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Amsterdamse Cahiers
voor Exegese van de Bijbel en zijn Tradities

Supplement Series

Reading and Listening
Meeting One God in Many Texts

***Festschrift* for Eric Peels**
on the occasion of his 25th jubilee
as professor of Old Testament Studies

Edited by

Jaap Dekker
Gert Kwakkel

Eric Peels

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PREFACE

Twenty-five years ago, on January 13, 1993, dr. Hendrik George Laurens (Eric) Peels, born in 1956, inaugurated as professor of Old Testament Studies at the Theological University of Apeldoorn (TUA). Already in 1986, the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, being the founder and stakeholder of the TUA, appointed Eric Peels an assistant professor. After having finished his Ph.D. *cum laude* in 1992,[1] under the guidance of prof. dr. B.J. Oosterhoff and prof. dr. A.S. van der Woude, he was appointed a professor of Old Testament Studies, thus becoming the successor of his most formative teacher Oosterhoff.

The inaugural lecture of Eric Peels was on the prophecy of Nahum and discussed its theology in its most literal sense, its talk about God.[2] According to the opening sentence of the Book of Nahum, YHWH is a jealous and avenging God. Many readers of the Bible are confused by statements like this and are inclined to consider them jarring notes among the impressive chorus of divergent Old Testament voices. For that reason, Eric Peels accepted the challenge to focus his research on the 'shadow sides' of the Old Testament revelation of God.[3]

Many colleagues as well as ministers and Christian laity, not only of his own denomination, have benefited of the books, articles and lectures that Eric has published, and are grateful for his teachings. Eric also lectured at several universities in France, the United States of America, South Africa, South Korea and Japan. He contributed to the international conferences of the *Society of Biblical Literature* (SBL), the *European Association of Biblical Studies* (EABS), and the *International Organisation for the Study of the Old Testament* (IOSOT), and participated in the *Oudtestamentische Werkgezelschap* in the Netherlands and Belgium (OTW), being its president from 2005-2008. Enjoying the fruits of all these activities Eric, together with his cordial and attentive wife Janine, maintains a close relationship with a lot of colleagues and friends in many countries. For all these reasons, we would like to honour our highly respected friend and colleague by offering him this *Festschrift* at the occasion of his 25th jubilee.

We are grateful that this *Festschrift* is published in the Supplement Series of *Amsterdamse Cahiers voor Exegese van de Bijbel en zijn Tradities* (ACEBT), and that the Editorial Board of this series welcomed our initiative and offered its cooperation. We thank all contributors for their willingness to participate in this project. It would not have been difficult to double the extent of this *Festschrift*, for Eric Peels has more colleagues and friends than those who were invited or able to participate. Therefore, a *Tabula Gratulatorum* is included. This *Festschrift* also includes a bibliography of all publications of Eric Peels which could be traced. We thank Sander Kok for meticulously compiling this bibliography as well as the index of biblical texts.

Congratulating Eric Peels with his 25th jubilee as professor of Old Testament Studies and wishing him God's blessing, we offer him this *Festschrift.* It was a pleasure to work on it. For

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[1] H.G.L. Peels, *De wraak van God. De betekenis van de wortel* NQM *en de functie van de* NQM-*teksten in het kader van de oudtestamentische Godsopenbaring*, Zoetermeer 1992 (ET: *The Vengeance of God: The Meaning of the Root* NQM *and the Function of the* NQM-*Texts in the Context of Divine Revelation in the Old Testament* [OTS, 31], Leiden 1995).

[2] *Voed het oud vertrouwen weder. De Godsopenbaring bij Nahum* (ApSt, 28), Kampen 1993 (Revive the initial faith: the revelation of God in Nahum's prophecy).

[3] Cf. his *Wie is als Gij? Schaduwkanten van het oudtestamentische Godsbeeld*, Zoetermeer ^{2}2007 (ET: *Shadow Sides: God in the Old Testament*, Carlisle 2003).

now, it is our hope that it will also be a pleasure to read the twenty-eight contributions to this volume, which all have been written as a token of gratitude and lasting friendship.

Apeldoorn, January 19, 2018

Jaap Dekker
Gert Kwakkel

INTRODUCTION

In discussions on difficult biblical texts, Eric Peels has always recommended to listen for a longer period of time instead of drawing smooth conclusions distancing oneself from the texts. That is the reason why this *Festschrift* is titled *Reading and Listening: Meeting One God in Many Texts*. The combination of 'reading' and 'listening' expresses respect for the transmitted texts of the Bible. The subtitle alludes to the research program of the joint section 'Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theology' (BEST) of the Theological Universities of Apeldoorn and Kampen, led by Eric: 'Who Is Like You Among the Gods? The One and Three in a Pluralistic Context' (2012-2017). All contributors to the Festschrift were requested to write about a topic related to the theme of this research program. This resulted in twenty-eight articles from Bible scholars and systematic theologians, specialists in Semitic languages and Assyriology, and even a philosopher, well-known to Eric. We arranged these articles in six sections, concerning, respectively, the Historical Books, the Prophets, the Psalms, the New Testament, Biblical and Systematic Theology, and Historical Theology.

In the first section of this *Festschrift* there are eight articles that focus on texts from the historical books, starting with the Book of Genesis. Paul Krüger reflects on the ethics of vengeance, taking the Bible's first story of manslaughter, about Cain's fratricide, as his point of departure. Building on a former article of Eric Peels Krüger seeks to answer the question whether it is valid to use this paradigmatic text when calling for revenge or restitution. He concludes that when justice has been done by God, as the sole prosecutor and judge, ongoing demands for restitution cannot be justified with reference to blood calling out in Genesis 4:10b.

Mart-Jan Paul discusses the theme of God's wrath as it manifests itself in the story of the Flood. According to Genesis 6:13 not only most of humanity would be eradicated by the Flood, but God even intended to destroy the earth itself. Paul explores the extent of this destruction and concludes that it indeed struck the whole earth, undoing the separation between dry land and waters which was part of the act of creation. God's mercy and the theme of recreation, however, are also present in the Flood story and beyond. Referring to the New Testament, Paul assumes that future judgment will not be complete destruction anymore.

Klaas Veenhof, one of Eric's former teachers in Assyriology, describes an aspect of family religion in the Ancient Near East by presenting Old Assyrian evidence concerning the so-called 'God of the father', a concept which is also known from the stories of the patriarchs in the Book of Genesis. Veenhof disputes the thesis of Albrecht Alt, who supposed that the concept had an Amorrite origin, and concludes that the feature of the 'family god' is understandable in a culture with an extensive pantheon. Old Assyrian texts demonstrate that the veneration of family gods was an accepted and general practice, but they do not shed new light on the role of 'the god of the father' in the patriarchal narratives in the Old Testament.

Klaas Spronk observes that difficult texts from the Book of Judges, describing violent acts, are often absent in studies on the theology of the Old Testament. He argues that this book offers a specific perspective on YHWH and his relationship to the people of Israel. The first verse sets its theological tone and makes it a book of prayer, though an uncommon one. The insight to be gained by reading it, and to be put into practice as well, is that if one sets oneself a goal to be reached, one should first ask YHWH. The ancient heroes of Israel learn, through trial and error, that YHWH is the saviour, ruler and judge par excellence. As an introduction to the Books of

Samuel and Kings, the narratives about Israel's judges make clear, in advance, that the best king is a king who knows when and how to pray to YHWH.

Focusing on the Jephthah narrative in the Book of Judges Koert van Bekkum analyses its historical, literary and theological aspects. He signals several geographical tensions in Jephthah's speech, but argues that these tensions contribute to the development of the literary plot and the characterization of Jephthah himself. Investigating the historical information which the narrative includes, in the light of the archaeological record of Transjordan and ancient Ammon, Van Bekkum concludes that the Jephthah narrative is an Iron II composition containing Iron I memories. He further argues that it communicates a straightforward message regarding social relations, leadership and the treatment of women, but that its main concern refers to the relation between YHWH and Israel, which is full of tension at that moment.

Cees Houtman draws attention to another disagreeable text by describing the reception of the story of the beheading of Goliath in Dutch children's and family bibles. Though David is often admired for his heroic deeds, Houtman characterizes his beheading of Goliath as 'barbarous'. Because of the role of God in this story it even adds a problematic aspect to the Old Testament concept of God. Houtman argues that present readers of the Bible should dissociate themselves frankly from these 'shadow sides' of biblical narratives, thus overtly disagreeing with Eric Peels.

Gert Kwakkel notes the difference between the unconditional dynastic promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 and its remarkable conditional shape in 1 Kings 2:4. He wonders whether it can be expected from a faithful God to submit an apparently unconditional promise to conditions at a later time. He reviews explanations presented by several scholars. Referring to two Hittite vassal treaties and to 1 Samuel 2:30 in particular, he argues that the text from 2 Samuel 7 is more conditional than has often been assumed. This leads Kwakkel to the conclusion that it is even more amazing that YHWH continued his relationship with David and his descendants.

Jin Soo Kim discusses David's astonishing last words, in which he orders Solomon to finish with Joab and Shimei (1 Kgs 2:1-9), and argues for an intertextual reading by comparing these words with 2 Samuel 23:1-7. Signalling similarities in terms of literary structure and content he concludes that David's orders about Joab and Shimei did not originate from his personal desire for revenge but from God's righteous judgment against those who were 'worthless'. According to Kim they had to be exterminated for the Davidic kingdom to be established in justice and righteousness.

The second section of this *Festschrift* is dedicated to the prophets, and also comprises eight articles. It opens with a contribution of Jaap Dekker on the Isaianic message of the uniqueness of YHWH in the context of religious pluralism. He observes that the Book of Isaiah persistently testifies to YHWH's incomparability, as it makes no concessions to pluralism, as if other religions should be recognized as equally valuable. In his view, it is instructive for Christians living in today's pluralist society that Isaiah's battle with gods and idols is only fought on the level of prophetic rhetoric. Monotheism as understood in the Book of Isaiah is not about subduing other people for the sake of theological convictions, but about testifying to YHWH, who claims to control history and to be able to bring salvation.

Chris van der Walt analyses the thematic unity within the prophecy of Isaiah 50:1-11, focussing on the central Isaianic theme of hearing and understanding. He demonstrates that the various sub-units of this prophecy fit in the immediate context. Its communicative purpose is to correct the wrong understanding among the exiles regarding both their own and YHWH's roles during exile. Because of the new proclamation of the hearing Servant, blindness in Israel could be corrected and the light of true understanding restored.

Hetty Lalleman presents an article on the uselessness of the idols, as it is exposed in the Book of Jeremiah. Employing the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32 as a hermeneutical key text, she investigates the meaning of הבל in the Book of Jeremiah and suggests that this designation specifically relates to the uselessness of the idols regarding the fertility of the land. Instead, Jeremiah proclaims the living God as the only source of life and happiness.

Henk de Waard, who prepares a Ph.D. under the guidance of Eric Peels, investigates the relationship between Jeremiah 32:5 and 52:11, two texts that address the personal fate of King Zedekiah, but seem to differ on the content of his fate. He discusses the textual differences between the Masoretic text and the Old Greek translation and concludes that successive editors and translators attempted to resolve the apparent discrepancy between Jeremiah 32:5 and 52:11 by reinterpreting an original promise as a threat. Accordingly, present readers of these texts meet a God who, through his promises, encourages people to rely on him, but also a God who by no means clears the guilty.

Focussing on the Book of Ezekiel Herrie van Rooy investigates the important motif of encountering the glory of the Lord. Referring to the general theme of this volume, he discusses the significance of the link between seeing, listening and speaking on the one hand, and the appearance of the glory of the Lord on the other, in the three major visions in the book (Ezek 1-3, 8-11 and 40-48). Van Rooy argues that the glory of the Lord appeared to Ezekiel in a foreign land to counter Israel's inclination to limit God to the temple, which in their view, made it impossible to experience him in the exile, especially when the temple was destroyed. Ezekiel's message about the glory of the Lord, therefore, was a message of hope, revealing that nothing could prevent the coming of God's glory to deliver his people.

Wim Beuken draws attention to the intertextual connections between the Minor Prophets and the Major Prophets, by comparing the beginning of the Book of Hosea (chs. 1-2) with the final part of the Book of Ezekiel (chs. 36-48). Beuken is hesitant to assume that a common redaction has tied these books together, but investigates whether the analogies which come to the fore in a canonical reading process can help the present reader of the Prophets to accept the inconvenient story of Hosea, who was ordered to enter a marriage which would result in trouble and shame. Beuken concludes that it takes apparently more prophets than one to fathom the ways of Israel's God.

Based on computer assisted research on linguistic patterns, Eep Talstra presents his analysis of participants in the prophecy of Zechariah 1:1-6. Talstra argues that accepting quick answers in determining who is speaking in the verses of this prophecy, results in meeting your own theology rather than meeting the one God. Pleading for a linguistically based methodology and carefully tracking the participants, Talstra concludes that the real focus of this prophecy is not a direct summons to Zechariah's audience to return. Remarkably, YHWH himself also speaks about his own returning. Apparently, there is thus more rhetorical power in this prophecy than there seems to be at first sight.

The final contribution to this section comes from Fanie Snyman. Investigating Malachi 2:17-3:7a by paying attention to its historical and literary dimensions, Snyman aims to provide a theological interpretation by listening and hearing to the Word of God in this text. Accordingly, he reflects on the question put forward by the people as to where the God of justice is (Mal

2:17). Snyman concludes that the God of justice will still be present in the just actions of his people, and also in his judgment over them, when they are doing injustice in society.

The third section of the volume is about the Psalms and entirely focuses on Psalm 16, one of the psalms on which Eric Peels has also published himself. First, Gunnar Begerau investigates the impact of Eric Peels' understanding of 'the holy ones' of Psalm 16:3 in recent literature. In an article from 2000 in *ZAW*, Peels interpreted them, without emending the Masoretic text, as deities that were honoured by the people in local sanctuaries. Begerau signals that this study of Peels is sometimes mentioned in passing, but that only a few authors have really interacted with him. According to Begarau, Peels has convincingly shown that the 'I' in Psalm 16 clings to the one and only God, in stark contrast to the worshippers of the idols.

Wido van Peursen demonstrates that a strictly formal computational approach contributes to a better understanding of Psalm 16 and its participants. In between two groups of participants—God (and the 'holy ones'?) on the one hand, and the other gods and their worshippers on the other—stands an 'I', who is related to both, but clearly states on whose side he is determined to stand.

The first contribution to the next, New Testament section of this *Festschrift* is still linked to the previous one, as Rob van Houwelingen writes about the function of Psalm 45:7-8 in the argument of Hebrews 1. Psalm 45 originally seems to have been a love song performed at the wedding of a particular king from Israel (or Judah), but is quoted in Hebrews to praise the exalted Son of God. Van Houwelingen investigates the differences between the Masoretic text and the Septuagint version of the current Psalm, and argues that the author of Hebrews deliberately quotes from the Septuagint, in order to demonstrate that the exalted Son is seated as God on the divine throne in heaven.

Michael Mulder contributes to the New Testament section by presenting an investigation of Revelation 20:1-6. Mulder traces the origin of the motif of the thousand-year reign with Christ within the context of Jewish apocalyptic tradition. He ultimately concludes, contrary to what has often been presumed, that there is no proof that the Book of Revelation makes use of a well-known contemporary motif. By presenting the idea of a messianic interregnum, it rather brings together a variety of motifs in its own distinctive manner, attempting to resolve the tension between the concrete earthly expectations uttered by the prophets and the increasing supernatural understanding of the future kingdom of peace.

Though all contributions to this *Festschrift* thus far are from scholars who, just as Eric Peels himself, are working in the field of Biblical Studies, biblical theologians and systematic theologians at the theological universities of Apeldoorn and Kampen cooperate with each other in the same research program. The potentially fruitful character of this cooperation is demonstrated in an article written by two authors, which opens the fifth section, on biblical and systematic theology. It deals with the unity of YHWH and the Trinity. Arnold Huijgen and Arie Versluis first analyse the meaning and intention of Deuteronomy 6:4, the central text on the unity of YHWH in the Old Testament and part of the Shema. Then, they examine Paul's Christian reinterpretation of the Shema in 1 Corinthians 8:6 and reflect on it in relation to Trinitarian theology. They conclude that important connections exist in internal logic between the Shema, 1 Corinthians 8:6 and classical Trinitarian theology.

Wolter Rose discusses the biblical theological topic of seeing God's glory. The theme is present throughout the Old Testament, from the Book of Exodus, which sets forth how Israel saw God's glory at Mount Sinai, to the Book of Ezekiel, as it records the prophet's vision at the river Kebar. Rose takes his starting point in the second strophe of Psalm 113 and, comparing reading texts to listening to music, distinguishes four different tunes in order to understand the different aspects of seeing God's glory. He traces these tunes in all sorts of biblical texts. After having made an inventory of human responses to the glory of God, he concludes that in the New Testament all tunes are important to understand the significance of Jesus Christ, who reveals the glory of the Father's only Son.

Hans Burger writes on God's character and the plot of the Bible. His basic thought is that systematic theology has an interest in biblical narrative, because a doctrine of God should conform to the identity and character of God as portrayed in biblical narrative. Describing first the doctrine of God as it has been established by Herman Bavinck without a direct relation to the biblical narrative, Burger studies the plot of the narrative of the Bible by evaluating its reconstructions by John Goldingay, Tom Wright and Christopher Wright. Looking for a controlling norm for a doctrine of God and for all further discussion of God's attributes, Burger emphasizes the importance of following the creed of the Church in its identification of God as triune. Interacting with Eric Peels, Burger concludes that the narrative of the triune God has also to control the current reflection on God's vengeance.

Hae Moo Yoo treats the concept of the image of God and discusses the question as to whether the image is lost after the Fall. Yoo reviews the interpretations of the image of God in church history, and concludes that the majority's opinion has always been that the image of God is not lost after the Fall. Referring to the Book of Genesis, however, Yoo argues that the image of God has indeed been lost, for it primarily means making God visible. He further argues that if, according to the New Testament, Christ alone is the image of God, humans cannot be image-bearers without being related to him. They have to be transformed into the image of Christ, which is also the transformation into the image of God. This restoration is part of the New Testament eschatological expectation.

Rik Peels presents an article on the theme of God's repentance, one of the themes addressed by his father Eric Peels. As the subtitle of his contribution indicates, and in accordance with the BEST research program, Rik Peels aims to take biblical theology seriously in doing systematic theology. Being a philosopher, he first carefully analyses what it is to repent and then describes the challenge for systematic theology. Though it seems that systematic theology cannot evade giving up either God's omniscience, or his omnibenevolence, or his ability to repent, biblical theology gives reason to embrace each of these, even though that leads to a contradiction. Rik Peels then argues that God does not know his future self perfectly, so that he has postponed certain final decisions, awaiting to see how certain free actions of his creatures will affect him.

Barend Kamphuis concludes the section on biblical and systematic theology by reflecting on hermeneutics and unity, relating the unity of the Church, one of its essential attributes according to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, to the unity of God. Driven by his passion to bring the divided protestant churches of the Netherlands together, Kamphuis describes the implications for the hermeneutics of Christian doctrine. He argues that the boundary for catholicity is at its centre, the confession of the crucified Lord Jesus Christ, but that inside this boundary Christians must leave room for each other with their different interpretations of the gospel. Kamphuis decidedly defends the hermeneutic rule that any interpretation of the Christian doctrine that divides the church cannot be true.

Finally, the sixth and last part of the *Festschrift* comprises two contributions which can be subsumed under historical theology. Paul Wells reflects on the *munus triplex*, the threefold office, which Calvin used to explain the meaning of the saving acts of Jesus Christ. He presents its three dimensions in terms of anticipation, realisation and eschatological hope and argues that the concept of the threefold office gives salvation an historical hermeneutic and scope stretching from the past to the future ending in the new creation, centred on the incarnation and fulfilment.

The concluding article of this volume is from Arie Baars who analyses a sermon on Jeremiah 15:19-20 John Owen preached before the English Parliament at a dramatic moment in history. Baars observes that Owen freely applied this text to the Parliament and people of England, without noticing the context of the highly dramatic and personal encounter between Jeremiah and God. Owen even draws a direct parallel between the Israelite theocracy in the Old Testament period and the British Commonwealth. Baars identifies this as an example of prophetic-political preaching.

Unless indicated otherwise the Bible translation used in this volume is the New Revised Standard Version. When the arrangement of chapters or verses differs from the Hebrew Bible—*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*—as a rule only chapters and verses from the Hebrew Bible are mentioned. When occasionally both are presented, the English numbers come first followed by the Hebrew numbers in square brackets.

ABBREVIATIONS

This *Festschrift* follows the collection of abbreviations in S.M. Schwertner, *Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete*, Berlin/New York ^{3}2014. Abbreviations not included in this collection are listed below.

AKT	*Ankara Kültepe Tabletleri*, Ankara 1990 etc.
AmSTaR	Amsterdam Studies in Theology and Religion
ApOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
BGT	*Bijbel in Gewone Taal* (Dutch Bible in common language), Heerenveen 2014
BCOTWP	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms
BIN	*Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of James B. Nier*, New Haven/London 1917 etc.
BTAT	Beiträge zur Theologie des Alten Testaments
CNT-2	Commentaar op het Nieuwe Testament, 2nd series, Kampen
CNT-3	Commentaar op het Nieuwe Testament, 3rd series, Kampen
CSCD	Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine
CCT	S. Smith, D.J. Wiseman *et al.*, *Cuneiform Texts from Cappadocian Tablets in the British Museum*, London 1921-1975
DBL.OT	J. Swanson, *A Dictionary of Biblical Languages: Hebrew Old Testament*, Bellington ^{2}1997
ESV	*English Standard Version*, Wheaton 2001
ET	English Translation
ETCBC	Eep Talstra Centre for Bible and Computer, Amsterdam
GNB	*Good News Bible*, Philadelphia 1992
GSEv	Gereformeerd Sociaal en Economisch Verband
HSV	*Herziene Statenvertaling* (Revised States Translation, in Dutch), Heerenveen 2010
IRUSC	Interpretation: Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church
JM	P. Joüon, T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (SubBi, 27), Rome 2011
KCC	Kidner Classic Commentaries
KJV	*King James Version*, London 1611
NBV	*Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling* (New Bible Translation, in Dutch), Heerenveen 2004
KTS	J. Lewy, V. Donbaz, *Keilschrifttexte in den Antiken-Museen zu Stambul*, [1]-2, Konstantinopel/Stuttgart 1926/1989
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NBG51	*Nieuwe Vertaling*, Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap, Haarlem 1951
NEB	*New English Bible*, Oxford/Cambridge 1970
NET	*New English Translation*, Garland 2005
NIV	*New International Version*, Grand Rapids 1973/2002
NJPS	New Jewish Publication Society—*TANAKH: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*, Philadelphia 1985
NRSV	*New Revised Standard Version*, Cambridge 1989
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*, http://www.oed.com/
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary

RIMA	A.K. Grayson (ed.), *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Assyrian Periods*, Toronto/Buffalo/London 1987 etc.
RIME	D.R. Frayne (ed.), *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods*, Toronto/Buffalo/London 1990 etc.
RSV	*Revised Standard Version*, London 1952
StBOT	Studiebijbel Oude Testament, Centrum voor Bijbelonderzoek, Veenendaal
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SOTSS	Society of Old Testament Study Series
SV	*Statenvertaling* (States Translation, in Dutch), Leiden 1637
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
TC	G. Contenau, F. Thureau-Dangin *et al.*, *Tablettes cappadociennes*, 1-3 (= TLC 4, 14, 19-21, 1920/1928/1935-1937 / *Textes Cunéiformes*, Musée du Louvre, Département des antiquités orientales, Paris 1910-1967)
THOTC	The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary
TU-B	TU bezinningsreeks, Kampen
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PART 1:

MEETING ONE GOD IN THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

BLOOD CRYING OUT FROM THE GROUND (GENESIS 4:10) AND THE ETHICS OF VENGEANCE

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A text that often crops up in connection with homicide, where there is no one (left) to speak on behalf of the victim(s), is Genesis 4:10b, where God says to Cain: ‘Listen; your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground!’ This text is relevant to personal and social ethics. No matter what type of intentional homicides are committed—mass murders or individual murders—such murders usually elicit outcries for some form of requital.

This article focuses on the question of whether it is valid to use this text when calling for revenge or restitution. In order to find an answer, it explores the meaning of 4:10b, taking into account the nature of the text, its literary context, and a close reading of the text.

NATURE OF THE TEXT

Genesis 4 is not prescriptive as is the case with legal texts in the Pentateuch, but it represents important aspects of the world’s first murder, which is significant for all humanity. This is not only the first description of human violence in the Old Testament, but also an exemplary one.[1]

Genesis 4:10b forms part of a larger narrative (4:1-26) that includes smaller narratives about Cain and Abel (4:1-16), Cain and his descendants (4:17-24), and the children of Adam and Eve (4:25-26).

Genesis 4:1-16 seems to lack coherence due to its terseness. Much is left unsaid, both by the narrator and the characters in the story, leaving gaps in the narrative.[2] The two most obvious questions arising from these gaps are: Why did God accept Abel’s offering and not that of Cain, although Cain took the initiative in offering (4:3-5a)? And what did Cain tell Abel before he murdered him and did Abel answer (4:8a)? On the one hand these gaps lead to conflicting readings, as well as elaborations on the story, especially in the targumim and apocrypha. On the other hand these gaps let some scholars suspect the text to be corrupted or conflated.

[1] Referring to Gen 2:4-4:26, Eric Peels refers to the text not only as a prototype, but also as an archetype of violence in its worst form. See H.G.L. Peels, ‘The World’s First Murder: Violence and Justice in Genesis 4:1-16’, in: J.T. Fitzgerald, F.J. van Rensburg *et al.* (eds.), *Animosity, the Bible, and Us: Some European, North American, and South African Perspectives* (SBL GPBS, 12), Atlanta 2009, 21. Cf. H.G.L. Peels, ‘In het teken van Kaïn. Een theologische exegese van Genesis 4’, *VeEc* 29 (2008), 174-175. This narrative acquires a ‘paradigmatic function’ according to G.J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC), Waco 1987, 117.

[2] Peels, ‘In het teken van Kaïn’, 175; K. Vermeulen, ‘Mind the Gap: Ambiguity in the Story of Cain and Abel’, *JBL* 133 (2014), 32.

However, many scholars have demonstrated that the pericope makes good sense as a coherent composition.[3] The so-called gaps are probably intentional to create a sense of ambivalence.[4]

Genesis 4:10b also leaves much unsaid, calling for reflection. Yet this text usually receives scant attention, while numerous studies focus on other aspects of 4:1-26. Possibly many scholars gloss over the text because they regard its meaning as obvious. Claus Westermann, for example, calls Genesis 4:10b a 'monumental sentence in the Bible' that hardly needs comment.[5]

LITERARY CONTEXT

Genesis 4:1-26 is the concluding pericope of a larger editorial unit demarcated by the תּוֹלְדוֹת formula in 2:4 and 5:1, and characterized by the consistent use of the divine names יהוה and יהוה אלהים. There are thematic links between Genesis 2, 3 and 4, and remarkable parallels between Genesis 3 and 4.[6] The following parallels are relevant for the text under discussion, namely 4:10b:

Thematic: The ground is a prominent theme in Genesis 2-4. The name 'Adam' or 'Man' (אָדָם) is reminiscent of 'ground' (אֲדָמָה). Cain is a worker of the *ground* (4:2). In 4:10b we learn that his brother's blood is crying from the *ground*, the same *ground* that has received his blood (4:11). The *ground* will no longer yield its strength to Cain (4:12). He is driven from the *ground* to be a fugitive and wanderer (4:14).

Stylistic: Both Genesis 3 and 4:1-6 make use of multiple questions, which are either rhetorical questions requiring no answer (3:9; 4:6,10) or questions remaining unanswered (3:11,13; 4:5,7,9).

Structural: Genesis 3 and the shorter pericope in Genesis 4 display a parallel coherent structure:

Element	Genesis 3	Genesis 4:1-16
1. Background to events	3:1a The serpent. The forbidden tree not explicit in Gen 3; see 2:17.	4:1-5 The two brothers and the reason for Cain's mood.
2. Dialogue about impending transgression	3:1b-5 The serpent convinces the woman to eat from the tree that God has forbidden.	4:6-7 The Lord warns Cain about sin lurking at the door.
3. Transgression	3:6-7 The woman and her husband eat from the fruit.	4:8 Cain speaks to his brother and kills him.
4. Concealment of the transgression	3:7-8 Man and woman make loincloths and hide.	Implicit: murder *in the field* (4:8).
5. Investigation	3:9 The Lord God asks the man about his whereabouts.	4:9a The Lord asks Cain about his brother's whereabouts.
6. Denial	3:10 The man tries to side-track God's question and denies responsibility.	4:9b Cain tries to side-track the Lord's question and denies responsibility.
7. Evidence of transgression	3:11a Awareness of nakedness is evidence of transgression.	4:10b Blood of Cain's brother crying out from the ground is evidence of transgression.
8. Verdict (by means of rhetorical question)	3:11b You ate from the forbidden tree; 13a You did it as well.	4:10a You did it!
9. Plea for mitigation	3:12 Man and woman do not deny their guilt, but try to shift blame *before sentence.*	[No reaction *before sentence*. Plea for mitigation *after sentence*; see element 11.]
10. Sentence (imposition of punishment)	3:14-19 Punishment announced to the serpent, the woman and the man; only the serpent's punishment is indicated as a curse.	4:11-12 Punishment announced to Cain as the only perpetrator. The punishment is indicated as a curse.
11. Reaction of perpetrator	3:20 Man notes that the sentence does not imply immanent death; he names his wife Eve because she would be the mother of all living.	4:13-14 Cain objects to the severity of the sentence; he notes that the sentence will bring starvation and death.
12. Mitigation of sentence	3:21 The Lord God makes garments of skin as token of care and the continuation of life.	4:15 The Lord safeguards Cain from blood revenge by an oath and a sign; he will not die.
13. Execution of punishment starts	3:22-24 Man (and woman) expelled from the garden to till the ground.	4:16 Cain departs from the presence of the Lord and settled in 'Wanderland' (Nod).

[3] E.g. K.A. Deurloo, *Kain en Abel. Onderzoek naar exegetische methode inzake een 'kleine literaire eenheid' in de Tenakh*, Amsterdam 1967; E.J. van Wolde, 'The Story of Cain and Abel: A Narrative Study', *JSOT* 52 (1991), 25-41; K.M. Craig Jr., 'Questions Outside Eden (Genesis 4.1-16): Yahweh, Cain and their Rhetorical Interchange', *JSOT* 86 (1999), 107-128; Vermeulen, 'Mind the Gap'.

[4] Vermeulen, 'Mind the Gap', 30, calls this 'a story that thrives on ambiguity'. See also M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, Bloomington 1987, 186-190, about the prevalence and role of gaps in biblical narrative.

[5] C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11* (BKAT), Neukirchen [9]1974, 415. Also Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 107.

[6] Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 412; A.J. Hauser, 'Linguistic and Thematic Links Between Genesis 4:1-16 and Genesis 2-3', *JETS* 23 (1980), 297-305; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 117; R. Alter, *Genesis*, New York 1997, 18; Craig, 'Questions Outside Eden', 127.

Elements 5 to 13 are indicative of a juridical process. Elements 7 to 12 specifically constitute a legal trial.[7] In terms of the typical pattern for climactic texts,[8] element 1 is exposition or background, element 2 the inciting incident, elements 3 to 7 the developing conflict climaxing in the verdict (element 8), where it becomes clear that the perpetrator is brought to book.[9] The sentencing (element 10) is still part of the climax. In 3:12 the climax is interrupted by the *non mea culpa* of element 9, which may be regarded as a complication of the climax. However, in 4:11 the sentencing follows directly on the verdict. It is marked very clearly with וְעַתָּה ('and now'), which is a typical marker in prophetic texts for a verdict.[10] Elements 11 and 12 occupy the slot of *denouement* (resolution), and element 13 indicates the outcome, which at the same time serves as bridge to the next pericope.

The relevance of the structural similarity between Genesis 3 and 4:1-16 for the text under discussion, is that both passages identify the transgression by means of a rhetorical question when the verdict (element 8) is given. In Genesis 3 the crime is mentioned specifically (eating from the tree, 3:12). In Genesis 4 the transgression is not called by name, but the rhetorical question serves as an exclamation of indignation, implying guilt: 'What have you done!' (מֶה עָשִׂיתָ, 4:10a).[11] God is not asking, but is accusing, as a prosecutor.[12] Even a 'perfect murder' where evidence is lacking, is known to God. In Genesis 3, when the woman is found guilty as well, a similar revealing question is asked: 'What is this that you have done?' (מַה־זֹּאת עָשִׂית, 3:13).

The verdict (element 8) is linked directly to the evidence of the transgression (element 7). In Genesis 3 the evidence precedes the verdict, and in Genesis 4 it follows on the verdict. The evidence gives the rationale for the verdict in the face of concealment of the crime (element 4) and denial of guilt (element 5). The 'direct and undeniable evidence'[13] is intended to refute Cain's denial of wrongdoing and misleading question.

From a structural point of view, it seems that 4:10b only pertains to the evidence of the crime, without any hint of retribution or vengeance. In both Genesis 3 and 4 it is God himself that metes out punishment (element 10). The resolution of the Genesis 4 text is that God specifically prevents blood revenge on Cain's murder (element 12).

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[7] Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 412; W. Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Int.), Atlanta 1982, 60.

[8] R.E. Longacre, S. Levinsohn, 'Field Analysis of Discourse', in: W.U. Dressler (ed.), R.E. Longacre, S. Levinsohn, 'Field Analysis of Discourse', in: W.U. Dressler (ed.), *Current Trends in Textlinguistics* (Research in Text Theory/Untersuchung zur Texttheorie, 2), New York/Berlin 1978, 104-110; R.E. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse* (Topics in Language and Linguistics), New York 1996, 33-38.

[9] Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 414, and Wenham, *Genesis*, 107, identify the pronouncement of Cain's guilt as the climax of the narrative. Others like M. McEntire, *The Blood of Abel: The Violent Plot in the Hebrew Bible*, Macon 1999, 22-23, see the murder as the climax, which is more likely in the light of the structure of the pericope.

[10] E.g. 2 Sam 12:10.

[11] GKC, § 148b, regards מֶה as an exclamation of indignation in 4:10b. See also Craig, 'Questions Outside Eden', 125; J.D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Genesis*, Vol. 1: *Genesis 1:1-25:18*, Darlington 2003, 146; V.P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis* (NICOT), Grand Rapids 1990, 231. G. von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (OTL), London 1972, 106, takes this as an anthropomorphism expressing God's horror.

[12] Hamilton, *Genesis*, 231.

[13] B.T. Arnold, *Genesis* (NCBiC), Cambridge 2009, 80. E. Noort, 'Genesis 4:1-16: From Paradise to Reality: The Myth of Brotherhood', in: G.P. Luttikhuizen (ed.), *Eve's Children: The Biblical Stories Retold and Interpreted in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (TBN, 5), Leiden/Boston 2003, 102, also regards the ground (אדמה) as part of the witness.

Cain hides his crime in more than one way. Not only does Cain commit the murder in the field (element 3),[14] but he also side tracks God's inquest (element 6). Abel's blood even disappeared in the soil (see 4:11). No *corpus delicti* is present that may serve as concrete evidence.[15] Therefore Abel's blood needs to cry out.

CLOSE READING OF THE TEXT

A close reading reveals that the text is fraught with difficulties. The Hebrew text of 4:10b reads קוֹל דְּמֵי אָחִיךָ צֹעֲקִים אֵלַי מִן־הָאֲדָמָה.

Voice

The first word, קוֹל, denotes a sound made by humans ('voice') or other living creatures. The word can also denote a sound made by inanimate objects such as music instruments.[16] In several instances the word is used in the Hebrew Bible as an interjection ('listen!'), which serves as a focus particle in dialogue do draw the attention of the other party.

In 4:10b דְּמֵי אָחִיךָ 'the blood of your brother' may be interpreted as the actual subject of the sentence on the basis of grammatical concord, so that קול stands on its own and should be interpreted as a mere interjection.[17] Yet some scholars positively take קול as a reference to the 'voice' or 'message' uttered by Abel's blood.[18]

The thrust of the rest of 4:10b remains unchanged whether קול is understood as a sound or a mere interjection.

Blood

The first question regarding the word דָּם ('blood'), is whether the word refers to literal blood ('the red liquid in creatures which is essential for life').[19] As with the word נֶפֶשׁ, the word דם denotes 'life', since (literal) blood is considered as the seat of life (Lev 17:11) or is identified with it (Gen 9:4; Lev 17:14).[20]

The referent 'blood' acquires different shades of meaning in contexts where loss of blood or shedding of blood is under discussion:[21]

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[14] The concealment of the crime is suggested by the fact that Cain kills Abel at a location where they are alone and *'Abel keinen Helfer und der Mord keine Zeugen hatte'*. See H. Gunkel, *Genesis* (HAT), Göttingen [9]1977 (1901), 44.

[15] What became of Abel's body is left unsaid. Von Rad, *Genesis*, 106, presumes that the corpse was covered over with earth. Perhaps Cain himself disposed of the body.

[16] *HALOT*, 1083-1085; *DCH* VII, 222; W.R. Domeris, 'קוֹל', in: *NIDOTTE* III, 898-902; B. Kedar-Kopfstein, 'קוֹל qôl', in: *ThWAT* VI, 1237-1252.

[17] GKC, § 146b; Dromeris, *NIDOTTE* III, 898; Kedar-Kopfstein, *ThWAT* VI, 1247; Deurloo, 'Kain en Abel', 119.

[18] Thus, e.g., *DCH* VII, 222. The Septuagint also uses the word φωνή (sound, voice) in 4:10b.

[19] DBL.OT, #1949.

[20] In his study on blood ritual, W.K. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power*, Baltimore/London 2004, 24, finds that the identification of blood as that which animates the body, is expressed in the legal core of Deuteronomy and in P and H texts, but is found nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. This observation serves as cautionary note when interpreting a text like 4:10b.

[21] *DBL.OT*, #1949; *HALOT*, 224-225; B. Kedar-Kopfstein, 'דָּם dām', in: *ThWAT* II, 248-266; G. Gerleman, 'דָּם dām', in: *THAT* I, 448-451.

Death: Massive loss of blood means loss of life, so that the word דם can imply shedding of blood and thus death. Shedding of blood (שָׁפַךְ + דָּם) indicates a violent death.
Killing: דם can also refer to the act of taking the physical life of another (Num 35:27). 'Innocent blood' (דָּם נָקִי) indicates unwarranted killing; that is, the murder of a person free of blame.
Pollution: Blood associated with murder is seen as clinging to the ground and polluting it (Num 35:33; Ps 106:38). The pollution must be removed by cleansing rituals (Deut 21:1-9), so that the blood can be covered.
Blood-guilt: The word דם can refer to the state of having liability for the death of a person, whether intentionally (murder) or unintentionally (manslaughter). Blood-guilt calls for retribution.

The second question is why the plural (דָּמִים) is used instead of the singular (דם) in 4:10b. Grammatically the use of the plural is insignificant:

> Although the plural may be used when the reference is to abundance of blood, or blood that has been shed violently and which presses heavily upon the murderer … in most cases the two forms are used indiscriminately. The plural seems to express the affective value attached to blood in certain situations.[22]

All the major ancient translations (Septuagint, Peshitta and the Samaritan Pentateuch) agree that the plural should be rendered as singular. However, some ancient Jewish commentaries seek a deeper meaning in the plural form, stating that the plural refers to the potential descendants of Abel. When he was murdered, a multitude of descendants were murdered as well. They still exist before God and are all calling from the ground.[23]

The latter interpretation presupposes that the concept דם/דמים should not be taken literally as a reference to blood, but that it represents the deceased person Abel. It is not the blood that cries out to God, but Abel himself, who continues to live in spite of his physical death. It may even be Abel's potential descendants who are calling.

Three possible meanings of דמים in 4:10b emerge from the discussion above:

(a) The word 'blood' is employed as *synecdoche*. Blood either represents the *'spirit'* of the deceased person or the 'spirits' of his potential offspring,[24] or acquires qualities that belong to a living, animated entity.[25] According to this line of thought, 'blood' may even refer to Abel himself (with or without his potential descendants) urging God in some way or another to act after his death.[26]

[22] Kedar-Kopfstein, *ThWAT* II, 250-251. See also U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, Part 1 (transl. I. Abrahams), Jerusalem 1961, 218.
[23] See, e.g., Sanh 4.5; BerR 22.9; TNeof. Gen 4:10; TO Gen 4:10. See discussion in J. Byron, 'Abel's Blood and the Ongoing Cry for Vengeance', *CBQ* 73 (2011), 744-745.
[24] See H. Christ, *Blutvergiessen im Alten Testament: Der gewaltsame Tod des Menschen untersucht am hebräischen Wort dām* (ThDiss, 12), Basel 1977, 80, 181.
[25] S. Ruzer, 'The Cave of Treasures on Swearing by Abel's Blood and Expulsion from Paradise: Two Exegetical Motifs in Context', *JECS* 9 (2001), 266, mentions Christian expositions of late antiquity in which the blood of Abel acquires a personality of its own and even rushed up to heaven lamenting the murder and bringing accusation before the heavenly court.
[26] Byron, 'Abel's blood', 746-747, points out that this is exactly what Philo does in some of his writings.

(b) The *deed of murder* calls out.[27] Such an interpretation leads to the notion that Abel's murder caused pollution and/or blood-guilt that calls for retribution. Paul Trebilco remarks: 'The power of innocent blood *(dām nāqî)* to pollute is most vividly portrayed after Cain shed Abel's blood, which then cried out to God from the ground for vengeance.'[28]
(c) The *literal bloodstains* call out. If the blood is crying out instead of Abel himself, it means that Abel is dead and can no longer cry out in person. In the trial, Cain as the sole suspect denies any wrong, which calls for proof. Abel's blood tells what he himself cannot do. Literal blood calling out as evidence or a complaint amounts to personification, where the blood acquires a voice as if it were a living person.[29] The notion that blood is personified is confirmed by a similar personification of the ground in the next verse. When blood is understood literally, the meaning of blood crying out gravitates towards a juridical setting where the blood serves as evidence.

Option (c) seems to be the most plausible interpretation.[30] The use of metaphorical language here 'adds considerable emotional charge to bare facts'.[31] The use of the plural further adds an intensity to the picture of spilled blood, suggesting abundance of blood or many visible bloodstains.

Your brother
God does not refer in the text by name only to Abel, but calls him 'your brother'. This may indicate that the act of violence was committed to someone who was nearest to Cain, which makes Cain's deed all the more shameful.

However, the most likely explanation why Abel is called 'your brother' is found in the structure of the narrative. In the beginning of the narrative Abel is mentioned three times by name (vv. 2a, 4a, 4b). Next, Abel is called by name, but indicated as the brother of Cain. Abel is thus depicted as the counterpart of Cain, even when God asked him where Abel is (4:9a).

Shamed by this inquest, Cain did not dare to mention Abel's name (4:9b), which set the pattern for the rest of the narrative, where Abel is only called the brother of Cain. The climax (4:10-11) is not interested in Abel, but in the verdict and sentence of Cain. Apart from Cain and his great-grandson, the only other human being who speaks in the larger narrative is Eve (4:1,25b). Even Seth, who is depicted as Abel's 'replacement' (25b) and who would be in the position to take up Abel's case, remains silent in the narrative. Still, in a strange way, God exonerates Abel through the birth of Seth. Seth is the brother that Cain cannot make disappear.

It is therefore unlikely that the narrator meant that Abel would be speaking after his death, be it personally or that his blood would speak out on his behalf. Yet, Abel plays a role behind the scenes. When his spilt blood cries out, Abel as a dead man 'is more active and present than when alive'.[32]

[27] Christ, *Blutvergiessen*, 37, mentions 'Blut als Subjekt der Tätigkeit' as a possible meaning.
[28] P.R. Trebilco, 'דָּם dām', in: *NIDOTTE* I, 964. Noort, 'Genesis 4:1-16', 97, refers to unatoned blood crying out as a voice with a magical function. This voice also has a juridical function.
[29] Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 412, 415.
[30] G.M. Dryburgh, 'The Blood that Speaks', *ET* 61 (1950), 252-253.
[31] Craig, 'Questions Outside Eden', 125-126.
[32] Van Wolde, 'Cain and Abel', 37. See Hebr. 11:4, where it is suggested that Abel plays an active role after his death.

Is crying out to me

Scholars generally agree that the verbs צעק and זעק carry more or less the same meaning. The latter is the by-form of the former.[33] The meaning of these verbs in the *qal* is uncontested. It denotes the making of a loud verbal noise (‘shout’, ‘cry out’, ‘call out’). The nature and purpose of the shouting depends on the context. The following types of shouting may be relevant to 4:10b:[34]

(a) *‘Public sounds of physical pain and emotional anguish’*,[35] uttered in sorrow or distress.
(b) *Calling in the midst of injustice or suffering*. The outcry is directed at somebody, known or unknown to the supplicant, with the expectation that somebody will respond to the cry. The outcry may express indignation,[36] but most often the cry is for help or relief. In almost half of the 47 occurrences of צעק (*qal*) in the Old Testament, the cry is directed to God, who heeds to the outcry, answers to it, and intervenes.[37]
(c) *A cry of complaint.* Such a solemn appeal for legal assistance, the so-called *Zetergeschrei* (hue-and-cry),[38] implies that the supplicant also asks for potential measures to be taken on his or her behalf. The victim becomes an accuser demanding vengeance.[39]

The most probable meaning seems to be the second. Some regard the outcry in 4:10a as a call for blood revenge.[40] However, blood revenge by other humans is excluded according to the text. Others are warned not the take Cain’s punishment into their own hands (4:15). The cry in 4:10a is specifically directed to God. God is the last resort of appeal and therefore acts as the avenger of blood.[41] In its narrative context the cry is a protest to God to whom alone blood and life belong.[42]

The cry in 4:10b comes during the course of a trial, where God is depicted as the sole prosecutor and judge. He is called upon so that justice will prevail. Divine justice is more than mere revenge, where the goal is to get even with the perpetrator, and where the same measure

[33] *HALOT*, 1042; R. Albertz, ‘צעק ṣᶜq schreien’, in: *THAT* II, 568-575.
[34] *DBL.OT*, #7590, 2410; *HALOT*, 1042, 277.
[35] *DBL.OT*, #2140.
[36] The substantive (צְעָקָה) is used in this sense in Gen 18:21 and 19:13, where God hears the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah.
[37] A.H. Konkel, ‘צעק’, in: *NIDOTTE* III, 829. See also H.G.L. Peels, *The Vengeance of God: The Meaning of the Root* NQM *and the Function of the* NQM*-texts in the Context of Divine Revelation in the Old Testament* (OTS, 31), Leiden 1995, 290-292.
[38] *HALOT*, 1042-1043, advocates this usage with reference to scholars like Von Rad, *Genesis*, 106. See also Christ, *Blutvergiessen*, 80; A. van Selms, *Genesis*, dl 1 (POuT) Nijkerk 1984, 83. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 415, regards the cry both as ‘evidence’ and a ‘complaint’ similar to the *Zetergeschrei*.
[39] Such a meaning of צעק is contested on the grounds that it is a Germanic legal concept foreign to the Ancient Near East. See G. Hasel, ‘זעק zāᶜaq; זְעָקָה zeᶜāqāh; צעק ṣᶜq; צְעָקָה ṣeᶜāqāh’, in: *ThWAT* II, 634-635; Albertz, *THAT* II, 571-572; *DCH* VII, 142.
[40] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 107; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 413.
[41] Noort, ‘Genesis 4:1-16’, 100; T. Hilhorst, ‘Abel’s Speaking in Hebrews 11.4 and 12.24’, in: Luttikhuizen (ed.), *Eve’s Children*, 123.
[42] Von Rad, *Genesis*, 106.

or more violence is meted out. The legal case is put into the hands of the supreme judge because on earth there is no longer any justice for him who was murdered.[43]

God’s verdict and sentence settles the matter. He deals with the perpetrator (4:11-12), but does not require the death of Cain as would have been the case with full-blown retribution for blood guilt where the principle of measure for measure holds. As final restitution God ‘replaces’ the murdered brother of Cain (4:25). He also visits Cain’s iniquity ‘on the children to the third and the fourth generation’ (Exod 20:5) whereas Lamech, his descendant in the fourth generation, demands more than equitable revenge for harm done to him (4:23).

Lamech’s outrage stands in stark contrast to Abel, who does not speak at all in the narrative, least of all about revenge. Lamech’s claim that Cain’s revenge is sevenfold (4:24) is not proof that God indeed took revenge on Cain. Even Eve does not mention retribution when Seth is born, but rather focuses on God’s gift of a replacement for Abel (4:25). The text does not leave room for blood that keeps on calling for further retribution.

The use of the participle (צֹעֲקִים) does not contradict this notion of a finished case. Although the participle may indicate ongoing action, the text is not interested in the blood of Abel after the trial, as if it keeps on crying out for some future reckoning. The participle used in the speech of the divine judge only indicates current action or the situation at the time of the trial, ‘without any hint of its unlimited continuance’.[44]

Bloodstains are often presented in criminal cases as evidence of the loss of life or the alleged loss of life. In Genesis 37:31-33 bloodstained clothes are presented to Jacob as (false) proof of Joseph’s death. In 4:10b Abel’s bloodstains in the ground are presented by the divine prosecutor as proof of his violent death. These bloodstains speak out loudly, not because they represent Abel, but because they are personified to add intensity to the narrative style. In this sense the blood becomes ‘accusing blood’.[45]

From the ground

In this context ‘ground’ simply refers to the crime scene, but the word is ‘symbolically loaded’.[46] The very ground on which the murder was committed, drank the blood of Abel (4:11). Cain tries to conceal his crime, but God reveals. The spilt blood on the ground serves as damning evidence, although such blood also defiles the ground and may call for some form of restitution.

Cain’s banishment from the ground is such a restitution. He is punished in a way that corresponds with the location of his crime, which incidentally is the place where and the means by which Cain used to eke out a living (4:2c). The curse shall come upon him *from* (מִן) the ground, just as the cry came *from* (מִן) the ground.[47] For Cain ground is life. The very element that sustained Cain’s life, turns against him, allowing the spilt blood to witness against him.[48] The murder of Abel reverses the role of the life giving ground.

[43] Peels, *Vengeance*, 67-69; H.G.L. Peels, ‘The Blood “from Abel to Zechariah” (Matthew 23,35; Luke 11,50f.) and the Canon of the Old Testament’, *ZAW* 113 (2001), 598; Peels, ‘In het teken van Kaïn’, 186.
[44] Hilhorst, ‘Abel’s speaking’, 123.
[45] Dryburgh, ‘The Blood that Speaks’, 258.
[46] Craig, ‘Questions Outside Eden’, 125, notes that the term ‘open field’ (שָׂדֶה) is used for the location of the murder (8b); here specifically the loaded term ‘ground’ is used.
[47] Cassuto, *Genesis*, 219, calls attention to a chiastic construction in vv. 10 and 11 that justifies such an interpretation.
[48] Arnold, *Genesis*, 80.

CONCLUSION

The observation that Genesis 4:10b offers evidence for the murder, is confirmed both by a structural analysis and a close reading. Human retribution is not at stake in the narrative, but rather the theodicy (God's righteous judgment). 4:10b creates a vivid picture of crucial evidence that cannot be concealed. This evidence is personified as a living witness that cannot be silenced before the divine prosecutor and judge.

Such a reading of Genesis 4:10b has ethical implications, since the pericope has a paradigmatic function. Crimes committed in secret are known to God only. Abel's blood calling out is indicative of God who in time exposes serious crimes. The pericope also indicates that an outcry for justice should cease when justice has been done. God immediately and fully dealt with the crime, so that ongoing demands for restitution cannot be justified with reference to blood calling out in Genesis 4:10b.

GOD'S DESTRUCTION OF THE EARTH BY THE FLOOD (GENESIS 6:13)

Mart-Jan Paul

Eric Peels has paid much attention to how God revealed himself in the Old Testament. After completing his Ph.D. on 'wrath', he wrote about God's 'shadow sides' and investigated texts considered problematic by many Christians.[1]

Following his approach, I choose to deal with a passage in which the wrath of God manifests itself in a special way, the Flood eradicating most of humanity. Starting point is Genesis 6:13: 'And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth".'

The last words are striking: not only will all the people be destroyed, but also the earth itself. It raises questions such as: What is meant by the destruction of the earth? A total annihilation can be excluded, because the earth continues to exist and later it is possible for Noah and his family to inhabit it. How extensive was the destruction? And what does this say about how God deals with creation and with humanity?

To get some answers, I would first like to pay attention to certain terminology, especially the words 'destroy' and 'earth'. Next, I will examine whether an extensive regional flood or a global flood is meant. Then I will touch on the tension between the narration and the geological data and define more clearly the character of the destruction of the earth. Next, I will deal with the relationship between God's punishment and his mercy. Finally, I will refer to the New Testament.

THE VERBS USED FOR GOD'S DEALINGS

The first verses of Genesis 6 describe the situation on earth whereby the sons of God and daughters of men mixed with each other. YHWH saw that the wickedness of humankind was great (v. 5). He was sorry that he had made humankind, and it grieved him to his heart (v. 6). After this expression of grief, the verdict follows: 'I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air' (v. 8).

The verb מחה is used in 6:7 and 7:4,23 and means: 'to wipe off/out' or 'to blot out'. Often, this term implies a complete removal of whatever is in view. In terms of judgment, the verb is employed to describe the complete removal (and thus blotting out) of life by the Flood, and later it denotes the complete obliteration of the memory of Amalek.[2] In the story of the Flood, the verb refers to the destroying of all of mankind on earth.

[1] H.G.L. Peels, *Wie is als Gij? Schaduwzijden aan de Godsopenbaring van het Oude Testament*, Zoetermeer 1996. (ET: *Shadow Sides: God in the Old Testament,* Carlisle 2003).
[2] C. van Dam, 'מחה', in: *NIDOTTE* II, 913-914.

The verb שחת is used in 6:11-13,17 and 9:11,15, meaning 'to become corrupt', 'to destroy'. The earth was corrupt and all flesh had corrupted its ways (6:11-12). God determined to destroy the earth (6:13) and he does the same to all flesh in which is the breath of life (6:17), but in the future never again will a flood destroy the earth and all flesh (9:11,15). The thorough devastation denoted by שחת makes it apt vocabulary for pronouncements and descriptions of divine judgment. The verb is also used for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Babylon and Tyre. Sometimes a complete destruction of a place is meant, but God never completely destroyed his people.[3] In Genesis 6 the earth will undergo a heavy judgment by the Flood, but continues to exist.

EARTH AND GROUND

In Genesis 6-9 the word הָאָרֶץ is used frequently. It denotes the dry land where mankind and many animals live. In 1:9-10 the dry land and the sea were separated. After the Flood came upon the earth, 8:13 states that the waters were dried up from the earth. In 6:11-13 the earth is depicted as depraved due to the violence of the people. Here, הארץ shows little distinction from the 'human world'. Usually, however, הארץ is distinguished from mankind.

Several times the word אֲדָמָה is used (e.g. 6:1,7; 7:4,8), as a designation of the ground, the surface of the earth. In 8:21, YHWH promises that he will not curse the ground because of man. Here the residence of man is referred to. In the following verse it is promised that all the days of the earth the alternation in seasons and days will continue (8:22). In 9:11, God promises that never again will a flood destroy the earth. Here, הארץ seems to mean the place where man and animal live and not just humanity. God establishes his covenant with man and animal and gives his bow in the clouds as a sign of the covenant between him and the earth.

In Genesis 6-8 the earth as the place where mankind and the animals live, is swallowed up by water. The Hebrew words do not denote the modern concept 'globe'. The destruction refers to the possibilities to live upon the earth. Now the question arises: is the whole earth with all the peoples to be destroyed or only the region in which Noah lived?

A REGIONAL OR GLOBAL FLOOD?

John Walton differentiates between several approaches to the extent of the Flood and mentions four possibilities:[4]

1. Global: The Flood covered the entire globe.
2. Known world: The Flood was universal relative to the world known to the audience of the Old Testament. This is a massive flood, but did not include other continents or areas of the world, such as China.
3. Regional: An extensive regional flood has occurred. It may have centred in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, the Mediterranean basin, or the area of the Black Sea.
4. Local: The Flood wiped out several towns along the river.

[3] C. van Dam, 'שחת', in: *NIDOTTE* IV, 92-93.
[4] J.H. Walton, *Genesis* (NIVAC), Grand Rapids 2001, 322. With regard to the first position, 'global' and 'globe' are modern designations.

Walton does not make a clear choice, but considers the first approach scientifically (geologically) problematic. Yet, Genesis gives us the impression of a universal flood, especially in view of the following four textual issues: universal scope of the language (7:21-23), covering the mountains (7:19), fifteen cubits above the mountains (7:20), and the tops of the mountains becoming visible.[5] For the first three issues Walton has explanations suggesting a regional flood. At the fourth issue he notes:

> [I]t covered all the elevated places that were within eyesight of the occupants of the ark. Though this would be a geographically limited flood, it could still be anthropologically universal if people had not yet spread beyond this region.[6]

Walton is not satisfied with any of the four possibilities and regards the case as 'unresolved'.[7]

In Europe, the inquiry on the extent of the Flood began in the seventeenth century. Until that time, it was common in Jewish and Christian circles to accept a worldwide flood. The first change in this view is to be found in the work of Isaac La Peyrère. He shocked Europe in 1655 by arguing for a pre-Adamic humanity.[8] He argued that only the Jews were the descendants of Adam. He claimed that Scripture only intended to tell their history—Gentiles had another history and line of descent. La Peyrère also posited that the Noahic Flood must have been a local event, due to the continuity of pre-Adamic streams of humanity to the present, while Noah's family belonged to the Adamic stream.[9] Several other works in the late seventeenth century also argued for a less than universal flood, though these works—in contrast to La Peyrère's—maintained that apart from Noah and his family it nonetheless destroyed all existing humanity.[10] In the nineteenth century the theory of a local or regional flood became more prevalent. In England, John Pye Smith advocated the notions of a local creation and a local flood occurring both in Mesopotamia (1837), while George Young attacked this position and defended a universal flood, referring to geological finds (1838, 1840).[11]

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF A GLOBAL FLOOD

1) The expressions 'earth', 'all', 'every', and 'under the heaven' all point in the direction of a very large area. Yet, use of these words is not decisive because elsewhere they function as hyperbolic expressions.[12] Still, in Genesis 6-9 the many expressions reinforce each other. Genesis 7:19-23 gives by the repeated enumeration (eight times 'all' / 'every' in Hebrew) as opposed to 'only Noah' (v. 23) an important indication of the worldwide situation.[13]

[5] Walton, *Genesis*, 324.
[6] Walton, *Genesis*, 328.
[7] Walton, *Genesis*, 329.
[8] Isaac La Peyrère, *Praeadamitae*, Amsterdam 1655.
[9] W. VanDoodewaard, *The Quest for the Historical Adam: Genesis, Hermeneutics, and Human Origins*, Grand Rapids 2015, 89-90.
[10] These works included Isaac Vossius (1659), Abraham van der Mijle (1667), Edward Stillingfleet (1675) and Matthew Poole (1678). Jean le Clerc was deeply skeptical of a global flood (VanDoodewaard, *Quest*, 95). Cf. A. Pietsch, *Isaac La Peyrère. Bibelkritik, Philosemitismus und Patronage in der Gelehrtenrepublik des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 2012.
[11] See the description of the positions in T. Mortenson, *The Great Turning Point*, Green Forest 2004, 168-177.
[12] E.g. in Gen 41:54,57; Deut 2:25; Jos 4:24; 1 Sam 17:46.
[13] Cf. K.A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26* (NAC), Nashville 1996, 365, 380-381.

2) The construction, outfitting, and stocking of the Ark could be considered as unnecessary if the Flood were to be only a local flood. Migration would have been a far better solution to the problem, for Noah as well as the birds and beasts. In a local flood, most of the fauna can escape death by fleeing the rising waters or by swimming to dry ground, or in the case of birds by flying away; but this would be impossible in a universal flood. In a regional flood relatively few birds would die, contrasting with statements in 6:7 and 7:3,23.

3) The duration of the Flood is longer than is the case with a regional flood. Here, 40 days of rain are mentioned, the water reached a highest point and decreased only after 150 days (8:3). The extreme duration of the Flood indicates its universal character. The particular word מַבּוּל also seems to point in that direction.[14]

4) At the dawn of the Flood water comes from below and above (7:11) and the earth is covered with water. From the terminology used, it appears that the separation between water and dry land (1:2,6-7) ceases and threatens to undo creation. In Genesis 6-8 creation motifs often accompany the description of humans and animals.[15] Now a certain un-creation is coming about and that indicates global effects.

5) All the mountains 'under the whole heaven' were inundated under at least fifteen cubits of water (half the height of the Ark, probably representing its depth of submergence), telling us that the Ark could float freely over all mountains. Water seeks the lowest place, would not rest long above the mountains, but would flow downward. The ark would have been carried away, not to the mountains of Ararat.[16]

6) Only Noah and those with him in the Ark survived the Flood, so that all present mankind are descended from Noah's three sons (see also Gen 9:1,19). Likewise, all the earth's present dry-land animals are descendants of those in the Ark (8:17,19; 9:10). The very purpose of God had been to destroy all other living men (6:7) and land animals (6:17; 7:22). Although the list of nations in Genesis 10 is likely not complete, the overview shows that all of the named peoples on three continents (Africa, Asia, Europe) are descended from Noah and his sons (see also 11:1,9).

7) God's promise never to send such a flood again (8:21; 9:11,15) has been broken repeatedly if it referred to a local or regional flood.

[14] The word מבול 'flood' is used only in Gen 6-9 and in Ps 29:10.

[15] Gen 6:6-7 (creation of human beings); 7:14 (animals, in relation to 1:21,24,25); 8:17 (to multiply, in relation to 1:22).

[16] C.F. Keil declared: 'To speak of such a flood as partial is absurd, even if it broke out at only one spot, it would spread over the earth from one end to the other, and reach everywhere to the same elevation'. See C.F. Keil, F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, Grand Rapids 1973, Vol. 1, 146. According to J.D. Sarfati part of the mountains could have been formed during and after the Flood (cf. Ps 104:8), so that their height was less then than it is now. There are maritime fossils found on high mountains such as the Mount Everest. See his *The Genesis Account: A theological, historical, and scientific commentary on Genesis 1-11*, Powder Springs 2015, 525-529, 559.

8) After the Flood, cosmological conditions were promised, including recurring seasons (8:22), the rainbow along with rain (2:5; 9:13-14), and enmity between man and beasts (9:2). God's covenant concerns not only Noah and his descendants, but also the earth and the animals (9:13-17). What value would this covenant have if only a region and only the animals in that environment are meant?

9) In addition to the listed promises there are indications that Noah is to be considered a new Adam.[17] The command to multiply and to control the earth is first given to Adam (1:26-28) and then repeated for Noah (9:1-2,7). Also, the provision on food is repeated, and for Noah expanded with animal food (1:29-30; 9:3). Striking is the individual approach regarding Noah: 'as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything', indicating a new ancestor of mankind. Also the ban on murder (9:6) indicates the whole of humanity.[18]

10) Later biblical writers accepted the universal Flood. It is likely that this is the case in Psalm 104:6-9 and Isaiah 54:9-10.[19] Clearer are the passages in the New Testament that place the Flood in a worldwide setting, especially 2 Peter 2:5 and 3:5-7.

11) In Mesopotamia clay tablets are found with traditions that are in some agreement with Genesis 6-9. In the Atraḫasis Epic the gods sent a flood to wipe out all humans. The god Enki warned Atraḫasis in a dream and advised him to make a boat.[20] In the Gilgamesh Epic, the hero passes countries, mountain peaks and seas to end up at the home of his ancestor Utnapishtim, who lives on an island paradise in a distant sea, beyond the end of the world. Utnapishtim tells about the great flood that destroyed humanity.[21] These traditions point towards a universal rather than a regional flood. There is no direct relationship with Genesis, but it is important that the Book of Genesis is not alone in this respect.[22]

On the basis of these arguments, it is likely that the author of Genesis intended a global flood.[23]

RELATIONSHIP WITH GEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS

It is interesting how authors have dealt with the relationship between the earth sciences and the message of the Book of Genesis. More than a century ago Samuel Driver wrote:

> It is manifest that a flood which would submerge Egypt as well as Babylonia must have risen to at least 2,000 feet (the height of the elevated country between them), and have thus been in fact a

[17] Cf. G.J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC), Waco 1987, li, and Mathews, *Genesis*, 351.

[18] In both stories 'the image of God' is mentioned, and both Adam and Noah have dominion over the animals (giving them names and letting them survive). Cf. B.K. Waltke, C.J. Fredericks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, Grand Rapids 2001, 128.

[19] The words of Ps 104 also refer to creation, but v. 9 points to the Flood.

[20] *COS* 1.130:451.

[21] *COS* 1.132.

[22] Compare also 'The Eridu Genesis' (*COS* 1.158) and the publication of a Babylonian tablet from about 1750 BCE in Irving Finkel, *The Ark Before Noah: Decoding the Story of the Flood*, London 2014. In these polytheistic texts the reasons for the Flood are not the same as in Genesis.

[23] W.H. Gispen understands especially 6:13 and 9:11,13 as pointing to a universal flood. See *Genesis*, dl 1 (COT), Kampen 1974, 232.

> universal one (…) a flood on the other hand, which did less than this is not what the biblical writers describe, and would not have accomplished what is represented as having been the entire *raison d'etre* of the Flood, the destruction of all mankind.[24]

For Driver it is clear that the description means a universal flood, but such a flood is impossible on scientific grounds, with the consequence that the description has to be considered as unhistorical.

Using geological information, Hugh N. Ross,[25] Davis Young and Ralph Stearley[26] try to defend a regional flood. Paul H. Seely is convinced that the description in Genesis points to a universal flood, not to a local one. However, he is of the opinion that our knowledge of geology, glaciology, and archaeology falsifies the extent of the Flood as it is described in Genesis 6-9. This is no problem for him, because the description is accommodated to 'the notions which then prevailed', to use one of Calvin's phrases. The account is accommodated to the geography of the times ('the whole earth') and the cosmology of the times ('the sources of the water'). His conclusion is: 'The Flood account is not trying to educate scientifically but is accommodated to their prior scientific understanding'.[27]

In my evaluation of Seely's position I am willing to accept accommodation in the description of scientific matters. However, it is problematic to use this concept for the general message of the passage. When Noah is depicted as a second Adam, and as forefather of the whole new humanity, this is not an accommodation to the understanding of the readers of Genesis, but a clear message.[28]

The question can be asked how Noah and his people knew what happened in other parts of the world. The description of the Flood in Genesis is not presented as primarily based on human perception. Time and again God's acts are mentioned: he sees what transpires on earth, judges, chooses Noah and gives commands to build the Ark. God then calls him into the Ark and closes the door. During the Flood, God remembers Noah and later gives commands to leave the Ark. In fact, Noah speaks not a word in the entire passage of the Flood and his perception is not mentioned.[29]

Noah is in line with Adam and is the second forefather of mankind. The knowledge of the geography of the world in those days was extensive (at least in the lists in Gen 10), even though it was not complete. It is possible to assume that not all people perished, but the description assumes that this is the case. The exegesis has to deal first with the intention of the text, after which it is—to a certain extent—possible to address the scientific questions that arise.

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[24] S.R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, London [4]1904, 101.

[25] H.N. Ross, *The Genesis Question*, Colorado Springs 1994.

[26] D. Young, R. Stearley, *The Bible, Rocks, and Time*, Downers Grove 2008. Cf. the discussion in K.D. Keathley, M.F. Rooker, *40 Questions about Creation and Evolution*, Grand Rapids 2014, Questions 30 and 31, 285-310.

[27] P.H. Seely, 'Noah's Flood: Its Date, Extent, and Divine Accommodation', *WTJ* 66 (2004), 291-311.

[28] See the critique on this use of the word 'accommodation' by A. Huijgen in *Divine Accommodation in John Calvin's Theology: Analysis and Assessment*, Göttingen 2011, 374-377, 384-387.

[29] The only words of Noah are in Gen 9:25-27. A.A. Snelling, *Earth's Catastrophic Past: Geology, Creation & the Flood*, Dallas 2009, 110, ref. 8. Snelling accepts biblically and geologically a worldwide flood.

DESTRUCTION OF THE EARTH

On the basis of these considerations, it is likely that the destruction of the whole earth was intended (6:13; 9:11,13). This means in the coherence of Genesis a return to the third day of creation, when God made a separation between dry land (the earth) and waters (the seas). That separation is undone in response to the wickedness of mankind.

In Genesis 3:17 the verdict is that the ground is cursed (אֲרוּרָה), with the result that the ground will bring forth thorns and thistles. Later, YHWH promises: 'I will never again curse (קַלֵּל) the ground because of humankind' (8:21). What is the meaning of this phrase? The parallel expression is 'nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done'.[30] It is possible to conclude that the second cursing of the ground means the destruction as described in the previous chapters. It was the situation that no longer would life on earth be possible. Instead of this terrible condition Noah received blessings, promises about good conditions for living, and the repetition of several commands previously given to Adam as head of humanity. The new humanity is called to be fruitful and multiply, to abound upon the earth. As a sign of the promises and the covenant with Noah and every living creature, the bow in the clouds is given (8:20-9:17).

Despite God's compassion, there was no respite from the curse of death and hardships as reaction on Adam's sin. Rather, while Adam's curse continues, God promises not to impose any repeated destroying of the earth. The language of 8:21 is tied to 6:7, the decision to blot out human beings and animals, not to 3:17 ('cursed is the ground because of you'). 'The troubling aftermath of the Edenic curse with its toil and pain continues in the renewed world.'[31]

PUNISHMENT AND MERCY

In the Book of Genesis, a pattern of punishment as well as mercy is discernible. The first chapters show that the offence is punished, yet God goes further in his relationship with mankind (Gen 3). A positive promise for the future of humanity is given (v. 15). Later, Cain is sentenced to an itinerant life, but he also received protection (Gen 4). The Flood had very serious consequences for humans, animals and the earth, but a small group of people and animals are rescued. After the Flood, God's promises for the future are given.

Genesis 11 mentions the spread of humanity after the (interrupted) construction of the Tower of Babel. The nations after the dispersion are listed in Genesis 10. Against this background, the election of Abraham is narrated, to form a separate people and to become a blessing for the world (Gen 12:3).[32]

The Flood narrative shows that God is able to bring restoration where he has brought destruction. The re-creation theme in the Flood narrative shows God starting again with humanity. Later it turns out that God in his judgments on Israel again and again saves people to realize his promises in them. In his action, God's mercy and grace come to the fore (Exod 33:19). In the Book of Isaiah the steadfast love of YHWH is illustrated by comparing God's promise in the days of Noah with the future of Israel: 'This is like the days of Noah to

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[30] In both sentences the expression אֹסִף 'I go forth' is used.

[31] Mathews, *Genesis*, 394.

[32] Based on the passive translation in Gen 12:3 'in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed'.

me: just as I swore that the waters of Noah would never again go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you and will not rebuke you' (Isa 54:9).

In the Wisdom of Sirach it is stated that Noah was found righteous and 'a remnant was left on the earth' (Sir 44:17). With the word 'remnant', an important concept in the Old Testament is evoked. The prophets in particular, use this word to announce the escape of a minority despite a severe judgment.[33]

The theme of re-creation is developed later in Scripture in relation to the exile, Israel's great political and theological crisis. In that context, the prophet Jeremiah is initially given a message that focuses on plucking up, pulling down, destroying, overthrowing, building and planting (Jer 1:10). In the introduction to the new covenant, God says:

> The days are surely coming (…) when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of humans and the seed of animals. And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant (Jer 31:27-28).[34]

In this light God's actions in and after the Flood can be seen.

Eric Peels ends his book *Shadow Sides* with an overview of God's forgiveness. He points out that in the relationship between God and his people, time and again forgiveness prevents breaking off the history of salvation. That has to do with God's faithfulness to the covenant. Forgiveness and retaliation, love and revenge, are often two completely opposite things for us, but in him they can go together. 'O LORD, our God, (...) you were a forgiving God to them, but an avenger of their wrongdoings' (Ps 99:8).[35]

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament several times refers to the Flood and the time when Noah lived. The time when the Son of Man comes, resembles the time prior to the Flood (Matt 24:37-39). Especially the letters of Peter refer to the Flood narrative. God did not spare the ancient world when he brought the Flood on the world of the ungodly (2 Pet 2:5). The author warns that the earth will perish by fire, as once happened by water (3:5-7). '[T]he elements (στοιχεῖα) will be dissolved with fire' (3:10).

From the parallel between destroying the earth by water and by fire, it is possible to assume that, according to the New Testament, the future judgment will not be complete destruction, but only a destruction of 'the elements' in order to come to a new earth. That points to continuity between the cursed earth and the renewed creation in the eschaton.[36] And this urges humankind to listen carefully to YHWH, in his actions and words—also the actions in the days of Noah—to

[33] E.g. Isa 7:3 and Zeph 3:13. Cf. 'Heil voor het overblijfsel van Israël', in: M.J. Paul, G. van den Brink *et al.*, (eds), *Bijbelcommentaar Hosea-Maleachi* (StBOT, 12), Doorn 2015, Excursus 6, 849-857.

[34] Cf. Walton, *Genesis*, 337-338.

[35] Peels, *Wie is als Gij?*, 153, 157. Cf. Exod 34:6-8.

[36] G.R. Kreider, 'The Flood Is as Bad as It Gets: Never Again Will God Destroy the Earth', *BS* 171 (2014), 418-439. See p. 431. In this article the focus is on the future renewal instead of a transformation *ex nihilo*. That view also has consequences for dealing with the earth and the environment.

prepare itself for the future. 'But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home' (3:13).

'THE GOD OF THE FATHER'

Old Assyrian Evidence on Family Religion

Klaas R. Veenhof

MEANING AND ORIGIN

'The god of the father' is well known from the stories about the Hebrew patriarchs in the Book of Genesis, where 'the father' is in the first place Abraham, whose encounter with God created a special bond between them. This special relationship was not 'inherited' from his father, for in Genesis 31:53 the god of Abraham's brother Nahor is distinguished from the god of Abraham. But Abraham's descendants call him 'the god of my/our father Abraham', because he has become the god of Abraham's family or clan.

The concept of 'the god of the father' was analysed in 1929 in Albrecht Alt's famous study 'Der Gott der Väter'.[1] He assumed that the designation 'god of PN' stems from the time when the relevant cult first developed and was therefore called after the person who had founded it. Alt supported his view by adducing similar designations in later Semitic and Greek memorial and dedicatory inscriptions of the Nabataeans and from Palmyra.[2] He considered them relevant, because they exhibited a terminological ('the god of PN') and sociological similarity. They stemmed from people who, much later, but in the same way as the early Israelites, 'aus den nomadischen Lebensverhältnissen der arabischen Wüste in die Kultur Palästinas und Syriens übertraten'. He considered the gods that occur in these texts gods without a proper name, 'itinerant deities' without a fixed abode, whose identification with the named gods, such as the various manifestations of El in Canaan, was secondary. This view was later criticized, for new comparative material from the Ancient Near East, elaborated by Karel van der Toorn,[3] showed that in early Mesopotamia gods designated as 'your god' or 'the god of my father' were not anonymous or itinerant, but gods known by name, venerated as members of local panthea.

Alt's emphasis on the person whose name qualified the god fitted the concept of the 'personal god', which received much attention in later years, when the study of the Ancient Near East witnessed a growing interest in 'private religion'. But Assyriologists specialized in the Old Babylonian period soon called attention to the fact that persons speaking of 'my god' and calling themselves 'his servant', in most cases referred to their 'family god'.[4] It was

[1] A. Alt, *Der Gott der Väter* (BWANT 3/12), Stuttgart 1929, reprinted in S. Hermann (ed.), *Albrecht Alt. Grundfragen der Geschichte des Volkes Israel. Eine Auswahl aus den 'Kleinen Schriften'*, München 1970, 21-98. The inscriptions used for comparison are edited on p. 88-97.

[2] In his 'Zum Gott der Väter', *PJ* 36 (1940), 102, Alt added a new example, a Greek inscription from the Ḥaurān. One could also mention the stela from Palmyra (CIS II, 3978), dedicated by two men, presumably members of an Arabic clan, to 'the god of their father' *('lh 'bwhn)*.

[3] K. van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life* (SHANE, 7), Leiden/Köln 1996, esp. ch. 4.

[4] M. Stol, 'Review of Dominique Charpin, *Archives familiales et propriété privée en Babylonie ancienne: étude des documents de "Tell Sifr"*', *RA* 74 (1980), 187-188, and 'Old Babylonian Personal Names', *SELVOA* 8 (1991), 205-207. Elaborated and documented in D. Charpin, 'Les divinités

evidence of 'family religion', a concept that in 1996 provided the title for Van der Toorn's book.

Alt's view also had a chronological implication, because 'the god of PN' referred to the founder of this cult, a Hebrew patriarch during Israel's prehistory. 'The god of the father', therefore, is a genuinely ancient element of the Israelite tradition. This view has convinced several scholars, who sought its origin in cultic legends or oral traditions from Israel's pre-literate, tribal period. Theodoor C. Vriezen called 'the belief in the *theos patroios* the oldest typical element of the religion of the patriarchal period'[5] and Herbert Donner qualified it as 'ein altertümlicher Religionstyp'.[6] While historical and literary criticism usually considers the narratives of Genesis late products, unsuitable for reconstructing the so-called 'patriarchal age', several scholars still believe that 'god of the father' is a feature that somehow survived in the stories written down much later. To quote Van der Toorn, 'the terms and concepts of family religion were familiar to the Israelite audience', because 'family religion, with its characteristic worship of "the god of the father" was still alive, if not in fact then at least in the minds of the audience.'[7]

COMPARATIVE DATA

In using comparative Mesopotamian data Van der Toorn focused on Babylonia, in particular during the Old Babylonian period (the first centuries of the second millennium BCE). But he also used some data from ancient Assur to document essential features, such as the invocation of the family god together with the spirits of the ancestors as 'protectors of the moral integrity of the family'.[8] Meanwhile he observed that 'the devotion to a particular deity ran in the family', since the same god could be referred to indiscriminately as 'your god' and 'the god of your/our father'.[9] Alt had already mentioned this feature[10] and it was noted by Julius Lewy, the pioneer of Old Assyrian studies, already in 1934.[11] He based his view on a few letters, where 'the god of my/your father' could be identified with a particular god, *in casu* Ilabrat. He therefore disagreed with Alt's idea that 'the god of the father' was an anonymous numen and not from the start a particular deity with a name. Alt, however, considered the Old Assyrian evidence not relevant, because the designation 'god of PN' was not attested there and because evidence for a continuous cult of such 'Sondergottheiten' was lacking.[12] Moreover, the Hebrew patriarchs had been nomads and the situation in the city of Assur, with its urban temples and identifiable gods was different. Lewy, on the other hand, apparently impressed by Alt's concept of the tribal, nomadic roots of 'the god of the father', claimed that the inhabitants of Assur, whom he

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familiales des Babyloniens d'après leurs sceaux-cylindres', in: Ö. Tunca (ed.), *De la Babylonie à la Syrie en passant par Mari*, Fs. J.-R. Kupper, Liège 1990, 59-78.

[5] Th.C. Vriezen, *De Godsdienst van Israël*, Zeist/Arnhem 1963, 98.

[6] H. Donner, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel und seiner Nachbarn in Grundzügen*, Bd 1 (ATD, 4/1), Göttingen ²1996, 94.

[7] Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 264.

[8] Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 63.

[9] Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 72-74, 101 n. 40, 109 n. 86, 88, 112 n. 101, 126 n. 46.

[10] Alt, *Der Gott*, 51 n. 1, a later addition between brackets, for Lewy's article (see next note) was published five years after Alt's study.

[11] J. Lewy, 'Les textes paléo-assyriens et l'Ancien Testament', *RHR* 110 (1934), 50-54.

[12] Alt maintained this objection in 'Zum "Gott der Väter"' (above n. 2), 102-103.

designated as 'les négociants assyriens d'origine amorrhéenne', also had nomadic roots. Once settled in Assur they had not given up the traditional veneration of their ancestral gods.

An argument for a nomadic, Amorrite origin of family gods was also derived from the fact that various kings in the early Old Babylonian period mention the gods Amurrum,[13] the moon god Sîn[14] and the god Dagan[15] as their personal god (called *ili rēšia* or *ilu ša qaqqadia*, lit. 'the god of my head'). Van der Toorn dealt with this feature under the heading 'Amorite Family Gods' and observed that 'Amorite religion is rooted in the tradition of pastoral nomadism' and that '[t]he social constraints that commended their devotion allowed them to choose from a small group of deities whom they traditionally considered as their native gods. (...) They were to be found, for the most part, in the areas which the Amorites considered the traditional land of their ancestors'.[16] He considers the veneration of Sîn by the above-mentioned kings 'characteristically Amorite', because Sîn here would be Sîn-Amurrum, the 'Amorite moon god', whose traditional cult centre was in the city of Harrān. He also claims that Amurrum or El-Amurrum (ᵈa n . m a r . t u) was the Amorrite variant of the West-Semitic god El and signals that Sîn and Amurrum are often jointly mentioned in seal inscriptions.[17]

These ideas reconnect to the above mentioned proposals of Alt and Lewy. Both claimed that such a nomadic or Amorrite heritage would have survived sedentarisation and urbanisation. It would help to explain the literary tradition of 'god of the father' of the Hebrew patriarchs who, as their names suggest, would have lived in an Amorrite environment. Van der Toorn, in a way comparable to Alt's use of Nabataean and Palmyranean inscriptions, compares texts of the later Safaitic nomads, which attest the worship of particular gods by their clans, celebrated at annual gatherings in their sanctuaries, as proof of loyalty to their traditions and as a sign of solidarity.[18]

THE OLD ASSYRIAN EVIDENCE

In this context a new look at the Old Assyrian evidence for 'the god of the father', from the nineteenth century BCE, still unknown to Alt, but introduced by Julius Lewy and sparingly used by Van der Toorn, deserve a closer analysis. A full presentation of the rich data, which have increased substantially since *Family Religion* was written and supplement and in some respects correct what was known by then, is impossible here.[19] The Old Assyrian evidence is different

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[13] Ipiq-Adad II of Eshnunna (19th century BCE; correct the translation in RIME 4, 689, no. 1001, where this inscription is assigned to Sîn-abušu).

[14] The dynasty that ruled Aleppo (Yamhad), see Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 76 n. 54 and 77 n. 63; Hammurabi of Babylon (who in the prologue and epilogue of his laws calls Sîn 'my creator') and his son Samsu-iluna (RIME 4, 381: 39); and also Šamšī-Adad I (in his inscription from the temple of Aššur/Enlil, RIMA 1, 51:132).

[15] Various kings of Isin, perhaps because the founder of their dynasty, Išbi-Erra, called 'the man of Mari', originated from the area of the middle Euphrates, where Dagan's cult was very important. The names of two kings mention Dagan and king Urdukuga built a temple for 'Dagan, his god'.

[16] Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 88-93.

[17] J.-R. Kupper, *L'iconographie du dieu Amurru dans la glyptique de la première dynastie babylonienne*, Bruxelles 1961, 57-58, 61 and 77-78, already observed that both gods were popular among nomads.

[18] Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 92.

[19] These data derive mainly from private letters, partly unpublished, partly edited in a great variety of books, articles, contributions to congress proceedings, museum journals etc., several of which are not easily accessible. There is no accessible corpus of edited Old Assyrian letters comparable to the series *Altbabylonische Briefe in Umschrift und Übersetzung*. A presentation of the Old Assyrian sources, with

from that of the Old Babylonian period, where information on the personal or family god derives mainly from two kinds of sources. In the first place from the legends of Old Babylonian cylinder seals, whose owners identify themselves as servants of a particular god and which exhibit cases of a grandfather, a father and his son(s) or brothers all mentioning the same god, which identifies him as family god. In the second place from the greeting formulae at the beginning of letters that invoke the blessing of gods for the addressee, which start to appear shortly before 1800 BCE. Most letters simply mention one or more gods by name, without indicating their relation to the correspondents. But some use the words 'your god', 'the god your creator/who created you' (*ilum ša ibnûka*/*bānika*) or 'the god, your protector' (*ilum nāṣirka*), although in most cases this god remains anonymous, because the addressee of course knew which god was meant. The evidence from the Old Assyrian period is different, for its letters are older and do not use greeting formulae with blessings. The numerous Old Assyrian seals also never mention that its owner is a servant of a particular deity. Instead, many writers of the letters invoke and refer to the gods, who are mentioned by name, are called 'my/your/our god' or 'the god of my/your/our father', or are identified by a few other designations. They appear in various combinations and in a variety of formulations.

What the gods are asked or said to do

Writers invoke the gods to stress their sincerity and reliability, to state emphatically what they have done or will do or to doubt, dispute or condemn what their addressees say and to make various statements in the way of an oath. They do so most often by uttering the wish or trust that the gods may 'watch, see' (*naṭālum*), or may 'know, take cognisance' (*idā'um*) of him or of somebody else and of what is done, promised, or said. They are invoked to act as witnesses, which implies that they can punish the person who lies or behaves in an evil way. Occasionally the gods are asked 'to call somebody to account' (*ša'ālum*). Fairly frequent is also the wish that the god(s) may 'reject' (*nadā'um*) the one who is not sincere, the addressee, a third person or the writer himself, by way of a hypothetical self-curse.[20] A few times the wish is uttered that certain gods should not let something happen or affect the writer.

Gods are also mentioned in a variety of other phrases that state or utter the wish that persons will talk or swear 'before them', that the gods may come into action, may support or guide people and bring them safely to their destination. A few texts mention the bringing of sacrifices (*niqi'am naqā'um*) to gods by going to their temple. This action is probably implied when numerous writers (among whom several women and frequently the ruler of Assur) promise or declare 'to pray for' (*karābum*, several times in the iterative Gtn-stem) their addressees before certain gods, often Aššur, but also family gods. Such a promise, also current in Old Babylonian letters, was a common way of showing one's gratitude to the addressee, often made immediately after phrasing a request.

The gods

The actions described above are expected from, ascribed to or performed before a variety of gods. They can be mentioned by name, whereby the god in several cases is identified as 'my (etc.) god', or 'the god of my (etc.) father'. But in nearly thirty cases only these last designations

transcriptions of the original phrases, will therefore be published elsewhere, together with additional data from the Old Babylonian period.

[20] A few times the perfect tense is used to express that the gods (must) already have rejected the person who lies or misbehaves.

occur and the challenge is to find out which god is meant. Identification of the god is often not (yet) possible. This applies also to combinations such as 'gods of the friends' and 'gods of the brothers'. Frequently more gods are mentioned together, often two and occasionally three, whereby Aššur always takes the first position. A problem to be mentioned is that the form of the construct state of *ilum*, 'god', varies (one finds *il*, *ili*, and even *ilu*) and that the Old Assyrian spelling usually does not indicate long vowels, so that the distinction between singular and plural can be difficult. In the combination 'the god of my/our/your father', however, the singular is always meant and only two cases exist where 'the gods of our fathers' (*ilū abba'ēni*) occur, referring to the gods of two different families. A general plural, 'the gods of my/our fathers', meaning 'the ancestral gods', attested in Hittite sources,[21] does not occur. Plurals feature in 'the gods of friendship/brotherhood' (*ilū ebaruttim/ahhuttim*), where the noun and the verb are both in the plural. Since abstracts in Old Assyrian are also used as collectives, the references are to the gods of friends and brothers (in the sense of colleagues), who must be the gods of different persons or families, which explains the plurals.

In the references known to me nine different gods appear, provided with a variety of qualifications and used in different combinations. There are about fifteen occurrences of *ilum*, 'god', without possessive suffix, especially in the wish 'may god watch/know', where 'god' may well refer to Aššur, since one also finds the same expression with him as subject. There are about two-dozen references to 'the god of my/your/our/their father', half of which add the name of the god so designated. And about as many times 'my/your/our/their god' occurs, where in only six cases his name is added.

Three times 'the spirits (*eṭemmū*) of my/our father' are invoked 'to see, to witness', once after Aššur and Amurrum and twice after 'our god Ilabrat' (designated as 'the god of our father'), in two related letters exchanged between a trader and his sister in Assur.[22]

Comments on the gods mentioned

Adad, the Akkadian weather god, occurs rarely, which is surprising, since he was very popular to judge from the number of personal names that mention him. Once a man promises to pray for his addressee 'before Aššur and Adad, the god of our father'. In another letter Aššur and Adad are invoked 'to see, to witness', and because it later mentions 'silver for Aššur and your god', Adad may be identified as the man's paternal god.

Amurrum, an established member of the Mesopotamian pantheon, both in Babylonia and Assyria,[23] occurs in all fifteen times, eight times with his name only (once when one prays before Aššur and him), six times as 'god of my/your/our father' and once as 'your god'. As pointed out by Julius Lewy, Cécile Michel and Guido Kryszat,[24] he was the family god of

[21] See S. Görke, 'Zur Bedeutung der hethitischen Familiengottheiten', in: M. Hutter, S. Hutter-Braunsar (eds), *Offizielle Religion, lokale Kulte und individuelle Religiosität* (AOAT, 318), Münster 2004, 207-212.

[22] For all three texts, see C. Michel, 'Les Assyriens et les esprits de leurs morts', in: C. Michel (ed.), *Old Assyrian Studies in Memory of Paul Garelli*, Leiden 2008, 181-198, n. 69-71.

[23] For his nature and the way he gained a place in the Mesopotamian pantheon, see J. Klein, 'The God Martu in Sumerian Literature', in: I.L. Finkel, M.J. Geller (eds), *Sumerian Gods and their Representations*, Groningen 1997, 99-116. Cf. the observations in D. Schwemer, *Die Wettergottgestalten Mesopotamiens und Nordsyriens*, Wiesbaden 2001, 198-200, on the relation between IŠKUR-Adad and MAR.TU-Amurrum. The cult of Amurrum is not attested at Mari.

[24] J. Lewy, 'Amurritica', *HUCA* 32 (1961), 47-50; C. Michel, *Innāya dans les tablettes paléo-assyriennes*, t. 1, Paris 1991, 86; G. Kryszat, 'Die altassyrischen Belege für den Gott Amurru', *RA* 100 (2006), 53-56.

Innāya, son of Elālī. In one letter his wife mentions that he had sent a linen garment and a belt for Amurrum, in another one relatives ask him to pray for them before Aššur and Amurrum. The god is also invoked in a letter of Aššur-nādā to two traders, 'may Aššur and Amurrum, the god (*ili*) of our father, know that …', words that imply that they shared the same family god. Since they do not belong to the Innāya family, there must have been a second family that venerated Amurrum as their god.

Aššur, the 'national god', in most cases appears together with the named or anonymous family god, who always takes the second position. Aššur apparently could not be claimed as the god of a particular family; only women who were his priestesses might designate him as 'my god'.[25]

Ilabrat (Ninšubur), a well-known Mesopotamian god,[26] features in Assyria as male deity. He is known from a few personal names and as owner or recipient of votive gifts and merchandise bought by means of them. His role of 'family god'—he occurs nine times, three times identified as 'the god of my/our father' or 'our god'—agrees with the fact that he repeatedly occurs as such in inscriptions on Old Babylonian seals, whose owners call themselves 'his servants'. In Aššur he figures as the god of Aššur-idī and his son Aššur-nādā.[27] The father does not invoke him, but his son and grandson call him 'the god of our father' and 'your god' and the son asks his father to bring a sacrifice and pray for him 'before your god'. Ilabrat was also the god of the family of Aššur-taklāku and his sister Tariša and consequently of their father Ali-ahum. In a letter Tariša invokes 'Aššur and Ilabrat our god (*ilini*) and the spirits *(eṭemmū*) of our father', while her brother answers her by calling upon 'the god of our father and the spirits of our father' as witnesses.[28] Since Ali-ahum was the brother of Elamma (the owner of an archive excavated in 1991),[29] Ilabrat must have been his family god too, but there are no comparable invocations in Elamma's correspondence to prove this.

Išartum is a little-known goddess, also attested in Babylonia and Mari. She is invoked once, 'Aššur and Išartum, the god of my father, must know'.[30]

Ištar, also called 'Ištar of (the city of) Assur' (*Ištar Aššurītum*), venerated in an ancient, important temple, was an independent, dominant goddess, not Aššur's spouse.[31] In the letters she is invoked twice (and one prays to her once). She would be attested much more frequently if Ištar-ZA.AT and Ištar the Star (*Ištar kakkubum*) would refer to her, but this is very unlikely.

Ištar kakkubum, 'Ištar the Star'. In a letter Idnāya tells two men 'I will pray before Ištar Star, our god', in another without address, 'Aššur, Amurrum and Ištar Star, the gods of our fathers'

[25] In KTS 2, 52, adduced as proof by Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 86, the word *ilka*, 'your god' qualifies Amurrum and not Aššur. The second *ilka*, at the beginning of l. 15, repeats the first, written on the edge, presumably because the scribe considered it not clear enough, but failed to erase it.

[26] See for him *RLA* 9 (1998-2001), 490-500, *s.v.* Nin-šubur.

[27] See M.T. Larsen, *The Aššur-nādā Archive* (OAA, 1; PIHANS, 96), Leiden 2002, especially the letters 14-21 (which mention votive offerings for the gods Aššur, Ištar and Ilabrat), 48 and 116-117.

[28] See C. Michel, 'Women in the Family of Ali-ahum, son of Iddin-Suen (1993 Kültepe archive)', in: F.D. Kulakoğlu, C. Michel (eds), *Proceedings of the 1st Kültepe International Meeting (KIM), Kültepe, Sept. 2013* (Subartu, 35), Turnhout 2015, 85-93, and her article mentioned in n. 22.

[29] Published in AKT 8: K.R. Veenhof, *The Archive of Elamma, Son of Iddin-Suen, and His Family (Kt. 91/k 285-568 and Kt. 92/k 94-187)*, (TTKY VI-33f), Ankara 2017.

[30] I. Albayrak, AKT 4 (*Kt. o/k*) (TTKY VI-33b), Ankara 2006, 50:22-23; her name means 'She who is straight', perhaps 'Fair-minded-Lady'.

[31] See W. Meinhold, 'Die Familie des Gottes Aššur', in: L. Marti (ed.), *La famille dans le Proche-Orient ancien: réalités, symbolismes et images. Proceedings of the 55th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Paris July 2009*, Winona Lake 2014, 141-149.

are invoked as witnesses. When a trader assures Pūšu-kēn that 'Aššur and Ištar Star may be witnesses' this is no proof that Ištar Star was the family god of Pūšu-kēn.[32]

Ištar-ZA.AT appears eleven times, most often in 'dem Umfeld der Familie des bekannten Kaufmannes Imdīlum'.[33] This 'Umfeld' comprises not only Imdī-ilum's own archive,[34] but also the one of his nephew Uṣur-ša-Ištar, excavated in 1962. Most letters from Imdī-ilum's archive simply mention Aššur and Ištar-ZA.AT, also Imdī-ilum's daughter who promises to pray for her father 'before Ištar and Ištar-ZA.AT'. But an uncle of him invokes 'Aššur and Ištar-ZA.AT, your god', and in two unpublished letters Uṣur-ša-Ištar himself invokes 'Aššur and Ištar-ZA.AT, the god of my father'.

Nisaba occurs three times, always after Aššur. Once one prays to them[35] and in two unpublished letters they are invoked to witness and the question is asked whether the addressee has 'sinned against Aššur and Nisaba'.[36] The references suggest that she was also venerated as a family god.

Šarra-matān, a rather mysterious god, is invoked once as witness, together with Ištar.[37]

Known and unknown 'family gods'

The identification of 'the god of our (etc.) father' is often a problem due to the lack of information on writers and recipients of letters and their families, compounded by a complete ignorance about when and why a god had become the god of a particular family. Cases where somebody writes about 'the god of our father', where a family relationship between him and his addressee cannot be established, might become understandable if more about the history of the family would be known. The correspondents could have had the same grandfather or even an earlier ancestor who venerated the god invoked, but the now available archival sources do not cover these early generations.

Scholarly research is dependent on the discovery and publication of family archives in the houses of the traders in the lower city of Kanesh. Knowledge of the archives of Innāya, Imdī-ilum, Uṣur-ša-Ištar and Ali-ahum has yielded the identification of Amurrum, Ilabrat and Ištar-ZA.AT and the knowledge which families venerated them. Other factors are the character of the correspondents and the occurrence of crises in the family or business. The invocations usually occur in personal letters that deal with conflicts or commercial failures and express frustration, irritation, mistrust, grief or reproach, but their presence varies per correspondence. Some writers were prone to express their emotions and invoked gods, while others seem to have restrained themselves and/or were spared such crises.[38] The letters from Ali-ahum's archive[39] refer to a crisis after the death of the *pater familias*, when dangers threaten 'the paternal house' in Assur and the brother of the writer, who lived in Kanesh, was lax in reacting. M.T. Larsen

[32] G. Kryszat, 'Altassyrische Miszellen 2 – Zur Göttin Ištar-ZA.AT', *AfO* 51 (2006), 247-248.

[33] See Kryszat, 'Miszellen 2'.

[34] Studied by M.T. Larsen, 'Your Money or Your Life! A Portrait of an Assyrian Businessman', in: J.N. Postgate (ed.), *Societies and Languages of the Ancient Near East*, Fs. I.M. Diakonoff, Warminster 1982, 214-245 (family tree on p. 219).

[35] BIN 6, 64.

[36] She is rare in Old Assyrian, but operates as patron deity of the scribal craft, invoked in the colophon of an eponym list (see *AoF* 35 [2008], 110, lines 144-145).

[37] For this god, who is called 'my gods' (plural!) and whose votive gifts are mentioned a few times, see J.G. Dercksen, *NABU* 2011/75.

[38] Several invocations occur in the archive of Aššur-nādā (see above n. 27). Almost no invocations are found in letters from the archive of Elamma, published in AKT 8 (see above n. 29).

[39] See above n. 28.

qualifies Aššur-idī, in whose correspondence Ilabrat is invoked and whose letters to his son are larded with complaints and warnings, as 'an exceedingly excitable (...) and sour old man'.[40]

If the main families of Assur—easily one hundred—all venerated one particular god, a large number of gods must have been involved. Even when several families had the same 'family god'—certainly more than the two cases involving Amurrum and Ilabrat now identified—more gods than the nine thus far documented must have been involved. That two of them, the little-known Išartum and Šarra-matān, have each emerged once (lucky hits), implies that other gods are simply missing by accident, due to the 'archival situation'. Several must be hiding under the many references to an anonymous 'my/your/our god' or 'god of my/your/our father'. The absence of Enlil, Ea, Suen and Šamaš is probably not accidental, on the assumption that such 'great gods', just like Aššur, were not easily claimed as the god of a particular family. But that some others, such as Tašmētum, are (still) missing, must be due to the archival situation, for she was a typically Assyrian goddess. Letters mention a votive gift to her, the lady Akatiya wrote a letter to her and when her brother asked her to pray for him 'before Aššur and before your god (*iliki*)' he could mean Tašmētum.[41] Which other gods may be expected is difficult to predict. They could be gods only known because a priest of them figures in an economic text,[42] or because they figure as theophoric element in personal names, such as the gods Erra and Wēr.[43]

Because the frequent occurrence of a few family gods is primarily due to the availability of the archives of some families, the conclusion that Amurrum, Ilabrat and Ištar-ZA.AT were more current or more popular than others is not warranted. To assess a god's popularity his occurrence in personal names might be investigated, whereby the number of different names in which he features is probably less indicative than the number of different people that were given a name in which he figures. But here too problems arise, because the two gods that, after Aššur, appear most frequently in personal names, Suen and Šamaš, are not attested as 'family gods'. That Adad and Ištar occur in only a few invocations contrasts with their appearance in the names of dozens of different persons, while Amurrum and Ilabrat each appear in only three personal names. There is apparently no simple link between a god's popularity and his status as family god and his appearance in personal names, as has already been noted for the Old Babylonian period by Marten Stol.[44] This fact and the apparently great freedom in choosing names[45] make it difficult to draw conclusions from these statistics.

Prayers before a god

Of the two dozen promises or statements that somebody will pray for a person before a particular god (*ana* PN *mahar* DN *karābum*), six concern prayers before Aššur, three before him and a named 'family god', eight before Aššur and an anonymous family god (five of which

[40] M.T. Larsen, 'Affect and Emotion', in: W.H. van Soldt *et al*. (eds) *Veenhof Anniversary Volume*, Fs. K.R. Veenhof (PIHANS, 89), Leiden 2001, 275-286.

[41] See G. Kryszat, 'Ein altassyrischer Brief an die Göttin Tašmētum', in: G.J. Selz (ed.), *Fs. Burkhart Kienast* (AOAT, 274), Münster 2003, 251-258; Akatiya's letter is AKT 2 (E. Bilgiç – S. Bayram [TTKY VI-33a], Ankara 1995), 40. More certainty may arise when the large archive of Uṣur-ša-Ištar is published.

[42] Examples are the gods Bēla(t)-ṣērim and Ea-šarrum.

[43] He figures in the names Wēr-bāni, Wēr-rēṣi, Ennam-Wēr and Iddin-Wēr.

[44] Stol, 'Personal Names', 206-207.

[45] Some Old Assyrian families named the oldest son after his grandfather, but this was often not the case.

are promises by the ruler of Assur to pray 'before Aššur and my god'[46]), six before an anonymous family god alone, one before Ištar Star and one before Ištar and Ištar-ZA.AT. Disregarding the special case of the ruler, who had a close connection with him, the preponderance of Aššur is remarkable, but in two cases the writers are women, probably priestesses of Aššur. The mention of Aššur alongside a family god suggests that the favour of the national god was considered important and his power perhaps as bigger than that of the family gods. But intercessory prayers before family gods are not rare and some texts mention that they were combined with a sacrifice. The writer of one text asks to 'bring a sacrifice before your god and pray for me',[47] which suggests a visit to a temple, and another advises 'to go down here to the temple of the god to ask mercy from the god and to make supplications before your god'.[48] Unfortunately, current knowledge about the cults in ancient Assur is minimal and it is not known whether the family gods mentioned had their own shrines, were venerated somewhere in the temples of 'great gods', or perhaps even in private chapels or domestic cultic facilities.

AN AMORRITE, NOMADIC TRADITION?

Was the veneration of family gods, called 'the god of the father', a nomadic, Amorrite tradition, as claimed by Alt and supported by Lewy in 1934? Much later Lewy elaborated his view that the inhabitants of Assur had nomadic, Amorrite origins[49] and, once settled in Assur, had not given up the traditional veneration of their ancestral gods. He even wrote 'there were devoted worshippers of Amurrum among the Assyrians of the later twentieth and early nineteenth pre-Christian century'. He tried to prove that 'the number of Assyrians who saw in Amurrum the god of their ancestors was larger than it might seem',[50] and that some of them, to judge by their names, 'were of West Semitic extraction'. With much acumen he collected evidence for Amorrite or West-Semitic features. He tried to prove that the god Anna, considered to be the father of Amurrum, was a 'deity of immigrants from the Western Land'. He also posited the existence of a town called Amurrum, 'inhabited by worshippers of the god Amurrum' and dedicated to the cult of that god,[51] which would have functioned as 'the place where the big caravans destined to carry goods from Aššur to Anatolia were assembled'. He interpreted Old Assyrian *kaspum a-mu-ru-um* as 'Amorrite silver', which originated from the west and would be proof of commercial exchanges between the Assyrians and western traders.[52] And he believed that the 'black donkeys', used in the Assyrian caravans, originated from Damascus, far in the west.

[46] Inscriptions of king Erišum reveal that this family or dynastic god of the rulers was Bēlum, but his name, 'Lord', hides his particular character.

[47] CCT 4, 6f:9-11.

[48] AKT 6 (M.T. Larsen, *The Archive of the Šalim-Aššur Family*, Vols. 1-3 [TTKY VI-33d-a,b,c], Ankara 2010-2015), 287:8-12.

[49] Lewy, 'Amurritica', 47-50. At that time it had not yet been established that the first part of the so-called Assyrian King List, registering 'kings that lived in tents', followed by 'kings that are ancestors', was a later addition and did not describe the ancestral history of the genuinely Old Assyrian kings; see F.R. Kraus, *Könige die in Zelten wohnten. Betrachtungen über den Kern der assyrischen Königsliste*, Amsterdam 1965.

[50] Lewy, 'Amurritica', 42.

[51] Lewy, 'Amurritica', 65-66.

[52] Lewy, 'Amurritica', 69-70.

While Lewy's criticism of Alt's idea of 'the god of the father' as an originally anonymous deity or numen seems justified, his 'Amorrite thesis' is not. Notwithstanding his name, the god Amurrum in Assur and Babylonia was not, or anyhow no longer, a nomadic, 'Amorrite' god, but an established member of the urban pantheon[53] and there is no evidence for the cult of 'Amorrite gods'. All the evidence for the veneration of Amurrum as 'family god' concerns two families, whose archives happen to be known and studied. A generalisation is therefore impossible[54] and the veneration of Ilabrat and Ištar-ZA.AT, certainly no 'Amorrite deities', is equally well documented. There is also no evidence that Anna was a West-Semitic, Amorrite god.[55] Judging from the personal names the Amorrite element in the population of the ancient city of Assur was extremely small. There are just a handful of Amorrite personal names among the thousands of names currently known and almost no Amorrite loanwords.[56] The geographical name Amurrum does not refer to a town (with a cult of Amurrum), but to the region between the upper courses of the Khabur and Balikh, where the town of Nehriya is said to have had Amorrite inhabitants.[57] *Kaspum amurrum* has been shown to mean 'tested silver'[58] and the presumed western origin of the donkeys is solely based on the fact that in Neo-Assyrian inscriptions the area around Damascus in Syria is called 'the mountain of the donkeys', but it is not supported by any textual evidence for the early period.

All this means that the survival of Amorrite traditions in the area of religious practices, let alone their nomadic origin in the west, cannot be substantiated by the data from ancient Assur. It can only be observed that the veneration of family gods, of 'the god of my/our father', was an accepted and probably general practice, but it is not known why families chose or affiliated themselves with particular gods and when this had happened.[59] Even if it had taken place some generations before the period during which the family gods are attested, that would not be proof of a western, Amorrite feature and of a nomadic origin. Assur was an ancient city that flourished already during the second half of the third millennium BCE and there is no proof of an important population group of Amorrite origin or affiliation that would have had a noticeable impact on its cultural traditions. The feature of the 'family god' apparently does not require a particular historical explanation. It is understandable in a culture with an extensive pantheon, with imposing temples and powerful 'great gods' and official cults, where in due time personal devotion arose, as beautifully pictured by Thorkild Jacobsen in his description of 'the rise of

[53] See above n. 23.

[54] Lewy, 'Amurritica', 42-43, anticipated doubts about his thesis, by asserting 'that the number of Assyrians who saw in Amurrrum the god of their ancestors was larger than it might seem', claiming that the invocation of Ištar Star alongside Amurrum showed that 'the worshippers of Ištar Star were wont to revere Amurrum', but, as shown above, the occurrences of Ištar Star are rare and there is no evidence for her association with Amurrum.

[55] The claim that the god Anna is an 'old West Semitic god, a deity of immigrants from the "Western Land", still venerated in Assur, as shown by the occurrence of "a priest of Anna" (in TC 3, 181:8)' (Lewy, 'Amurritica', 37-40) is wrong. Anna is the main god of the city of Kanesh, the seat of the principal Assyrian trading colony in Anatolia, and the name of his priest—Azu—is not Assyrian.

[56] In § 4.4.4 of his *A Grammar of Old Assyrian* (Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section 1: The Near and Middle East, 118), Leiden/Boston 2017, N.J.C. Kouwenberg lists only two Amorrite loanwords, *aqdamātum* and *kaṣûm*, both geographical terms. This is not surprising, because the Assyrian caravans between the Khabur and the Balikh crossed an area which they called *Amurrum*.

[57] Cf. K.R. Veenhof, 'The Old Assyrian Period', in: M. Wäffler (ed.), *Annäherungen* 5 (OBO, 160/5), Fribourg/Göttingen 2008, Teil I, 97-98, with n. 426.

[58] *Amurrum* is a verbal adjective of the D-stem of *amārum*, 'to see, to inspect'.

[59] Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 78-80.

personal religion'.[60] Van der Toorn mentions three possible reasons for a correlation between a particular god and a family: the choice of a deity below the highest level of the local pantheon, the profession of the worshipper, and topographic proximity, that is the presence of a temple or shrine near where a family lived.[61] The first reason may apply, because thus far Enlil, Ea, Šamaš and Sîn do not figure as family gods, but important gods such as Ištar and Adad do. It is not known whether the third reason played a part, because little is known about the cultic topography of ancient Assur, apart from the locations of the temples of Aššur and Ištar. Information on where particular families lived is even completely missing, because the excavators never reached the Old Assyrian stratum in the lower town. The second reason does not apply, for all families mentioned above consisted of traders.[62] Whatever the truth, it does not explain the role of 'the god of the father' in the patriarchal narratives in the Old Testament, which are situated in a world culturally far removed from urban Mesopotamia[63] and for which the parallels adduced by Alt (from Palmyra and the Nabataeans) and Van der Toorn (the Safaitic nomads) seem to be more relevant than the data from ancient Mesopotamia.

[60] Th. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion*, New Haven/London 1976, ch. V.

[61] Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 78-80.

[62] See Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, ch. V.

[63] The origin of Abraham's family from 'Ur of the Chaldeans' is difficult to accept. The patriarchal narratives contain many anachronistic data, such as the fact that Laban spoke Aramaic, which probably reflects the situation around 1000 BCE. The family originated from the area of the upper Balikh and the western bend of the Euphrates, as the names of several of its members known as geographical names (such as Harrān, Nahur, Serug) in that area during the first half of the second millennium BCE suggest.

AN UNCOMMON BOOK OF PRAYER

The Theology of the Book of Judges

Klaas Spronk

In studies on the theology of the Old Testament, the Book of Judges does not play a prominent part. This is primarily due to the fact that it is seen as part of the Deuteronomistic History with its clear message about YHWH's blessings and curses in relation to Israel's obedience to the Torah.[1] Although Noth's theory assuming only one author is challenged and often replaced by multi-layered reconstructions, the Book of Judges is usually still seen within some kind of deuteronomistic framework. A good example of this can be found in the recent handbook by Jörg Jeremias. He agrees with many of his colleagues that we are probably dealing with different deuteronomistic authors, coinciding with separate blocks. The Book of Judges takes a special place: 'besonders das Richterbuch und die Bücher Sam bis Kön differieren konzeptionell in mehrfacher Hinsicht'.[2] In its present form it would have been the work of deuteronomistic authors after the exile, but they shared the theological views of their pre-exilic predecessors. The main difference was that the emphasis was no longer on the centralization of the cult in Jerusalem, but on the first commandment: to venerate YHWH alone.[3]

Not everyone agrees that the theology of the Book of Judges is deuteronomistic. Frederick Greenspahn maintains that 'careful scrutiny of the biblical text itself suggests that such a view is simplistic'.[4] In his opinion, the theology of the author who collected and edited the older stories of Israel's heroes is not based on the well-known deuteronomistic reward-and-punishment scheme, but on a scheme of punishment and grace, as can be found elsewhere in the Old Testament. Robert Miller goes one step further. In his view the deuteronomistic theological viewpoints are intentionally challenged in the Book of Judges in its final form. Instead the book is 'permeated by a contrary theology on a covenant of divine commitment'.[5]

In what follows, I want to take another look at the way YHWH is described in the Book of Judges. Based on my earlier studies on this fascinating book,[6] I assume that it is possible that the Book of Judges offers a specific perspective on YHWH and his relationship to the people of

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[1] Cf., e.g., R.B. Dillard, 'Theology of the Book of Judges', in: W.A. Elwell (ed.), *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (1996) [http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/judges-theology-of.html].

[2] J. Jeremias, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Grundrisse zum Alten Testament, ATD, Ergänzungsreihe 6), Göttingen 2015, 224.

[3] Jeremias, *Theologie*, 230.

[4] F. Greenspahn, 'The Theology of the Framework of Judges', *VT* 36 (1986), 386.

[5] R.D. Miller, 'Deuteronomistic Theology in the Book of Judges?', *OTE* 15 (2002), 414.

[6] Cf. K. Spronk, 'The Book of Judges as a Late Construct', in: L. Jonker (ed.), *Historiography and Identity: (Re)formulation in Second Temple Historiographic Literature* (LHB/OTS, 534), New York 2010, 15-28; 'Comparing the Book of Judges to Greek Literature', in: M.C.A. Korpel, L.L. Grabbe (eds), *Open-Mindedness in the Bible and Beyond*, Fs. B.E.J.H. Becking (LHB/OTS, 616), London 2015, 261-271; 'De ethiek van het boek Rechters', in: P. Tomson, J. de Lange (eds), *'So Good, So Beautiful': Studies into Psalms, Ethics, Aesthetics, and Hermeneutics*, Fs. D. Erbele-Küster, Gorinchem 2015, 53-63.

Israel. I am happy to present this study as a token of respect and friendship to Eric Peels, with whom I share an interest in difficult texts like the Book of Judges, which are full of violence in the name of YHWH but nevertheless can be a source of inspiration.[7]

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the modern history of research of the Book of Judges, scholars often sharply distinguish between the diachronic and synchronic approach, usually with little respect for one another. Walter Groß, who in his commentary offers very detailed analyses of the growth of the text, disqualifies the 'ahistoristische holistische reine Endtextauslegung' as 'unsachgemäß'. 'Weil sie den Text in seinen Widersprüchen und damit in seinen widerständigen Formulierungen nicht wirklich wahrzunehmen fähig ist, läuft sie Gefahr, vorschnelle Synthesen zu suchen und zu diesem Zweck z.B. Brüche in der Personenführung psychologisierend oder moralisierend auszuwerten und so dem Text Aussagen und Wertungen zuzuschreiben, die seinen ursprünglichen Autoren, wohl auch seinen ursprünglichen Lesern völlig fern lagen.'[8] Assuming that Groß is right and that one has to reckon with a number of different voices in different contexts, it is necessary to think about the consequences for the study of the theology of the book: are there different and perhaps even contradictory views on YHWH? Gerhard von Rad notes a difference in the character of the texts. The original stories stemming from the early ages of Israel 'führen uns kultur- und geistesgeschichtlich in eine archaische Welt und haben eine Urwüchsigkeit und Frische an sich, wie sie nur Überlieferungen aus der Frühzeit eines Volkes eigen sein kann'.[9] This would have been replaced later by much more thoughtful theological reflections. According to the old stories, YHWH acted unpredictably ('durchaus unberechenbar'), whereas the Deuteronomist presents his actions as more systematic ('göttliche Gesetzmäßigkeit').[10] John Yoder finds in the original stories of the judges a concept of God close to that of Canaanite Baal and El. Israel's concept of God developed over time, but in his opinion the older texts still have an important function, namely, preventing the reader from controlling God or ignoring the inevitable 'religious and moral struggles of God's earthly children'.[11]

When looking at the consequences of the diachronic approach, one may note that it appears to be difficult to escape the risk that Groß associated with the synchronic approach: modern ideas and systemization may become too dominant, especially in reconstructing some kind of development of religious conceptions. The descriptions by Von Rad and Yoder primarily say something about their own ideas of the 'primitive' religion of Israel and are hardly based on the texts themselves. It cannot be denied that the Book of Judges shows clear traces of editing. The differences in character and length of the stories point to different sources used by the writer or writers. In his commentary, Groß sometimes identifies more than ten layers beneath the

[7] Our views are well summarized in H.G.L. Peels, 'De God van het Oude Testament: heilig is Hij', *ThRef* 57 (2014), 422-431, and K. Spronk, 'The Transformative Power of Old Testament Texts about Violence', in: L. van Liere, K. Spronk (eds), *Images of Enmity and Hope: The Transformative Power of Religions in Conflicts*, Münster 2013, 15-27.
[8] W. Groß, *Richter* (HThKAT), Freiburg 2009, 78.
[9] G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Bd 1, München 1960, 341.
[10] Von Rad, *Theologie* 1, 343.
[11] J.C. Yoder, *Power and Politics in the Book of Judges: Men and Women of Valor*, Minneapolis 2015, 218.

Masoretic text. He also offers many suggestions about the possible date of these layers, but has to admit that this dating is based on a reconstruction of the history of Israel, which is in itself also based on much debated historical-critical analyses of Old Testament texts. So there is much uncertainty about the identity of the original authors and their audience.

The following description of the image of YHWH in the Book of Judges, therefore, will not be based on a reconstruction of the growth of the text, distinguishing between source material and editorial texts. It may be assumed that the final text presents a coherent picture of YHWH and his relationship to the tribes of Israel. However, one has to leave open the possibility that there are elements which do not fit in and that this may be due to the fact that they belong to earlier or later traditions.

THE PLACE OF YHWH WITHIN THE BOOK

Starting by first simply listing all the passages where the god of Israel is mentioned, it can be noticed that the name YHWH is mentioned 175 times and that he is referred to as אלהים 40 times. Most occurrences of the name are found in chapter 6 (27x). Besides, it occurs frequently in chapters 2 (23x), 3 (15x), 11 (14x), 13 (18x), and 20 (10x), whereas it is missing from chapter 9 and occurs only once in chapters 12, 18, and 19. The number 175 (in 618 verses) shows that the Book of Judges is no less 'theological' than the neighbouring books, such as Joshua (with 224 occurrences in 658 verses) and 1 Samuel (320 in 810 verses). The distribution over the chapters coincides with what is usually regarded as the climax of the book, namely Gideon as the ideal judge as described in chapters 6 and 7, directly followed by the anti-climax in the person of Abimelech in chapter 9. The low number of occurrences may be due to the fact that we are dealing with a theologically problematic situation in chapter 12 (the conflict with Ephraim) and certainly also in chapters 18 and 19, but one would expect the same for chapters 20 and 21 (in the final chapter YHWH is mentioned 7 times). A closer look at the texts with explicit references to YHWH may give some answers.

THE MEANINGFUL BEGINNING

YHWH is already mentioned in 1:1. The Israelites ask YHWH: 'Who shall go up first to fight the Canaanites?'.[12] YHWH answers promptly: 'Judah shall go up first.' This question is repeated in 20:18, 23 and 27, but there the enemy is the tribe of the Benjaminites. Nevertheless, YHWH's answer remains the same and, just as in the first chapter, it is followed by successful actions. According to 1:4, YHWH delivers the Canaanites and Perizzites into the hand of Judah and in 1:19 it is explicitly stated that YHWH is with Judah. Also in the battles against the Benjaminites, the other tribes are eventually successful, when YHWH gives the Benjaminites into their hands (20:28). In 20:35 we even read that it is YHWH himself who defeats Benjamin.

One can compare this to the beginning of the Book of Joshua. Both Joshua and Judges open with a reference to the death of the previous leader: 'It happened after the death of Moses / Joshua'. In Joshua 1:1 it is YHWH who takes the initiative by addressing Joshua, commanding him to take the place of Moses and to hold onto the Torah. By keeping to everything written in

[12] The translations are mine.

the Books of Moses, he will be able to make the right choices and act according to the will of YHWH. It is remarkable that in the Book of Judges this command and even a reference to the Torah are missing. The consequence of the lack of the Torah as a medium between YHWH and his people is that in the Book of Judges, contact between YHWH and the Israelites is more direct. There are many direct dialogues between God and man. The way YHWH is addressed in the beginning and end, using the phrase שאל באלהים, has a close parallel in a number of stories about Saul and David and their relation to YHWH.[13] These stories illustrate the rise to power of David as the result of his successful attempts to obtain divine advice, for instance in 1 Sam 22:10,13 and 2 Sam 2:1 (David asks YHWH: 'Shall I go up?'). On the other hand, they also illustrate the downfall of Saul, when after the death of Samuel he is no longer able to make contact with YHWH (1 Sam 28:6,16). This indicates that what we have here at the beginning of the Book of Judges is the first and probably also the most important criterion for good leadership.

Elsewhere it is stated that the Israelites cry out (זעק, 3:9,15; 6:6,7; 10:10; צעק, 4:3; 10:12) to YHWH in their distress, caused by the enemies sent by YHWH. This is reminiscent of the Israelites suffering from persecution by Pharaoh in Egypt.[14] In both cases YHWH reacts according to his mercy and because he remembers his covenant with Israel. On the part of the Israelites, one could ask whether this outcry to YHWH is only based on their agony or whether some repentance or conversion is also involved. According to the summary of what happened in the period of the judges in 1 Sam 12:9-10, the outcry was a confession of sin: 'They cried out to YHWH and said: "We have sinned; we have forsaken YHWH and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths. But now deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve you".' This is not explicitly stated, however, in combination with the verb זעק / צעק in the Book of Judges. The only exception is 10:10, but precisely there YHWH questions Israel's sincerity and suggests that they had better cry out to the other gods they chose to serve (10:14). After this conversation the verb זעק / צעק is not used any more in the Book of Judges. Apparently the people realized that when used on its own the verb could give rise to misunderstanding: when one wants to address YHWH in the right manner, more than a simple outcry is needed.

THE MESSENGER OF YHWH

Characteristic of the encounter between YHWH and Israel according to the Book of Judges is that when YHWH takes the initiative to start a conversation he does so via the מלאך יהוה. This happens three times: in 2:1-5; 6:11-24; and 13:2-23, which is more than in any other book in the Old Testament.[15] The first appearance of the messenger of YHWH in 2:1-5 reminds us of Exod 23:20-23, where the messenger is sent by YHWH to lead the people and to keep it to the commandments.[16] The reaction of the people to the reproach and threats by the messenger is

[13] Cf. H.-F. Fuhs, 'שאל *šā'al*,', in: *ThWAT* VII, Stuttgart 1993, 921, who calls it a 'Leitmotiv'.
[14] Cf. Greenspahn, 'The Theology of the Framework of Judges', 393.
[15] Cf. E. Eynikel, 'The Angel in Samson's Birth Narrative Judg 13', in: F.V. Reiterer, T. Nicklas *et al.* (eds), *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings – Origins, Development and Reception* (Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature, Yearbook 2007), Berlin 2007, 118, who points to the fact that the מלאך יהוה is found 19x in the Book of Judges out of 58x in the Hebrew Bible and that מלאך אלהים is used next to it 2x in Judg 6:20; 13:6 out of 13x in total.
[16] Cf. H. Ausloos, 'The "Angel of YHWH" in Exod. xxiii 20-33 and Judg. ii 1-5. A Clue to the "Deuteronom(ist)ic" Puzzle?', *VT* 58 (2008), 1-12.

one of shock. They start weeping and also take measures to restore the relationship with YHWH by making sacrifices.

The second account[17] of a meeting with a messenger of YHWH is in the beginning of the story of Gideon. In comparison with 2:1-5, it can be noted that it takes much more time for Gideon to be convinced by the messenger. The repeated reference to YHWH leading his people out of Egypt does not impress him, because he does not see those miracles happening in his own situation (6:13). This reaction seems to provoke YHWH not to hide any longer behind the messenger: 'Then YHWH turned to him and said: "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?" ' (6:14). From now on the conversation is between Gideon and YHWH himself. This is only interrupted by the scene describing the offering and the messenger of YHWH going up in the flame.

The third encounter is between the messenger of YHWH and the wife of Manoah (13:3). Here, there is much more debate about the identity of the מלאך יהוה. In the report to her husband, she speaks of 'a man of God looking like a messenger of God' (13:6). 'Man of God' is a common indication of a prophet (cf. 1 Sam 2:27; 9:6). So the first suggestion here is that we are dealing with a human being. This is taken over by Manoah when he asks YHWH to send this 'man of God' again (13:8). It is remarkable and probably not a coincidence that Manoah never uses the name of YHWH. When he addresses him in his prayer, he says אדוני, 'my Lord'. In the story the attention to the use of the name is underlined by the fact that, quite surprisingly, the narrator now also speaks of אלהים: 'God heard Manoah, and the angel of God came again' (13:9). When, finally, Manoah understands that he met the messenger of YHWH when he did the wondrous thing (מפלא, 13:19, relating it to Gideon asking for miracles in his conversation with the messenger, in 6:13) of going up in the flame, he again uses the word אלהים: 'We shall surely die, because we have seen God' (13:22). It is the same reaction as Gideon's, except that Gideon uses the name of YHWH (6:22). The wife of Manoah knows better. This is emphasized by her using the name of YHWH in her reassuring answer. Again, there is a difference with the story of Gideon, where it is YHWH himself who takes away Gideon's fear.

There is much debate about the precise relationship between YHWH and the messenger of YHWH.[18] Within the Book of Judges, the three closely related stories about the messenger of YHWH indicate YHWH's initiative to get into contact with his people. They show that despite Israel's sin and it's reluctance towards YHWH, this contact is still possible and can become very close. The differences between the stories of the encounter in chapters 6 and 13 show that this close relationship, as established between YHWH and Gideon, is not self-evident and can break down again.

[17] The מלאך יהוה is also mentioned in 5:23, but this is not within a story of an encounter between YHWH and man. As will be explained below, this verse also points to an interesting aspect in the relations between YHWH and man.
[18] Cf. A.S. van der Woude, 'De *Mal'ak Jahweh*: een Godsbode', *NedTT* 18 (1963), 1-13; S.L. White, 'Angel of the Lord: Messenger or Euphemism?', *TynBul* 50 (1999), 299-305; M.-J. Paul, 'The Identity of the Angel of the LORD', *Hiphil* 4 [http://www.seej.net/hiphil] (2007); R.A. López, 'Identifying the "Angel of the Lord" in the Book of Judges', *BBR* 20 (2010), 1-18. It is telling that the editor of the *ThWAT*, H.-J. Fabry, felt it necessary to add a special paragraph on this subject (on p. 901) to the article on מלאך in Band IV, Stuttgart 1984, 887-904, by D.N. Freedman and B.E. Willoughby.

YHWH AND THE LEADERS OF ISRAEL

According to the narrator, there can be no doubt that it is YHWH who acts and steers the course of history. It is clearly stated in chapter 2 that YHWH, who brought the Israelites out of Egypt, now gives his people into the hand of enemies and also raises the judges to deliver them from these enemies. Even the old nations that remained in the land are said to have been left there by YHWH (3:1). In all the following stories this determining role of YHWH is indicated, both directly and indirectly via his spirit. In a number of cases it is emphasized, for instance, when it is stated in the story of Samson wishing to marry a Philistine woman: 'it was of YHWH that he was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines' (14:4). Towards the end of the book, especially in chapter 19, the number of references to YHWH pulling the strings is declining or even completely missing. However, there is one in the final chapter, in a statement about the fate of the tribe of Benjamin: 'YHWH had made a gap in the tribes of Israel' (21:15).

In many cases the narrator also gives information about the way the different characters react to this role of YHWH and how they relate to YHWH's actions. Ehud says to Eglon that he has 'a word of God' for him (3:20), indicating that YHWH is behind the following deadly action. When he calls the Israelites to follow him, he declares that YHWH has given their enemy into their hands (3:28). There can also be no doubt that Deborah acknowledges YHWH's decisive role. She passes this on to Barak (4:6) and when he does not show enough confidence she announces that YHWH will use a woman instead (4:9). In the introduction of the song in the next chapter she emphasizes that they owe their victory to YHWH. It is even stated—with the words of the messenger of YHWH—that the tribes were asked to help YHWH in his battle (5:23). It is usually the other way around: YHWH assisting his people.[19] It indicates that here YHWH has taken the initiative.

Of central importance in the story of Gideon is the moment when YHWH directly addresses Gideon saying: 'Go in your strength, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?' (6:14). It is a combination of YHWH sending and Gideon acting with the strength he received. When Gideon is still hesitating, he rightly appeals to YHWH as the one who has to save his people: 'If you will save Israel by my hand as you have said' (6:36). The underlying important theological insight is that YHWH is the real saviour. The rest of the story clearly illustrates that it is not by human power, but by divine intervention that the Midianites are defeated. After this victory, however, the question comes up once again: was this the hand of YHWH or do we have to credit Gideon with special qualities? First the Midianite kings Zebah and Zalmunnah suggest that Gideon is more than average. They suggest that he looks like the son of a king (8:18) and speak of his manly strength (8:21; note the parallel with 6:14). Then the Israelites ask him to rule over them and found a dynasty (8:22). Gideon resists the temptation, stating that the real ruler is YHWH (8:23). This is fully in line with the basic message of the Book of Judges, but the moment this theological insight is clear it is adumbrated by human arrogance. Gideon makes himself important by placing a cultic device in his birthplace Ophrah (8:27) and calls one of his sons Abimelech, which can be translated as 'my father is king' (8:31). When it comes to the relationship with YHWH, this Abimelech is the opposite of his father.[20] He has no relations with YHWH at all. Abimelech does not seek the advice of YHWH

[19] Cf. G. McConville, *God and Earthly Power: An Old Testament Political Theology: Genesis-Kings* (LHB/OTS, 454), New York 2006, 130, who speaks of an 'unusual angle on divine and human power'.

[20] Cf. E. Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest: An Ideology of Leadership in the Gideon, Abimelech and Jephthah Narratives (Judg 6-12)* (VT.S, 106), Leiden 2005, 171. Cf. also Groß, *Richter*,

once and from the side of YHWH every intervention is aimed against Abimelech. In 9:23 it is stated that God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem and as a conclusion we read that God had avenged the evil done by Abimelech. The author may have avoided using the name of YHWH to emphasize the distance between YHWH and the man who trusted in his own strength alone.

A similar movement from a positive development in the relations between YHWH and the Israelite leader towards alienation can be found in the story of Jephthah.[21] In both the negotiations with the elders of Israel and with the king of Ammon, Jephthah pays due respect to YHWH. When Jephthah is made 'head and commander' over Israel, he also 'speaks his words before YHWH (11:11). When he tries to persuade the king of Ammon to give up his claims to the contested region, he calls upon YHWH as judge (11:27). It is important to note that YHWH is explicitly called שפט here. The only other place where this noun is used in the Book of Judges is in the general introduction in 2:16-19.[22] Jephthah shares with the king of Ammon and with the reader his clear theological insight: the real judge is YHWH. Together with the observations by Gideon of YHWH as the real saviour (6:36) and real ruler (8:23), this can be regarded as the core theological message of the book. Good relations with YHWH are confirmed when Jephthah receives the spirit of YHWH. Then, however, things go wrong, starting with his rash vow, which costs him his only child, and ending with the slaughter of forty-two thousand Ephraimites (12:6). YHWH is still mentioned in these chapters, but he does not have an active role. The terrible things that happen are not ascribed to his doing.

The stories of Samson can be read as a lesson not to trust in one's own strength. Again one may note the contrast between the positive introduction and problems that arise as soon as the central human character has received the spirit of YHWH. The difference with the story about Jephthah is that in the end contact with YHWH is restored when Samson prays to YHWH. In fact his father Manoah gave a good example when he prayed for the return of the messenger (13:8). Samson learned to pray to YHWH at moments when he had become weak: when he was very thirsty (15:18) and when he had lost his strength and eyesight (16:28). In this way the story makes clear that man is dependent on YHWH and also that YHWH is open to human supplication and uses imperfect men like Manoah and Samson to achieve his plans.[23]

In the final chapters of the book, people still talk about YHWH but hardly to him. The mother of Micah blesses her son in the name of YHWH and dedicates the money, which he had returned to her, to YHWH (17:2-3). Micah assumes that YHWH will be good to him (17:13). There is no reaction, however, from YHWH, or any indication of his approval. The same can be said of the blessing and the promise given to the Danites (18:6,10). No active role is ascribed to YHWH. In chapter 19 describing the gruesome death of the woman from Bethlehem, he is not mentioned at all. In the aftermath of this story, when the tribe of Benjamin is punished for the crime at

93: 'So endet das Richterbuch mit historisch-theologischen Wertungen die denen im Zentrum bei Gideon und Abimelech diametral zuwiderlaufen.'

[21] Cf. K. Spronk, 'Judging Jephthah: The Contribution of Syntactical Analysis to the Interpretation of Judges 11:29-40', in: W.Th. van Peursen, J.W. Dyk (eds), *Tradition and Innovation in Biblical Interpretation*, Fs. E. Talstra (SSN, 57), Leiden 2011, 299-315. In his insightful essay on Judges 11:29-40, 'Geschiedenis in antitypisch perspectief', *Wapenveld* 51/6 (2001), 12-16, Eric Peels suggests to read this story within the broader framework of the salvation history. See also the contribution of Koert van Bekkum to this *Festschrift*: '"Let YHWH, the Judge, Decide': Historical, Literary and Theological Aspects of the Jephthah Narrative'.

[22] Cf. McConville, *God and Earthly Power*, 121.

[23] Cf. J.C. Exum, 'The Theological Dimension of the Samson Saga', *VT* 33 (1983), 30-45.

Gibeah, YHWH does act again. This happens when the Israelites ask his advice in the same manner as at the beginning of the book (20:18,23,27). YHWH answers and also acts on behalf of those who prayed to him: ‘YHWH defeated Benjamin for Israel’ (20:35).

The refrain of the last five chapters is that ‘there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes’ (17:6; 21:25). This is often explained as a defence of kingship, paving the way for the first kings of Israel.[24] It is probably more to the point, however, to put the emphasis on the second part of the sentence: everyone did what was right in his own eyes. The Book of Judges has shown time and again the importance of asking the advice of YHWH to do what is right in his eyes. What is needed is good leadership: someone—be it a king or not—who is fully convinced that the best way to start one’s action is by asking YHWH what to do. In the Book of Judges only few leaders realize this ideal or they do so only temporarily. In this way their stories can be seen as a prefiguration of the future kings.

CONCLUSION

The first verse of the Book of Judges sets its theological tone: to reach a goal one should first ask YHWH. The stories of Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson show that this insight is gained gradually and can also be forgotten. At their brightest moments the ancient heroes of Israel realize that it is YHWH who is the saviour, ruler and judge par excellence. As an introduction to the following stories about the kings, the Book of Judges makes it clear that the best king is a king who knows when and how to pray to YHWH.

[24] This is questioned by G.T.K. Wong, *Compositional Strategy of the Book of Judges: An Inductive, Rhetorical Study* (VT.S, 111), Leiden 2006, 191-223, who wants to take מלך as referring to YHWH rather than to a human king. This is not convincing, because he has to go a long way to prove his case, by piling up circumstantial evidence, such as a farfetched comparison with 2 Chr 15:3.

‘LET YHWH, THE JUDGE, DECIDE’

Reflections on the Historical, Literary and Theological Aspects of the Jephthah Narrative

Koert van Bekkum

INTRODUCTION

The Jephthah narrative in the Book of Judges (Judg 10:6-12:7) is a remarkable story. Jephthah presents himself as a strong leader, becomes a judge, and seems to be dedicated to YHWH, the God of Israel. At the same time, he bears the traits of a tragic hero, losing his single child because of a foolish vow and breaking the unity of Israel in a civil war.

The first time Eric Peels paid attention to the account was in his monograph on the vengeance of God, because of the attestation of the root נקם in the response of Jephthah’s daughter to her father’s complaint (Judg 11:36). In one of the so-called ‘theses’ added to his original dissertation, Peels made an intriguing remark on the rabbinic interpretation of the passage: ‘For the understanding of Judg 11:29-40, it is not without significance that the figurative interpretation of Jephthah’s sacrifice is of Jewish origin (R. Joseph Kimchi) and dates to the second half of the 12th century CE, the period in which the blood accusation against the Jews was heard for the first time in history’ (thesis IX).[1] This comment reveals that Peels is not only concerned with philological and exegetical issues concerning the image of God in the Old Testament, but also addresses potential theological tensions that arise from a comparison between the religion-historical and literary meaning of the texts and their reception history. A similarly comprehensive approach can be observed in a later article for a non-scholarly readership on the meaning of Jephthah’s vow in a Christian perspective, in which Peels characterizes Jephthah as an ‘antitype’ of Christ.[2]

In recent decades the narrative, and in particular the passage regarding Jephthah’s vow, has been subject to intense study from different angles: (social-)literary analysis,[3] feminist

[1] H.G.L. Peels, *De wraak van God. De betekenis van de wortel* NQM *en de functie van de* NQM-*teksten in het kader van de oudtestamentische Godsopenbaring*, Zoetermeer 1993, 197-199; ET: *The Vengeance of God: The Meaning of the Root* NQM *and the Function of the* NQM-*Texts in the context of Divine Revelation of the Old Testament* (OTS, 31), Leiden 1995, 251-253.

[2] H.G.L. Peels, ‘Geschiedenis in antitypisch perspectief’, *Wapenveld* 51 (2001), 12-16. In addition, one of Peels’ PhD-candidates wrote a thesis on Ammon and Moab also discussing the Jephthah narrative: Th. Scheiber, *Lots Enkel. Israels Verhältnis zu Moab und Ammon im Alten Testament*, Norderstedt 2007, 116-127.

[3] E.g. B.G. Webb, *The Book of the Judges: An Integrated Reading* (JSOTS, 46), Sheffield 1987, 42-78; T.J. Schneider, *Judges* (Berit Olam), Collegeville 2000, 160-186; G. Oeste, ‘Butchered Brothers and Betrayed Families: Degenerating Kinship Structures in the Book of Judges’, *JSOT* 35 (2011), 295-316.

exegesis,[4] reception history,[5] intertextual research,[6] renewed redaction critical analysis,[7] and the study of political ideology, history and archaeology.[8] The following contribution gathers some of the harvest of this research in order to explore to what extent it can be used in studying the theological meaning of the passage. The first section shows that a methodological sound approach of geographical, archaeological and historical issues results in a better understanding of the literary and theological nature of the narrative. A second section on its literary-theological framework highlights how the affairs following Jephthah's appeal for divine justice in Judg 11:27 reveal the religious core of Israel's problems and anticipate the search for a better leader in the Books of Samuel.

GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

The main setting of the story of Jephthah is, as its name for the area 'Gilead' spells out (Judg 10:8; 11:8,29), the 'rough terrain' of Transjordan. Here, Israelite clans with an ancestor bearing the same name (Num 26:29, cf. Judg 11:1) struggle with Ammon, a kingdom that becomes so strong that its army crosses even the Jordan River (Judg 10:8-9). In response, the elders of the town of Gilead (10:17-18; 11:5-11) ask an expelled member of their kin, now a famous warlord in the land of Tob in southwest Hauran (11:3, cf. 2 Sam 10:8), for help. He comes to Mizpah, a 'lookout' close to Gilead (10:17; 11:11,29,34), refutes the Ammonite territorial claims, and drives them back from the border town of Aroer before Rabbah (11:33, cf. Jos 13:25) deep into Ammon, to Minnith and Abel Keramim (11:33). But despite this great victory, the story ends in a civil war and a bloodshed at the fords of the Jordan River (12:5-6).[9] Both the geographical descriptions and Jephthah's long monologue in his negotiations with the Ammonite king (11:15-27) bind the story closely to earlier passages in the composition of Genesis to 2 Kings on the conquest and division of Transjordan (Num 21:21-35; Deut 2:9-3:17, cf. Num 32:33-42; Jos 12:1-6; 13:8-31, see Map).

The geographical differences between these passages have often been used for diachronic purposes. Methodologically, however, this should be preceded by investigating the development of the narrative as a whole, and by taking a look at the different perspectives and

[4] For an overview, see T.S. Davis, 'The Condemnation of Jephthah', *TynBul* 64 (2013), 2-5.

[5] E.g. C. Houtman, K. Spronk, *Jefta und seine Tochter. Rezeptionsgeschichtliche Studien zu Richter, 11,29-40* (ATuM, 21), Zürich/Wien 2007.

[6] E.g. D. Böhler, *Jiftach und die Tora. Eine intertextuelle Auslegung von Ri 10,6-12,7* (ÖBS, 34), Frankfurt am Main 2008.

[7] W. Groß, *Richter* (HThKAT), Freiburg/Basel etc. 2009, 550-573.

[8] E. Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest: An Ideology of Leadership in the Gideon, Abimelech and Jephthah Narratives (Judg 6-12)* (VT.S, 106), Leiden/Boston 2005; E. Bloch-Smith, 'A Stratified Account of Jephthah's Negotiations and Battle: Judges 11:12-33 from an Archaeological Perspective', *JBL* 134 (2015), 291-311; I. Finkelstein, 'The Old Jephthah Tale in Judges: Geographical and Historical Considerations', *Bib.* 97 (2016), 1-15.

[9] The most likely identifications for these locations are: (city of) Gilead – Khirbet Jalʿad (Palestine Grid 223.170); Tob – et-Taiyibeh (267.219); Mizpah of Gilead – Sūf (229.191) or Tell el-Maṣfā (227.193); Aroer (before Rabbah) – Khirbet Udena (233.152); Minnith – Umm el-Hanafīš (232.137); Abel Keramim – Tell el-ʿUmeiri (234.142). Other towns, such as Heshbon (11:19,26) and Aroer at the Arnon (11:26) are mostly identified with Tell Heshban (226.134) and Khirbet Araʿir (228.098). For a discussion, see, e.g., E. Gaß, *Die Ortsnamen des Richterbuchs in historischer und redaktioneller Perspektive* (ADPV, 35), Wiesbaden 2005, 464-504, 682; Finkelstein, 'Old Jephthah Tale', 9-13.

goals of each of these passages.[10] The first passage in Numbers highlights the accidental nature of the conquest of the kingdoms of Sihon and Og. The special remarks regarding Israel's respect for Ammon's and Moab's territorial integrity in Deuteronomy 2 introduce the idea of divine providence in the history of this area and describe the land as so-called 'successor-territories'. With the benefit of hindsight, Moses concludes that areas formerly inhabited by every kind of Amorite clans are now given as inalienable inheritances to Moab, Edom, Ammon and Israel. This idea is further elaborated upon in the depiction of the Israelite territory in Transjordan in Deuteronomy 3 and Joshua 12 and 13. These passages assume that Israel still needs to cross the Jordan River in order to enter the promised land. At the same time, however, the conquered areas are counted as belonging to that land. Accordingly, the eastern Jordan Valley is added to the Transjordanian inheritances of Reuben, Gad and half-Manasseh in order to connect them to the Israelite territory on the other side of the Jordan. In this way, the geography of Moses' conquest and his division of Transjordan set a standard for Joshua's conquering and dividing the promised land in Cisjordan.[11]

These two themes of the extent of the promised land in Transjordan and of the transfer of leadership are clearly alluded to in the story of Jephthah. Jephthah refers to them in his negotiations with the elders of Gilead, with the Ammonites, with YHWH, and in his confrontation with Ephraim. The story of Gideon, however, makes it clear that the words of a deliverer should not always be taken at face value. Gideon tells the divine messenger that he originates from a poor and unimportant family (Judg 6:15). Yet, his cattle, the number of his servants and the significant position of his father in the rest of the story betray that the opposite is the case. In addition, he refuses to become Israel's ruler (8:23), but he has many wives, seventy sons and even calls one of them Abimelech, 'my father is king' (8:30-31).

The Jephthah narrative comprises elements that raise similar questions, in particular in comparison to the previous passages regarding Israel's conquest of Transjordan. Apart from simplifying the route from the desert to the plains of Moab, Jephthah also seems to mix up the chronology of Israel's travels through the desert by suggesting that Israel had to stay for a long time in Kadesh, because the king of Edom did not allow Israel to cross their country. In addition, he claims that Moab did the same, while leaving out the crucial information that at that time, it was very weak due to the power of Sihon in the region (11:17, cf. Num 20:14-21; 21:26; 33:37-49). He even declares that Israel never entered Moabite territory (11:18, cf. Num 21:20; 22:1; 33:49; Deut 1:5; 2:18) and suggests that Balak, son of Zippor, never started a quarrel with Israel (11:25; cf. Num 22-24). These elements all contribute significantly to the literary goal of Jephthah's speech, that is, the refutation of the Ammonite claim to all the land between the Yabbok and the Arnon. In making this argument, Jephthah clearly is exaggerating: Israel never made any mistake, always respected the borders of Edom, Moab and Ammon, never had any problems with Balak, only conquered the area north of the Arnon in response to an attack by Sihon, and has been living there three centuries already (11:26)!

As a result, the geographical tensions contribute to the development of the literary plot and suit the person of Jephthah perfectly: a man with a strong desire not only to become the leader of

[10] Cf. J.M. Sasson, *Judges 1-12* (AncB), New Haven/London 2014, 425.

[11] Cf. D.M. Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analyses in the Hebrew Bible*, Vol. 2 (JSOTS, 39), Sheffield 1986, 93-119; K. van Bekkum, *From Conquest to Coexistence: Ideology and Antiquarian Intent in the Historiography of Israel's Settlement in Canaan* (CHANE, 45), Leiden/Boston 2011, 199-205.

his clan and of Ephraim, the most important tribe, but also a God-given deliverer of Israel. His wish seems to be granted eventually, when the spirit of YHWH comes upon him (11:29).

This situation creates serious problems for any diachronic analysis of the passage. For a long time, and in particular since Martin Noth, scholars have been trying to separate a supposed local legendary tradition of an Iron I Transjordanian hero from its later additions in the so-called Deuteronomistic History.[12] Literary and syntactical analyses, however, highlight the unity of the Jephthah narrative. This becomes evident, for example, in the sophisticated literary composition of the four conversations, and in the way the story is resumed after the inclusion of remarks in an aside, such as 11:4-5,35,37.[13] In a similar way, the above-mentioned analysis shows that further editing and later scribal activity is also not the best answer in explaining the geographical tensions. Apart from compositional phrases such as 12:7, the story clearly seems to be written as a unity.

But when was the narrative put in writing? The composition of the story is generally related to four periods in history: (a) the Hellenistic period, when the peoples in the Levant might have formulated alternatives to Greek myths and tragedies about heroes and about the sacrifice of Iphigenia by Agamemnon;[14] (b) the late pre-exilic and exilic periods of the 7th-6th century BCE, at the supposed height of the scribal activity of the so-called 'Deuteronomists', whose stories would also reflect contemporary political tensions in Transjordan;[15] (c) the first half of the 8th century BCE, when the border between the Northern kingdom of Israel and Moab/Ammon was stable and when this kingdom might have collected its foundation myths;[16] and finally (d) the late pre-monarchic period, because the Gideon and Jephthah accounts can be understood as taking position in the extensive polemics on the advantages and disadvantages of the monarchy.[17]

Historians generally acknowledge the internal logic for an early date: the biblical narrative of Jephthah and also that of David in Keilah (1 Sam 23) presuppose a social structure in which outlaws no longer part of society run away to remote settlements and gather in bands in order to survive. References in the Amarna Letters to Late Bronze *ʿApiru* gangs, and the prominent role of groups of outlaws and warlords in social-scientific reconstructions of the early state formation in Edom, Ammon, Moab and Israel during Iron I-IIA fit this model perfectly. In this case, Jephthah goes to the region of the upper Yarmuk River, where he becomes a professional warrior. Being a man of oratory skills and personal reputation, he gathers a band of fellows, which finally helps him in defeating an enemy and establishing the rule of law in his former hometown.[18]

[12] M. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien. Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament*, Halle 1943, 53-54. For recent efforts, see Groß, *Richter*; Finkelstein, 'Old Jephthah Tale', 2-8.

[13] Webb, *Book of Judges*, 73-78; K. Spronk, 'Judging Jephthah: The Contribution of Syntactic Analysis to the Interpretation of Judges 11:29-40', in: W.Th. van Peursen, J.W. Dyk (eds), *Tradition and Innovation in Biblical Interpretation*, Fs. E. Talstra (SSN, 57), Leiden 2011, 309-314.

[14] E.g. T.C. Römer, 'Why Would the Deuteronomists Tell About the Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter?', *JSOT* 77 (1998), 27-38, cf. K. Spronk, 'Comparing the Book of Judges to Greek Literature', in: M.C.A. Korpel, L.L. Grabbe (eds), *Open-Mindedness in the Bible and Beyond*, Fs. B.E.J.H. Becking (LHB/OTS, 616), London 2015, 261-271.

[15] E.g. Bloch-Smith, 'Stratified Account', 308-311.

[16] Finkelstein, 'Old Jephthah Tale', 4, 13-15.

[17] E.g. M. Noth, *Geschichte Israels*, Göttingen ^{6}1966, 152-153; Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest*, 239-248.

[18] See, e.g., N. Naʾaman, 'Ḫabiru and Hebrews: The Transfer of a Social Term to the Literary Sphere', *JNES* 45 (1986), 271-288; N. Na'aman, 'David's Sojourn in Keilah in Light of the Amarna Letters', *VT* 60 (2010), 87-97; Finkelstein, 'Old Jephthah Tale', 9, 13; R. Kessler, W. Sommerfeld *et al.* (eds), *State Formation and State Decline in the Near and Middle East*, Wiesbaden 2016.

Needless to say, this does not imply that the present story was already written down at that time. It can even be doubted whether the Gideon, Abimelech and Jephthah stories criticize the monarchy as such. References to Ephraim and Manasseh and to leaders from these tribes clearly underline their prominent position among the people of Israel in the Books of Joshua and Judges.[19] Yet, the fact that in these stories Jephthah is one of the examples of the weakening of Ephraim's position as a leading tribe, indicates that the narrative in its present form most likely at least postdates the establishment of the Davidic dynasty.[20] At the other end of the spectrum, the choice for a Hellenistic date bears the burden of explaining why Jewish circles in Jerusalem would be interested in Transjordan and how the narrative ever could have preserved historical memories of a social structure that had vanished centuries ago. The linguistic profile of the composition—Classical Biblical Hebrew—also favours a pre-exilic date.[21] It is very difficult to be more precise. Most scholars connect the 'deuteronomistic' characteristics in the narrative to the reform of the cult by King Josiah of Judah in 622 BCE. The scholarly assumption 'D = Josianic', however, is not unchallenged, while scholars also present arguments in support of an earlier date for a 'deuteronomistic' scribal tradition.[22]

It is interesting to see what light archaeological information sheds on these historical considerations. The archaeological record of Transjordan and ancient Ammon is good.[23] The material remains do not reveal unequivocally how and when the non-sedentary inhabitants of the region in Late Bronze II and the tribal configurations of Iron I developed into the Iron II territorial kingdoms of Moab and Ammon. It is very clear, however, that this social and political trajectory took place and that the rise of the warlords and kings did not destroy the tribal social structure.[24]

Research into the surveys and excavations of the geographical locations mentioned in the Jephthah narrative confirm this pattern. All sites were occupied during Iron I and part of the more developed kingdoms of Israel, Ammon and Moab in Iron II. But Gilead (Khirbet Jalʿad), Heshbon (Tell Heshban) and Aroer at the Arnon (Khirbet Araʿir) laid in ruins during the Persian

[19] Jos 14:4; 16-17; 19:50; 24:30,33; Judg 2:9; 3:27; 4:5; 5:14; 7:24; 8:1-2; 10:1; 12:1,15.

[20] Judg 10:1; 12:1-7, cf. Jos 16:10; Judg 1:29; 17-19. See also Ps 78:9,67; 80:2-3; Jer 7:15. For literature and a discussion, see B.N. Peterson, 'Judges: An Apologia for Davidic Kingship? An Inductive Approach', *MJTM* 17 (2015-2016), 3-46. A recent contribution from a Dutch Reformed perspective is offered by H. de Jong, *Efraïm – Gods eerste liefde*, Franeker 2016.

[21] For considerations regarding the pre-exilic date of Classical Biblical Hebrew, see J. Joosten, 'Diachronic Linguistics and the Date of the Pentateuch', in: J.C. Gertz, B.M. Levinson *et al.* (eds), *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Gap Between the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America* (FAT, 111), Tübingen 2016, 327-344.

[22] See, e.g., the works of J. Berman, A. Lemaire, G.J. McConville, P. Pitkänen, M. Richelle and S.L. Richter.

[23] Cf., e.g., R.W. Younker, 'Review of Archaeological Research in Ammon', in: B. MacDonald, R.W. Younker (eds), *Ancient Ammon* (SHANE, 17), Leiden/Boston etc. 1999, 1-29.

[24] For an overview and several diverging reconstructions, see, e.g., R.W. Younker, 'The Emergence of the Ammonites', in: MacDonald, Younker, *Ancient Ammon*, 189-218; L.G. Herr, M. Najjar, 'The Iron Age', in: R.B. Adams (ed.), *Jordan: An Archaeological Reader*, London 2008, 311-334; B.W. Porter, *Complex Communities: The Archaeology of Early Iron Age West-Central Jordan*, Tucson 2013, 133-146; M.L. Steiner, A.E. Killebrew (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Levant*, Oxford 2014, 1771-1795, 2054-2116; B. Routledge, 'Conditions of State Formation at the Edges of Empires: The Case of Moab', in: Kessler, Sommerfeld *et al.*, *State Formation and State Decline*, 77-97.

period, while Aroer before Rabbah (Khirbet Udena), Abel Keramim (Tell el-ʿUmeiri) and Minnith (Umm el-Hanafiš) seem to have experienced a settlement gap during the Hellenistic period.[25]

Therefore, the archaeological picture on the one hand unambiguously undergirds the suggestion that the Jephthah narrative is an Iron II composition which preserves Iron I memories. On the other hand, the story reflects only one moment in the actual transformation of the rural communities into polities. It barely provides information regarding the nature and expansion of these polities and their overlapping land-claims, thus leaving room for all kinds of socio-historical reconstructions. This clearly illustrates that the narrative is not to be understood as a political document. The story focuses primarily on the relation between YHWH and Israel. It is only in this context that the text makes remarks upon Israel's neighbours and the nature of leadership.

LITERARY-THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The theological context for the Jephthah narrative is presented as early as the introductory lines on Israel's veneration of other gods after the rule of Tola and Jair (Judg 10:6). In addition to serving the Baalim (10:6,10, cf. 2:11; 3:7; 6:25,28,30-32; 8:33) and the Ashtarot (10:6, cf. 2:13), Israel now also begins to worship the gods of the surrounding nations, in particular 'the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines' (10:6).[26] This statement adds a new dimension to the remark in 3:6 that Israel would serve the gods of Canaan. Here a new chapter in the history of Israel commences, one that looks forward to Jephthah's and Samson's conflicts with the Ammonites and the Philistines, and beyond them even to the wars and alliances of Saul and David.[27] Subsequently, from chapter 10:8 onward, the focus is exclusively on the Ammonites.

The next passage, 10:9-16, deviates considerably from the conventional pattern of serving other gods, punishment, crying to YHWH, conversion and delivery. This further illustrates the idea that a new phase in the downward spiral of the Book of Judges has begun.[28] Israel's initial response of remorse, only referring to Baal, is short and formulaic (10:10), while YHWH's answer clearly reveals that the conflict now has become more personal and intense. Recently, Jack Sasson rightly drew attention to the sarcastic undertone of this reply. Israel 'only appeals to its ancestral God, when the going gets tough'. Accordingly, וַתִּקְצַר נַפְשׁוֹ בַּעֲמַל יִשְׂרָאֵל (10:16) should not be translated by 'he no longer could bear Israel's misery' (cf. NIV), but as 'he lost

[25] Gaß, *Die Ortsnamen des Richterbuches*, 468-569, 475, 480, 484-486; Finkelstein, 'Old Jephthah Tale', 12. For the archaeological record of Tob (et-Tayyibe), its relatively independent position and later absorption into Aram-Damascus, see F. Braemer, 'Prospections archéologiques dans le Ḥawrān (Syria)', *Syr.* 61 (1984), 219-250; K.L. Younger Jr., *A Political History of the Arameans: From Their Origins to the End of Their Polities* (ABSt, 13), Atlanta 2016, 219-220.

[26] Attestations of foreign gods in the Book of Judges are not to be read as religious-historical reports regarding the highly complicated religious plurality of the Iron I-II Levant. The reference to Chemosh (11:24), for example, fits the functional monolatry of parts of Transjordan that can be found in the Iron Age inscriptions of Moab. But the texts primarily highlight the distinction between YHWH, the God of Israel, and other gods. Cf., e.g., W.E. Aufrecht, 'The Religion of the Ammonites', in: McDonald, Younker, *Ancient Ammon*, 152-162; H.-P. Müller, 'Chemosh', *DDD*², 187-189.

[27] Thus already Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, 53-54.

[28] Cf. Judg 2:1-5,11; 3:7,12; 4:1; 6:1-2,8-10; 13:1.

patience with Israel's behaviour'. In his view, YHWH loses his temper and withdraws himself from the business: 'No judge, no saviour'.[29]

This translation of the verb, highlighting the fact that קצר bears the connotations of impatience and annoyance,[30] is indeed possible. Moreover, Sasson's interpretation also explains several important elements in the narrative: (a) The elders of Gilead have to start acting on their own behalf; (b) for a long time, it seems that Jephthah will become only Gilead's military leader (קָצִין, 11:6,11) and head (ראשׁ, 11:8-9,11, cf. 10:18) and not Israel's real judge; (c) finally, from 10:16 on, YHWH himself is no longer a leading character in the story, for he is only indirectly referred to in dialogues and vows (11:9-11,21-27,30,32,35-36), he acts in the background (11:29), and he is not even mentioned in the last section on the civil war between Gilead and Ephraim.[31] In Sasson's case, however, this reading also leads to an exclusively negative interpretation of 11:29, as if Jephthah forces YHWH to take his side and to bestow his spirit (רוּחַ יהוה) on him, because of his appeal to the validity of Gilead's land claim.[32] In the light of 12:7 and the Book of Judges as a book of God's saviours, this is an unlikely interpretation. Therefore, it seems better to state that 10:16 does not describe a merciful change of heart, but a more ambivalent mental state: YHWH is angry and annoyed and indeed seems to be willing to withdraw himself from the scene. Yet, it still cannot be excluded that he is also hurt by 'Israel's misery' and that some judge will stand up and act as YHWH's deliverer.[33]

From this point of departure, the plot develops until its devastating end. In depicting Jephthah's descent, the text had already created sympathy with its main character and made a remark that may seem premonitory for his failure: after being expelled from his kin, Jephthah had no choice but becoming a warlord (גִּבּוֹר חַיִל, 11:1), a persuasive orator and powerful negotiator, desperately seeking rehabilitation. As the story proceeds this leads to an exclamation by Jephthah expressing a faithful appeal for justice: 'Let YHWH, the Judge, decide!' (11:27, cf. Gen 31:53; 1 Sam 24:13; Ps 7:9; 26:1; 43:1). The positive meaning of this invocation should not be denied. Yet, in its present narrative context, the formulation also alludes to God's reassessment of his rule over Israel and to Jephthah's questionable ambition to become the people's divine deliverer.[34] Accordingly, it is hard to avoid the impression that the invocation is also loaded with self-centredness. Nevertheless, in response, YHWH's spirit comes upon him, Jephthah becomes a true judge and Ammon is defeated.

By answering in this way, YHWH indeed rescues Israel from the Ammonites. He also 'decides', however, that this salvation does not comprise deliverance from internal struggles and from a selfish leader personalizing his victories and expanding his dubious abilities as a dealmaker to the relation with God. The final effect is that a judge without ancestors and

[29] Sasson, *Judges*, 413-415, quotations on pp. 414 and 415; cf. J.M. Sasson, 'Jephthah: Chutzpah and Overreach in a Hebrew Judge', in: D.S. Vanderhooft, A. Winitzer (eds), *Literature as Politics, Politics as Literature: Essays on the Ancient Near East*, Fs. P. Machinist, Winona Lake 2013, 406-407.

[30] Cf. *HAL*, s.v.

[31] On this last observation, see Spronk, 'Judging Jephthah', 314-315.

[32] Sasson, 'Jephthah: Chutzpah and Overreach', 409-410. Accordingly, Sasson, *Judges*, 435, offers the following translation of 11:19: 'Endowed with zeal for the Lord, Jephthah crossed Gilead and Manasseh.'

[33] Accordingly, Jephthah's explicit manipulation of God only occurs very late in the story, that is, in 11:30-31.

[34] According to the narrative context of the Book of Judges, Israel and its leaders time and again have difficulties in fully acknowledging that YHWH is Israel's Ruler (יִמְשֹׁל, 8:23), Deliverer (הַמַּצִּיל, 8:34, cf. 6:9; 10:15), Saviour (ישׁע hi., 2:18; 6:36-37; 10:12-13) and Judge (הַשֹּׁפֵט, 11:27).

children (11:2,39, cf. 10:1,4; 12:8-9,13-14) mirrors the disintegration of Israel on the level of household (בֵּית־אָב, 11:2), clan (Gilead), tribe (Manasseh and Ephraim) and people (Israel).[35] In addition, the story is another cruel example in the Book of Judges that violence against women utterly exemplifies Israel's fall into lawlessness. The (tradition of) female solidarity with Jephthah's daughter (11:37-40) resists this deterioration of male leadership.[36] But this only happens after she has revealed the religious core of the problem her father and Israel are wrestling with: 'You have opened your mouth to YHWH' (11:36).[37]

In this way, the Jephthah narrative looks forward to the Books of Samuel, desperately crying for a better leader from the 'House of Joseph' (Judg 1:22), or maybe for someone from Judah to go up first (Judg 1:1-2)[38]: a man 'after YHWH's own heart' (1 Sam 13:14), being less selfish, taking better vows (1 Sam 14:24;19-20) and knowing that obedience is better than sacrifice (1 Sam 15:22), who will be able to subjugate Ammon (1 Sam 11; 2 Sam 8:12; 10).

CONCLUSION

Over the last decade, scholars have been struggling with the negative image of Jephthah in modern research. How does this relate to the more positive view, for instance, in the New Testament (Heb 11:32) and to the ambiguous considerations by the church fathers?[39] Some argue that the original version did not give evidence of aversion towards human sacrifice and that it only becomes problematic in the light of other texts in the Old Testament.[40]

The Jephthah narrative itself, however, seems to be less complicated, in spite of its distance from the present world. It communicates—both by itself and in the larger contexts of the Book of Judges and of the composition of Genesis to 2 Kings—a straightforward and alarming message regarding social relations, leadership and the treatment of women. At the same time, these elements are subject to the main line of the story concerning the relation between YHWH and Israel. This relation is full of tension, as becomes most evident in two important verses: the remark on YHWH's annoyance and anger (Judg 10:16) and Jephthah's exclamation that 'YHWH, the Judge, may decide' (11:27). These verses contribute significantly to the development of the plot and express most compellingly what is at stake. Accordingly, despite his anger, YHWH's compassion in the Jephthah narrative is felt, while Jephthah himself can be seen as both a tragic fool and an antitype of Christ, and as a man of faith and a deliverer of Israel.

[35] Oeste, 'Butchered Brothers and Betrayed Families', 296, 304-305, 308-309, 315.

[36] Cf. J.C. Exum, 'Feminist Criticism: Whose Interests are Being Served?', in G.A. Yee (ed.), *Judges & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, Minneapolis 1995, 78, 87; Schneider, *Judges*, 171; Davis, 'Condemnation of Jephthah', 16.

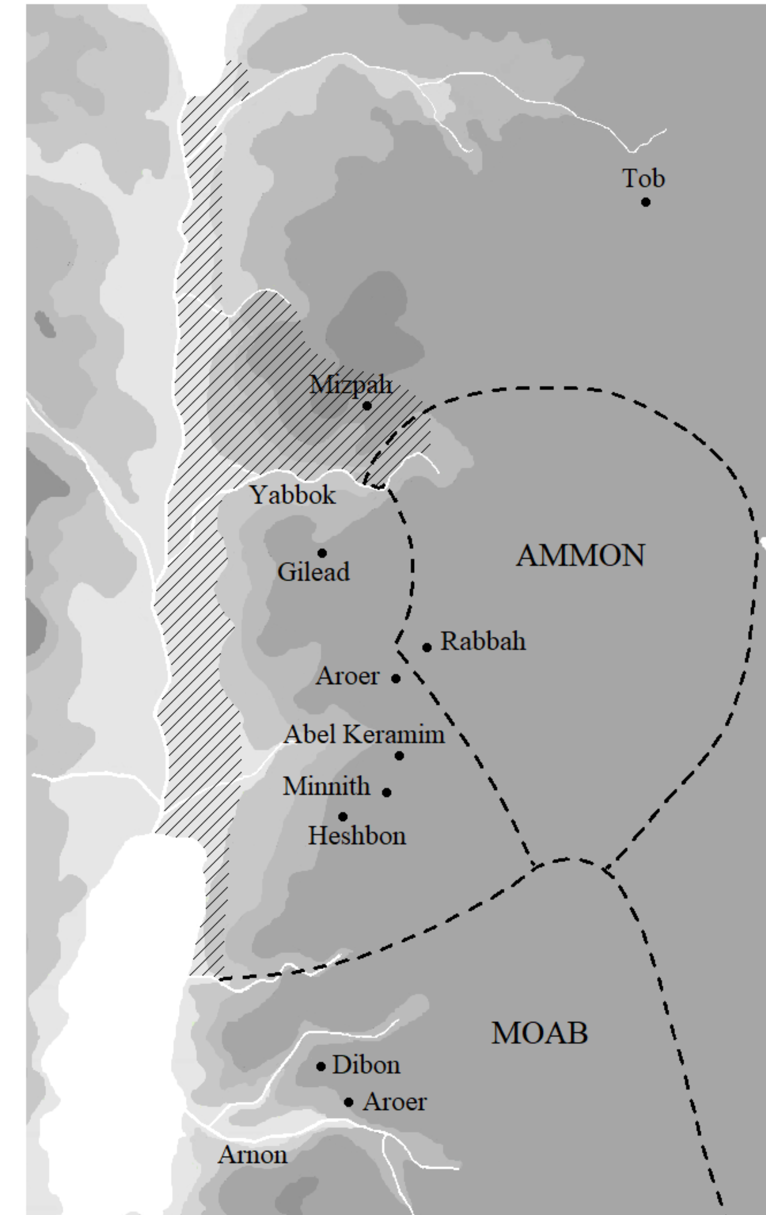
[37] Most often, the verb פצה bears a negative connotation and occurs in a context of violence and trouble and of rash and imprudent speaking (Gen 4:11; Num 16:30; Deut 11:6; Job 35:16; Ps 22:14; Lam 2:16; 3:46). For the parallel between וְאָנֹכִי פָּצִיתִי־פִי אֶל־יְהוָה (11:35) and פָּצִיתָה אֶת־פִּיךָ אֶל־יְהוָה (11:36), see Webb, *Book of Judges*, 74: 'Jephthah, we know, is *good* at opening his mouth (how ironical that his name should be יפתח "he opens"). What has precipitated the crisis with his daughter is that he has opened his mouth to *Yahweh*, that is, he has tried to conduct his relationship with God in the same way that he has conducted his relationships with men.'

[38] Cf. the contribution of Klaas Spronk to this volume: 'An Uncommon Book of Prayer: The Theology of the Book of Judges'.

[39] Cf. J.R. Franke, T.C. Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, Vol. 4, Downers Grove 2005, 136-140; Houtman, Spronk, *Jefta und seine Tochter*, 38-41.

[40] Groß, *Richter*, 597. See also A. Logan, 'Rehabilitating Jephthah', *JBL* 128 (2009) 665-685.

Map—Geography of the Jephthah narrative
in relation to the conquest of Sihon's kingdom in Num 21,
the added territories in Deut 2-3 (marked),
and the kingdoms of Ammon and Moab during the Iron IIb.



THE BEHEADING OF GOLIATH (1 SAM 17:51) IN DUTCH CHILDREN'S AND FAMILY BIBLES

Evaluating an 'Uncomfortable' Text

Cees Houtman[1]

INTRODUCTION

In the modern world the Old Testament world sometimes is very near. Nine/eleven, 2001, confronted the American people with suicidal terrorists who by destroying the Twin Towers in New York, behaved themselves like Samson in the temple of Gaza who at his death killed numerous people (Judg 16:25-30). The kidnapping of 276 Nigerian schoolgirls by the terroristic organization Boko Haram on 14 April 2014 has its 'parallel' in the rape of the young virgins by the Benjaminites, described in Judges 21:20-23. The beheading by the so-called 'Islamic State' (= IS) of Western captives, known by name,[2] and of many nameless Oriental Christians, Yezidhis and non-Sunnitic Islamites in the summer of 2014 and thereafter is even 'foreshadowed' in several Bible-passages. The cruel beheadings of IS confronted western people with a kind of execution which they knew only from times past.[3]

The affinity of the modern world with the Biblical world challenges a Christian theologian to render judgment on the problematic scriptural passages. I accept that challenge by discussing in this article the theme 'beheading in the Bible'. As a matter of course, especially those texts are relevant in which highly esteemed persons are responsible for the beheading. So for us the cutting off of the head of John the Baptist by order of Herod (Matt 14:6-12)—in Biblical history he figures as a despicable man—is not a problematic incident. We are in trouble on account of David's beheading of Goliath (1 Sam 17:51) and Judith's beheading of Holofernes (Judith 13:6-10), because both of them are admired for an action which in the eyes of modern westerners has to be characterized as 'barbarous'.[4] For that reason 1 Samuel 17 and Judith 13 are excellent stories for discussing the vexed questions with regard to 'beheading in the Bible'. In view of the necessity of restricting myself, I shall deal only with the best known story, that of David and Goliath.[5]

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[1] I am indebted to Rev. Jaap Faber, Kampen, the Netherlands, for correcting the English of this article at a number of points.

[2] James Foley, Steven Sotloff (both US), and David Haines (UK).

[3] The best known example from Dutch history dates from the seventeenth century: on 13 May 1619 the Dutch statesman Johan van Oldebarnevelt was beheaded.

[4] For other texts on beheading see 1 Sam 31:9; 2 Sam 4:7-8,12; 20:22; 2 Kgs 6:32; Rev 20:4.

[5] 1 Sam 17:51 is not identified as a problematic text in H. Lalleman (ed.), *Ongemakkelijke teksten van het Oude Testament*, Amsterdam 2014, a collection of 65 'uncomfortable' Old Testament texts, discussed by a number of orthodox Protestant exegetes. Also H.G.L. Peels does not mention the text in

The story of little David who gains the victory over the giant Goliath (1 Sam 17:1-54) is one of the most favourite Old Testament narratives, a pearl of narrative art. It has fairy-like traits: the man who succeeds in defeating the giant is promised the hand of the king's daughter, abundant wealth and also freedom from taxes (1 Sam 17:25-30); our Tom Thumb liked that idea; thanks to his cleverness and his device 'Necessity is the mother of invention' he was more than a match for the giant.

It is possible to read the story from diverse perspectives. For example, as a mere worldly history about a very ambitious lad, obsessed by the idea of becoming an important and rich man. Three times the young man makes sure that the victor of the fight will get a very attractive reward (1 Sam 17:34-37). He conducts himself as a boaster who labours under overestimation of himself (1 Sam 17:34-37), and who is abused by adults without any sense of responsibility. They allow him, a defenceless child (cf. 1 Sam 17:41-44), to take action as a child-soldier avant la lettre. In that role he cuts off the neck of his opponent in a horrible way (1 Sam 17:51), supposing to do a God pleasing act as appears from his pious talk (1 Sam 17:36-37,45-47).

Reading the story from a secular perspective undoubtedly runs counter to the author's intentions. He introduces David as an adult politician and theologian who profiles himself as the man who was born to the kingship. He portrays David as the contrast of king Saul who does not know how to handle the situation. Saul is the failing leader. David, on the contrary, is the man with a vision and a clear programme. It is unfolded by him against Goliath within hearing of the Israelite army:

> You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This very day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's and he will give you into our hand. (1 Sam 17:45-47)

As the coming king David presents an at first sight hopeful and subversive programme. He tells to adhere the concept of the Lord as the God who does not save by sword and spear.[6] On reflection, however, he appears to be no pacifist and not willing to eschew violence. It is even included in his programme. It is true, as a fighter he does not use regular weapons such as spear and javelin. He makes use of unorthodox weapons, sling and stone, to fell his opponent. In order to finally kill him he nevertheless uses the sword (1 Sam 17:49-51), and that immediately after the author's remark: 'there was no sword in David's hand' (1 Sam 17:50). Moreover, sling and stone have in common with sword and spear that they are means of violence and that they have the same effect as regular weapons. Their use does not prevent that the victory results in a horrible scene: the beheading of Goliath (1 Sam 17:51). Notwithstanding David's promising confession the story ends in a frustrating liquidation. The king-to-be did not act in conformity with his revolutionary credo.

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his study about God and violence in the Old Testament, i.e. *God en geweld in het Oude Testament* (ApSt, 47), Apeldoorn 2007.

[6] Cf. Pss 20:8; 33:17; 147:10; Prov 21:31; Isa 30:16; 31:1,3; Hos 14:4.

As said, 'Beheading in the Bible' invites a reaction, in fact from every reader. Especially narrators of Bible stories are obliged to present their view. Before giving known my own verdict on the theme, they have the floor to present their view on David's programme and its execution.

DAVID'S PROGRAMME AND ITS EXECUTION IN DUTCH CHILDREN'S AND FAMILY BIBLES

To know the view of the retellers of the story of David and Goliath I have consulted circa 110 children's and family Bibles from the nineteenth and twentieth century. Most of them are of Protestant origin, several are of the hand of Roman-Catholic authors, a few are written by a Jew.[7]

In all the retellings David is portrayed as a courageous lad. Usually he is praised for his intelligence and especially for his piety and his great trust in God. In nineteenth century retellings his patriotism is often memorized as well.[8] The wish to describe David as a pious young man has even stimulated a Roman-Catholic author to put a short prayer ('O, Lord, help me!') into David's mouth at the crucial moment of the fight (cf. Judg 16:28; Judith 13:4-5,7). He also tells how David did not forget to thank God for the victory:

> Hardly had David cut off Goliath's head, when he knelt at the corpse of the dead giant. He folded his hands and prayed: 'O, Lord, I thank you for helping me to conquer your enemy. For with your aid I am able to do everything, but without you I cannot do anything'.[9]

The Lord figures prominently in David's programme, but in the story he is not mentioned explicitly as the acting person behind David. Generally that does not prevent retellers from regarding him as the real actor, the one who has directed the course of events. According to a Protestant minister there is no room for misunderstanding. The outcome of the story proves

> that God redeems by whom and how He wants; that power, courage, and weapons are of no avail, when the Lord has decided upon anybody's ruin; that His strength can make the weakest strong, when He so desires. A single stone, thrown by the hand of a lad, is the cause of the death of countless people, and the cause of welfare and salvation to countless others. And this stone, would it not be directed by the Lord? ... Could David have missed his aim? No, he could not. Well then, if that is how matters stand, let it be for us a proof of God's all-embracing government which regards also those things which we commonly ascribe to so-called chance, to human management or power, to right insight, to cleverness and resoluteness or any other human quality! And, if we praise David for some things, let it not be the firmness of his hand, his keen sight, the force of his throw, his skilful slinging—let it be his trust in God ...[10]

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[7] For an overview of the Dutch children's and family Bibles see C. Houtman, *Bijbelse geschiedenis herverteld. Woord en beeld–Vraag en antwoord*, Heerenveen 2010, 45-84, 143-166.

[8] See, e.g., H. Wester, *Bijbelgeschiedenissen voor de Nederlandsche jeugd*, dl 1, Groningen ^{2}1831, 193.

[9] A. Timmermans, *Bijbel voor de jeugd*, dl 1: *Oude Testament*, Helmond n.d. [1963], 222.

[10] A.W. van Campen, *De Bijbel voor jeugdige christenen. Godsdienstig huisboek*, Tiel 1857, 364.

Usually David's killing of Goliath is narrated without commentary. A Jewish reteller, however, has been trapped into transforming the rather sober Bible text into a bloody scene. The effect of David's attack with sling and stone is narrated as follows:

> his blood runs over his body, it splashes and spouts, it pollutes all nearby; the stones (sic) have penetrated the brains and have crushed these; Goliath totters, falls, and lies down motionless![11]

An ultra-orthodox Protestant narrator describes the confrontation of David and Goliath as a dramatic spectacle:

> The two fighters approach to each other. 'With one blow I shall fell him', roars the giant. Look, David puts a stone in the sling, stops, takes his aim ... turns about the sling, a moment ... and the stone whizzes through the air and strikes the giant on his forehead, deeply it penetrates the brains. Goliath falls down at one blow, on his face. Thunderous bursts of cheering resound in Israel's army. Then David leaps forward ... he tugs at Goliath's sword ... one cut and the blasphemous head rolls unto the field. The man who scoffed at God holds his tongue forever. Hear, the mountains re-echo the shouts of joy.[12]

Without any problem he combines the description of horrible violence with deep piety. He exhorts his readers to pray to the Lord for a re-born heart. For him, Goliath's end is an illustration of the fate of the man who lives without God. His strength is of no avail 'as God takes away his breath'. According to the ultra-orhodox reteller the story is, as for other, especially Roman-Catholic interpreters,[13] a foreshadowing of Christ's victory over the devil:

> Nearer and nearer the time is coming that the Hero, God's Elect, will defeat on Golgotha's cross his enemies and will strike the hellish head of the giant satan. His victorious shout resounds on earth, is heard in heaven and hell: 'It is finished' (John 19:30).[14]

Compassion with Goliath is lacking in all retellings. In view of his role in the story this is not amazing. He is not a defenceless victim like John the Baptist, but a barbarous monster. Sometimes it is accentuated that Goliath deserved his liquidation. Even for a liberal Protestant narrator the story does not contain any stimulation to propagate Jesus' exhortation to love the enemy (Matt 5:44). He argues:

> Pride will have a fall, that is the lesson of the story on Goliath ... For us it is impossible to have compassion with him. On the contrary, it gives us great pleasure that ... he deserved all he got.[15]

[11] L. Borstel, *De Bijbel, schetsen en tafereelen voor Israëlietische huisgezinnen*, Leiden n.d. [1884], 362.
[12] B.J. van Wijk, *De bijbelse geschiedenis aan onze kinderen verteld*, fourth edition, Utrecht 1977, 123.
[13] See, e.g., F.X.M. Schiphorst, *Bijbelse geschiedenis voor het katholieke gezin*, Bilthoven [5]1955, 193.
[14] Van Wijk, *De bijbelse geschiedenis*, 123.
[15] A.J. Oort, *Kinderbijbel, naar de 'De Bijbel voor jongelieden' ...*, dl 1, 's-Gravenhage [3]1903, 259.

Goliath's fate—he was killed by his own sword, and actually the victim of his own violence—induces two interpreters to remark: 'that is the fate of dictators'.[16]

As was remarked already, generally the beheading of Goliath is narrated without commentary. Several retellers, however, go one better and keep silence on it. According to ten consulted 'Bibles', which all date from the second part of the twentieth century, the fight ends with Goliath's fall. His death is described, for example, as follows:

> It [the small stone] struck Goliath on his forehead. He fell face down on the ground. He could not do anything.[17]

> It [the small stone] flied through the air, and struck him [Goliath] behind his ear. Goliath tottered for a moment and then he fell on his back.[18]

All ten 'Bibles' are written by moderate-orthodox or liberal Protestant authors. They save their readers the horrible scene of Goliath's beheading and accommodate the Biblical history to their readers.[19] Some of them even conclude the history with Goliath's death.[20] Others also describe the flight or the persecution of the Philistines, but keep silence on the killing and plundering of the Philistines by the Israelites reported in 1 Samuel 17:51-53.[21] In all these retellings no blood is drawn.

In short, among more recent retellers there is a trend to 'expurgate' the Biblical history and to criticize it implicitly. Explicit criticism, however, is scarce. Only two of the authors consulted are willing to dissociate themselves openly from the beheading, and one of them only in passing and with understanding:

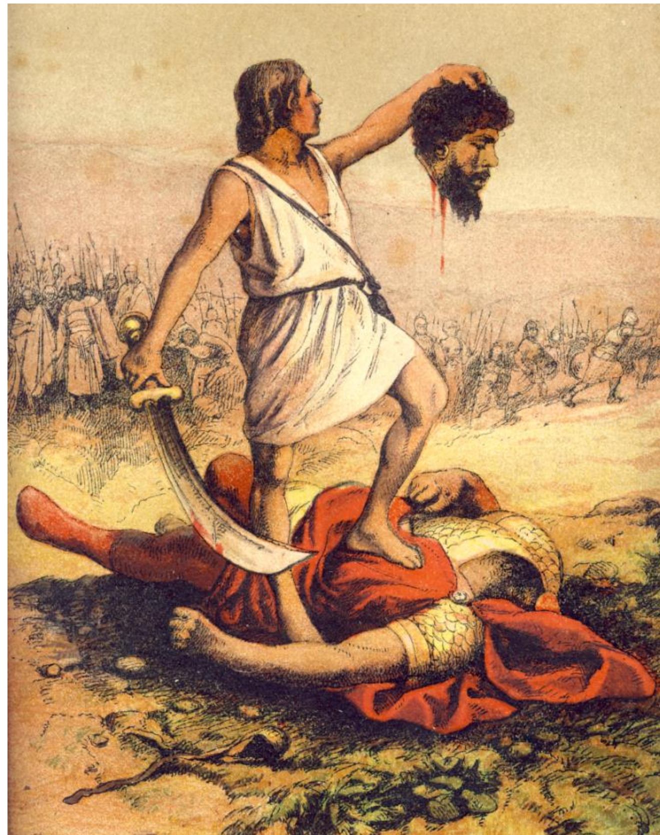
> That [the beheading] is barbarous, but such things happened in those days. It is a pity, but only in that way he [David] can help the Israelites.[22]

More fundamental is the view of the second 'commentator', a liberal Protestant. He frankly acknowledged that we cannot serve God 'by cutting off the heads of men'. He emphasized that 'in understanding the voice of God' there is a difference between us and 'those heroes like David' who lived in quite different times.[23]

[16] J.M. van Minnen, E. de Vries, *Bijbel, thora voor kinderen. Wat de Bijbel vertelt aan kinderen*, Kampen [2]1980, 139.
[17] D.A. Cramer-Schaap, *Bijbelse verhalen voor jonge kinderen*, Amsterdam [2]1958, 162.
[18] K. Eykman, *Woord voor woord. Kinderbijbel: Het Oude Testament*, Wageningen 1976, 146.
[19] Cf. C. Houtman, 'Is de Bijbel geschikt voor kinderen? "Het beste boek" en "de onzedelijkheid" met bijzondere aandacht voor het Réveil', *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* 39, nr. 84 (2016), 3-23.
[20] See, e.g., Eykman, *Woord voor woord*, 146.
[21] See, e.g., Cramer-Schaap, *Bijbelse verhalen*, 162.
[22] Van Minnen, De Vries, *Bijbel, thora voor kinderen*, 139.
[23] R.M. Jones, *Hebreeuwsche helden*. Naar het Amerikaansch door I.C. Thomson-Wentholt, Assen n.d. [1931], 80.

EVALUATION

Modern westerners abhor liquidation by means of cutting off the human head. Already in the second part of the twentieth century, before the 'Islamic State' gave the world a terrible shock by openly demonstrating their cruel practices, several retellers of the story of David and Goliath expressed their dislike of beheading by erasing it from the story. Evidently it gave them an unpleasant feeling. As such they distinguish themselves both from the many retellers in the past who without a qualm gave a true report of the history, and from the many Bible illustrators who showed a plain preference for picturing dramatic scenes. In view of the barbarous actions of IS there will at present very probably not be much enthusiasm to portray David as a lad with a severed head as a trophy in his hand, as was done in earlier days.[24]



[24] The illustration (litho) in the text (David with the head of Goliath as a trophy) has been borrowed from Borstel, *De Bijbel*, opposite to p. 362.

Of course, David was not a villainous headsman and Goliath not an innocent victim, but nevertheless the story evokes negative emotions. Modern westerners hate the confrontation with barbarous forms of personal violence. Often they seem to realize insufficiently that presenting cruel pictures is part of the strategy of IS, and that the other fighting parties, among them 'civilized' nations, conceal the terrible consequences of warfare. Actually the real problem of the story of David and Goliath is not so much the beheading of Goliath, but rather the use of violence and the part of God in it.

It is true, nowhere in the story is it said that David acted on order of the Lord, but it is evident that according to the author of the Books of Samuel he was guided by God. So the enemy's falling by his own sword has been regarded even as a glorification of God.[25]

However it may be, the confrontation of David and Goliath had such a promising start in light of the hopeful credo confessed by David: 'the LORD does not save by sword and spear!' Nevertheless, David himself used a sword when opportunity came, and he did so many times thereafter during his career as a warlord of unusual cruelty (1 Sam 18:7,27; 2 Sam 8:2,4). Moreover, as a true triumphator he 'cherished' Goliath's head and sword as trophies (1 Sam 17:54,57). Notwithstanding his behaviour as victor and his atrocities David is 'decorated' in the Bible with honourable designations as 'man after God's heart' (1 Sam 13:14) and 'servant of the LORD' (1 Kgs 8:66).

In the light of the violent end of the story of David and Goliath, one can yearn for a less 'human' and 'worldly' and a more 'divine' and 'evangelical' ending. Now that the opportunity presents itself, I venture to suggest two more 'comfortable' endings by changing the end of the biblical history.

How beautiful and pleasant it would be if Goliath, after his fall, struck by the stone, but not mortally wounded, would have stood up, and would have, after having thrown away his sword, walked straight on David to shake hands with him, addressing the Israelites with the following words:

> Indeed, the Lord does not save by the sword and spear! We all are foolish men! Let us break the spiral of violence and terminate the hostilities. Let us be reconciled in the name of God and let us live together in peace.

How beautiful and pleasant it would be if David, after defeating Goliath, had said to the Israelites who made themselves ready for persecuting, killing, and plundering the Philistines (cf. 1 Sam 17:52-53):

> Ho! Stop! One victim is already far too much! Let us[26] be generous and let us present our enemies[27] with an attractive peace-offer.[28] For if we continue using violence, there will be no hope for us and our opponents!

[25] J. Hoogwerf, *Vertelboek voor de bijbelsche geschiedenis*, dl 1: *O.T.*, Den Haag n.d. [circa 1930], 523.

[26] Israelites/Israelis.

[27] Philistines/Palestinians.

[28] For a biblical 'parallel', see 2 Kgs 6:21-23.

CONCLUSION

As appears from his publications, Professor Eric Peels, to whom this article is dedicated as a token of friendship, does not evade the 'shadow sides' of the Bible, the problematic aspects of its concept of God as well as the stumbling blocks in its histories.[29] He even seems to regard it as a challenge to explain 'uncomfortable' texts in a satisfactory way. In so doing, he does not leave his readers in doubt about his presuppositions and his strategy. He frankly acknowledges the presence of problematic concepts and histories in Scripture, but adhering to the orthodox view of the authority of the Bible as 'Word of God' he refuses to dissociate himself from them. He prefers 'to continue listening' to the texts with the entire Scripture as their context,[30] in the hope that in that way a satisfactory solution will eventually be found. So he sets himself up as an advocate of a 'method' which in the past was defended, among others, by the illustrious orthodox theologian Abraham Kuyper.[31] In short, Peels seeks a way out by means of intellectual wrestling. I myself prefer a way out as the result of existential wrestling.[32] In my view, a 21st century Christian theologian has the duty to examine critically the 'shadow sides' of the Bible, and to have the courage to dissociate himself frankly from them, if necessary.

[29] See, e.g., his *God en geweld*, and further *Heilig is Zijn naam. Onze godsbeelden en de God van de Bijbel*, Bedum 2000; *Wie is als Gij? Schaduwkanten van het oudtestamentische Godsbeeld*, Zoetermeer ²2007 (ET: *Shadow Sides: God in the Old Testament*, Carlisle 2003).

[30] Peels, *God en geweld*, 43-53.

[31] See C. Augustijn, 'Kuypers rede over "De hedendaagse schriftcritiek" in haar historische context', in: C. Augustijn, J. Vree, *Abraham Kuyper: vast en veranderlijk. De ontwikkeling van zijn denken*, Zoetermeer 1998, 117.

[32] Cf. C. Houtman, 'Lijden aan de Bijbel. Over de kwetsbaarheid van de Schrift', *ThRef* 59 (2016), 195-215, and see the response of Peels with the pretentious title 'Een spade dieper. Over de worsteling om de Schrift recht te doen' (= One spit deeper. About the struggle to do justice to Scripture), *ThRef* 59 (2016), 216-232.

THE CONDITIONAL DYNASTIC PROMISE IN 1 KINGS 2:4

Gert Kwakkel

INTRODUCTION

In 2 Samuel 7, YHWH commissions the prophet Nathan to announce to King David that after the king's death YHWH will establish the kingdom and the throne of his offspring forever (vv. 12-13). If David's son and successor commits iniquity, YHWH 'will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings' (v. 14b), but even so he will never take his steadfast love (חֶסֶד) from him as he took it from Saul (v. 15). On the contrary, David's house and kingdom shall be made sure before YHWH and his throne shall be established forever (v. 16).

Several years later, when David is about to die, he admonishes his son Solomon to walk in the ways of YHWH and to keep his commandments and ordinances, as written in the law of Moses. If Solomon does so, he will be a successful king (1 Kgs 2:1-3). Moreover, YHWH will establish his word spoken concerning David: 'If your heirs take heed to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel' (v. 4). As in 2 Samuel 7, YHWH's promise is about the continuation of David's royal dynasty. However, in 1 Kings 2:4 the continuation is subjected to certain conditions, which is not the case in 2 Samuel 7:12-16. Moreover, in 1 Kings 9:5 God attaches the same conditions to the promise as David does in 2:4. According to both texts, the promise will be fulfilled if David's heirs keep faithful to him. If they refuse to do this, they will not only be punished (as in 2 Sam 7:14), but will also risk losing the throne.

How can one explain that what God first promises unconditionally is submitted to conditions later on? Does this agree with what can be expected from a faithful God? In the present study, several answers to these questions from different perspectives will be brought into conversation with each other and reflected upon. This is done in honour of Eric Peels, a colleague and friend, who always takes his partners in discussions as seriously as possible and is willing to make use of diverse research methods.[1]

A DEUTERONOMISTIC EXPLANATION OF THE END OF THE DAVIDIC MONARCHY

In his famous book on the tradition regarding the succession of King David published in 1926, Leonhard Rost accounted for the difference between 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Kings 2:1-4 in terms of Deuteronomistic editing. In his view, 1 Kings 2:3-4 must be attributed to the Deuteronomist, who also reworked verses 1-2. In 2 Samuel 7:8-16, however, the Deuteronomist merely added verse 13. The rest of the pericope is older: verses 11b and 16 may date from David's time, while

[1] Peels wrote a brief study of 2 Sam 7:1-17: '2 Samuël 7: een fundamentele profetie', in: A.G. Knevel, M.J. Paul (eds), *Verkenningen in de oudtestamentische messiasverwachting* (TV.BE, 8), Kampen 1995, 42-50.

the remaining verses must have been written shortly after the fall of the Northern Kingdom in the eighth century BCE.[2]

Following Rost, Martin Noth considered 1 Kings 2:3-4 a deuteronomistic insertion, because of its formulation and contents. In the insertion, the condition of obedience to the law had been added to the divine promises of 2 Samuel 7:12,14-16, just as in 1 Kings 8:25.[3] A more precise analysis was presented by Timo Veijola, in that he distinguished between two deuteronomistic layers, namely the historical Deuteronomist (DtrG) and the nomistic Deuteronomist (DtrN). Besides, he found more deuteronomistic influence in 2 Samuel 7:8-16, where he attributed verses 8b, 11b, 13 and 16 to DtrG and verse 11a to DtrN. As for 1 Kings 2:3-4, peculiarities such as the repetition of לְמַעַן in verses 3b and 4 and of לֵאמֹר in verse 4 and the nomistic terminology in verses 3b and 4aβ led him to attribute verse 4aα and b to DtrG and verses 3 and 4aβ to DtrN.[4] Both layers date from after 587 BCE and use an idealized picture of David in which messianic hope is projected onto the past. DtrN differs from DtrG in that it rejects human kingship, extends the promises to the people, and makes the promise of an everlasting dynasty conditional upon obedience to the law.[5]

Similarly to Veijola, Frank Moore Cross related the discrepancy between 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Kings 2:4 to two editions of the Deuteronomistic History. Although Cross identified several ancient elements in 2 Samuel 7, he attributed its present form, with some minor exceptions, to the extensive first edition, Dtr[1], dating from King Josiah's days. In agreement with the standard Judaean ideology, Dtr[1] presents Nathan's oracle as an unconditional divine decree in which eternal kingship was promised to David's dynasty. 1 Kings 2:4 is part of the second edition, the exilic Dtr[2], which attempted to update the work of its predecessor in order to come to terms with the recent collapse of the Judaean monarchy.[6]

A DEUTERONOMISTIC EXPLANATION OF THE SCHISM

The common thread to the above interpretations is that the conditions as found in 1 Kings 2:4 were added during the Exile to account for the apparent non-fulfilment of the promise. This point of view has been contested by Richard Nelson, who otherwise agrees with Cross' theory

[2] L. Rost, *Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids* (BWANT, 3/6), Stuttgart 1926, 55-68, 89-91.

[3] See M. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien. Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament*, Tübingen ²1957, 66; M. Noth, *Könige*, Bd 1 (BKAT), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1968, 8-9 and esp. 29-30.

[4] T. Veijola, *Die ewige Dynastie. David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie nach der deuteronomischen Darstellung* (STAT, B/193), Helsinki 1975, 22-29, 68-79. Other passages in Kings referring to David's faithfulness or the continuation of his dynasty which Veijola attributes to DtrN include 1 Kgs 3:6,14; 11:4,6,33,38; 14:8; 15:3; 2 Kgs 14:3; cf. *Ewige Dynastie*, 141 n. 104.

[5] Veijola, *Ewige Dynastie*, 127-138; T. Veijola, *Das Königtum in der Beurteilung der deuteronomistischen Historiographie. Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (STAT, B/198), Helsinki 1977, 115-122; *Verheissung in der Krise. Studien zur Literatur und Theologie der Exilszeit anhand des 89. Psalms* (STAT, B/220), Helsinki 1982, 143-161.

[6] F.M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, Cambridge 1973, 237-265, 274-289; on 1 Kgs 2:4, see esp. 287. For a recent slightly different view, involving an alternative interpretation of 1 Kgs 2:3-4; 6:12; 9:4-5, see A.L. Joseph, 'Who Is Like David? Was David Like David? Good Kings in the Book of Kings', *CBQ* 77 (2015), 33-41.

of a double redaction of the Deuteronomistic History.[7] Nelson rightly draws attention to the fact that in the Books of Kings parallels to 1 Kings 2:4 occur only in the story of Solomon's reign (i.e. in 1 Kgs 8:25 and 9:4-5). In his view, the oracle quoted by David in 1 Kings 2:4 has no relationship with Nathan's oracle as set forth in 2 Samuel 7. Unlike the latter, the former merely concerned the son of David that would be his father's direct successor.[8] The 'throne of Israel' (כִּסֵּא יִשְׂרָאֵל) which is promised on condition of obedience is that of the Northern kingdom, not Judah. Since Solomon failed to meet the condition, David's house lost that throne. The oracle quoted in 1 Kings 2:4 thus serves to explain the schism of 1 Kings 12. Since it was fulfilled in the schism, albeit in a negative way, it did not need any further fulfilment as in the Babylonian exile. Moreover, it does not contradict the unconditional promises of 2 Samuel 7, as these were fulfilled in the 'fief' (נִיר) reserved for David's and Solomon's descendants (1 Kgs 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kgs 8:19). Accordingly, 2 Samuel 7 and the conditional promise of 1 Kings 2:4 can both be part of the first deuteronomistic edition.[9]

Like Nelson, Baruch Halpern relates the conditional promises in 1 Kings 2:2-4, 8:25 and 9:4-5 to the schism instead of the exile. However, he differs from Nelson in that he takes כסא ישׂראל as referring to the united kingdom and not only to the northern tribes. Moreover, he does not deny the relationship between the conditional promises such as 1 Kings 2:2-4 and 2 Samuel 7. In his view, the conditional promises are part of the deuteronomistic historian's interpretation of Nathan's oracle. In its present shape, 2 Samuel 7 does not specify the extent of the territory over which David was promised perpetual dominion. This remarkable fact may be due to the historian's reshaping of the chapter. Whatever the case, he used it to propagate the idea that the unconditional promise of an everlasting dynasty was fulfilled by the preservation of the two tribes, while the loss of the ten tribes could be attributed to Solomon's failure to meet the conditions mentioned in 1 Kings 2. This loss corresponded to the 'rod' by which David's son would be disciplined when he committed iniquity, according to 2 Samuel 7:14. It was 'a territorial sanction against a perpetual dynasty'.[10]

Halpern's view marks a step forward in comparison with Nelson's. He eliminates some weak points in Nelson's argument,[11] for example when he links כסא ישׂראל with the united kingdom, which agrees with the meaning of the expression in all other texts in 1 Kings 1-11 in which it occurs, namely 8:20 and 10:9. Yet his discussion of the way in which the deuteronomistic historian used and interpreted 2 Samuel 7 is not fully satisfactory. Would any reader of the present text ever have thought that Nathan's oracle involved only an abstract dominion instead of one over all Israel? Does this interpretation not arouse the suspicion of manipulating the text?

[7] R.D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTS, 18), Sheffield 1981, 27-29, 121, 127.

[8] Note that Nelson, *Double Redaction*, 102-103, relates the plural בָּנֶיךָ 'your sons' in 1 Kgs 2:4 to David's own sons who attempted to succeed their father on the throne.

[9] Nelson, *Double Redaction*, 99-118.

[10] B. Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History*, San Francisco/Cambridge etc. 1988, 156-175; quotation from p. 167. A similar view has been defended by A. Laato, 'Psalm 132 and the Development of the Jerusalemite/Israelite Royal Ideology', *CBQ* 54 (1992), 53-54, 57. A recent publication in which Laato's argument is followed is H. Angel, 'The Eternal Davidic Covenant in II Samuel Chapter 7 and Its Later Manifestations in the Bible', *JBQ* 44 (2016), 84-85, 89.

[11] As those identified by I.W. Provan, *Hezekiah and the Books of Kings: A Contribution to the Debate about the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (BZAW, 172), Berlin/New York, 1988, 107-110.

Before moving to an alternative view from a synchronic perspective, a minor observation can be made as to the attribution of 1 Kings 2:3-4 to deuteronomistic editing. Evidently, several expressions in these verses are reminiscent of Deuteronomy and related literature, in particular the phrase about keeping God's statutes, commandments and ordinances (חֻקֹּתָיו מִצְוֹתָיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו) in verse 3[12] and the clause 'with all their heart and with all their soul' (בְּכָל־לְבָבָם וּבְכָל־נַפְשָׁם) in verse 4.[13] Therefore, irrespective of the position taken on redaction-critical matters, all interpreters of these verses must account for their relation with Deuteronomy and related passages in the Deuteronomistic History, in particular 1 Kings 3:14; 6:12; 8:25; 9:4-5; 11:33,38; 14:8.

As for Veijola's arguments in support of breaking down 1 Kings 2:1-4 into two layers, the most conspicuous peculiarity is the repetition of לאמר in verse 4. However, as Charles Burney has pointed out, the function of the second לאמר may be to introduce 'the express words of the promise after a brief summary of the conditions'.[14] Since the other peculiarities adduced by Veijola also do not require a breaking down of the text, his analysis will not be pursued in this study.

DAVID ATTEMPTS TO MANIPULATE HIS SON

Unlike the readings of the authors mentioned above, Lyle Eslinger advocates a synchronic narratological analysis, in which he sharply distinguishes between the utterances of the characters in the text and the point of view of the author or the narrator. He affirms that in 1 Kings 2:3-4 David uses deuteronomistic language and deliberately makes the promises of 2 Samuel 7:13-16 conditional. David does this, because he wants to force or allure Solomon so that the young and insecure king will carry out his father's murderous instructions found in verses 5-9. In other words, there is manipulation in the text, but it is the character David who makes use of it, not the deuteronomistic historian.[15]

Eslinger is correct in affirming that David's words do not necessarily correspond to what the author of Kings or the narrator intends to communicate. Still, in the following chapters God attaches conditions to his promises no less than David (see 1 Kgs 3:14; 6:12-13; 9:4-5). This raises the question as to whether God also attempts to manipulate Solomon. According to Eslinger, this is exactly what God strives for. He changes the terms of the agreement of 2 Samuel 7:13-16 to trap Solomon so as to bring the king to his downfall through his inability to keep the terms, and to free himself from the promise of an everlasting dynasty.[16]

Eslinger's solution to the problem of the tension between Nathan's oracle and David's last words is provocative, to say the least. It implies, however, a suspicious reading of God's words and acts that goes so far that the question arises whether such a reading could ever agree with

[12] Cf. Deut 8:11; 11:1; 30:16; 1 Kgs 6:12; 2 Kgs 17:34.

[13] See, e.g., Deut 4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 1 Kgs 8:48; 2 Kgs 23:25.

[14] C.F. Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings*, Oxford 1903, 14. Burney refers to similar cases 'of resumption after an intervening sentence' in 1 Kgs 1:30; 8:30,41-42; 13:11; 1 Sam 29:10; Lev 17:5. In addition, a nice parallel can be detected in 2 Sam 3:12 (also with a repeated לאמר, in most manuscripts).

[15] L. Eslinger, *Into the Hands of the Living God* (JSOTS, 84), Sheffield 1989, 126-127. J.T. Walsh, *1 Kings* (Berit Olam), Collegeville 1996, 37-40, interprets the text along lines similar to Eslinger, but does not suggest a solution to the problem of the incongruity between 2 Sam 7 and 1 Kgs 1.

[16] Eslinger, *Into the Hands*, 135-138, 141-143, 145-147, 178-181.

the intention of biblical books such as Kings. Is this really the best way out of the tension between the mainly unconditional promises of Nathan's oracle and their conditional counterparts in 1 Kings 2?

NATHAN'S ORACLE IS MORE CONDITIONAL THAN IT SEEMS

Obviously, the problem would be solved if it can be demonstrated that the promise of a perpetual Davidic dynasty in 2 Samuel 7 was implicitly conditional right from the beginning. This is exactly what Michael Avioz has attempted to do in an article published in 2012.[17]

Michael Avioz

Avioz takes issue with Moshe Weinfeld's interpretation of God's covenant with David. According to Weinfeld, two types of covenant should be distinguished, namely the obligatory and the promissory. The former is represented in, for example, the Hittite treaties and was conditional. The latter corresponds to ancient Near Eastern royal grants as found, for example, in the Babylonian *kudurru*'s (boundary stones). By means of such grants servants of the king were rewarded for loyal service. More particularly, God's gift of land to Abraham and of a house (i.e. a dynasty) to David reflects the grants given by Hittite suzerains to their privileged vassals. Just like these grants, God's gift to David was unconditional; what had been given could not be taken away any more. It was only later on that the Deuteronomist put the promise under condition, in order to account for the Exile.[18]

In his rebuttal, Avioz heavily relies on a critical review of Weinfeld's argument by Gary Knoppers.[19] Knoppers has made several convincing methodological comments, which need not be reproduced here. For the present discussion, it suffices to say that he has pointed out that the closest analogy to God's promise of a perpetual dynasty can be found, not in Assyrian land grants, but in Hittite vassal treaties, such as that of Tudḫaliya IV with Ulmi-Tešup. Knoppers holds that in these treaties the recipient of the promise of dynastic succession is not devoid of obligations. Instead, the promise is commonly contingent upon continuing vassal loyalty, which is either stipulated or assumed. The same is true of all ancient Near Eastern royal grants: in all likelihood, they were predominantly conditional.[20]

In support of his own interpretation of Nathan's oracle, Avioz also draws on arguments taken from the Old Testament. He posits that the Saul narratives show that the author of Samuel 'regarded every royal covenant as conditional'. In fact, all covenants made by God were conditional, including the covenant with Abraham. As for the conditional nature of God's covenant with David, Avioz points also to 2 Samuel 23:5. In this text, David qualifies the

[17] M. Avioz, 'The Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7: Conditional or Unconditional?', in: G. Galil, A. Gilboa *et al.* (eds), *The Ancient Near East in the 12th-10th Centuries BCE: Culture and History: Proceedings of the International Conference Held at the University of Haifa, 2-5 May, 2010* (AOAT, 392), Münster 2012, 43-51.

[18] M. Weinfeld, 'The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East', *JAOS* 90 (1970), 184-196; cf. also M. Weinfeld, 'בְּרִית', in: *ThWAT* I, 799-801 (ET: 'בְּרִית *b^e^rîth*', in: *TDOT* II, 270-272). Note that Weinfeld, 'Covenant of Grant', 196a, admits that a conditional conception of God's promise may have existed alongside the unconditional; however, this has no impact whatsoever on his argument.

[19] G.N. Knoppers, 'Ancient Near Eastern Royal Grants and the Davidic Covenant: A Parallel?', *JAOS* 116 (1996), 670-697.

[20] Knoppers, 'Royal Grants', 682b-683a, 684a, 686a, 692a, 696b.

everlasting covenant (בְּרִית־עוֹלָם) which God has made with him as עֲרוּכָה. According to Avioz, this word, which he translates as 'well-organized in and properly explained', 'supports the assumption that the covenant between God and David is conditional'.[21]

Avioz's argument is brief and not convincing in all respects. To mention just one point: it seems very doubtful that so much can be inferred from ערוכה in 2 Samuel 23:5 as Avioz has done. Yet his contribution evokes two questions that merit further reflection. The first relates to the implications of the fact that God's promise to David is referred to as a ברית in several texts (see Jer 33:21; Ps 89:4,29,35; 2 Chr 13:5; 21:7 in particular). The second concerns the implications of the parallels found in the Hittite treaties.

Covenant-making

As for the first question, when taken in isolation 2 Samuel 7 can evidently not be read as the record of a formal ritual of covenant-making (in contrast to, e.g., Gen 15:7-21; Exod 24:1-11; Jer 34:18-19). It merely describes how Nathan informed David about God's reaction to David's intention to build a temple and God's promises regarding the future of the royal family. Furthermore, these promises are rarely referred to as a ברית in the Books of Samuel and Kings. Apart from 2 Samuel 23:5, where בֵּיתִי 'my house' provides a link with 2 Samuel 7,[22] the only text in which this may be the case is 1 Kings 11:11, where YHWH charges Solomon with not having kept בְּרִיתִי וְחֻקֹּתַי 'my covenant and statutes'. However, since this phrase relates to Solomon's idolatry (see v. 10), בריתי could refer equally well to the Sinaitic or the Deuteronomic covenant.[23]

It follows that the Deuteronomistic History itself does not provide clear indications that God's promises in 2 Samuel 7 should be interpreted as part of a ברית. This can be done only in terms of a canonical or biblical-theological reading, which also considers texts such as Psalm 89:4,29,35. Even so, it is unwarranted to conclude that God's promise in 2 Samuel 7:15-16 must be conditional, merely because it can be regarded as part of a ברית.

This claim can be substantiated from God's ברית with Noah in Genesis 9. Genesis 9:4-6 reveals that Noah and his descendants were by no means exempted from obligations. Nevertheless, God's covenantal promise that never again there will be a flood to destroy the earth (Gen 9:11) is clearly unconditional. Similarly, if 2 Samuel 7 is interpreted as the making of a ברית, there is obviously a conditional element in verse 7:14b (about the rod with which David's son may be punished). Yet this does not alter the fact that the key promise in verses 15-16 may still be taken as unconditional.[24]

Hittite vassal treaties

As for the second question, two Hittite vassal treaties deserve closer examination. The first is the treaty of the Hittite King Tudḫaliya IV with King Kurunta of Tarḫuntašša. In this treaty, Kurunta and his descendants receive kingship over Tarḫuntašša for ever, as a reward for his loyalty. If Kurunta's son or grandson commits treason against his Hittite suzerain, the latter will deal with him as he desires, but even then Kurunta's house (dynasty) and land will not be given to someone who is not a descendant of Kurunta. If need be, Kurunta and Tudḫaliya and their

[21] Avioz, 'Davidic Covenant', 46, 49-50 (all quotations are from p. 49).

[22] See 2 Sam 7:11,16,18,19,25-27,29.

[23] Cf. 1 Kgs 19:10,14; 2 Kgs 17:15,35,38; 18:12.

[24] Cf. G. Kwakkel, 'Verplichting of relatie: verbonden in Genesis. Henk de Jong en zijn visie op het verbond', in: J. Bouma, F. Gerkema *et al.* (eds), *Verrassend vertrouwd. Een halve eeuw verkondiging en theologie van Henk de Jong*, Franeker 2009, 121-123, 130.

descendants are obliged to mutual loyalty and assistance. For Kurunta this implies, among other things, that he must supply a contingent of 100 or 200 soldiers, as the case may be. If Kurunta fails to comply with the treaty clauses and becomes disloyal to the King of Ḫatti, the gods who serve as witnesses to the treaty are relied upon to destroy him with his posterity.[25]

The other treaty was made between either King Ḫattušili III or Tudḫaliya IV of Ḫatti and King Ulmi-Tešub of Tarḫuntašša. According to some scholars, Ulmi-Tešub was the same person as Kurunta; if not, he may have reigned shortly before or after him.[26] As in the treaty with Kurunta, Ulmi-Tešub and his descendants are guaranteed inalienable kingship over Tarḫuntašša, even in case of disloyalty of a son or grandson of Ulmi-Tešub, which could eventually lead to execution by the King of Ḫatti. As for the conditions, Ulmi-Tešub is ordered not to overstep the boundaries of his territory set by his Hittite suzerain. He must further rally 200 men for future Hittite campaigns and offer help against revolts. If he does not respect the stipulations or refuses support to the Hittite King or his son, the Thousand gods shall blot him out with his wife, offspring and whatever belongs to him.[27]

The obvious parallel between God's words to David about the consequences of iniquity committed by David's son in 2 Samuel 7:14b-16 and the Hittite treaties immediately catches the eye. All three texts provide for chastisement of a disloyal descendant, but explicitly preclude a change of dynasty. Still, the treaties differ from 2 Samuel 7 in that they specify a number of obligations to be fulfilled by the vassal and—in the treaty with Kurunta—his descendants. Moreover, if the treaty is not respected, the gods are expected to blot out the very descendants of the vassal who were promised everlasting kingship! Admittedly, the words invoking divine wrath are fairly formulaic, as a comparison with other texts shows.[28] Even so they may indicate that the promise of an everlasting dynasty was less unconditional than one may be inclined to think at first sight. This also seems to follow from the logic of such treaties. If, for example, the king of Tarḫuntašša defected to the king of Egypt time and again, would his Hittite suzerain leave the dynasty undisturbed and just wait for the gods to intervene? This seems very improbable.

If it can be assumed that David or the author of Samuel and his first readers were familiar with customs like those reflected in the Hittite treaties, they may have realized that continuous disloyalty in the future could undermine the promise of an everlasting dynasty, even if this was not explicitly stipulated. Conversely, however, one might also argue that it was precisely the absence of obligations and divine curses that struck those who were informed about Nathan's oracle. Therefore, additional arguments are needed to arrive at firm conclusions.

1 Samuel 2:27-36

In contrast to what Avioz has asserted, it seems hard to derive such arguments from the Saul narratives. Unlike David Saul was never promised a dynasty. Samuel brought up the possibility of an everlasting kingship only when Saul had already forfeited it (1 Sam 13:13). Moreover, in 2 Samuel 7:14b-15 Nathan says with so many words that God's reaction upon sinful behaviour of David's son would differ from what he had done to Saul (2 Sam 7:14b-15).

[25] See §§ 14-17, 20-22 and 25-26 of the treaty in *COS* 2.18; K.A. Kitchen, P.J.N. Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East*, Part 1: *The Texts*, Wiesbaden 2012, No. 73.

[26] For a brief discussion and bibliography, see K.A. Kitchen, P.J.N. Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East*, Part 2: *Text, Notes and Chromograms*, Wiesbaden 2012, 62-63.

[27] See Kitchen, Lawrence, *Treaty*, Part 1, No. 74.

[28] See *COS* 2.17A:95, 2.17B:98.

A more relevant parallel can be found in 1 Samuel 2:27-36, the prophecy about the downfall of Eli's priestly family. This passage not only shares the motif of a dynasty with 2 Samuel 7, but also has several words in common with this chapter and the last verses of 2 Samuel 6.[29] In verses 27-29, an unknown prophet reminds Eli of his God-given privileges and exposes his sinful behaviour. In verse 30 he goes on to say: 'Therefore the Lord the God of Israel declares: "I promised that your family and the family of your ancestor should go in and out before me forever"; but now the LORD declares: "Far be it from me; for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be treated with contempt".' The prophet makes no mention of any condition attached to God's promise of everlasting priestly service. Yet he says that YHWH vehemently refuses to continue to fulfil the promise, because of the contemptuous behaviour of Eli and his sons.

Obviously, several issues could be raised regarding this text, such as its redaction-historical position and the relations between the priestly families of Aaron, Eli and Zadok. Irrespective of the decisions taken in these matters, from this text onward readers of Samuel and Kings know that YHWH reserves the right to cancel a promise if the behaviour of its recipients runs counter to his expectations. Apparently, he did not think it necessary to stipulate explicitly things that could be considered self-evident at all times. For God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:15-16 this means that readers could ponder the possibility that similar conditions applied to its fulfilment. And after reading the story of David's adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah they had even more reason to take this into account.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the following observations can be made:

1. Unlike Nathan's oracle in 2 Samuel 7:11-16, David's final address to Solomon in 1 Kings 2:3-4 puts emphasis on the conditional nature of the promise of an everlasting kingship. From a diachronic or historical-critical perspective these verses and related passages such as 1 Kings 8:25 and 9:4-5 can plausibly be attributed to deuteronomistic editing. If so, it is more likely to connect these passages with the schism which followed Solomon's death than with the fall of the Davidic dynasty in the sixth century BCE, as Nelson and Halpern have demonstrated.

2. In agreement with traditional diachronic analysis, this study has interpreted 1 Kings 2:3-4 mainly in conjunction with 2 Samuel 7 and passages referring to the dynastic promise in the following chapters of 1 Kings. The function of the passage in its own context, on which Eslinger concentrated, is worth further investigation. In that connection, priority should be given to an in-depth assessment of the actions to be taken by Salomon according to verses 5-9, to find out whether they are really inspired by mere revengefulness, as is commonly assumed.[30]

3. For modern readers, there is a gap between the unconditional promise of 2 Samuel 7 and the conditions mentioned in 1 Kings 2:3-4. Yet a good case can be made for the idea that by adding conditions, David makes explicit what a well-informed reader might have surmised, based on what God apparently expects from those who receive his promises. In support of this contention, one could point in particular to 1 Samuel 2:30.[31] Further confirmation might be found in Hittite vassal treaties.

4. In the end, the most amazing thing is not that conditions attached to God's promise to David. The really astonishing thing is that God was willing to continue his relationship with David and his descendants, though in another way than those may have expected who first heard about the dynastic promises of 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Kings 2.[32]

[29] Apart from בית, the following words can be noted (the list is not exhaustive): בחר in 1 Sam 2:28; 2 Sam 6:21; כבד versus קלל in 1 Sam 2:29-30; 2 Sam 6:20,22 (cf. R. Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History, Part Two: 1 Samuel*, San Francisco/New York etc. 1989, 69-70); עַד־עוֹלָם in 1 Sam 2:30; 2 Sam 7:13,16,24-26; נֶאֱמָן in 1 Sam 2:35; 2 Sam 7:16. Note also the correlation between 1 Sam 2:33 and 1 Kgs 2:4 (לְךָ + כרת + לֹא + אִישׁ).

[30] Cf. the contribution of Jin Soo Kim to this *Festschrift*: 'David's Last Words: Understanding 1 Kings 2:1-9 Based on an Intertextual Reading'.

[31] Cf. also Kwakkel, 'Verplichting of relatie', 124, 130, on Gen 18:19.

[32] Cf. 1 Kgs 11:13,36; Isa 9:5-6; 55:3-4; Jer 33:17,20-22; Luke 1:32-33.

DAVID'S LAST WORDS

Understanding 1 Kings 2:1-9 Based on an Intertextual Reading

Jin Soo Kim

INTRODUCTION

Many Bible readers might remember that David is the king of kings who was 'a man after God's own heart' (1 Sam 13:14) and received for his seed the promise of an everlasting kingship (2 Sam 7:16).[1] 1 Kings 2:1-9 contains David's last will, which he left to his successor Solomon before his death. It is natural to expect that this passage would present some godly words from David consistent with the valuation of him as 'a man after God's own heart'. Moreover, his successor Solomon was the person who was to inaugurate the new epoch of peace as his name שְׁלֹמֹה indicates (cf. 2 Sam 7:11; 1 Kgs 4:24 [5:4]). Accordingly, more than anything else, the average Bible reader might anticipate that David would have mentioned matters related to peace in his final testament.

When 1 Kings 2:1-9 is read, however, readers might suspect that such an anticipation is inaccurate. Of course, the passage is not without the godly instruction that the king should rule over the people according to the Mosaic laws so that his reign may be prosperous (vv. 1-4). Surprisingly enough, however, along with these pious advices appear the cold-blooded commands resembling vicious political liquidation (vv. 5-9). In particular, the mention of the names Joab and Shimei in this context aggravates the readers' confusion. Joab accompanied David life long as his military commander in chief and did not even hesitate to do 'dirty work' for him. What about Shimei? Although Shimei once made the grave mistake of cursing David, his life was spared due to David's generous forgiveness (2 Sam 19:23). Disregarding all this past history, David ultimately orders to kill them. How should these apparent contradictions be understood?

Several scholars have tried to explain the tensions assumed to appear in David's last words. The conclusions of their studies are diverse: from construing it as David's ignoble political revenge[2] to regarding it as his 'calculated political advice to ensure the stability of the throne after he is gone'.[3] Furthermore, the passage is often labelled either as a pro-Solomonic apology

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[1] Cf. the contribution of Gert Kwakkel to this *Festschrift*: 'The Conditional Dynastic Promise of 1 Kings 2:4'.

[2] Cf. J.P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*, Vol. 1: *King David*, Assen 1981, 386; J.W. Wesselius, 'Joab's Death and the Central Theme of the Succession Narrative (2 Samuel IX-1 Kings 1-5)', *CBQ* 57 (1995), 482. According to W. Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings* (SHBC), Georgia 2000, 39, David's last words are dominated by a passion inconsistent with the requirements of Torah: 'However, it is enough to recognize that David on his deathbed is a person of deep contradiction and incongruity, caught between the clear claims of faith and the obvious requirements of raw power.'

[3] J.S. Rogers, 'Narrative Stock and Deuteronomistic Elaboration in 1 Kings 2', *CBQ* 50 (1988), 409.

ad maiorem gloriam Salomonis[4] or as 'Solomonic propaganda' fabricated to justify the bloody executions described in 1 Kings 2:12-46.[5]

The differing viewpoints suggest that scholars approach the passage with their own interpretive suppositions, not to mention various methods. However, though interpretive variety must be prized, the effort to find the essential meaning peculiar to the passage must continue. As part of this endeavour, I seek to understand David's last words in 1 Kings 2:1-9 by reading them intertextually in connection with 2 Samuel 23:1-7. Although the two passages are different in literary form, both recount David's last words.[6] This paper takes it for granted that intertextual reading is not merely a matter of interpretive choice but the reading that the present Old Testament canon requires.

DIFFERING VIEWPOINTS

In order to clarify the point at issue, it is necessary to inquire into other scholars' ideas. Sophia Bietenhard and Michael Eschelbach, for example, make use of two distinct exegetical methods (diachrony and synchrony) prevalent in present Old Testament exegesis. Interestingly, however, both come to the same conclusion. The third person who will be introduced in this paper is Benjamin Scolnic, who tries to understand the passage in its original cultural and religious context.

Sophia K. Bietenhard

In her doctoral thesis focusing on the Joab passages in 2 Samuel 2-20 and 1 Kings 1-2,[7] Bietenhard attempts a diachronic analysis on the basis of the tensions in content appearing in those passages. She argues that Joab was originally David's loyal subject representing the people of the tribe of Judah and David's servants, but that he was transformed into an anti-Davidic person in the hands of redactors. According to Bietenhard, Joab supported Adonijah's succession to the throne not because of personal ambition but considering the national interests of Israel along with that of the tribe of Judah. In her view, the present text, which casts a negative light on Adonijah and his followers, is the end product of pro-Solomonic redaction which idealized Solomon's party who won the power struggle. Given the obvious tensions in the text—for example, the contrast between the instruction to keep the law and the cold-blooded command to kill—, Bietenhard insists that David's last words in 1 Kings 2:1-9 are to be tagged as editorial additions intended to justify the bloody executions made by Solomon. What David says about Joab and Shimei—that is, Joab's immoral murder of Abner and Amasa, and Shimei's malicious curse on David—are theologizing reasoning through which the redactors attempted

[4] See L. Rost, *Die Überlieferung von der Thronfolge Davids*, Stuttgart 1926, 89-91, 128. Cf. G.N. Knoppers, *Two Nations under God: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies*, Vol. 1: *The Reign of Solomon and the Rise of Jeroboam* (HSM, 52), Atlanta 1993, 64-67.

[5] E.A. Seibert, *Subversive Scribes and the Solomonic Narrative: A Rereading of 1 Kings 1-11* (LHB/OTS, 436), New York 2006, 135. Cf. M. Noth, *I Könige 1-16* (BKAT), Neukirchen-Vluyn ^{2}1983, 31; E. Würthwein, *Studien zum Deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk* (BZAW, 227), Berlin 1994, 38.

[6] No word like 'testament' or 'last words' appears in 1 Kgs 2:1-9. Nevertheless, the expression in 1a (וַיִּקְרְבוּ יְמֵי־דָוִד לָמוּת) characterizes the passage as David's last words.

[7] S.K. Bietenhard, *Des Königs General. Die Heerführertraditionen in der vorstaatlichen und frühen staatlichen Zeit und die Joabgestalt in 2 Sam 2-20; 1 Kön 1-2* (OBO, 163), Göttingen 1998.

to cover up the horrible executions, the cause of which could only be found in cold-blooded power politics.

Michael A. Eschelbach

Unlike Bietenhard, Eschelbach takes a synchronic approach to the Joab passages in 2 Samuel and 1 Kings.[8] Eschelbach investigates the literary and artistic characteristics of the texts so as to suggest a fresh understanding of David's relation with Joab. Surprisingly, his portrait of Joab is not much different from Bietenhard's. Whereas Bietenhard comes to a very positive image of Joab through diachronic analysis, Eschelbach achieves the same result through synchronic analysis. Eschelbach, however, regards the positive image of Joab as a kind of 'foil' that functions to reveal David's character more clearly.

How does Eschelbach come to such an understanding of David's last words in 1 Kings 2:1-9? First of all, he pays attention to the fact that this passage moves from David's admonition concerning the significance of obeying the law (vv. 3-4) to his instructions to punish or reward some people (vv. 5-9). In this movement, he argues, the evil aspects of David's character are brought to light.[9] He traces back David's instructions concerning Joab and Shimei to his 'old personal grievances' against them. David's arguments in favour of the executions are as a matter of fact no more than pretexts invented to justify 'bitter personal vengeance.'[10]

Echelbach thinks that also the Amasa episode in 2 Samuel 20 portrays David negatively. David's personnel policy—to try to acquire the support of the opposing party by promoting Amasa, Absalom's military commander, to the same post in his regime—was by no means commendable and, most of all, was unjust to Joab. The fact that Joab was not punished for killing Amasa, he conjectures, testifies to the validity of his hostility against the latter. In particular, Eschelbach gives great significance to Amasa's attitude in his dealing with Sheba's revolt. He claims that if the narrator's remark on Amasa's delay in this incident is taken seriously, Joab's measure of killing him can be justified. In Eschelbach's view, David attests to Amasa's failure by placing the latter's duty in Abishai's charge (2 Sam 20:6).

Benjamin E. Scolnic

Benjamin Scolnic, a Jewish Rabbi, rightly argues that modern readers can only understand difficult passages in the Old Testament, if they do not judge them according to their own modern values or ethical standards. Instead, they must pay attention to the values of the times in which they were written. Scolnic, therefore, attempts to inquire into David's last words, which have often become an arena of competition for clever interpretation.[11]

Scolnic tries to illuminate David's last words against the backdrop of ancient Israel's conceptual world. He notes that in explaining the causes compelling Joab's execution, David repeatedly mentions 'blood': 'He killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime as if in battle, and with that blood he stained the belt around his waist and the sandals on his feet' (1 Kgs 2:5b, NIV). According to Scolnic, 'blood' is 'the dangerous moral disease carried by people who

[8] M.A. Eschelbach, *Has Joab Foiled David? A Literary Study of the Importance of Joab's Character in Relation to David*, Unpublished Ph.D. Diss., Westminster Theological Seminary 1999.

[9] Eschelbach, *Has Joab Foiled David?*, 98-99. Cf. Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, 39: 'However, it is enough to recognize that David on his deathbed is a person of deep contradiction and incongruity, caught between the clear claims of faith and the obvious requirements of raw power.'

[10] Eschelbach, *Has Joab Foiled David?*, 100. Similarly Fokkelman, *King David*, 386.

[11] B.E. Scolnic, 'David's Final Testament: Morality or Expediency?', *Judaism* 43 (1994), 19-26.

commit unrighteous manslaughter'.[12] He calls attention to the fact that several Old Testament passages teach that if anyone sheds the blood of the innocent, that blood shall be on his own head (Jos 2:19; 2 Sam 1:16; 16:8; 1 Kgs 2:37; Jer 26:15). The blood of those who are unjustly killed is like a 'dangerous disease' and a 'poison' such that its effect extends to the killer himself and all his family, and 'even when the "man of blood" dies, the poison is passed on and remains active in the lives of his descendants' (cf. 2 Sam 21:1-14).

Based on these observations, Scolnic argues that David's instructions to Solomon concerning Joab were intended to protect him and his kingdom from the influence of unjust bloodshed. David was compelled to give these instructions because Joab stood in close relation with David himself. Therefore, David had to take responsibility for Joab's crime. In particular, since David himself once experienced the terrifying reality of God's punishment for unjust bloodshed (cf. 2 Sam 12:7-12), he felt 'threatened to the core of his personality by his association with, or complicity in, the "blood-guilt" of Joab'. For these reasons, David ordered the execution of Joab intending to recover 'the moral purity' of his kingdom and thereby guarantee 'God's protection'.[13]

Evaluation

So far various viewpoints on David's last words in 1 Kings 2:1-9 have been examined. Though Bietenhard and Eschelbach differ in their approach to the passage (diachrony vs. synchrony), they both give a negative explanation of the image of David portrayed in it. To their minds, David's instructions about Joab and Shimei originated from his personal desire for revenge. Scolnic, however, offers an opposing view by construing David's testament in light of ancient Israel's conceptual world. The present author regards Scolnic's view as the one best conforming to the passage's intention. The only weakness in Scolnic's study is that it cannot give an adequate explanation of the literary tensions in the text, since its argument is mainly based on the supposition of ancient Israel's conceptual world. The present study attempts to supplement Scolnic's view by way of an 'intertextual reading' of the passage.

AN INTERTEXTUAL READING OF 1 KINGS 2:1-9

1 Kings 2:1-9 pictures David leaving his last words to his successor Solomon. Therefore, it is necessary to compare them with 'David's last words' (דִּבְרֵי דָוִד הָאַחֲרֹנִים) in 2 Samuel 23:1-7:[14]

I. Superscription and Introduction (vv. 1-2)

1. These are David's last words,
   the utterance (נְאֻם) of David son of Jesse,
   the utterance (נְאֻם) of the man exalted on high (הַגֶּבֶר הֻקַם עָל),
   the anointed one of the God of Jacob,
   the sweet psalmist of Israel (וּנְעִים זְמִרוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל).
2. The Spirit of YHWH speaks through me,
   his word is on my tongue.

[12] Scolnic, 'David's Final Testament', 23.
[13] Scolnic, 'David's Final Testament', 23.
[14] Translation is mine.

II. Successful Ways to Perform Kingly Office (vv. 3-5)

3. The God of Israel said,
   the Rock of Israel spoke to me:
   'He who rules over men in righteousness,
   he who rules in the fear of God,
4. he is like the light of the morning when the sun rises,
   even a morning without clouds,
   like a grass springing out of the earth because of the brightness after rain.'
5. Truly (כִּי־לֹא),[15] my house is so with God,
   for he has made an everlasting covenant with me,
   prepared in all things, and secured.
   Truly (כִּי־לֹא), he will make all my salvation and all my desire prosper.

III. Those Hindering the Future of the Kingdom (vv. 6-7)

6. But the worthless,
   all of them will be thrown away like a thorn,
   for they cannot be taken in hand.
7. Each who touches them must be armed with iron and the staff of a spear.
   So they will be utterly burned with fire in their place.

As can be seen from the above scheme, this psalm consists of three sections: 1) the Superscription and Introduction (vv.1-2); 2) the blessing for the one who rules over people in righteousness in the fear of God (vv. 3-5); and 3) the judgment to come on the worthless who impede the progress of the kingdom (vv. 6-7). First and foremost, it should be pointed out that this structure of the psalm is almost the same as the prose structure of 1 Kings 2:1-9. There the words of David also consist of three main sections: 1) the introduction (v. 1); 2) advice for the king as to how he can be successful in his rule (vv. 2-4); and 3) instructions about how to punish the wicked and reward the good (vv. 5-9).[16] For the sake of comparison, it is necessary to introduce the parallel passage from 1 Kings 2:1-9 here.[17]

I. Introduction (v. 1)

1. When David's time to die drew near,
   he commanded Solomon his son, saying,

II. Successful Ways to Perform Kingly Office (vv. 2-4)

2. 'I am going the way of all the earth.
   So be strong and be yourself a man!
3. and keep your obligation to YHWH your God,

[15] As to the meaning of כִּי־לֹא, three different options have been suggested: H.S. Nyberg, 'Studien zum Religionskampf im Alten Testament', *ARW* 35 (1938), 381-382, thinks that it has negative sense. He interprets the phrase as indicating Israel's failure to have right relationship with God. S.R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text*, 359-360, regards it as a negative particle with affirmative force: is it not …? I follow H.N. Richardson, 'The Last Words of David. Some Notes on II Samuel 23:1-7', *JBL* 90 (1971), 263, who thinks that it has asseverative force: surely, my house is …
[16] To be precise, the issue of rewarding the good is not mentioned in 2 Sam 23. Nevertheless, the similarities between the two passages are too strong to be overlooked.
[17] Translation is mine.

walking in his ways,
keeping his statues, his commandments, his legal decisions, his testimonies,
as it is written in the law of Moses,
that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go,

4. that YHWH may establish his Word that he spoke to me, saying,
'if your sons keep their way, walking before me in truth,
with all their heart, with all their soul,
then you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'

III. Those Hindering (or Facilitating) the Future of the Kingdom (vv. 5-9)

5. Now you also know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me,
what he did to the two commanders of Israel's armies,
to Abner son of Ner, and to Amasa son of Jether.
He killed them and shed the blood of war in peacetime,
and he put the blood of war on the belt around his waist
and on the sandals on his feet.
6. So act according to your wisdom
and do not let his grey hair go down to Sheol in peace.
7. But show kindness to the sons of the Gileadite Barzillai
and let them be among those who eat at your table,
for thus they came near to me when I fled from Absalom your brother.
8. And behold, Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim, is with you.
He cursed me with a grievous curse on the day when I went to Mahanaim,
but he came down to meet me at the Jordan,
and I swore to him by YHWH, saying,
'I will not put you to death by the sword.'
9. But now, do not leave him unpunished, for you are a wise man.
You will know what you ought to do to him,
and you shall bring his grey hair down to Sheol in blood.'

The two passages resemble one another in structure and for the most part in content. In 1 Kings 2:2-4, David says that the king shall prosper, only if he keeps YHWH's commandments as written in Moses' law (v. 3); David also says that to have a successor on the throne, the king should conduct himself faithfully in an undivided loyalty to God (v. 4). This speech of David is very similar to his words in 2 Samuel 23:3-4 emphasizing that the king should rule over the kingdom in righteousness and justice in the fear of God to make his kingship prosper 'like the light of the morning when the sun rises'. Moreover, if the 'fear of God' mentioned in 2 Samuel 23:3 is read in the light of Deuteronomy, it appears to be closely related to keeping all the words of the law and the statutes, and doing them (cf. Deut 17:19). Accordingly, it may be argued that David's last words in 2 Samuel 23:3-5 are very similar to his advice to Solomon in 1 Kings 2:2-4 stressing that keeping the law is a royal road to the prosperity of his kingship.

The similarity can also be discerned between 1 Kings 2:5-9 and 2 Samuel 23:6-7. While the latter passage mentions the unnamed 'worthless', 1 Kings 2:5-9 reveals the names of two of such 'worthless' people, that is, Joab and Shimei, explaining the evil things they have done and the serious judgment they have to suffer. Thus, the two passages are closely tied together in terms of content and subject matter. From this interrelation it may be inferred that Joab and Shimei introduced in 1 Kings 2:5-9 equate the 'worthless' mentioned in 2 Samuel 23:6-7.

Here it is necessary to take note of 2 Samuel 23:2, where David makes it clear that his last words are not merely his personal testament but the words God has given to him. This means that the proclamation of judgment against the 'worthless' (vv. 6-7) is no less through the Spirit of YHWH than the assertion that upholding the fear of God is essential to the prosperity of the

kingship (vv. 3-5). Moreover, the Hebrew word נאם which occurs twice in v. 1b often describes the prophets' act of revealing God's will.[18] Thus, proclaiming the words of God, David in effect appears as God's spokesman.

This understanding of 2 Samuel 23:1-7 casts light on 1 Kings 2:1-9. As explained above, both passages show great similarity in terms of structure and subject. Most of all, they both concern David's last will. For these reasons, the reference to divine inspiration in 2 Samuel 23:1-7 gives a guiding principle for the proper understanding of 1 Kings 2:1-9. That is to say, David's last words in 1 Kings 2:1-9 result from what the Spirit has revealed him; in other words, they represent David's conclusions about the concrete measures to be taken so that the Spirit's words may materialize. David's last will about Joab and Shimei thus did not originate from his personal desire for revenge but from God's righteous judgment against those who were 'worthless'.

UNDERSTANDING THE JOAB PASSAGES IN 2 SAMUEL

In the previous section, the conclusion is drawn that David's words about Joab and Shimei in 1 Kings 2:1-9 represent God's will toward them. Since the two scholars introduced in the beginning of this study extract a picture of Joab out of 2 Samuel 3 and 20 different from that of David's last words in 1 Kings 2:1-9, an additional investigation of these passages is required.

Joab as portrayed in 2 Samuel 3

This chapter deals with Joab's assassination of Abner, which occurred when negotiations for the unification of the divided nation were underway between the tribe of Judah over which David was ruling and Israel's camp, whose king was Ishbosheth Saul's son. Taking the passage at face value, one can easily understand that Joab murdered Abner for the sake of revenging the death of his brother Asahel, but David wisely averted the catastrophic outcome of the murder; that is, perpetual fixation of the national division. However, the way Bietenhard and Eschelbach read the passage is completely different. According to Bietenhard Joab murdered Abner not because of his personal desire for revenge but because of his patriotic loyalty to the country. She even argues that Joab's murder of Abner was in fact done in obedience to David's order.[19]

Bietenhard's theory is based on the fact that no mention whatsoever of Asahel's death shows up in Joab's words of protest against David negotiations with Abner (cf. 2 Sam 3:24-25). To this it may be objected that though Joab harboured strong resentment over his brother's death, it was impossible for him to articulate it as an excuse for opposing the negotiations. It was after all a matter of personal/familial hatred, no matter how unbearable it was. Most significantly, the text itself clarifies that Joab assassinated Abner in order to take vengeance for his brother's death (2 Sam 3:27,30). If this clarification is received seriously, Joab's words in vv. 24-25 should be interpreted as an outright lie.[20]

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[18] The word appears 376 times in the Old Testament of which 365 times are of the form 'נְאֻם ... יְהוָה'. Cf. D. Vetter, 'נְאֻם', in: *THAT* II, 1.

[19] See also S.L. McKenzie, *König David. Eine Biographie*, Berlin 2002, 143.

[20] Joab's claim that Abner tried to spy on the internal affairs of David's camp finds no evidence in the context. The context shows that having conflicts with Ishbosheth (2 Sam 3:1-11), Abner tried to persuade the elders in Israel to receive David as their new king (2 Sam 3:17-19).

Eschelbach defends Joab by explaining that he killed Abner in order to prevent more sacrifices and disasters and to keep the country safe from the enemy's attack. Theoretically, this conjecture is not impossible. It is questionable, however, whether Joab's presumptuous undertaking was really intended for the best interest of the country, since it must have been clear to Joab that Abner's assassination would throw cold water on the peaceful mood beginning to be created then between Judah and Israel. Although Eschelbach argues that Abner's death eventually brought about a favourable outcome for David, this argument is only partially true. If David had not quickly reacted to this violent accident, Judah and Israel might have fallen into an irrevocable conflict (cf. 2 Sam 3:36-37).

Eschelbach is also unwilling to give much significance to David's act of mourning for Abner's death. He argues that David's act was no more than a ritual done in accordance with contemporary funeral customs. However, it is remarkable that the scene of David's mourning for Abner's death is described in such a detailed manner. To devaluate it as merely displaying a customary ritual ceremony appears arbitrary and artificial. It does violence either to David who conducted an honourable funeral for Abner or the author who draws attention to David's acts with a lengthy description. According to Eschelbach, the clear emphasis on David's blamelessness incites a suspicion towards his innocence in the readers' mind. Yet, there are other ways to interpret this emphasis.[21]

Joab as portrayed in 2 Samuel 20

This chapter tells how Joab, while going out for battle to put down Sheba's revolt, killed Amasa who had recently replaced him as the commander of David's army, and how he recovered his earlier position after having successfully subdued the insurgents. Since few explanations in the passage give a clue to Joab's motivation, it is not easy to comprehend his character and personality. Nevertheless, Bietenhard and Eschelbach make up a positive image of Joab out of the pieces scattered in this passage.

Bietenhard points out that 1) the scene in which Joab ruthlessly kills Amasa strongly contrasts with the scene in which he diplomatically solves the revolt problem in Abel Beth Maacah and 2) the scene describing Amasa's assassination resembles that describing Abner's. Based on these observations, Bietenhard argues that Joab's murder of Amasa was invented by pro-Solomonic redactors.[22] It is an oversimplification, however, to consider Joab to be free of any aggressiveness or brutality merely because he settled the problem of the revolt by diplomatic means. In fact, it was not Joab but a wise woman in Abel Beth Maacah who opened the way for appeasement without bloody fights (v. 16). Otherwise Joab might have attempted to put down the rebel force with the sword (cf. v. 15).

Bietenhard insists that since Amasa's assassination resembles that of Abner, neither were real events but fictitious stories concocted by later redactors. However, it cannot be ruled out that the same person might commit similar crimes, though different in time and place. Hence, it is unjustifiable to argue for later redaction solely based on the two events' formal similarities. Most of all, the present text portrays Joab as a ruthless killer bringing about Amasa's violent death, which should not be ignored.

[21] Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 120: 'It is the chief goal of this part of the story of David's rise to demonstrate the new king's innocence of the two assassinations (viz. of Abiner and Ishbaal) that opened the way to his kingship in the north. The Narrator, therefore, wants to leave no ambiguity about the slaying of Abner.'

[22] Bietenhard, *Des Königs General*, 190, 316.

Eschelbach argues that 1) the personnel policy of David who passed over Joab to appoint Amasa as the chief commander of his army is unjust, and that 2) Joab's act of killing Amasa is justifiable, because the latter was unable to conscript the men of Judah within the appointed time. However, was it really unjust for David to appoint Amasa as his military commander in chief? Amasa was once on the side of Absalom when he revolted against David (2 Sam 17:25). Hence, David's decision can be regarded as an example of his political efforts to be reconciled with the opposition. Why should such efforts be condemned as unjust? Moreover, was not Joab the person who ruthlessly killed Absalom disregarding David's serious request to leave him alive (2 Sam 18:14)? All things considered, David's appointment of Amasa can be regarded as a politically prudent choice.

As for Eschelbach's second argument, his assertion is acceptable if Amasa's delay may be construed as betraying his disobedience to or even rebellion against David. However, nowhere does the text explain why Amasa delayed in performing his duty. Although Eschelbach deduces the legitimacy of Joab's killing of Amasa from the fact that David did not punish him, David's attitude can be explained otherwise. David might have wanted to leave the case to God's hands as he had done earlier (2 Sam 3:28,29). It would still have been extremely difficult for him to punish the one who succeeded in putting down Sheba's rebellion. In any case, it is obvious that Joab and his brothers were not easy persons for David to handle (cf. 2 Sam 3:39).

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have attempted to understand David's testament in 1 Kings 2:1-9 by way of reading it intertextually in connection with his last words in 2 Samuel 23:1-7. This study has brought to light similarities in terms of literary structure and content. This finding enables us to understand David's command concerning Joab and Shimei from a new angle. As mentioned in 2 Samuel 23:1-7, they were like 'a thorn' to David's kingdom so that those who wanted to 'touch' them had to equip themselves with 'iron and the staff of spear'. They were those who must be 'utterly burned with fire in their place'. Furthermore, the fact that 2 Samuel 23:1-7 reveals what the Spirit of YHWH had spoken through David gives an important clue to how 1 Kings 2:1-9 might be understood. David's command to Solomon concerning Joab and Shimei's execution does not represent his personal revenge but God's judgment on 'the worthless'.

This interpretation is affirmed by the analysis of the Joab passages in 2 Samuel 3 and 20. Contrary to what Bietenhard and Eschelbach have claimed, the image of Joab is neither that of the loyal person who did not even hesitate to do 'dirty work' for the country's safety nor the strategist who chose to kill a few (Abner and Amasa) in order to save the life of many. Rather, he ruined King David's effort for the country's unification for the sake of revenge. Moreover, his ignominious crime of shedding innocent blood brought about the dangerous result of complicating David's kingship through vicious bloodguilt. Joab and Shimei were literally 'the worthless' who had to be exterminated for the Davidic kingdom to be established in justice and righteousness.

PART 2:

MEETING ONE GOD IN THE PROPHETS

‘TO WHOM WILL YOU LIKEN ME AND MAKE ME EQUAL?’

The Isaianic Message of the Uniqueness of YHWH in the Context of Religious Pluralism

Jaap Dekker

INTRODUCTION

Since the publication of his PhD dissertation,[1] Eric Peels has consistently focused his research on the concept of God in the Old Testament. He has especially tried to understand the ‘shadow sides’ of the Old Testament revelation of God, such as his anger and his wrath, and has thoughtfully contributed to scholarly and ecclesiastical discussions on God and violence in the Old Testament. One of his Dutch publications on these topics is titled *Wie is als Gij?*[2] This refers to the famous exclamation in the ancient Song of Moses: ‘Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders?’ (Exod 15:11). This rhetorical question concerning the incomparability of YHWH resounds several times in the Old Testament, in psalms and prayers (Ps 35:10; 71:19; 77:14; 89:9; 113:5; Mic 7:18), and even in personal names (e.g. Judg 17:1; 1 Kgs 22:8; Mic 1:1). The reference to other gods is not always explicit in these and similar utterances, but it is clearly in comparison with them that YHWH’s incomparability is expressed.[3]

The same holds true for the second part of the Book of Isaiah (40-55), in which YHWH himself repeatedly proclaims his incomparability. Already in the beginning of these chapters it is asked to whom the addressees would liken God or what likeness they would compare with him (40:18). In 40:25 YHWH himself asks: ‘To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal?’ This twofold question is even developed into a threefold one in 46:5: ‘To whom will you liken me and make me equal, and compare me, as though we were alike?’ By contrast, YHWH’s incomparability is expressed in single form in 44:7: ‘Who is like me?’

The historical context in which these rhetorical questions are posed is a society characterized by religious plurality. The core of Isaiah 40-55 goes back to the late Babylonian period, when the Persian King Cyrus had already begun to conquer the ancient Near Eastern world (from 550 BCE onwards) and the Judean exiles in Babylon could be called to prepare for their return to Zion. The Book of Isaiah as a whole has received its present shape only in the post-exilic period. Characteristic for Israel living in these periods is its existence as an ethnic and religious

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[1] H.G.L. Peels, *De wraak van God. De betekenis van de wortel* NQM *en de functie van de* NQM-*teksten in het kader van de oudtestamentische Godsopenbaring*, Zoetermeer 1992; ET: *The Vengeance of God: The Meaning of the Root* NQM *and the Function of the* NQM-*Texts in the Context of Divine Revelation in the Old Testament* (OTS, 31), Leiden 1995.

[2] *Wie is als Gij? Schaduwkanten van het oudtestamentische Godsbeeld*, Zoetermeer [2]2007. ET: *Shadow Sides: God in the Old Testament*, Carlisle 2003.

[3] C.J. Labuschagne, *The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament* (POS, 5), Leiden 1966. See also R. Müller, ‘Der unvergleichliche Gott. Zur Umformung einer polytheistischen Redeweise im Alten Testament’, in: Chr. Schwöbel (ed.), *Gott – Götter – Götzen* (VWGTh, 38), Leipzig 2013, 304-319.

minority, which had to interact with people holding and sometimes even vigorously promoting other religious views. In this pluralistic context it became necessary to reflect on the relation between YHWH and other deities and to consider if it still made sense to uphold any truth claim for the strength and uniqueness of the God of Israel.

In this article I investigate the way in which the uniqueness of YHWH in comparison with other gods is described in the Book of Isaiah. The relevance of this research arises from the context of religious pluralism, which also characterizes modern western society and currently reveals 'an aversion to universal claims, because allegedly these would do injustice to the complexity of the world and in the end lead to suppression and violence'.[4] It may be expected that an investigation of the theology of the Book of Isaiah will contribute to understanding the essence of biblical revelation in the context of present day's religious plurality. By writing this article, I express my great respect and thankfulness to Eric Peels, an inspiring teacher, colleague and friend, who has contributed to my love for Old Testament theology in general and for the theology of the prophets in particular.

MONOTHEISM IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

Though this article focuses on the Book of Isaiah in its present shape and does not aim to deal with history-of-religion questions, talking about YHWH and other deities immediately relates to the current debate on the rise of monotheism in the religion of Israel. For the sake of clarity, I will shortly describe the crucial role of the Book of Isaiah in this complex debate and provisionally mark my own position.

In the mid-twentieth century William Albright claimed that Moses, being the founder of Jahwism, could already be regarded as a true monotheist.[5] Albright presented this thesis to oppose the religion-historical reconstruction put forward by Julius Wellhausen, who had turned the prophets into the true founders of Israel's religion.[6] Both theses, however, could not withstand criticism. The exclusive worship of YHWH might well be rooted in the experience of the exodus (cf. Exod 15:11; 18:11), but this is not yet monotheism in a theoretically reflected sense.[7] For several decades already, the general view has been that the author of Isaiah 40-55, the so-called 'Second Isaiah', could be credited for having shaped Israel's religion in a real monotheistic fashion for the first time. This anonymous prophet seems to deny explicitly the existence of other gods and reflects on the unity of cosmos and history and the dependence of

[4] Research Program Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theology 2012-2017, *Who Is Like You Among the Gods? The One and Three in a Pluralistic Context*, Theological Universities Apeldoorn and Kampen, http://www.webkey7.nl/tua/images2/documentatie_-_programma_best.pdf [accessed January 2, 2017].

[5] W.F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process*, Baltimore 1940.

[6] J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, Berlin 1883.

[7] Being aware of the difficulties in the concept 'monotheism', I use it as a common heuristic category for the religious conviction that only one God exists. Because it seems impossible to formulate a one-size-fits-all definition, I agree with S.Chr. Frevel, 'Beyond Monotheism? Some Remarks and Questions on Conceptualising "Monotheism" in Biblical Studies', *VeEc* 33/2 (2013), 1-7, that the concept is open to further differentiations depending on 'the frame of reference in which it is used'.

both on the rule of YHWH, which Hans Wildberger called a breakthrough that could only be managed by great personalities.[8]

According to this view, the religion of Israel during the pre-exilic period was polytheistic in practice (nomenclature, local cult practices, family religion),[9] though several prophetic movements (e.g. Elijah, Hosea) and religious reformations (e.g. Hezekiah, Josiah) clearly promoted the worship of YHWH alone, appealing to the Mosaic covenant between YHWH and Israel.[10] This exclusive worship of YHWH, however, remained the concern of a minority. It cannot even be considered real monotheism, for the existence of other gods is still presupposed. Therefore, it has often been labelled as 'monolatry' or 'mono-Yahwism'. It is only in the prophecies of 'Second Isaiah', after a six-century evolutionary as well as revolutionary process, at the end of the Babylonian exile, that a sound and clear monotheism breaks through.[11]

While the reconstruction of the pre-exilic 'polytheism' of Israel has also been criticized for being far too general and unspecified,[12] it is particularly disputed now that the prophecies of 'Second Isaiah' reflect a consequent monotheistic faith already. When it is said time and again, for example, that there is no one besides YHWH (43:11; 44:6,8; 45:5,6,14,21; 46:9), this is not a philosophical or systematic-theological statement, but a revelatory testimony which is inextricably part of a prophetic rhetoric, meant to persuade the exiles that YHWH alone is able to exercise authority over the events of history. The rhetorical focus of this statement becomes clear when it is compared with the haughty saying of Babylon in 47:8,10: 'I am, and there is no one besides me!' (cf. Zeph 2:15), which in fact claims absolute rule and incomparability and does not exclude the mere existence of other kingdoms (cf. 47:5 'the mistress of kingdoms' and 47:7: 'I shall be mistress forever').[13]

This evidently means that the prophecies of 'Second Isaiah' primarily emphasize the sovereignty of YHWH and his capacity to bring salvation and do not intend to make philosophical claims.[14] Even the potentially ontological saying of 43:10bβ—'Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me'—is still part of a prophecy that completely focuses on YHWH claiming to be the only sovereign and saviour. The same holds true for those passages in which YHWH presents himself as being the first and the last (44:6; 48:12; cf. 41:4). This self-revelation primarily implies his capacity to announce the former things as well as the outcome

[8] H. Wildberger, 'Der Monotheismus Deuterojesajas', in: H. Donner, R. Hanhart *et al.* (eds), *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie*, Fs. W. Zimmerli, Göttingen 1977, 506-530. See also H. Clifford, 'Deutero-Isaiah and monotheism', in: J. Day (ed.), *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (LHB/OTS, 531), New York/London 2010, 267-289.

[9] F. Stolz, *Einführung in den biblischen Monotheismus*, Darmstadt 1996.

[10] B. Lang, 'Die Jahwe-allein-Bewegung', in: B. Lang (ed.), *Der einzige Gott. Die Geburt des biblischen Monotheismus*, München 1981, 47-83.

[11] R.K. Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel* (JSOTS, 241), Sheffield 1997. It is hotly debated how Deuteronomy fits in this process. Cf. the contribution of Arnold Huijgen and Arie Versluis to this volume: '"Our God is One": The Unity of YHWH and the Trinity in the Interplay between Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theology'.

[12] R. Albertz, 'Jahwe allein! Israels Weg zum Monotheismus und dessen theologische Bedeutung', in: R. Albertz, *Geschichte und Theologie*, Berlin/New York 2003, 359-382.

[13] P.A.H. de Boer, *Second Isaiah's Message* (OTS, 11), Leiden 1956, 47.

[14] N. MacDonald, 'Monotheism and Isaiah', in: D.G. Firth, H.G.M. Williamson (eds), *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches*, Downers Grove 2009, 43-61; M.J. Lynch, 'Mapping Monotheism: Modes of Monotheistic Rhetoric in the Hebrew Bible', *VT* 64 (2014), 47-68.

of things, the things to come, which are not yet done, new things, or hidden things (41:22; 42:9; 46:10; 48:3,6).[15]

Given the still ongoing debate on monotheism in the Book of Isaiah, biblical scholars would be well-advised to be more nuanced than before in reconstructing the rise of monotheism in the religion of Israel and drawing straightforward conclusions. The rhetorical character of prophecy must always be taken into account. Besides, the concepts of polytheism, monotheism and monolatry originate from modern western analytic philosophy, and do not always match the rhetoric of biblical prophecy. This does not make it necessary to abandon these concepts, but often they have to be specified. This article will show that the prophecies of Isaiah 40-55, while not yet monotheistic in a strict sense, even so go beyond the mainly monolatric statements of pre-exilic prophecy.

THE LORD OF HOSTS AND THE IDOLS (ISAIAH 1-39)

The title of this article is taken from the second part of the Book of Isaiah, in which the uniqueness of YHWH comes to the fore most explicitly. The relation between YHWH and other gods, however, is also present in the first part of the book.

From the first chapter onwards YHWH is called קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל 'the Holy One of Israel' (1:4), a title that refers to his absolute supremacy and uniqueness, distinguishing YHWH fundamentally both from other gods and humans.[16] At the same time, YHWH is frequently called יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת 'LORD of hosts' (1:9). The use of this title, whose origin seems connected with the Ark tradition (2 Sam 6:2), decreases significantly in the second part of the book and it is even totally absent from the third part.[17] In the first part of the book, however, it is clearly meant to characterize the identity of YHWH.

Who are the צבאות to whom YHWH seems to be so closely connected? In 13:4 the mustering of a צְבָא מִלְחָמָה 'army for battle' by יהוה צבאות himself is described. This army clearly refers to the kingdoms and nations which are gathered together as mentioned in the same verse. In the previous verse, however, YHWH refers to his commanding and calling of 'my consecrated ones', 'my warriors' and 'my proudly exulting ones' (13:3). Probably, these designations allude to the tradition of the Holy War (cf. Jos 7:13; 1 Sam 21:6).[18] In this tradition YHWH sometimes even brought in the host of heaven (cf. Judg 5:20; Jos 10:11-14). The Book of Isaiah mentions YHWH as controlling the host of heaven (40:26; 45:12)[19] and ultimately even punishing them (24:21-23; cf. 13:10; 34:4). These texts regard the host of heaven as celestial powers partaking in the divine world, though they are totally subordinated to יהוה צבאות.

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[15] Cf. J. Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55: A Literary-Theological Commentary*, London/New York 2005, 203: 'Isaiah 40-55 neither grants nor disputes the abstract existence of the gods. This matter is not within its way of thinking. Its concern is their dynamic existence.' For a critical reflection on what the 'existence' of other gods means in the context of the Old Testament, see G. Kwakkel, 'L'existence des autres dieux selon l'Ancien Testament', in: J.-P. Bru (ed.), *Contre vents et marées. Mélanges offerts à Pierre Berthoud et Paul Wells*, Aix-en-Provence 2014, 79-92.

[16] J. Dekker, 'Isaiah, Prophet in the Service of the Holy One of Israel (Isa 1-39)', in: H.G.L. Peels, S.D. Snyman (eds), *The Lion Has Roared: Theological Themes in the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament*, Eugene 2012, 40-64.

[17] יהוה צבאות occurs 62 times in Isaiah, of which only six in 40-55.

[18] W.A.M. Beuken, *Jesaja 13-27* (HThKAT), Freiburg/Basel etc. 2007, 64.

[19] Cf. כּוֹכְבֵי־אֵל 'stars of God' in 14:13.

In this context, the concept of the divine council should also be mentioned. Though the צבא השמים is not as explicitly mentioned in Isaiah's call vision as in the vision of Micaiah son of Imlah in 1 Kgs 22:19, it seems to be alluded to in the description of the winged seraphs surrounding the throne of Adonai (6:1-3), and in Isaiah's reference to יהוה צבאות as the king (6:5). The plural YHWH uses when asking 'who will go for us' (6:8) could even refer to the members of the divine council (cf. 14:13). It becomes clear, however, that the seraphs are stripped of their own holiness by being forced to protect themselves with their wings, while proclaiming the holiness of YHWH alone.

Contrary to the deuteronomistic tradition and Jeremiah, the Book of Isaiah does not mention the צבא השמים as being object of worship by the people of Israel. Instead it refers to the אֱלִילִים 'idols' (2:8,18,20; 10:10,11; 19:1,3; 31:7) and the עֲצַבִּים 'images' (10:11; 46:1; sg. in 48:5). Already from the second chapter onwards the book announces their utterly passing away, for a day will come on which YHWH alone will be exalted (2:17-18). The idols' destiny then will be to keep the moles and bats company (2:20). YHWH already begins to execute this judgment on the idols among his own people by making Assyria the rod of his anger (10:11), but it will be extended to the idols of Egypt (19:1) and Babylon (21:9). Other prophecies foretell that one day the people in Zion will even judge their idols themselves by scattering them like filthy rags and sending or throwing them away (30:22; 31:7). In any case, one must partially agree with the Assyrian Rabshakeh and King Sennacherib that the gods of the nations were not able to save (36:18-19; 37:12). Isaiah, however, rejects the suggestion that YHWH has been casted in the same mould (37:16-19; cf. 36:20).

In the first part of the book the manmade character of the idols is already stressed by calling them מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו 'work of his hands' // אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ אֶצְבְּעֹתָיו 'made by his own fingers' (2:8; 17:8) and מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי־אָדָם 'work of human hands' (37:19). Though often covered with silver and gold (2:20; 30:22; 31:7; cf. 40:19; 46:6), in essence these idols are no more than wood or stone (37:19), which underlines the incomparability and uniqueness of YHWH as it is proclaimed in the second part of the book (40:20; 44:14-20; 45:20).[20]

NO GOD BESIDES YHWH (ISAIAH 40-66)

While the first part of the Book of Isaiah thus mainly mentions the idols in the context of imminent judgment—as does the third part of the book (see 57:12-13: a breath will take them away)—, the second part of the book, prepared for by the Hezekiah narratives (36-39), focuses on their ultimate powerlessness and on the foolishness of the people worshiping them. They are nothing and their work is nothing (41:24), a delusion and empty wind (41:29). Not only the idols themselves are an abomination (44:19; cf. 66:3), but especially the one who choses them (41:24). They will inevitably be ashamed. From 40:18-20 onwards the uniqueness and incomparability of YHWH is emphasized and criticism is levelled especially at the idol-makers.

Part of the rhetorical context in which YHWH claims to be incomparable is the lawsuit which YHWH in 41:1-5 announces to institute against the nations and for which in 41:21-29 he even summons those who pretend to be gods. According to some it is only a playing with words

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[20] Cf. the contribution of Hetty Lalleman to this volume: 'The Idols as "Useless" in the Book of Jeremiah'.

when YHWH addresses these gods directly.[21] This, however, seems doubtful, for YHWH is challenging existing realities in ancient Near Eastern society and not mere ideas.[22] It is a serious disputation, therefore, when the gods of the foreign nations are summoned to appear in court and to answer the charges YHWH is filing against them, while the nations themselves are called to serve as witnesses of their gods (43:9). YHWH claims that he has raised up King Cyrus and in advance has even predicted his coming, thus proving that he is the only one worth to be called אֱלֹהִים (41:2-4,25-27; 43:12; 44:6,8,28; 45:1-7,13,21-22; 48:15). In order to strengthen this claim, the people of Israel are called to appear as his witnesses, for they are the servant of YHWH, even though they are still blind and deaf (43:8-12; 44:6-8).

Meanwhile, however, it becomes clear that, while the gods are reduced to silence, the polemic is in fact against those who are responsible for creating idols and praying to a god who is not able to save (45:20; cf. 44:17). For that reason, the passages about the lawsuit of YHWH against the nations and their gods alternate with oracles that describe and even ridicule the construction of gods and idols (41:6-7; 44:9-20; 46:6-7). Knut Holter has convincingly demonstrated that the polemics in these passages are not against the idols themselves but against their makers who are ironically contrasted with YHWH.[23]

It has often been argued that the texts against idolatry are not original to the book, because they identify the gods and their images and thus are different from the law suit passages.[24] It is beyond the scope of this article to verify this hypothesis. These texts, however, fit well in the overall concept of the present book.[25] The first polemic text concerning the construction of idols (40:19-20) is even closely connected to the initial rhetorical question about YHWH's incomparability (40:18),[26] thus indicating the essential coherence of both themes. The idol-makers in fact function as parallels of the nations who are summoned to appear as witnesses of their silent gods. The focus of both the lawsuit passages and the idol-fabrication passages is on soteriology, emphasizing that only YHWH controls history and thus is able to bring salvation. In this rhetorical context, the gods and the idols can even be paralleled, for YHWH will give his glory to neither of them (42:8). The intention is to urge the addressees to adhere to YHWH.

Even so, however, while the emphasis is on soteriology, there is something new in the way Isaiah 40-55 talks about YHWH and the gods. On the one hand, the existence of other heavenly beings is presupposed in those prophecies that mention the host of heaven as being numbered and even commanded by YHWH (40:26; 45:12). On the other hand, they are not called אלהים anymore,[27] which traditionally had been the case (cf. Ps 82:6). This coheres with the fact that YHWH addresses the gods of the nations in the context of a lawsuit (41:21-29), but at the same

[21] H.-J. Hermisson, 'Gibt es die Götter bei Deuterojesaja?', in: A. Graupner, H. Delkurt *et al.* (eds), *Verbindungslinien*, Fs. W.H. Schmidt, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2000, 109-123.

[22] F. Hartenstein, 'Was sind die Götter bei Deuterojesaja und in den späten Psalmen?', in: Schwöbel (ed.), *Gott – Götter – Götzen*, 221-237.

[23] K. Holter, *Second Isaiah's Idol-Fabrication Passages* (BBET, 28), Frankfurt am Main 1995.

[24] See e.g. C. Westermann, *Das Buch Jesaja. Kapitel 40-66* (ATD), Göttingen/Zürich ^{5}1986, 27, 119-120; S. Petry, *Die Entgrenzung JHWHs. Monolatrie, Bilderverbot und Monotheismus im Deuteronomium, in Deuterojesaja und im Ezechielbuch* (FAT, 2/27), Tübingen, 2007, 141-188.

[25] R.J. Clifford, 'The Function of Idol Passages in Second Isaiah', *CBQ* 42 (1980), 450-464.

[26] P. van der Lugt, 'The Dynamics of the Incomparable God Highlighted by the Immobility of an Idol: The Rhetorical Integrity of Isa. 40:12-26, 41:1-7 and 46:1-13', in: K. Spronk (ed.), *The Present State of Old Testament Studies in the Low Countries: A Collection of Old Testament Studies Published on the Occasion of the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Oudtestamentische Werkgezelschap* (OTS, 69), Leiden/Boston 2016, 162-163.

[27] Cf. S.M. Olyan, 'Is Isaiah 40-55 Really Monotheistic?', *JANER* 12 (2012), 190-201. See also Kwakkel, 'L'existence des autres dieux', 90-91.

time focuses on their human construction. Although the common noun אֵל is still used for them (cf. 44:10,15,17; 45:20; 46:6), YHWH explicitly claims that no אל was formed before him, nor shall there be any after him (43:10). Moreover, the designation אלהים is only applied to YHWH now. This also holds true for 56-66.

In the first part of the book, the gods whom people worship by means of images are called, though not often, אלהים (21:9; 36:18-20; 37:12,19,38),[28] but in the second part their divine status is explicitly disputed. People may call their images their gods (42:17: אַתֶּם אֱלֹהֵינוּ; cf. 44:17), but the truth the Book of Isaiah communicates in increasing explicitness, and which in the future even the Egyptians will admit (45:14), is that in fact there is no אלהים besides YHWH (44:6; 45:5,6,18,21; 46:9). The definition of אלהים simply does not include those who are neither able to tell the future nor to produce it by doing good or harm (41:23). YHWH, however, is able to form light and create darkness, to make peace and create calamity (45:7), thus justly claiming the designation אלהים for himself alone (cf. 45:18: הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים). The other gods are, therefore, not referred to as אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים (e.g. Exod 20:3) but only as אַחֵר (42:8; 48:11). The rhetoric of 40-55 implies that there is only one of the deity species, YHWH the God of Israel. In the literary context of the present book this claim is already prepared for in the prayer of Hezekiah: 'you are God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth' (37:16; cf. 37:20).

This statement, which is repeated time and again in the second part of the book and even reverberates in its third part (cf. 64:3), primarily functions as a prophetic testimony with a strong soteriological focus, meant to invite the exiles to trust YHWH for being able to change the course of history and to bring them back to Zion. At the same time, however, this testimony evidently tends to an implicit monotheistic claim.[29] Admittedly, this implicit claim is not yet fully explicated and developed by the Book of Isaiah itself, as often has been supposed turning 'Second Isaiah' into an intellectual genius who was outstanding in his field. It is no exaggeration, however, to say that the theme of the incomparability of YHWH as it is increasingly testified to in the Book of Isaiah, even claiming it on the level of the אלהים species, clearly asked for progressive revelation in post-exilic and subsequent times, including the New Testament period.

RELEVANCE

After a long period in which Christianity has deeply influenced and even dominated western society, a gradual process of secularisation has now reduced it to a minor position. Secularists even increasingly claim that religion as such should no longer manifest itself in public life. Inherent to this tendency is the stringent appeal to Christians to give up their exclusivist truth claim and conform to pluralism. Some even argue that pluralism and monotheism are incompatible, because monotheism would be inclined to use violence. Others think it possible for monotheists to accept pluralism and to recognize other religions as having equal legitimacy and value.[30] From the perspective of Christian doctrine, however, giving up its inherent truth

[28] The difficult saying of 8:19b refers to the people of Israel and their God (cf. 8:21). See W.A.M. Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12* (HThKAT), Freiburg/Basel etc. 2003, 239-243.

[29] Cf. Frevel, 'Beyond Monotheism?', 7: 'The denial of divineness implies a monotheistic claim in a polytheistic robe.'

[30] G. Crowder, 'Value Pluralism and Monotheism', *Politics and Religion* 7 (2014), 818-840, takes the latter position, referring to H. Hardy, 'Taking Pluralism Seriously', in: G. Crowder, H. Hardy (eds), *The One and the Many: Reading Isaiah Berlin*, Amherst 2007, 279-292, for the former.

claims would change the essence of Christianity. It is worth considering, therefore, if Isaiah can help to find a more accessible way in which Christianity can uphold its truth claims without running the risk of becoming intolerant or even violent to other religions. This article only leaves room for some initial thoughts.

First of all, it has to be noted that Israel's religion surprisingly was not absorbed in the melting pot of the pluralist exilic and post-exilic society, though after the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem and the downfall of the Davidic monarchy the gods of the nations seemed to have defeated the God of Israel. Especially the Book of Isaiah, being part of a then growing corpus of canonical literature, rather persistently testifies to YHWH's lasting incomparability and uniqueness. It even proclaims a future in which everyone will admit that there is no God besides YHWH (45:14b) and that only in YHWH are righteousness and strength (45:23-24). The Book of Isaiah thus makes no concessions to pluralism in the sense of recognizing other religions as equally valuable. While still taking the mere existence of other heavenly beings for granted, it increasingly and fundamentally contests their divine status and emphasizes the human construction of gods and idols. However, this battle is only fought on the level of prophetic rhetoric. The only role entrusted to Israel is being witnesses in YHWH's lawsuit against the nations and their gods.[31]

The Book of Isaiah clearly trusts that history will provide evidence of the uniqueness of YHWH. The statement that only YHWH is God is inextricably connected with the appearance of Cyrus. YHWH claims that he has raised him up and has predicted his coming in order to bring salvation. In line with this emphasis on prophecy and history and on Israel's witnessing role of how prophecy has come true, Christianity today may understand its role in a similar way. Monotheism as the Book of Isaiah understands it is not about subduing other people for the sake of theological convictions, but about testifying to YHWH who claims to control history and to be able to bring salvation. It is up to God himself, therefore, to demonstrate in history that he is right. The Book of Isaiah argues that he has done so by making use of King Cyrus. Christians believe that in the coming of Christ, he has demonstrated once again that he is right and that he will do the same in the future. Living in a society characterized by religious pluralism, Christians may uphold their truth claims by peacefully testifying to what YHWH has done and will do in history.

Naturally, this testimony can only be relevant when it manifests itself in public. YHWH as he is testified to in Isaiah is not just a family god, but intends to be recognized as God of all peoples. The Book of Isaiah emphasizes his unicity in comparison with manmade gods and idols and disputes those who fabricate them. This dispute remains relevant in the context of western society, because the human heart is still a fabric of idols, as John Calvin has put it.[32] When, for example, zealous secularists try to banish all religion to private life, they in fact testify to secularism as the one and only god and should be unmasked as modern idol-fabricators. In a pluralist society, it is not a problem when Christians and secularists, or adherents of whatever other religion, publicly testify to their own exclusivist truth claims, as long as they all restrict themselves to a non-violent testimony. In the end, history, despite its often chaotic and disturbing outlook, has to provide and, according to the Book of Isaiah, will provide evidence that besides YHWH there is no saviour (43:11).

[31] Cf. R. Albertz, 'Muss die exklusive Gottesverehrung gewalttätig sein? Israels steiniger Weg zum Monotheismus', in: K.D. Dobos, M. Köszeghy (eds), *With Wisdom as a Robe: Qumran and Other Jewish Studies in Honour of Ida Fröhlich* (HBM, 21), Sheffield 2009, 23-40.

[32] J. Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.11.8.

In many publications, Eric Peels has argued against all attempts to domesticate the God of Israel, as he is revealed in the Old Testament. Especially the 'shadow sides' of this revelation may not be polished off, for YHWH is essentially incomparable among the gods. The Book of Isaiah elaborates on this theme. It emphasizes the uniqueness of YHWH in a context of religious pluralism, equipping its readers to be public witnesses and thus also to offer resistance to tendencies to domesticate YHWH by making him a family god. YHWH has revealed himself on the scene of history. It is on the same scene that he claims to be vindicated as the one and only God.

HEARING UNITY IN A PASSAGE OFTEN BROKEN

A Thematic Perspective on Isaiah 50:1-11 within Its Context

Chris van der Walt

What I appreciate about Eric Peels' scientific approach is that he 'listens for longer' which inevitably leads to an enriched understanding of a text in the process. By listening attentively, a better understanding of a text, situation or person is obtained. Parallels are consequently identified on the basis of the listener's prior knowledge but also deviation from existing knowledge. As far as parallels are concerned, it is the similarity within a text or situation that makes it familiar. By recognizing the similarity, sense is made of it in its familiarity, but in dissimilarity, new comprehension is possible as new aspects are investigated.

Since Bernhard Duhm's theory about the tripartite division of Isaiah was published more than a hundred years ago much research has been done on the differences within the Book of Isaiah. Recently more research is being done on the literary and theological unity in the book.[1] A passage in which internal differences have often been emphasized is Isaiah 50:1-11. However, a considerable degree of coherence in the text can be found by listening to the similarity in recurring themes in the Book of Isaiah, especially in 40-66. Approaching Isaiah in its present unity, parallels with similar themes occurring elsewhere in the book will be the subject of this study in order to demonstrate the logical flow and coherence in this often dissected passage. This is deemed necessary in the light of the maxim: 'If you take something apart—you break it'.

The fragmentation of Isaiah 50 is often the result of the segregation of the so-called third Servant Song from the rest of the chapter. Generally demarcated as 50:4-11 or 50:4-9, it means that 50:1-3, and according to some approaches also 50:10-11, are relegated to mere appendices to the larger pericope. In my opinion this leads to a diminished understanding of the text as a whole. An attentive and scholarly approach to 50:1-11 within its wider context, will conclude that unity can be found within the text itself, and thus an enhanced understanding of the communicative purpose of the literary context. The most significant communicative purpose though is a better understanding of the acts of God as described in this text.

The diverse interpretations of 49:14-50:11 can be seen in the outlines of the text made by different scholars:

[1] U. Berges, *Das Buch Jesaja. Komposition und Endgestalt* (HBS, 16), Freiburg/Basel etc. 1998; ET: *The Book of Isaiah: Its Composition and Final Form*, Sheffield 2012; H.M. Barstad, 'Isaiah 56-66 in relation to Isaiah 40-55: Why a New Reading is Necessary', in: L.-S. Tiemeyer, H.M. Barstad (eds), *Continuity and Discontinuity: Chronological and Thematic Development in Isaiah 40-66* (FRLANT, 255), Göttingen 2014, 41-62; J. Dekker, 'Eenheid en auteurschap van Jesaja', in: K. van Bekkum, P.H.R. van Houwelingen *et al.* (eds), *Nieuwe en oude dingen. Schatgraven in de Schrift* (ApSt, 62 / TU-B, 13), Barneveld 2013, 129-146.

Claus Westermann suggests the pericope outlines for the passage to be 49:14-26, 50:1-3, 50:4-9, 51:1-2 plus the relocation of 50:10-11. He suspects that there was a disturbance in the arrangement of the text and therefore relocates 50:10-11 to a position after 51:1a.[2]

Alec Motyer identifies 49:14-50:11 as a unit under the heading of ‘The many and the one: unresponsiveness and response’.[3]

Brevard Childs demarcates the pericope as consisting of 49:14-50:11 but also connects it thematically to themes in 40-48. Even though Childs considers the passage under discussion as a unit, he considers 50:10-11 as a commentary-like addition to the Servant Song.[4]

John Oswalt identifies two passages, namely 49:14-50:3, which contains the people’s negative response to the proclamation of the Servant’s redemptive work, and 50:4-51:8, which includes the extended response of God.[5]

Joseph Blenkinsopp demarcates two passages, namely 49:24–50:3 and 50:4-11, and also considers 50:10-11 as a comment appended to 50:4-9.[6]

Gary Smith subdivides the passage into 50:1-3 and 4-11 as a Servant passage, describing 50:1-3 as a further response of God to the question in 49:14.[7]

Ulrich Berges, who generally argues for a unitary Isaiah, identifies 50:1-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-11 as distinct sub-units, but also suggests that these sub-units serve a common purpose.[8]

This selection of scholars’ views indicates that the passage may be variously interpreted, and as consequence divided in a number of ways. In this article it will be argued that given the internal evidence, read together with the textual context, 50:1-11 may very well be considered to be a unit because of the logical flow of themes within the passage.

If a passage like 50:1-11 is treated as one coherent text, it is possible to demonstrate that the various sub-units fit into and resonate with the immediate context, all serving a flowing communicative purpose.

ACCUSATION AND ANSWER: ISAIAH 40:27, 49:14-26 AND 50:1-3

Texts related to one another, which might contribute to a better understanding of the unit under consideration, are the accusations and answers found in 40:27, 49:14-26 and 50:1-3. All these passages contain accusations from Judah directed against Yhwh and his answers to those accusations.

First under discussion is the short lament in 40:27: ‘Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God”?’ YHWH answers Israel’s accusations by means of rhetorical questions: ‘Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable’ (40:28). The answer implies a lack of response through hearing on the side of Judah, here indicated as Jacob-Israel. What they apparently have not heard and did not know or simply ignored, were the true reasons for the

[2] C. Westermann, *Das Buch Jesaja Kapitel 40-66* (ATD, 19), Göttingen/Zürich 1986, 188-191; ET: *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary* (OTL), London 1996, 217-233.
[3] J.A. Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC), Leicester 1999, 392.
[4] B.S. Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary* (OTL), Louisville 2001, 395-396.
[5] J.N. Oswalt, *Isaiah* (NIVAC), Grand Rapids 2003, 554-568.
[6] J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55* (AncB), London 2008, 319.
[7] G.V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66* (NAC), Nashville 2009, 374-379.
[8] U. Berges, *Jesaja 49-54* (HThKAT), Freiburg 2015, 85-113.

Babylonian exile. The lament of Israel about God disregarding their right was based on the perception that he was no longer actively involved with them and for that reason they were exiled. However, the actual reason is that they did not listen and respond accordingly, even though the prophets had warned them time and again that violation of the covenant would have grave consequences. The perception of Judah that YHWH was no longer involved is supported by their opinion that by being in Babylon, they were beyond YHWH’s domain of influence because they were no longer physically present in the Promised Land. This inability of Israel to comprehend what was happening to them in exile is also addressed in passages like 42:18-25 where the deaf- and blindness of Israel as God’s Servant is emphasized.

In 49:14 an accusation similar to that in 40:27 is made, namely that the Lord has forsaken and forgotten Zion. The Lord responds to this accusation in 49:15 with: ‘Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb?’ In both passages God’s answer exposes Judah’s lack of understanding and insight as the real issue. This lack of understanding and insight seemingly does not have a valid excuse, as the prophets previously proclaimed to them that they would be exiled because of YHWH’s righteousness (cf. 5:7,16) and not because of inability on his side. What they needed to hear anew is a repetition of God’s perspective on their situation, namely that their exile is due to his active and righteous involvement based on the covenant. In this process he will be made known once more as the only one who can give perspective on life, even in exile, because there is none amongst the gods who can announce a plan and execute it (cf. 43:8-21).

A true perspective can only be obtained by the exiles when their experiences in exile are correctly interpreted. This interpretation can only be received by hearing and thus necessitates a discourse between God and his people in exile. Such a discourse is needed because in Israel’s spiritual state they remain blind and for that reason cannot discern spiritual truths (42:19; 43:8). This blindness is the result of their deliberate deafness to God’s words.[9]

The disputational tone of 40:27-28, 42:18-20, 43:26, 45:11,21 and 49:14 continues in 50:1-3 in the sense that God once more answers with rhetorical questions involving metaphors, namely that of a divorce certificate, creditors and signs in nature. This time he answers by asking: ‘Where is your mother’s bill of divorce with which I put her away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?’ These questions suggest negative answers: Neither would a woman forget her nursing child (49:14), nor could Zion produce a certificate of divorce, nor was YHWH indebted to anyone forcing him to sell them (50:1a). The lament of the people of Zion that YHWH had apparently divorced them as his bride or sold them because of debt is then discharged with a double causal phrase indicating their sins as the reason for the schism between them and God (50:1b).

In 50:2 YHWH develops the theme of schism between him and his people by asking more questions. This time he deviates from the use of rhetorical questions by introducing an interrogative (מַדּוּעַ) one. God expects answers to his questions from his people. Why was there nobody when he arrived? He called and why did nobody answer? Is it because of inability on his side? To the last questions God provides answers himself, pointing to his evident actions in nature. The actions described are not life-giving, but refer to death because he takes away life-giving water. The situation is commented on in 50:3 by YHWH proclaiming that because of what he did, it became dark. In the Old Testament, this is the only time that קַדְרוּת is used. It means a

[9] C. van der Walt, ‘The Deaf Cannot See: An Accumulation of Blindness and Deafness as Combined Theme in Isaiah 42 and 43’, *IDS* 48/2 (2014), 6.

state of blackness in which sunlight is blocked out and thus it also has an associative meaning of gloom, despair or mourning.[10]

Before moving on to the relationship between 50:1-3 and 4-11, attention must be drawn to the frequent use of the discourse marker הֵן ('behold!') in 49:16,21 and 50:1,2,9,11. Discourse markers often draw attention to the contents of the sentences that follow, affording those sentences greater prominence within their larger contexts.[11] Compared to other Old Testament books הֵן is used more often in Isaiah than in any other book, the Book of Job being the exception. In 40:14-50:11 it is used fourteen times of which five times are in 50:1-11. Here it points to God's actions in relation to the people he bound himself to in covenant.[12] The stipulations of the covenant calls for a certain reaction from God's people. Previously the expected response was absent but now it is urgently required and needs implementation.[13] The required reaction will be initiated by means of hearing, because it is only through hearing an explanation that one can understand what one sees. Thus the repeated use of הֵן draws attention to what is new and unexpected, namely the new understanding of what God's discourse with his people will accomplish.

THE RELATION BETWEEN ISAIAH 50:1-3 AND 4-11

Many scholars do not find any unity between 50:1-3 and 4-11, for example Smith making the following remark on 50:4: 'After an abrupt end to the preceding oracle and without much of an introduction, suddenly the reader hears the voice of an obedient disciple of the Lord who is eventually identified as "his Servant" in 50:10.'[14] John Watts also does not see any unity in 50:1-11. Using the form critique method he identifies smaller units and outlines 50:4-9 as a speech by a beleaguered teacher showing 'his determination to follow YHWH's course' and 50:10-11 as Darius's vindication of himself as YHWH's choice, 'threatening rebels with a dose of their own medicine'.[15] Berges ascribes the origin of the sayings in 50:1-11 to different groups although the message is linked to the same subject, namely a new perspective on the future of Zion.[16]

However, when 50:4-11 is considered in its wider context, the themes within the literary context indicate a logical flow toward a unitary message. The important theme of the people of YHWH being interrogated about their lack of hearing of what they should have listened to and therefore should have known for a long time is introduced in 40:21 with: 'Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?' This lack of knowledge is reiterated in 42:23-25 with:

> Who among you will give heed to this, who will attend and listen for the time to come? Who gave up Jacob to the spoiler, and Israel to the robbers? Was it not the LORD, against whom we have sinned, in whose ways they would not walk, and whose law they would not obey? So he poured upon him the heat of his anger and the fury of war; it set him on fire all around, but he did not understand; it burned him, but he did not take it to heart.

From there the theme of hearing and knowing is carried over to chapter 48 as its main theme. 48:6-8 presents an important message in the sense that it announces a new understanding that will be brought about.[17] The theme of an ear that will hear without rebelling is thus not abruptly introduced in chapter 50 as Smith suggests, but is already present in an important part of the book. Since the Servant will announce new things (42:9) it is thus not unexpected when it is said in 50:4 that Adonai YHWH awakens the ear of the Servant-speaker.

The Servant starts in 50:4 by stating that Adonai YHWH has given him an unusual gift to fulfil his calling, namely a לְשׁוֹן לִמּוּדִים ('tongue of disciples'), which indicates that he has extraordinary verbal skills. These verbal skills are not to be understood as absolute fluency in speaking, as opposed to stammering, but as competence and understanding as the result of instruction and thereby the ability to speak with understanding like a disciple.[18] An understanding which the house of Jacob lacked.

The fact that the Servant was given the tongue of disciples stems from the truth that he had an awakened ear. What is uncommon about the awakened ear of the Servant is the expression יָעִיר לִי אֹזֶן לִשְׁמֹעַ כַּלִּמּוּדִים ('he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught'). This is the only instance in the Old Testament where the expression is used that God awakens or stirs the ear up to action (יעיר). The use of the hiphil imperfect indicates the character of God's ongoing action. His ongoing action is further emphasized by the iterative expression בַּבֹּקֶר בַּבֹּקֶר. Such ongoing action is necessary because the unhearing ears of the Servant (42:18,19) and the people (43:8) necessitate extraordinary action in order for the ability to hear to be restored. The term יעיר (awaken) with God as subject, is of special importance. God would not only make a new beginning for the remnant through historical events so that they might return from exile, but will also prepare the state of mind necessary to leave Babylon behind and embrace what he has in store for them. This will be done by first setting people in motion to proclaim God's plan by opening up their ears, like the person speaking in 50:4. In 50:4 the term אזן ('ear') is used collectively for ears. Although the ability of the ears to hear is incapacitated, it is God who will awaken/stir up the ears. That will lead to understanding, and that will result in speaking words that will give strength to the weary.

The object of speaking are the יָעֵף ('weary person', here used collectively). The inclusive sense in which the term is used in verse 4 becomes clear from the explanation of Hendrik Bosman when he says that יעף in the prophetic material embraces the total range of physical, emotional and spiritual incapacity.[19] The weary are thus not only those who lacked physical or emotional or spiritual strength, but amounts to an all-inclusive weariness. In that sense it is noteworthy that not only the ears of the Servant are in themselves incapacitated and need a new beginning. Those to whom the Servant has to speak are no less incapacitated through their weariness.

Israel and the nations are all weary. Israel is exhausted by the exile, which is a result of their transgressions of the law and God's subsequent righteous actions required by the covenant (Deut 28). The nations' weariness is the result of the burden idolatry lays on their shoulders

[10] *DBL.OT*, #7725.
[11] C.H.J. van der Merwe, J.A. Naudé *et al.*, *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, Sheffield 1999, 59.
[12] Although the covenant is not specifically mentioned in this passage, the concept is clearly embedded in the relational notions of the discussed metaphors, namely that of vineyard and owner, mother and child as well as mother and bill of divorce.
[13] A. Harman, 'Particles', in: *NIDOTTE* IV, 1032.
[14] Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 378.
[15] J.D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66* (WBC), Revised Edition, Dallas 2005, 753.
[16] Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 307.
[17] U. Torsten, 'Too Hard to Understand? The Motif of Hardening in Isaiah', in: D.G. Firth, H.G.M. Williamson (eds), *Interpreting Isaiah: Issues and Approaches*, Nottingham 2009, 62-83.
[18] E.H. Merrill, 'לָמַד', in: *NIDOTTE* II, 801.
[19] H. Bosman, 'עִיף', in: *NIDOTTE* III, 390-396.

(41:5-7). Israel and the nations were thus equally weary. Ironically this happened because Israel did not recognize God as the only one against whom no idol could stand and therefore they lost the light of understanding (48:3-8).

The core message of 50:4 is thus that Adonai YHWH will make a new beginning by intervening and activating the ears of his Servant towards hearing and resultant action, because in itself his ears did not have the capacity to hear. Since hearing will be initiated by God, the Servant will have the ability to be taught to such an extent that he will not just be able to understand the physical, emotional, and spiritual deficiency of his hearers, but will also receive the ability as prophetic Servant to convey correct understanding to them in order for them to be restored from their weariness.

Thus the lament of the people of Zion that YHWH has divorced them as a husband his wife (50:1) is not only dismissed, but the Servant is enabled to sustain the people with a word that will lead to a true understanding of their situation. The consequences of this understanding are then conveyed in 50:5-11. First the consequences for the Servant are spelled out in verses 5-9 and then those for his hearers in verses 10-11.

In 50:5 it is stated that the Servant's ability to correctly hear and understand inhibits him from rebelling as his hearers did. The people's rebellion led to a schism between them and YHWH, but the hearing ears of the Servant will bring about a new relationship between himself and YHWH, which will be of such a nature that he will endure suffering without being disgraced (50:6-7). He and the rest of God's people are similar in sharing their suffering, but dissimilar in understanding their situation. The Servant understands that in his suffering God is neither absent nor indifferent. In fact he has shown him something greater than suffering and that is his covenantal righteousness and faithfulness over and against the covenantal unrighteousness and unfaithfulness of God's people (50:7). The Servant testifies about the outcome of the new relationship between him and YHWH in verses 6-9 and it can be concluded that this testimony is meant to teach the audience to come into a similar relationship with him. It is significant that the Servant is primarily a disciple and only in that capacity, can he be prophetic Servant.[20]

THE RELATION BETWEEN ISAIAH 50:1-9 AND 10-11

At first sight 50:10-11 may seem to be a disconnected fragment. Yet, by listening to the logical flow in the text, coherence can be established because the themes in verses 10-11 bring the whole chapter to a close.

The last two verses of Isaiah 50 are introduced with the questions מִי בָכֶם יְרֵא יְהוָה שֹׁמֵעַ בְּקוֹל עַבְדּוֹ ('Who among you fears YHWH and listens to the voice of his Servant?'[11]). As with the rhetorical questions discussed earlier, a negative response is also expected here.[22]Until now, none of the people of Israel who earlier heard the Servant, reacted positively through fearing YHWH, listening to his Servant, and as consequence trusting YHWH and relying on him.

The conduct of the people must thus be seen in contrast to YHWH's conduct conveyed in the rhetorical questions in 50:1. Those questions reiterated that YHWH had not abandoned his people. The double question in 50:10a suggests the opposite though. The people abandoned

[20] W.A.M. Beuken, *Jesaja*, dl 2B (POuT), Nijkerk 1983, 93-94.
[21] Translation mine.
[22] W. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66* (WeBC), Louisville 1998, 124.

YHWH (i.e. do not fear him), the result of deliberately not having listening ears (i.e. not obeying the voice of his prophetic Servant).

The ensuing lack of understanding is expressed metaphorically in 50:10b as a person walking in חֲשֵׁכִים ('darkness'). With 'darkness' ignorance is implied.[23] It is this ignorance that the prophetic Servant of YHWH is addressing in conveying his teaching in a manner fitting to that of a true disciple. His hearers have been ignorant for a very long time (cf. 1:2,3). Now that their ignorance is addressed, the people will have the opposite of חשכים, namely נֹגַהּ (light). The root נגה, which is primarily associated with several different aspects of theophany such as God's glory, is here used metaphorically for God's shining into the lives of his people.[24] When God's light shines into the lives of his people, נגה as the opposite of חשכים becomes a reality. This leads to them being aware of his presence and providing them with necessary understanding of God's intentions with the exile. Swanson explains נגה in 50:10 further as: 'knowledge, formally light, i.e., what is known that can be responded to'.[25] The awakened ear of the Servant and his tongue, fit to sustain the weary, would provide the light or knowledge necessary to which they could respond. Consequently that would result in providing knowledge about YHWH and his righteous actions so that his hearers might respond with a true understanding of YHWH's intentions with the exile.

In 50:10c the hearer is called upon to put his confidence in YHWH (יִבְטַח) and to rely on his God (וְיִשָּׁעֵן). This call to faith is put in the jussive singular, and should be interpreted as a collective appeal to the people (plural) of Judah. 50:10c constitutes the main clause of 50:10, with the two clauses 10a and 10b leading up to this injunction. Logically this main clause flows from the proclamation about YHWH's righteousness and his trustworthiness to his Servant in 50:4-9 and the fact that the fear of the Lord is closely related to obeying the voice of his Servant (50:10a).

Isaiah 50:11 closes the passage with a warning to all those having the opposite of confidence in YHWH; that is, confidence in their own understanding. The verse opens withהֵן כֻּלְּכֶם ('behold all!'), which contains the discourse marker הן, which has the semantic function of focussing attention to the utterance that follows.[26] It is a repetition of הֵן כֻּלָּם found in 50:9, where a similar proclamation of doom is made. A relation is thereby established between the adversaries addressed in 50:9 and 50:11. By the repetition of 'behold all' attention is emphatically drawn to all adversaries of YHWH and his Servant, proclaiming their evident doom.

In 50:11, the idea of reliance on oneself is conveyed by the use of metaphors related to the provision of light by means of manmade fire. The NRSV translates הֵן כֻּלְּכֶם קֹדְחֵי אֵשׁ מְאַזְּרֵי זִיקוֹת in 11a as: 'But all of you are kindlers of fire, lighters of firebrands.' If both participles קדחי and מאזרי are treated equally the translation would be: 'Behold you kindlers of fire, lighters of firebrands.' The kindlers of fire and lighters of firebrands are thus directly addressed in a word of warning about imminent judgement because they try to create their own interpretive light as a way out of their present darkness.[27] They did this by providing (מאזרי) themselves habitually with זיקות ('flaming torches'), which are implements used for lighting a path walking at night.[28] When the literary context is respected it is better to understand זיקות as referring to instruments of light and not as instruments of destruction. Thus the light they provide logically stands

[23] J.D. Price, 'חֲשֵׁכָה', *NIDOTTE* II, 315.
[24] M.J. Selman, 'נֹגַהּ', *NIDOTTE* III, 18.
[25] *DBL.OT*, #5586.
[26] Van der Merwe, Naudé, *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 328, 330.
[27] Childs, *Isaiah*, 396.
[28] *DBL.OT*, #2338.

antithetically to the darkness mentioned in 50:3 and 10. While the adversaries of God provided their own light or understanding of their situation, they wandered in darkness which led them to perceive YHWH as the culprit (see discussion of 50:1). When the Servant brings the correct understanding, received from YHWH, a new light shines because the exile is then perceived correctly, the result of YHWH's righteousness. This perspective would not only lead them to acknowledge him for who he is amongst the gods, but also the way would be prepared for the people to return to Zion (51:11).

However, the idea of fire providing light is not accepted by all. The ASV and NRSV translate בְּאוּר in 50:11b with 'in the flame' and not 'in the light' of your fire. If 'flame' is used instead of 'light' the repetitive use of 'darkness' as the opposite of 'light' as well as the metaphorical trend in the literary context is not acknowledged, which leads to a different understanding of the passage. This, however, does not flow logically from the context. Therefore, I prefer to understand 50:11 as concluding with a stark statement of warning, which can be paraphrased as 'Carry on in your own understanding, the result will be that you will perish by my hand in the place of pain'. This is also a fitting conclusion to the whole pericope, 50:1-11.

In conclusion: Isaiah 50:1-11 forms a unit because of the thematic unity concentrating on the lack of hearing and understanding. This is addressed by the hearing ear and instructing tongue of the prophetic Servant. The purpose of the passage is thus a correction of the wrong understanding by the exiles regarding both their own and YHWH's roles during exile. Because of the new proclamation of the hearing Servant, blindness in Israel could be corrected and the light of true understanding restored. If, however, some would prefer walking in their manmade light of personal interpretation providing a manmade understanding of their circumstances they would ultimately perish by the hand of YHWH.

If Isaiah 50 is interpreted according to the discussed thematic unity, Isaiah 51 logically flows from it because the chapter commence on a more positive note with reference to hearers who listen to the Lord, seek him and pursue righteousness.

THE IDOLS AS 'USELESS' IN THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

Hetty Lalleman

INTRODUCTION

Professor Eric Peels and I share a love for and a great interest in the Book of the prophet Jeremiah; his predecessor in Apeldoorn, professor B.J. Oosterhoff, had the same interest. Reflecting on the theme of the BEST research programme of the Theological Universities of Apeldoorn and Kampen, 'Who Is Like You Among the Gods? The One and Three in a Pluralistic Context', it makes sense to investigate what Jeremiah says about God's apparent rivals, the idols, to whom the prophet often refers as הֶבֶל or הֲבָלִים. What does the use of הבל mean in contexts that speak of idols and idolatry? How should this intriguing word, famously used by Qohelet, be understood? It is my pleasure to dedicate this essay to Eric.[1]

Jeremiah regularly uses the word הבל (and plural הבלים) to refer to idols or idol worship (2:5; 8:19; 10:3,8,15; 14:22; 16:19; 51:18).[2] The basic meaning of this word is 'breath' but it is more often used in metaphors, which render translations such as 'unsubstantial', 'worthless', 'unprofitable', 'useless', 'futile', 'transient', and 'fleeting'. Jeremiah seems to argue that the idols are insubstantial because they are false. But what more can be said? As my starting point I will take the lemma on הבל in the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*[3] of which I quote the key part:

> In a 'Deuteronomic' sense, *hebel* refers to the components of false religions. In some passages *hebel* is nearly a synonym for 'idol', e.g., Jer 10:8; 14:22. However, there are entire systems of insubstantialities (breath-like vanities) in the non-Judaic religions. Jeremiah uses the word often and almost exclusively in this way. Idol-making is useless (Jer 10:3) because such are the idols themselves (10:14-15; 16:19-20; 51:18). In addition to idols, vain are sacrificial carcasses (16:18-19) and foreign customs (10:3). In Jeremiah *hebel* refers to the totality of any false religion, even if it is Israel's own ineffective pursuit (2:5; 8:19; also Deut 32:21; 1 Kgs 16:13, 26; 2 Kgs 17:15).[4]

In his study of הבל in the Book of Ecclesiastes Douglas Miller deals with a number of texts from Kings and Jeremiah which use this word. He places 1 Kings 16:13,26 and Jeremiah 14:22 under the heading of 'stock metaphor', by which he means that the word הבל refers to foreign gods without any other referent.[5] In other texts the false deities are also indicated by means of some clues, as in Deuteronomy 32:21; 2 Kings 17:15; Jeremiah 2:5; 8:19; 10:3,8,15; 16:19; 51:18. In Jeremiah 10:15; 16:19 and 51:18 the emphasis is on the deception these false deities bring. In

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[1] And to his wife Janine, another good friend, as well.

[2] Jer 23:16 uses the verb הבל for the words of the false prophets. Jer 51:18 is part of the oracle against Babel and is identical to 10:15; I will not deal with it separately.

[3] D.C. Fredericks, 'הֶבֶל', in: *NIDOTTE* I, 1005-1006.

[4] Fredericks, *NIDOTTE* I, 1005.

[5] D.B. Miller, *Symbol and Rhetoric in Ecclesiastes: The Place of* Hebel *in Qohelet's Work* (AcBib, 2), Atlanta 2002, 78-79.

Jeremiah 10:3,8 the emphasis is on the weakness of the false deities.[6] In general, however, all these texts contain an element of deception and unreliability.[7]

This essay will investigate what הבל exactly means in Jeremiah. In which way are idols הבל? I will employ Deuteronomy 32 to shed light on Jeremiah's words, assuming that this text was available to the prophet.[8] In this way I will argue that הבל specifically relates to the uselessness of the idols regarding the fertility of the land.

DEUTERONOMY 32

Deuteronomy 32:1-43 contains the Song of Moses; at the heart of it verse 21 reads:

> They made me jealous by 'no-god'
> They provoked my anger by their הבלים
> So I make them jealous with 'no-people'
> With a nation foolish (נָבָל) I make them angry.[9]

In order to understand the implications and meaning of verse 21, the context of these words needs to be investigated. I cannot here discuss the genre of this song in detail, whether it is prophecy, wisdom or a lawsuit.[10] Gordon McConville structures the Song in a way that partially fits that of an ancient Near Eastern lawsuit pattern.[11] A slightly different division appears in Jan Verbruggen's commentary and I prefer this.[12] Verbruggen argues that this is a covenant lawsuit shaped in the form of a song which contains wisdom elements.[13]

A major issue in Deuteronomy 32 is the contrast between God's provision for his people's needs and their wandering off to other gods. This is a recurring theme in Israel's history and a great concern for the future, see Deuteronomy 6-7 and other places in the book such as 31:14-29. In its present context 31:28-29 forms the preparation for Moses' Song in chapter 32.

Within the Song several important themes can be highlighted: God is Israel's Rock (vv. 4,15,18,30,31), however, the people serve other gods (vv. 16-18,21,37-38), and the overall theme is that God is the only God:

> See now that I, even I, am he;
> there is no god besides me.

[6] Miller, *Symbol and Rhetoric in Ecclesiastes*, 90. Miller, 80, 82, also mentions an element of deception in 2 Kgs 17:15; Jer 2:5 and 8:19.

[7] Miller, *Symbol and Rhetoric in Ecclesiastes*, 78.

[8] A variety of dates have been suggested for the Song of Moses: from pre-exilic to post-exilic. In my view there is no compelling reason why the Song cannot be old, at least older than Jeremiah. See also Peels' comments in H.G.L. Peels, *De Wraak van God. De betekenis van de wortel* NQM *en de functie van de* NQM*-teksten in het kader van de oudtestamentische Godsopenbaring*, Zoetermeer 1992, 119-120 (ET: *The Vengeance of God: The Meaning of the Root* NQM *and the Function of the* NQM*-Texts in the Context of Divine Revelation in the Old Testament* [OTS, 31], Leiden 1995, 147-148). There is no space to discuss this issue in full depth, see the select (!) bibliography in P.C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT), Grand Rapids 1976, 69-72.

[9] Translation mine. Unless otherwise indicated, Bible quotations are from the NRSV.

[10] J.G. McConville, *Deuteronomy* (ApOTC), Leicester/Downers Grove 2002, 451-452; Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 373-376.

[11] McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 451.

[12] J. Verbruggen, *Deuteronomium* (De Brug), Heerenveen 2008, 270.

[13] Verbruggen, *Deuteronomium*, 271.

> I kill and I make alive;
> I wound and I heal;
> and no one can deliver from my hand (v. 39).

YHWH is jealous when his 'children' (vv. 5-6,18,19-20) forsake him and serve other gods (vv. 16-21). The context of the relationship between God and his people is clearly that of the Sinaitic covenant: Jacob is God's own portion in the midst of the other nations (v. 9, cf. Deut 7:6); YHWH's care for his people is that of a father for his children. He sustained his people in the wilderness, protected them, guided them and fed them (vv. 10-14; see also Hos 11:1,4).

In verses 10-14 the emphasis is strongly on God's provision and physical care for Israel. Fertility and abundant harvests are his gifts alone—no other gods have anything to do with this. This was a highly important message for the people of Israel that was about to enter the land in which the worship of Baal centred around fertility and its influence was a constant threat to worshipping YHWH alone (cf. Hos 2:7,10; ET 2:5,8).

In this context verse 21 is part of the verdict in the lawsuit between God and his people. It is similar to the *lex talionis*: they served a 'no-god' and made God jealous, God will take a 'no-nation' and make *them* jealous. (For a similar idea see Hosea 1:9.) The people served what was הבל, God will take a nation that is נבל.

To sum up, Deuteronomy 32:21 uses the word הבל for the other gods in the context of God's provision for Israel: they cannot provide, only he can. In a culture in which fertility was essential, this is a highly polemical statement.

Three further texts in the Old Testament, already mentioned by Daniel Fredericks, are reminiscent of Deuteronomy 32:21. 1 Kings 16:13 and 26 speak of specific kings of Israel 'provoking the LORD God … to anger' with their הבלים, which refers to their serving other gods/idols.[14] In 2 Kings 17:15, an evaluation of the fall of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) in 722 BCE and the sinful behaviour that caused it, it says that 'they went after the הבל and became הבל'. In the context of verse 15 it is clear that the serving of the nations' gods is meant. H.A. Brongers comments on 2 Kings 17:15 that serving idols is dangerous business: one becomes *hèbèl*, that is to say, one physically and emotionally perishes (Jer 2:5).[15]

JEREMIAH 2:5

I will now look at the way in which הבל is used in the Book of Jeremiah. It is striking that in most cases it occurs in a context that has to do with fertility, just like in Deuteronomy 32. The expression from Deuteronomy 32:21, 'provoking [God]' *sc.* to anger, is not only used in 1 Kings 16:13,26 and 2 Kings 17:15, but also in Jeremiah, in particular in passages that are reminiscent of Deuteronomy (viz. Jer 7:18,19; 11:17; 25:6,7; 32:29,30,32; 44:3,8).

[14] Miller, *Symbol and Rhetoric in Ecclesiastes*, 78-79, takes this as a 'stock metaphor', where false gods are meant but without further indication.

[15] H.A. Brongers, *II Koningen* (POuT), Nijkerk 1970, 166. Brongers, 166, also comments that in the prophetic proclamation, in particular by Jeremiah, the idols are called *habalim* to show their impotence.

Jeremiah 2:5 is part of a so-called *rib*, a court case, which starts in verse 4. (See v. 9 for the verb ריב.) It is possible to take verses 4-9 as a separate unit[16] or to include verses 10-13 with them.[17] Oosterhoff comments that we can in fact define the whole chapter as an accusation and lawsuit.[18] The words are spoken to the 'house of Jacob and all the families of the house of Israel' (v. 4), which primarily means the tribes of the northern kingdom that had already gone into exile in 722 BCE. However, at the beginning of the chapter Jerusalem is mentioned as an addressee, so in the present context verses 4-13 are meant for all Israel, the covenant people.

The court case starts with a question which opens the accusation: 'What wrong did your ancestors find in me that they went far from me …?' (v. 5) This question expresses the appalling behaviour of the covenant people, that God chose as his bride (v. 2). Israel was different, 'holy', destined to be totally committed to the one and only God (Deut 6:4), but God has been 'replaced' by idols such as the Canaanite god Baal. It looks as if the Israelites found something wrong in their God and therefore began to worship other gods. In Hebrew there is a wordplay: did they find עָוֶל in me, God asks? It seems so because they went after 'the הבל' (with the definite article) and now they have become הבל. The word הבל can be seen as a pun on the name Baal (הַבַּעַל); as Jack Lundbom comments, 'Here with the article it is a disparaging name for Baal.'[19]

There are a number of correspondences between Deuteronomy 32 and Jeremiah 2. The reminder of the time in the desert and God's care in Jeremiah 2:6 echoes Deuteronomy 32:10, the reminder of bringing them into a fertile land in Jeremiah 2:7 echoes Deuteronomy 32:13-14. The remarkable criticism, 'Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods?' in Jeremiah 2:11 recalls Deuteronomy 32:21. God's people have done something that is unheard of in other (pagan!) nations: they exchanged God, Israel's 'glory', for what cannot help/is of 'no profit' (vv. 8,11). Oosterhoff comments that the latter two words can be read together as a nickname for Baal.[20]

G.K. Beale argues that Jeremiah 2:11 not only speaks about changing God for idols, but about 'changing the glory of one deity for another'.[21] The verse should be read in combination with Jeremiah 2:5: they become what they worship, for instead of reflecting God's glory they reflect 'the empty nature of the idol, which does not profit its worshiper'.[22]

Other gods are unreliable, in contrast to God, 'the source of living water' (v. 13). The main issue in Jeremiah 2:4-13 is that the people rely more on Baal than on the Only One who can truly provide for their needs. In material matters such as fertility, produce and harvest, Israel trusts the gods of other nations, *in casu* the Canaanite god Baal, more than God, their Sustainer. That is הבל and those who worship these 'no-gods' become themselves הבל. They live a futile existence without any solidity.

In Jeremiah 2:5 the word הבל is used in the same polemical way as in Deuteronomy 32: to contrast God's provision with the uselessness of other gods in matters of fertility. Gods are 'useless' when it comes to fertility and any attempt to make the gods (Baal) provide what one

[16] W.L. Holladay, *Jeremiah*, Vol. 1 (Hermeneia), Philadelphia 1986, 73; J. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20* (AncB), New York/London etc. 1999, 257; B.J. Oosterhoff, *Jeremiah 1-10* (COT), Kampen 1990, 105.

[17] H. Lalleman, *Jeremiah and Lamentations* (TOTC), Downers Grove/Nottingham 2013, 77.

[18] Oosterhoff, *Jeremia 1-10*, 105.

[19] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 259.

[20] Oosterhoff, *Jeremia 1-10*, 111: 'Baat-Niet' ('He who does not profit.')

[21] G.K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry*, Downers Grove/Nottingham 2008, 111.

[22] Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 115.

needs in daily life is in vain. What one expects them to do they are unable to give. In the end one becomes as 'futile' as they are. The result is a spiritually 'empty' existence.

JEREMIAH 8:19

Jeremiah 8:19 is a verse in poetry and the only text to use הבל as well as 'provoking to anger'. The verse forms an indication that the Book of Jeremiah uses 'Deuteronomistic language' and integrates it into his message. It is part of the section 8:4-9:3 which speaks of God's people turning away from him and not turning back; there is a word play on שׁוּב in verses 4-5. Such behaviour is 'unnatural' even for birds (v. 7, where the word 'stork' sounds like חֶסֶד, God's faithfulness in the covenant). 8:13 and 20 speak of a bad harvest—the people's spiritual state is reflected in the condition of the land—, whereas verse 16 speaks of the enemy's threat. War and famine often went hand in hand.

Verse 19 mentions the 'images' of gods (פְּסִילִים) and the הבלים. The people are complaining and lamenting: 'Is the LORD God not in Zion? Is her King not in her?' These are rhetorical questions: from the poor situation of the land and the people it could be concluded that the God of Israel had left his people. God answers with another question which functions as an accusation: 'Why have they provoked me to anger with their images, with their foreign idols?'[23] In verse 20 the people continue to lament: 'The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.' They do not realize that the desperate situation of famine in the land and the threat of enemies are caused by their own following of foreign הבלים. These gods are of no use when it comes to providing food and safety: 'We look for peace, but find no good, for a time of healing, but there is terror instead.' (v. 15)

JEREMIAH 10:3,8,15

Jeremiah 10:1-16 has the following structure:

(1-2a Introduction)
2b-5 The idols of the nations are made by humans
6-7 but God is King over the nations and nobody is like him!
8-9 Idols are lifeless products made by humans
10 but God is the living God!
11 Idols have not created anything
12-13 but God made the heavens and the earth!
14-15 Those who make idols are silly and will perish
16 but Israel's God made everything—and Israel belongs to him![24]

This structure shows the contrast between God and the idols. The passage addresses the absurdity of serving idols. The emphasis is on the idols as made by human beings. Therefore the prophet says in verse 5: 'Do not be afraid of them for they cannot do evil, nor is it in them to do good.' (Hebrew יָרֵא and רָעַע, an example of assonance.) Fear not, they cannot do anything

[23] W.A. Brueggemann, 'Jeremiah's Use of Rhetorical Questions', *JBL* 92 (1973), 358-374.

[24] Cf. Lalleman, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 126.

that you would need to fear. Idol making and idol worship are equivalent in this passage: the gods do not exist outside their images. This view is not shared everywhere in the Old Testament; sometimes idols are considered as really existing beings.[25]

The passage emphasizes that idols/statues are made by human beings. By contrasting these ‘self-made gods’ with the work of God as creator (vv. 12,16) and King (7,10), the lack of power of the idols, the gods of the nations, is emphasized. The statues *are* the idols: made of wood and only made by human beings. They are indeed ‘useless’, of no substance, as is indicated by the use of the word הבל in verses 3, 8 and 15.

In verse 3 the customs of the nations are mentioned. The preceding verse emphasizes the non-threatening character of what the nations worship: it is הבל, a puff of air, unsubstantial, useless. So the customs, in this case the idol-making of the nations, are useless. This work is ‘nothing’ (v. 3).[26] Idols cannot do anything, neither good nor bad (v. 5).

In verse 8, the next verse that speaks of הבל, the first colon reads: ‘They are both stupid[27] and foolish …’ It makes most sense to interpret ‘they’ as referring to the idols. The second colon is harder to translate. Literally it says: ‘Instruction of הבלים wood it is.’ The ‘wood’ refers to the material idols are made of. Because they are just wooden objects their instruction is useless. ‘In other words, the instruction of worthless idols is worthless itself.’[28]

The idols do not give any guidance or instruction, even though it may have been exactly that which made people worship them in the first place. The images themselves deceive their worshippers: they are a ‘fraud’ (שֶׁקֶר, v. 14), a word often used by Jeremiah to refer to false prophets (6:13; 8:10; 23:9-40). They look deceptively attractive but they achieve nothing for their worshippers. There is no breath (רוּחַ) in them, whereas God brings out his רוח from his storehouses (v. 13). People who worship ‘stupid idols’ are themselves stupid (vv. 8,14). The idols are ‘worthless’, הבל, ‘a work of delusion’ (v. 15).

Verse 15 continues to say that the idols will perish when God punishes them. In case people are still impressed by them, know that they will perish. It probably implies that their worshippers will also perish.

Verses 12-14 make the connection with fertility in a way which recalls Deuteronomy 32. The prophet claims that it is God who gives rain and implicitly he polemicizes against the cult of Baal, as is the case in Jeremiah 2.

JEREMIAH 14:22

Jeremiah 14:22 is part of a lament which consists of verses 17-22. The wider context is a section that begins in 14:1 and has as superscription: ‘The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought ...’ It is unclear which period of drought is meant but according to verses

[25] See G. Kwakkel, ‘L’existence des autres dieux selon l’Ancien Testament’, in: J.-Ph. Bru (ed.), *Contre vents et marées*, Fs. P. Berthoud and P. Wells, Aix-en-Provence 2014, 86, who mentions Jer 10:3-5 as an example of a text in which the other gods are not regarded to be present apart from their images made by human beings. Cf. also C.J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*, Nottingham 2006, 136-163.

[26] NRSV: ‘false’.

[27] Hebrew verb בער; in Jer 10:14 it is said that humans who worship idols become what the idols are: stupid. The verb also occurs in v. 21, used for the leaders, the ‘shepherds’ of the people. The verb may be one of the connections between the two otherwise seemingly unrelated passages Jer 10:1-16 and 10:17-22.

[28] Lalleman, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 127.

1-6 it causes a severe famine which affects all of creation, including the animals. Verses 7-9 connect the people’s sinful behaviour with the disaster of the drought. In the lament the people acknowledge that the famine is the direct result of their sins against YHWH but they also call on his name: if he saves them, everyone will see that he is able to redeem them, that he is not powerless.

Verses 20-22 are a counterpart of 7-9; both are confessions of corporate guilt and verse 20 even extends the guilt and the confession to the sins of the forefathers. Both passages call on God’s name and appeal to his honour (vv. 9,21). God is the only hope of the distressed people (8,22). The plea takes place within the context of the covenant (v. 9: we bear your name; v. 21: do not break your covenant with us). In this context suddenly the הבלים of the nations are mentioned. A rhetorical question makes clear that they are unable to give rain, they are הבל: useless, without power, insubstantial. They are useless when it comes to fertility. Only ‘the LORD our God’ (v. 22) can provide rain, nobody or nothing else can.[29] This is a truly bold statement in a culture which was still engrained with worship of Baal, the Canaanite fertility god. Here he is not even worth to be mentioned by name.

JEREMIAH 16:19

Jeremiah 16:19 is important as it uses הבל in the context of idols. The nations, surprisingly enough, will confess how silly their worship of idols was. They say ‘just lies (שֶׁקר) our fathers have inherited, הבל, and there is no profit in them’.[30] Here, הבל refers to the idols, as verse 20 makes clear: ‘Can mortals make for themselves gods? Such are no gods!’ The relationship with Deuteronomy 32:21 cannot be missed; see also Jeremiah 2:11.

The wider context of Jeremiah 16:19-20 is as follows: the chapter contains a message of judgment. The prophet receives the prohibition to marry or to take part in funerals and festive occasions as a sign of the coming judgment. The reason for this judgment is given in verses 10-13 in language familiar from the Book of Deuteronomy (esp. 29:24-28). Judah’s forefathers started to serve other gods and the present generation is said to have behaved even worse. They heard the prophetic warnings but ignored them, which adds to their guilt. The punishment will match the crime (*lex talionis*). Judah will serve other gods in a foreign land ‘day and night’ (Jer 16:13), which implies that they will soon have enough of it.

The theme of idolatry is again taken up in verses 16-18 (prose) and 19-21 (poetry); these two passages are connected by the mentioning of idolatry in verses 18 and 19. Verse 18 uses the words שִׁקּוּצִים and תּוֹעֵבוֹת for the idols; these words can be seen as synonyms here. Hence it is possible to translate verse 18 as: ‘With the corpses of their detestables and their abominations they have filled my inheritance’ (taking the two expressions together with the verb מלא).[31] Oosterhoff interprets the ‘detestables’ and ‘abominations’ as the *statues* of idols which are

[29] Miller, *Symbol and Rhetoric in Ecclesiastes*, 79, comments: ‘In this text, the “*hebel*’s of the nations” … are contrasted with Yahweh who is the true rain-giver. Although the nations seek out their various gods for rain, only Yahweh who made the heavens is a legitimate source of hope.’

[30] Translation mine.

[31] Translation mine. See also B.J. Oosterhoff, *Jeremia 11-29* (COT), Kampen 1994, 149, and Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 765.

lifeless.[32] However, these words probably describe the idols themselves, as in Jeremiah 4:1.[33] If the phrase 'corpses of detestables' is taken as referring to the idols, and not just to the statues which are man-made and therefore dead, the message of the prophet is even stronger: the gods served by the people (v. 11) are lifeless, dead, powerless.

Although verse 19 by its poetic beginning[34] seems to change the topic, it does continue the theme of idolatry. It is remarkable that the nations (גּוֹיִם), the non-Israelites, will come and confess that they and their ancestors have served a lie (שׁקר); they served הבל in which there is no profit (cf. Jer 2:5,8,11). A further reference to idols in verse 20 says that they are *not* gods (cf. 2:11; 5:7; 10:1-16; Deut 32:21). The nations will know better than God's own people that their idols are nothing, unsubstantial, useless. In these verses the nations are thus presented as an example to Judah; the words of the prophet must have had a shocking effect on his hearers.

In comparison with the other texts that use the word הבל to indicate idols, Jeremiah 16:20 shows a clear connection with Deuteronomy 32:21; there is, however, no indication of a context of fertility.

CONCLUSION

It seems plausible that Deuteronomy 32:21 has influenced Jeremiah's description of the idols. God's provision is emphasized in the polemics against the foreign gods such as Baal. In Israel's history the ever-present temptation was to expect fertility from Baal, not from God (Jer 2, 8, 10, 14). Jeremiah 16 is the only chapter that was influenced by Deuteronomy 32 but in which fertility is *not* the issue. Further research is needed here.

Reflection on the impact these passages may have for our own time requires a critical evaluation of modern day behaviour. In today's world 'idols' are probably those things (or people) on which people rely to supply them with happiness (in OT terms: fertility).

The title of Beale's book, *We Become What We Worship,* is well-chosen. When humans rely on 'idols', on other things than God the giver of life, for their wellbeing and happiness, they will end up as הבל. No-one wants to end up as a 'no-body': Jeremiah's description of idols can be a warning to avoid just that. Instead, the living God is the only source of life and happiness.

[32] Oosterhoff, *Jeremia 11-29*, 149.
[33] So Holladay, *Jeremiah*, Vol. 1, 479, and Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 771; the latter mentions Jer 4:1 and 7:30. For the idea of 'corpses' of idols, but using a different word for corpse, see Lev 26:30.
[34] This beginning resembles the beginning of Ps 27:1; 43:2; 46:1; see also 37:39 and 59:17.

DID YHWH 'VISIT' ZEDEKIAH?

Exegetical and Theological Notes on the Relationship between Jeremiah 32:5 and 52:11

Henk de Waard

INTRODUCTION

According to the Book of Jeremiah, the prophet repeatedly delivered the word of YHWH to king Zedekiah, especially at the time of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem (588-587 BCE). In these oracles, Jeremiah not only announced that the city would fall, but also addressed the personal fate of the king—he would 'be given into the hands of the king of Babylon' (37:17).[1] The most detailed announcement about the king's future is found in Jeremiah 32:4-5 and 34:3-5, according to which Zedekiah would have to meet his wrathful suzerain and then be deported to Babylon. The final chapter of the book reports how these threats materialized (52:8-11).[2]

Both 32:4-5 and 34:3-5, however, conclude with a remarkable promise.[3] The former oracle suggests an eventual turn of Zedekiah's destiny, as it says that he will be in Babylon 'until I [YHWH] attend to him' (32:5b[4]). In 34:3-5, similarly, Jeremiah assures Zedekiah that he 'shall die in peace' and then be honoured with a royal funeral (34:4-5). These promises not only provide a surprising conclusion to the pronounced judgment, but also seem hard to reconcile with the historical narrative in chapter 52, according to which the king was confined in Babylon 'until the day of this death' (52:11d).

The present study will focus on the promise in 32:5.[5] Scholars have asked whether YHWH's 'attendance' or 'visitation' (root פקד) is indeed a promise, or whether the relevant verb bears the connotation of retribution. I will argue that the text is promissory, but that a difference between the Masoretic text (JerMT) and the Old Greek translation (JerG) of 52:11d is indicative of its reinterpretation as a threat by later editors. In agreement with the prevailing scholarly opinion, I regard JerMT and JerG as representatives of distinct Hebrew versions of the book,

[1] See also 21:1-7; 32:3-5; 34:2-5,21-22; 38:17-23 and cf. 24:8-10; 27:12-15 (references to chapters and verses follow MT). These prophecies have been analysed by J. Applegate, 'The Fate of Zedekiah: Redactional Debate in the Book of Jeremiah', *VT* 48 (1998), 137-160, 301-308. According to Applegate, the various prophecies make contradictory statements, which he interprets as evidence of a 'redactional debate' about Zedekiah's fate. Many of the contradictions disappear, however, (a) when a distinction is made between messages that address the king's individual future (32:3-5; 34:2-5,21-22; 37:17; 38:17-23) and those that speak collectively about him and his people (21:1-7; 24:8-10); and (b) if it is recognized that prophecies usually are (implicitly) conditional (see below).
[2] Version IIb of the book (see below) contains a parallel report in 39:5-7.
[3] The oracles in 32:3-5 and 34:2-5 are very similar, the formulation of the concluding promise being the largest difference. It is quite clear that 32:3-5 was based on the earlier text of 34:2-5; see, e.g., W.L. Holladay, *Jeremiah*, Vol. 2: *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 26-52* (Hermeneia), Minneapolis 1989, 210.
[4] See my arrangement of clauses below.
[5] On 34:4-5, see H.-J. Stipp, '"Im Frieden wirst du sterben". Jeremias Heilswort für Zidkija in Jer 34,5', in: S.J. Wimmer, G. Gafus (eds), *"Vom Leben umfangen". Ägypten, das Alte Testament und das Gespräch der Religionen*, Gedenkschrift für M. Görg (ÄAT, 80), Münster 2014, 173-181.

both of which have evolved independently from a common parent text. The Hebrew version underlying JerG (which may be called 'version IIa') usually stands close to this parent text ('version I'),[6] while JerMT exhibits much more secondary development ('version IIb').[7]

THE FATE OF ZEDEKIAH ACCORDING TO JEREMIAH 32:4-5

	JerMT (version IIb)	JerG	NRSV
32:4a	וְצִדְקִיָּהוּ מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה לֹא יִמָּלֵט מִיַּד הַכַּשְׂדִּים	καὶ Σεδεκιας οὐ μὴ σωθῇ ἐκ χειρὸς τῶν Χαλδαίων	[King] Zedekiah [of Judah] shall not escape out of the hands of the Chaldeans,
b	כִּי הִנָּתֹן יִנָּתֵן בְּיַד מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל	ὅτι παραδόσει παραδοθήσεται εἰς χεῖρας βασιλέως Βαβυλῶνος	but shall surely be given into the hands of the king of Babylon,
c	וְדִבֶּר־פִּיו עִם־פִּיו	καὶ λαλήσει στόμα αὐτοῦ πρὸς στόμα αὐτοῦ	and shall speak with him face to face
d	וְעֵינָיו אֶת־עֵינוֹ (עֵינָיו[Q]) תִּרְאֶינָה׃	καὶ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ ὄψονται	and see him eye to eye;
5a	וּבָבֶל יוֹלִךְ אֶת־צִדְקִיָּהוּ	καὶ εἰσελεύσεται Σεδεκιας εἰς Βαβυλῶνα	and he shall take Zedekiah to Babylon,
b	וְשָׁם יִהְיֶה עַד־פָּקְדִי אֹתוֹ נְאֻם־יְהוָה	καὶ ἐκεῖ καθιεῖται	and there he shall remain [until I attend to him, says the LORD;
c	כִּי תִלָּחֲמוּ אֶת־הַכַּשְׂדִּים		though you fight against the Chaldeans,
d	לֹא תַצְלִיחוּ׃		you shall not succeed].

In the above translation, square brackets indicate elements that are unrepresented in JerG and, most probably, were missing in version IIa. Since this applies, *inter alia*, to verse 5bβcd, scholars often suppose that the final part of the oracle, including the phrase relating YHWH's 'attendance', constitute secondary supplementation in version IIb (version IIa having preserved version I).[8] They refer to a phraseological parallel of verse 5bβ in 27:22b, which is also

[6] The designation 'version I' reflects the idea that this is the earliest version of the book that can be reconstructed on the basis of the textual differences between JerMT and JerG; it does not imply that this version was indeed the first edition of the book. In the present contribution, however, redactional processes preceding 'version I' are left out of consideration.

[7] For an extensive exposition and defence of this view, see H.-J. Stipp, *Das masoretische und alexandrinische Sondergut des Jeremiabuches. Textgeschichtlicher Rang, Eigenarten, Triebkräfte* (OBO, 136), Freiburg/Göttingen 1994. An update of the argument can be found in: H.-J. Stipp, 'Zur aktuellen Diskussion um das Verhältnis der Textformen des Jeremiabuches', in: M. Karrer, W. Kraus (eds), *Die Septuaginta. Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten* (WUNT, 219), Tübingen 2008, 630-655.

[8] See, e.g., J.G. Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah* (HSM, 6), Cambridge 1973, 104; Holladay, *Jeremiah*, Vol. 2, 203; Stipp, *Sondergut*, 80.

unrepresented in JerG and which is clearly attributable to an extensive reworking of that passage in version IIb.[9]

In various respects, however, the textual situation of 32:5 is different to 27:22. In particular, 32:5bα is found in both JerMT and JerG, while the corresponding phrase in 27:22 ('and there they shall remain') is only found in JerMT and is part of the supplementary material of version IIb. With Andrew Shead, therefore, I believe that a distinction should be made between 32:5bβ and 32:5cd.[10] There is little reason to doubt that the latter sentences were added secondarily in version IIb, but verse 5bβ rather was part of the original oracle and was omitted in version IIa through *parablepsis*.[11] This hypothesis is suggested by the graphic similarity of יִהְיֶה 'remain'[12] and יהוה 'the LORD', and is supported by the fact that it is hard to see why a later editor would have added a promise that apparently remained unfulfilled (52:11d). Moreover, verse 5bα gives the impression of being incomplete without the temporal phrase in verse 5bβ. In version I, therefore, the oracle probably concluded by verse 5b (in its entirety). After the parting of the literary development of the book into separate branches, verse 5bβ was lost in version IIa through a scribal error, while in version IIb the oracle was supplemented by verse 5cd.

As was mentioned above, not every scholar agrees that verse 5bβ is to be interpreted as a promise. Referring to the wide semantic range of the root, Wilhelm Rudolph, John Thompson and others consider the root פקד to be used *in malam partem*, denoting Zedekiah's punishment and death.[13] According to John Applegate, verse 5bβ is intentionally ambiguous and thus mediates between contradictory messages about Zedekiah elsewhere in the book.[14] In my opinion, however, Christopher Begg is correct in arguing that 'the overall movement of thought in the oracle' strongly indicates that פקד is used *in bonam partem*.[15] Since verses 4-5bα already describe Zedekiah's punishment, the particle עַד most naturally signifies the end of the punishment and 'a shift to a new, favorable divine treatment of him.'[16] This interpretation is supported by the parallel phrase in 27:22 (version IIa), where it is made explicit that YHWH's

[9] On 27:22, see E. Tov, 'Exegetical Notes on the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the Septuagint of Jeremiah 27 (34)', in: E. Tov, *The Greek and the Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint* (VT.S, 72), Leiden/Boston etc. 1999, 330.

[10] A.G. Shead, *The Open Book and the Sealed Book: Jeremiah 32 in its Hebrew and Greek Recensions* (JSOTS, 347), London/New York 2002, 94-99. It is important to note that such a distinction should also be made if it is assumed that v. 5bβ, like v. 5cd, was a later addition in version IIb. Given the different emphases of these sentences, they were unlikely to have been added by the same hand.

[11] There is no doubt that version IIa (or at least the copy of it that served as the *Vorlage* of JerG) had suffered much from scribal errors, among which numerous cases of *parablepsis*. See Janzen, *Studies*, 117-120; Stipp, *Sondergut*, 60.

[12] JerG 32:5 reads καθιεῖται, which represents יֵשֵׁב rather than יִהְיֶה. According to Stipp, *Sondergut*, 80, יֵשֵׁב was the original reading, which was changed in version IIb, 'im Einklank mit der Überschuß in 27,22' (which reads יִהְיוּ). More probably, however, JerMT has preserved the original reading (which served as a template for the expansion in 27:22), and יִהְיֶה was changed into יֵשֵׁב in version IIa after the omission of v. 5bβ. Cf. Shead, *Open Book*, 99, however, who seems to regard καθιεῖται as an interpretive translation of יִהְיֶה.

[13] W. Rudolph, *Jeremia* (HAT, 12), Tübingen ²1958, 190; J.A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (NICOT), Grand Rapids 1987, 588. See also F.B. Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations* (NAC, 16), Nashville 1993, 290; G. Fischer, *Jeremia 26-52* (HThKAT), Freiburg/Basel etc. 2005, 195; and cf. J. Bright, *Jeremiah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AncB), New York ²1965, 237; J.R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36* (AncB), New York/London etc. 2004, 503.

[14] Applegate, 'Fate', 153-156.

[15] C.T. Begg, 'Yahweh's "Visitation" of Zedekiah (Jer 32,5)', *ETL* 63 (1987), 115; see also L.C. Allen, *Jeremiah* (OTL), Louisville/London 2008, 366.

[16] Begg, '"Visitation"', 115.

'visitation' of the looted temple vessels involves their return to Judah. In fact, the only reason to interpret 32:5bβ differently is the historical improbability that Zedekiah ever experienced such a favourable treatment, but the text itself is not unclear.[17]

THE FATE OF ZEDEKIAH ACCORDING TO JEREMIAH 52:7-11

Jeremiah 52 is very similar to 2 Kings 24:18-25:21,27-30, which, according to the *opinio communis*, was its source text. Describing the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE (vv. 1-30) and the release of king Jehoiachin (vv. 31-34), the chapter is an historical epilogue to the book. It is usually assumed that its main function is to show the fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecies. As for the fate of Zedekiah, it reports his failed escape and capture and his condemnation by Nebuchadnezzar (vv. 7-10), and then his deportation to Babylon (v. 11):

	JerMT (version IIb)	JerG	NRSV (adapted)
52:11a	וְאֶת־עֵינֵי צִדְקִיָּהוּ עִוֵּר	καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς Σεδεκιου ἐξετύφλωσε	He [Nebuchadnezzar] put out the eyes of Zedekiah,
b	וַיַּאַסְרֵהוּ בַנְחֻשְׁתַּיִם	καὶ ἔδησεν αὐτὸν ἐν πέδαις	and bound him in fetters,
c	וַיְבִאֵהוּ מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל בָּבֶלָה	καὶ ἤγαγεν αὐτὸν βασιλεὺς Βαβυλῶνος εἰς Βαβυλῶνα	and the king of Babylon took him to Babylon,
d	וַיִּתְּנֵהוּ בְבֵית־ (Q בֵּית־) הַפְּקֻדֹּת עַד־יוֹם מוֹתוֹ׃	καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτὸν εἰς οἰκίαν μύλωνος ἕως ἡμέρας ἧς ἀπέθανεν	and put him in the house of punishments/a mill-house until the day of his death.

For the most part, the description of Zedekiah's fate in 52:7-11 corresponds to the announcements of the prophet (see 32:4-5aα, as well as 34:3,21; 37:17; 38:18,23). This is not the case, however, with the promise in 32:5bβ, as, rather than a favourable turn, 52:11d records the king's lifelong confinement in exile. This sentence is found in both JerMT and JerG,[18] but the Hebrew and Greek texts show an interesting difference concerning the king's exact location. According to JerMT, he was put in בֵּית־הַפְּקֻדֹּת, a *hapax legomenon* that may be translated as 'the house of punishments' (cf. Ezek 9:1). With a similarly unique expression, JerG refers to οἰκίαν μύλωνος 'a mill-house', implying that Zedekiah was forced to grind grain.

Some scholars have regarded οἰκίαν μύλωνος as an interpretive translation of בית־הפקדת, but in JerG 29-52[19] the root פקד (in the sense of 'to attend to, to visit') is consistently rendered by ἐπισκέπτομαι 'to visit, to look upon' (for the verb) or ἐπίσκεψις 'inspection, visitation' (for the noun פְּקֻדָּה).[20] This consistency suggests that, instead of being interpretive, JerG reflects a different Hebrew *Vorlage* in version IIa. As pointed out by Karel van der Toorn, it was common practice in the Ancient Near East for prisoners to be put to grinding, and οἰκίαν μύλωνος probably translates a Hebrew equivalent of the Akkadian term *bīt ararri* 'house of the miller'.[21] Since version IIa is generally close to version I, it can be assumed that this Hebrew text—Holladay tentatively reconstructs it as בֵּית־הַטַּחֲנָה—[22] was the original reading, which may well describe Zedekiah's actual destiny.[23]

Thus, while Jeremiah's judgment oracles concerning Zedekiah were fulfilled, the promise of 32:5bβ appears to have failed. According to 52:11d (version I), the king was put in a mill-house, and there he died.

THE REINTERPRETATION OF JEREMIAH 32:5Bβ IN 52:11D (VERSION IIB)

If 'mill-house' represents the original reading in 52:11d, it must be asked why the editors of version IIb changed it into בית־הפקדת. According to Van der Toorn, they did this, because they 'were no longer familiar with this type of sanction'.[24] In that case, however, it is hard to see why they coined such a unique and rather unclear term. בית־הפקדת apparently is an *ad hoc* formulation, suggesting that there was a particular motive for rephrasing the text in this way. In my opinion, it is no coincidence that the editors chose the root of the crucial verb פקד in 32:5bβ.[25]

It is important to notice that there is clear evidence that the editors of version IIb aimed at a higher degree of homogeneity in the book.[26] They reduced divergences between similar or parallel passages, adding elements from one text to the other. This can be seen, for example, in 34:3, where the sentence 'and speak with him face to face' was added, apparently to make the verse more similar to 32:4. Moreover, the editors smoothed out literary tensions. As argued by Stipp, this is the background of the addition of the phrase, 'you shall not die by the sword' in 34:4c, which qualifies the promise, 'you shall die in peace' (v. 5a) in order to mitigate the discrepancy between the promise and the description of Zedekiah's fate in 52:7-11.[27]

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[17] Cf. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 237: 'One would *normally* take this in a favorable sense: Zedekiah will stay in Babylon till Yahweh intervenes in his behalf' (italics mine).

[18] Since it does not appear in the parallel text in 2 Kgs 25:7, the sentence was likely added by the editor who adopted Jer 52 from the Books of Kings. As noted by Allen, *Jeremiah*, 538, it enhances the contrast between the fates of Zedekiah and Jehoiachin (52:31-34).

[19] There are notable translational differences between JerG 1-28 and 29-52, the origin of which is still unclear. See Stipp, *Sondergut*, 17-19.

[20] For the verb, see 49:8 [30:2]; 27[34]:8; 29[36]:10,32; 30[37]:20; 36[43]:31; 44[51]:13,29; for the noun, see 48[31]:44 (square brackets indicate the numbering of chapters and verses according to JerG). In JerG 1-28, the rendering of פקד shows somewhat more variety; in addition to ἐπισκέπτομαι/ἐπίσκεψις (3:16; 5:9,29; 9:8,24; 11:22,23; 13:21; 15:15; 23:2,12; 51[28]:18), JerG has ἐκδικέω 'to avenge, to punish' (15:3; 23:2,34; 25:12; 46[26]:25; 50[27]:18,31; 51[28]:44,52), and the nouns ἐπισκοπή 'visitation' (10:15) and ἐκδίκησις 'vengeance' (46[26]:21; 50[27]:27).

[21] K. van der Toorn, 'Judges XVI 21 in the Light of the Akkadian Sources', *VT* 36 (1986), 249.

[22] Holladay, *Jeremiah*, Vol. 2, 436. Cf. טַחֲנָה 'mill' in Eccl 12:4, as well as the other occurrences of the root טחן, in Exod 32:20; Num 11:8; Deut 9:21; Judg 16:21; Isa 3:15; 47:2; Job 31:10; Eccl 12:3.

[23] Otherwise: H.-J. Stipp, 'Zedekiah in the Book of Jeremiah: On the Formation of a Biblical Character', *CBQ* 58 (1996), 641 n. 28. According to Stipp, the reading 'mill-house' may relate to a secondary tendency to blacken Zedekiah's character in version IIa, a tendency he identifies in 34:18-19; 37:18-21; 38:9. However, there is no obvious relation between such a tendency and the variant readings in 52:11. For a different evaluation of the variations between versions IIa and IIb in these texts, see A.R.P. Diamond, 'Portraying Prophecy: Of Doublets, Variants and Analogies in the Narrative Representation of Jeremiah's Oracles—Reconstructing the Hermeneutics of Prophecy', *JSOT* 57 (1993), 104-109.

[24] Van der Toorn, 'Judges XVI 21', 251 n. 3; see also Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 441.

[25] Cf. J.L. Mackay, *Jeremiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, Vol. 2: *Chapters 21-52* (A Mentor Commentary), Fearn 2004: 'yet another occurrence of the root *pāqad*'.

[26] Stipp, *Sondergut*, 130: 'Die weitaus meisten abhängigen masoretischen Überschüsse lassen sich unter die Funktion subsummieren, die innere Kohärenz des Jeremiabuches zu steigern, indem vorhandenes Sprachmaterial an geeigneten Stellen vermehrt und Unebenheiten geglättet wurden.'

[27] Stipp, 'Jeremias Heilswort', 174.

The modification in 52:11d may be explained along the same lines. I would suggest that the responsible editor employed the semantic range of the root פקד in order to resolve the (apparent)[28] contradiction between Zedekiah's actual fate and the promise in 32:5bβ. By coining the term בית־הפקדת 'house of visitations/punishments',[29] he alluded to 32:5bβ, indicating that Zedekiah was indeed 'visited' in Babylon, but not, as might be expected, *in bonam partem*. In other words, he reinterpreted the promise as a threat, and, by modifying the text of 52:11d, he created an intratextual link with 32:5bβ that signified the 'correct' interpretation of Jeremiah's oracle. The link points to Zedekiah's actual fate as the determining factor for establishing the connotation of פקד—the 'visitation' was the king's punishment in Babylon (cf. the interpretation of some modern commentators, referred to above).[30]

THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To sum up the discussion so far: on the basis of the internal coherence of the oracle, 32:5bβ is to be interpreted as a promise that, ultimately, YHWH will act for Zedekiah's benefit. As revealed in 52:11d (version I), however, such an intervention never happened. This discrepancy led to a reinterpretation of the connotation of פקד in 32:5bβ, which is hinted at in the modified text of 52:11d (version IIb).

On a literary level, this reinterpretation resolves the discrepancy between 32:5 and 52:11, but it leaves an important theological question unanswered. In line with the theme of this *Festschrift*, it must be asked what God readers meet in these texts. Since he promised Zedekiah to act favourably, why did he not do so? Does this not suggest that the question of Balaam—'Has he promised, and will he not do it? Has he spoken, and will he not fulfil it?' (Num 23:19)—is less rhetorical than it seems? Is YHWH untrustworthy?

A helpful guide for considering these questions may be found in an article by Robert Chisholm.[31] According to him, '[t]o explain adequately the phenomenon of "failed" prophecy we must move beyond [a] simplistic hermeneutic and recognize that prophetic language is inherently functional, often contingent, and invariably contextualized'.[32] He argues that predictive discourse is dynamic and often announces YHWH's intentions conditionally, even though the conditions may remain unstated and the prediction seems unqualified. When a prophet proclaims judgment, it can be averted by repentance, and when he proclaims prosperity, it can be annulled by disobedience. This principle of intrinsic contingency is unfolded most clearly in Jeremiah 18:1-12, and Chisholm emphasizes that it is fundamental for understanding biblical prophecy.[33]

[28] According to my analysis, the contradiction is real. It is possible, however, that the editor of version IIb saw it as an apparent contradiction (interpreting in 32:5bβ *in malam partem*) and simply wanted to make clear that it was not real.

[29] Perhaps it was coined by analogy to phrases like עֵת פְּקֻדָּתָם 'the time of their visitation/punishment' (8:12; 10:15; 46:21; 50:27; 51:18) and שְׁנַת פְּקֻדָּתָם 'the year of their visitation/punishment' (11:23; 23:12; 48:44).

[30] The same editor may have added 32:5cd, in order to underscore the negative purport of the oracle.

[31] R.B. Chisholm, 'When Prophecy Appears to Fail, Check Your Hermeneutic', *JETS* 52 (2010), 561-577.

[32] Chisholm, 'Prophecy', 561.

[33] Chisholm, 'Prophecy', 563-568. Cf. R.W.L. Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment* (CSCD), New York 2006, 51-53; G. Kwakkel, 'Prophets and Prophetic Literature', in: H.G.L. Peels, S.D. Snyman, *The Lion Has Roared: Theological Themes in the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament*, Eugene 2012, 5-6.

Applying the principle to the promise of 32:5, it is noteworthy that the Book of Jeremiah portrays Zedekiah as an ambiguous character. On the one hand, he shows interest in the word of YHWH (21:1-2; 37:3,17; 38:14), and he plays a part in protecting the prophet against the hostility of the Judean officials (37:20-21; 38:10,16). On the other hand, and primarily out of fear, he does not heed Jeremiah's message (cf. 38:19) and even allows the officials to kill him (38:5; cf. 32:3; 37:18; 38:15). In a sense, therefore, he appears as 'weak rather than wicked',[34] but still the redactional verdict in 37:2 is straightforward: like his servants and the common people, Zedekiah did not 'listen to the words of the LORD, that he spoke through the prophet Jeremiah'.

As suggested by Leslie Allen, the promises to Zedekiah in 32:5 and 34:4-5 perhaps 'once belonged in a setting of his protection of Jeremiah',[35] and they may be interpreted against that background. This suggestion is supported by the resemblance between 34:4-5 and the promises to Ebed-Melech (39:15-18) and Baruch (45:1-5), both of whom were supporters of the prophet. Moreover, the promise of a royal funeral contrasts with Jeremiah's message to king Jehoiakim (22:18-19), whom the book presents as a fierce enemy of the prophet and his word.[36]

As expressed by 37:2, however, Zedekiah ultimately matched his wicked predecessor in an essential respect: like Jehoiakim, he disobeyed the prophetic word.[37] 32:3 even emphasizes the king's part in silencing the prophet (cf. 37:18,21). Along the lines drawn by Chisholm, that may explain why the promises were not fulfilled:

> And if at any time I [YHWH] declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it. (18:9-10 ESV)

So, what God do readers meet in 32:5 and 52:11? A God who, through his promises, encourages people to rely on him, but also a God who by no means clears the guilty. It is one of Eric Peels' greatest merits that he never ceases to emphasize the importance of a biblically informed image of God, as the One who is holy in both his mercy and his judgment.

[34] Stipp, 'Zedekiah', 632. In successive redaction stages of the Book of Jeremiah, Stipp identifies a 'progressive development of an ever more negative portrayal' of Zedekiah (643-644). In the most ancient sources, found in Jer 37-38, a relatively positive portrait is presented (628-632), but later redactors, among whom is the Deuteronomistic editor responsible for 37:1-2, took a more negative stance toward him (632-643). Cf. J.B. Job, *Jeremiah's Kings: A Study of the Monarchy in Jeremiah* (SOTSS), Hants/Burlington 2006, 99-119.

[35] Allen, *Jeremiah*, 385; cf. Stipp, 'Jeremias Heilswort', 173-174.

[36] According to 22:18-19, Jehoiakim would not have a proper burial. For the contrast between this oracle and the promise to Zedekiah in 34:4-5, see H. Migsch, *Gottes Wort über das Ende Jerusalems. Eine literar-, stil- und gattungskritische Untersuchung des Berichtes Jeremia 34,1-7; 32,2-5; 37,3-38,28* (ÖBS, 2), Klosterneuburg 1981, 211-214. On the negative portrayal of Jehoiakim in the Book of Jeremiah, see Job, *Jeremiah's Kings*, 61-77.

[37] Cf. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 405.

SEEING, LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Encountering the Glory of the Lord in the Book of Ezekiel[1]

Herrie F. van Rooy

INTRODUCTION

The glory of the Lord (כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה) in the Book of Ezekiel has been the subject of much research.[2] The aim of this contribution is not to study this important theme on its own, but to discuss the significance of the link between seeing, listening and speaking in Ezekiel on the one hand, and the appearance of the glory of the Lord on the other hand in the three major visions (1-3, 8-11 and 40-48) in the book.[3] In all three visions, a link is found between what the prophet saw and heard and what he had to say to his audience. One example from each of the three visions will elucidate this link.

At the end of Ezekiel 1, the prophet describes his reaction to the vision he saw (Ezek 1:28b): 'This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of someone speaking.'[4] He sees and hears, and in Ezekiel 2, he receives the commission to go and speak to the people of Israel in exile.

At the end of the temple vision, the prophet describes his actions (Ezek 11:24b-25): 'Then the vision that I had seen left. And I told the exiles all the things the LORD had shown me.' In the last part of this chapter, he receives instructions about the message he had to bring to the

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[1] It is a privilege and an honour to dedicate this contribution to my friend and colleague Eric Peels. We share an interest in the prophets of the Old Testament and I have learned much from him, as an academic and an example of true piety. This work is based on research supported by the National Research Foundation of South Africa. Any opinion, finding and conclusion or recommendation expressed in this material is that of the author and the NRF does not accept any liability in this regard.

[2] P. de Vries recently completed a dissertation on this subject: P. de Vries, *De heerlijkheid van JHWH in het Oude Testament en in het bijzonder in het boek Ezechiël*, Heerenveen 2010. For a summary, see P. de Vries, 'The Glory of YHWH in the Old Testament with Special Attention to the Book of Ezekiel', *TynBul* 62 (2011), 151-154. Cf. P de Vries, 'The Relationship between the Glory of YHWH and the Spirit of YHWH in Ezekiel 33-48', *OTE* 28.2 (2015), 326-350. A good survey of different approaches can be found in J.T. Strong, 'God's *Kābôd*: The Presence of Yahweh in the Book of Ezekiel', in: M.S. Odell, J.T. Strong, *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (SBL SymS, 9), Atlanta 2000, 69-95. Strong himself indicates that God is present among his people in the time of Ezekiel through his *Kābôd*. He regards it as a hypostasis of the Lord (72-82). P. de Vries, 'Ezekiel: Prophet of the Name and Glory of YHWH – The Character of His Book and Several of Its Main Themes', *JBPR* 4 (2012), 106, defines the hypostasis as an aspect of the Lord that appears as a separate entity. Zimmerli connected it to the Lord's appearance in light; W. Zimmerli, *Ezechiel 1-24* (BKAT), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1969, 81* (ET: *Ezekiel*, Vol. 1 [Hermeneia], Philadelphia 1979, 123). Cf. the contribution of Wolter Rose to this *Festschrift*: 'Witnessing Superlative Character: What Seeing God's Glory (Also) Means'.

[3] For a survey of the importance of the glory of the Lord in the Book of Ezekiel, cf. H.F. van Rooy, 'Ezekiel, Prophet of the Glory of the Lord', in: H.G.L. Peels, S.D. Snyman (eds.), *The Lion has Roared: Theological Themes in the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament*, Eugene 2012, 127-148. Cf. also J.T. Willis, 'National "Beauty" and Yahweh's "Glory" as a Dialectical Key to Ezekielian Theology', *HBT* 34 (2012), 1-18.

[4] All Bible references are from the *New Revised Standard Version*, unless otherwise stated.

people. In the passage quoted, seeing, hearing and telling are connected. He told (וָאֲדַבֵּר) the people 'all the words of the Lord' (כָּל־דִּבְרֵי יְהוָה) that the Lord had shown him (הֶרְאָנִי). Here, the words of the Lord refer to what Ezekiel saw and heard in the vision.

In Ezekiel 40:4, which is the beginning of the great vision of Ezekiel 40-48, the link between seeing, hearing and speaking is explicitly established: 'The man said to me, "Mortal, look closely and listen attentively, and set your mind upon all that I shall show you, for you were brought here in order that I might show it to you; declare all that you see to the house of Israel".' Seeing, hearing, showing and telling are all connected in this passage. For 'telling', the imperative הַגֵּד is used, but the idea is quite clear.

In this contribution, seeing, hearing and telling are linked to the general theme of this volume (cf. the title, *Reading and Listening: Meeting One God in Many Texts*). It aims to investigate the interaction between the glory of the Lord, the details of the visions Ezekiel saw, the words of God he heard (as well as the other sounds he heard during the visions) and the command of God to Ezekiel, namely to tell the Israelites what he had seen and heard. His message to his audience is informed and confirmed by what he saw and heard, and that encourages him to proclaim the word of God, so that his audience would hear the word and recognize that they are encountering the one God through the work of the prophet in a distant land.

THE CALL VISION (EZEKIEL 1-3)

In the call vision, the glory of the Lord (כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה) is mentioned three times.[5] The first instance has been referred to above. It is as if the whole vision of Ezekiel 1 leads up to what is mentioned in 1:28. The prophet saw a wonderful sight, almost impossible to describe in human words. That is why his descriptions are introduced by expressions such as 'something like' (1:4,5,13,16,22,26,27) or just 'like' (1:16,24,27).[6] These expressions render a searching quality to the descriptions and make them more relative and more uncertain as the vision unfolds. The climax is reached in verse 28, where מַרְאֶה 'appearance' is used three times, namely in describing the rainbow, the brilliant light and the glory of God. The concluding sentence of the verse, with its tautological 'appearance' and 'likeness', affirms the inability to describe the glory of God: 'This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.' The noun מראה occurs fifteen times in Ezekiel 1. In the last verse in which it is found (28), a further qualification is added by the noun דְּמוּת.[7] This word is also used in 1:5,10,13,16 and 22 to qualify what the prophet saw. This vision of the glory of the Lord was so overwhelming that the prophet fell down, an action that represents the body language of submission.[8]

Near the end of the call vision, the glory of the Lord is mentioned again, in 3:12. The Masoretic Text has a doxology reading, 'May the glory of the Lord be praised in his dwelling

[5] The first two visions clearly demonstrate the characteristics of a typical theophany, in which the glory of the Lord indicates the Lord's presence. Cf. J. Middlemas, 'Transformation of the Image', in: W.A. Tooman, M.A. Lyons (eds), *Transforming Visions: Transformations of Text, Tradition and Theology in Ezekiel*, Cambridge 2010, 129.

[6] De Vries, 'Ezekiel: Prophet of the Name', 106.

[7] Cf. J.F. Kutsko, 'Ezekiel's Anthropology and Its Ethical Implications', in: Odell, Strong, *Book of Ezekiel,* 130-132.

[8] L.C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19* (WBC), Dallas 1994, 36.

place' (NIV). However, most translations and commentators accept a reading ברום for ברוך.[9] This fits better, as the glory of the Lord is moving away at the end of the vision.

Seven days after the vision, the prophet received the word of the Lord again. He had to go to a valley where he saw the glory of the Lord once more (3:16): 'So I rose up and went out into the valley; and the glory of the LORD stood there, like the glory that I had seen by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face.' Again, he fell down, an understandable reaction when seeing the glory of the Lord.[10]

In the call vision, especially in Ezekiel 1, the prophet frequently uses the verb 'to see'. In verse 1, he says that he saw visions of God, using the verb ראה and the cognate noun מַרְאָה. The verb is used again in 1:4,27,28; 2:9 and 3:23. This seeing is explicitly linked to the glory of the Lord in 1:28 and 3:23. The seeing of the glory of the Lord had a profound effect on him. In both instances, he fell flat on the ground; in both instances, he was spoken to and the Spirit enabled him to stand on his feet (2:1,2; 3:24). Clements sums up the importance of the visual aspect of faith in Ezekiel's life and work: '(I)t is essential to grasp the central place that the visual aspect of faith plays in his life and message. He is the most visually descriptive and vision-oriented of the prophets.'[11]

Part of the call vision was Ezekiel's hearing different noises (1:24; 3:12). More importantly, he heard a voice speaking to him (1:28; 2:2), giving him the commission to speak God's word to the exiles. He had to listen to what the Lord said (2:8; 3:10,17),[12] even though the people would not listen to him (2:5,7; 3:6,7,11). It might be that some would listen and some not (3:27), but anyhow, he had to listen to the message coming from the Lord. The command to listen is also connected to the glory of the Lord in 1:28 and 3:23-24. He saw the glory of the Lord and he had to listen to the words of the Lord. The Lord spoke to him, but what he saw and heard was not an end in itself. It was the preparation for his commission to act as God's messenger and to proclaim his words to the exiles. He had to listen and obey.[13]

This is made clear in 1:28, directly after the passage where the prophet describes that he saw the glory of the Lord and heard a voice of someone speaking. It is the Lord who gave Ezekiel his commission in 2:3 saying, 'Mortal, I am sending you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have transgressed against me to this very day.' Ezekiel had to speak to the people and tell them what he had seen and heard.

Two Hebrew words are used for the prophet's speaking to the people, with no significant difference between them, namely אמר and דבר. The first command to go and speak, in 2:4, has וְאָמַרְתָּ (a *weqatalti*) following on a participle; also in 3:11,27). In 2:7 וְדִבַּרְתָּ is used (a *weqataltí* following on a preceding jussive; also in 3:4), whereas the imperative of the same verb is found in 3:1 (דַּבֵּר). Ezekiel's speaking was dependent on God's commission, as God could prevent him from speaking (3:27). He had to keep on speaking when instructed to do so, even if the people would not listen (2:5; 3:7). Because of the commission, he frequently received a message he had to deliver; he could deliver it after saying to the people, 'Thus says the Lord God.'

[9] E.g. Zimmerli, *Ezechiel 1-24*, 12 (ET: *Ezekiel*, Vol 1, 94); Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 13; and D.I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel 1-24* (NICOT), Grand Rapids 1997, 132.

[10] Cf. P. de Vries, 'The relationship between the glory of YHWH and the Spirit of YHWH in the Book of Ezekiel – Part One', *JBPR* 5 (2013), 119.

[11] R.E. Clements, *Ezekiel* (WeBC), Louisville 1996, 13.

[12] For the importance of obedience in this context, cf. J. Robson, *Word and Spirit in Ezekiel* (LHB/OTS, 447), New York/London 2006, 213-215.

[13] Cf. Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 115.

The aim of the prophet's speaking is expressed in 3:17-21. He had to warn the people. He was appointed a watchman for Israel, to warn them of the impending doom and to call them to repentance.[14] This was the case especially before the fall of Jerusalem. The first part of the Book of Ezekiel, up to chapter 24, contains messages delivered to the exiles before the fall of Jerusalem. The exiles wanted to go home; they expected the exile to be of short duration, an expectation bolstered by false prophets. Ezekiel had to proclaim that this expectation was false, that Jerusalem would be destroyed and that the exiles would be joined by more exiles. It was only after the fall of Jerusalem that the tone of his message changed.

The message of the first vision is clear. The prophet saw the glory of the Lord, he heard his voice and he had to proclaim the words of the Lord to the people of the Lord.[15]

TEMPLE VISION (EZEKIEL 8-11)

The glory of the Lord is mentioned more often in this vision than in the other two major visions and, moreover, it has an active role in it. This vision is dated about a year later than the first one. The prophet relates that at the beginning of the vision he was transported to the temple in Jerusalem.[16] The glory of the Lord is mentioned in 8:4, where Ezekiel's arrival at the temple is described. In this case, the reference to the glory of the Lord serves the purpose of linking this vision to the previous one: 'And the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the vision that I had seen in the valley.' It is mentioned right at the beginning of the description of the vision, and not, as in 1:28, for the first time after the description of the unfolding vision. In 1:28, Ezekiel says that he saw the glory of the Lord in Babylonia. Here, he tells that he was transported to the temple. The glory of the Lord is not restricted to one location. After describing some of the abominations he saw in the temple and hearing the Lord pronouncing the coming judgment, the prophet saw the glory of the Lord beginning to move: 'Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on whom it rested to the threshold of the house.' (9:3) This is followed by a command to the six men to go through the city as executioners, sparing only those who were agitated about the evil connected to the temple.

At the beginning of Ezekiel 10, the prophet says that he saw something like a throne above cherubs. Again, the glory of the Lord moved from above the cherubs to the threshold of the temple. The court of the temple was filled by the glory of the Lord, while the house was filled with a cloud, as described in 10:4: 'Then the glory of the LORD rose up from the cherub to the threshold of the house; the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the glory of the LORD.' The description echoes the events at the inauguration of the tabernacle (Exod 40:34-38) and that of the temple of Solomon (1 Kgs 8:10-11).

In the following passage, with its many parallels to Ezekiel 1, the prophet describes how the glory of the Lord moved again: 'Then the glory of the LORD went out from the threshold of the house and stopped above the cherubim.' (10:18) The glory of the Lord started to move out of the temple and stayed above the cherubs, who were moving to the east gate of the complex (10:19).

[14] Cf. Zimmerli, *Ezechiel 1-24*, 90-91 (ET: *Ezekiel*, Vol. 1, 145).
[15] Cf. De Vries, 'Relationship Part One', 119.
[16] For the importance of transportation in Ezekiel, cf. Robson, *Word and Spirit*, 114.

In the following section, the actions of the cherubs are described, as well as further events in the temple, including the sudden death of Pelatiah (11:13). After more words of the Lord, his glory departed from the temple and went to the mountain east of the city (11:22-23).[17]

Ezekiel repeatedly indicates what he saw in this vision. He was told to look to the north (8:5: 'O mortal, lift up your eyes now in the direction of the north.'). He saw a figure looking like a human being (8:2); he saw the glory of the Lord (8:4), a hole in the wall (8:7), a dome above the cherubs (10:1), four wheels beside the cherubs (10:9), and some men at the entrance of the temple (11:1). He refers to the creatures he saw in the first vision (10:15,20,22). He received the instruction to go and look (8:9), and he obeyed (8:10). He was asked what he saw (8:6,12,15,17) and was told that he would see things more evil than what he was seeing at that time (8:6,13,15). He heard people saying that the Lord did not see (8:12). One would indeed expect the prophet to see many things in a vision, even when the verb 'to see' is not used. As in the first vision, 'looked like' and 'like' are frequently used in the description of what he saw (8:2; 10:1,9,10,21,22). At the end of the vision, the prophet was transported back to Chaldea: 'The spirit lifted me up and brought me in a vision by the spirit of God into Chaldea, to the exiles. Then the vision that I had seen left me.' (11:24) He concludes in 11:25, saying, 'And I told the exiles all the things that the LORD had shown me.' It is clear that the visions can also be regarded as divine speech.[18]

There is frequent mention of the fact that the Lord or his representative spoke to the prophet (8:5,6,9,12,13,15 etc.) or commanded him to do something (8:8). Although the verb 'to hear' is not used with reference to the prophet, it is clear that he had to listen to what the Lord had to say. In 9:1, the Hebrew has an idiomatic expression (וַיִּקְרָא בְאָזְנַי), that is, 'to call in the ear of' ('Then he cried in my hearing with a loud voice, saying …'). A similar expression occurs in 9:5. In this vision he had to listen to many things. In 11:14, the normal introduction to an oracle occurs, 'Then the word of the LORD came to me.' In 8:18, the Lord said that he would not listen when the people called to him. This is the only occurrence of the verb 'to hear' in this vision.

As indicated above, the Lord or his representative spoke continuously to the prophet in this vision. In chapter 11, the Lord instructed the prophet to inform the people about his words. In 11:4, the Lord instructed him to prophesy against the people: 'Therefore prophesy against them; prophesy, O mortal.' In the next verse, the Lord commanded him to speak to the people, using the messenger formula, 'Say, Thus says the LORD.' This is followed by a message he had to proclaim to the people. The same occurs in 11:16 and 17. In 11:25, the vision is concluded by a remark that the prophet told the exiles about the vision he saw. This constitutes an *inclusio*, as the vision starts in chapter 8 with the elders sitting before the prophet.[19]

Again, the vision does not fulfil a purpose on its own. The prophet once again saw the glory of the Lord, he experienced the sorrow of seeing this glory leaving the temple, and he heard the words of the Lord. It all serves the purpose to elucidate the message he had to deliver to the exiles, warning them to expect the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, and calling them to acknowledge their sins and repent.

[17] For ancient Near Eastern parallels of the deity departing from the sanctuary, cf. Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 155.
[18] Robson, *Word and Spirit*, 37.
[19] Cf. P.M. Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (LHB/OTS, 482), New York/London 1997, 117.

THE GREAT VISION OF THE NEW LAND AND TEMPLE (EZEKIEL 40-48)

In the final vision of the Book of Ezekiel, the glory of the Lord is mentioned four times in Ezekiel 43 and once in Ezekiel 44. Ezekiel 43 links up with the temple vision of Ezekiel 8-11, and describes the glory of the Lord returning to the temple. For the purpose of this discussion, the relevant passage is the following:

> [1]Then he brought me to the gate, the gate facing east. [2]And there, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east; the sound was like the sound of mighty waters; and the earth shone with his glory. [3]The vision I saw was like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and like the vision that I had seen by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. [4]As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, [5]the spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple (Ezek 43:1-5).

The appearance of the glory of the Lord in this vision is linked to the previous two visions. The reference to the river Chebar links it to the call vision (Ezekiel 1-3) and the reference to the destruction of the temple links it to the temple vision (Ezekiel 8-11). As in both other visions, the prophet fell on his face when he saw the glory of the Lord. Again, the spirit lifted him, so that he could see the glory of the Lord entering the temple complex from the east. The high point of this vision is the glory of the Lord filling the temple. In Ezekiel 10 and 11, it is described how the glory of the Lord filled the temple, but then departed, proclaiming that the temple had lost its meaning and was prone to destruction. Now, the return of the glory of the Lord to the temple proclaims that the time of judgment has passed and that a new era has dawned.[20] As De Vries notes, Ezekiel emphasizes neither the temple nor the city, but the glory of the Lord that is coming to dwell in the temple.[21]

Ezekiel 44:4 links with this passage. The prophet was taken via the north gate to the front of the temple, where he again saw the glory of the Lord filling the temple and fell upon his face ('Then he brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple; and I looked, and lo! the glory of the LORD filled the temple of the LORD; and I fell upon my face.'). It was his task to transmit the revelation of God to the people.[22]

In this great vision, Ezekiel mentions what he saw quite a few times. He saw the glory of the Lord (44:4) as mentioned above. He saw details about the new temple (41:8). He saw the whole vision and compared it to the first and second visions (43:3). As in the second vision, he was asked about what he saw (47:6). As in the previous two visions, he heard someone speaking to him in the vision (43:6).

Two passages are very important for this discussion. In the introduction, reference has been made to Ezekiel 40:4 as an example of seeing, hearing and speaking linked in a specific passage. The prophet received the command to look and listen attentively and to apply his mind to what he would be shown and to what he would hear (וְשִׂים לִבְּךָ לְכֹל אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי מַרְאֶה אוֹתָךְ). He then received the command to tell the house of Israel all that he had seen (הַגֵּד אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה רֹאֶה לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל). It is interesting to note that he had to tell what he had seen. This would imply that what he had heard was part of the vision, but the emphasis was on seeing, linking his commission to seeing the glory of the Lord.

[20] For ancient Near Eastern parallels to this passage, cf. D.I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48* (NICOT), Grand Rapids 1998, 576-577.
[21] De Vries, 'Ezekiel: Prophet of the Name', 105.
[22] Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, 619.

A similar wording appears in Ezekiel 44:5-6a:

> The LORD said to me: Mortal, mark well, look closely, and listen attentively to all that I shall tell you concerning all the ordinances of the temple of the LORD and all its laws; and mark well those who may be admitted to the temple and all those who are to be excluded from the sanctuary. Say to the rebellious house, to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD …

The only difference here is the use of a different verb for telling the people (וְאָמַרְתָּ). The verb used in 40:4 (נגד) is also used in 43:10, where Ezekiel receives the command to describe the temple to the Israelites.

In these two passages, the link between seeing, listening and telling is quite evident. The description of the glory of the Lord is not as detailed in this vision as in the previous two. What is heard receives more attention than the description of the glory of the Lord.[23]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

For the exiles, and probably for the prophet himself, the exile meant the absence of the Lord, especially at the beginning. They were encountering many gods in Babylonia, they saw the Babylonian religious processions, and wondered about the power of their God, who seemed to be unable to protect his people against the Babylonians. To them, their God was far away, in the temple in Jerusalem. Encountering God in a foreign country seemed impossible to many, if not most, of them. In the words of the poet of Psalm 22, they felt as if God had forsaken them. In this situation, Ezekiel had a glorious encounter with God, emphasizing that God's presence cannot be limited to a specific place. Israel was inclined to limit God's presence to the temple, and when they were taken away from the temple and the temple was destroyed, they experienced God as far away. To counter this restriction of the Lord to the temple in Jerusalem, the glory of the Lord appeared to Ezekiel in a foreign land, before and after the destruction of Jerusalem.

During the time before the destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel had two visions of the glory of the Lord. He had to look and listen, to encounter the only true God. God was not absent, he was present in Babylonia, amongst the exiles. After seeing and hearing, Ezekiel had to convey the message of the encounter to the people to call them to recognize their own guilt and to repent. God had not forsaken them, but was using the exile to bring them to their senses and to bring them back to him. God encountered them through his chosen prophet in a foreign land.

After the destruction of Jerusalem, the prophet had to wait many years before encountering his God for a third time in the great vision of Ezekiel 40-48. Again, he had to listen and look to the revelation of the glory of the Lord and to proclaim it to the exiles. This encounter told him that the one true God was not restricted to a land or a temple, which was destroyed in any case. In the land of their unbelieving conquerors, he was shown the Lord's glory, which told him of the great deeds of the Lord in the past and gave a promise of great deeds to come in the future. The encounter with the one God commissioned him to speak to the exiles, who in the end had to realise that there was a prophet in their midst, that he had encountered God and that they had to listen to the message he proclaimed in his name. In this way, indirectly, they also encountered their God and heard of his glory. The message of Ezekiel about the glory of the Lord brought a message of hope, a promise of God's presence in their lives and of a return, not merely to the

[23] Cf. Middlemas, 'Image', 135.

land and a new temple, but first and foremost to God. They were, to their minds, living in a foreign and faraway land, but for God no land is like that. No land, no empire, no false gods could prevent the coming of his glory to deliver his people.

IT TAKES TWO PROPHETS TO FATHOM THE GOD OF ISRAEL

Ezekiel 36-48 as a Porch to Hosea 1-2

Willem A.M. Beuken

The sequence of the so-called Latter Prophets in the Hebrew Bible is generally the same, although there are a few exceptions. The position of the Book of Hosea (BHos) as the first of the Twelve or Minor Prophets right after the Book of Ezekiel (BEz) is dominant. In the last decades, there has been a lot of research on a redaction that would have put the Twelve Prophets together into a literary and theological unit, one Book of the *corpus propheticum* in the Hebrew Bible. Consequently, one wonders whether that final redaction has engaged with the question of how the BHos would be appreciated in the sequel of the BEz, for the transit from the latter to the former is bewildering. Readers come from the new temple where YHWH's glory has descended (Ezek 43:1-7) and from the city that henceforth carries YHWH's name (Ezek 48:35). Without any introduction *ad captandam benevolentiam* (the superscription does not serve as such), they are confronted with the story that God charged another prophet with an incriminating assignment: 'Go, take for yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking YHWH' (Hos 1:2).[1] The Targum of Hosea has radically striped the command of its scandalous character: 'Go (and) *speak a prophecy against the inhabitants of the idolatrous city, who continue to sin. For the inhabitants of* the land *surely go astray* from *the worship of* the Lord.'[2]

The problem of Hosea's God-talk has been tackled by extensive exegesis of the book itself, taking into account the text and its origin. Much attention has been paid to the fate of the poor prophet Hosea, in recent times also to that of the poor wife Gomer, less, however, to the damaged moral prestige of Israel's God. Therefore, it looks appropriate to examine whether the preceding BEz prepares the readers for the shocking beginning of the BHos. Since an over-all research of the two prophetic books under this regard exceeds the margins of this article, it seems feasible to compare the beginning of the BHos, chs. 1-2, with the final part of the BEz, chs. 36-48.

The Hoseanic composite is clearly framed by the sentences: 'The beginning of YHWH's speaking through Hosea' (1:2) and 'YHWH said to me once more' (3:1). It is, on the contrary, far from evident which passage in the BEz was designed as its structural end. From the synchronic point of view, of course, the vision of restoration (Ezek 40-48) functions as such. Without broaching the redaction history of the book (especially in relation with the Greek Papyrus 67!), we take into account that at some time, one of the composites that precede Ezekiel 40-48 may have served as the book's finale, or may have helped preparing the transit to Hosea. Do these composites show intertextual links that anticipate the discourse about God in Hosea 1-2? Thus, this article has the following structure: I. The oracle about the restoration of Israel's land and people in ch. 36; II. The sign-act of the dry bones in ch. 37; III. The prophecy against

[1] Translation of the Scriptures according to RSV, slightly adapted to NRSV.
[2] R.P. Gordon, *The Targum of the Minor Prophets Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes* (ArBib, 14), Edinburgh 1989, 29.

Gog in chs. 38-39; IV. The vision of the realotted land and the temple in chs. 40-48. A conclusion answers the question what the supposed analogies mean for the canonical reading process from Ezekiel to Hosea.

EZEKIEL 36:16-38: COVENANT AND WILDERNESS

It is the second part of ch. 36 that exhibits a connection with Hosea 2. At the literary-historical level, its segments vv. 16-23bα and vv. 23bβ-38 constitute units that are closed by the so-called *Erkenntnisformel*: 'the nations' (v. 23bα) and 'they', i.e. Israel, 'shall know that I am YHWH' (v. 38). Vv. 16-23bα deal with the pollution, *c.q.* sanctification of YHWH's name among the nations, vv. 23bβ-38 with the purification and recreation of Israel. Apart from v. 18, the former section does not show semantic agreement with Hosea 1-2. The latter section, however, strongly matches with both Hosea 1:2-2:3 and 2:4-25.[3]

The dominating topic in Ezekiel 36:23bβ-38 is the recovery of the covenant: 'You shall dwell in the land (בָּאָרֶץ) that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God' (v. 28). It relies on an initiative of YHWH: 'I will gather (וְקִבַּצְתִּי) you from all the lands, and bring you to your own ground (אַדְמַתְכֶם)' (v. 24). An analogous thematic combination determines the first composition of the BHos in 2:2-3: 'In the place where it is said to them: "You are not my people", it shall be said to them: "Children of the living God". The people of Judah and the people of Israel shall be gathered (וְנִקְבְּצוּ), … and they shall go up from the land (הָאָרֶץ), … Say to your brother: "My people".' This oracle reverberates in 2:20-25. The promise: 'I will make for them a covenant with the beasts of the field' (v. 20) is first elaborated in Israel's 'betrothal to YHWH in faithfulness' (vv. 21-22), and subsequently in cosmic harmony (vv. 23-25: a cascade of 'to answer'). This is initiated by YHWH and passes by heavens and earth in order to reach Jezreel, the territory which will bear witness to the reliability of the statement: 'I will sow her for myself in the land' (cf. 2:2: 'They shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel'). It should not go unnoticed that the Hoseanic topic 'God sows' echoes God's promise in Ezekiel 36:9: 'Behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown.' The affinity of Hosea with Ezekiel in the combination of 'land', 'covenant' and 'YHWH sows' as a consequence of God's personal relationship with Israel is at least a matter of common prophetic heritage.[4]

In collocation with the covenant formula, some other concepts connect particularly Hosea 2:4-25 with Ezekiel 36:23bβ–38. First of all, the contrast between the wilderness and the land. The very term 'desert' (מִדְבָּר) does not occur in Ezekiel 36 (yet *passim* in Ezek 20), but the sojourn among the nations where Israel has profaned YHWH's name, functions as such (vv. 22-24). It contrasts with 'to dwell in the land of your fathers' (v. 28). As a result of Israel's 'iniquities and abominable deeds', this land has become 'a desolate land', but after Israel's purification, YHWH will 'rebuild and replant' it (vv. 31-36). In Hosea 2, on the contrary, 'the desert' (vv. 5,16: מדבר) does not signify Israel's diaspora among the nations. It is a transit time of hardship that YHWH will initiate (v. 14: 'I shall lay waste her vines and het fig trees'). That will help 'wife' Israel (v. 4) to unmask the fallacy of her 'lovers' (vv. 7,15), to perceive the goodness of YHWH, her 'husband' (vv. 4,18), and to return to him (v. 9). The paradigm of the

[3] Numeration of chapter and verses according to the Hebrew text of *BHS*.

[4] Hos 2:20 might also refer to Ezek 34:25; cf. A. Klein, *Schriftauslegung im Ezechielbuch. Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Ez 34-39* (BZAW, 391), Berlin 2008, 207-208.

wilderness may allude to the sojourn in alien territory, but this application is not explicated here.[5]

EZEKIEL 37:1-14: LIFE AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF YHWH

The dominant concept in the vision of the dry bones in ch. 37 is 'to live' (vv. 3,5,6,9,10,14: root חיה). The subject are the dry bones which represent Israel, but the agent who brings them to live, is YHWH, for the promise 'they/you shall live' is always preceded by an action of YHWH. The one, but conspicuous place in Hosea 1-2 where the theme 'to live' occurs, is in line with Ezekiel 37:1-14 (the direction of the intertextual connection remains to be defined). It runs: 'It shall be said to them: "Children of the living God"' (Hos 2:1: בְּנֵי אֵל־חָי). The divine title 'the living God' in this wording is not often found in the Hebrew Bible (Jos 3:10; Ps 42:3; 84:3). In Ezekiel 37, YHWH's life producing initiative takes place at the background of his actions against Israel's pride and infidelity and its anthropological renewal in the preceding chapter (36:16-38).[6] There is a striking parallel between Israel's transformation by means of 'a new heart and a new spirit', followed by the gift of YHWH's 'spirit' (36:26-27), and the reconstruction of the dry bones into bodies of 'sinews, flesh and breath', elaborated as YHWH's 'spirit' (37:1-14). In Hosea, the 'children of whoredom' who embody the apostasy from YHWH (1:2), are to be transformed into the 'children of the living God' (2:1). The semantic collocation of 'living' in the latter text confirms the link with the vision of the bones. In both passages, YHWH's relationship with 'my people' (Ezek 37:12-13; Hos 1:9-2:1) and 'the land of Israel' (Ezek 37:12,14 [אֲדָמָה]; Hos 1:2; 2:2 [אֶרֶץ]) is at stake. What Ezekiel envisages, i.e. the revival of the bones in 'an exceedingly great host' which symbolize 'the whole house of Israel' (37:10-11), finds its counterpart in Hosea's announcement that 'the children of Israel' will reach their full growth (cf. 2:1: 'like the sand of the sea, which can neither be measured nor numbered'). The meaning of the place name 'Jezreel', 'God will sow', confirms this promise (2:2,24-25; cf. 1:4-5). God is living because he generates life.[7]

The clause 'they shall go up from the land' (וְעָלוּ מִן־הָאָרֶץ) in Hosea 2:2 may play a part in this connection. Its meaning is matter of discussion for quite some time.[8] According to some scholars, it contains a promise of increase in population: 'to come up and to take possession of the land' (after the depopulation in 733 BCE; cf. Exod 1:10; Deut 29:22). Others interpret the

[5] Cf. G. Kwakkel, 'The Wilderness in Hosea', in: A. Labahn (ed.), *Conceptual Metaphors in Poetic Texts: Proceedings of the Metaphor Research Group of the European Association of Biblical Studies in Lincoln 2009* (PHSC, 18), Piscataway 2013, 133-158. Otherwise, in as far as this innovative study concludes that the woman not only in Hos 2:4-25 but also in Hos 1:2 stands for the people living in the land, not for the land itself (p. 139), it can be asked whether the phenomenon of congruity of metaphors necessarily applies to texts that obviously have been put together into one redactional structure. The purport of the latter is not injured by a divergent identification of the perfidious woman as the land since after all, land and people belong together. The different, yet unique reference of Hos 1:2 has a provocative function.

[6] For the connections of Ezek 37:1-14 with 36:23-38, cf. J. Schnocks, *Rettung und Neuschöpfung. Studien zur alttestamentlichen Grundlegung einer gesamtbiblischen Theologie der Auferstehung* (BBB, 158), Bonn 2009, 219-237.

[7] H.W. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton I. Hosea* (BKAT), Neukirchen [2]1965, 30; J. Dearman, *The Book of Hosea* (NICOT), Grand Rapids 2010, 95-96: Excursus – Sowing in Hosea.

[8] For a survey, cf. G. Kwakkel, 'The Land in the Book of Hosea', in: J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, J.C. de Vos (eds), *The Land of Israel in Bible, History, and Theology*, Fs. E. Noort (VT.S, 124), Leiden 2009, 170-173.

verb עלה as ‘to go out’ (cf. Gen 13:1; 44:4; Exod 1:10; Isa 36:1,10) which would imply ‘from exile’ (cf. 2:17). Recently, it has been proposed that ‘to go out’ refers to the people of Israel and Judah who move up to the battlefield of Jezreel, where they shall win a victory, contrary to the defeat recorded in 1:5.[9] While the last meaning ties most in with the context, the expression can at the same time function as a zeugma, that is it may also allude to Ezekiel 37:12-13: ‘I will raise (עלה hi.) you from your graves and I will bring you home (בוא hi.) to the ground (אֲדָמָה) of Israel … when I raise (עלה hi.) you from your graves, O my people.’ The address ‘my people’, here and in Hosea 2:3, would corroborate the allusion.

For the intertextual relation of Hosea 1:2-2:25 with Ezekiel 37:1-14, the following matters. In the Ezekiel text, there is a close connection between ‘you shall live’ and ‘you shall know that I am YHWH’ (Ezek 37:6). At the end of the passage, it is confirmed twice: ‘I will bring you home into the land of Israel, and you shall know that I am YHWH, when I open your graves’ (v. 13); ‘You shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, YHWH, have spoken, and I have done it’ (v. 14). In the second section of Hosea’s opening composition, that is, in 2:4-25, the transit from ‘to not know YHWH’ to ‘to really know him’ constitutes the pivot of the story: from ‘She did not know that it was I who gave her …’ (2:10) / ‘She forgot me’ (2:15) to ‘You shall know YHWH’ (2:22). Thus the content of this knowledge is worded, both in Ezekiel and Hosea, by the ‘God element’ of the covenant formula (its full form occurs later in both passages: ‘I will be their God and they shall be my people’ [Ezek 37:27] and ‘I will say to Not my people, “You are my people”; and he shall say: “You are my God”’ [Hos 2:25]).

I conclude that the story of Hosea’s marriage links up with Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones by means of Israel’s new name, ‘children of the living God’ (Hos 2:1). It embodies the restoration of the people’s bond with YHWH as spender of life.

EZEKIEL 39:25-29: YHWH’S PITY AND ISRAEL’S SHAME

It seems improbable, in advance, to find semantic data in the Gog prophecy that prepare for the opening of the BHos, as Ezekiel 38-39 show proto-apocalyptic traits which are fully lacking in Hosea 1-2. Yet, following earlier literary-historical research, particularly the thesis that the Gog prophecy has been added to the BEz at some later time, we should pay attention to its last section, 39:25-29, which does not deal with Gog but has multiple connections with ch. 36.[10]

The passage opens with the statement: ‘Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have pity on the whole house of Israel’ (39:25). An analogy catches the attention. The second clause returns in negative wording in Hosea 1:6: ‘I will no more have pity on the house of Israel.’ Resemblance of vocabulary and direction of speech do not necessarily imply intertextual borrowing, but the two contexts point in that direction. On the one hand, Ezekiel 39:25 is the single text in the BEz where the verbal root ‘to have pity’ (רחם) occurs,[11] on the other hand, this

[9] Kwakkel, ‘Land’, *ibidem*.

[10] According to some scholars, the Greek Papyrus 967 allows for the hypothesis that at some time, the oracle for ‘the house of Israel’ in 36:16-23bα was immediately, i.e. without the prophecy on Gog, followed by the oracle on ‘the house of Israel’ in 39:25-29. In that case, these prophecies, 36:16-23bα and 39:25-29 together, may have functioned during some redactional stage as the finale of the BEz (with or without ch. 37 and before chs. 40-48 were joined).

[11] The noun רֶחֶם, ‘womb’, occurs in Ezek 20:26, but it is far from sure that the specific meaning of the denominative (or homophonic) verb, i.e. ‘to have pity’, is operative in all the occurrences of the

semanteme is broadly used in Hosea 1-2. First of all in 1:6-7: ‘Call her name “Not Pitied”, for I will no more have pity on the house of Israel … But I will have pity on the house of Judah.’ Thereupon, v. 8 mentions the child with this name again: ‘When she had weaned Not Pitied’, while a similar statement is lacking after the naming of the first son in v. 5, before the statement: ‘She conceived again and bore a daughter’ in v. 6. Moreover, Hosea 1:2-2:3 ends with the reversal of the name: ‘She has obtained pity’ (2:3). Finally, the end of the first literary composition in the BHos, chs. 1-2, resumes the theme: ‘I will have pity on Not Pitied’ (2:25; cf. 2:21: ‘I will betroth you to me for ever […] in steadfast love and in pity’).

Next to the topic ‘to have pity’, another analogy should be noticed. Both passages exhibit the root ‘to bear’ (נשׂא) in conjunction with ‘to have pity’, yet the subject and the (in)direct object differ:

> Hos 1:6: I will no more have pity on the house of Israel, to bear (forgive) for them at all (נָשׂא אֶשָּׂא לָהֶם)
> Ezek 39:25-26: I will have pity on the whole house of Israel … they shall bear their shame (וְנָשׂוּ אֶת־כְּלִמָּתָם).[12]

The fact that the verbs ‘to have pity’ and ‘to bear’ occur together in Hosea 1:6-7 and Ezekiel 39:25-26, moreover in contexts of the same scope, points to an intertextual connection in spite of the disparity caused by the different acting persons: ‘YHWH will forgive (bear)’ in Hosea 1:6 *vs*. ‘They shall bear their shame’ in Ezekiel 39:26. Since the latter expression (נָשָׂא כְּלִמָּה) with Israel as subject belongs to the regular vocabulary of the BEz, while the former use of the verb נָשָׂא with YHWH as subject occurs only once more in the BHos (14:3: ‘Take away all iniquity’, כָּל־תִּשָּׂא עָוֹן), the following surmise pushes forward. The topics ‘YHWH bears (forgives) for them’ and ‘Israel bears shame’ constitute two sides of one hamartological concept, that is the ending of the disrupted relationship between God and his people. The Hebrew language can use one verb for this twofold event: נשׂא, ‘to bear’. In Hosea 1:6, the redaction first links up with Ezekiel 39:25: ‘YHWH will have pity’, next, it refashions the parallel clause in the latter text: ‘They (Israel) will bear their shame’ into ‘to (not) forgive (bear) for them’ (cf. the conclusion of the BHos [14:3]). Given all this, the direction of borrowing is likely from Ezekiel to Hosea.[13]

noun (cf. Gesenius[18] 1236: ‘Primärnomen’; *DCH* VII, 468-469). In this verse, the term has a technical application (cf. T. Kronholm, ‘רֶחֶם’, in: *ThWAT* VII, 479).

[12] In many translations, the verbal form וְנָשׂוּ is interpreted as deriving from the verb נשׁה, ‘to forget’ (e.g. RSV). In the context of the BEz, however, the form together with the noun כְּלִמָּה, ‘shame’, as object constitutes an idiomatic expression in which וְנָשׂוּ is a defective spelling of the root נשׂא, ‘to bear’ (16:52,54; 32:24-25,29-30; 34:29; 36:6-7,15; 39:26; 44:13; cf. W. Zimmerli, *Ezechiel*, Bd 1 [BKAT], Neukirchen 1969, 367; *DCH* IV, 427; Gesenius[18], 848b).

[13] W.A. Tooman, *Gog of Magog: Reuse of Scripture and Compositional Technique in Ezekiel 38-39* (FAT, 2/52), Tübingen 2011, 101,193-195, 231, 235-237, regards Ezek 39:25 as a reuse (inversion) of Hos 1:6.

EZEKIEL 40-48: THE CONTOURS OF THE LAND

In the beginning of this large section, the prophet is brought in a vision into 'the land of Israel' in order to be instructed about it (40:2). At the end, he is invited to overlook 'the land' portioned out as an inheritance for Israel's tribes (48:29). Since the opening of the BHos situates 'the land' as YHWH's antagonist, we are invited to look after intertextual, not only thematic, connections between Ezekiel 40-48 and Hosea 1-2.

In that perspective, the adjunct of place בִּמְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר in Hosea 2:1 catches the attention. It is not completed by a place name, so some scholars interpret it as a preposition: 'instead of'.[14] However, the single authentic parallel supports the literal meaning 'in the place where' (1 Kgs 21:19; cf. Rom 9:26). The expression might refer to 'Jezreel' in Hosea 1:4-5; 2:2, yet in that case the sequence of place names in 2:1 and 2:2 would be the reverse. In fact, the term may also refer to the adjunct of place in the very last clause of the BEz: 'The name of the city henceforth shall be: "YHWH is there (שָׁמָּה)"' (48:35). This closes the appendix about the gates of 'the city' (vv. 30-35, cf. 40:2).

The name holds complicated matter. On the one hand, it barely suits the city, for according to the division of the land in Ezekiel's report, YHWH's abode is located in the holy district outside the city (45:1-6; 48:15-19,30-35a).[15] On the other hand, the city is located between seven tribes to the north and five tribes to the south, exactly the site of former Jerusalem, and 'the gates of the city are named after the tribes of Israel' (Ezek 48:31). Thus the city belongs to all the tribes.[16] The geography of v. 35b: 'YHWH is there', goes well with the beginning of chs. 40-48, where YHWH's temple is situated in the land of Israel: 'The hand of YHWH was upon me, and he brought me *there* (שָׁמָּה). In visions of God, he brought me into the land of Israel … and he set me down upon a very high mountain, on which was a structure like a city opposite me. When he brought me *there* (שָׁמָּה) …' (40:1-3). It is clear that 40:1-3 and 48:35b put a frame of space around chs. 40-48. So right at the end of the BEz, the very name of the city, 'YHWH is there', adds a special feature to the lived space of the addressees: 'The spatial distance between their physical boundary and their imaginary spiritual center makes the exiles overcome their status as "seemingly cast out from God's presence", and survive, yearning for the imagined or ideally remembered city.'[17] Besides, the terms שָׁמָּה/שָׁם and מָקוֹם regularly occur when the antithesis between Israel (both before and after its purification) and the country of the exile is at stake (שָׁמָּה/שָׁם: 4:13; 6:9; 11:16,18; 17:20; 20:28-29,35,43; 23:3; 29:13; 34:12,14; 36:21; 37:21; 39:28; 47:9,23; מָקוֹם: 6:13; 12:3; 17:16; 34:12; 39:11; 46:20).

Against this setting, the adjunct of place בִּמְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר in Hosea 2:1 may indeed refer to the adverb of place שָׁמָּה in Ezekiel 48:35. So the eventful geography of the land Israel, as described in the BEz, constitutes the décor of the salvation announced in Hosea 2. It is the land where YHWH once dwelled among his people, which he has abandoned, but to which he will return, and where he will get possession of a new domain and live among the twelve tribes. The reference serves the opening of the BHos which pointedly advances and combines two capital themes of the BEz: 'For the land commits great whoredom by forsaking YHWH' (1:2).

[14] G.R. Driver, 'Isaiah I–XXXIX: Textual and Linguistic Problems', *JSS* 13 (1968), 53-54.

[15] K.-F. Pohlmann, *Das Buch des Propheten Hesekiel (Ezechiel). Kapitel 20-48*. Mit einem Beitrag von T.A. Rudnig (ATD), Göttingen 2001, 629-630.

[16] Cf. J. Milgrom, D.I. Block, *Ezekiel's Hope: A Commentary on Ezekiel 38-48*, Eugene 2012, 261-262.

[17] S.J. Kim, '*YHWH Shammah:* The City as Gateway to the Presence of YHWH', *JSOT* 39.2 (2014), 204.

This clause catches the attention, for it is almost unique (Lev 19:29; the concepts 'land' and 'whoredom' occur furthermore together in Exod 34:15; Deut 31:16; Jer 3:1; Ezek 23:19; 1 Chr 5:25). In the context of Hosea 1:2-2:3 one rather expects terms like 'the house of Jezreel', 'the house of Israel' (1:4-5) or 'the children of Israel' (2:1-2). The expression 'the land' (אֶרֶץ), moreover, closes the passage in a puzzling statement: 'They shall go up from the land' (2:2; cf. below). Finally, the term plays a role in the twofold sense of 'earth' and 'land', at the end of the first part of the BHos (1:2-2:25), particularly in the harmony of various cosmic domains that 'answer' each other (2:23-25). Seen in this light, the purpose of 'land' in 1:2 seems to provide a link with the final clause of the allotment of the land in Ezekiel: 'This is the land which you shall allot as an inheritance among the tribes of Israel' (48:29).

CONCLUSION

The intertextual analogies between Hosea 1-2 and Ezekiel 36-39; 40-48 shed new light on the connection of the two books. At first sight, this junction looks more like a clash than as a flowing transition of God-talk from one prophetic voice to another. YHWH's command to Hosea: 'Take a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking YHWH' (1:2) can hardly be taken serious, even in light of the opening admonition in the following unit: '… that she put away her whoredom … for their mother has played the whore' (2:4,6). The colourful history of exegesis bears witness to the enigmatic character of the case.[18] It may be alleviated from the context of the BHos (cf. 3:1-3; 4 *passim*; 5:3-4; 6:10; 9:1), and as far as possible, from the socio-historical ethics of the times in which the prophet acted and his book came into being. Apart from all that, the command can meet comprehension from considering its place in the canon of the prophetic books, that is as a salacious heirloom from the preceding BEz. God's order clarifies to people who arrive from Ezekiel's vision of the new land and the new temple at the threshold of the BHos that the drama of Israel's perplexing apostasy from YHWH, denounced by the preceding prophet, is still going on, unimpeded God's equally perplexing ability to integrate Israel's aberrancy in his salvific governance. The idea that the prophet must play a bewildering role in all this is entrusted to the competent understanding of readers who have carefully found their way through the egress of the Book of Ezekiel.

The relations between the beginning of the BHos and the last part of the BEz may entice scholars to consider them as traces of a sort of common redaction, but there are good reasons to adopt this literary-historical idea with caution. First of all, the two books represent divergent theological ambiances within the *corpus propheticum*, and the literary procedures by which they came into being strongly varied. Most likely, the collections of oracles had already advanced to some halfway or last but one version before they underwent a remodelling that made them fit to perform, next to each other, in the Latter Prophets. Secondly, the very concept of a redactional adjustment raises the question whether that influenced both books to equal extent, or did one of them serve as a donor for the other. Finally, the present study has not taken the whole BEz and the whole BHos into consideration. The research remained limited to the chapters that are generally considered to contain the last parts of the former (Ezek 36-39; 40-

[18] S. Bitter, *Die Ehe des Propheten Hosea. Eine auslegungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (GTA, 3), Göttingen 1975.

48) and the beginning of the latter (Hos 1:2-2:3; 2:4-25). All this dissuades from assuming a full-scale redaction.

The study was simply prompted by the question: could the intended readers of the Prophets pass from Ezekiel to the Twelve, particularly to Hosea, without being forced into incompatible theological splits about the God of Israel? Does familiarity with Ezekiel's message help accepting Hosea's story or is the gap between the books too large? Should readers of the Prophets simply make the best of a God who forbad the one prophet to mourn his wife (Ezek 24), and ordered the other to enter a marriage which would result in trouble and shame (Hos 1-3)? Or is it feasible to interpret their prophecies as concordant since both of them bore witness to the exceptional care of the one God for his one people? For sure, the Books of Ezekiel and Hosea do not resemble soapbox preachers in a park, insouciant regarding the impact which their divergent talk about God has on passers-by. Far rather they are neighbours within the *corpus propheticum*, tuned in to each other as guides through YHWH's adventure with his troublesome people. It truly takes more prophets than one to fathom the ways of Israel's God.

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The theological work of Eric Peels shows earnest concern to clarify that the Hebrew and Greek Bible evades explanations which measure the God of Israel by modern, idiomatic standards of human dignity and social correctness. In his view, it is the assignment of the exegetical guild to explain how variegated differences of world view preserve the gulf between the Scriptures and our present-day culture, especially with regard to the discourse about God. The hermeneutical deadlock might be alleviated by endeavours at sketching how God interferes with the world in terms of the biblical outlook on human life. This view itself is far from consentient, as the present study shows. It is offered to our colleague and friend in gratitude for that stance, and in expectancy that his research will yield further rich rewards.

WHO IS WHO IN ZECHARIAH 1:1-6?

Text Linguistics, Participant Tracking and the Reading of Biblical Texts

Eep Talstra

Do readers always understand who is speaking and who is being addressed in biblical texts? Asking that kind of question sounds like the common academic attitude of suspicion. Is it really unclear who speaks in the Bible and who the audience is that is summoned or expected to listen? As a general theological statement, that may be true. However, researchers of the biblical texts and translators of the Bible are repeatedly confronted with the fact that with particular texts they cannot escape from answering questions about who exactly is speaking here. In many cases the answer to the question is of great significance, since it determines the way one reads a text.

As biblical scholars we are usually allowed to take our time before proposing an interpretation or a translation of a particular text. Eric Peels, in his practical biblical wisdom, has always taught us to do this. Reading requires an attitude of listening. Do not accept quick answers, otherwise you may run the risk of meeting your own theology rather than 'meeting the One God' in the texts. Nevertheless, Bible Societies and readers can afford to wait for only so long, so decisions do have to be discussed and then finally also be made. In this, the question of method arises: is 'reading' a matter of linguistics and 'listening' a matter of theology? And if so, how do they interact?

This contribution depends on techniques of computer assisted participant analysis and it discusses results of textual analysis based on the methodology used in that research: any particular textual interpretation has to legitimate itself against general patterns of language usage.[1] The text of the Book of Zechariah presents syntactic research with a number of examples where exegetes and translators have to find solutions regarding who speaks and who is addressed. These are cases of variable importance for biblical exegesis. Before entering upon the discussion of Zechariah 1:1-6, I will present two other cases that provide helpful preliminary remarks on matters of method.

LINGUISTIC PATTERN AND LITERARY PECULIARITY

Sometimes translators need to propose a solution for what seems to be a more or less technical issue. That can be observed in the way one solves cases where the reader seems to run into some gap in the text. For example, in Zechariah 1:7 it is said that 'in the eleventh month of the second year of king Darius the word of YHWH came to the prophet Zachariah, saying: "I have seen this night, look, a man riding upon a red horse …"' The writer uses the same pattern of speech as in 1:1, and there one can see that after this introduction YHWH indeed begins to speak

[1] E. Talstra, 'The Bible as Data and as Literature: The Example of Exod 16', in: H. Ausloos, B. Lemmelijn (eds), *A Pillar of Cloud to Guide: Text-critical, Redactional, and Linguistic Perspectives on the Old Testament*, Fs. M. Vervenne (BETL, 269), Leuven 2014, 549-568. Cf. the contribution of Wido van Peursen to this *Festschrift*: 'Patterns and Pleasure: Participants in Psalm 16'.

to the prophet. That is what a reader may expect based on the general syntactic patterns used to open a direct speech section. Compare Zechariah 7:1, a superscription without לֵאמֹר, and 7:4, an introduction with לאמר. Only in verse 4 does a direct speech section follow. In 1:7 the reader clearly has to react differently. In spite of the fact that the opening words claim that God is about to speak, it is the prophet who here begins to report about what he has 'seen this night'. So the reader encounters an unmarked change of speaker from one participant to another.[2]

Translations react in different ways. The NIV does not add any explanatory phrase here. The NRSV changes the syntax of לאמר into a small clause with the prophet's name inserted into the translation: 'and Zechariah said'. Thus the participant shift from God as the speaker to Zechariah as the speaker is made linguistically clear. Translations with an emphasis on the target language fill the gap in an even more explicit way, for example, NBV: 'Dit is zijn relaas.' (This is his report.) The BGT further expands the text with a long sentence: 'Hier volgt het verslag van Zacharia over alles wat hij toen hoorde en zag.' (Here follows Zechariah's report of everything he then heard and saw.) So these solutions increasingly require additional text the more they decide to be of service to a modern readership.

However, one may ask whether, even if one agrees that in terms of grammar the Hebrew text is indeed syntactically incorrect, there really is a gap to be filled in this text. Or is this a deliberate literary or redactional construction to make the reader understand that Zechariah's visions are to be read not as his private religious experiences, but instead precisely as they are being presented in the context of the book: as the *word of God*? If that is the case, one should not insert Zechariah's name as the new participant too easily here. But even then, how would one translate that? In modern theory of Bible translation one often proposes that the translator makes explicit in the translation what has remained implicit in the Hebrew text. Following that strategy and assuming that the visions in the actual literary context indeed are presented as the *word* spoken by God, one could translate verse 7 as a general introduction: '… the word of YHWH has come to Zechariah, speaking by visions.' Verse 8 [new line, or indentation:] 'I have seen …'

TEXT GRAMMAR AND EXEGETICAL INTERPRETATION

In other cases, the question of 'who is who?' has to be discussed beyond the area of technical issues, since textual interpretation is involved and consequently theology as well.

A clear case is Zechariah 3:5. The prophet has a vision about Joshua, the high priest who is being re-installed by YHWH. The angel of YHWH commands his servants to take Joshua's filthy clothes from him and to give him a festive garment instead.

Verse 4: 'The angel said: "I herewith take away your iniquity from you."' After these words verse 5, according to the Hebrew text, וָאֹמַר יָשִׂימוּ צָנִיף טָהוֹר עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ, writes: 'And *I* said: "Let them put a clean turban on his head."'

Who is this 'I'? Since the prophet Zechariah himself is reporting here about his vision (3:1 'He made *me* see …'), linguistic consistency (participant tracking) requires him to be seen as

[2] This is exceptional. See the default pattern, with the verb רָאָה in, e.g., Gen 16:13; 21:16; 26:28; 1 Kgs 22:17 and Isa 38:11. See 'ETCBC database of the Hebrew Bible with Query Saver' via http://shebanq.ancient-data.org/.

the 'I' who makes the suggestion of the clean turban (cf. Amos 7:2,5[3]). That conclusion, however, raises a challenge of interpretation. Is it an acceptable idea to interpret this as the prophet himself deciding to interfere in the heavenly scene by making a suggestion? If translators reject this idea, but also do not wish to alter the Hebrew text,[4] they may choose to make sure that the 'I' be interpreted as the angel of the Lord speaking. In English one would not notice the difference (it fully depends on where one puts the quotation marks: e.g., NRSV), but in Dutch one does. Should one read 'ik' (human 'I') or 'Ik' (divine or heavenly 'I')?[5] In terms of linguistics the second solution creates a problem. The proposal to see the angel of the Lord as the one who now re-introduces himself as the speaker of verse 5 would overrule standard syntactic patterns and, as a result, make the text unnecessarily complicated. The angel was speaking already, addressing Joshua, in verse 4. So why and to whom would he now begin to narrate about his own speaking in verse 5? And for what reason would one want to avoid the idea that, in line with linguistic patterns, it is not the angel but the prophet who is narrating here about his own suggestion?[6] Two types of respect seem to be in mutual conflict here: respect for and a desire to accept the Hebrew text as it stands versus ignoring the linguistic codes of the text in order not to translate the text in a way that would diminish respect for the heavenly council where a prophet should not dare to intervene.

This example is also helpful for raising the question of method. How should a translator decide? If grammar and syntactic analysis of the participants active in the text provide us with sufficient arguments to find out 'who is who' and consequently produce a linguistically correct translation, should one then still consider additional literary or theological interpretations and even overrule the linguistic arguments present? If standard linguistic patterns lead us to the conclusion that the prophet is speaking in verse 5, why should one use other arguments to silence him again? One cannot have it both ways. If one decides not to change the Hebrew text one cannot simultaneously decide to ignore its linguistic features and translate from a theological point of view regarding who is who in the text. That procedure creates a theological problem: by overruling text grammar one is creating a Bible translation for a readership more pious than the Bible itself is.

PARTICIPANTS IN ZECHARIAH 1:1-6: LANGUAGE AND THEOLOGY

The question of 'who is who in a text' not only provokes discussions that apply to particular decisions made in translations of a more traditional theological blend. The same holds true for recent translations that have explicitly chosen to serve their readers by using modern lexicon and style to represent biblical phraseology. The paradox occasionally to be observed is that translators decide to use a modern lexicon while at the same time easily rearranging or neglecting the syntax of a text, thus violating rules of text grammar. As a result, a translation

[3] A.S. van der Woude, *Zacharia* (POuT), Nijkerk 1984, 67, refers to Isa 6:3-8 and accepts the Hebrew text of Zech 3:5 as it stands: the prophet speaks.

[4] See the various proposals in *BHS*, which are based on the ancient Versions.

[5] The HSV proposes that the angel of the Lord is quoting himself in v. 5: 'Vervolgens zei Ik: Laat hen een reine tulband op zijn hoofd zetten.' (Then *I* said: Let them put a clean turban on his head.)

[6] R. Hanhart, *Sacharja 1-8* (BKAT), Neukirchen 1998, 171, discusses the various textual traditions and ancient translations. In his view, the Hebrew text 'I said' contains a later alteration of an earlier version: 'He said' (218), and so he translates accordingly.

may indeed become easier to read, but it also misrepresents the composition and the roles of the various participants in the Hebrew text. This can be observed in some modern translations of Zechariah 1:1-6. This text segment is presented here in a basic translation, respecting the syntax of the Hebrew text, to allow for a comparison with some translations in modern Dutch and English.

1. In … the word of YHWH has come to Zechariah, saying:
2. 'YHWH has been really angry with *your* [plural] *parents*.'

3. 'Now you [singular] have to say to *them*:
"Thus YHWH of heavenly hosts has said:
'Return to me – statement of YHWH of heavenly hosts –
so that I can return to you – YHWH of heavenly hosts has said.
4. You should not be as *your parents*
to whom the former prophets have called, saying:
"Thus YHWH of heavenly hosts has said:
'You should return from your bad ways and your bad deeds.'"
but they have not listened
and have not paid attention to me – statement of YHWH.
5. *Your parents*, where are they?
And the prophets, is it forever that they live?
6. For sure, my words and my rules,
that I have commanded my servants the prophets,
is it not the case that they have caught *your parents*,
and that *they returned*
and said:
'In the way YHWH of heavenly hosts had planned to act to us according to our ways and our deeds,
thus he has acted to us.'
?'

The Hebrew text confronts us with at least two occasions where questions of the type 'who is who in this text?' need to be answered.
(1) Who is the participant that the prophet is commanded to address in verse 3? 'YHWH has been really angry with *your parents*. Now you have to say to *them* … The Lord has said: *Return* to me …'
(2) Who is the participant that appears to have turned back in verse 6? '*They* turned back and they said: "as the Lord had planned, he has done to *us*."'

First question
The GNB switches 1st, 2nd and 3rd person markers in order to create a consistent text. It also replaces the 'you' (plural) with 'the people', thus actually creating an extra and unidentified participant in the narrator's text:

> 2-3 The Lord Almighty told Zechariah to say to the people, 'I, the Lord, was very angry with your ancestors, but now I say to you, "Return to me."'

The NBV also inserts a new participant, *'the people'*, in the text. This makes explicit who the *'them'* in the Hebrew text are, but it also disconnects *'them'* from the *'you'* in *'your ancestors'*:

> 2-3 De toorn van de HEER heeft jullie voorouders getroffen. Zeg nu tegen het volk: 'Dit zegt de HEER van de hemelse machten: Keer terug naar mij, …' (The anger of the Lord has struck your ancestors. Now tell the people: 'This is what the Lord of the heavenly powers says: Return to me, …')

The BGT, by inserting 'the people', adopts the same strategy:

> 2-3 Maar nu moet jij namens mij tegen het volk zeggen: 'Ik ben de machtige Heer. Jullie moeten weer gaan leven zoals ik het wil.' (But now on my behalf you have to say to the people: 'I am the mighty Lord. You should start living again as I want it.')

The syntactic problem in verse 3 is that after *'your parents'* in verse 2, one at first sight expects the *'to them'* in verse 3 to refer to *'your parents'*. But from verse 4, it is clear that only *'you'* (plural) is intended. In the words spoken by YHWH, *'you'*, Zechariah's audience, are urged not to be as *'your parents'* and to 'return' to YHWH (v. 3). So *'them'* refers back to the pronominal suffix *'your'* (plural) in the preceding direct speech section.[7] In a translation one may need to make that connection explicit, but then it would not be helpful to insert the neutral term 'people' but rather: 'your audience', or 'your people' if one prefers. It is Zechariah's generation that has to be addressed, not the people as a general category.

Second question
The next question mentioned above is who in the end (v. 6) really did 'return'. And who tells us that this has happened: is YHWH speaking or is it the narrator? In other words, where should one locate the last question mark: after verse 6, or, as some translations do, after verse 6a, ending with the phrase 'your parents'?

GNB
> 6 Through my servants the prophets I gave your ancestors commands and warnings, but they disregarded them and suffered the consequences. Then they repented and acknowledged that I, the Lord Almighty, had punished them as they deserved and as I had determined to do.

The GNB correctly (to be explained below) reads the entire verse 6 as words spoken by God. However, by removing all of the question marks from God's speech one has created a rhetorically neutral text. In this way God just reports that the ancestors, by repenting, eventually did as was expected. As a result, one loses in this translation the rhetorical effect of the text as a summons to the new generation to understand the past as really the past and to start reconsidering their own situation.

NBV
> 6 '... "Toch hebben mijn woorden en de wetten die ik mijn dienaren de profeten had opgedragen te verkondigen, jullie voorouders getroffen."' Toen kwam het volk tot inkeer en erkende: 'De HEER van de hemelse machten heeft vanwege onze handel en wandel met ons gedaan wat hij zich had voorgenomen.' ('… "Yet my words and the instructions that I commanded the prophets to announce have struck your ancestors."' Then the people repented and recognized: 'Because of our acts and behaviour the Lord of heavenly hosts has acted with us in accordance to his plan.')

[7] Van der Woude, *Zacharia*, 21.

BGT

6 ‘Maar voordat jullie voorouders stierven, heb ik hen gestraft. Want ze luisterden niet naar de profeten …’
Toen de mensen hoorden wat Zacharia zei, gingen ze anders leven. Want ze begrepen dat de machtige Heer gedaan had wat hij gezegd had …
(‘But before your ancestors died, I punished them. For they did not listen to the prophets …’
When the people heard what Zechariah said, they began to change their way of life. For they understood that the mighty Lord had acted as he had said …)

The two translations in modern Dutch have also removed the question marks, so that the text becomes a direct message rather than an invitation to observe and become aware. But these translations have also decided that the words spoken by the Lord end in verse 6a: הֲלוֹא הִשִּׂיגוּ אֲבֹתֵיכֶם ‘… my words have caught *your parents.*’ Verse 6b is regarded now as a concluding statement by the narrator. This implies that it is not ‘your parents’ that are said to have turned back, but instead Zechariah’s audience. For that reason ‘the people’ had to be reinserted here, in order to make it match with the same insertion in verse 2.

Clearly modern translations that have a goal of being ‘easy to read’ divert quite easily from the syntactic markers and the rhetorical elements present in the Hebrew text. If one searches on the internet one will be surprised, or even frustrated, to find how easily writers presenting materials for Bible Study feel free to change the syntax and the participants of the Hebrew text in order to make sure Zechariah preaches the classical message of sin and repentance.[8] In my view there is no principal argument to object to the use of a modern or even a restricted lexicon in Bible translation, whereas at the same time one should continue to ask whether common language usage necessarily has to result in the presentation of a simplified Bible. Easy-to-read translations of Zechariah 1 seem to suggest that in verses 1-6 the reader encounters only three main participants interacting in classical roles: God, the prophet Zechariah and the people who are characterised as sinners that need to repent. That is also clear from the superscription used in the GNB: ‘The Lord Calls His People to Return to Him.’ The ‘people’ that were added in their translation of verse 2 are even promoted into the heading! The superscription in NBV is more fitting: ‘Oproep terug te keren naar de HEER’ (Summons to return to the Lord), but also here one wonders what role is left for the other participants in the text: the ancestors and the early prophets, who continue to be part of the prophet’s arguments in 8:14 and 7:7,12. From the linguistic markers of the text’s participants, one can conclude that Zechariah 1:1-6 is not a text about just three participants playing traditional religious roles. Instead it presents five main participants: God, the prophet Zechariah, the previous generation (אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם ‘your fathers’), the previous prophets (הַנְּבִיאִים הָרִאשֹׁנִים ‘the early prophets’) and the actual audience (‘you’, plural).

One can observe that two participants, ‘Zechariah’s audience’ and ‘the fathers’, are not being addressed in the same way. The verb ‘return’ is used with different prepositions, which implies different meanings. The combination of שׁוּב אֶל ‘return to’ is used in 1:3 with the audience and in 1:3 and 8:3 with YHWH as its subject. It expresses a movement, not repentance. Compare this with 1:16 where the same verb with the proposition ל expresses return and arrival: שַׁבְתִּי לִירוּשָׁלַםִ. Next the text uses שׁוּב מִן ‘return from’ in 1:4 with the fathers. This idiom expresses conversion, repentance. So the message to the audience is different from the message to the fathers. The

[8] For example: on https://net.bible.org/#!bible/Zechariah+1 (consulted November 18, 2016) the editor adds a note (8) to v. 6: ‘In v. 4 the ancestors would not turn but in v. 6 they appear to have done so. The subject in v. 6, however, is to be construed as Zechariah’s own listeners.’ Why we should accept this change has not been explained.

fathers were summoned to repent, but they did not pay attention, as is stated again in 7:11 and 13.[9]

Now the question is whether the same verb used without a preposition in verse 6, וַיָּשׁוּבוּ ‘and they turned’, picks up the message to the audience (v. 3) or the message to the fathers (v. 4). From what is said in the last lines of verse 6, ‘As YHWH had planned, … he has acted with us …’, the answer is clear, since the words of the former prophets to the fathers (v. 4) are repeated there. It is the fathers that ‘turned’, not Zechariah’s audience. Their turn is not mentioned before chapter 8.

Participant tracking can corroborate this. With the verb וישובו ‘and they turned’ no explicit subject is introduced: ‘my words, … is it not the case that they have struck your fathers and they turned …?’ There is no linguistic sign indicating that ‘they turned’ should syntactically be connected back all the way up to the ‘them’ in verse 3. Nor is there any sign that God’s direct speech has ended so that the narrator would be the speaker of these lines. One may conclude therefore that God’s speech continues to the end of verse 6 and that God speaks about the fathers finally having returned, that is: repented, as summoned in verse 4.

These observations demonstrate why linguistics is an important tool for textual analysis and for evaluating exegetical interpretation. Reading requires one to be aware of the interaction of participants, lexical expressions and rhetorical elements in the text.

This brings us back to the question of the topic of God’s discourse in verses 3-6. If Zechariah’s audience hears that the generation of the fathers in the end understood and then repented, what exactly is expected from them now with the expression used in verse 3: ‘return to me’? Here the rhetorical elements in the text become important. After the references to the failed communication of the fathers and the former prophets in verse 4, YHWH in verses 5 and 6 poses three rhetorical questions, all of them suggesting: ‘could we not agree upon the fact that ...?’ and expecting an answer of the type: ‘yes, of course, you are right’. This way of argumentation is not uncommon in speeches by YHWH in the Book of Zechariah: for example, in 3:2 where he argues with Satan; in 7:6 and 7 where he argues with Zechariah’s audience.

In verses 5 and 6 YHWH’s rhetorical questions are formulated very directly by the use of fronting positions for the elements that are crucial: ‘your fathers’—where are they? You are right, they are no longer with us. ‘The prophets’—is it forever that they live? You are right, they are no longer here. ‘My words’—is it not the case that they have struck your fathers …? You are right, they finally understood that the prophets’ warnings were correct.

So what is it that YHWH is after in using all of this rhetorical power? A general summons to repent in view of Israel’s sinful history? Blame the parents and urge the current generation to do better in repenting? That would reduce the text to an overall theological model of sin and conversion, and it would neglect the very intense discourse that this speech actually is. God is challenging the audience, the new generation, to become aware of a new situation, to see and to trust the new beginning he has in mind, soon to be demonstrated by the visions that are about to come. The text of chapter 1 does not inform us of any reaction from the audience to the

[9] H. Wenzel, *Reading Zechariah with Zechariah 1:1-6 as the Introduction to the Entire Book*, (CBET, 59), Leuven 2011. Wenzel presents an interesting study on intertextuality and prophecy. Unfortunately, however, he has neither presented a thorough linguistic analysis of the text segment, nor a translation. So he missed the verbal valence patterns of the verb שׁוּב, the proper identification of participants in the text and the discourse function of the rhetorical questions God is asking. As a result his exegesis of the text is not convincing. See pp. 83, 297.

rhetorical questions. In a way this silence can best be read as part of the discourse of God and Zechariah's generation. How easily do people turn and adjust to a new initiative? It may take more than just six verses of prophetic text. The visions coming next seem to confirm that God is aware of that. So one should not feel tempted to change the text's syntax in order to construct some reaction. We will have to continue reading until chapters 7 and 8 to find out. First the narrator tells us about YHWH's next move in the discourse of the book: the visions.

CONCLUSION

One can thus conclude that the real focus of Zechariah 1:1-6 is not a direct summons to Zechariah's audience to return, interpreted as to repent. God's speech builds up a case to convince them that once they are ready to return, that is, to seek and trust him again (as in Deut 30:2-3), YHWH is ready to return: to renew his history with them. The conflict of the past generations is truly past now. YHWH himself points that out to the new generation and summons them to watch and trust what he makes them aware of. A heading of the type used in the GNB, 'The Lord Calls His People to Return to Him', limits the text to simply a general evangelical statement about 'God and sinners', which misses the point of the full discourse and neglects the fact that YHWH himself also speaks about his own 'returning'. Restricting this text to a summons to repent actually restructures God's speech into a predictable, straightforward pious text, without any tension or rhetorical power left in it.

Reading and listening, as Eric Peels rightly defines our work as biblical scholars, both are in need of a proper linguistic methodology that helps us to see God and humans in dialogue or dispute in particular situations at particular times. It does not mean that all exegesis is simply decided upon by syntax and grammar. Room for debate remains, since there are difficulties in establishing sufficient clarity with an ancient language such as Biblical Hebrew. But that difficulty is different from making translation decisions based primarily on theological preferences or timeless religious models. Arguing intensively with his people in the midst of actual circumstances is part of the biblical 'image of God' as we meet him in the many texts of the Bible.

'WHERE IS THE GOD OF JUSTICE?'

Listening and Hearing the Word of God in Malachi 2:17-3:7a

Fanie Snyman

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

In Malachi 2:17 the prophet voices a question posed by the people: 'Where is the God of justice?' Why do the people have doubts about the perceived absence of God's justice? And what is the answer to the question posed? These two questions will be investigated in this contribution.

To answer these questions one has to listen to and hear the text. Listening to and hearing the text means a careful reading and interpretation of the text involved, respectively. To hear the Word of God one first has to listen to the text. On a methodological level listening to the text means to carefully investigate a text by paying attention to its historical and literary dimensions. Hearing the Word of God involves a theological interpretation of the text listened to.

The two questions addressed are of course not the only questions raised by this text. Malachi 2:17-3:7a[1] is a text known for many other problems interpreters are confronted with. Space does not allow a complete investigation of all the problems encountered in the text but the following may be noted.

One of the important issues in the history of research into this passage is the redactional and compositional problems the interpreter is confronted with. Viewing the text from a historical critical perspective scholars[2] are convinced that 3:1b-4 is a later addition to the original text. The question posed in 2:17 is actually answered in 3:5 and therefore verses 1b-4 are considered a later addition. Viewing the text from its so-called final form scholars argue[3] that verses 1b-4 make sense within the unit as a whole and there is no necessity to view these verses as an addition.

The identity of the messenger of the covenant in 3:1b is another hard nut to crack and consequently many different proposals have been put forward.[4] Closely connected to this problem is the question on the identity of the *malachi* (מַלְאָכִי) figure in 3:1a. The messenger of YHWH is not a heavenly being or an angel, but the prophet himself. Through his prophecies, Malachi, the prophet, is himself the one performing the duties of preparing the way. That is also the reason why nothing else is said about him or the part he has to play, as it is all evident from his prophecies reported in the book carrying his name. His duty is to call the people to repent from their cultic and ethical malpractices before YHWH will come to judge. There is thus an intended pun in the name of the prophet as he is the messenger and at the same time Malachi,

[1] S.D. Snyman, 'Rethinking the demarcation of Malachi 2:17-3:7a', *AcT* (2011), 156-168.

[2] E.g. A.S. van der Woude, *Haggai Maleachi* (POuT), Nijkerk 1982, 127; K. Elliger, *Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten*, Bd 2: *Die Propheten Nahum, Habakuk, Zephanja, Haggai, Sacharja, Maleachi* (ATD), Göttingen 1975, 205-206.

[3] Cf. S.D. Snyman, *Malachi* (HCOT), Leuven 2015, 126.

[4] S.D. Snyman, 'Once again: Investigating the Identity of the Three Figures Mentioned in Malachi 3:1', *VeEc* 27 (2006), 1031-1044.

the prophet. So, the Book of Malachi has not derived its name from the *malachi* figure in 3:1a. It is rather the other way around. In 3:1a a later redactor identified a prophet by the name of Malachi as indeed the one who is sent on this mission to prepare the way for the Lord's coming in judgment.

Perhaps a redactor put in this line because of the delay experienced in the execution of the promised judgment. According to the initial prophesy, YHWH will come suddenly and as that has not happened yet, the reason for the delay needs to be explained. The reason given is that the prophet's coming had to be seen as a preparation for the actual coming of YHWH. The time lapsed between the prophecy being uttered and the actual coming of YHWH was a time of preparation and repentance. Even later, when the coming of YHWH in judgment still did not materialize, it is foreseen that his coming will be preceded by yet another prophetic figure, Elijah (Mal 3:23).

The demarcation of the unit is also controversial. Many scholars opt for the traditional demarcation of 2:17-3:5, but there are convincing arguments to demarcate the text to include verses 6-7a as part of the unit.[5]

MALACHI 2:17-3:7A IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BOOK OF MALACHI

The content of the book displays the following structure:[6]

A 1:1 Superscription: A message and a word from YHWH
  B 1:2-5 From the past to the future contrasting Jacob/Israel and Esau/Edom
    C 1:6-2:9 Malpractices in the worship of YHWH by the priests the people
      D 2:10-16 The issue of mixed marriages
      D' 2:17-3:7a The issue of the God of justice
    C' 3:7b-12 Tithing as a cultic malpractice and the blessing to come
  B' 3:13-21 A view from the present time to the future
A' 3:22-24 Postscript: Two additions regarding Moses and Elijah

From this structure it is clear that parts D (2:10-16) and D' (2:17-3:7a) form the core or centre of Malachi's oracles. It is also clear that the book as a whole can be divided into two distinctive parts (1:1-2:16 and 2:17-3:24 respectively).[7] Malachi 2:17-3:7a is then an important passage in the book. It forms part of the centre of the book and is at the same time the first part of the second half of the book.

[5] Snyman, 'Rethinking the demarcation of Malachi 2:17-3:5'.
[6] S.D. Snyman, 'Malachi, Prophet proclaiming the Lord in the present, past and future', in: H.G.L. Peels, S.D. Snyman (eds), *The Lion has roared. Theological Themes in the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament*, Eugene 2012, 198.
[7] The similarities with the concentric structure proposed by R. Kessler, *Maleachi* (HThKAT), Freiburg/Basel etc. 2011, 53, as well as the results of E. Assis, 'Structure and Meaning in the Book of Malachi', in: J. Day (ed.), *Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (LHB/OTS, 531), New York/London etc. 2010, 354-359, are striking although different arguments are presented in each case.

THE CONCEPT OF משפט IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

What does מִשְׁפָּט mean? According to the lexicon of Koehler and Baumgartner משפט denotes a decision or judgment (in German *Rechtsentscheid*), especially within a legal sphere and therefore it pertains to a decision taken in terms of judgment. משפט may then also mean 'a case presented for judgement' denoting a legal and just decision.[8] According to Gerhard Liedke שפט has broadly speaking the meaning of an action by which a disrupted social order can be or has been restored.[9] משפט is therefore a term not to be restricted to the legal sphere only. It may also have the meaning of 'that what one is due to, that what is one's right, what is one entitled to' and is thus also connected to the idea of judgment.[10] Christopher Wright comes to a similar conclusion when he describes משפט as 'what needs to be done in a given situation if people and circumstances are to be restored to conformity with *tsdq/tsdqh*.[11] Throughout the Old Testament there is an almost unquestioned conviction that YHWH is the God of justice (Deut 4:5-8; Ps 89:15; Isa 30:18). That God's justice is then questioned Malachi 2:17 makes it an all the more pressing and even daring question to be asked by God's very own people.

THE QUESTIONING OF GOD'S JUSTICE

The book provides us with a glimpse into the social conditions current in the time of Malachi (460-450 BCE), a period coinciding with the reign of Artaxerxes I (464-424 BCE). People questioned the love of YHWH (1:2-5); in spite of a rebuilt temple, they neglected the religious obligations expected from them (1:6-14; 3:7b-12) with even the priests neglecting their duties as officials at the temple (2:1-9). Moral decay (2:10-16; 3:5) characterized the people and sceptical questions were asked about God's activity in their lives (3:13-21). It was a time of drought and poor crops (3:10-11) during which the people lost a vision of a future dispensation that will be brought about by God and open up new eschatological perspectives.

There were thus ample reasons for the people to doubt the age-old conviction that the God of Israel is the God of justice (cf also Isa 30:18). Reality defied belief. The real life experiences of the people contradicted the confession of faith in the God of justice. From a political perspective there was little hope of restoring Judah as an independent state; and from an agricultural perspective there were crop failures, insect plagues and droughts to cope with contradicting the promises of the land, which was supposed to yield abundant crops to make a good living (Deut 8).

The only other passage in the Old Testament where the אֱלֹהֵי הַמִּשְׁפָּט phrase occurs is Isaiah 30:18 (though without the article). In this passage salvation is announced and God's justice is demonstrated in his mercy. In the literary context of this passage, his ability to hear the prayers of his people is mentioned (Isa 30:19); it is YHWH who guides them and who significantly, provides rain that will guarantee good crops for the people to eat and for the animals to graze upon (Isa 30:23-24). In the case of Malachi, exactly the opposite seems to be the case: YHWH's justice does not result in the salvation of the people and in restoring their fortunes, hence the questioning of YHWH's justice.

[8] KBL, 579-580; cf. also *HAL*, 615-616.
[9] G. Liedke, 'שפט *špṭ* richten', in: *THAT* II, 1001.
[10] Liedke, *THAT* II, 1005.
[11] C.J.H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, Leicester 2004, 257.

The passage opens with the well-known statement-question-answer-style characteristic of the Book of Malachi. The prophet confronts the people with a statement voicing an accusation: 'You have wearied the Lord with your words.' To this accusation the people respond with a question: 'How have we wearied him?' The prophet in his turn responds by summarizing the convictions of the people: 'All who do evil are good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them', followed then with the question summarizing their attitude: 'Where is the God of justice?'

God's apparent inactivity in light of so many injustices on both the political and economic front led them to the conclusion that God approves the evil deeds people do and that they even please him. God, who is known to be the God of justice, is no longer interested in justice and therefore the question can be rightfully asked: 'Where is the God of justice?' If God is the God of justice how come so little is seen of divine justice? The God of justice is inactive on the issue of justice and therefore those who do evil are actually good in his eyes. If God is the God of justice then justice must be done by God and that is what the people do not see or experience. The question reveals an attitude of being sceptical of YHWH's ability and will to judge.[12] God's inactivity and his seeming inability to act, makes him absent from the struggles of everyday life of believers living in Yehud during the time of Artaxerxes I.

THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION

The answer given has two parts. The people are reminded of their religious (3:1b-4) and social responsibilities (3:5).

The first part of the answer is given in 3:1b-4. The God of justice (called the Lord הָאָדוֹן in verse 1) will come suddenly and unexpectedly to his temple. The people asked for the God of justice and it is therefore assumed that they seek God to execute justice and would delight in the coming of the Lord and the angel of the covenant.

It was argued already that *malachi* (מלאכי) mentioned in 3:1a, refers to the prophet Malachi, introduced by a redactor as a later addition to the initial prophecy to explain the delay in the coming of YHWH.[13] As Adam van der Woude[14] and others[15] have pointed out, האדון 'the Lord' and מַלְאַךְ הַבְּרִית 'the angel/messenger of the covenant' are part of a chiastic construction. This chiastic construction suggests that האדון and מלאך הברית should refer to one person. האדון can be none other than YHWH as he is the only one to have a temple to come to and מלאך הברית is then a reference to YHWH represented as an angel as it is the case in other instances in the Old Testament (e.g. Gen 22:15-18). YHWH as the Lord and the angel/messenger of the covenant are then almost identical figures, but at the same time they must be distinguished from one another. The angel/messenger of the covenant is not the Lord, but in the angel/messenger of the covenant the Lord himself is met. It is therefore better to translate this term as angel of the covenant or covenant angel rather than messenger of the covenant to strengthen the idea of the angel of the covenant as a reference to the Lord and therefore to YHWH himself.

[12] K.W. Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching: Prophetic Authority, Form Problems, and the Use of Traditions in the Book of Malachi* (BZAW, 288), Berlin 2000, 283.

[13] Snyman, *Malachi* 130-131.

[14] A.S. van der Woude, 'Der Engel des Bundes: Bemerkungen zu Maleachi 3:1c und seinem Kontext', in J. Jeremias, L. Perlitt (eds), *Die Botschaft und die Boten*, Fs. H.W. Wolff, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981, 289-300; A.S. van der Woude, *Haggai, Maleachi* (POuT), Nijkerk 1982, 130-133.

[15] Kessler, *Maleachi*, 229-232; A. Meinhold, *Maleachi* (BKAT), Neukirchen-Vluyn 2006, 258-263.

The God of justice will come to judge as is expected from his name. While the people asked a question on the God of justice, it is now the prophet who asks questions to the people. Be mindful of your anticipated delight in the coming of the Lord to execute justice, the prophet warns, because who will endure the day of his coming and will be able to stand when he appears? Those asking for the God of justice will have to endure the execution of his justice upon themselves.

The purpose of the coming of the Lord executing justice is not to destroy his people but to cleanse and refine them as silver and gold are purified by fire or the launderer's soap. Just as a refiner of metal is able to remove the dross from the ore to leave a pure and refined metal behind and just as dirt is removed from a piece of cloth by making use of a cleansing ingredient, so YHWH will discriminate between pure and impure, clean and unclean. Only then will the offerings brought to YHWH be acceptable to him once more. Quite significantly, the sacrifices brought are termed in 3:3 as offerings in righteousness (מִנְחָה בִצְדָקָה). This phrase has a threefold meaning in this passage. First, it may have an objective meaning; that is, the offerings presented will be righteous in the sense that they are brought in accordance with the requirements of the Torah and consequently in the right way, contrary to current practice in the time of the prophet. In this sense בצדקה qualifies the offering מנחה. Secondly, the phrase may have a subjective meaning and refer to the people who bring the sacrifices. In this sense בצדקה qualifies the participle 'bringing' (מַגִּישֵׁי). An offering in righteousness will only be brought by people who are righteous themselves.[16] Thirdly, the phrase may also refer to the action of sacrificing. Other passages in Malachi make it clear that not only the poor quality of sacrificial animals caused God's anger, but also the attitude of the priests and the people showing contempt in the way in which they brought their offerings (1:6,13; 2:2). Righteous people will bring offerings in righteousness.

Righteousness is a well-known concept in the Old Testament and Gerhard von Rad's view on this term is still worth remembering: 'Es gibt im Alten Testament keinen Begriff von so zentraler Bedeutung schlechthin für alle Lebensbeziehungen des Menschen wie den der צְדָקָה.'[17] The term indicates a relationship between two parties that is in order, meaning the relationship conforms to the expectations one may have of it.[18] Righteousness is disrupted by war or quarrels and when this happens, it must be restored. Righteousness is also something to be done in practical terms like the proper behaviour in a relationship where one has to live up to the standards of accepted behaviour expected in society. Von Rad reminds us that it will 'be an utterly false description of the facts' if one would think of righteousness as a secular (human relationships) and religious (human beings with God) concept, rather they 'were bound together'.[19] If this is the case in 3:3, then righteousness within the religious part of life is also connected to righteousness in the sphere of human relationships. Verse 5 deals with justice in the sphere of human relationships. Righteousness is a term closely connected to justice.

In verse 5 the prophet turns to the area of human relationships and the people's social responsibilities as the second part of his answer to the question of the people on the God of justice. The first person singular form is resumed when YHWH says that he will come near to the people to exercise justice (משפט). A list of six transgressions is given.

[16] Kessler, *Maleachi*, 238.

[17] G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Bd 1: *Die Theologie der geschichtliche Überlieferungen Israels*, München 1969, 382 (ET: *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, London 1971, 370).

[18] Wright, *Ethics*, 256.

[19] Von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* 1, 386 (ET: *Old Testament Theology* 1, 374).

Sorcery is the first of the transgressions listed and refers to the practice of divination and witchcraft with the aim of predicting the future and to exercise an influence on the eventual outcome of events still to happen. This is forbidden in Exodus 22:17[18] and Deuteronomy 18:10-12 and is regarded as an abomination to God, punishable with even the death penalty. In 1 Samuel 28 an incident is recorded in which Saul consulted a medium at Endor, an incident portrayed in overtly negative colours as yet another episode in the life of Saul that led to his demise as the first king of Israel (cf. also 2 Chr 33:6, about King Manasseh). Sorcery inevitably involves foreign gods and religious practices and therefore cannot be tolerated as it jeopardises the exclusive worship of YHWH alone (Deut 18:12; 2 Kgs 9:22). Kessler has shown that sorcery does not have only a religious dimension but also a social dimension in that it was often directed to harm other people with the goal of personal gain.[20] What makes this transgression even worse is the observation by Weyde that prophetic speeches against sorcery are mostly aimed at foreign people while in the Malachi text it seems to be the people of the Lord practicing sorcery.[21]

Adultery is explicitly forbidden in the Decalogue (Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18). Adultery was seen as a man having sexual intercourse with a married woman. This was also a transgression punishable with the death penalty (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22) and regarded as one of the capital crimes in Israel. In Genesis 20:9 adultery is referred to as 'a great sin' (חֲטָאָה גְדֹלָה). Elsewhere in the Old Testament adultery is mentioned alongside murder (Ezek 16:38; 23:37; Job 24:14-15) indicating the seriousness of this transgression. That adultery is mentioned here brings to mind the high regard the prophet has on marriage as is seen from the previous part in 2:10-16. Unstable and disrupted family relationships because of adultery are seen as a threat in ancient societies[22] and therefore these strong prohibitions are quite understandable.

To swear falsely is the third transgression mentioned and the one also found forbidden in the Decalogue (Exod 20:16; Deut 5:20). The prohibition on perjury is also found elsewhere in the Torah (Lev 5:22,24; 19:12) as well as in the prophetic literature (Jer 5:2; 7:9; Zech 5:4). To swear falsely has implications for an individual both in terms of the relationship with YHWH as well as one's neighbour. To swear an oath was often in the name of YHWH (Lev 19:12; Num 30:3[2]; Deut 10:20). To swear falsely was thus nothing more than a violation of the name of YHWH. At the same time it also violates the relationship between human beings by betraying the basic trust between them. Perjury occurs in a context where truth is expected, but where lies are told thereby disrupting human relationships.

Admonitions from the wisdom literature echo the same sentiments. Proverbs 19:5; 24:28 and 30:8 speak out against perjury so that is seems that the prophet is not only informed by convictions stated in the Torah but also by wisdom traditions.

To defraud labourers from their wages can also be traced back to Deuteronomy (15:18; 24:14). From Deuteronomy 24:14-15 it seems that to defraud a hireling from his wages has the implication of not paying him on the day that he earns his money.[23] To oppress the widow and the orphan (more precisely a fatherless child) likewise expresses a concern for the *personae*

[20] Kessler, *Maleachi*, 242.

[21] Weyde, *Prophecy*, 309.

[22] D.E. Garland, 'A Biblical View of Divorce', *RevExp* 84 (1987), 419-432; E. Lipinski, 'Marriage and Divorce in the Judaism of the Persian Period', *TrEu* 4 (1991), 63-71; G.P. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: A Study of Biblical Law and Ethics governing marriage developed from the perspective of Malachi* (VT.S, 52), Leiden 1994; R. Kessler, 'Die interkulturellen Ehen im pererzeitlichen Juda', in: A. Herrmann-Pfandt (ed.), *Moderne Religionsgeschichte im Gespräch. Interreligiös – Interkulturell – Interdisziplinär*, Fs. Ch. Elsas, Berlin 2010, 276-294.

[23] Kessler, *Maleachi*, 243.

miserae in the community; they are often mentioned together with the alien. Widows and orphans were particularly vulnerable in society. With the loss of a husband and father a widow and fatherless child were deprived of the care they were entitled to and left unprotected in an all too often harsh society. The social weak and vulnerable members of the community may not be exploited. To take care for the orphan and the widow is a concern in the Torah (Exod 22:21-23; Deut 24:17-22; 26:12-13; 27:19) as well as in the prophetic literature (Isa 1:17; 10:2; Jer 7:6; Mic 2:9; Zech 7:10). Naomi and her two daughters-in-law are perhaps the most well-known widows in the Old Testament. Their vulnerable situation is described in especially Ruth 1-2. Quite telling Ruth is spoken of as the 'woman/wife of the dead' in Ruth 4:5,10. Social injustices in society are unmasked by the God of justice and revealed to the very people who had questioned his justice.

In the Book of the Twelve the גֵּר 'alien' occurs only here and in Zechariah 7:10. In Malachi 3:5 the plight of the alien in society is distinguished from that of the widow and the orphan by a separate verb, although the alien is often mentioned together with the orphans and widows (Deut 27:19). The alien may not be 'bent', 'turned away' or 'thrust aside' or 'deprived'. The alien is object of YHWH's care and consideration and the people should do likewise. Moreover, the people should remember that they themselves were once aliens in the land of Egypt and therefore be kind to the aliens now that the people have their own land (Exod 22:20-21; Deut 10:18-19). It is remarkable that the alien is mentioned here when one takes the previous part into account where marriages with foreign women are denounced.

Over and above the references from the Torah exhorting the people not to oppress the widows and the orphans and not to deprive the aliens, admonitions coming from the wisdom literature in this regard are also worth mentioning. According to Proverbs 14:31 'those who oppresses the poor insult their Maker'.

It is debatable whether the phrase 'and do not fear me' should be interpreted as yet another transgression mentioned or serves as a summary or ultimate conclusion of the previous list of transgressions. The latter possibility seems the more probable option. The transgressions against fellow human beings are brought into the realm of the people's relationship with YHWH himself. To fear YHWH does not only mean to honour YHWH and to serve him in the right way, it also means to treat a fellow human being in the right way. To fear YHWH is not an unfamiliar concept in the book (Mal 1:14; 2:5; 3:16,20) showing that the term includes both the relationship with God and human beings alike. To fear YHWH is a phrase at home in Leviticus (Lev 19:14) but is also found in Proverbs (Prov 23:17) reflecting both cultic and wisdom influence.

The text makes it clear that YHWH will come near to his people to exercise justice. YHWH's justice consists of revealing the injustices in society. Ultimately, justice is something done by the people. When it happens that sorcerers are consulted, where adultery is committed, where people tell lies, where labourers are not paid a decent wage, where the vulnerable ones in society are oppressed and the aliens are deprived of justice, all of these amount to acts performed by human beings who happen to be God's people. God's justice means that he denounces the injustices of people who ought to put justice in practice.

When questions are asked about the God of justice, questions are asked about justice in society. The surprising answer given in Malachi is that justice is something to be done by members of the society themselves. It is people who should not practice sorcery, who should not commit adultery, who are expected to tell the truth, who pay decent wages to labourers, who do not oppress the vulnerable, who care for the foreigner in their midst and by performing

these acts show that they actually have reverence for the name of YHWH in their behaviour towards people.

The God of justice is absent and inactive where his people are doing injustice. God's justice is seen where his people are doing justice in society. Because God is concerned about justice in society he will come to judge his people, not in order to destroy but to restore justice in and by the people who asked for the God of justice. The passage concludes in a significant way. The God of justice remains the God of justice—he did not change in this regard as the people suggested. But neither did the people of God change—they remain the descendants of Jacob who do not obey the commandments of the Lord.

CONCLUSION

The question asked by the people of God in Malachi's time is the kind of question modern day believers ask anew. Where is the God of justice when Christians are executed and the event is broadcasted on YouTube for the world to see? Many believers ask the same question within the smaller circle of their own life experiences.

The answer the prophet gave long ago was a surprising one. Justice has both a religious and a social dimension. The (absent) God of justice becomes present in the acts of justice his people do. The surprising answer Malachi gives us is that the justice of God is seen in and through the just actions of his people. The God of justice is also seen when he comes to judge his very own people when they are doing injustice in society. It is by listening to and then hearing the Word of God that believing communities of all ages discover it anew.

PART 3:

MEETING ONE GOD IN THE PSALMS

WHO HAS LISTENED TO THE TEXT?

The Impact of Eric Peels' Reading of Psalm 16:3 in Recent Literature

Gunnar Begerau

INTRODUCTION

I have experienced Eric Peels, my former supervisor, as an Old Testament scholar who has a broad horizon. Certainly, as every Professor of the Old Testament, he has to focus on various themes in his teaching and research tasks. Nevertheless, Peels has permanently kept track of the big developments, while at the same time having a grandstand view on particular issues in the fast plains of the Old Testament wilderness with myriads of people trying to read, understand, discuss and, hopefully, also write on it. With regard to Peels one could see the insightful article about Jesus and the Hebrew Canon,[1] for example, or the well balanced book about the character of God.[2] Additionally, Peels has published various contributions to the Book of Jeremiah and numerous articles about the Psalms.[3] Hence, it is not surprising that Peels has come across with an exegetical question about Psalm 16.

PEELS' LOOK ON PSALM 16:3

Peels makes a fresh investigation on the translation and understanding of Psalm 16:3.[4] Although the meaning of the Masoretic text seems to be evident, this verse is difficult to translate: 'To the holy ones, they who are in the land, and the mighty ones, all my delight is in them' (לִקְדוֹשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־בָּאָרֶץ הֵמָּה וְאַדִּירֵי כָּל־חֶפְצִי־בָם).[5]

According to Peels, the 'holy ones' have been interpreted as 'saints' (fellow believers) for a long time. In many recent studies, however, one is 'confronted with the view that the "saints" mentioned in Psalm 16:3 are no human beings, but gods'.[6] This problem is not easy to solve. The answer has to keep various aspects in mind: literary context in Psalm 16:2-4, syntax of theses verses, text-critical issues, and also the semantical range of words within the Old Testament (and extra biblical context). Finally, the question remains 'holy people or holy gods'.[7]

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[1] H.G.L. Peels, '"The Blood from Abel to Zacharias" (Matthew 23,35; Luke 11,50f.) and the Canon of the Old Testament', *ZAW* 113/4 (2001), 583-601.

[2] H.G.L. Peels, *Wie is als Gij? Schaduwkanten van het oudtestamentische Godsbeeld*, Zoetermeer [2]2007 (ET: *Shadow Sides. God in the Old Testament*, Carlisle 2003).

[3] See the bibliography of Peels in this *Festschrift*.

[4] 'Sanctorum Communio vel Idolorum Repudiatio? A Reconsideration of Psalm 16,3', *ZAW* 112 (2000), 239-251; cf. also the Dutch version (only with minor adjustments) 'Gemeenschap der heiligen in Psalm 16:3?' in: J.W. Maris, H.G.L. Peels (eds), *Om de kerk*, Fs. W. van 't Spijker, Leiden 1997, 244-256.

[5] Translation mine.

[6] Peels, 'Sanctorum Communio', 241.

[7] Peels, 'Sanctorum Communio', 241.

Even though there has been several conjectural readings 'in order to make the text more readable', Peels opts for the view that, 'in general, a conjectural reading can only be applied, when—with an honest exegetic conscience—no sensible meaning can be derived from the Masoretic text which could be traced'.[8] Based on the Masoretic text Peels wants to show that 'the interpretation of the "saints" as idols has got unmistakably stronger arguments in favour than the classic explanation which identifies the saints with fellow-believers, especially when in exegetic reasoning both the structural ordering of the psalm and the conceptual coherence of the confession in vv. 2-4 are taken into account, which so far has been done insufficiently in exegetic research'.[9]

Unfortunately, Peels has not given a straight translation of verses 2-4 but at least pieces can be found that are spread throughout the article. Hence, Peels highlights and explains the problems of the classic interpretation of Psalm 16, especially verses 2-4 according to the Masoretic text:

2 אָמַרְתְּ לַיהוָה אֲדֹנָי אָתָּה
טוֹבָתִי בַּל־עָלֶיךָ׃
3 לִקְדוֹשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־בָּאָרֶץ הֵמָּה
וְאַדִּירֵי כָּל־חֶפְצִי־בָם
4 יִרְבּוּ עַצְּבוֹתָם אַחֵר מָהָרוּ
בַּל־אַסִּיךְ נִסְכֵּיהֶם מִדָּם
וּבַל־אֶשָּׂא אֶת־שְׁמוֹתָם עַל־שְׂפָתָי׃

Verse 2 unfolds an expression of faith in the Lord: 'I say to YHWH, my Lord, I have no goodness beyond you'. The person at prayer is hiding in the presence of his mighty God (v. 1). He confesses his faith in his great Saviour. Therefore, verse 2 contains the core of the poet's words. From here, the psalm opens up like a flower. Peels doesn't translate אָמַרְתְּ as 'you say' (2nd person sg. fem., referring to the soul) but as 'I say' (1st person sg.). He interprets it as *scriptio defectiva* (without the yod at the end). Verse 2 is like a summary at the beginning of the psalm. The poet announces that his 'God himself is this King, from whom he receives all good things'.[10] But the confession of the poet goes a step further. While God is addressed directly in verse 2 ('you'), the so called 'saints' (לקדושים) are addressed indirectly (המה,'they'). Peels stresses the point: 'He does not speak *with*, but about *them*'.[11] Theses 'saints' are not fellow believers 'in the land' or 'on earth' (בארץ). Rather, they are deities that are honoured in local sanctuaries on 'earth'. The designation as 'mighty ones' (ואדירי) in the second part of verse 3 highlights the attributes of these deities. Thus, they are called 'favourite idols', in translation: 'The mighty ones, of whom people say: all my delight is in them'.[12] Verse 4 shows that the idolaters have to give up and pay in order to win the favour of the idols. The poet, however, denies this kind of worship. He confesses that God is his portion (v. 5).[13] In sum, 'the so-called saints of v. 3 are not fellow-believers, but indeed idols'.[14]

[8] Peels, 'Sanctorum Communio', 242.
[9] Peels, 'Sanctorum Communio', 242.
[10] Peels, 'Sanctorum Communio', 245.
[11] Peels, 'Sanctorum Communio', 245.
[12] Peels, 'Sanctorum Communio', 248.
[13] Peels, 'Sanctorum Communio', 248-249.
[14] Peels, 'Sanctorum Communio', 251.

Congratulating Peels with his jubilee I will now examine how his reading of Psalm 16:3 in the context of verses 2-4 has been recognized since 2000, the year Peels' article was published. I restrict myself to those commentaries, monographs and articles which have been published since 2001, because it takes some time before scholars may be expected to interact with the article of Peels.

THE TRANSLATION AND EXEGESIS OF PSALM 16:3 IN RECENT LITERATURE

Contributions without discussing the exegetical problems raised in Psalm 16:3

I want to give three examples of commentaries that do not talk about the difficulties of translation and interpretation in Psalm 16:3 at all. First, there is the new commentary in the Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (TOTC) series written by Tremper Longman III and published in 2014. When he comes to explaining Psalm 16:3 with special reference to the saints Longman only comments in the following way about the psalmist: 'He identifies with the holy people who are in the land, that is, those who have set themselves apart by virtue of their special relationship with God. He finds pleasure in his relationship with God and with God's people'.[15] Just after this sentence he moves to explain verse 4. Certainly, various commentaries have a different approach how to read and interpret the text. Accordingly, a commentary in the TOTC series does not necessarily claim to scrutinize meticulously each text critical and exegetical detail. This commentary of Longman replaces the older commentaries written by Derek Kidner from 1973. Interestingly, Kidner, contrary to Longman, had described these textual and interpretational complications.[16] Longman and David Firth as editors of the TOTC series explain the aim of the new commentary in the general preface as follows: It has to be 'an up-to-date reading of the text' and it has to deal with 'questions confronting the readers in the first half of the twenty-first century'.[17] Furthermore, the editors have changed the format 'to reflect a key emphasis from linguistics, which is that texts communicate in larger blocks rather than in shorter segments such as individual verses'.[18] Unfortunately, this 'update' has led to a much shortened explanation of Psalm 16:2-4.

The second commentary comes from Allen Ross and was published in 2012. Similar to Longman he states that the word 'saints' 'refers to the righteous Israelite, the worship community'. The following clarifications on what follows in verses 2-4 support the view that 'these are fellow members of the covenant'.[19] One may ask how the description and evaluation of the various understandings on Psalm 16:3 could have been accompanied by the author's intention: 'My purpose in writing this commentary was to focus on the chief aim of exegesis, the exposition of the text'.[20]

In the same way, but translating Psalm 16:3 differently, Jean-Luc Vesco in his 2006 commentary describes only his own view without comparing or discussing other views. He notes some text-critical differences[21] and just mentions concerning the saints in verse 3 that 'we

[15] T. Longmann III, *Psalms* (TOTC), Downers Grove 2014, 104.
[16] D. Kidner, *Psalms 1-72* (KCC), London 2008, 100-101.
[17] Longman, *Psalms*, 7.
[18] Longman, *Psalms*, 8.
[19] A.P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, Vol. 1: *1-41*, Grand Rapids 2011, 403.
[20] Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 11.
[21] J.-L. Vesco, *Le Psautier de David. Traduit et Commenté*, t. 1, Paris 2006, 182 n. 2.

have translated by "gods", and the "mighty ones" indicate the pagan idols'.[22] Then he refers in general to the Aramaic and Phoenician texts without giving any example. Only three passages of the Old Testament are given quickly to show the biblical relation. There is no vivid discussion going on. The reader is not able to understand why Vesco translates the saints as 'gods' and not as 'fellow believers'.[23]

Contributions referring to the exegetical problems in Psalm 16:3 without interacting with Peels' article

Gerald Wilson's commentary on Psalms 1 to 72 appeared in 2002, closely after Peels' article.[24] He describes the problems of translation and interpretation of Psalm 16:2-4 shortly but clearly.[25] When the choice is made for understanding אמרת in verse 2 as first-person voice ('I said to the Lord') then 'verses 2-4 are the words of the psalmist and express an almost palpable sense of confidence in the protective care of Yahweh'.[26] If the second-person masculine singular translation is preferred ('you said'), then verses 2-3 constitute an utterance from someone with a syncretistic faith. This utterance contrasts the confession of 'the psalmist's absolute and personal rejection of such a wishy-washy accommodation and stakes out his clear commitment to Yahweh alone'.[27] In this case the 'holy ones' refer to pagan Canaanite deities. Then the psalmist stands in sharp contrast with his addressee because he puts his trust in YHWH alone (vv. 1, 4-5).[28] But in the end, for Wilson this question is 'almost impossible to resolve'.[29] Wilson has given a balanced view of the ongoing discussion, while he seems to tend to the latter interpretation referring to the pagan deities. This interpretation is mainly in accord with that of Peels. Wilson, however, does not support an emendation of the Hebrew text nor does he need references to any semantic range in other ancient Near Eastern languages. Probably, Wilson was not able to consider the article of Peels from 2000 because his exposition on Psalm 16 then had already been written.

In the Word Biblical Commentary (WBC) series the commentary of Peter Craigie from 1983 has received an update in 2004. Therefore, it seems appropriate to have a look on the 1983 commentary of Craigie first. Similarly to Wilson, Craigie gives preference to maintain the consonantal Hebrew text in the beginning of verse 2. Hence, this second person 'brings out clearly the contrast between the psalmist's view (vv. 1, 4b-11) and that of the person with whom he is in dialogue (vv. 2-4a)'.[30] But there are two more corresponding aspects. First, like Wilson, Craigie has recognized that this passage is very problematic in translation and interpretation. Second, even Craigie favours the view that there is a syncretistic negative speaking on the one hand and the psalmist's positive confession on the other. Finally, 'the psalmist is able to move on to his own affirmation of integrity and confidence'. Intriguingly, as stated above, Craigie's

[22] Vesco, *Le Psautier de David*, 183: 'nous avons traduit par "dieux", et les "puissants" désignent les divinité païennes'.
[23] Likewise R.J. Clifford, *Psalms 1-72* (AOTC), Nashville 2002, 96. Generally, in this commentary only a few works are cited, see pp. 337-338. Peels' study has not been included.
[24] G.H. Wilson, *Psalms*, Vol. 1 (NIVAC), Grand Rapids 2002.
[25] Likewise K. Schaeffer, *Psalms* (Berit Olam), Collegeville 2001, 37-38. Because this commentary was published in 2001 (that is just too close to the publication of Peels' article in 2000) it has not been considered further in this study.
[26] Wilson, *Psalms*, 308.
[27] Wilson, *Psalms*, 308.
[28] Wilson, *Psalms*, 308-309.
[29] Wilson, *Psalms*, 307.
[30] P.C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (WBC), Waco 1983, 154-155.

commentary has been revised after many years by Marvin Tate (and by the help of others) so that the revised edition was published in 2004. In order to preserve the unique work of Craigie the editors decided to leave it unchanged. Instead they added 'an extensive supplement at the end of Craigie's commentary'.[31] *De facto* up to page 366 the old commentary is just the same as the revised one. According to the preface this supplement includes also 'an updated bibliography for each of Pss 1-50'.[32] Turning to this section it appears that five articles are added for the bibliography of Psalm 16.[33] Four contributions are from the eighties. There is only one recent article, namely of Raymond Tournay, dating from 2001.[34] Unfortunately, however, Peels' article from 2000 is not listed, although the added bibliography on each of the single psalms (1-50) shows that several articles even from 2002 and 2003 have been included. Peels' article would have helped to support the view of Craigie on Psalm 16:2-4.

One very recent commentary has been published in the New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT) series. In their work from 2014 the three scholars Nancy DeClaisé-Walford, Rolf Jacobson and Beth LaNeel Tanner have also seen the difficulties in interpreting verses 3-4. They speak against the view of Richard Clifford and Klaus Seybold[35] identifying the holy ones 'as heavenly beings who rebel against the Lord's council'.[36] Instead they vote for a 'positive connotation of those in good favor with the Lord'.[37]

Also Geoffrey Grogan in his 2008 commentary compares both opinions generally. The sources for his overview are various commentaries. Finally, he opts for the majority view that the 'holy ones' have to be read as 'pagan deities' because this 'has the merit of following the Hebrew the more closely'.[38]

These recent commentators six, eight or fourteen years after the appearance of Peels' article thus have not yet used this short but illuminating study. To be fair, one does not know the reasons.

Contributions that have reconsidered Peels' view on Psalm 16:3

There are also commentaries and articles on Psalm 16 that are aware of Peels' article. In case they mention his article it is interesting to investigate their use of it.[39]

One of these is John Goldingay in his recent commentary on the psalms.[40] Goldingay states that verse 3 has to be read in accordance with the 'I have said' (אמרת) of verse 2. He continues with a short sentence accompanied by a footnote referring to the article of Peels: 'NIVI mg [NIV, Inclusive Language Edition *margin*, GB] assumes that the holy people/leaders are the devotees of these other gods [footnote], but there are no other occurrences of "holy people" or "leaders" with that meaning.'[41] By putting a footnote with reference to Peels' article in its totality, the reader gets the following impression: if I confer Peels' article with the information given in the

[31] M. Tate, P.C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (WBC), 2nd Ed., Waco 2004, 11-12.
[32] Tate, Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 12.
[33] Tate, Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 477.
[34] R.J. Tournay, 'À Propos du Psaume 16, 1-4', *RB* 108 (2001), 21-25.
[35] Clifford, *Psalms 1-72*, 97; K. Seybold, *Die Psalmen* (HAT), Tübingen 1996, 71.
[36] N.L. Declaissé, R.A. Jacobson *et al.*, *The Book of Psalms* (NICOT), Grand Rapids 2014, 179.
[37] Declaissé, Jacobson, *Psalms*, 179.
[38] G.W. Grogan, *Psalms* (THOTC), Grand Rapids, 62.
[39] See also the contribution of Wido van Peursen to this *Festschrift*: 'Patterns and Pleasure: Participants in Psalm 16'.
[40] J. Goldingay, *Psalms*, Vol. 1: *Psalms 1-41* (BCOTWP), Grand Rapids 2006, 229.
[41] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 229. Afterwards Goldingay argues for the 'holy ones' as the group 'with whom the suppliant identifies'.

main text, Peels' understanding apparently is 'that the holy people/leaders are the devotees of these other gods'. This, however, is not an adequate perception of Peels' main idea. The summary at the end of Peels' article rather states that the exegesis 'leads to a reaffirmation of the newly gained insight that the so-called saints of v. 3 are not fellow-believers, but indeed idols'.[42]

Probably, Kathrin Liess has written the most extensive monograph on Psalm 16.[43] Its main focus is on the significance of life and death in the individual psalms based on a thorough exegetical investigation of Psalm 16. This includes also a detailed analysis of verses 2-4. Liess is aware of the large number of exegetes that have struggled with the text of these verses and their translation. Consequently, Liess also mentions Peels' article ('Sanctorum Communio').[44] She recognizes the important critical task, that the interpretation of קדושים and אדירים serves as a significant starting point not only for the question how to deal with the text-critical and grammatical evaluation but also for understanding the content and meaning of theses verses.[45] She gives an overview of recent research concerning the translation and interpretation of the 'holy ones' and the 'mighty ones' as 'gods/idols'. The footnote that lists the main contributions in the past decades also embraces the two articles of Peels ('Gemeenschap', 'Sanctorum Communio') at the end of the record. Liess values these contributions as 'detailed'.[46] Accordingly, Liess refers to Peels several times:[47]

a. Contrary to other exegetes who work with text critical emendations Peels does not need to change the Masoretic text in verse 3b.[48] Here, Peels' view is included among those who see verses 3-4 as a rejection of pagan deities. Liess, however, does not give any evaluation of this interpretation. Her interaction with Peels remains something like an appendix. The problem resulting from this approach comes to the fore when Liess explains why various scholars come to read the קדושים as 'gods'. Finally she rejects this option because of the signalled unconvincing argumentation by text critical changes and unpersuasive references to Ugaritic and Phoenician texts. According to Liess, there is no need for a text-critical intervention in v. 3 if one understands קדושים as "community of the pious".[49] However, Peels had insisted that his exegesis is based on the Masoretic text without any text critical changes, opting at the same time for 'the holy ones' as 'pagan deities'.[50]
b. More clearly Liess is engaged in Peels' view on interpreting the suffixes in verse 4a linked to verse 3. She explains these suffixes but does not refute Peels' arguments.[51] According to Peels, the masculine 'manifold' (ירבו) does not refer directly to the female 'afflictions' (עצבותם), but 'forms the antecedent for the following appositional sentence … and has to be translated as "manifold are the afflictions of those who …"'.[52]
c. Peels is mentioned among others in order to disapprove the assertion that interprets the 'land/earth' in verse 3a as 'underworld'.[53]
d. When Liess discusses the structuring of the text by Pierre Auffret she refers to Peels who has influenced Auffrets' contribution, for he has changed his structural analysis in a more recent article.[54]

In sum, Liess has perceived Peels' article several times. From time to time it serves to support various exegetical details or to show alternative views. Yet one wonders if she really has confronted herself with the balanced opinions of Peels who argues for the saints as 'gods/idols' based on the Masoretic text and within the Old Testament context. At least, one would have expected Liess to discuss Peels' argumentation when she addresses various approaches that explain the saints as 'gods'. Yet, in this unit there is not any reference to Peels.[55]

Beat Weber in his *Werkbuch* mentions Peels' view on the 'holy ones' in brackets: '(according to an alternative reading the "holy ones" has to be understood as idolaters on whom, falsely, the adoration of people is addressed, cf. H.G.L. Peels)',[56] but he does not explain this alternative view of Peels in detail.[57] Furthermore, it has not been included in the translation of the Hebrew text.[58] This creates the impression that the publishing year of his *Werkbuch* (2001) was still too close to the appearance of Peels' article in 2000. Possibly Weber was not able to include Peels' ideas in detail. The main problem, however, is that Weber's short notice gives an inadequate summary of Peels' alternative interpretation. Peels definitely votes for the saints as 'gods/idols'. Hence, in verse 3 the idolaters say about the idols that their delight is in them.[59]

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[42] Peels, 'Sanctorum Communio', 251. Cf. also pp. 244, 250 and especially the statement of Peels placed in front of his discussions on p. 242: 'According to us, the interpretation of the "saints" as idols has got unmistakenly stronger arguments in favour than the classic explanation which identifies the saints with fellow-believers, especially when in exegetic reasoning both the structural ordering of the psalm and the "conceptual coherence" of the confession in vv. 2-4 are taken into account, which so far has been done insufficiently in exegetic research.'

[43] K. Liess, *Der Weg des Lebens. Psalm 16 und das Lebens- und Todesverständnis der Individualpsalmen* (FAT, 2/5), Tübingen 2004.

[44] Liess, *Der Weg des Lebens*, 33 n. 6.

[45] Liess, *Der Weg des Lebens*, 115: 'Dabei bildet jeweils die Interpretation von קְדוֹשִׁים und אַדִּירִים einen wichtigen Ausgangspunkt für die Frage nicht nur nach der textkritischen und grammatischen Beurteilung, sondern auch nach der inhaltlichen Bedeutung dieser Verse.'

[46] Liess, *Der Weg des Lebens*, 115 n. 3, 'ausführlich'.

[47] Liess, *Der Weg des Lebens*, 140, refers to Peels' Dutch article when she writes about those who understand 'in/on the earth' as 'difference between YHWH in heaven and the deities on earth'. This reference is correct, but it is not clear why, especially in this case, the Dutch version is mentioned. Obviously, the same information is given in Peels' English article (cf. 'Sanctorum Communio', 246-247).

[48] Liess, *Der Weg des Lebens*, 116 n. 5.

[49] Liess, *Der Weg des Lebens*, 138.

[50] Peels, 'Communio Sanctorum', 242.

[51] Liess, *Der Weg des Lebens*, 140 n. 119.

[52] Peels, 'Communio Sanctorum', 248.

[53] Liess, *Der Weg des Lebens*, 142.

[54] Liess, *Der Weg des Lebens*, 75 n. 3. Cf. P. Auffret, 'C'est pourquoi se réjouit mon cœur – Etude structurelle du Psaume 16', *BZ* 40 (1996), 73-83 ; P. Auffret, '"Mon Seigneur c'est toi". Etude structurelle zu Psaume 16', *OTE* 15 (2002), 310-319. See also Liess, *Der Weg des Lebens*, 47-48 n. 94. Auffret is more interested in Peels' view on the structure of Ps 16:2-4 than in his translation and interpretation of the single v. 3.

[55] Liess, *Der Weg des Lebens*, 130-136.

[56] B. Weber, *Werkbuch Psalmen I. Die Psalmen 1-72*, Stuttgart 2001, 97: '(nach einer alternativen Deutung sind mit den "Heiligen" Götzendiener gemeint, auf die sich—fälschlicherweise—das Wohlgefallen der Leute richtet, vgl. H.G.L. Peels).'

[57] Cf. B. Weber, 'Notizen zu Form, Pragmatik und Strukturen von Psalm 16', *BN* NF 125 (2005), 27, where he states shortly that he follows Liess' view 'dass mit den in 3 genannten personalen Größen "JHWH-Fromme" (und nicht Fremdgötter) bezeichnet sind'.

[58] Weber, *Werkbuch I*, 96.

[59] Cf. Peels, 'Sanctorum Communio', 242, 247.

In her monograph about the Christians as 'saints' in the Pauline letters Maren Bohlen also takes into account the highly controversial translation of Psalm 16:3.[60] Bohlen states that according to recent research the original meaning of the קדושים is 'gods' and not 'saints'. Interestingly, in a footnote she cites only two scholars for this view. First of all Peels' summarizing statement is quoted: 'According to us, the interpretation of the "saints" as idols has got unmistakenly stronger arguments in favour than the classic explanation which identifies the saints with fellow-believers.' The only other scholar mentioned is Joseph Coppens who comes to the same result as Peels.[61] These two references from 1963 and 2001 show, that the question has been discussed for several decades culminating in the results offered by Peels. Maybe Bohlen didn't have the space to present nor to evaluate the arguments of Peels, because her study is broad in scope ranging from the New into the Old Testament. So one could only expect a quick look at Psalm 16:3. Then, Peels' article obviously has served as a profound and balanced discussion and was able to function as a representative conclusion for the current research.

CONCLUSIONS

Who has listened to the text of Psalm 16? Furthermore, who has listened to Peels' article?

Firstly, there are recent commentaries that do not discuss the problem raised in Psalm 16:3. They explain their view quickly without any discourse, evaluation or concluding remarks. Especially the very recent commentaries could have been expected to interact with Peels' article from 2000.

Secondly, if Old Testament scholars are aware of the problems of translation and interpretation in Psalm 16:3 they might describe the discussion that was going on in the past decades. One would expect that an exegete of Psalm 16 is able to check if an acknowledged journal such as *ZAW* referred to this passage in the past few years.

Thirdly, some scholars would lament that it is not possible to detect every small article in the whole world of Old Testament research. Definitely, there are a vast number of academic studies flooding libraries all over the world. The article of Peels about Psalm 16:3, however, can easily be found by using ATLA (ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials).

Peels offers a reading of the Masoretic text that highlights the challenge of the Old Testament believers who trust in God alone and not in any other deity. Although the reading and understanding of Psalm 16:2-4 remains a challenge, Peels can be credited with having offered a thorough interpretation of these verses. His explanations are based on the Masoretic text and his semantical and exegetical investigations rely mainly on passages within the Old Testament. Finally, Peels' argumentations seem to fit as a reasonable part of the structure of Psalm 16 as a whole.

The person at prayer in Psalm 16 clings to the one and only God. This poet has the deep conviction that his confession to YHWH stands in stark contrast to the worship of the idols. The worship of the idolaters appear not as an alternative approach for dealing with daily needs.

[60] M. Bohlen, *Sanctorum Communio. Die Christen als Heilige bei Paulus* (BZNW, 183), Göttingen 2011, 40-41: 'Die Frage, ob es sich bei diesen Heiligen um himmlische Wesen im Sinne von anderen Göttern oder um Menschen handelt, wird in der Forschung kontrovers diskutiert.'

[61] Bohlen, *Die Christen als Heilige bei Paulus*, 40; cf. J. Coppens, 'Les Saint dans le Psautier', *ETL* 39 (1963), 491: 'Vu l'incertitude de cette leçon, le plus simple et le plus obvie est de songer à des divinités qui sont "sur la terre" par opposition à Yahvé, dieu des cieux.'

Hence, this Psalm encourages its readership to expect everything from God alone. The poet himself rejects any other god and states instead: 'You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.' (Ps 16:2)

PATTERNS AND PLEASURE

Participants in Psalm 16

Wido van Peursen

INTRODUCTION

Eric Peels is well-known for his work on 'difficult' texts in the Bible. His list of publications includes titles such as *The Vengeance of God*[1] and *God and Violence in the Old Testament*.[2] This 'shadow side' of the Old Testament is, however, not the only focus of his work. He has also sought to draw attention to another issue, which is somewhat on the other side of the spectrum of the Old Testament's speaking about God and man: joy. His work on this topic centres on Psalm 16, which he calls 'a Psalm of joy *par excellence*'.[3]

Psalm 16 contains a number of text-critical and exegetical problems. Interpretations and translations differ considerably. The most striking differences occur in verse 3, where some translations speak of 'the saints' (RSV; cf. NIV), whereas others speak of 'gods' that the poet once worshiped (NBV, BGT). I will address some of the challenges below. However, my contribution starts from another observation that Peels made in various publications, namely that the expression of loyalty to God somehow calls into the picture another group of people, 'the enemies'.[4] The repudiation of idol worshippers that begins in Psalm 16:3 or 16:4 (depending on one's interpretation of v. 3), complements the expressions of confidence and joy elsewhere in the psalm. A clear dividing line is set between the psalmist and his (or rather God's) adversaries. In this psalm one finds the poet ('I'), God (addressed in the first line), the idol worshippers (v. 4), and perhaps also the saints (v. 3). Who else figures in this psalm? Who are the participants and how are they related?

The question 'Who is who in Psalm 16?' leads to the PNG-shifts that occur in this psalm; that is, the shifts in Person, Number and Gender. These shifts may indicate either that new participants enter the scene, or that the same participants are referred to differently (e.g. an alternation of speaking *to* God and speaking *about* God). In this contribution I will investigate what role computational tools can play in the identification of participants and their relations. I want to demonstrate that a strictly formal computational approach can contribute to a better understanding of this psalm and its participants.[5]

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[1] H.G.L. Peels, *The Vengeance of God: The Meaning of the Root* NQM *and the Function of the* NQM-*Texts in the Context of Divine Revelation in the Old Testament* (OTS, 31), Leiden 1995.

[2] H.G.L. Peels, *God en geweld in het Oude Testament* (ApSt, 47), Apeldoorn 2007.

[3] H.G.L. Peels, '*"Geen goed boven u"*. Vreugde in het hart van de oudtestamentische vroomheid', in: A. Baars, G.C. den Hertog (eds), *Verheugd in God. Theologische opstellen over Bijbel en vreugde, vroeger en nu* (ApSt, 61), Apeldoorn 2013, 14. For a more detailed exegesis of Psalm 16 see H.G.L. Peels, 'Sanctorum communio vel idolorum repudiatio? A Reconsideration of Psalm 16:3', *ZAW* 112 (2000), 239-251.

[4] See, e.g., Peels' discussion of Ps 139:21-22 in his '"I Hate them with Perfect Hatred" (Psalm 139:21–22)', *TynBul* 59 (2008), 35-51.

[5] Cf. the contribution of Eep Talstra to this *Festschrift*: 'Who is Who in Zechariah 1:1-6? Text Linguistics, Participant Tracking and the Reading of Biblical Texts'.

THE FEMALE VOICE SILENCED?

Psalm 16 starts with a cry to God. The poet addresses God, made explicit by the vocative אֵל ‘God’, followed by a causal clause which expresses a relationship between ‘I’ (subject of the verb) and ‘You’ (complement of the verb).

However, the set of participants changes in verse 2, where the perfect 2fs[6] אָמַרְתְּ and the complement ליהוה occur. Now YHWH is spoken about in the 3rd person (the direct speech that is introduced by אָמַרְתְּ will address him again in the 2nd person) and another ‘you’ is addressed. Most commentators correct the finite verb to a 1s form (אָמַרְתִּי). Interpretations that retain the 2fs verb assume an implied female subject: some opt for the poet’s נֶפֶשׁ ‘soul’ (Targum, KJV, SV) others for the people of Israel, conceived of as a woman (Hossfeld/Zenger,[7] N.H. Ridderbos[8]). Trebolle Barrera argues that Psalm 16 was composed by a woman,[9] in which case the feminine form is as an address to the poet. He argues that the first words of the psalm ‘are those of a bride or queen to her husband or Lord’.[10]

Others interpret the 2nd person verb form (sometimes revocalized to the masculine form אָמַרְתָּ) as a signal that marks the start of a dialogue. According to Tournay[11] the poet reports the words of the unfaithful Israelites, who address both YHWH and other gods (the *qedoshim*; see below) with expressions of loyalty. He sees a parallel in Psalm 11:1, where after an expression of trust in God, others are reproachfully quoted with a direct speech following a 2nd person verb form of אמר.[12]

Even if the text is emended to read a 1s verb, the other PNG-shift remains: In verse 1 God is addressed in the 2nd person (vocative), in v. 2a he is spoken about in the 3rd person. It has long been noticed that in the Psalms there is frequent alternation of speaking *to* God and speaking *about* him,[13] but little research has been done on the questions as to what patterns can be discerned, where the PNG-shifts happen, and what functions can be assigned to them. Sometimes a liturgical setting has been argued as a possible explanation, but this applies to only part of the many PNG-shifts in the Psalms.

Whether or not אָמַרְתְּ is emended to a 1s verb form, questions abound. If one keeps the 2fs form or changes the vocalization to read a 2ms, the question is: who is the ‘you’, and how does it relate to the 1s subject of the preceding clauses? If one reads a 1s verb, the question is: what is the function of this ‘self-quotation’ introduced by a form of אמר? In Biblical Hebrew poetry לֵאמֹר introducing direct speech is avoided and direct speech occurs often without any introduction. Nevertheless, there are quite a number of cases where another form of אמר

[6] Abbreviations in PNG designations: s = singular; p = plural; m = masculine; f = feminine.
[7] F.-L. Hossfeld, E. Zenger, *Die Psalmen*, Bd 1, (NEB.AT), Würzburg 1993, 110.
[8] N.H. Ridderbos, *Die Psalmen. Stilistische Verfahren und Aufbau mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Ps 1-41* (BZAW, 117), Berlin/New York 1972, 157 n. 1.
[9] J. Trebolle Barrera, ‘Salmos de mujeres’, *EstBib* 57 (1999), 665-682.
[10] Trebolle Barrera, ‘Salmos de mujeres’, 679.
[11] R. Tournay, ‘En marge d’une traduction des Psaumes’, *RB* 63 (1956), 497; similarly P.C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (WBC), Waco 1983, 156.
[12] Cf. R.A. Jacobson, *Many are Saying: The Function of Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Psalter* (LHB/OTS), New York/London 2004, 31-32.
[13] Cf. W.A.M. Beuken, ‘Psalm 16. The Path to Life’, *Bijdr.* 41 (1980), 378.

introduces direct speech. Why is אמר used in some cases and not in others?[14] If a 1s verb is read, there is even no change of speaker that would require such an introduction.[15]

A first step towards answering these questions is to look for parallels: Where does the verb אמר occur? Where does it occur with the complement ‘to God’? Where does it occur in the suffix-conjugation? Where is the speaker of the direct speech identical with the speaker of the lines preceding אמר? I did some queries in SHEBANQ, which provides access to the database of the Hebrew Bible of the Eep Talstra Centre for Bible and Computer (ETCBC).[16] I looked for the following patterns in the Book of Psalms: (a) Forms 1s of אמר (26 results).[17] (b) Clauses containing a 1s form of אמר and a complement containing the preposition ל (five results: Ps 42:10; 50:12; 75:5; 91:2; 140:7).[18] (c) Clauses containing a verb form 1s of אמר and a complement containing the words יהוה, אֵל or אֱלֹהִים (two results: Ps 91:2; 140:7).[19] (d) Forms of 1s אמר, followed by אַתָּה in the immediately following clause (three results: Ps 31:14; 140:7; 124:6).[20] In order to establish parallels to Tournay’s interpretation, I also looked for (e) forms of אמר in the 2nd person (in addition to the verse under discussion three results: Ps 11:1; 89:20; 90:3).[21]

This pattern search does not immediately decide whether or not the emendation of the verb form is correct. Nor does it give an answer to the question why the verb אמר occurs here. It helps, however, in that it shows parallels that have been unnoticed in previous research. Thus Kathrin Liess, in her argument for reading a 1s form of אמר correctly notices the parallels in Psalm 31:15; 140:7; 142:7 (the three results of query [d]),[22] but Psalm 91:2 (cf. query [c]) provides an interesting parallel as well. Regarding Tournay’s interpretation, query (e) shows that the parallel he adduces to support his claim is valid, but the only one in its kind: in the other two query results, in Psalm 89:20 and 90:3, it is God who speaks. Query (b) shows that the pattern in which the *Lamad* introduces a complement is very common, which argues against Mitchell Dahood’s interpretation of ליהוה as a vocative.[23]

AN ELUSIVE *LAMAD*

At the end of the direct speech, the psalm introduces two other participants in v. 3: לִקְדוֹשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־בָּאָרֶץ הֵמָּה ‘[to] holy ones, who are in the land’ and אַדִּירֵי כָּל־חֶפְצִי־בָם ‘the excellent, in whom is my delight’. There is no consensus about the interpretation of this verse. Disagreement concerns

[14] S.A. Meier, *Speaking of Speaking: Marking Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Bible* (VT.S, 46), Leiden 1992, 42-49.
[15] According to Jacobson, *Many are Saying*, 68-69, the self-quotation has an emphatic function.
[16] See https://shebanq.ancient-data.org/ All queries quoted here have a unique identifier. They can be retrieved by the links given in this article.
[17] https://shebanq.ancient-data.org/hebrew/query?version=4&id=1512.
[18] https://shebanq.ancient-data.org/hebrew/query?version=4&id=1513.
[19] https://shebanq.ancient-data.org/hebrew/query?version=4&id=1514.
[20] https://shebanq.ancient-data.org/hebrew/query?version=4&id=1515.
[21] https://shebanq.ancient-data.org/hebrew/query?version=4&id=1516; in this query I excluded imperatives, which would have yielded another four results: 4:5; 35:3; 66:3; 96:10.
[22] See also Jacobson, *Many are Saying*, 22-23, 67-68.
[23] M. Dahood, *Psalms*, Vol. 1, *1-50* (AncB), New York 1966, 89; similarly GKC, § 119*u*. Admittedly, a closer look at all the query results is needed to see whether there are other cases where the reinterpretation of the complement as a vocative is possible. Thus ליהוה in Ps 140:7 is also encoded in the ETCBC database as a complement, but interpreted by Dahood as a vocative.

both the function of the *Lamad* and the identity of the קדושים. Regarding the *Lamad*, three interpretations are possible:

(a) לקדושים is parallel to ליהוה and indicates a second complement of אָמַרְתְּ in v. 2: '(you/I) say to YHWH ... (and) to the *qedoshim* ...' (Tournay; Beuken[24]).
(b) לקדושים is still dependent of אָמַרְתְּ, but the function of the *Lamad* is different from the one in ליהוה. It does not mean 'to', but 'concerning'. Cf. NIV: 'I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord ..." I say of the holy people ...' (J. Ridderbos; Peels[25]).
(c) לקדושים opens a new section. It is an extraposition or 'casus pendens' introduced by *Lamad*. Cf. NRSV: 'As for the saints in the land ...' (Liess[26]).

The second suggestion is unlikely. It may be true that under some conditions the *Lamad* may bear the meaning 'concerning', but in combination with אמר this function is rare.[27] To my best knowledge, there are no examples where the verb אמר governs both a complement with *Lamad* indicating the addressee and a second complement with *Lamad* designating the topic. The choice between (a) and (c) is difficult. Without emendation of the following ואדירי כל־חפצי־בם (see below), option (a) implies that the description of the addressees covers the whole of v. 3, and that the direct speech starts only at v. 4. It is not evident, however, why the poet after his confession of trust to YHWH addresses the *qedoshim* with a repudiation of idol worship.[28] Without emendation, option (c) only makes sense if לקדושים is interpreted as referring to 'gods' rather than to 'holy people' and if אחר is taken as referring to 'another (god)'. Only in that case can one claim that the extraposition indicates the 'theme' or 'topic' of the clause that follows.[29] In this interpretation the construction is similar to that in

> לפעלות אדם בדבר שׂפתיך אני שׁמרתי ארחות פריץ With regard to the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have avoided the ways of the violent. (Ps 17:4 [RSV])[30]

In the ETCBC database ליהוה is encoded as a complement, apparently because it was taken as a parallel to לקדושים. However, when looking for other occurrences of this pattern, one can

[24] Beuken, 'Path to Life', 373; similarly M.J. Paul, G. van den Brink *et al.*, *Psalmen*, dl 1 (StBOT), Veenendaal 2010, 161. For Tournay see above.

[25] J. Ridderbos, *De Psalmen*, dl 1: *Psalm 1-40* (COT), Kampen 1955, 127; Peels, 'Sanctorum communio', 245.

[26] K. Liess, *Der Weg des Lebens. Psalm 16 und das Lebens- und Todesverständnis der Individualpsalmen* (FAT, 2/5), Tübingen 2004, 45-51. For the construction, see GKC, § 143*e*, and E. König, *Historisch-komparative Syntax der hebräischen Sprache* (Historisch-kritisches Lehrgebäude der hebräischen Sprache, 3), Leipzig 1897, § 271*a*, although these authors are hesitant to interpret Ps 16:3 in this manner.

[27] *HALOT*, 508*b*, gives only Gen 20:13. Similarly GKC, § 119*u*. BDB, 514*a*, gives more examples, including Deut 33:12,13 (etc.); Judg 9:54; Isa 41:7: Ps 3:3; 41:6. Other possible examples include Exod 14:3; Num 23:23; 26:65; Judg 15:3; Isa 29:16(bis); Eccl 2:2. (I thank Dr. Reinoud Oosting for these examples.) However, in light of the total number of 5275 occurrences of אמר in the Hebrew Bible, including many cases where the addressee is marked with לְ, this construction is still infrequent. Cf. F. Siebesma, 'Continuity and Discontinuity: A Study in Biblical Hebrew on the Variation of the Prepositions אֶל and לְ Occurring with the Verb אמר' (MA Thesis, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam 2014).

[28] Cf. Liess, *Der Weg des Lebens*, 51.

[29] Cf. J.P. Lettinga, *Grammatica van het Bijbels Hebreeuws*, 12th. rev. ed. by M.F.J. Baasten and W.Th. van Peursen, Leiden 2012, § 70.

[30] Cf. G. Kwakkel, *'According to My Righteousness': Upright Behaviour as Grounds for Deliverance in Psalms 7, 17, 18, 26 and 44* (OTS, 46), Leiden 2002, 73-74.

observe that there are a number of examples where אמר governs two complements, but they are almost always connected with *Waw*.[31] The only exception is

> הוי אמר לעץ הקיצה עורי לאבן דומם Alas for you who say to the wood, 'Wake up!' to silent stone, 'Rouse yourself!' (Hab 2:19)[32]

Concluding one can say that the evidence is scarce: although the formal parallelism between לקדושים and ליהוה is striking and points to interpretation (a), if cases of אמר + ל + addressee 1 + ו + ל + addressee 2 (with *Waw* before the second *Lamad*) are excluded, there is only one real parallel to the construction in Psalm 16:2-3.

HOLY PEOPLE OR HOLY GODS?

One of the most debated issues of Psalm 16 is the identification of the participants introduced by the *Lamad* in v. 3, the קדושים. There is a long tradition to interpret קדושים as 'holy people' (thus already LXX), but more and more an alternative interpretation wins ground, according to which this word refers to foreign gods. To my best knowledge, the latter interpretation was introduced by the pioneers of the historical-critical method (e.g. Wellhausen[33]); it was promoted by those who argued for a strong Canaanite influx in the Hebrew Bible (Dahood[34]), and has since then been accepted by many other biblical scholars (including Peels).[35]

Arguments for this interpretation include other biblical passages where gods are called קדושים (e.g. Ps 89:6–8; Job 5:1),[36] Canaanite parallels where *qdšym* refers to gods,[37] and the following relative clause אשר־בארץ המה 'who are in the land', which is redundant if it concerns 'holy people'.[38] However, the traditional interpretation ('holy people') has also been argued on the basis of parallel usages in the Bible (e.g. Ps 34:10), as well as the addition 'who are in the land'. There are other places where 'the poet observes the faithful followers of YHWH in the land and rejoices in them'[39] (cf. Ps 101:6), whereas the gods usually gather in a divine council, rather than on the earth (cf. Ps 89:6-8).[40]

Parallel to לקדושים אשר־בארץ המה stands ואדירי כל־חפצי־בם. Translations like 'they are the noble, in whom is all my delight' (NRSV) ignore the conjunction ו–, while translations such as

[31] Isa 30:10; 45:10; Jer 2:27; Hos 2:3;10:8.

[32] This is, together with Ps 16:3, the only result of https://shebanq.ancient-data.org/hebrew/query?version=4&id=1517.

[33] J. Wellhausen, *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten. Sechstes Heft* 1. *Prolegomena zur ältesten Geschichte des Islams*, 2. *Verschiedenes*, Berlin 1899, 168.

[34] Dahood, *Psalms*, Vol. 1, 87.

[35] See, e.g., R. Alter, *The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary*, New York/London 2007, 45 (Alter also mentions the possibility that the *qedoshim* are 'Canaanite [?] potentates'); A.A. Anderson, *Psalms*, Vol. 1: *Psalms 1-72* (NCBC), London 1972, 142; N.A. van Uchelen, *Psalmen*, dl 1 (POuT), Nijkerk 1971, 102. Cf. the contribution of Gunnar Begerau to this *Festschrift*: 'Who has Listened to the Text: The Impact of Eric Peels' Reading of Psalm 16:3 in Recent Literature'.

[36] Thus, e.g., Van Uchelen, *Psalmen*, dl 1, 102.

[37] Dahood, *Psalms*, Vol. 1, 87.

[38] Thus, e.g., Peels, 'Sanctorum Communio', 243.

[39] Paul *et al.*, *Psalmen*, dl 1, 130 n. 7.

[40] Thus, e.g., J. Ridderbos, *De Psalmen*, dl 1, 127. Some have argued that ארץ refers here to the netherworld; see K. Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in the Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (AOAT, 219), Kevelaer/Neukirchen-Vluyn 1986, 336, with further references.

'and to the excellent: all my delight is in them' (Geneva Bible) ignore the construct state of אדירי.[41] If the Masoretic text (which is not problematic syntactically) is respected, ואדירי כל־חפצי־בם is a parallel element to קדושים. This does not immediately solve the riddle of the identity of קדושים, because now the question becomes: who are the אדירי? In the Bible this word occasionally refers to gods (1 Sam 4:8), a usage that has a parallel in Phoenician, and hence supports the interpretation of קדושים as 'gods'.[42] But more often it refers to kings and rulers and it is also used for YHWH, although the parallelism with קדושים in Psalm 16:3 is unique.

If קדושים and אדירי are interpreted as references to gods, however, it is difficult to account for כל־חפצי־בם. That the poet has 'delight' in other gods contradicts the rest of the psalm. Some assign a past meaning to it ('who were all my desire'[43]), even leading to the suggestion that the poet was a Canaanite convert to Yahwism (see below). Others assume that the *-i* ending of חפצי is not the suffix pronoun 1s, but rather a *yod compaginis*.[44] All these 'solutions', however, seem somewhat forced. When the קדושים and אדירי are 'holy people', the poet's delight is easily understood.[45]

TRACING THE PARTICIPANTS FURTHER

The next challenge in v. 4 is the anaphora resolution of the suffixes 3mp of עַצְּבוֹתָם 'their sorrows', נִסְכֵּיהֶם 'their libations' and שְׁמוֹתָם 'their names'. The suffix of שמותם most likely refers to gods and hence the suffix of נסכיהם 'their libations' most probably does the same.[46]

When קדושים is interpreted as gods, the 3mp suffixes are easily interpreted as referring to them. If קדושים is interpreted as 'holy people', the only remaining candidate for being the antecedent of the suffixes is אַחֵר. Most likely אַחֵר stands for אֵל אַחֵר 'another god' (Exod 34:14).[47] The absolute use of אַחֵר for 'another (god)' is also found in Isa 42:8; 48:11.[48] Admittedly, having a 3mp antecedent (in this case: קדושים) results in a more lucid and unequivocal analysis, but the use of a singular antecedent (in this case: אַחֵר) to plural suffixes is not without parallel.[49]

According to Van Uchelen, the suffix of עצבותם has the same referent as that of נסכיהם and שמותם, which means that it refers to the gods' sorrows. The observation that vv. 3-4 are bound together by the 3mp plural pronouns and suffixes,[50] is thus reinforced by the suggestion that all

[41] Cf. Peels, 'Sanctorum Communio', 243.
[42] Spronk, *Beatic Afterlife*, 336.
[43] Thus Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 45; Van Uchelen, *Psalmen*, dl 1, 99.
[44] Cf. N.H. Ridderbos, *Die Psalmen*, 157 n. 5; Peels, 'Sanctorum communio', 248.
[45] Cf. Beuken, 'Path to Life', 377; J. Ridderbos, *De Psalmen*, dl 1, 127 (referring to Ps 119:63).
[46] J. Ridderbos, *De Psalmen*, dl 1, 128.
[47] Cf. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalmen 1-59* (BKAT), 5th rev. ed., Neukirchen-Vluyn 1978, 261; Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 46.
[48] Cf. Liess, *Der Weg des Lebens*, 54.
[49] Cf. Liess, *Der Weg des Lebens*, 59-60; J. Ridderbos, *De Psalmen*, dl 1, 128. For 'pluralities expressed by the collective singular' see JM, § 135; see also B.K. Waltke, M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Winona Lake 1990, § 7.2.1d, for 'non-conventional collectives'. For the agreement of a collective singular noun with a plural pronominal suffix, see JM, § 149*a*; Waltke, O'Connor, *Introduction*, § 16.4b. Since in Ps 16:4 'another (god)' means 'another god besides YHWH', rather than 'someone else besides the קדושים', the use of אַחֵר does not argue against the interpretation of קדושים as 'gods'; *pace* Beuken, 'Path to Life', 377.
[50] Cf. J.P. Fokkelman, *Major Poems of the Hebrew Bible at the Interface of Prosody and Structural Analysis* 3: *The Remaining 65 Psalms* (SSN, 43), Assen 2003, 23.

these 3mp forms have the same referent. The קדושים are grieved because the poet turns away from them to the true God of Israel.[51] However, the implication that אַחֵר 'another (god)' is YHWH seems unlikely in light of those parallels in which אַחֵר or אֵל אַחֵר refers to gods other than YHWH (cf. above). Therefore most interpreters take the suffix of עצבותם as the antecedent of the following asyndetic relative clause אַחֵר מהרו resulting in a translation such as 'Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows' (NRSV) (the semantics of מהר is also a debated issue but, although disagreeing about the best translation equivalent, most interpreters take אַחֵר as its object).[52] In this interpretation עצבותם refers to the sorrows of those who serve other gods.[53]

In v. 5, YHWH is still spoken about in the 3rd person, but in v. 5b there is again a 2nd person independent pronoun (אתה) referring to God. In vv. 7 and 8, YHWH is again referred to in the 3rd person, to be addressed again in the 2nd person in vv. 10-11.

There is another class of participants showing up in this part of the psalm that at first sight enters the scene unnoticed: כִלְיוֹתָי 'my reins' in v. 7; מִימִינִי '[at] my right hand', לִבִּי 'my heart', כְּבוֹדִי 'my glory'[54] and בְּשָׂרִי 'my flesh' in v. 9; and נַפְשִׁי 'my soul' in v. 10. In a systematic analysis of all participant references one cannot just equate all these participants with the 'I'. Even though they are closely related (and some translation do indeed have 'me' for 'my soul' in v. 9), the כליותי 'my reins' is the subject of a verb of which 'I' is the object. There is a similar alternation of closely related participants between 'YHWH/you' and פָּנֶיךָ 'your face' and בִּימִינְךָ '[in] your right hand' in v. 11.

Among these references to participants that are somehow related to the 'I' (expressed by the regens-rectum relationship of the suffix pronoun 1s), in v. 10b another participant occurs, namely חֲסִידְךָ 'your faithful one', parallel to נפשי 'my soul' in v. 10a. The parallelism as well as the context suggests that here חסידך should be taken as a self-designation of the speaker.[55]

WHO IS 'I'?

Whereas the 2nd and 3rd person references may be ambiguous as to their referent in the text, the 1st person unambiguously refers to the 'I' in the text. The 'I' plays a central role in the network of the psalm. In network analysis it is common to translate participants into nodes in a network and the syntactic relations as edges. Translating all the clauses into edges results in a network. If one composes such a network of Psalm 16, the 'I' is in the centre. It relates to YHWH (v. 2), the mighty ones (v. 3), the idols (v. 4) etc. It is the connecting link between participants that do not by themselves have a relation in this psalm (e.g. God and the idols). The 'I' is also the most persistent participant. Unlike other participants, who change their role—thus God is both addressed in the 2nd person and spoken about the 3rd person— the 'I' is present as 'I' in the whole psalm, with only two possible exceptions: אָמַרְתְּ in v. 2b, if this verb addresses the 'I' of v. 1-2a, and חסידך in v. 10, if this is a self-designation of the 'I' (see above).[56]

[51] Van Uchelen, *Psalmen*, dl 1, 102; cf. his translation on p. 99.
[52] For an asyndetic relative clause after a suffix, cf. JM, § 158*a*; GKC, § 155*f*. Both grammars give only the example of Ps 16:4.
[53] J. Ridderbos, *De Psalmen*, dl 1, 128, refers to Ps 32:10.
[54] Some manuscripts read כְבֵדִי 'my liver'; J. Ridderbos, *De Psalmen*, dl 1, 65, prefers this reading.
[55] Compare the deferential self-designations discussed in E.J. Revell, *The Designation of the Individual: Expressive Usage in Biblical Narrative* (CBET, 14), Kampen 1996, ch. 5.
[56] The network analysis supports the interpretation of חסידך as a self-designation if it appears that it takes a place in the network that is almost similar to the place of the 'I' node.

Can more be said about the 'I' than to call him (or, if one follows Trebolle Barrera: her) 'the poet'? Various proposals have been made to identify this 'I'. In the traditional view it is David, as the superscription לְדָוִד 'to David' suggests. M.J. Paul *et al.* still adhere to this view and have it play a decisive role in their philological and translational decisions. Thus because of the Davidic authorship they reject the view that 16:3-4 refers to idol worship in the poet's past.[57]

In the Christological appropriation of Psalm 16 in the New Testament (Acts 2:25-28; 13:35) the attribution to David was extended, so to speak, to Christ, for whom David prophetically spoke. This view is found, in various bearings, with the early Church Fathers, with Luther and Calvin, as well as in more recent commentators who adhere to a more conservative understanding of Scripture**.** Some are more unequivocal in attributing the whole psalm to Christ, by virtue of which it is in fact a dialogue between God the Father and Christ (Jerome).[58] Others make more sophisticated distinctions between David's voice in the first part of the psalm (vv. 1-4) and Christ's voice in the second part (in vv. 8-11).

In modern critical scholarship, it has been argued that the poet was a Canaanite convert to Yahwism, who declares that he will not bring libation offerings to other gods any more (Dahood[59]), or a Levitical priest, who was tempted to participate in the service for other gods (Kraus[60]), or a king (Eaton[61]). Much depends on the interpretation of vv. 3-4 (do they imply that the poet used to worship other gods?) and vv. 5-6 (that YHWH is one's 'portion' and 'inheritance', is reminiscent of the well-known statement that YHWH was the Levites' inheritance). An evaluation of these various suggestions would require a thorough analysis of the vocabulary of this psalm in comparison with, for example, the terminology that is used in relation to Levites, priests and kings, which is beyond the scope of this contribution.

CONCLUSION

In the introduction, I said that Psalm 16 is a complex psalm that raises many questions. After my investigation of the participants in Psalm 16, there is hardly any question that receives a decisive answer. Nevertheless, I hope that I have shown that a strictly formal and structural approach can contribute to a better understanding of this psalm.

In some cases, the formal analysis of participants and syntactic structures could help decide which interpretations are unlikely and which are more plausible (e.g. the question regarding the *Lamad* in the beginning of v. 3). Parallel patterns in other psalms showed more clearly the role of certain elements in the psalms (e.g. the use of אמר in v. 2) and revealed parallel passages that remained unnoticed (cf. above, on Ps 91:2 as a parallel to v. 2).

The formal analysis also suggested that one should try to make sense of the text without taking the easy step to textual emendations too quickly (cf. above on אמרת in v. 2 and ואדירי 'and the excellent …' in v. 3). This observation is not unique to a computational analysis, but working with interactive computer programs in the analysis of the biblical text helps in applying this principle consequently. If the programs for the full linguistic analysis do not detect any

[57] M.J. Paul *et al.*, *Psalmen*, dl 1, 130 n. 7.
[58] For details see Peels, 'Sanctorum Communio', 240-241.
[59] Dahood, *Psalms*, Vol. 1, 87.
[60] Kraus, *Psalmen 1-59*, 262.
[61] J.H. Eaton, *Psalms: Introduction and Commentary* (TBC), London 1967, 58-59; *Kingship and the Psalms* (SBT, 2/32), London 1976, 66-67.

irregularity, one should be most careful to consider the text irregular or corrupted on other grounds.

A strictly formal approach prohibits the exegete from considering expressions that are somehow related (e.g. the 'heart', 'glory', 'soul' and 'flesh' of the 'I') as identical. Here, too, working with computer programs helps to be aware that any identification of two or more references as referring to the same participant requires a careful argumentation.

Taking the participants in the psalm as nodes in a network showed that a divide emerges between God (and the 'holy ones'?) on the one hand, and the other gods and their worshippers on the other. In that respect, this psalm fits into the pattern that Eric Peels had found in other psalms. In between these two groups of participants stands the 'I', who in the network is related to both, but clearly states on whose side he is determined to stand. Facing the two groups, the poet shows the two attitudes that are also two poles in Eric Peels' work: disapproval of idol-worshippers and pleasure in God.

So I hope that in the end my formal analysis of syntactic structures and participants will be 'a little help' (Dan 11:34) for understanding this Psalm of Pleasure.

PART 4:

MEETING ONE GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

FOREVER SEATED ON THE DIVINE THRONE

The Function of Psalm 45:7-8 in the Argument of Hebrews 1

Rob van Houwelingen

INTRODUCTION

Texts in which Jesus is explicitly called God are relatively rare in the New Testament and in most cases their interpretation is controversial. That Jesus could be considered as equal to God already in the first century CE is according to many biblical scholars hardly compatible with the basic principles of Jewish monotheism. Other scholars are increasingly challenging this mainstream position. In any event, the Letter to the Hebrews, with its high Christology, presents a text where the exalted Son is unambiguously addressed with the vocative 'o God'. This New Testament passage, Hebrews 1:8-9, appears to be an Old Testament quotation, namely from Psalm 45. What could be the theological relationship between both texts? This *Festschrift* for my esteemed colleague Eric Peels provides an appropriate opportunity to explore the function of Psalm 45:7-8 in the argument of Hebrews 1.

This essay consists of three parts, the first and the last one being the main sections. Each part opens with my own translation of the respective verses from the Hebrew or Greek. Firstly, Psalm 45:7-8 in the Masoretic text will be discussed, as a song for the king of Israel on his divine throne on earth. Second, as an interlude, the differences in emphasis as found in the Septuagint version will be explained as pointers in a messianic direction. Third, it will be argued that Hebrews 1 deliberately quotes Psalm 45 according to the Septuagint version, in order to demonstrate that the exalted Son is seated as God on the divine throne in heaven.

1. PSALM 45: THE KING OF ISRAEL ON HIS DIVINE THRONE

Your throne, [upheld by] God, is forever and ever.
…
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of joy beyond your companions.

Psalm 45 is not addressed to God, but to the king, which is exceptional in the Psalter. It is called a 'song of loves' in the Hebrew title. The atmosphere of Psalm 45 is reminiscent of the Song of Songs. The psalm could have been used at the occasion of a particular royal wedding,[1] but the significance of Psalm 45 can also be more general: 'praised be the ideal king of Israel'.

[1] In this case, King Solomon is often considered to be the most obvious historical referent. Solomon had many foreign wives (1 Kgs 11:1-8; cf. Ps 45:13) and his throne was made of ivory (1 Kgs 10:18; 2 Chr 9:17; cf. Ps 45:9). See, besides the commentaries, H.W. Bateman IV, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13: The Impact of Early Jewish Exegesis on the Interpretation of a Significant New Testament Passage*, New York/Washington etc. 1997, 170-171.

The psalm is well structured and uses various unusual and beautiful expressions. At the beginning and at the end of the poem, the psalmist speaks about himself, carefully creating an *inclusio* (vv. 2 and 18). The main body of the text consists of two connected sections. In the first section (vv. 3-10), the anointed king is praised because of his majesty and righteousness; the second section (vv. 11-17) is addressed to the bride and has often been labelled as a wedding song for the king. J. Mulder formulates the connection between the two sections as follows: 'Both the king's justice and his wedding are means by which God's blessing achieves his goal: a permanent kingship in the subject's dynasty.'[2]

The quotation of Hebrews 1 has been taken from the first section of Psalm 45, where verses 7-8a focus specifically on the king's justice, demonstrating that God's blessing will secure the everlastingness of the kingship in Israel.[3]

John Calvin supposed a deeper meaning in this psalm, pointing to the love between Christ and the Church: 'under what is here said of Solomon as a type, the holy and divine union of Christ and his Church is described and set forth.'[4] According to Calvin, who identifies the character of v. 11 with that of v. 13, the passage about the coming of the daughter of Tyre 'contains a remarkable prophecy in reference to the future calling of the Gentiles.'[5] But one may ask: did the bride from abroad become a believer? Calvin seems to realize that a direct-messianic interpretation is problematic, since he later remarks: 'It is not necessary for us to examine every word minutely, in order to apply to the Church everything here said concerning the wife of Solomon.'[6]

As far as is known, Psalm 45 was initially (before Greek and Aramaic translations came into circulation) not interpreted as messianic in Judaism, and no other New Testament author has an explicit quotation from Psalm 45.[7]

Several arguments from the text of Psalm 45 may be listed in favour of the referent as a normal king:

a. The mention of the lovers and the wife of the king, together with the daughter from Tyre (vv. 11 and 13)
b. The description of the bride and her virgin companions (v. 15)
c. The promise of the sons who will take the place of the king's fathers (v. 17)

According to J. Ridderbos, Psalm 45 is a song for the occasion of the marriage between a king from Israel (or Judah) and a foreign princess.[8] Most contemporary exegetes support this view.

Both the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint have in verse 7 the word 'God' (אֱלֹהִים, ὁ θεός) after 'your throne'. Most translations render the passage as referring to the monarch as God, for

[2] J. Mulder, *Studies on Psalm 45* (diss. Nijmegen), Oss 1972, 28.
[3] Mulder, *Studies*, 28-29.
[4] J. Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, Vol. 2 (transl. J. Anderson), Grand Rapids 1949, 173.
[5] Calvin, *Psalms*, 188.
[6] Calvin, *Psalms*, 190.
[7] S. Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (diss. VU Amsterdam), Amsterdam 1961; G.J. Steyn, 'The *Vorlage* of Psalm 45:6-7 (44:7-8) in Hebrews 1:8-9', *HTS* 60 (2004), 1085-1103; S. Motyer, 'The Psalm Quotations of Hebrews 1: A Hermeneutic-Free Zone?', *TynBul* 50 (1999), 3-22. Unfortunately, in the Qumran Scrolls there is only one incomplete reference to Ps 45: *4Q171* contains a commentary on Ps 37, followed by the beginning of an interpretation of Ps 45. That *4Q252*, referring to Gen 49:10a, may also allude to Ps 45 cannot be proven.
[8] J. Ridderbos, *De Psalmen*, dl 2 (COT), Kampen 1958, 31-32. Ridderbos rejects what he labels the direct-messianic interpretation. Cf. J. Goldingay, *Psalms*, Vol. 2: *Psalms 42-89* (BCOTWP), Grand Rapids 2007, 54-55.

example: 'Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever' (NRSV); 'Your throne, o God, will last for ever and ever' (NIV). Elsewhere in Scripture, however, no Israelite king is ever directly addressed in this way.[9] He could be called the son of God (cf. 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7), but this is also true of Israel (Exod 4:22; Hos 11:1) and one cannot conclude that Israel is addressed with a divine title or is considered to have a divine nature. Unlike surrounding cultures, in Israel there was a clear demarcation between the divine and human spheres.[10]

According to the traditional opinion, 'gods' could stand for human persons with a high authority, especially judges, referring to Exodus 21:6; 22:7-8; Ps 82:1,6.[11] But these references are disputable. The texts from Exodus are about appearing before God in his sanctuary, or according to some interpreters, before the family gods, in order to make an official declaration.[12] Psalm 82 has the contrast gods/men ('you are gods, nevertheless you will die like mere men', v. 6), which implies that the gods are not men.[13] There is a growing scholarly consensus that Psalm 82 is using the motif of the 'assembly of the gods'. Even if in these texts reference is made to human beings, in each instance אלהים clearly refers to a plural and not to a singular. Elsewhere in Psalm 45 אלהים refers to God himself and not to the king (vv. 3 and 8). Thus, other translations have 'Your divine throne' (RSV) or 'Your throne is a throne of God' (NRSV, footnote).

After an extensive discussion of grammatical difficulties and possible solutions, Jacob Hoftijzer proposes an interpretation of כִּסְאֲךָ אֱלֹהִים as a noun phrase: 'your throne upheld by God' or, 'your divine throne'.[14] Besides, despite all syntactical complications, what Psalm 45 conveys is quite conceivable on a conceptual level. According to 1 Chr 29:23, King Solomon was sitting on the throne of YHWH; in 1 Chr 28:5, the king of Israel is described as chosen by God to sit on the throne of the kingdom of YHWH; according to 2 Chr 9:8, the queen of Sheba said to Solomon: 'God placed you on his throne as king for YHWH your God'. Moreover, Israelite kings were called the 'anointed of YHWH/God' (2 Sam 1:14,16; 23:1), indicating that God was the source of their royal authority or their throne. YHWH is the actual King of Israel. They were only representatives of the theocracy. The anointing motif is recalled in Psalm 45:8.[15]

[9] On the much debated interpretation of Isa 9:6, see G.A. Cole, *The God Who Became Human: A Biblical Theology of Incarnation*, Downers Grove 2013, 85-87. If Cole is right, 'mighty God' would be a so-called 'throne name'.
[10] Ps 45 would be an exceptional case, according to A.Y. Collins, J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature*, Grand Rapids 2008, 56.
[11] For this traditional view, see M.J. Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of* Theos *in Reference to Jesus*, Grand Rapids 1992, 190-202; G.H. Guthrie, 'Hebrews', in: G.K. Beale, D.A. Carson (eds), *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids 2007, 937.
[12] Cf. G. Kwakkel, *'According to My Righteousness': Upright Behaviour as Grounds for Deliverance in Psalms 7, 17, 18, 26, and 44* (OTS, 46), Leiden 2002, 165 n. 68.
[13] J.P. Lettinga, 'Psalm 82. De levende God en de stervende afgoden', in: *Almanak Fides Quadrat Intellectum*, Kampen 1988, 139-141. For the implications on the interpretation of John 10:34-38, where Ps 82:6 is quoted, see P.H.R. van Houwelingen, *Johannes. Het evangelie van het Woord* (CNT-3), Kampen 1997, revised edition, [4]2011, 226-229.
[14] J. Hoftijzer, 'Remarks on Psalm 45:7a', *ErIsr* 26 (1999), 82.
[15] Cf. Ps 89:28. It is also possible to take אלהים as an intensifier: 'your throne is mighty'. But אלהים with the intensifying function is not attested with a predicate anywhere else (Hoftijzer, 'Remarks', 81). Or one could take אלהים as an explanatory genitive: 'your throne is God's (throne)'—in that case, v. 7a corresponds with 7b: 'your royal sceptre is a sceptre of equity'. See J.P.M. van der Ploeg, *Psalmen*, dl 1 (BOT), Roermond 1971, 279; Mulder, *Studies*, 73-80. NEB translates: 'Your throne is like God's throne.'

The word 'throne' has of course to be taken in its metaphorical sense: the actual royal power, that is, the governing of the king or the royal dynasty (2 Sam 7:16). It is almost synonymous with 'kingdom' in the next line of the psalm. The sceptre is the emblem of the king's royal authority, so 'sceptre of righteousness' means that the reign of this king is based on justice.

English translations read verse 8 as follows: 'therefore God, your God, has anointed you.' Traditional Dutch translations, such as the SV and NBG51, have: 'therefore has, o God, your God anointed you.' This is also true for Hebrews 1. אלהים in verse 8 is interpreted in the same way as in verse 7, namely as a vocative, perhaps motivated by the desire to have another reference to Christ. Bruce comments on Hebrews 1: 'our author may well have understood "God" in the vocative twice.'[16] But the phrase 'God, your God' is in both the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint exactly the same as in Psalm 50[49]:7: 'I am God, your God' (cf. 'God, my God' in Pss 22, 43 and 63). Therefore, it is more likely that the king of Israel is not addressed here as God, but is being encouraged by the fact that YHWH *his* God did appoint and fill him with the power of his Spirit, as was demonstrated at his royal anointing.

In conclusion, Psalm 45 was originally addressed to a particular king from Israel (or Judah) and could be used at different later occasions. The monarch is praised as the one who has the right to sit on a God-given throne, as he rules with righteousness over the people of Israel. For the king of Israel, YHWH was 'your God' in a very special sense because of the promise that his dynasty would be everlasting. There is no reason, however, to assume that the king of Israel was believed to be God or equal to God.

2. THE SEPTUAGINT: MESSIANIC PERSPECTIVES

Your throne, o God, is forever and ever.
...
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of joy beyond your companions.

In the title of Psalm 44 LXX one finds the mysterious words: 'a song for the beloved' (ᾠδὴ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ). In the Hebrew text, יְדִידֹת is a feminine plural noun. The Greek of the Septuagint, however, refers to one particular person in the masculine singular. Is he King Solomon, whom God called Jedidiah, 'the beloved of YHWH' (2 Sam 12:25)? Or does this title in a subtle way indicate the beloved messianic king? A Christian would remember the designation of Jesus at his baptism as God's beloved Son (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22).

In verse 7 אלהים is translated by ὁ θεός, which has to be taken as a vocative: 'o God'. Indeed, the Septuagint often uses the articular nominative for the vocative (particularly in the psalms, when God is addressed; cf. Luke 18:11,13). In all ancient versions אלהים is interpreted in this sense, which is completely acceptable from a grammatical point of view.[17] That Jewish exegetes understood the text as an address to God is clear from the translation of Aquila and from the Targum.[18] Nevertheless, it is contextually improbable that this vocative refers to God, because

[16] F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Revised Edition (NICNT), Grand Rapids 1990, 60.
[17] Hoftijzer, 'Remarks', 78.
[18] S.H. Levey, *The Messiah: An Aramaic Interpretation: The Messianic Exegesis of the Targum*, Cincinnati etc. 1974, 110. Aquila has the vocative θεέ (Jerome, *Ep.* 65:13).

'you' in the preceding and the following verses refers clearly to the king. Does this vocative rather indicate the king as God?

A second occurrence of ὁ θεὸς can be found in verse 8b. The exact parallelism between this verse (διὰ τοῦτο ἔχρισέν σε ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεός σου) and verse 3c (διὰ τοῦτο εὐλόγησέν σε ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα), reflecting the Hebrew text, suggests that ὁ θεὸς in verse 8b has to be taken as a nominative, not as a vocative.[19] So, only in verse 7 is the king called 'God'. In the context of our psalm, this means that the monarch exercises God-like authority over Israel. The reign of YHWH is extended to the king of Israel.[20]

In other words, the attribution of deity in the psalm is figurative. The psalmist praises this particular monarch as the one who exercises God-*like* ruling authority over Israel and who is credited with judging behaviour in a manner similar to that of God.[21] The act of anointing is important in this regard, because it effects a fundamental change in the character and outlook of man (1 Sam 10:6; 16:13). For the psalmist, being chosen and anointed by YHWH is a necessary preliminary to the attainment of the ideal kingship.[22]

The Septuagint version of the psalm has some interesting features that differ from the Masoretic Text. Only the theologically relevant differences will be discussed here.[23] Twice, the vocative δυνατέ ('o mighty one') is used with reference to the king, but the designation as 'mighty' appears only once in the Hebrew text, namely in verse 4: גִּבּוֹר. Therefore, δυνατέ in verse 6 seems to be an addition of the Septuagint. This doubling stresses the superiority of the (expected) mighty king above others, because his position is closely related to the Almighty God.

In verse 5 the Hebrew phrase צְלַח רְכַב ('prosper and ride on') is translated by the imperative βασίλευε: 'reign, exercise kingship'. This verse also has θαυμαστῶς 'wonderfully, admirably', a word that is often used especially with regard to God or God's works. It is not certain whether the Septuagint used another *Vorlage* of the text, or is deliberately pointing in a messianic direction with all these features. In any case, it is fair to say that the perspective was widened and that the Septuagint opened up the possibility of a messianic interpretation.[24] It is one of the first written witnesses for this tradition, if not the very first.

A similar development seems to occur in the Targum tradition. In verse 3 the Targum adds: מלכא משיחא 'o King Messiah'; in verse 15 מלכא דעלמא 'King of the world'; in verse 16 מלך עלמין 'Eternal King'. The daughter in verse 11 is addressed as כנישתא דישראל 'o congregation of Israel', who has to attend with her ears to the words of the Torah. Levey remarks: 'The interweaving of the references to God, the Messiah, and Israel is skilful, if difficult to follow at times.'[25]

In Psalm 44 LXX, then, the distinctive position of the king of Israel (or Judah) is highlighted by translating אלהים with the vocative ὁ θεὸς. This means that the king is addressed as the one who exercises God-like ruling authority over Israel and will continue to do that forever. Some details in the translation give the impression that the ideal king will be exalted to a superhuman

[19] M.J. Harris, 'The Translation of *Elohim* in Psalm 45:7-8', *TynBul* 35 (1984), 89.
[20] Bateman, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics*, 200.
[21] Harris, 'The Translation of *Elohim*', 74-75.
[22] C.F. Whitley, 'Textual and Exegetical Observations on Ps 45,4-7', *ZAW* 98 (1986), 277-282.
[23] For an overview, see Guthrie, 'Hebrews', 938-939.
[24] Steyn, 'The *Vorlage*', 1089.
[25] Levey, *Messiah*, 112.

level, especially when combined with the possibility of a messianic interpretation of the psalm.[26]

3. THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS: THE SON AS GOD ON THE THRONE

But of the Son he says:
'Your throne, o God, is forever and ever.
...
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of joy beyond your companions.'

With a *catena* of texts from Scripture, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews substantiates his introduction. Previously God spoke to the fathers by his prophets, now he speaks to us through the Son. The Letter starts with this statement in the opening sentence (Heb 1:1-2). Next, there is a significant change with respect to the grammatical subject. While God is the acting, or rather the speaking person at the outset, in verses 3-4 the new subject is the Son.

The author looks back at the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. He is the exalted Son who, after his purification for sins, has seated himself at the right hand of God's heavenly majesty. This was an unexpected action, because traditionally only the king himself sat on the throne; servants were only next to it or around it. The seat on his right hand is the place of honour (Ps 45:10). Here someone, triumphantly and in a completely natural way, took a seat next to the Almighty, as his unique throne-mate. The Son has divine stature; that is the first point that the author of Hebrews wants to make.

Thus, the Son entered the other world, where the angels live. He is at home there. Yet he himself does not belong to the angels; he is far above them. They throw themselves reverently before him (v. 6), not as equals; they are ministering spirits (vv. 7 and 14), not fellow rulers.[27] By his superiority above the angels, the transcendence and divine identity of the Son is demonstrated; that is the second point that the author of Hebrews wants to make.[28]

The enthroned Son has inherited an excellent name (v. 4b). Richard Bauckham thinks of the Holy Name (as in Phil 2),[29] but in that case the comparative element—more venerable than the angels—would be lost. Most exegetes think of the name 'Son', because of the quotation of Psalm 2:7 that follows in the next verse: 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you.' Moreover, according to verse 6, God introduces his firstborn Son (πρωτότοκος, which echoes Psalm 89[88]:28). This explanation is strengthened by considering that angels are sometimes

[26] Even on a minimalist reading, the LXX translation of v. 8 could have given rise to messianic interpretations. See H. Ausloos, 'Psalm 45, Messianism and the Septuagint', in: M.E. Knibb (ed.), *The Septuagint and Messianism* (BETL, 195), Leuven 2006, 239-252.
[27] The reason that the angels are mentioned here is not the danger of angel worship. See A. Zwiep, 'Jezus en de engelen', in: *Jezus en het heil van Israëls God. Verkenningen in het Nieuwe Testament*, Zoetermeer 2003, 105-115.
[28] R. Bauckham, 'Monotheism and Christology in Hebrews 1', in: L.T. Stuckenbruck, W.E.S. North (eds), *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism*, London/New York 2004, 170-173.
[29] Bauckham, 'Monotheism', 175.

referred to as 'sons of God' in the Old Testament,[30] whereas the throne-mate of the Almighty bears the name 'the Son of God'. Indeed, he has inherited a more excellent name than the angels.

Hebrews 1 frames seven Old Testament quotations between two rhetorical questions. Just as in *4QFlorilegium*, the construction of a string of Old Testament passages with introductory formulas and the weaving together of conceptually similar texts serve to make a theological statement.[31] These are the seven quotations:

1. Psalm 2:7
2. 2 Samuel 7:14
3. Deuteronomy 32:43 LXX (cf. Ps 97[96]:7)[32]
4. Psalm 104[103]:4
5. Psalm 45[44]:7-8
6. Psalm 102[101]:26-28
7. Psalm 110[109]:1

Quotations 1 and 7 correspond to each other, because in both cases the rhetorical question is asked: 'to which angel did God ever say?' By this question, the author of Hebrews intentionally creates an *inclusio*. This does not mean, however, that the *catena* as a whole has a chiastic structure.[33] It is more obvious to look for a link with the argument, considering that the author underpins the two points that he wishes to make in the introduction with an anthology of scriptural quotations.[34] Quotations 1 and 2 substantiate the first point, while quotations 3 and 4 substantiate the second point. Thus, quotation 5 is the core text, because only there are both points mentioned: the divine throne on which the Son is seated and the elevation above his companions.[35] Quotations 6 and 7 add two clarifying aspects: the eternity of the Son, who was involved in creation and whose years will have no end, so that his kingship is permanent (in addition to quotation 2), and the invitation of God to sit at his right hand, so that he has rightfully taken the place of honour (in addition to quotation 1).

All these scriptural quotations are deliberately placed by the author on the lips of the speaking God. Only the few introductory words 'But to the Son [he says]' (v. 8) were needed to focus the meaning of these verses in the desired way.[36] And generally the quotations are taken from the Psalter. Carefully reading and listening, one perceives how God himself

[30] E.g. Gen 6:2,4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Dan 3:25. Cf. J. Doedens, *The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4* (diss. Kampen), Kampen 2013, who argues that 'sons of God' should be interpreted in a broader sense: divine beings.
[31] Bateman, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics*, 149-206.
[32] With the Greek word πάλιν, the next citation of the *catena* is connected to the foregoing: 'To mention another place in Scripture …' Cf. Matt 13:45,47; Rom 15:12; 1 Cor 12:21.
[33] Contra Bauckham, 'Monotheism', 175-177, who assumes that the middle quotation, quote 4, functions as core text.
[34] This corresponds with the structure of chapter 1, according to W.L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8* (WBC), Dallas 1991, 27; A. Vanhoye, *Situation du Christ: Epître aux Hébreux 1-2*, Paris 1969, 52.
[35] See also H.W. Bateman IV, 'Psalm 45:6-7 and its Christological Contributions to Hebrews', *TJ* 22NS (2001), 20.
[36] S.E. Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews*, Tübingen 2009, 163-165. The verbal form that has to be supplied in the Greek text is λέγει from v. 7a.

addresses his Son, as he uses the language of the psalms. So it is YHWH himself who entitles the enthroned Son as God![37]

With the core text, Psalm 45:7-8 in the Septuagint version, the author of Hebrews wants to demonstrate that this unique king on the divine throne is more than God-like. He understands the psalm as Christological. Thus, in the translation of the Septuagint, the Son is addressed in the vocative: ὁ θεὸς, o God. He rules in *heavenly* majesty and *perfect* righteousness. That the first line of the next quotation also has a vocative, κύριε, seems to be a striking similarity; the Son is both God and Lord.[38] H.W. Attridge is of the opinion that the author of Hebrews exploited the ambiguity of the psalm in this regard.[39] This view can be fine-tuned now by observing that the Septuagint version, including its messianic hints, provided the author of Hebrews with an appropriate hermeneutical key for his argument.

Does the phrase 'God, your God' in verse 9, as it was interpreted in the discussion of Psalm 45 (see section 1) not contradict the divinity of the Son, so clearly proclaimed by verse 8? Would he in this case not address the Eternal One on the throne as 'my Father' rather than 'my God'? In answer, one may observe that these two titles are not mutually exclusive. After his resurrection, according to the Fourth Gospel, Jesus announced his ascension with the words: 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God' (John 20:17). He speaks in the same breath about 'my Father' and 'my God'. That is why Paul could write: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (2 Cor 1:3; cf. Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 11:3; Eph 1:3,17; Col 1:3 according to many textual witnesses). God, the heavenly Father, always turns out to stand behind Jesus Christ, who is our Lord.

Thus, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews interprets Psalm 45 Christologically. In the context of the psalm, the companions undoubtedly refer to fellow royals, such as other kings, or princes from the royal family. That the king was anointed with the oil of joy, beyond his companions, means in this context that his joy surpassed that of all others. In the new Christological context of Hebrews 1, the companions are angelic beings, who worship and serve the Son around the divine throne in heaven, the centre of God's eschatological reign.

By doing so, the author is not simply applying to Jesus the title of God; he starts with a hymnic celebration of the enthroned Christ, a theme that will be unfolded in the main body of the epistle.[40] The Son is a king who participates in the divine identity and in God's eschatological rule of all things.

[37] The introduction of v. 6 could mark the moment when God introduces his firstborn Son in the heavenly world ('the world to come' in 2:5), after his ascension. Cf. K.L. Schenck, 'A Celebration of the Enthroned Son: the Catena of Hebrews 1', *JBL* 120 (2001), 478.

[38] Steyn, 'The *Vorlage*', 1094. In Heb 10:7, ὁ θεὸς is also used as a vocative (citing Ps 39:9 LXX: ὁ θεός μου).

[39] H.W. Attridge, *Hebrews* (Hermeneia), Philadelphia 1989, 49.

[40] Schenck, 'A Celebration', 484-485. For a concise Christological reception history, see E. Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, Bd 1 (EKK), Zürich 1990, 86-87.

CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTION

The above research leads to the following conclusions:

a. Psalm 45 MT, originally addressed to a particular king from Israel (or Judah), could be used at different later occasions. This monarch is acclaimed as the one who is seated on a God-given throne—but the psalmist does not believe the king to be God or equal to God.

b. Psalm 44 LXX is the hermeneutical key to understand the use of this text in Hebrews 1. By translating אלהים with the vocative ὁ θεὸς, the distinctive position of the king is highlighted. He is praised as the one who exercises God-like ruling authority over Israel.

c. Psalm 45[44]:7-8 should be considered the main link in the *catena* of Hebrews 1, because only in this quotation are both aspects of Hebrews 1:3-4 represented: the Son on the throne of God and his superiority above the angels.

d. Hebrews 1:8-9 provides a new, Christological, context for Psalm 45[44]:7-8. The Son is explicitly called 'God' by God himself. This unique king, then, exalted above the angels and forever enthroned in heaven, participates in the divine identity and in God's eschatological rule of all things.

A brief hermeneutical reflection is appropriate here. It appears that Psalm 45 went its own way through history. A love song performed at the wedding of a particular king from Israel (or Judah) was suitable at later occasions, could be opened in the Septuagint version to the possibility of a messianic interpretation, and functioned as core text in the *catena* of Hebrews 1, where two lines of it are quoted to praise the exalted Son who is forever seated on the divine throne. In fact, it is God himself who addresses his Son as 'God'. Already within the biblical canon, then, a development in interpretation can be observed. What is the underlying basis? The Letter to the Hebrews opens with a statement regarding the speaking God, who spoke by the prophets, but presently speaks through his Son. This is the continuous message of the Bible: the living God is still speaking. He uses the testimony of inspired writers and their canonical interpretations. Although biblical scholars of the 21st century may use some other (not necessarily better!) exegetical methods than those common during the Second Temple period, their attitude towards the text still must be one of careful reading and listening.

REIGNING WITH CHRIST FOR A THOUSAND YEARS

Revelation 20:1-6 in the Context of Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition

Michael Mulder

INTRODUCTION

John's vision in Revelation 20:1-6 has a rich post-history in the Christian tradition. This article, however, focuses on its prehistory. Often the origin of the motif of the thousand-year reign with Christ is sought within the context of Jewish apocalyptics. To quote one example: Howard Marshall asserts that 'the concept of the millennium is a part of some Jewish apocalyptic writings of the time, so that John may have been constrained to use imagery that was already current to express what he wanted to say'.[1]

Does John indeed take over a well-known contemporary motif here? This article will examine all texts from the Jewish tradition advanced in support of such an assumption, hoping to find fresh insight for the interpretation of the millennial period mentioned in Revelation 20.

I am pleased to dedicate this small inquiry to Eric Peels, a leader in accurate reading and listening, even if the outcome sometimes differs from opinions generally assumed.[2]

THE MILLENNIUM IN THE CONTEXT OF REVELATION 20:1-6

Several exegetes relate the thousand years of Revelation 20:1-6 to a period symbolically referred to as 'a time, times and half a time', 42 months or 1260 days elsewhere in the book (Rev 11:3,4; 12:6,14; 13:5; cf. Dan 7:25; 12:7).[3] This is the period during which the two witnesses (Rev 11) are active, the woman (Rev 12) is protected, and the beast (Rev 13) oppresses the faithful. In various places, John sees that towards the end of this time a much briefer period will take place, during which the believers will seem to have been vanquished.[4] This attack on the testimony of the church is sometimes referred to as 'the war' or 'the battle' (Rev 16:14; 19:19). When Revelation 20:7-9, after the millennium, again speaks of 'the battle', this may be understood as a recapitulation of the war that has already been mentioned.

Within this approach, the millennium during which Satan is bound is identified with the period before that battle, that is the time in which the church is living at the moment. Revelation

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[1] I.H. Marshall, 'The Christian Millennium', *EvQ* 72 (2000), 230; cf. M. Erdmann, *The Millennial Controversy in the Early Church*, Eugene 2005, 23: 'The interval of one thousand years as the duration of the messianic kingdom appears frequently in late Jewish literature'. Most commentators in the last decades express the same supposition.

[2] I most heartily thank Mr. Aart Plug who was willing to translate my contribution in proper English.

[3] See, e.g., G.K. Beale, 'The Millennium in Revelation 20:1-10: An Amillennial Perspective', *CrisTR* 11 (2013), 29-62. For a summary of the various perspectives see B.J. Dodd, 'Millennium', in: R.P. Martin, P.H. Davids (eds), *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments: A Compendium of Temporary Biblical Scholarship*, Downers Grove 1997, 740-741 and the references listed there.

[4] In addition to the three and a half years, Rev 11:7-12 makes mention of three and a half days. A comparable passage in Rev 17:9-14 speaks of one hour.

uses various images to demonstrate that the Evil One has indeed limited power. He is imprisoned under the cover of the Abyss (Rev 9), he is not able to devour the woman (Rev 12). Even though he is defeated by the blood of the Lamb, he still strives to oppress and deceive the faithful.[5] Ultimately, however, he will not prevail. Revelation 20:1-6 then presents the same situation and period from a heavenly perspective. In heaven the saints who have died for their witness of Jesus reign with Christ for the entire thousand-year period. This reign may be regarded as a recapitulation of what John wrote about the prayers of the saints who, while looking forward to Christ's final victory,[6] already share in the heavenly glory of the Lamb.

An entirely different interpretation is advanced by those exegetes who regard Revelation 20:1-6 as the portrayal of a new phase in God's work on earth. The chief characteristic of the millennium, in this approach, is the fact that Satan is bound, so that he is no longer able to deceive the nations. It is pointed out that this passage cannot be a representation of the church's situation in the period before Christ's return.[7] Thus, this vision reveals a new expectation, not so much linked with previous parts of Revelation, but it may easily be connected with a number of Old Testament prophecies, foreshadowing a time in which trials will have ceased, and peace reigns on earth.[8] Within this overall perspective, there are differing views as to how the millennium is to be defined. While some exegetes take a strictly literal view, the majority regard the millennium as an extended but indefinite period, known to God alone.[9]

If it can be established that the idea of a thousand-year interregnum was a familiar one in Jewish apocalyptics, this would be a strong indication that a similar motif in Revelation ought to be understood as an interregnum as well. In order to ascertain how this conception aligns with Jewish tradition, it is good to examine the relevant texts within their own context, and to examine what light they might shed on John's message.

THE BOOK OF JUBILEES

The *Book of Jubilees* may be dated at around the middle of the second century BCE. Drawing on the Books of Genesis and Exodus, history since creation is recounted, and schematically represented through a division into periods of jubilees, each of which is seven 'weeks' of seven years. The exodus is said to have taken place after a jubilee of jubilees since creation (49 times 49 is 2401 years), as a climactic point of liberation (*Jub* 50:4). Clearly, this chronological framework is of great significance to the author. It highlights the understanding that Israel's history was directed from on high to bring it to this climactic event. This in turn provides grounds for the confident expectation of another liberation, to take place after another fixed period is completed. The end of the book speaks of the expectation of a time without end, in which the land is purified from all uncleanness, and in which Satan will be no more (*Jub* 50:5).

[5] Elsewhere the limitation of his power is described in temporal or spatial terms (Rev 8:7,9,10,12: 'a third part'; 11:2: the part that was not measured), indicating that his power will have no effect on those who belong to the Lamb (cf. Rev 7:3; 9:4; 13:8; 16:2).

[6] H.R. van de Kamp, *Openbaring* (CNT-3), Kampen 2000, 440, points to Rev 6:9-10; 8:5; 9:13-15; 14:18; 18:20; 19:2.

[7] G.R. Osborne, *Revelation* (BECNT), Grand Rapids 2002, 702, refers to numerous warnings against temptations in the NT.

[8] E.g. Isa 24:21,22. A. Sataka, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (KEK), Göttingen 2008, 383-385, connects Rev 19-20 with Ezek 37-39 discerning there the same sequence of periods.

[9] Cf. Osborne, *Revelation*, 701.

The precise date of the beginning of this period is not provided, but the context suggests that this will take place upon the completion of another 49 jubilees. The whole of world history is divided into two jubilees of jubilees, each of which ends with a mighty liberation.[10]

In the middle of the description of the period of the patriarchs, after the death of Abraham, a minor apocalypse is inserted, which Moses receives as a revelation (*Jub* 23). This insertion links the lifetime of Abraham—175 years—with the observation that in ancient days people lived to a much greater age, but that because of their disobedience to God's covenant, they died at progressively earlier ages, usually even before the completion of one-and-a-half jubilees (*Jub* 23:12). This is followed by the description of a period without peace, in which people look back and say:

> The days of the ancients were as many as one thousand years and good. But behold, (as for) the days of our lives, if a man should extend his life seventy years or if he is strong (for) eighty years, then these are evil. And there is not any peace in the days of this evil generation. (*Jub* 23:15)[11]

Referring to Psalm 90:10 a connection is made to the author's time, bringing to mind the period before the decree of Antiochus IV, which led to the Maccabean revolt. Apparently, the author is aiming at an exhortation to be faithful in his own time. In the apocalypse, great expectations are attached to such a return to God. True, God will punish his people because of their sins, just as he did in the days of Abraham, when peoples' lives were cut short, but another time is coming:

> And in those days, children will begin to search the law,
> and to search the commandments,
> and to return to the ways of righteousness.
> And the days will begin to increase and grow longer
> among those sons of men, generation by generation,
> and year by year, until
> their days approach a thousand years,
> and to a greater number of years than days.
> And (there will) be no old men and none is full of days,
> because all of them will be infants and children.
> And all of their days they will be complete
> and live in peace and rejoicing.
> And there will be no Satan and no evil (one) who will destroy,
> because all of their days will be days of blessing and healing. (*Jub* 23:26-29)

Referring to Isaiah 65:20, a wonderful future is portrayed as the consequence of a return to the way of righteousness and observance of the law. This is reminiscent of the Essene expectation from the time of the Maccabean revolt.[12] Generally this expectation is understood to be a gradual transition to a time of peace, and an end to Satan's resistance, all of which are portrayed in earthly, national colours.[13]

[10] Cf. R.T. Beckwith, *Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian: Biblical, Intertestamental and Patristic Studies*, Leiden etc. 1996, 238, 239.

[11] Translation O.S. Wintermute, in: J.C. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 2, New York 1985, 100. Subsequent passages are quoted from the same translation.

[12] This portrayal of the future as the result of a 'peaceful transition' stands in contrast to the description in the *War Scroll,* cf. L.R. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple period: A Guide of New Testament Students*, Downers Grove 2002, 128.

[13] Cf. L.J. Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology* (JSNTS, 19), Sheffield 1987, 40: 'In short, we have a gradually established, earthly Kingdom which shall endure forever.'

While the *Book of Jubilees* attaches much significance to periods and years, the reference to the millennium mentioned here is not intended to specify the duration of a kingdom of peace or a messianic interregnum. Instead, it indicates that the blessings of God in the latter days will be even greater than those at the beginning of world history. People will live even longer than the ancients did.[14] The reference to thousand years does, however, implicitly point to the source of this blessing, since such a period is described in Psalm 90:4 in relation to God (with him a thousand years are as one day). In fact, this is the only Old Testament reference to thousand years. The *Book of Jubilees* drew on precisely this context to describe the judgment of God, in the shortening of a lifetime to seventy or eighty years (Ps 90:10, quoted in *Jub* 23:15). The fact that people's lifetimes will now exceed a thousand years, points to a reversal of this judgment.

1 ENOCH

The oldest extant Jewish pseudepigraphic apocalypse is the *Apocalypse of Weeks*,[15] also dating from the second century BCE. Here, world history is divided into ten weeks, ten periods of sevens. It is uncertain how precisely these sevens should be interpreted.[16] After a description of the first six, the apocalypse shifts its attention to the seventh seven, in which an apostate generation arises. Once again, one can discern allusions to the pre-Maccabean period. This is followed by an eighth and a ninth period, in which the righteous increasingly look forward to their redemption:

> Then, after this matter, in the tenth week in the seventh part, there shall be the eternal judgment; … the first heaven shall depart and pass away; a new heaven shall appear; and all the powers of heaven shall shine forever sevenfold.
> Then after that there shall be many weeks without number forever; it shall be (a time) of goodness and righteousness, and sin shall no more be heard of forever. (*1 Enoch* 91:15-17)[17]

The final victory is to take place immediately after the judgment, and will be followed by a time of peace without end. This expectation does not include any messianic figure, and even though considerable emphasis is laid on calculations of times and periods, there is no reference to a millennium.

In the later *Book of Parables*, dated around the same time as the writing of the New Testament, the Enoch literature does contain expectations of a Messiah. In various places it states that he will come to execute judgment. After this a time of peace will follow:

> The righteous and elect ones shall be saved on that day; and from thenceforth they shall never see the faces of the sinners and the oppressors. The Lord of the Spirits will abide over them; they shall eat and rest and rise with that Son of Man forever and ever. (*1 Enoch* 62:13-14)

[14] See also *Jub* 4:30, where Adam is said to have died at the age of 930 years: 'And he lacked seventy years from one thousand years, for a thousand years are like one day in the testimony of heaven and therefore it was written concerning the tree of knowledge, "in the day you eat from it you will die". Therefore he did not complete the years of this day because he died in it.'

[15] *1 Enoch* 93:1-10 and 91:11-17; this order has been confirmed by the discovery of 4Q212.

[16] Some scholars suggest to interpret the units as generations. Beckwith, *Calendar and Chronology*, 249, shows that they should be interpreted as periods of approximately seven hundred years, with variations.

[17] Translation E. Isaac, in: J.C. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 1, New York 1983, 73.

This messianic reading might be a Jewish reaction to the Christian identification of Jesus with the Son of Man; it could also be a later Christian interpolation in *1 Enoch*.[18] Either way, it is clear that the millennium motif does not play a part in the eschatological expectation of *1 Enoch*. While the *Book of Parables* does speak of a messianic kingdom of peace, there is no suggestion that this period is to be followed by an even better one.

2 BARUCH

The expectation of a new resurrection and of judgment after a period of peace and prosperity on earth can be found in the *Apocalypse of Baruch*, written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. In addition to this expectation, portrayed, as previously, in earthly colours, it appears that a new perspective has emerged, one that describes a subsequent supernatural redemption:

> And it will happen that when all that which should come to pass in these parts has been accomplished, the Anointed One will begin to be revealed. … The earth will also yield fruits ten thousand fold. And on one vine will be a thousand branches, and one branch will produce a thousand clusters, and one cluster will produce a thousand grapes …
> And it will happen after these things when the time of the appearance of the Anointed One has been fulfilled and he returns with glory, that then all who sleep in hope of him will rise. (*2 Bar* 29:3,5; 30:1)[19]

This is followed by a time of judgment, when the righteous will rejoice, 'But the souls of the wicked will waste away' (*2 Bar* 30:4). In this apocalypse, then, the end of time is preceded by a messianic interregnum. The number thousand is only used to describe the abundant wealth produced by nature during this time of peace, and not as an indicator of the duration of this period.

After this, the age of the future is to follow. The messianic kingdom is seen as belonging to the *olam hazzèh*, the present era. On the one hand, this period is portrayed by means of images that are earthly and recognizable; on the other, they are regarded as an upbeat into what transcends this earthly reality: 'For that time is the end of that which is corruptible and the beginning of what is incorruptible' (*2 Bar* 74:2).[20]

[18] Cf. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature*, 386-387; Kreitzer, *Jesus and God*, 35-36.

[19] Translation A.F.J. Klijn, in: Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 1, 630-631.

[20] Cf. *2 Bar* 40:3: 'His dominion will last forever until the world of corruption has ended and until the times which have been mentioned before have been fulfilled'; during this period, he will 'protect the rest of my people who will be found in the place that I have chosen' (40:2).

4 EZRA

A comparable eschatological schema, incorporating a messianic interregnum, may be found in *4 Ezra*, which also dates from the first century CE. A time of great tribulation is to be expected (*4 Ezra* 13:30). City will rise up against city, and people against people, but—says God—'then my son will be revealed' (*4 Ezra* 13:32),[21] '… he will stand on the top of Mount Zion. And Zion will come and be made manifest to all people, prepared and built …' (*4 Ezra* 13:36). Elsewhere, we read that this Messiah will judge the living. Afterwards, 'he will deliver in mercy the remnant of my people, those who have been saved throughout my borders, and he will make them joyful until the end comes, the day of judgement …' (*4 Ezra* 12:34). The end, then, will come after an interim period during which the Messiah will act as a deliverer.

There is one place where the duration of this messianic period is calculated:

> For my son the Messiah shall be revealed with those who are with him, and those who remain shall rejoice four hundred years. And after these years my son the Messiah will die, also all who draw human breath. And the world shall be turned to primeval silence for seven days … And after seven days the world which is not yet awake shall be roused, and that which is corruptible shall perish. (*4 Ezra* 7:28-33)[22]

This is the moment when the Most High will withdraw his mercy, and deliver a final judgment. This day of judgment is to last approximately 'a week of years' (*4 Ezra* 7:43).

Here, the peace brought by the Messiah is portrayed again in concrete earthly terms, drawing on the prophetic expectations that are described in the Old Testament. They are also linked to contemporary events. At the time of writing, Jerusalem had been destroyed, and the idea of a redemption apart from the rebuilding of Zion is inconceivable. At the same time, there is a growing awareness that the salvation of God cannot be encapsulated in concrete earthly reality, and that after this era, another one is yet to come, a time without end.

4 Ezra, written around the same time as the Book of Revelation, is the first to indicate the duration of this messianic kingdom: this interim period is to last for four hundred years.

2 ENOCH

The text most frequently referred to as a background to the millennial expectation is the so-called *Slavic Enoch*, also known as *2 Enoch.* Its date of writing is disputed, since no early manuscripts exist; in any case it is later than the time of Christ. It is commonly held to date from the end of the first century CE. It contains a passage of interest to our present topic. As a reflection on the seven days of creation, it is revealed to Enoch that this creation period is related to seven millennia of world history, to be completed by an eighth millennium:

> On the 8th day I likewise appointed, so that the 8th day might be the 1st, the first-created of my week, and that it should revolve in the revolution of the 7.000; [so that the 8.000] might be in the beginning of a time not reckoned and unending. Neither years, nor months, nor weeks, nor days, nor hours. (*2 Enoch* 33:1,2)[23]

[21] This and the following verses translated by B.M. Metzger, in: Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 1, 517-559.

[22] Various manuscripts display evidence of distinctively Christian editing. Whether or not 'my son' is in the original text is often disputed. Still, it is assumed that a Jewish original exists, in which this calculation of time occurs within the context of a messianic kingdom. See Kreitzer, *Jesus and God*, 53.

The interpretation of this text is complicated. It could be understood as a midrash, in which the history of the world is subdivided into seven periods of thousand years, corresponding to the seven days of creation. Just as on the eighth day the history of the world actually began, so in the future the eighth millennium marks the beginning of the coming Sabbath. If the text is read this way, we see here the first reference to any form of Jewish millennialism, the expectation of a millennium at the end of world history. No reference is made, however, to a messianic figure, or to any kind of an interregnum.[24] There is no indication of any transition from such a millennium to the time of completion; instead, the last 'thousand' points to a time without time, to time without end.

It should be noted that the authenticity of this text is open to question. The special attention paid to the eighth day (and therefore also to the first day) of the week could well indicate that this is a Christian interpolation.[25]

RABBINIC LITERATURE

In the rabbinic tradition there is no commonly accepted division of historical periods, such as occurring in the midrash of *2 Enoch* 33. A number of discussions concerning the duration of the days of the Messiah are known. One such discussion has been preserved in three versions, in *Tanchuma* (Eqeb 7b), *Pesiqta Rabbati* (1,4a) and in *Midrasj Tehillim* (on Ps. 90, § 17). While dating from the high to the late Middle Ages, these collections surely contain older material, as indicated by their references to earlier rabbinical sources. The discussions show that the days of the Messiah are linked to a number of biblical motifs, leading to a variety of calculations: 40, 100, 400, 600, 1000 or 7000 years.

The *Talmud* contains a discussion that is somewhat similar to the midrash from the Slavic Enoch:

> R. Kattina said: Six thousand years shall the world exist, and one [thousand, the seventh], it shall be desolate, as it is written: *And the Lord* alone *shall be exalted in that day* (Is. 2,11). …
> The Tanna debe Eliyyahu teaches: The world is to exist six thousand years. In the first two thousand there was desolation; two thousand years the Torah flourished; and the next two thousand years is the messianic era, but through our many iniquities all these years have been lost. (*Sanh*. 97a-b)[26]

The first subdivision somewhat resembles that of a week, with six working days, each of a thousand years, to be followed by a period in which the world will not be cultivated. The Gemara subsequently connects this to 'a year of release', interpreting this as the time of redemption. However, this final period is not linked to the Messiah, while in the second midrash

[23] Translation F.I. Andersen, in: Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 1, 156.

[24] D.E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22* (WBC), Dallas 1998, 1107, therefore estimates this passage as irrelevant to the interpretation of Rev 20.

[25] Compare the same interest in the eighth day in *2 Enoch* 28:5, where God named the first day 'for myself', reminiscent to 'the Lord's day' in Rev 1:10. Moreover, this passage does not occur in the shorter version of *2 Enoch*. See Kreitzer, *Jesus and God*, 42-43.

[26] Translation I. Epstein (ed.), *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud*, *Sanhedrin*, London 1969.

the messianic period lasts for two thousand years, starting at the year 4.000 after creation.[27] The added note that his coming has been delayed 'through our many iniquities' might point to a calculation that had to be adjusted when the Messiah failed to appear in the Jewish year 4.000 (i.e. 240 CE).

The idea of a messianic millennium, then, does not occur in the Talmud. At the same time, there does seem to be a prevailing understanding of the messianic era as an interim period, after which the Holy One will carry out a definitive renewal of the world (*Sanh*. 97b).

EARLY CHRISTIAN SOURCES

The motif of a 'week' of thousand-year periods, in which the final period corresponds to the messianic millennium, can be found with one of the apostolic fathers, namely the *Letter of Barnabas*, dating from the beginning of the second century CE. Here, there is an allegorical interpretation of the days of creation, drawing on the thought that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years. 'This implieth that the Lord will finish all things in six thousand years.' 'And he rested on the seventh day' is explained as follows:

> When His Son, coming [again], shall destroy the time of the wicked man, and judge the ungodly, and change the sun, and the moon, and the stars, then shall He truly rest on the seventh day. … Further, He says to them [the Jews], 'Your new moons and your Sabbath I cannot endure.' Ye perceive how He speaks: Your present Sabbaths are not acceptable to Me, but that is which I have made, [namely this,] when, giving rest to all things, I shall make a beginning of the eighth day, that is, a beginning of another world. (*Ep. Barn*. XV)[28]

The aim of the Christian author is to replace the Jewish Sabbath observance with the keeping of the eighth day, 'the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead'. The motif of the eighth 'day', marking the beginning of a new world, bears a strong resemblance to *2 Enoch*. As in the *Book of Jubilees*, the *Epistle of Barnabas* alludes to Psalm 90:4 in the direct context of the quotation. So elements of the Jewish apocalyptic tradition play a part in this anti-Jewish polemic. However, there is no speculation about the nature of a messianic interregnum. With the coming of the Messiah another world begins, the true rest.

The Jewish pseudepigraphic *Testament of Isaac* probably dates from the second century CE, but is only known from later translations that include Christian (especially Coptic) editorial additions. Its chief purpose seems to be to stimulate the observance of a day of remembrance of the patriarch Isaac. Whoever keeps this day is promised:

> He shall be present with them [Abraham and Isaac] at the first moment of the millennial banquet to celebrate with them in the everlasting light in the kingdom of our Master and our God and our King and our Savior, Jesus the Messiah. (*Test. Is*. 8:6)[29]

[27] Beckwith, *Calendar and Chronology*, 270, shows that this is in fact a Christian calculation 'based on a non-Pharisaic chronology', and, therefore, forms an isolated baraita in the Talmud. Before and after this midrash other calculations are mentioned as well.

[28] Translation A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Vol. 1: *The Apostolic Fathers*, Edinburgh 1993, 146, 147.

[29] Translation W.F. Stinespring, in: Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol. 1, 911.

Here too, several motifs are brought together, but without any further elaboration. It is clear, however, that the Christian editor shared the general expectation of a thousand-year festive banquet in the world to come. Nothing more is known about this interpolation than that it is probably of mediaeval origin.[30]

CONCLUSION

This brief survey may provide a clear answer to the question as to whether John, in Revelation 20, takes over a well-known motif from the Jewish apocalyptic literature, when he describes the thousand-year binding of the Evil One, during which believers already begin to share in the victory of Christ.

I conclude that such a connection cannot be shown, since this expectation cannot be found in any of the intertestamental literature known to us.

A number of motifs have been traced which may have influenced the formation of both Jewish and early Christian expectations concerning the future. Some of these led to the idea of a messianic interregnum—sometimes millennial, sometimes not. There is a tendency in both Jewish and early Christian texts of the period to add a more supernatural understanding of the future kingdom of peace to the concrete earthly expectations uttered by the prophets. The idea of a messianic interregnum might be explained as an attempt to resolve the tension that can be felt between these two sets of expectations, while retaining elements of both.

The Book of Revelation brings together a variety of motifs in its own distinctive manner. To reach an appropriate understanding of the millennial period mentioned in Revelation 20, therefore, much can be said for an approach looking for the keys to its interpretation in the composition of the book itself, rather than in an already-known motif that John took over and modified. This in turn lends support to an approach that highlights the agreement between the 'thousand-year reign' and the 'a time, times and half a time', 42 months or 1260 days, as already indicated at the beginning of this article.

[30] According to another suggestion, the millennium motif, in which the Evil One is bound, has its origin in Persian Zoroastrianism. Interesting, but relevant texts cannot be dated earlier than the late Middle Ages. J.T. Sanders, 'Whence the First Millennium? The Sources behind Revelation 20', *NTS* 50 (2004), 452, 453, asserts that 'all the main aspects of the millennial scheme of Rev 20 are present in Zoroastrianism', but has to admit that 'the millennium itself with its saviors fore and aft, can be attested only in the ninth century Pahlavi texts'.

PART 5:

THE ONE GOD OF THE BIBLE IN BIBLICAL AND SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

'OUR GOD IS ONE'

The Unity of YHWH and the Trinity
in the Interplay between Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theology

Arnold Huijgen and Arie Versluis

INTRODUCTION

The work of our colleague Eric Peels is characterized by three emphases that come together in the present article. First, an openness for theological questions in exegesis that go beyond the merely philological, while taking the philological and historical tasks seriously.[1] Second, the willingness to engage in major, complex and central questions of the Old Testament: see his project on the harsher sides of divine revelation in the Old Testament, including the study of vengeance and violence in the Old Testament.[2] Third, a focus on the Old Testament's theology proper: since the Old Testament makes claims about God, the Old Testament scholar should be prepared to ask who this God is.[3] The present contribution is in line with these three focal points, since it discusses the unity of YHWH in the Old Testament and beyond: a complex, theological question, directly related to the Old Testament's theology proper.

In the present article, the discussion between biblical exegesis and systematic theology is stimulated, in line with the aims of the research group BEST, Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theology, which Eric serves as president.[4] The interaction between exegetes and systematic theologians, facilitated by this group, frequently involves the exciting question how dogmatic formulations relate to results of biblical studies. One of the focal points of the research group is dogma in the strict sense: the doctrine of the Trinity. This seems to be at odds with the Old Testament, which emphasizes the unity of God, and it seems to be questionable even from the perspective of the New Testament. These questions will be addressed here by two students of Eric Peels, an exegete and a systematic theologian, both members of the BEST research group.

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[1] E.g., H.G.L. Peels, '"You shall Certainly Drink!": The Place and Significance of the Oracles Against the Nations in the Book of Jeremiah', *EuroJ Th* 16 (2007), 81-92.

[2] H.G.L. Peels, *The Vengeance of God: The Meaning of the Root* NQM *and the Function of the* NQM-*Texts in the Context of Divine Revelation in the Old Testament* (OTS, 31), Leiden 1994; 'The Blood "from Abel to Zacharias" (Matthew 23,35; Luke 11,50f.) and the Canon of the Old Testament', *ZAW* 113 (2001), 583-601; '"I hate them with perfect hatred" (Psalm 139:21-22)', *TynBul* 59 (2008), 35-51; 'The World's First Murder: Violence and Justice in Genesis 4:1-16', in: J.T. Fitzgerald, F.J. van Rensburg *et al.* (eds), *Animosity, The Bible, and Us: Some European, North American, and South African Perspectives* (GPBS, 12), Atlanta 2009, 19-39.

[3] The first fruits of this project can be found in two studies in Dutch: H.G.L. Peels, *God en geweld in het Oude Testament* (ApSt, 47), Apeldoorn 2007; *Traag tot toorn. Een onderbelicht aspect van het oudtestamentische godsbeeld* (ApSt, 58), Apeldoorn 2011.

[4] See the research programme *Who Is Like You Among the Gods? The One and Three in a Pluralistic Context*, http://www.webkey7.nl/tua/images2/documentatie_-_programma_best.pdf [accessed 12 September 2016].

The following steps are taken to research the unity of YHWH in the Old Testament, the New Testament and systematic theology. First, the ‘Shema’ (Deut 6:4),[5] the central text on the unity of YHWH in the Old Testament, is scrutinized: what does it mean that YHWH is called אֶחָד? Second, Paul’s Christian reinterpretation of the Shema in 1 Corinthians 8:6 is examined. Third, the statements on the unity of YHWH are brought into contact with Trinitarian theology. The objective of the present article is to argue that similar concerns drive the Shema, 1 Corinthians 8:6 and Trinitarian theology. As a side-effect, historical contexts and developments can only receive limited attention.

THE SHEMA (DEUTERONOMY 6:4)

The central Old Testament passage on YHWH’s unity is the Shema. The importance of this text is clear from its position and context in the Book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 6:4 is marked out from the preceding verses by an imperative followed by a vocative and by a transition to the first person plural (‘our’ God).[6] It opens the first section of parenesis after the Decalogue and is presented as the beginning of YHWH’s words spoken to Moses alone (see Deut 5:27). The threefold qualification of Israel’s love of YHWH, as requested in the following verses, and the emphasis on the use of these words in the lives of the Israelites (Deut 6:5-9) underscore their centrality. This importance is also evident in reception history. In Judaism, the Shema is recited at the beginning and end of every day, and it should be the first and last words spoken in life (*b. Ber.* 2a; *b. Ber.* 61b; *b. Suk.* 42a). In the New Testament, it is cited as the first commandment (Mark 12:29-31).[7]

Following the admonition to the people to hear, Deuteronomy 6:4 has the crucial words: יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד. The first two words should most likely be interpreted as *casus pendens*, understanding אלהינו in apposition to יהוה.[8] In the Book of Deuteronomy, יהוה and אלהים are juxtaposed more than 300 times, the two words being always in apposition (‘YHWH your/our God’). In the few texts in which אלהים is used as a predicate of YHWH (‘YHWH is God’), the words are always separated by the element הוא and the article is used (האלהים; Deut 4:35,39; 7:9; cf. Jos 24:18; 1 Kgs 8:60). In addition, it is never questioned in Deuteronomy whether YHWH is the God of Israel, but this is presupposed; that would render the statement ‘YHWH is our God’ superfluous.[9] It may be objected that it is ‘declared’ or ‘established’ in Deuteronomy

[5] In this article, the ‘Shema’ refers to Deut 6:4, unless otherwise indicated. In Jewish liturgy, the Shema consists of Deut 6:4-9, Deut 11:13-21 and Num 15:37-41.

[6] See J.S. DeRouchie, *A Call to Covenant Love: Text Grammar and Literary Structure in Deuteronomy 5-11* (Gorgias Dissertations, 30 / Biblical Studies, 2), New Jersey 2007, 227-228; E. Otto, *Deuteronomium 1-11* (HThKAT), Freiburg 2012, 783.

[7] See D.I. Block, ‘How Many Is God? An Investigation into the Meaning of Deuteronomy 6:4-5’, *JETS* 47 (2004), 194-195; N. MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of ‘Monotheism’* (FAT, 2/1), Tübingen 2003, 60-62; R.W.L. Moberly, *Old Testament Theology: Reading the Hebrew Bible as Christian Scripture*, Grand Rapids 2013, 8-9; J.H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* (JPSTC), Philadelphia 1996, 440-441.

[8] According to L.-J. Bord, D. Hamidović, ‘Écoute Israel (Deut. VI 4)’, *VT* 52 (2002), 19, these words are not an apposition, but ‘une formule monolithique’. They take the first two words as the object of שְׁמַע, and translate: ‘Écoute, Israel, yhwh notre Dieu! […] yhwh est unique.’ (Ibid., 28). This syntactic division, however, receives little support.

[9] See, e.g., MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of Monotheism*, 64-68; R.W.L. Moberly, ‘“Yahweh Is One”: The Translation of the Shema’, in: J.A. Emerton (ed.), *Studies in the Pentateuch*

that YHWH is Israel’s God (Deut 26:17; 29:12[13]).[10] However, the consistent Deuteronomic phraseology argues for an appositional interpretation.[11]

For the present article, the two final words of the Shema are the most important. YHWH is said to be ‘one’. It is curious that ‘the most important word’[12] of the most important creedal statement of the Old Testament is the word ‘one’. The interpretation of this word, however, is rather controversial. Three main translations deserve attention.[13]

First, ‘YHWH is one’. In this interpretation, the Shema is a statement about YHWH’s character. He is described as ‘one’, which raises the question of what this oneness means. According to several scholars, the Shema is a confession of mono-Yahwism. Against the multiple sanctuaries with their divergent interpretations of YHWH’s character and of appropriate worship, the Shema would proclaim the single YHWH. This would fit the Deuteronomic themes of one nation and one sanctuary.[14] An argument in favour of this interpretation are the texts found in Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, which mention ‘YHWH of Samaria’ and ‘YHWH of Teman’, suggesting differing local variants of YHWH. This interpretation of YHWH’s oneness, however, has met a number of objections.[15] Although it is possible that ideas of poly-Yahwism were found in popular religion, this idea is completely absent in Deuteronomy. Moreover, the connection between one God, one nation and one sanctuary is not as clear in Deuteronomy as it is in modern scholarship: the sanctuary and the nation are even never called ‘one’.[16]

Other interpretations under this first rubric of YHWH’s oneness include the following: (a) The Shema shows the fidelity, integrity and reliability of YHWH throughout the generations. This fits the Deuteronomic theme of YHWH’s faithfulness to his oath to the fathers (e.g. Deut 7:8-9).[17] (b) The Shema states that YHWH is an undivided personality; therefore, he also claims the undivided love of his people. The main point of the Shema is not a statement about YHWH’s oneness, but the call to love him wholeheartedly.[18] (c) The Shema aimed at reuniting the religion of Israel and Judah after the fall of Samaria. The claim that YHWH is one should be understood as: He is the single God of both of us, He is one (not two).[19]

(VT.S, 41), Leiden 1990, 209-215. Otherwise, e.g., Block, ‘How Many Is God?’, 196-197; Otto, *Deuteronomium 1-11*, 794-795.

[10] According to C. Hardmeier, ‘Das *Sch^{e}ma‘ Jisra’el* in Dtn 6,4 im Rahmen der Beziehungstheologie der deuteronomistischen Tora’, in: E. Blum (ed.), *Mincha*, Fs. R. Rendtorff, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2000, 83-87, the Shema is a confession corresponding to the declaration of the covenant in Deut 26:17.

[11] This is confirmed by the Nash Papyrus, which adds הוא, and by the Septuagint and Peshitta.

[12] J.G. Janzen, ‘On the Most Important Word in the Shema (Deuteronomy VI 4-5)’, *VT* 37 (1987), 280-300.

[13] For a discussion of all proposals, see MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of Monotheism*, 62-70.

[14] Thus, e.g., C.J. Labuschagne, *Deuteronomium*, dl 1B (POuT), Nijkerk 1987, 78-79; Otto, *Deuteronomium 1-11*, 798-799 (original meaning).

[15] See N. Lohfink, ‘אֶחָד’, in: *ThWAT* I, 213-214; J. Kraut, ‘Deciphering the Shema: Staircase Parallelism and the Syntax of Deuteronomy 6:4’, *VT* 61 (2011), 586-588; Moberly, *Old Testament Theology*, 14-17. In this interpretation, the Shema is sometimes translated as ‘YHWH our God is one YHWH’. Thus, e.g., E. Nielsen, *Deuteronomium* (HAT), Tübingen 1995, 86-87.

[16] MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of Monotheism*, 71-72; T. Veijola, *Das 5. Buch Mose Deuteronomium 1,1-16,17* (ATD), Göttingen 2004, 178. The connection is found in Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 4, 200-201, who explicitly mentions one God, one nation, one city, one temple and one altar.

[17] Janzen, ‘On the Most Important Word in the Shema’.

[18] W. Herrmann, ‘Jahwe und des Menschen Liebe zu ihm. Zu Dtn. VI 4’, *VT* 50 (2000), 47-54.

[19] E. Aurelius, ‘Der Ursprung des Ersten Gebots’, *ZThK* 100 (2003), 4-7.

Second, ‘YHWH alone’. This interpretation, claiming that YHWH alone is (Israel’s) God, fits the Deuteronomic warnings against the worship of other gods.[20] It is doubtful, however, whether אחד can have this meaning. A number of texts have been adduced to prove that this translation is possible.[21] Upon further scrutiny, however, these examples have all appeared unconvincing. Moreover, for the claim that YHWH alone is God, Deuteronomy uses the word לְבַד (Deut 4:35; cf. 39).[22]

Third, ‘YHWH is the only one’. In this interpretation, the Shema focuses on the relation between YHWH and Israel. A particularly relevant parallel is found in Song of Songs 6:8-9, since this text also states that a person is ‘one’.[23] The bride is characterized as the only one (אַחַת הִיא), ‘my dove, my perfect one’; she is the only one for her mother, ‘flawless to her that bore her’. Two elements of this parallel stand out. First, the bride is not claimed to be the *only* woman or the *only* child; on the contrary, there are sixty queens, eighty concubines, and maidens without number (Song 6:8). However, she has a *unique* place; there is no one like her in the eyes of her lover and her mother. Second, the claim that the bride is the only one functions in a context of devoted love, which parallels the call to love YHWH wholeheartedly (Deut 6:5). The words of the lover have been described as expressing ‘the particularizing logic of love’.[24] In the context of the Shema, this implies that whatever gods there may be, they are of no interest; for Israel, YHWH is and should be the only one, whom Israel should love with all its heart. So, the claim made about YHWH is defined by a personal, relational, affectionate context.

This interpretation fits the immediate context of the Shema in the Book of Deuteronomy. It may be read as the positive counterpart of the first commandment (Deut 5:7). The Decalogue opens with a statement about YHWH; on that basis, it demands Israel’s exclusive loyalty by forbidding the service to any other gods. The same structure applies to the Shema, but with a positive formulation, stressing wholehearted love; this time, an explicit reference to other gods is missing,[25] but the contrast with other gods is made explicit later on in Deuteronomy 6. It has been argued that several elements of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 are elaborated in 6:10-25; verse 4 would then be paralleled in verse 14, which forbids Israel to follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around them.[26] As for Israel, YHWH is the only God to be loved and worshiped. Because no other text parallels the content and context of Deuteronomy 6:4 as much as Song of Songs 6:8-9 does, this interpretation of יהוה אחד is to be preferred.

In conclusion, Deuteronomy 6:4 is a concise expression of the unique relation between YHWH and Israel. YHWH is the only one for Israel, and therefore deserves its unreserved and wholehearted love. Still, the relation between YHWH and the gods and between YHWH and Israel needs clarification, to place the Shema in the context of the Book of Deuteronomy.

[20] See, e.g., Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 438-440.

[21] E.g. 1 Chr 29:1; Isa 51:2. See most recently Block, ‘How Many Is God?’, 199-200.

[22] Against older claims that לבד as an adverb would not be appropriate in a nominal clause, it has now been demonstrated that it is used adjectivally in nominal clauses; see 2 Kgs 19:15,19; Ps 86:10; Isa 37:16; C.R. Bruno, ‘A Note Pertaining to the Translation of Deut 6:4’, *VT* 59 (2009), 320-322; MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of Monotheism*, 69-70; Moberly, ‘Yahweh Is One’, 211-213.

[23] This parallel in mentioned, e.g., by Lohfink, *ThWAT* I, 213; MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of Monotheism*, 74-75; Moberly, *Old Testament Theology*, 19-20, but in general has not gained the attention it deserves.

[24] Moberly, *Old Testament Theology*, 20.

[25] MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of Monotheism*, 77.

[26] See Block, ‘How Many Is God?’, 205-207; Bord, Hamidović, ‘Écoute Israel’, 20-21.

The Shema does not make an explicit claim concerning other gods. In itself, the confession that YHWH is the only one does not exclude the existence of other deities. This is confirmed by ancient Near Eastern parallels. In Egypt, several gods are said to be ‘the only one’. In a Ugaritic text, Baal claims to be ‘the only one (*aḥdy*) who rules over the gods’, thus explicitly presupposing the existence of the other gods.[27] In the Book of Deuteronomy, the existence of other deities is presupposed as well. While YHWH’s claim on Israel and his unique position among the gods are nowhere contested, it is frankly stated that YHWH allotted other gods to the nations (Deut 4:19; 29:25).[28] An explicit comparison is made between YHWH’s relation to Israel and the relation of other nations to their gods. No nation has a god so near to it as YHWH is to Israel whenever it calls to him (Deut 4:7).

Deuteronomy makes clear, however, that YHWH is not just one of many gods but that he has a unique position.[29] Moses declares that in the defeat of King Sihon and Og, YHWH has only begun to show his greatness; for ‘what god in heaven or on earth can perform deeds and mighty acts like yours!’ (Deut 3:24). To him belongs everything. He is the God of gods and Lord of lords (Deut 10:14,17; cf. 7:9). Just like the texts claiming that it is YHWH who allotted the gods to the nations, these statements underscore that YHWH is superior to all the gods.

In some texts, the emphasis on YHWH’s unicity tends toward the confession that he is the only God. Other deities are mocked, since they are ‘made by human hands’ and they are objects of wood and stone, silver and gold that neither see nor hear (Deut 4:28; cf. also 29:16). In the Song of Deuteronomy 32, they are even denied the status of a deity, as the idols are called ‘what is no god’ (לֹא־אֵל; Deut 32:21). Israel is called to acknowledge that YHWH is God, as opposed to the deities; ‘there is no one besides me’ (יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים אֵין עוֹד מִלְּבַדּוֹ; Deut 4:35, repeated slightly differently in 4:39). In the Song, YHWH himself claims: ‘See now that I, even I, am he; there is no god besides me’ (וְאֵין אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי; Deut 32:39; note the resumption, as in 6:4). Although the focus remains on YHWH’s relation with Israel, these texts do suggest that YHWH is the only God (see especially מלבדו; Deut 4:35).[30]

The relation between YHWH and the gods in Deuteronomy can be described as dynamic.[31] The primary goal of the text is to proclaim YHWH’s unicity as Israel’s God. It is always clear that his position among the gods is unique as well. A number of texts tend toward the confession that YHWH is the only God. The dynamics appear from the fact that the confession that there is no one besides YHWH stands in close vicinity to the statement that YHWH allotted other gods to other nations (Deut 4:19,35).

[27] *KTU* 1.4:VII:49-52; see J. Bergman, N. Lohfink, ‘אֶחָד’, in: *ThWAT* I, 211-212; O. Loretz, ‘Die *Einzigkeit* Jahwes (Dtn 6,4) im Licht des ugaritischen Baal-Mythos. Das Argumentationsmodell des altsyrisch-kanaanäischen und biblischen “Monotheismus”’, in: M. Dietrich, O. Loretz (eds), *Vom Alten Orient zum Alten Testament*, Fs. W.F. von Soden (AOAT, 240), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1995, 237-245; M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11* (AncB), New York 1991, 338.

[28] These texts are changed in some of the versions, probably to avoid the suggestion that YHWH would incite people to worshiping idols. See A. Versluis, *The Command to Exterminate the Canaanites: Deuteronomy 7* (OTS, 71), Leiden/Boston 2017, 154.

[29] Different from the ANE parallels, this claim is made only about YHWH in the Old Testament; Loretz, ‘Die Einzigkeit Jahwes’, 245.

[30] Contra MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of Monotheism*, 78-95, who states that these texts only claim YHWH’s uniqueness, but do not deny the existence of other deities.

[31] According to Otto, *Deuteronomium 1-11*, 798-801, the Shema reflects a historical development between the seventh and the fourth century BCE from a monoyahwistic to a monolatric and a monotheistic confession, depending on the place of Deut 6:4-5 as the beginning of *Urdeuteronomium*, its connection with the Decalogue and Deut 4 as a hermeneutical key.

The Shema focuses on the relation between YHWH and Israel. This exclusive relation is already assumed in the description of YHWH as 'our God', and is underscored by the confession of YHWH as 'the only one'.[32] The confession leads to (expressed by *w^e^qatal*) the call that Israel should love YHWH with all its heart, soul and might. The threefold repetition of 'all' emphasizes the totality of the requested love, which corresponds to the uniqueness of YHWH as the only one. The combination of heart, soul and might is not intended as a psychological statement describing the human personality, but as a reinforcement expressing undivided love.[33] This love not only consists in loyalty to the covenant, but also has an affective element, as the parallel with Song of Songs 6:8-9 makes clear.[34]

The intimate relationship between YHWH and Israel is a theme throughout Deuteronomy.[35] Although YHWH's might and even his care also extend to other peoples,[36] Israel is the object of his special love and care. He has made an oath to the fathers and kept it, thus showing his fidelity (e.g. Deut 7:8-9).[37] YHWH has redeemed Israel from Egypt and cared for it in the wilderness as a man carries his son (Deut 1:31). He alone guided Israel (Deut 32:12). Therefore, Israel is repeatedly called to love and serve YHWH alone (Deut 6:13-14; 10:20; 11:16,28). Worshiping other gods would lead to death (Deut 7:4; 13; 17:3-5). Israel should pass on the words of YHWH to generations to come (Deut 6:7,20-25). Thus, YHWH goes with Israel throughout the generations; he will be the same in the future as he has been in the past and as he is now (e.g. Deut 28:1; 31:4).

In Deuteronomy, the Shema is a confession of the unique relationship between YHWH and Israel. In the late text Zechariah 14:9, the Shema is made part of eschatological, universal expectations: in the eschatological future 'YHWH will be king over the whole earth. On that day, YHWH shall be one and his name shall be one' (יִהְיֶה יְהוָה אֶחָד וּשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד). Thus, according to this reinterpretation of Deuteronomy 6:4, the first commandment will once be universally observed and the Shema will become the confession of all the nations.[38]

In conclusion, the Shema confesses that YHWH is the only God for Israel; therefore, Israel should love him alone. It is not an abstract claim of numerical oneness or of (narrowly

[32] Lohfink, *ThWAT* I, 213: the Shema expresses that 'JHWH für *Israel* der *eine* und *einzige* Gott ist'. Cf. Moberly, 'Yahweh Is One', 215.

[33] See Block, 'How Many Is God?', 202-204.

[34] See B.T. Arnold, 'The Love-Fear Antinomy in Deuteronomy 5-11,' *VT* 61 (2011), 551-569. Cf. Otto, *Deuteronomium 1-11*, 797-798.

[35] See J.R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, Grand Rapids 2013, 310.

[36] See, e.g., Deut 2:21-22; cf. Versluis, *The Command to Exterminate the Canaanites*, 152-156.

[37] We fail to see, then, that divine integrity would not be 'a major theme in Deuteronomy', as MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of Monotheism*, 73, states.

[38] See C.L. Meyers, E.M. Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14* (AncB), New York 1993, 439-440; Veijola, *Deuteronomium*, 179. In Sir 42:21, the Shema is also extended to the past: אחד הוא מעולם; P.C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of all Extant Hebrew Manuscripts & A Synopsis of all Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts* (VT.S, 68), Leiden 1997, 169. Given its theological weight, it is remarkable that there are so few echoes of the Shema elsewhere in the Old Testament; apart from Zech 14:9, only Mal 2:10; Job 31:15 may be considered as such.

conceived) 'monotheism',[39] but a statement of unicity, in the tone of love.[40] This unique relationship is grounded in YHWH's revelation to and his acts for Israel in the past and asks for Israel's love and loyalty in the future.

ONE GOD, ONE LORD (1 CORINTHIANS 8:6)

In 1 Corinthians 8:6, Paul writes: 'yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, (ἀλλ᾽ ἡμῖν εἷς θεός ὁ πατὴρ ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεις εἰς αὐτον, καὶ εἷς κύριος ᾿Ιησοῦς Χριστός) through whom are all things and through whom we exist.' This passage clearly alludes to motifs found in the Shema, but the question remains what the exact relation of this text to the Shema is, and which consequences this has for Christian interpretations of the Shema. It has been applauded as a remarkable theological innovation, 'one of the greatest pioneering moments in the entire history of christology'.[41]

Exegetically, the repeated εἷς is remarkable. It raises the question: is it an adjective to θεός and κύριος, or do we have to do with two short nominal clauses, εἷς θεός and εἷς κύριος—and if so, is εἷς predicate or subject of this clause?[42] Many exegetes take εἷς to be an adjective, with ὁ πατήρ as apposition to εἷς θεός, and ᾿Ιησοῦς Χριστός as apposition to εἷς κύριος: 'there is the one God, namely the Father […] and the one Lord, namely Jesus Christ.'[43] The parallel structure in this verse is remarkable, because the first part obviously is about God, while the second also seems to be about God, since κύριος is a common name of God, used by the Septuagint as translation of YHWH. The unity of God seems to be qualified, therefore, by the addition of the one κύριος Jesus Christ as belonging to the unity of God.

For the relation between Paul's statement and the original Shema, the interpretation of the word ἡμῖν is important. If this word serves as a qualification of Paul's confession, then verse 6 presents a rather subjective claim of group identity, namely Christians, without necessarily making a statement about God himself: *for us* (relationally, existentially) there is only one God

[39] The term 'monotheism' has been controversial ever since it was introduced, and has been specified as inclusive or exclusive, implicit or explicit, among others. For an overview of the history of the terminology, see MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of Monotheism*, 5-58. Cf. the contribution of Jaap Dekker to this *Festschrift*: '"To Whom Will You Liken Me and Make Me Equal?": The Isaianic Message of the Uniqueness of YHWH in the Context of Religious Pluralism'.

[40] The interpretation of Deut 6:4 as a claim about God's intrinsic unity is a later development in Judaism. According to T. Veijola, 'Höre Israel! Der Sinn und Hintergrund von Deuteronomium VI 4-9', *VT* 42 (1992), 535-536, this interpretation originated in Amoraic times, apparently in confrontation with Christian and gnostic theology, and was fully developed by Maimonides.

[41] N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and Law in Pauline Theology*, Minneapolis 1992, 136. Cf. L. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*, Philadelphia 1988, 97-99.

[42] See O. Hofius, '"Einer ist Gott—Einer ist Herr": Erwägungen zu Struktur und Aussage des Bekenntnissen 1.Kor 8,6', in: M. Evang, H. Merklein *et al.* (eds), *Eschatologie und Schöpfung*, Fs. E. Gräßer (BZNW, 89), Berlin 1997, 96.

[43] This interpretation is already found in the Vulgate: 'nobis tamen unus Deus, Pater, ex quo omnia, et nos in illum: et unus Dominus, Iesus Christus, per quem omnia, et nos per ipsum.' See also C.K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Black's New Testament Commentary), London 1968, 187; W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther: 1Kor 6,12-11,16* (EKKNT), Düsseldorf/Neukirchen 1995, 216.

and one Lord (dativus relationis),[44] or: *we* have only one God (dativus possessoris),[45] but this would not necessarily imply that there *is* only one God. As Wolfgang Schrage observes, for Christians the gods and lords are no longer gods and lords.[46] Although this observation is correct, the question is whether this statement of Christian identity does not reach further than merely the group level, and implies an ontological statement about God as well.[47]

For the interpretation of verse 6, it is relevant to note that most exegetes interpret verses 4-6 as containing quotations from Corinth or from pre-Pauline catechetical materials.[48] Ottfried Hofius specifies this by reading 1 Corinthians 8:6 as a citation from the letter written by the Corinthians to Paul.[49] According to Hofius, it is likely that verse 4 quotes a statement of the Corinthians, and verses 5 and 6 are the argumentative foundation of that statement.[50] If this is correct, the dense formulation of verse 6 could well refer to a formulation of catechetical instruction. Paul would then, in verse 7, fully agree with the statement of verses 4-6, but would indicate that this γνῶσις is not common to all, since there are some in whose conscience this knowledge has not been rooted firmly.

For the present purpose, Hofius's argument that ἡμῖν in verse 6 should be read as dativus iudicantis is important. Ἡμῖν then means: according to our judgment, that is: the judgment of both Paul and the Corinthians that have internalized the γνῶσις in their consciences.[51] This fits the direct context, as a parallel to the 'we know' of verse 4. Regardless of possible catechetical origins—although these would add strength to the argument—Paul refers to common Christian knowledge of the Corinthians and himself. Then, this statement, particularly the εἷς, receives more emphasis, as a confession of faith consisting of two nominal clauses with εἷς as subject: 'in our judgment, there is only one who is God, namely the Father […] and only one who is κύριος, namely Jesus Christ.'[52] So, 1 Corinthians 8:6 is a confessing text that transcends the level of the existential expression. Existential as it may be, this statement also makes an ontological claim, stating that One is God, and One is Lord.[53]

The rest of the text of 1 Corinthians 8:6 expresses the union of God and Jesus through the language of creation: God is the Creator of all,[54] and Jesus Christ the Mediator of creation (δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα) and of redemption (καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ), who is himself God.[55] Even if one thinks these terms are too dogmatically laden, it is clear that a parallel exists between the characterizations of the one God and the one Lord. While one could expect that the distinction between Creator and creation would lead to a distinction between God on the one hand and Jesus on the other, Jesus Christ is placed on the side of the Creator, not on the side of creation; not merely existentially, but ontologically. Meanwhile, Jesus Christ is also distinct from the Father, indicated by the different prepositions: all things are 'from' (ἐξ) the Father, all things are 'through' (διά) the Lord Jesus Christ.[56]

But is this a reinterpretation, a Christian exegesis of the Shema? There are strong indications it is.[57] First, the words of 1 Corinthians 8:6 remind of Deuteronomy 6:4, with the emphatic εἷς. Second, in the direct context, a negative reference to the Shema is found in the monotheistic confession of verse 4: οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς (1 Cor 8:4).[58] Also, because of Paul's extensive use of the Septuagint, Deuteronomy 6:4 LXX should be taken into account: κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστιν. It is obvious that both phrases εἷς θεὸς and εἷς κύριος are closely related to the words of this text. Third, in the direct context, reference is made to 'heaven and earth' (v. 5), a language that is typically used in Deuteronomy 4 in relation to the unicity of YHWH (Deut 4:32-39). Fourth, and more importantly, the Shema had gained a prominent place in the liturgy and worship in Second Temple Judaism,[59] so any allusion to it as clear as 1 Corinthians 8:6 would not only highlight the connection to the Shema, but also draw attention to the specific interpretation of the Shema offered by Paul.

On a closer look, it shows that Paul draws a contrast between the many idols in the present world and the one God. The many idols correspond to the 'many gods and many lords', while the single God is explained in verse 6 in the differentiation between God the Father and the κύριος Jesus Christ.[60] Verse 6 is not meant to distinguish between God the Father on the one hand and an ontologically lower Christ on the other. On the contrary, Paul inserts the confession of the κύριος into the confession of the one God and places Jesus Christ on the side of the Creator. It should be noted that the singularity and unicity of God is not something Paul concedes or takes into account *nolens volens*, but it is vital for the point he is making: while pagans serve many gods and many lords, there is only one Lord. This is in fact Christian monotheism.[61]

So, the confession of 1 Corinthians 8:6 is in fact a Christian exegesis of the Shema. While the Shema is alluded to or even explicitly confirmed in other texts of the New Testament (Mark

[44] Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 241. Cf. E. Gräßer, '"Ein einziger ist Gott" (Röm 3,30). Zum christologischen Gottesverständnis bei Paulus', in: E. Gräßer, *Der Alte Bund im Neuen. Exegetische Studien zur Israelfrage im Neuen Testament* (WUNT, 35), Tübingen 1985, 251-252.

[45] F. Lang, *Die Briefe an die Korinther* (NTD), Göttingen/Zürich 1994, 108, 110-111.

[46] Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 241.

[47] Remarkably, some commentators pass over this point in silence: D.E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (BECNT), Grand Rapids 2003, 375; A.C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC), Grand Rapids/Cambridge, 2000. Although Thiselton does discuss the ontological status of the θεοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ κύριοι πολλοί in 1 Cor 8:5 (632-634), no attention is paid to the ontological implications of 1 Cor 8:6.

[48] Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 628-629.

[49] Hofius, 'Einer ist Gott—Einer ist Herr', 99-100. This interpretation is based on the words περὶ δὲ, which Paul often uses in this letter to introduce a topic that the Corinthians had brought forward (cf. 1 Cor 7:1,25), after which he engages in discussion with them.

[50] Hofius, 'Einer ist Gott—Einer ist Herr', 99-100.

[51] Hofius, 'Einer ist Gott—Einer ist Herr', 102-103, refers to 1 Cor 2:14, 2 Pet 3:14, in addition to examples from classical Greek (Sophocles, Euripides, Xenophon).

[52] Cf. 1 Tim 2:5-6; Hofius, 'Einer ist Gott—Einer ist Herr', 104.

[53] C. Plantinga, 'Social Trinity and Tritheism', in: R.J. Feenstra, C. Plantinga (eds), *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays*, Notre Dame 1989, 23-24.

[54] H. Conzelmann, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (KEK), Göttingen 1969, 171, overstates that God's Fatherhood would relate only to creation, not to Jesus Christ. Cf. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 242.

[55] Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 242, even states that 1 Cor 8:6, as an analogy to Rom 4:17, presupposes *creatio ex nihilo.*

[56] Cf. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 375; Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 636.

[57] Cf. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 237 n. 153.

[58] Cf. Mark 12:29. See Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 373.

[59] Moberly, *Old Testament Theology*, 11; R. Bauckham, 'Divine and Human Community', in: R. Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology*, Grand Rapids 2015, 23; P.A. Rainbow, 'Jewish Monotheism as the Matrix for New Testament Christology: A Review Article', *NovT* 33 (1991), 82.

[60] Hofius, 'Einer ist Gott—Einer ist Herr', 107, subtly distinguishes between a 'sprachlich' differentiation of εἴδωλον in θεοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ κύριοι πολλοί and a 'sachlich' differentiation of θεὸς in Father and Son.

[61] Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 136. Bauckham, 'Divine and Human Community', 33, seems to make too much *ex silentio* of the fact that Paul in 1 Cor 8:6 'does not here explicitly call Jesus "the Son" and so does not explicate the unity of God as the community of the Father and the Son'.

12:29; Gal 3:20; 1 Tim 1:17), Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:6 consciously and explicitly connects the confession of the Shema to the Christological confession of Jesus as Lord and God.[62]

In this context, it is noteworthy that the exegesis of the Shema itself (as offered in section 2 above) as a qualitative rather than a quantitative statement is in agreement with its reception in Second Temple Judaism and Paul's use of the Shema: not God's oneness in a numerical sense, but his unicity for Israel and his unique relation to Israel are central.[63] YHWH's unicity is the point Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 8:6. This unicity does not exclude the 'existence' (in the sense of ontological reality) of other gods, nor does it define this existence in relation to God's existence: the intent of this confession is an expression of allegiance to the living God, of exaltation, worship and love; not to present an ontological chart of deities.[64] God's oneness means that no other gods should be the object of worship for the people of God. Still, Paul's statement does imply a stronger claim on the ontological level than the Shema.

The level of theological reflection in 1 Corinthians 8:6 concerning the status of the one Lord Jesus Christ is rather high.[65] Yet the question how the unity of God and the deity of Jesus Christ relate remains mostly implicit in the New Testament. The confession of 1 Corinthians 8:6, however, connects these explicitly, albeit without the intention to provide a theoretical ontology. Still, Paul's statement 'incorporates Jesus Christ into the unique divine identity'.[66] According to Richard Bauckham, Paul, by doing this, 'is precisely *not* repudiating Jewish monotheism, whereas were he merely associating Jesus with the unique God he certainly *would* be repudiating monotheism'.[67] In other words, exactly the boldness of the claim—as Bauckham interprets Paul's words—that Jesus Christ is incorporated in the identity of the one God renders it an orthodox one from a monotheist perspective, whereas a less bold statement would be heterodox, identifying some sort of godhead outside of God.

[62] This conclusion is shared by Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 211; Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 97; O. Hofius, 'Christus als Schöpfungsmittler und Erlösungsmittler. Das Bekenntnis 1Kor 8,6 im Kontext der paulinischen Theologie', in: Udo Schnelle, T. Söding *et al.* (eds), *Paulinische Christologie. Exegetische Beiträge*, Göttingen 2000, 52; Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 128-129; Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 636-637.

[63] Cf. T.H. McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism? Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology*, Grand Rapids/Cambridge 2010, 60.

[64] Cf. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 211.

[65] Cf. other texts in which Jesus Christ is confessed as God; e.g. Mark 12:29,32; John 20:28; Eph 4:6; 1 Tim 2:5; Jas 2:19.

[66] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 211.

[67] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 213.

TRINITARIAN THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Although according to the famous statement of Adolf von Harnack, dogma is a product of the Greek spirit on the ground of the gospel,[68] Biblical texts themselves evoked questions that were not per definition driven by Hellenistic philosophy, but rather by the Christian monotheist reading communities themselves.[69] 1 Corinthians 8:6 obviously evokes the question of the relation between the one God and the one κύριος and of the distinction between Creator and creation. The Early Church developed these questions into Trinitarian theology. Gregory of Nazianzus, for example, expanded the Shema even further than Paul did, quoting and interpreting 1 Corinthians 8:6: 'For us, there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and one Holy Spirit, in whom are all things.'[70]

Two basic ideas that are shared by Paul and Trinitarian theologians such as Gregory but not generally by Hellenistic philosophy are the distinction between Creator and creation and the specific relationality between the Trinitarian persons.[71]

The first idea is the utter qualitative distinction between Creator and creation, which denies the plurality and divine hierarchy found in polytheistic models. Trinitarian theology expresses the conviction that there are no beings that belong ontologically somewhere in between God and creation. There is no godhead outside God, for God is one, and in accordance with the ban on images of God, the Creator cannot be reduced to an aspect or part of creation. This is the demarcation line between Jewish monotheism and various forms of paganism, as Bauckham has rightly noted.[72] Even while Second Temple Judaism showed much interest in angels, angelic beings and intermediary figures between God and humans, this did not diminish, but rather underline, the 'absolute distinction between the unique identity of YHWH and all other reality'.[73] Distinctions within the divine identity were not inconceivable, because the Jewish understanding of divine uniqueness did not reduce it to unitariness.[74] So, in intention and substance, the monotheism of the doctrine of the Trinity conforms to Second Temple monotheism.[75]

For Hellenistic philosophy, however, this accent on the distinction between Creator and creature was absent. Moreover, Platonic influences in particular led to an entirely different layered understanding of the relationship of God to the world, in which Jesus Christ was more likely to belong somewhere in between God and humans, neither truly God nor truly man, but

[68] Adolf von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Bd 1: *Die Entstehung des Kirchlichen Dogmas*, Freiburg ^{2}1888, 18: dogma is 'in seiner Conception und in seinem Ausbau ein Werk des griechischen Geistes auf dem Boden des Evangeliums'.

[69] L.W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotions to Jesus in Early Christianity*, Grand Rapids 2005, 651.

[70] Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 39, in: Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 38-41* (SC, 358), Paris 1990, 172-174: Ἡμῖν δὲ εἷς Θεὸς ὁ Πατήρ, ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα, καὶ εἷς Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, δι᾽ οὗ τὰ πάντα, καὶ ἓν Πνεῦμα ἅγιον, ἐν ᾧ τὰ πάντα.

[71] See C. Schwöbel, 'The Trinity between Athens and Jerusalem', *JRefT* 3 (2009), 41.

[72] Bauckham, 'Divine and Human Community', 33.

[73] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 87. Cf. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 27: 'By all indications, the postexilic interest in angels went hand in hand with a vigorous and lively monotheistic piety.'

[74] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 17.

[75] Cf. K. Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik. Die Lehre vom Wort Gottes: Prolegomena zur christlichen Dogmatik*, Bd I, 1, Zürich 1932, 374: 'mit der Trinitätslehre, betreten wir den Boden des christlichen Monotheismus.'

a demigod like Hercules. For Trinitarian theology, however, making Jesus Christ a mixed being is heresy.[76]

The second idea concerns the relation between God the Father and God the Son in the Trinity. Trinitarian theology affirms that Father, Son and Spirit are God, but that they are three 'Persons'. This formula seeks to acknowledge the tension in biblical narrative and in texts such as 1 Corinthians 8:6 between the Father and the Son without reducing them to a single identity or subordinating the one to the other. These tendencies, modalism and subordinationism, pervaded the (mostly middle- or neo-Platonic) philosophical climate in the centuries before Trinitarian dogma was formulated,[77] since there was only one ἀρχή of reality, while the rest of reality was ordered in hierarchical metaphysical echelons, in which living beings were conceived as being superior to the inanimate and the immaterial being superior to the material.[78] The top of the pyramid was reserved for the One: because composition is inferior to simplicity, the One is highest. In this logic, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to conceptualize the many in relation to the One without subordinating the many to the One. Any multiplicity must, then, be subordinated to a higher unity, from which it derives its existence. This gave rise to Christological subordinationism. Or, when multiplicity is seen as either an optical illusion or a temporary state of the higher unity, there is the modalist option of Father, Son, and Spirit being merely *modi* of the one true God. However, the Trinitarian idea that the divine hypostases are coordinated, not subordinated, opposed basic neoplatonic ideas.[79]

So, this theology implies a rejection of important aspects of the prevailing metaphysics, in which everything was divided into substance (οὐσία) or accident. Relationality was secondary, for it was accidental to the substance. In Trinitarian theology, however, οὐσία and relations are not brought in a scheme of subordination, but in coordination, or rather: relation.[80] Relationality is key. The relation between Father and Son is not accidental, but belongs to the definition of their being: the Fatherhood of the Father is not accidental, like the fatherhood of a human person could be understood as accidental to his identity. Rather, the Father is who he is in his relation to the Son. Without the Son, the Father would not be Father. Without the Father, the Son would not be Son. This relation in distinction is vital for Trinitarian theology.

The Early Church could hear in 1 Corinthians 8:6 a balance, and tensions, which Trinitarian theology seeks to maintain. It is noteworthy that the text brings the distinction between Creator and creature to the fore in an eschatological light: everything is from the Father and we are 'towards' him, while everything is through the Son, and so are we. Relational logic is crucial in 1 Corinthians 8:6: between the Father and the Son, between the Father and creation, between the Son and creation, between the Father and 'us', between the Son and us and between all the relations mentioned. That God is the origin of all these relations and that there is relationality in God himself (Father and Son), is key to the understanding of Paul's logic.

Is this relational logic, however, compatible with the Shema? It is noteworthy that, as argued above, the Shema is not merely a monotheistic statement, but it functions in the context of the

[76] This heresy is associated with Apollinaris of Laodicea. For a nuanced discussion of Apollinaris' Christology, see A.M. Ritter, 'Dogma und Lehre in der Alten Kirche', in: C. Andresen, A.M. Ritter *et al.* (eds), *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte*, Bd 1: *Die Lehrentwicklung im Rahmen der Katholizität*, Göttingen ^{2}1999, 230-235.

[77] A. Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, Bd 1: *Von der Apostolischen Zeit bis zum Konzil von Chalcedon (451)*, Freiburg ^{3}1990, 372.

[78] Ritter, 'Dogma und Lehre in der Alten Kirche', 132.

[79] Ritter, 'Dogma und Lehre in der Alten Kirche', 202.

[80] Ritter, 'Dogma und Lehre in der Alten Kirche', 205.

relation between God and his people Israel; that is, in the context of the covenant. YHWH is the unique One for Israel. This 'particularizing logic of love' is also characteristic of a biblically warranted account of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is not merely a logical figure to conceptualize the One and the many in one perspective, but it is the flip side of the acknowledgment that God is love. In Deuteronomy 6:4, this love means that Israel should be devoted to YHWH alone and not to other gods.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The survey of two central biblical texts, Deuteronomy 6:4 and 1 Corinthians 8:6, in connection to later Trinitarian reflection, leads to the following conclusions.

1. Deuteronomy 6:4 is a concise expression of the unique relation between YHWH and Israel. YHWH is the only one for Israel and therefore deserves its unreserved and wholehearted love. The Shema is not an abstract claim of numerical oneness or of 'monotheism'.

2. Rather than being a statement about the ontological status of other gods, the Shema emphasizes the unique relation between YHWH and Israel: 'our God is one'. This indicates a relational logic of love, which differs from an ontological logic of power.[81]

3. 1 Corinthians 8:6 offers a Christian exegesis of the Shema, including its relational character: 'For us there is only one God.' Rather than being only a subjective statement of Christian believers, however, it is a universal claim made in the concrete relation between God and his people.

4. Paul consciously and explicitly connects the confession of the Shema to the Christological confession of Jesus as κύριος and θεὸς. Jesus Christ belongs to God's identity, he is God, but he is not identical to the Father. The combination of these notions evokes questions that are similar to the questions addressed in Trinitarian theology.

5. There are important connections in internal logic between the Shema, 1 Corinthians 8:6 and classical Trinitarian theology, particularly in the distinction between God on the one hand and all of reality on the other; that is, the distinction between Creator and creation.

6. Trinitarian logic keeps the one God and the three Persons together as a logic of love, without subsuming the three in the One (modalism) or regarding the One as higher than the three (subordinationism). This expresses the same reality as indicated in 1 Corinthians 8:6.

[81] See A. Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation in John Calvin's Theology: Analysis and Assessment* (RHTh, 16), Göttingen 2011, 355-361.

WITNESSING SUPERLATIVE CHARACTER

What Seeing God's Glory (Also) Means

Wolter Rose

INTRODUCTION

The people of Israel saw God's glory at Mount Sinai (Exod 24:15-18; Deut 5:24). As the details of the description indicate, it was a spectacular display. The prophet Ezekiel, hundreds of years later, saw God's glory at the river Kebar, and then two more times at other locations (Ezek 1:28; 3:23; 8:4).[1] Again, it was in many ways a spectacular display.

It is sometimes thought that these instances present the default way of seeing God's glory. Could it be that that opinion is actually wrong? What if, as Aster has argued,[2] what Ezekiel saw was more the exception than the rule? What if the same applies to the people of Israel seeing God's glory at Mount Sinai?

What happens if one leaves these cases out of the equation (for a moment) and then starts reading everything that is said in the Old Testament about God's glory again? How does that affect the way one understands what it means to see God's glory? Those are the issues I aim to address in the first part of this article.[3] In the second part I will offer a brief survey of reasons why and situations and ways in which people respond to God's glory. In a third part I will show how what is said in the Old Testament about the glory of the God of Israel is said in the New Testament about the glory of Jesus, the Son of God.[4]

A first clue that this is a worthwhile topic of investigation comes later in the Book of Exodus in another case of someone seeing God's glory. This time it is Moses. Negotiating with YHWH about the future relationship between YHWH and the people of Israel after the sin of the Golden calf, Moses asks, 'Show me your glory, I pray' (Exod 33:18). YHWH responds by unfolding his name, YHWH (Exod 34:5-7), speaking words which highlight both his willingness to forgive and his resolve to be serious about the commandment contained in the Second Word of the Decalogue (Exod 20:3-6; Deut 5:7-10).

The narrator does not tell that Moses 'saw' something, which contrasts with how in an earlier episode in the same book the narrator records twice that certain people 'saw the God of Israel'

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[1] Cf. the contribution of H.F. van Rooy to this *Festschrift*: 'Seeing, Listening and Speaking: Encountering the Glory of the Lord in the Book of Ezekiel'.

[2] Shawn Zelig Aster, *The Unbeatable Light: Melammu and its Biblical Parallels* (AOAT, 384), Münster 2012, 301, 311.

[3] For a survey of scholarship on כבוד יהוה, see Aster, *Unbeatable Light*, ch. 6. Other recent studies include: T. Longman, 'The Glory of God in the Old Testament', in: C.W. Morgan, R.A. Peterson (eds), *The Glory of God*, Wheaton 2010, 47-78; P. de Vries, *De heerlijkheid van JHWH in het Oude Testament en in het bijzonder in het boek Ezechiël*, Heerenveen 2010; R. Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology*, Grand Rapids 2015, ch. 3.

[4] It gives me great pleasure to write this article as a token of appreciation for my dear colleague Eric Peels, who for me and many other is a trailblazer with his words to the tune *Liever langer luisteren* (better keep listening for a longer while).

(Exod 24:10,11). Yet, in my opinion, it is right to conclude that what happened when YHWH proclaimed his name was an answer to Moses's question—perhaps not the answer Moses expected, but a real answer.

1. PSALM 113: YHWH'S GLORY, SET TO FOUR TUNES

Reading texts can be compared to listening to music. With some music, if one listens to it again and again, one may hear things which one had not noticed before. Having listened to the voices speaking about YHWH's glory over and over again, I think I can distinguish four different melodies or tunes. Sometimes one will hear only one of the tunes, sometimes two or more tunes combined.

What I am suggesting is that the theme of God's glory is not only present when the noun כבוד or one of its synonyms is used (the tune which I will call 'Thesaurus' below), but also when one of the other three 'tunes' is used. In my presentations of the other three tunes (I will call them 'Superlative', 'Unrivalled', and 'Multidimensional'), when I list passages from the Old Testament I will put at the top of the list passages which contain both the tune 'Thesaurus' and the tune under discussion in that specific section (e.g. ##4-5, 10-11, 16 in the lists below). Further down the list, passages will be mentioned which do not contain the tune 'Thesaurus' but only the tune under discussion.

I consider a passage like Ps 96:1-8 as justification for this approach. As Goldingay puts it (notice his first two words: 'as usual'): 'As usual, the reasons for the worship and recognition are at the same time their content. (…) the formal distinction between vv. 1-3 and 4-6 is belied by a substantial continuity. The psalm continues to speak of Yhwh's honor.'[5]

All the four tunes can be heard together in the second strophe of Psalm 113.[6] Following a tradition of English language Christianity, I have given each of these tunes a name (they have nothing to do with the tunes mentioned in the headings of some of the psalms). In the following sections I will introduce the tunes 'Thesaurus', 'Superlative', 'Unrivalled', and 'Multidimensional'.

1.1 'His Glory'—the tune 'Thesaurus'

(1) The LORD is high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens.
(Ps 113:4)
(2) They shall see the glory of the Lord,
the majesty of our God.
(Isa 35:2)
(3) his name alone is exalted;
his glory is above earth and heaven.
(Ps 148:13)

[5] J. Goldingay, *Psalms*, Vol. 3: *Psalms 90-150* (BCOTWP), Grand Rapids 2008, 104 (he uses the word 'honor' where I use the word 'glory').
[6] My stichometric analysis of Ps 113 in three strophes of each three bicola (vv. 1-3, 4-6, 7-9) would be very similar to that of Pieter van der Lugt, *Cantos and Strophes in Biblical Hebrew Poetry III: Psalms 90-150 and Psalm 1* (OTS, 63), Leiden/Boston 2014, 251-255.

'Glory', 'splendour', 'majesty', and ... 'name'

The tune 'Thesaurus' (a 'collection of concepts or words arranged according to sense', *OED*) can be recognized by the presence of the noun 'glory' (כָּבוֹד, #1) and its synonyms (#2). Out of the fifteen synonyms listed in *DCH*[7] the most relevant for the present discussion are: הָדָר ('splendour'),[8] הוֹד ('majesty'), צְבִי ('ornament', 'splendour'), and תִּפְאֶרֶת ('beauty', 'splendour'). The noun שֵׁם ('name', 'standing', 'reputation') should also be mentioned. It is, as Adam van der Woude has argued,[9] in some contexts used as a synonym in the semantic field of 'glory' (#3).

1.2 'YHWH is high above all'—the tune 'Superlative'

(4) The Lord is high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens.
(Ps 113:4)
(5) Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvellous works among all the peoples.
For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be revered above all gods.
(Ps 96:3-4)
(6) Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods
(Exod 18:11)
(7) For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome
(Deut 10:17)
(8) They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom,
and tell of your power,
to make known to all people your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.
(Ps 145:11-12)
(9) Blessed be his glorious name forever;
may his glory fill the whole earth.
Amen and Amen.
(Ps 72:19)

'Greater than (all) / above (all)'

The second tune, the tune 'Superlative', can be recognized by the use of comparative or superlative expressions. In the second strophe of Psalm 113 the tune can be heard in the words 'high above all' (#4). This phrase is an alternative way of expressing the comparative construction,[10] with the preposition עַל ('over', 'above'), rather than (#6) the standard preposition מִן ('away from', 'out of', than'). In the same way, 'to be revered above all gods' (#5) and 'greater than all gods' (#6) are comparable in meaning. Whether providing the reason for praising YHWH and telling his glory, or the content of it, or possibly both, the word 'for' (כִּי)

[7] *DCH* IV, 357.
[8] The English equivalent 'splendour' is to be preferred over NRSV's 'majesty' in Isa 35:2; see *HAL*, 230.
[9] A.S. van der Woude, 'שֵׁם *šēm* Name', in: *THAT* II, 935-963, 958: 'Weil der Name in dynamischem Sinne das meint, was den Träger des Namens auszeichnet, bedeutet *šēm Jhwh* (ähnlich wie im profanen Gebrauch [...]) öfters die Herrlichkeit, den Ruhm und die Macht Jahwes, wie diese sich in Schöpfung (Ps 8,2.10) und Geschichte (Ex 9,16) offenbaren.'
[10] Cf. *HAL*, 781a, sub 1f.

at the beginning of the third line of #5 makes the connection between the tune ‘Superlative’ and the theme of glory explicit.

When used of YHWH, in many instances both comparative constructions include the qualifier ‘all’ (כֹּל), as here in #4, #5, and #6. This indicates that the expression is of a superlative nature semantically, even when the grammatical construction is comparative, which explains my choice for the label ‘superlative’.

‘God of gods’, ‘glory of splendour’

Statements about YHWH’s glory display a great creativity in using various superlative constructions. ‘God of gods and Lord of lords’ (#7) is an example of what I will call a ‘superlative construction by plural’, the joining of ‘two substantives, the first of which is constructed on the same substantive in the plural’.[11] The phrase can also be translated: ‘the Highest God and the Supreme Lord’.[12]

An example of a ‘superlative construction by synonyms’ is found in #8: ‘a genitive group of two substantives, which are synonyms or have closely related meanings’.[13] The phrase (in word-for-word translation: ‘the glory of the splendour of your kingdom’) is an effort to speak even more abundantly about what a few lines earlier was expressed as ‘the glory of your kingdom’. The superlative construction by synonyms is found a number of times with the words כבוד, ‘glory’, and שׁם, ‘name’ (here, the first line of #9).

1.3 ‘Who is like YHWH our God?’—the tune ‘Unrivalled’

(10) The Lord is high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens.
Who is like the Lord our God [...?]
(Ps 113:4-5)
(11) There is none like you, O Lord;
you are great, and your name is great in might.
(Jer 10:6-7)
(12) God is with you alone, and there is no other;
there is no god besides him.
(Isa 45:14)
(13) For who in the skies can be compared to the Lord?
Who among the heavenly beings is like the Lord,
a God feared in the council of the holy ones,
great and awesome above all that are around him?
O Lord God of hosts,
who is as mighty as you, O Lord?
(Ps 89:6-8[7-9])
(14) There is none like you among the gods, O Lord,
nor are there any works like yours.
[...]
For you are great and do wondrous things;
you alone are God.
(Ps 86:8,10)

[11] JM § 141*l*.
[12] So B.K. Waltke, M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Winona Lake 1990 § 9.5.3j #64; cf. NBV: ‘de hoogste God en Heer’.
[13] JM §141*m*; three substantives in Ps 145:5: ‘the glorious splendour of your majesty’ (הדר כבוד הודך), word-for-word: ‘the splendour of the glory of your majesty’.

(15) Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.
(Deut 6:4)

‘No one like / no one beside’, ‘Who is like?’, ‘No one / no other’

The third tune is the tune ‘Unrivalled’.[14] In the second strophe of Psalm 113 the tune can be heard in the last line of #10. Here YHWH’s unrivalledness is expressed in a rhetorical question, expecting the answer ‘No one is!’. In other cases the expression comes as an affirmation (#11, #12 and #14). Usually one finds a nominal clause with a preposition, e.g., ‘like’ (כְּ, #10, #11, and the first line of #14), or ‘beside’ (זוּלָתִי or מִלְּבַדּוֹ, #12). Occasionally one finds a fuller clause with a verb expressing the notion of comparison (the first two lines of #13).

People mention God’s unrivalledness when they speak *about* him in the third person (#10, #12) or *to* him in the second person (#11), or both about and to him (#13). Speaking about YHWH’s unrivalledness is an expression of agreement with YHWH’s own declaration of his unrivalledness, either in an affirmation or in a rhetorical question (both in #18, see below).

‘Alone’

Another alternative way of expressing God’s unrivalledness is a clause with the word ‘alone’ (last line of #14, compare the ‘none like’ in the first line). If the translation of Deuteronomy 6:4 in NRSV (#15) is defensible, and I think it is,[15] then the Shema could also be considered for inclusion with statements of YHWH’s unrivalledness.

1.4 ‘On high ... far down’—the tune ‘Multidimensional’

(16) The Lord is high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens.
Who is like the Lord our God,
who is seated on high,
who looks far down [...]?
(Ps 113:4-6)
(17) Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the clouds.
Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
your judgments are like the great deep;
(Ps 36:5-6[6-7])
(18) I am the first and I am the last;
besides me there is no god.
Who is like me?

[14] In the tune ‘Unrivalled’ I group what Labuschagne distinguishes as two aspects: incomparability and uniqueness; see C.J. Labuschagne, *The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament* (POS, 5), Leiden 1966, 114-123, where he highlights the ‘intimate connection’ between the two. On incomparability, see now also J.A. Middlemas, *The Divine Image: Prophetic Aniconic Rhetoric and its Contribution to the Aniconism Debate* (FAT, 2/74), Tübingen 2014, 93-102.
[15] Perhaps even better: ‘YHWH is our God, YHWH is the only one’, as a somewhat free rendering of word-for-word: ‘YHWH is our God, YHWH is unique’. For ‘unique’ as a possible meaning of אחד, see the examples listed in *DCH* I, 180-181, including Song 6:9 (also in a love relationship, like the Shema, cf. Deut 6:5: ‘You shall love the LORD’): ‘My dove, my perfect one, is the only one, the darling of her mother’ (אחת היא יונתי תמתי אחת היא לאמה). Interpreted this way, the Shema expresses a thought similar to the one expressed in Deut 4:35: ‘acknowledge that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him’ (cf. 4:39). Cf. the contribution of A. Huijgen and A. Versluis to this *Festschrift*: ‘Our God is One’: The Unity of YHWH and the Trinity in the Interplay between Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theology’.

> [...]
> Is there any god besides me?
> There is no other rock; I know not one.
> (Isa 44:6,8)

The fourth tune is the tune ‘Multidimensional’. In the second strophe of Psalm 113 the tune can be heard in the last two lines of #16. Here two areas of YHWH’s involvement[16] are mentioned: ‘on high’ and ‘far down’. This is just one example of the joint mention of two aspects of YHWH’s nature or character as evidence for his glory.

To qualify as multidimensional, the two aspects should be non-synonymous, e.g., contrasting or complementary. ‘Steadfast love’ and ‘faithfulness’ in the first two lines of #17 form a synonymous (broken) word pair. One could say the same of ‘righteousness’ and ‘judgments’ in the second and third line.[17] However, the combination of these two word pairs (cf. Ps 89:14[15]) makes YHWH extraordinary. Now one hears the tune ‘Multidimensional’.

I have chosen the word ‘multidimensional’ not so much because it fits well with the combination ‘high ... far down’ in #16, but for another reason. In studies of literature the adjective ‘multidimensional’ is used to describe characters who are real, or true to life, as opposed to ‘flat’ characters, who are one-sided, predictable.[18] YHWH is a multidimensional character in the sense that he is a person who has depth, in space, in his nature, and in time (#18)—to mention just a few dimensions.

1.5 Seeing YHWH’s glory means witnessing his superlative character

> (19) Which among the trees of Eden was like you in glory and in greatness?
> (Ezek 31:18)
> (20) The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
> the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
> They shall see the glory of the Lord,
> the majesty of our God.
> (Isa 35:2)

Now that I have introduced the four tunes to which people speak about God’s glory, the question to be addressed is: what does it mean to see God’s glory? How does the experience of the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 1, 3, and 8, or the experience of the people of Israel in Exodus 24:15-18, Deuteronomy 5:24 and similar passages relate to the experience of Moses in Exodus 33-34? To answer these questions I will briefly discuss an illuminating passage in the Book of Ezekiel.

When one reads through Ezekiel 31, one will hear language that by now sounds familiar, like ‘it towered high above all the trees of the field’ (v. 5), ‘the cedars in the garden of God could not rival it, / nor the fir trees equal its boughs; / the plane trees were as nothing / compared with its branches; / no tree in the garden of God / was like it in beauty’ (v. 8).

If said about YHWH, one would think these words were spoken to the tunes ‘Superlative’ and ‘Unrivalled’. Following on from the discussion so far, one would expect to hear the word ‘glory’ (כבוד) somewhere in this context. And indeed, the word occurs as part of the phrase

[16] See the last paragraph of 2.1.
[17] Even more so if one translates ‘judgments’ as a singular, ‘justice’, with NJPS and NIV.
[18] Cf. S. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, Sheffield 1990, 90-92.

‘glory and greatness’, which forms the focus of the question in Ezekiel 31:18, the final verse of the chapter (#19), ‘To whom do you compare [...]?’.[19]

The expressions are used by the prophet while talking about a tree, a ‘cedar in Lebanon’, towering ‘high above all’, with no tree in the garden of God being ‘like it’ in beauty. This is indeed, as Daniel Block calls it,[20] a ‘superlative cedar’. This is an example of how in common language the word ‘glory’ (כבוד) may be used to refer to superlativeness. Other examples include the exceeding wealth of Jacob,[21] or the ‘fabulous wealth’ (NET) of Haman,[22] or the ‘high station’ (NJPS) of Joseph at the court of Egypt.[23]

That it is not far-fetched to suppose that similar language with the same meaning is used of YHWH and his superlativeness can be seen in #20. Here the synonymous words כבוד and הדר (‘glory’ and ‘splendour’) are used in the first two lines to describe Lebanon, Carmel and Sharon, and then in the last two lines for YHWH.

So, what does it mean to see God’s glory, how do Ezekiel’s visions of YHWH’s glory and Moses’s encounter with YHWH’s glory relate? My answer to the first question would be: to see YHWH’s glory is to witness his superlative character,[24] and in answer to the second question, I would suggest that what Ezekiel saw in his vision was a physical manifestation of YHWH’s superlative character.[25] In the end Moses and Ezekiel may have seen the same thing, but in a different presentation.

2. REASONS, SITUATIONS AND WAYS OF RESPONSE TO YHWH’S GLORY

2.1 Reasons: Creator, Judge/King, and Champion of the vulnerable

> (21) Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. [//] You are the Lord, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them.
> (Neh 9:5-6)
> (22) For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and

[19] So D.I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48* (NICOT), Grand Rapids/Cambridge 1997, 193. The person addressed in the question is Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Most translations adapt the question to the usual form in which it is put, like NRSV: ‘Which among the trees of Eden was like you [...]?’, but the way the question is put here—and in v. 2—is different: אל־מי דמית ככה בכבוד ובגדל. It is more accurately translated with a singular second person as the subject, bringing out the correspondence with כל־עץ בגן־אלהים לא־דמה אליו ביפיו in v. 8.
[20] Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, 188.
[21] Gen 31:1 כל־הכבד הזה; cf. 30:43.
[22] Esth 5:11 כבוד עשרו.
[23] Gen 45:13 את־כל־כבודי במצרים; cf. 45:8.
[24] I am aware that I add yet another proposal to the list of suggestions made to identify what lies at the heart of the Hebrew phrase כבוד יהוה, including: (a) presence—C.J. Collins, ‘כבד’, in: *NIDOTTE* II, 577-587, 581; Aster, *Unbeatable Light*, 301 (‘in most of Biblical literature’); (b) radiance—F.M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, Cambridge 1973, 153 n. 30 (in Ps 29:3,9); Aster, *Unbeatable Light*, 301 (only in Ezekiel); (c) sovereignty—W. Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, Minneapolis 1997, 283.
[25] A similar distinction is made by Brueggemann, *Theology*, 283: ‘In many texts Yahweh’s glory has a visible, physical appearance of light. But what is seen in the end is Yahweh’s rightful claim to governance.’

who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing.
(Deut 10:17-18)

One area where people see YHWH's glory is his role as Creator. In the opening section of a long prayer of confession in Nehemiah 9:5-37 an unusually expanded description is given of YHWH's creational activity. The creedal statement is introduced by words spoken to the tunes 'Thesaurus' and 'Unrivalled' (#21).

A second area where people see YHWH's glory is his role as Judge or King. The words to the tune 'Superlative' in #22 (quoted earlier in #7) are followed by a statement of YHWH's impartiality and incorruptibility in his performance as Judge. The statement then continues with words describing YHWH in his role as Champion of the vulnerable, a third area where people see his glory.

YHWH's role as Champion of the vulnerable is also seen in the way in which he 'looks far down' in Psalm 113 (#16 in 1.4). That this is not the looking down of a spectator becomes clear in the last strophe of the Psalm (vv. 7-9). Here a poor man and a barren woman are mentioned as the beneficiaries of YHWH's special attention and care (cf. his 'steadfast love' and 'faithfulness' in #17 and #23).

2.2 Situations: adoration, thanksgiving, conflict, and despair

(23) I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples,
and I will sing praises to you among the nations.
For your steadfast love is higher than the heavens,
and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.
Be exalted, O God, above the heavens,
and let your glory be over all the earth.
(Ps 108:3-5[4-6])
(24) There is no Holy One like the Lord,
no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our God.
(1 Sam 2:2)
(25) In the day of my trouble I call on you,
for you will answer me.
There is none like you among the gods, O Lord,
nor are there any works like yours.
(Ps 86:7-8)
(26) I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you.'
(Ps 16:2)

If one looks at the moments in which people mention God's glory and respond to it, one finds a variety of life situations. Here I will only mention a few. On one side of the spectrum one finds adoration, when people express their deep appreciation and respect for YHWH, his greatness and goodness (#23). Closely related to adoration is thanksgiving, e.g., the prayer of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10), who fits the cameo in the final strophe of Psalm 113 of the barren

women made a joyous mother so well. Words to the tune 'Unrivalled' (#24) follow after an expression of joy over deliverance given by YHWH (v. 1).[26]

At the other end of the spectrum, one finds life situations of conflict and despair. People not only sing about YHWH's glory in situations where there are no problems or when all problems have been solved, but also when the problems are still there. These problems include: (a) battling despair, individually,[27] or (b) communally;[28] (c) being under threat from the wicked in old age;[29] (d) facing opponents (#25, where calling to mind God's glory serves as the basis of confidence that YHWH will answer the cry of supplication); and (e) confrontation with worshippers of other gods, on a communal level,[30] or on a personal level (#26).[31]

2.3 Ways: praise, joy, fear, and exchange

(27) For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be revered above all gods.
(Ps 96:4)
(28) Then my soul shall rejoice in the Lord,
exulting in his deliverance.
All my bones shall say,
'O Lord, who is like you?'
(Ps 35:9-10)
(29) The nations will fear the name of the Lord,
and all the kings of the earth your glory.
(Ps 102:15[16])
(30) They made a calf at Horeb
and worshiped a cast image.
They exchanged the glory of God
for the image of an ox that eats grass.
(Ps 106:19-20)

People respond in different ways to witnessing God's glory. In a number of cases God's glory is reason for praise, which is then seen as the only fitting response (#27). Another response which sometimes but not always is connected with praise, is joy (#28).

In other cases God's glory is reason for fear. This is sometimes presented as the response of the nations (#29), but it would be a mistake to think that fear is the only response of non-

[26] Translating the last words of 1 Sam 2:1 'I rejoice in your deliverance', with NJPS, following MT שׂמחתי בישועתך. NRSV translates: 'I rejoice in my victory', for which there is no text-critical evidence whatsoever.
[27] Ps 77:7-10[8-11], the tune 'Unrivalled' in v. 13[14].
[28] Ps 89:46-49[47-50], the tune 'Unrivalled' in vv. 6-8[7-9] (#13 above), 'Multidimensional' in vv. 14-15[15-16].
[29] Ps 71:4,10-11, the tune 'Thesaurus' in v. 8, 'Superlative' and 'Unrivalled' in v. 19, 'Multidimensional' in vv. 18-19.
[30] E.g., in Hezekiah's prayer in 2 Kgs 19:15-19, the tune 'Unrivalled' both at the beginning and the end of the prayer in vv. 15, 19 (confronting Rabshakeh's words in v. 12).
[31] The phrase 'holy ones' (קדושׁים) in Ps 16:3 must refer to other gods, otherwise there is no antecedent for the plural third person suffixes in 'their drink offerings' and 'their names' in v. 4 (cf. H.G.L. Peels, 'Sanctorum communio vel idolorum repudiatio? A reconsideration of Psalm 16:3', *ZAW* 112 [2000], 239-251). See also in this *Festschrift* W.Th. van Peursen, 'Patterns and Pleasure: Participants in Psalm 16' and G. Begerau, 'Who has Listened to the Text: The Impact of Eric Peels' Reading of Psalm 16:3 in Recent Literature'.

Israelites when they witness YHWH's glory: the words quoted in #12 (see 1.3) are a plea spoken by foreigners, from Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia.

One response to witnessing YHWH's glory is negative: when the people of God worship images or other gods, a practice forbidden in the Second Word of the Decalogue, one way to look at it is as an exchange of the glory of God for an image (#30; cf. Jer 2:9-13).

3. SEEING THE GLORY OF THE FATHER'S ONLY SON, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH

3.1 The gospel of the glory of Christ: superlative, unrivalled, and multidimensional

(31) though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.
(2 Cor 8:9)

(32) Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name
(Phil 2:9)

(33) There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.
(Acts 4:12)

(34) I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.
(Rev 22:13)

(35) And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.
(John 1:14 [NRSV translation footnote])

(36) Seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ
(2 Cor 4:4)

It would require another article to demonstrate that all four tunes to which YHWH's glory is spoken of are used by the writers of the New Testament to speak of the glory of the Son of God. Space only allows for a very brief discussion, this time in a reversed order starting with the fourth tune.

One could say that the summary description by the apostle Paul in #31 of the mission of Christ Jesus shows how the Son of God embodies the multidimensional movement 'on high ... far down' (#16 and #22). In Philippians 2:6-11 the apostle tells the same story but now in an expanded version. At the end of the passage Paul speaks words to the tune 'Superlative' about both the position and the name Jesus receives (#32), applying in a daring and innovative way words spoken by YHWH through the prophet Isaiah (cf. Isa 45:21-25: 'To me every knee shall bow, / every tongue shall swear') to the person of Jesus ('so that at the name of Jesus / every knee should bend, / […] and every tongue should confess / that Jesus Christ is Lord').[32]

The intimate connection between the glory of YHWH the God of Israel (#18) and of Jesus the Son of God is shown in #34 (against the background of Rev 1:6 and 21:6), words spoken to the tune 'Multidimensional'. The connection is also seen in the description of the mission of Jesus as the Word becoming flesh in the prologue of the gospel of John. The apostle identifies himself with a community of people who 'have seen his glory', speaking words to the tunes 'Thesaurus' and 'Unrivalled' (#35). Peter similarly speaks to the tune 'Unrivalled' when explaining to the rulers and elders of his people the unique significance of Jesus and his name (#33).

It comes as no surprise then that Paul can call Jesus Christ 'the Lord of glory' (1 Cor 2:8) and can summarize the Christian gospel as 'the gospel of the glory of Christ' (#36).

[32] An example of what Brueggemann, *Theology*, 287, calls the New Testament's 'daring moves to situate Jesus in Israel's rhetoric concerning Yahweh's glory'.

GOD'S CHARACTER AND THE PLOT OF THE BIBLE

Hans Burger

INTRODUCTION

In his writings Eric Peels has focused on the image of God in the Old Testament, especially its so-called shadow sides.[1] Rather than remaining silent about these sides of the image of God, he has discussed the difficulties that have been raised about that aspect of God's image. It would be wrong, however, to limit oneself to the problems and difficulties. Instead, they should be located in their biblical context: the dealing of God with us and with his entire creation. Consequently, Peels finishes his book, *The Vengeance of God*, with a chapter on the place and function of the vengeance of God within the larger context of God's Old Testament revelation. In short, to understand theologically God's vengeance one needs to see this divine aspect in relation to God's character and attributes. Consequently, Peels describes God's vengeance in this way:

> The punishing retribution of God, who in kingly sovereignty—faithful to his covenant—fighting and judging arises to defend the honour of his name, insures the maintenance of his justice, and works for the liberation of his people.[2]

This description indicates the interaction of God with his creation, especially with humanity, as the flow of the biblical narrative discloses it. Understanding this biblical narrative is important, particularly when one seeks for the larger whole of God's revelation.

In the first part of his *Systematic Theology*, Robert Jenson presents his doctrine of the triune God, namely, the God 'identified by the biblical narrative'.[3] The only reason to read the Bible as one story, according to Jenson, is that the different biblical stories 'witness to the continuing action of one and the same agent'.[4] As long as a story is open, the identity of the main characters of the story is open as well. However, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is a proleptic event that makes it possible to anticipate the end of the Biblical story. This anticipation gives dramatic coherence to the narrative identity of God.[5] This implies that both the Old and New Testaments are necessary to formulate an adequate doctrine of God. Reading the biblical story from the end as the drama of God, Jenson follows the creed of the Church and identifies three

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[1] See e.g. H.G.L. Peels, *De wraak van God. De betekenis van de wortel* NQM *en de functie van de* NQM-*teksten in het kader van de oudtestamentische Godsopenbaring*, Zoetermeer 1992 (ET: *The Vengeance of God: The Meaning the Root* NQM *and the Function of the* NQM-*Texts in the Context of Divine Revelation in the Old Testament* [OTS, 31], Leiden/New York etc. 1995); H.G.L. Peels, *Wie is als Gij? Schaduwkanten van het oudtestamentische Godsbeeld*, Zoetermeer 2007 (ET: *Shadow Sides: God in the Old Testament*, Carlisle 2003).

[2] Peels, *The Vengeance of God*, 277.

[3] R.W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1: *The Triune God*, Oxford 1997, 57.

[4] Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 58.

[5] Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 63-66.

main characters, Father, Son and Spirit.[6] In Jenson's concept, the biblical narrative is the entrance to a doctrine of God.[7]

For this reason, systematic theology has an interest in biblical narrative. Biblical narratives portray characters, and show who God is as their main character: the Scriptures tell about the way God interacts with human beings, in Israel, and ultimately in Christ and in the Holy Spirit. An image of God and a doctrine of God have to conform to the identity and character of God as the biblical narratives portrays it, given the presupposition that it is necessary to read the Bible to identify God.[8]

From a systematic theological point of view, it is important to observe that the story of the Bible as well as a doctrine of God both have their own 'narrative' or rhetorical logic. A narrative is characterized by what Paul Ricoeur calls 'discordant concordance', defined as 'the synthesis of the heterogeneous'.[9] In a narrative, different elements are brought together in a temporal sequence. The Bible narrates about God's history with creation, systematic theology reflects on this narrative. A doctrine of God has its own logic: it starts somewhere, orders its material, and 'tells' its own story of God. It is not a problem that systematic theology uses analytic thinking and often has a discursive character: Scripture itself contains non-narrative books, and stories often incorporate discursive passages.[10] However, it is still important to ask whether a doctrine of God (with its own [rhetorical] logic) does justice to the identity and character of God as main character of the story of the Bible. One has to ask, to which extend the arrangement of biblical material in a doctrine of God does imply a replotting of the story of the Bible. And what is the price to be paid for this replotting of the narrative?

In this article, I will contribute to understanding the larger whole of the image of God, of which God's vengeance and other 'shadow sides' are elements. Therefore, I will try to reconstruct the plot of the narrative of the Bible, the interaction of the elements of a story (like events, characters and settings).[11] In doing this, I presuppose that it is possible and fruitful to reconstruct an overarching but 'non-modern', 'hospitable' metanarrative with one main plot, because the triune God is acting in the biblical narratives in accordance with his goals and purposes.[12] Further, I will draw some systematic theological conclusions concerning the

[6] Cf. R.W. Jenson, *Canon and Creed* (IRUSC), Louisville 2010, 16, 43-50.

[7] J. Goldingay, 'Biblical Narrative and Systematic Theology', in: J.B. Green, M. Turner (eds), *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids/Cambridge 2000, 125-126, 130-131, shares the view that biblical narratives portray the character of God. He, however, minimizes the importance of the Trinitarian framework, emphasized by Jenson. Goldingay, as an Old Testament scholar, reads Scripture from the beginning to the end. Jenson reads Scripture in the light of its end.

[8] Cf. C. van der Kooi, 'Creative Love Theism: The Doctrine of God in Reformed and Evangelical Theology', in: C. van der Kooi, E. van Staalduine-Sulman *et al.* (eds), *Evangelical Theology in Transition* (AmSTaR, 1), Amsterdam 2012, 202. This narrative approach fits well with an earlier salvation-historical approach. The idea that the history of salvation has to be 'foundational' for dogmatics instead of merely 'illustrative' will lead to comparable results. Cf. B. Holwerda, 'De heilsgeschiedenis in de prediking', in: B. Holwerda, *"... Begonnen hebbende van Mozes ..."*, Terneuzen, 1953, 88, 94.

[9] P. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, Chicago/London 1992, 141.

[10] Cf. Goldingay, 'Biblical Narrative and Systematic Theology'.

[11] Cf. M.A. Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism? A New Approach to the Bible*, London/Minneapolis 1993, 23.

[12] R. Bauckham, *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World*, Grand Rapids 2003, 90, 93. And further C.J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, Nottingham 2006, 64.

significance of this plot for the doctrine of God and for understanding God's vengeance. But first I will describe Herman Bavinck's doctrine of God as an example of establishing doctrine without a direct relation to the biblical narrative.

BAVINCK'S DOCTRINE OF GOD

In Volume Two of his *Reformed Dogmatics*, Herman Bavinck begins his doctrine of God with the incomprehensibility of God, followed by a discussion of the knowledge of God, arguing that such knowledge is based on revelation. Significantly, his doctrine of God is preceded by Volume One of the *Reformed Dogmatics*, which deals with revelation, Scripture and faith. His discussion of revealed knowledge deals with revelation and Scripture in general, not with the narrative of salvation history itself. His starting point is the modern question whether it is possible to know God at all. Epistemological questions continue to guide his doctrine of God, for his section on the names of God starts with a discussion of accommodation and anthropomorphism. Discussing the classification of the names of God, Bavinck emphasizes the importance of the divine simplicity with the implication that 'all Gods attributes are identical with its essence'. Moreover, theology has to 'honor equally all the attributes of God'.[13] In his concept of God, Bavinck gives the primacy to the aseity of God, understood as the independence of an immutable being over against the becoming of creation that has been caused, and apart from the doctrine of the Trinity.[14] Thus, Bavinck follows the conceptual structures of classical perfect being theism and its concept of God.[15] His ordering of God's names and attributes is accordingly: first God's proper names: El, Elohim and El Shaddai; further YHWH, YHWH Sabaoth and Father. Then the attributes of God, ordered in the light of God's relation with his creatures: the incommunicable attributes of 'aseity, immutability, infinity (eternity and immensity) and oneness (numerical oneness, unity, and qualitative oneness, simplicity)'; and the communicable attributes ordered in accordance with the 'image and likeness of God' in humanity:

> First, there are attributes of God as the living one, as Spirit: his spirituality and invisibility. Second, there are attributes that describe God as perfectly self-conscious: knowledge, wisdom and veracity. Third, there are attributes that refer to God's ethical nature: goodness, righteousness, and holiness. Fourth, there are attributes in which God appears before us as Lord, king and sovereign: his will, freedom and omnipotence. Finally, there are attributes that sum up and complete all the preceding ones and reveal God in his absolute blessedness: perfection, beatitude, and glory.[16]

[13] H. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, Kampen 1928 (ET: *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 2: *God and Creation*, Grand Rapids 2004, 120).

[14] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 2, 122, 151-153. For an insightful discussion of God's aseity, see J. Webster, 'Life in and of Himself: Reflections on God's Aseity', in: B.L. McCormack (ed.), *Engaging the Doctrine of God: Contemporary Protestant Perspectives*, Grand Rapids 2008, 107-124. The influence of the modern deformation of the concept of aseity as described by Webster can be traced in Bavinck's doctrine of God.

[15] On classical theism and the logic of its concept of God, see Chr. Schwöbel, 'Exploring the Logic of Perfection: Divine Attributes and Divine Agency', in: G. van den Brink, L.J. van den Brom *et al.*, *Christian Doctrine and Philosophical Theology*, Fs. V. Brümmer, Kampen 1992, 197-217; N. Wolterstorff, 'Is It Possible and Desirable for Theologians to Recover from Kant?', in: N. Wolterstorff (ed. T. Cuneo), *Inquiring about God: Selected Essays, Vol. 1*, Cambridge 2010, 37-42.

[16] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 2, 136.

When dealing with the individual attributes, the biblical narrative does not come in view, and Bavinck does not give an analysis of the divine attributes in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity. Only after Bavinck has finished his paragraphs on God's attributes, the doctrine of the Trinity follows as the closing part of the doctrine of God.

To sum up, the concept of God developed in this doctrine of God is not controlled by the doctrine of the Trinity or by the narrative of Scripture. The storyline of his doctrine of God (knowledge – names – incommunicable attributes – communicable attributes – Trinity) differs from the storyline of Scripture.[17] Controlling concepts are God's aseity and simplicity. According to H. Jansen, this leads to a quite statically understanding of the relationship of the divine creator and creature, and to an emphasis on God's transcendence. Moreover, it becomes difficult to do justice to God's interaction with humanity in the history of salvation.[18] Finally, this concept of God makes the question 'What is God?' dominant. A doctrine of God starting from the narrative of Scripture focuses more on the identity and character of God, and hence on the question 'Who is God?'.

Before I turn to the plot of the Scriptures, it is important to note that a doctrine of God can be determined by the metaphysics of perfect being of classical theism, but also by a more contemporary metaphysics of creative love, as is the case in the open theism of Clark Pinnock.[19] Now, the question is whether it is possible to develop a doctrine of God controlled by the narrative of Scripture.

PLOT OF THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

The plot of the Bible has been reconstructed in various ways. I will deal with a reconstruction by three evangelical biblical scholars, the Old Testament scholar John Goldingay, the New Testament scholar Tom Wright, and Christopher Wright who as an missiologist has an overview of both Testaments.

Unlike Robert Jenson, who reads Scripture from the end, John Goldingay reads the Old Testament from the beginning, to reconstruct the faith of a reader of the Old Testament in 10 BCE.[20] The Old Testament is a book containing a diversity of faith affirmations, of narrative and non-narrative materials. Nevertheless, it is possible to articulate the metanarrative of Scripture.[21] Goldingay focuses on the Old (or First) Testament, although he admits that he reads it as a Christian.[22] According to Goldingay, the plot of Scripture contains the following acts:

1. God began (creation)
2. Humanity turned its back on God's instructions, and God started over (from Eden to Babel)
3. God promised, and the family grew (Israel's Ancestors)

[17] Nevertheless, the subsequent parts of his *Reformed Dogmatics* do follow partly the story of Scripture, namely creation, fall, person and work of Christ, benefits of the covenant, church, means of grace, intermediate state, return of Christ, and consummation.
[18] H. Jansen, *Relationality and the Concept of God* (CurEnc, 10), Amsterdam/Atlanta 1995, 60-61.
[19] See Van der Kooi, 'Creative Love Theism'.
[20] J. Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1: *Israel's Gospel*, Downers Grove/Bletchley 2003, 16.
[21] Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 21-23.
[22] Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 24-25.

4. Israel cried out, and God delivered (the Exodus)
5. God sealed, and Israel imperiled (Sinai)
6. God gave, and Israel took (the land)
7. Israel equivocated, and God accommodated (from Joshua to Solomon)
8. Israel turned away, and God wrestled (from Solomon to the exile)
9. God preserved, and Israel turned back (exile and restoration)[23]
10. God sent (the coming of Jesus).

The narrative tells both how God is 'involved in a particular sequence of events'[24] and how God takes humanity seriously, letting human beings play their part in history. In this interaction of God and human beings, Gods character is discovered, with moral implications for his people. Following act 2 till 9, God is 'compassionate, gracious, long-tempered, committed, truthful, carrying waywardness, not acquitting, and attending to waywardness in the way family life works out'.[25] The relation between Goldingay's reconstruction of the plot of the Old Testament and the character of God is evident: rightly, Goldingay affirms that the narratives tells the reader who God is.

Two comments on Goldingay's reconstruction need to be made. First, compared with Peels' work, the question emerges where the shadow sides of God's character can be found in Goldingay's version of the story of the Old Testament. God's anger is mentioned sometimes, but clearly the emphasis is on God's love and mercy, on God's loyalty to his people.[26] In his relationship with his people, God is 'a passionate and therefore jealous and angry lover'.[27] Anger can be necessary and God can be angry, but his commitment is stronger.[28] God's active punishment is minimized if not denied.[29] Similar to Peels, Goldingay stresses the prevalence of God's love and goodness over his anger and wrath.[30] However, Goldingay's version of Israel's gospel could have been more complete if he had also told the gospel of God's wrath and judgment. Goldingay proves to be no exception to Peels' observation 'that the Old Testament discussion of the vengeance of God has only received a very minor treatment in the discipline of Old Testament theology'.[31]

Second, Goldingay is an open theist, and it can be seen that an open theistic concept of God influences his reconstruction of biblical narrative. Also for God, creation is an adventure and a discovery.[32] God's knowledge is supernatural, but this knowledge 'comes about through discovery, through 'searching out'.[33] Just as human beings, God lives 'in narrative sequence' and 'is not atemporal or outside time, although God is omnitemporal and not limited to particular times'.[34] God is like a teacher who prepares his lessons, who does not control his students but still has an ordered class plan.[35] God's sovereignty is like that of 'a prison governor

[23] Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 36.
[24] Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 32.
[25] J. Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 3: *Israel's Life*, Downers Grove 2009, 48.
[26] Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 139.
[27] Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 633.
[28] Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 633-634.
[29] Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 139, 170, 698, 705-707.
[30] Cf. Peels, *Wie is als Gij?*, 142.
[31] Peels, *Vengeance*, 271.
[32] Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 45.
[33] Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 137.
[34] Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 63.
[35] Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 61.

or a parent of teenage children'.[36] Hence, Goldingay is critical of the influence of Greek thinking, which understood God's knowledge as God's unchangeable 'possession of all knowledge'.[37] According to Goldingay, the idea that God needs to reveal himself because he is hidden and transcendent to reality, likewise is a Greek thought and not a biblical idea.[38] Goldingay's correction of Greek thinking has to be appreciated, but he goes too far. First, he neglects the idea of God's foreknowledge as it can be found, for example, in Psalm 139:16: 'In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.' Further, as Peels has shown, more can be said about God's hiddenness as a biblical motif and not a Greek one.[39]

John Goldingay prefers to read the Old Testament as a book distinct from the New Testament and stops reading at 10 BCE. Nicholas Thomas Wright, however, reads the Old Testament in the light of the New. Crucial for his historical reconstructions of Jesus and Paul is a worldview-model that presupposes four worldview-markers: story, praxis, symbols, and questions. These questions are the following: Who are we?, Where are we?, What is wrong?, What is the solution? And what time is it?

Because stories are an important element of the worldview-model that determines his historical reconstructions of Jesus and Paul, the reconstruction of the biblical narrative plays an important role in his work.[40] Initially, Wright reconstructed the biblical narrative as a drama in five acts: Creation – Fall – Israel – Jesus – Church.[41] Recently in his book on Paul, he has given a more detailed analysis of the plots and subplots of the biblical narrative.[42] The outer story is about God and creation. God created the world with a purpose, but due to human acts things have gone wrong. God will come to judge and restore his creation. That restoring judgment of God will bring an end to the present age, and the age to come will begin.

The first subplot is about humanity, which was created to bring creation to its purpose. However, human beings failed to play their part in God's plan to reflect God's glory to his creation and bring this world to God's destiny. God's relationship with humanity is broken, and sin and death threaten us. Now, the restoration of both God's relationship with humanity and of humanity itself is necessary, so that humanity can reflect again God's glory and take its place in God's plan with creation.

Now, the second subplot comes in, the story of Abraham and his seed Israel. God's intention with Israel was to rescue humanity from rebellion, sin and death. Abraham and his family were called to be a blessing for humanity, but they proved to be part of the problem of humanity themselves and failed due to their covenant rebellion.

The third subplot is about the role of Torah. The Torah was given to Israel to let it play its part as a light for the nations. However, from the first moment that the Torah was given, it has shown Israel that it shares in the Adamic problem of humanity. The Torah has a paradoxical function in Israel's story, both as helper and opponent. It keeps Israel together, but also makes

[36] Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 138.
[37] Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 137.
[38] Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 158.
[39] Cf. Peels, *Wie is als Gij?*, 30-44.
[40] On his worldview-model and narrative, see N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, London 1992, 122-139; N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, Minneapolis 2013, 24-36.
[41] N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 139-143.
[42] N.T. Wright, *Paul*, 475-537.

it more sinful, so that Israel will suffer from the curse of the law instead of being a blessing unto the nations, until Israel itself will be saved and restored.

The story of Jesus presents the solution to the problems of all the other stories. The crucified Messiah is God's answer to the problems of all the other (sub)plots. He is the Messiah, the rescuer of the rescue-operation Israel, who fulfils Israel's calling. He is the true Israel, the seed of Abraham, who brings God's blessing to the world. And he is Adam, the new man who will bring creation to its purpose.

God is the one God of Israel, who is faithful to his creation and his purpose for creation; to humanity and his plan for humans in creation; to his covenant with Abraham and Israel to restore humanity and creation. He is faithful, although humans and Israel rebel against him. In Christ Jesus he returns to his people and becomes their king again. What God does in Christ and through his Spirit shows a radical view of the problem of evil: dark powers and human sin together plunged creation into darkness. The one God of Israel, however, is willing and able to rescue his rescue-operation and give the real answer to the human plight. God himself, identified with Jesus and present in his Spirit, brings the solution to the dark problem of evil. Both his faithfulness to his creation and his covenant, and his power to judge and to restore are central elements of Wrights portrayal of God.[43]

Wright's reconstruction of the plot of the Bible might be helpful to embed theological reflection on God's vengeance within the narratives of Scripture. Considering Peels' understanding of God's vengeance, the richness of his enumeration of elements is already striking (kingly sovereignty, covenant faithfulness, defence of the honour of God's name, maintenance of his justice, liberation of his people).[44] Wright, however, merely emphasizes the positive effect of God's judgment, which saves God's creation from the darkness of evil, and he does not focus on the 'shadow sides' of God. Peels' understanding of God's vengeance can therefore be used to enrich Wright's views.

The other Wright, Christopher Wright, is an Old Testament scholar and missiologist who gives an overview of the Old and New Testaments together in his book *The Mission of God*. Basic to his reconstruction of the plot of Scripture are two ideas. First, he uses a triangular model with God, humanity (or God's people) and the earth (or the land) as its three angels: a theological, a social and an economic angle.[45] Second, it is the mission of God that impels the narrative. God's mission is 'to restore creation to its full original purpose of bringing all glory to God himself and thereby to enable all creation to enjoy the fullness of blessing that he desires for it'.[46] Both ideas interact, for Wright's understanding of God's mission is determined by his triangular model. The mission is theocentric because it ultimately focuses on God's glory, as was God's good creation (the first angle).[47] Humanity and God's people in particular are elected to participate in this mission (the second angle),[48] 'in their engagement with God's world for the sake of the whole of God's creation' (the third angle).[49] Moreover, the triangular structure

[43] Cf. N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Minneapolis 1996, 612-654; Wright, *Paul*, 619-773.
[44] Peels, *Vengeance*, 277-295.
[45] Chr. Wright has developed this triangular model as an ethical triangle, structuring the Old Testament worldview in his *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, Downers Grove 2004.
[46] Chr. Wright, *Mission*, 188.
[47] Chr. Wright, *Mission*, 62-65, 404.
[48] Chr. Wright, *Mission*, 65-67.
[49] Chr. Wright, *Mission*, 51.

determines Wright's understanding of God's restoration and redemption. Wright emphasizes that one's vision of salvation has to be holistic. God's redemption is political, economic, social and spiritual.[50] Comparably, God's restoration is social (the angle of the people), economic (the angle of the land) and theological (the angle of the relationship with God).[51] As a consequence, Wright opposes a soteriologically narrow understanding of the cross of Jesus Christ. Not only has the cross dealt with guilt and sin, but at the cross Jesus Christ also conquered the powers of evil and death. He restored the unity of humanity by removing the hostility between Jews and Gentiles and by creating one new man. But he also will heal God's entire creation.[52]

Of course, the interaction in the space defined by the triangle, the interaction between God, humanity and world develops over time. At the beginning, God creates purposefully, but humans rebel against God and his purposes. Most of the story deals with how God's redemption is being realized in the interaction with his people in human history. The end of the story is the eschatological hope, that is, the new creation that is still being longed for.[53] During the long history, the people of God, which participates in God's mission, have their own history: from humanity to Israel and Jesus and to the Church.[54] God's people is chosen to be a blessing to the entire creation. Hence, Wright develops a missionary understanding of election and of the covenant. He takes the sequence of the various covenants not, with Walter Eichrodt, as *the* but still as '*one* fruitful way of presenting the grand narrative'. Understanding the narrative as 'a cable, with several closely entwined wires running along together', the covenant is one of the constituting wires.[55] The covenants with Noah, with Abraham, with Israel at the Sinai, with David and finally the new covenant together mark the diverse steps through time in which God's interaction with his people has developed.[56] The missional understanding of Scripture also colours Wright's view of the life of God's people. The life of both Israel in the Old Testament and the Church in the New Testament, has to be a witness to the other peoples of the earth.[57]

As a result of the combination of a theocentric and a holistic perspective, the wrath of God is a theme in Wright's reconstruction. Rebellion against God's purpose, idolatry and injustice all raise God's anger.[58] The emphasis on the glory of God and the purposes of God prevent Wright from disarming God's wrath in the name of God's love. God's purpose, however, is not to punish but to give the fullness of his blessing to his creation. Then, God is magnified most.

[50] Chr. Wright, *Mission*, 268-270.
[51] Chr. Wright, *Mission*, 290-292.
[52] Chr. Wright, *Mission*, 312-314.
[53] Chr. Wright, *Mission*, 63-64.
[54] Chr. Wright, *Mission*, 65-66.
[55] Chr. Wright, *Mission*, 325. On Eichrodt's attempt to use the covenant as organizing principle in Old Testament theology, see also Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 18. Recently, others reconstruct the narrative of Scripture, making use of the sequence of covenants. See e.g. S.W. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises*, New Haven/London 2009; P.J. Gentry, S.J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, Wheaton 2012.
[56] Chr. Wright, *Mission*, 324-356.
[57] Chr. Wright, *Mission*, 357-392.
[58] Chr. Wright, *Mission*, 179, 182, 185, 278, 359-360, 377, 395, 457-460, 469-472, 495, 501.

BACK TO THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Having described these three positions, it strikes me that none of these reconstructions of the plot of the Bible is Trinitarian. Knowing the end of the drama of Scripture by anticipation and God as triune, however, it is important to follow the creed of the Church in its identification of God as triune.[59]

Furthermore, the conclusion might be that the differences in the three reconstructions are not impressive. All three read the Scriptures as a collection of books and stories, which tell one overarching narrative, from Creation and Fall, via Israel, through Jesus Christ, to the Church and God's future. But each has his own emphasis: Goldingay emphasizes God's love for his people, Tom Wright God's loyalty to his covenant, and Christopher Wright God's mission for his glory. This evokes an important theological question: how should the relationship between these three emphases be understood: God's mission for his glory (the most theocentric emphasis), God's loyalty to his covenant (relational but also forensic) and God's love for his people (potentially the most open to anthropocentrism)?

The answer given to this question has theological significance. One might give primacy to one of these emphases. Peels' micro-narrative of God's vengeance, however, should make one cautious to do so:

> The punishing retribution of God, who in kingly sovereignty—faithful to his covenant—fighting and judging arises to defend the honour of his name, insures the maintenance of his justice, and works for the liberation of his people.[60]

Central in a doctrine of God is the question 'who is God?'. An answer to this question could be: God is the Father, the Son and the Spirit, who in his acts is characterized by his mission for his glory, his loyalty to his covenant and his love for his people. The elements of this short description have to balance each other. Next, such an answer has to be the controlling norm of a doctrine of God and of all further discussion of God's attributes.

Accordingly, the narrative of the triune God has to control our reflection of God's vengeance. Peels' description of God's vengeance is, on the one hand, a beautiful example of a discussion of an attribute controlled by such a narrative kernel; on the other hand, because Peels is an Old Testament scholar, it is not surprising that his understanding of God's vengeance has no Trinitarian outlook. A systematic theological treatment of God's vengeance should add a reflection on the cross and the coming judgment of Jesus Christ,[61] and on the purifying work of the Holy Spirit.

[59] Cf. the contribution of Arnold Huijgen and Arie Versluis to this *Festschrift*: '"Our God is One": The Unity of YHWH and the Trinity in the Interplay between Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theology'.
[60] Peels, *Vengeance*, 277.
[61] See e,g J.M. Burger, '"Door zijn striemen bent u genezen"; een uitweg uit de verstaanscrisis', in: *ThRef* 57 (2014), 388-395.

THE IMAGE OF GOD, LOST OR NOT?

Hae Moo Yoo

It is certainly not necessary to cite the adagium of hermeneutics to witness that exegesis can easily be influenced by the context within which the author is working. This is especially the case with the interpretation of the image of God.[1] 'By studying how systematic theologies have poured meaning into Gen. 1:26, one could write a piece of Europe's cultural history.'[2] For all that, I will examine especially this and other texts exegetically and dogmatically to ascertain whether the image of God is lost or not after the Fall. In the course of the discussion, the renewal of the image of God comes also into consideration.

M. Horton asserts the permanence of the image of God as follows:

> The important point is the affirmation that all human beings, even after the fall, are God's image-bearers. Coming into the world as relational beings, they are already members of a covenant community: the covenant of creation, 'in Adam'. Their status apart from being 'in Christ' is not that of nonperson or nonbearer of the divine image, but that of false witness and representative. They have lost not the natural image but the moral ability to fulfill its destiny. They remain prophets, priests, and kings but have abused their office and are born into the world in a state of high treason. It is an indelible status, commission, and office ... no person is relieved of that office. Instead, this office (image) witnesses against each of us, even as it also demands respect for all human life regardless of one's relation to God in Christ. Only in Christ do we realize the salvation and the goal of our personhood by the gospel, but the law that binds us to our neighbors and cobearers of God's image obliges us to treat them as persons.[3]

Horton bases his assertion of the permanence of the image of God on the following arguments. First of all, all humans are members of the covenant of creation. Secondly, the image of God is an indelible status. Thirdly, after the Fall they lost only the moral ability to fulfil the destiny of the natural image. Therefore, he maintains that humans apart from Christ are false representatives, but they are persons and image-bearers. Besides, there are some terms peculiar to the recent studies on the image of God, e.g. relational, representative, destiny, office, personhood.

Horton's view as set forth above may imply that losing the image of God equals no longer being a person. Therefore, those advocating the view that the image is lost after the Fall should consider the question as to whether they accept this consequence and if not, how they see the relation between humans as image-bearers and humans as persons. If one says that humans have lost the image of God through the Fall, should it consequentially mean that they are not humans and nonpersons?

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[1] Prof. Dr. John Vanderstoep (Canada) has carefully reviewed this article. I am very grateful to him.

[2] H. Berkhof, *Christelijk geloof. Een inleiding tot de geloofsleer,* Nijkerk [5]1985, 180 (ET: *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith*, Grand Rapids 1979, 179).

[3] M. Horton, *The Christian Faith: a Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*, Grand Rapids 2011, 436-437.

THE IMAGE OF GOD AND ITS LOSS IN CHURCH HISTORY

It is popular nowadays to distinguish three types of interpretations of the image of God in church history.[4] First, the substantialistic interpretation conceives the image of God by reason, conscience, spirituality, immortality, freedom and personhood, and so on. This dominant metaphysical stream of interpretation stretches from the ante-Nicene fathers through the high Middle Ages. Even in the modern period it held sway until the middle of the twentieth century. Secondly, a dynamic or relational notion beginning in the Reformation focuses more on ethical conformity or obedient response to God. Thirdly, the functional or missional view of the image of God is a more recent phenomenon which designates the royal office or calling of humankind as God's representative and agent in the world. This view relates Psalm 8 to the interpretation of Genesis 1.

Obviously, in formulating their view of the image of God, the church fathers engaged with all kinds of ideas that were in vogue in their days, either by following or rejecting them. Against the Gnostic writers who aspired an identity with God, Irenaeus distinguished between the image which lay in the soul of the animal nature and remained after the Fall, and the likeness to be received through the Spirit which was lost after it.[5] Christ as the invisible Logos is the archetype of man and he establishes the likeness as the visible Logos.[6] For Tertullian, even man, as performer of shameful acts, is God's image.[7] While Irenaeus emphasizes the togetherness of body and soul, Clemens and Origen stand against corporeality in the image of God.[8] Following the latter, Augustine restricts the image of God to reason,[9] and this has become the main view in Western theology. He deduces the vestiges of the Trinity from the human soul (*anima*) as the image of God.[10] However, he affirms that man and woman are created equally as the image of God.[11] Immortality as the original image of God is first considered as a gift of grace,[12] but since the third century has been accepted as a natural quality of the soul.[13] The mind and free will are included in the image, especially by John of Damascus.[14]

Thomas Aquinas for the most part considers likeness, as well as a preamble to image, as an expression and a perfection of it, and accepts the distinction made by Irenaeus.[15] Lombard speaks of *imago creationis*, *recreationis* and *similitudinis*.[16] In general, the medieval

[4] J.R. Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*, Grand Rapids 2005, 18-29.
[5] Irenaeus, *Contra haereses*, 5,6,1, PG 7, 1138A; 5,16,2, 1168A; cf. Origenes, *De principiis*, 3,6,1, PG 11, 333C.
[6] Irenaeus, *Contra haereses*, 5,16,2, PG 7, 1168A; cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Paedagogus*, 1,12, PG 8, 368B; Origenes, *De principiis*, 1,2,6, PG 11, 134B-135B; Origenes, *Contra Celsum*, 4,30, PG 11, 1072B; Athanasius, *Oratio de incarnatione*, 13, PG 26, 119B.
[7] Tertullianus, *De spectaculis*, 2, PL 1, 632B.
[8] Clemens, *Stromata*, 2,19, PG 8, 1048B; Origenes, *De principiis*, 1,7, PG 11, 128A.
[9] 'ratio et intelligentia', Augustinus, *Confessiones*, 13,32,47, PL 32, 866; cf. Lactantius, *De ira Dei*, 7 and 14, PL 7, 93A, 122A; Athanasius, *Oratio contra gentes*, 34, PG 25, 68B.
[10] 'memoria, intellectus, voluntas', Augustinus, *De trinitate*, 10,11,17-19, PL 42, 982-984; 'mens, notitia, amor', 9,12,18, 972. Thomas (I, q 93, a7), Lombard (cf. n. 15 below) and Luther (WA 42,45,13-17) follow Augustine in this, but Calvin criticizes him (*Institutio*, 1,15,4).
[11] Augustinus, *De genesi ad litteram*, 3,20, PL 34, 287-288.
[12] Tatianus, *Oratio adversus Graecos*, 13, PG 6, 834A.
[13] Tertullianus, *Adversus Marcionem*, 2,9, PL 2, 295B; *Ad nationes*, 2,3, PL 1, 590A; *De anima*, 51, PL 2, 736A.
[14] Joannis Damasceni, *De fide orthodoxa*, PG 94, 919B.
[15] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (ed. Caramelli), I, q 93, a9, Roma 1952, 461.
[16] Lombardus, *Commentaria in Psalmos*, PL 191, 88B; *Sententiae*, 1,3,7, PL 192, 530.

scholasticism does not exclude body from the image, but regards the spiritual activities as important elements of the image.

The Reformers reject the distinction between image and similitude, and emphasize the integrity and wholeness of man before God. For Luther, Adam was the image in his original righteousness, but it has been lost as a result of the Fall and then regained by Christ.[17] According to Calvin, the image was located in the soul. However, he explicates the image as a representation of God, which is visible in the light of the mind, in the uprightness of the heart, and in the soundness of all the parts. God's image was not totally annihilated, yet it was so corrupted that whatever remains is frightful deformity.[18] Therefore, he interprets it as the destiny of man restored by Christ.

In the nineteenth century, the image of God is understood more and more as a disposition and destiny of man. Friedrich Schleiermacher holds that the appearance of Christ the Saviour completes the creation of man.[19] Albrecht Ritschl asserts that the original state of perfection of man is possible only after the appearance of Christ.[20]

In the twentieth century, Karl Barth proposes a relational notion of the image of God that refers to the God-given capacity of human beings as male and female to be addressed by and respond to God's word.[21] Emil Brunner distinguishes the formal-structural concept of the image in the relationship with God as responsibility from the content-material concept of the image in the fulfilment of the responsibility through Christ. The image is not to be lost.[22]

Since the twentieth century, Old Testament studies on the image of God have developed and can be classified into three opinions: the relational, the functional, and no explicit definition. The first view maintains that God has created man in his image to correspond with himself. The second view, based on the function of royal images in the Ancient Near East as reconstructed by archaeological research, claims that in Genesis 1:26-28 man is charged with the representation of God and is equipped with divine qualities in order to carry out this function. The third view holds that there is no definite idea of the image of God in Genesis 1:26-28.[23]

As for the consequences of the Fall, in church history it is the majority's opinion that the image of God is not lost after the Fall. Some defend this view referring to the reason or mind or intelligence, others to the formal structure of the responsibility of man. Recently, there has been a major consensus among biblical scholars and theologians that the image of God is not lost because the Fall is no historical factuality.[24] However, there are some who assert the loss of the image of God after the Fall. Luther and the Lutherans identify the image of God with 'original righteousness' which has been lost and is only renewed through regeneration.[25] In some sense Irenaeus speaks of the loss of the likeness. Though it is debatable to compare the

[17] M. Luther, *Reihenpredigten über 1 Mose,* WA 24,52,6; *Die Disputation de iustificatione (1536),* 15, WA 39/1,108,5-15; *Vorlesungen über 1 Mose (1:26)*, WA 42,46,4-5.
[18] Calvin, *Institutio*, 1,15,3-4.
[19] Fr. Schleiermacher, *Der christliche Glaube 1*, Berlin 1962, 337 (§ 61,5); *2*. 24 (§ 89,1).
[20] A. Ritschl, *Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, Bd 3, Bonn ^{3}1888, 307.
[21] K. Barth, KD III/1, 208, 219.
[22] E. Brunner, *Die christliche Lehre von Schöpfung und Erlösung*, Zürich 1950, 91-92.
[23] G.A. Jónsson, *The Image of God: Genesis 1:26-28 in a Century of Old Testament Research* (CB.OT, 26), Lund 1988. Jónsson himself stands for the functional interpretation, which now would be the consensus view among Old Testament scholars, except for the relational view of C. Westermann and the view of J. Barr who advocates no explicit definition (219).
[24] J. Kamphuis, *Uit verlies winst. Het beeld van God en het komende koninkrijk*, Barneveld 1985, 17.
[25] Th.G. Tappert (ed.), *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Philadelphia 1959, 512.

view of Irenaeus with Calvin's view between the broad (*humanitas*) and narrow (*conformitas*) senses of the image,[26] Calvin and the Reformed view allude to the loss of the image of God in some sense.

THE FALL AND THE LOSS OF THE IMAGE OF GOD ACCORDING TO GENESIS

Genesis 1:26-28, 5:1,3 and 9:6 will be taken into consideration of the topic, whether after the Fall the image of God is lost or not.

> Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Gen 1:26-27)

The Hebrew preposition בְּ in verse 26 (NRSV: 'in') is the so-called 'beth essentiae', so it might be translated by 'as'.[27] The preposition כְּ 'according to' means a relation of either perfect (equality = exactly like), or imperfect (resemblance = more or less like) similitude. Therefore, God's first words in verse 26 can be translated: 'Let us make humankind as our image, like our likeness.'

The image refers to the correspondence of man to God. However, it is more proper to speak of God's relation to man here. God deliberated by himself, and decided to create humankind, and to grant them to have dominion over the other creatures. The dominance over them was the position and the function of man from the outset, and at the same time his relation to them. 'Likeness' follows next to emphasize that the correspondence between God and man is not about identity, but rather points to the intimacy of the relationship. Scholars cite Psalm 8:6-8 to explain the content of the image: 'You have given them dominion over the works of your hands.' (Ps 8:6a) The right of his dominion and the duty of his reign are not autonomous but in being an image of God. Man is related to God by exerting his dominion by representing God.[28]

Man was made as male and female. This fact introduces the relation of man to woman. '... let *them* have dominion over ...' points to humankind in the plural. This office of dominance is given to both man and woman. They apparently execute this office together in Genesis 5:3, which says that Adam became the father of a son in his likeness, according to his image. It is noteworthy that in the description of the begetting of a son by Adam, which evidently requires the cooperation of a woman, the same words as in God's creation of humankind are used. God's blessing to 'multiply' (Gen 1:28) finds its fulfilment in this instant. However, by killing his brother Abel who was the likeness and image of their father Adam, Cain destroyed the community and negated God's blessing and the task to multiply.

Can murder, even fratricide as is the case with Cain, be attributed to the image of God? 'Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind.' (Gen 9:6) Here it is recalled that God made humankind in his own image. The fact that this prohibition is given to Noah after the Flood, also draws our

[26] Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, 21.
[27] D.J.A. Clines, 'The Image of God in Man', *TynBul* 19 (1968), 80.
[28] H.W. Wolff, *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments*, München 1973, 233-242.

attention to the time preceding it. When people began to multiply, the Lord said that his spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh (Gen 6:1,3). God sentenced all flesh unto death save Noah and his family. 'Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God.' (Gen 6:9) Here, some aspects of being the image of God might be recognized, that is, to be righteous and blameless.[29]

Is it appropriate to allege that after the Fall there was no image-bearer except for Noah? That is, the image of God is lost after the Fall? If this is really the case, how can it be explained that Adam begot his son in his image, and that Genesis 9:6 restates that in his own image God made humankind?

Even if it may be correct to say that coming into the world as relational beings humans are already members of a covenant community 'in Adam', it should be remembered that Genesis 5 and 9 come after the 'protoevangelism' of Genesis 3:15, which may be understood as an eschatological promise. By promising the offspring of the woman, God has turned the eyes of the sinners toward the salvation of the future. This is already a covenant of grace and Adam was encouraged to long for the offspring of the woman. After receiving this promise from God, Adam named his wife Eve, 'the mother of all living' (Gen 3:20). With the same promise Adam was driven out of the garden of Eden, and bore Cain. Was it 'inconsistency'[30], that Adam was alive in exile? No! Adam was really dead when he sinned against God, who had already warned him (Gen 2:17). In such a state, Adam was banished. However, he became alive by believing in the promise of God, in the eschatological expectation of that offspring of the woman (Gen 4:1).[31] The dead man wanders around the tree of life clinging to the promise given to him. Christian theology stands or falls with a historical Adam and a historical Fall,[32] and the Fall brought about a great chasm which could not be bridged over by a sinner. Sinners apart from being 'in Christ' are really false witnesses and representatives, but also dead in themselves, so that they cannot be legitimately called the divine image-bearers apart from the covenant of grace and the faith in it. In this faith, Adam is, in advance, granted the office of the image of God.

In Genesis 9:6, we are reminded of the creation of man in the image of God, but it is not contradictory to the loss of the image. We have to note that this verse comes after Noah offered burnt offerings (Gen 8:20). Then God blessed Noah and his sons with the blessing and mandate given to Adam before the Fall (Gen 9:1,7). God began again with humans who stood before him through the offerings. 'When God is on the way to the recreation, he remains faithful to his creation.'[33] Sinners cannot stand before God without the intercession of a mediator, here foreshadowed by the offerings.

In light of these reflections, it appears to be inappropriate to say that the image of God in its narrow sense is lost, but that in the broad sense it is not. It is necessary also to consider the historical creation of man in the image of God in the past and the eschatological expectation of its restoration in the future.

[29] Cf. B. Janowski, 'Die lebendige Statue Gottes: Zur Anthropologie der priesterlichen Urgeschichte', in: B. Janowski (ed.), *Die Welt als Schöpfung* (BTAT, 4), Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2008, 162; A. Schüle, 'Menschsein im Spiegel der biblischen Urgeschichte (Genesis 1-11)', in: B. Janowski, K. Liess *et al.*, *Der Mensch im alten Israel: Neue Forschungen zur alttestamentlichen Anthropologie* (HBS, 59), Freiburg im Breisgau 2009, 595.
[30] C. Westermann, *Genesis 1* (BKAT), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1974, 306.
[31] Cf. Luther, *Vorlesungen über 1 Mose (5:3,5)*, WA 42,250,4-6.
[32] Horton, *The Christian Faith,* 424.
[33] Kamphuis, *Uit verlies winst*, 45.

CHRIST THE IMAGE OF GOD

Scripture actually nowhere mentions whether humans 'are' the image of God or not. At the utmost, it says that man is created 'as' the image of God.[34] However, there is only one person who 'is' the image of God: Jesus Christ. Christ is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). The apostle Paul says: '... the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God' (2 Cor 4:4).

There is an intimate relation between Christ the image of God and glory. This might be called an eschatological aspect of the image of God. The destiny of man is directed from the start towards the glory, which is in the end attained in Christ. Is it biblically legitimate to assert that the first Adam ceased 'to reflect God's glory after his sin. Thus, he did not lose the divine image altogether, but it did become distorted by losing the glorious aspect of that image'?[35] In that case Romans 3:23 is cited without exception: 'since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God', as if this verse referred to Adam's impact on the entire fallen humanity, which also failed to reflect God's glory. Still, the eschatological perspective of this verse has to be taken into consideration. This verse does not mention the image of God directly, but in connection with 2 Corinthians 4:4 it can provide some guidelines for understanding. 'Fall short' of Romans 3:23 does not mean a lack of something already possessed, but an achievement or want, because it has not been reached yet.[36] The glory mentioned here is still to be achieved and reached in the future. '(I)t may be affirmed quite simply that the sinner of this aeon displays little of the divine nature according to which, and with a view to which, he was created (Rom 3:23). We can only turn our gaze from the "groan" of the present to the other aeon. This means that it is not man of the present, but eschatological man who shares in the "glory".[37] The destiny of man was to reach the glory of God, but it was thwarted by his fall.

The idea of the loss of the image of God is usually rejected, as we have seen. The most plausible reason for this can be sought in the distinction between the image and the likeness in various forms. However, as can be concluded from the parable of the talents (Matt 25), the slaves receive the talents in order to fulfil their stewardship. Most theologians might consider the talents and the ability to calculate them as if they were components of the image of God which could never be lost in any circumstance. However, neither the talents given to them by the master nor the ability to calculate them, but their obedient usage decide whether a slave is good and trustworthy or wicked and lazy. The image of God is not a sort of datum which remains neutral, but is sustained by God himself. It does not refer to any quality in man, but to his destiny in obedience to God and his commandments. That the Creator sustains man as man after the Fall, does not unconditionally lead to the conclusion that man outside of Christ is still

[34] Surely, there is one passage, namely 1 Cor 11:7, which mentions man the image and reflection (*doxa*) of God and woman the reflection of man. How is this passage to be interpreted? Paul alludes to the creation of man and woman in Gen 1 and 2, and testifies that woman is dependent on man. Therefore, this verse does not simply declare that man is the image and reflection (*doxa*) of God, but that he is so in relation to woman; cf. Augustinus, *De trinitate*, 12,7,10, PL 42, 1003.

[35] G.K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*, Grand Rapids 2011, 456.

[36] S. Greijdanus, *De brief van den apostel Paulus aan de gemeente te Rome 1* (KNT), Amsterdam 1933, 190; Cf. J. Jervell, *Imago Dei: Genesis 1:26f im Spätjudetum, in der Gnosis und in den paulinischen Briefen* (FRLANT, 58), Göttingen 1960, 326-327.

[37] G. Kittel, 'δόξα', *TDNT* II, 250.

the image of God.[38]

The image of God primarily means visibility, making God visible. Christ is the image of the invisible God. The Gospel testifies that God the only Son has made God known (John 1:18; cf. 6:46; 12:45; 14:9). Jesus is the Revealer who makes God manifest in a unique way, God the Father has revealed himself in Jesus, and only in Jesus.[39] This making of God visible by Jesus means revelation in history. In his works, Jesus revealed and reveals who God is. In Colossians 1:15 as well as in 2 Corinthians 4:4 'the point is the visibility, radiation of God's glory in and through the glory of Christ.'[40] The image of God is not based solely on God's invisibility, but Christ the image of God is to be understood as a making of God visible.[41]

CONCLUSION: THE LOSS OF THE IMAGE AND ITS RESTORATION BY CHRIST

In conclusion, after the Fall the image of God is lost, and the expelled, lost image-bearer is totally unable to restore it by himself.

> Man has lost his own, godlike being, which he had from God. He lives now without his essential destiny to be Gods image ... That is the contradiction of our existence and the source of all our troubles. Since then the proud children of Adam sought to restore the lost image of God. ... Their monstrosity, which they shape into the image by their own invention, bears without their knowing it more and more the image of Satan. The image of God as favour of the Creator remains lost in this world.[42]

The Creator, who recalled the sinner of his creation in his own image, makes him long for the coming Restorer. Jesus Christ, the last Adam, has achieved this restoration with glory. The image denotes the manifestation, the visibility of God. Many other elements of the image, e.g. relational, representative, destiny, office, personhood, can be explained from the fulfilled works by Christ in his crucifixion and resurrection. If Christ alone is the image of God, then humans are not image-bearers outside of him. 'In all these NT statements it is presupposed that the lost man is not the image of God. Only through the faith in Christ he is transformed into the image of God.'[43]

When Christ regained this glory, he did not only regain the glorious aspect of the image, but Christ himself is the image of God and as such he regained it for mankind. Believers, seeing the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18; cf. Rom 8:29). By this transformation, they will regain the image of God to which they conform day by day in the power of the Spirit of Christ. Believers are transformed

[38] Jas 3:9 testifies that even after the Fall man was made in the image of God, but this does not yet mean that man *is* the image of God. Cf. J. van Genderen, W.H. Velema, *Beknopte Gereformeerde dogmatiek*, Kampen 1992, 303: 'One can no longer speak of the image of God after the fall into sin and prior to the restoration. Yet the Bible does so. Why? It is because man continues to be addressed in terms of his original calling and purpose, and because restoration does not mean the creation of something from scratch.'

[39] W. Michaelis, 'ὁράω', *TDNT* V, 363.

[40] G.C. Berkouwer, *De mens het beeld Gods*, Kampen 1957, 111.

[41] Contra Michaelis, *TDNT* V, 370.

[42] D. Bonhoeffer, *Nachfolge* (DBW, 4), (Ed. M. Kucke, I. Tödt), München 1989, 298.

[43] E. Schlink, *Ökumenische Dogmatik,* Göttingen 1983, 103; cf. 172. Schlink refers to New Testament statements which are also mentioned in this article.

into the image of Christ (1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29), which is also the transformation into the image of God. This transformation is not partial but total. That is the renewal in knowledge according to the image of God the Creator (Col 3:10-11), and the new creation according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph 4:24). It accompanies the renunciation of sin, faith in Christ, and new life in obedience by the power of the Holy Spirit. It also affects not only man's knowledge and action, but also his corporeality (Phil 3:21). With regard to the image of God, there is no indelible status in itself, though commission and office remain even to the sinner. Indeed, none is relieved of that office.

It is to be ascertained that only in Christ humans become and are image-bearers of the triune God. God does not give man up, but he holds on to man's destiny for which he has created him, that is, to be his image. In Christ's resurrection from the dead, the image of God as the destiny of man is fulfilled in his glory, which was originally given to him. It should be remembered that Christ's resurrection is really from the dead, and the death which he overcame is the real penalty upon sin by the fall of the first Adam.

GOD IS A REPENTING GOD

Taking Biblical Theology Seriously in Systematic Theology: A Case Study

Rik Peels

I am excited and honoured to contribute to this *Festschrift* for my father. My relation to his work has shown significant improvement over the years. It started with crashing his computer when I was a kid (he handled it gently, but I can now easily imagine how frustrating that must have been), then being taught about his research as a student, subsequently being inspired by it in my own work in the philosophy of religion, now writing on it for this book, and, hopefully, as my father (coincidentally) recently suggested, joint work on this in the future. More importantly, I am deeply thankful for the way he and my mother introduced me to living the life of faith. It has been and still is a pearl of great price.

INTRODUCTION

Many biblical scholars offer original exegeses of particular text passages, accounts of certain historical developments, analyses of the structure or main theme of a particular book in the Bible, and so forth. This is all, of course, valuable work. A significant number of biblical theologians, though, at some point lose track of (or no longer believe in) the fact that the primary purpose of the Bible, the Old Testament included, is for God to *reveal himself*. He intends to show who he is and who he is *to us*. I am proud that my father has always kept a clear eye on the fundamental aim of Scripture and has, in fact, made it the focus of his own work: what does the Old Testament tell us about who God is? He has especially given attention to properties of God that we—Western 21st century human beings—especially may find troubling, such as God's revenge, anger, patience, jealousy, and repentance. What Scripture wants to tell human beings about the Lord himself has fascinated my father from the very start of his academic work and I am thankful for all that he has been able to do in the course of the last twenty-five years.

Now, let us turn for a moment to systematic theology and philosophy of religion. These fields have said much both about what God is supposed to have *done* (such as redeeming the world in the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ) and about who God *is*. The remarkable thing, though, is that what they say about God often fails to take the aforementioned divine attributes into account. They frequently limit themselves to perfect being properties, such as necessary existence, omniscience, omnipotence, simplicity, etc., plus a few extra attributes such as holiness and grace. Little is said about God's joy, revenge, anger, patience, jealousy, and repentance, even though both the Old and New Testaments are full of statements and stories related to these characteristics of God. In other words, much systematic theology has dealt extensively with the *nature of* God (the attributes that God has essentially) but relatively little

with the *face* or *character of* God (the surprising properties that tell us something about who God is that do not obviously follow from his being perfect in all regards).[1]

Of course, making good on this would be a large-scale project. It is particularly important nowadays, though. For one thing, many people struggle with scriptural passages that mention these attributes of God. Another reason is that whether or not religious people are inclined towards a normal and healthy religious life or towards extremism, fundamentalism, and terrorism, turns out to crucially depend on how they think of God's character. In this paper, I provide a small contribution to the larger-scale project by briefly sketching what Old Testament scholars, my father included, have said about repentance, how that seems to conflict what systematic theologians say about God's omniscience and omnibenevolence (perfect goodness), and by discussing several attempts to solve this problem of seeming incompatibility.

THE BIBLE PORTRAYS GOD AS A REPENTING GOD

What is it to repent? According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it is 'to feel sorry, self-reproachful, or contrite for past conduct; to regret or be conscience-stricken about a past action, attitude, etc.; to feel such sorrow for sin or fault as to be disposed to change one's life for the better; to be penitent; to remember or regard with self-reproach or contrition; to feel sorry for; regret'. I take it that repentance has four elements: (i) one did, intended, or decided to do something at some point in the past, (ii) one now deems that action, decision, or intention bad or at least less than ideal, (iii) one has a negative emotion (such as feeling sorry) towards it, (iv) one is now disposed to act, decide, or intend otherwise.[2] Humans often repent of something that was not merely less than ideal, but evil. Performing an evil act or forming an evil intention would, however, clearly be incompatible with God's perfect goodness. Biblical theologians stress, though, that God never repents of anything that is literally evil, and that it never issues from failure or culpable ignorance.[3]

That leaves us with the question whether God ever repents of something less than ideal. There are several passages in the Bible that meet the above criteria for repentance. There is a passage in Hosea in which God describes how he intends to punish Israel (Hos 11:5-7). Further on in the chapter, though, God changes his mind:

[1] These attributes of God are, remarkably, largely absent from many dogmatics and other systematic theological works. Here is a sample: Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana / Teaching Christianity* (transl. E. Hill), Hyde Park 1996; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (transl. Fathers of the English Dominican Province), Notre Dame 1948; L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, London 1959 (originally 1949), esp. 19-99; R.G. Smith, *The Doctrine of God*, London 1970; G. Bray, *The Doctrine of God*, Downers Grove 1993; J.Wm. McClendon Jr., *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2: *Doctrine*, Nashville 1994; J. MacPherson, *Christian Dogmatics*, Edinburgh 1998; J. Webster, K. Tanner *et al.* (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, Oxford 2007.

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Louisville 1960, *does* actually mention some of them, but only in passing: II.viii.16,18 (jealousy); I.xvii.12,13 (repentance); H. Berkhof, *Christelijk geloof. Een inleiding tot de geloofsleer*, Nijkerk 1973 (ET: *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith* (transl. S. Woudstra), Grand Rapids 1979), largely neglects these properties, but does briefly mention God's anger and jealousy (pp. 132-133; § 20).

[2] Biblical scholars, to the extent that they define repentance, often accept similar definitions; e.g., T.E. Fretheim, 'The Repentance of God: A Key to Evaluating Old Testament God-Talk', *HBT* 10 (1988), 50.

[3] H.G.L. Peels, *Wie is als Gij? Schaduwkanten van het oudtestamentische Godsbeeld*, Zoetermeer [2]2007, 77 (ET: *Shadow Sides: God in the Old Testament*, Carlisle 2003, 69).

> How can I give you up, O Ephraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel! How can I make you like Admah! How can I treat you like Zeboiim! My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger, I will not again destroy Ephraim (…) (Hos 11:8-9)[4]

This passage is most naturally interpreted as implying that God repents. Moreover, it is often said *expressis verbis*—at least, נחם *niphal* is used, which is normally translated as 'to repent'[5]—that God repents, such as his decision to make man (Gen 6:6) or his decision to make Saul king (1 Sam 15:10-11,35b).[6] In fact, in by far most cases of biblical repentance, God himself is the subject, about 35 times, as Buttersworth and my father point out.[7] The idea that God repents can be found in many different biblical traditions, such as the psalmody, the Jahwist and Elohist traditions, the Deuteronomic History, and the exilic prophecy.[8] Moreover, God repents at key junctures in the history of Israel, such as his revelation at Sinai and when the northern and southern kingdoms fall (Exod 32:12-14; Jer 42:10). Various literary genres mention God's repentance: prophecies (e.g., Jer 26:3), historical passages (e.g., 1 Sam 15), and creedal statements (e.g., Jonah 4:2b). These creedal statements make clear that it is characteristic of God that he repents. Joel, for example, says: 'Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil. Who knows whether he will not turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him (…)' (Joel 2:13b-14a). All this is spelled out in much more detail by Old Testament scholars, such as Joachim Jeremias in his well-known book *Die Reue Gottes*,[9] by my father in *Shadow Sides: God in the Old Testament*,[10] in entries in biblical-theological dictionaries,[11] and by Terence Fretheim and Lester Kuyper in various journal articles.[12,13]

[4] Bible quotations are from the *Revised Standard Version*, London 1952.

[5] Some interpreters argue that נחם *ni*. + prep. עַל ought to be understood as 'to foreswear' or 'to cease doing'. See, e.g., P.A.H. de Boer, 'Does Job Retract? (Job xlii 6)', in: P.A.H. de Boer, C. van Duin (eds), *Selected Studies in Old Testament Exegesis*, Leiden 1991, 179-195. Others, however, stick to traditional equivalents such as 'to repent' or 'to regret', at least in some cases; see, e.g., *DCH* V, 663. More importantly, though, even if 'to foreswear' is a better translation in some instances, the conditions of repentance—except maybe that of the negative emotion—are satisfied in those cases and the puzzle, therefore, remains how God could foreswear an earlier decision, plan, or intention, given that he is omniscient and perfectly good.

[6] Some further examples are: Exod 32:14; 2 Sam 24:16a; 1 Chr 21:15; Jer 18:7-10; 26:3,13,19; 42:10; Amos 7:3,6; Jonah 3:9-10.

[7] M. Butterworth, 'נחם', in: *NIDOTTE* III, 82; Peels, *Shadow Sides*, 57.

[8] As Fretheim, 'The Repentance of God', 54, rightly points out.

[9] J. Jeremias, *Die Reue Gottes. Aspekte alttestamentlicher Gottesvorstellung*, 2nd ed., Neukirchen-Vluyn 1997, 119, 149-157.

[10] See H.G.L. Peels, *De omkeer van God in het Oude Testament*, Apeldoorn 1997, 39-41; *Shadow Sides*, 57-71.

[11] See, e.g., Buttersworth, 'נחם', 81-83; H. Simian-Yofre, 'נחם *nḥm*', in: *ThWAT* V, 366-384, 368-376; H.J. Stoebe, 'נחם *nḥm* pi. trösten', in: *THAT* II, 65.

[12] See Fretheim, 'The Repentance of God'; L.J. Kuyper, 'The Repentance of God', *RefR* 18 (1965), 3-16; 'The Suffering and Repentance of God', *SJT* 22 (1969), 257-277.

[13] There are also a couple of texts (Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:29; Jas 1:17) that say that God does *not* repent. Elsewhere, I have argued in more detail that these texts should be understood as saying that God does not repent *in the way humans often do*: he does not do so unreliably, capriciously, or as the result of culpability or sin. See R. Peels 'Can God Repent?', in: J.L. Kvanvig (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion* Vol 7, Oxford 2016, 194.

A CHALLENGE FOR SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

The idea, widely advocated among biblical scholars, that God sometimes repents, results in a serious challenge for systematic theologians, though. This is because it seems to conflict with properties traditionally ascribed to God. Elsewhere, I have spelled out the problem more formally—by that, I mean, in terms of a list of propositions from which a contradiction can be derived deductively (it is, thus, a *reductio ad absurdum*).[14] Here, I present a somewhat more informal version of the problem.

That God can repent conflicts with the combination of two attributes traditionally ascribed to him. The first attribute is *omniscience*, roughly the property that God knows any truth that can possibly be known.[15] The second is *omnibenevolence*: God always does what he deems to be the best thing all-things-considered. These two attributes seem to follow from the idea that God is perfectly good in all regards (perfect being theology), they find plenty of support in Scripture (e.g., Ps 139), and they are ascribed to God in various Christian creeds, such as the Belgic Confession (e.g., Art. 1).

In order to see how this leads to a problem, let us take the story of Nineveh in the Book of Jonah as an example. For the sake of argument, I will treat it as an historical narrative (whether or not it is actually meant as such). Imagine that, as the story goes, God intends to destroy Nineveh. Since he is omniscient, he *knows* that the inhabitants of Nineveh will repent, but, apparently, destroying Nineveh is still the best thing for God to do all-things-considered (otherwise, he would not intend to do so). Then it follows from God's omnibenevolence and omniscience that he knows that destroying Nineveh is the best thing to do for him all-things-considered. Later, however, when the Ninevites repent and give up their evil ways and violence, God himself comes to repent the earlier decision. Thus, he comes to believe and, hence, know that destroying Nineveh is *not* the best thing for him to do all-things-considered. But then it follows that when God intended to destroy Nineveh, he either had the false belief that he would destroy Nineveh (and, hence, was not omniscient), or it was *not* the best option available to him (and, hence, he was not omnibenevolent).

Since one ends up with a flagrant contradiction, it seems that the systematic theologian is committed to giving up one of the three attributes: either God is not omniscient, or God is not omnibenevolent, or God never repents. But as has been shown, the systematic theologian, if he or she takes biblical theology seriously, has a good reason to embrace each of these. The challenge is to solve this thorny problem.

IS OUR LOGIC DEFECTIVE?

An old and classic response to problems like these is to assert that our logic does not apply to God. For the purposes of this paper, by 'logic' I mean a set of laws that humans take for granted in their reasoning, such as that the law of double negation: if *p* is the case, then it is not the case that not-*p* is the case, and the law of non-contradiction: it cannot be the case that both *p* and

[14] See R. Peels, 'Can God Repent?', 196.

[15] There is, of course, a detailed debate on how to define omniscience. What I have said here, though, seems to square well with many views in the field (e.g., P. van Inwagen, 'What Does an Omniscient Being Know about the Future?', in: J.L. Kvanvig [ed.], *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 1, Oxford 2008, 216-230).

not-*p* are the case (where '*p*' stands for a fully articulated propositional statement). Some central tenets of the view that God transcends the laws of logic can already be found with René Descartes and, in explicitly Christian philosophy, with Reformational philosophers such as Herman Dooyeweerd.[16] Applied to the issue under consideration, it would run as follows. God repents, is omniscient, and is omnibenevolent, and that leads to a contradiction, but that is merely a *human* problem, since God transcends human logic. Unfortunately, I cannot discuss the view in any detail here. But let me point to two of the main problems from which it suffers. First, there is *no reason to think* that God is somehow above the laws of logic. There is good reason to think that God is above the *physical* laws, as he created them himself and as the Bible tells several stories about God's performing miracles of various kinds. It gives us no reason to think that logic is not applicable to God.[17] Second, once one asserts that God transcends the laws of logic, then pretty much anything goes. One could assert, for instance, that God does or could lie. A natural reply would be that this contradicts Scripture, perfect being theology, creedal statements, and much else that is crucial to the Christian faith. But the approach under consideration implies that one could then simply respond that all of that is true, but that it does not count against the idea that God lies, because contradictions are merely human laws and that God transcends such laws and may, therefore, very well be a being who lies. Clearly, claiming that God transcends basic logic leads to absurdities and puts the 'great truths of the Gospel', as Jonathan Edwards calls them, in jeopardy.

SHOULD DIVINE REPENTANCE BE UNDERSTOOD METAPHORICALLY?

A second proposal is that the biblical passages that imply that God repents should be interpreted *metaphorically*. According to Philo of Alexandria, for instance, those who take passages about God's repentance literally display an ever greater irreligion and impiety than those humans whose existence God is said to repent in the passage.[18] Instead, he claims, what these passages want to confer is merely the thought that God is merciful or compassionate, not that he can truly repent. To say that God repents is to talk anthropomorphically or, more specifically, anthropopathically. Something in the neighbourhood, namely the idea that God is loving and compassionate, is true, though.

The problem with this interpretation is that if this is really what the biblical authors wanted to say about God, it is hard to see why they would not simply say that.[19] In other words, it is

[16] See, for instance, Descartes, *Descartes Philosophical Letters* (transl. and ed. A. Kenny), Oxford 1970, Letter to Mercenne, April 15, 1630; To Mersenne, May 6, 1630, to Mersenne, May 27 1630; H. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (transl. D.H. Freeman, W.S. Young), Philadelphia 1969, Vol. 1, 515-519; Vol. 2, 39-42.

[17] One might think that human beings' cognitive capacities have been damaged by sin and that this gives us good reason to think that God is not subject to the laws of logic. Elsewhere, I have argued that the former is true, but that the latter does *not* follow from it. See R. Peels, 'Sin and Human Cognition of God', *SJT* 64 (2011), 390-409. If it is denied that logic applies to God, then *anything* can properly be said about God, for there is no need any longer to talk coherently and consistently about God (which is a requirement of logic).

[18] See Philo of Alexandria, *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis*, Les Oeuvres de Philon D'Alexandrie 8 (transl. A. Mosès), Paris 1963, 72-73.

[19] Cf. Fretheim 'The Repentance of God', 60: 'It would be redundant if repentance were nothing more than another way of speaking of God's love or mercy. Love is that in which the divine repentance

unclear why they would not say that God is merciful, loving, or compassionate and use all sorts of images and metaphors for that, such as that of a worried mother or father, a good caretaker, and so forth. Such images and metaphors would surely have been sufficient to make the point. Of course, metaphors are often helpful to draw the reader into the story, but why would the biblical authors have used the misleading metaphor of divine repentance if other, much more adequate metaphors were available? It is more plausible that they described God as a repentant God because this is how they experienced God and interpreted God's acts and words at several moments in history. Moreover, as I pointed out above, the idea that God repents is put forward in Israel's *credo*. It seems implausible that they would use a misleading metaphor in such a core statement. Finally, biblical theologians, my father included, are unanimous in their verdict that these passages show the ancient Israelites' belief that God can and does literally repent—of course, without the sinful elements that often come with *human* repentance.[20]

IS THIS A CASE OF DIVINE ACCOMMODATION?

A third suggestion is that in implying that he repents, God *accommodates himself* to such an extent that humans can comprehend something about him.[21] Since they cannot understand the essence of God, God has to present himself differently from how he truly is. For instance, in commenting on Genesis 6:6, a text which says that God repents his decision to create man on earth, John Calvin says:

> The repentance which is here ascribed to God does not properly belong to him, but has reference to our understanding of him. For since we cannot comprehend him as he is, it is necessary that, for our sake, he should, in a certain sense, transform himself. That repentance cannot take place in God, easily appears from this single consideration, that nothing happens which is by him unexpected or unforeseen. (…) the Spirit accommodates himself to our capacity. (…) God, in order more effectually to pierce our hearts, clothes himself with our affections.[22]

Several problems emerge here. First, if God, in revealing himself, sometimes accommodates himself to our cognitive limitations, then why should one think that God has accommodated himself in saying or suggesting that he sometimes *repents* rather than in saying or suggesting that he is *omniscient* or in saying or suggesting that he is *omnibenevolent*? One might respond that repenting seems more human than being omniscient or being omnibenevolent and that it is, therefore, more likely that God accommodates himself in saying or suggesting that he repents. In response, let me point out that I agree, of course, that being omniscient and being omnibenevolent are clearly not human traits: no human alive (except, maybe, the glorified Christ) is omniscient or omnibenevolent. However, to be benevolent and to know certain things are clearly human traits and if God, in talking to us, accommodates himself, it might very well be that he accommodates himself in suggesting that he knows in the same way as humans do

is grounded (Ps 106:45), and the application of repentance is certainly a gracious act. But something new must have been intended.'

[20] See Jeremias, *Die Reue Gottes*, 119-123; Peels, *Shadow Sides*, 57-71.

[21] This is also the view of C.J. Goslinga, 'Is er werkelijk berouw bij God?', *GTT* 65 (1965), 153.

[22] J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (transl. J. King), Vol. 1, Grand Rapids 2003, 248-249. For a detailed exposition and assessment of Calvin's theory of accommodation, see A. Huijgen, *Divine Accommodation in John Calvin's Theology: Analysis and Assessment* (RHT, 16), Göttingen 2011.

except for the fact that he knows everything and that he is benevolent in the same way as human beings are (sometimes) benevolent except for the fact that he is benevolent in any situation.

Second, if God accommodates himself, then those who believe in him are at risk of no longer being able to know God as he truly is. For instance, they could no longer discern whether God has any affections at all, since, for all they know, the suggestion that God has affections might also be part of divine accommodation. They could no longer say that God knows or does certain things. For these are also things that God might say in order to accommodate himself to our understanding. It would follow that they cannot know God as he truly is. That is a dire consequence, to say the least.

DID THE BIBLICAL AUTHORS FALSELY BELIEVE THAT GOD REPENTS?

A fourth proposal is that the Old Testament writers simply *falsely* thought that God is a God who repents. One may appeal to the fact that (virtually) all passages that imply that God repents are found in the Old rather than the New Testament. In the course of time, insight into the nature of God has increased. Whereas the ancient Israelites thought of God as a violent warrior and a tribal God, who revenges himself and who sometimes repents, Jews and Christians in later ages have come to see that God is perfectly good, omniscient, omnipotent, and immutable.

The problem with this line of response is that it does not give a reason to think that God's repentance rather than his omniscience or omnibenevolence has to go. The contradiction might imply or suggest that *some* divine attribute has to go, but it does not say which. One cannot rely on the Bible in support of this claim, for, as argued above, it clearly implicates that God *does* repent. So what other reason could one have to think that one should abandon the idea that God repents? One might think that perfect being theology provides such a reason. For to repent is to be less than perfect and a being should be perfect if he is to be God. However, what precisely is less than perfect about being someone who sometimes repents? Well, as argued above, repentance implies that one comes to believe that one did something bad or one intended to do something while there was another option which was better.

One should tread carefully here, though. Doing something bad in the sense of doing something while there is a better option is not the same thing as performing a *culpable* or *blameworthy* action. If, for instance, God has good reason to think that doing something at some time is the best thing, then it is hard to see how God could be culpable or blameworthy for intending to do that, even if at some later time God acquires new information which makes clear to him that it is better to do something else. Surely an omnibenevolent God could not perform a blameworthy action or form a culpable intention. But doing something less than perfect, given the information available to him, is *not* clearly something that is incompatible with being God.

SHOULD OPEN THEISM BE ACCEPTED?

Alternatively, one might suggest that, even though God is perfectly good and sometimes repents and is even omniscient, his omniscience should not be taken to include knowledge of future free actions of humans. On an approach that has recently become popular in systematic theology, so-called *open theism*, the future is open to God. Various theologians and

philosophers, such as Clark Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker, and David Basinger, have advocated this view. It would explain divine repentance as follows. God decides or intends to, say, destroy Nineveh because of the sins of its inhabitants. He then discovers that the inhabitants of Nineveh repent, something he could not foresee, since the future is open to him. Subsequently, he changes his mind and, on the basis of his new knowledge about the repentance of Nineveh's inhabitants, decides that he will not destroy the city.

On open theism, God literally repents. The reason he does so every now and then is that he lacks foreknowledge of the future free actions of his creatures. This is not to deny that God can often predict fairly accurately what they will do, given his infinitely good grasp of who they are. Since, however, they are free, God often does not truly *know* what they will do.[23]

Open theism is a sophisticated movement within systematic theology and I cannot do it full justice here. Instead, let me just notice that it brings along its own challenges. First, several biblical passages seem to suggest that God *does* actually know what particular human beings will do freely. For example, God does not *force* Peter to deny Christ; he simply foresees that Peter will do so freely. If Jesus did not have foreknowledge (whether or not on the basis of a revelation of God the Father) but merely probabilistic knowledge based on Peter's character, then the prediction of Jesus might have turned out to be false—Peter, after all, could have chosen otherwise if he was truly free. One could reply that Jesus was lucky to get it right, but that seems to conflict with most orthodox christologies: Christ could not have been mistaken about what he said. Second and even more importantly, if God cannot foresee what his creatures will do freely, then there would be something, even something created by God, that God does not fully grasp. And that seems hard to reconcile with certain biblical passages, such as Psalm 139 and Hebrews 4:13, in which it is said explicitly that there is nothing about us that is hidden from God.

LIVING WITH A CONTRADICTION?

I have discussed five proposals as to how to meet the challenge of the seeming incompatibility of God's repentance, omniscience, and omnibenevolence, and found each of them wanting. We now get to the first of the two solutions to the problem that I find more tenable, even though, as will be shown, both of them are not entirely satisfying. The first of these runs as follows. Logic is not defective. Thus, God cannot simultaneously be a repentant God, omniscient, and omnibenevolent in the senses specified above. Therefore, strictly speaking, at least one of these three claims must be false. But one has good reason to accept each of them and it is likely that they are each *sufficiently close* to the truth to believe them. If one finds this problematic, consider how it is perfectly normal to make similar moves in (completely) different areas of life. It is widely known, for instance, that two leading theories in physics, namely Quantum Mechanics and General Relativity, are strictly speaking incompatible: they cannot both be true, since they contradict each other. However, for each of them, there is good reason to think that it is true. Hence, even though it is worthwhile to seek for an alternative theory that has all the merits of these two theories but is not inconsistent (such as, according to some, String Theory), until that theory has been found, one should embrace both theories, that is, *work with them and live as if they are literally true* and take it that they are *sufficiently close to the truth* to believe

[23] See C. Pinnock, R. Rice *et al.*, *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, Downers Grove 1994, 155-176.

them—again, even though, literally, they cannot all be exactly true (thus, this response assumes the validity of logic). Therefore, it should be believed that God is repentant, omniscient, and omnibenevolent, even though that leads to a contradiction.

DOES GOD KNOW HIMSELF PERFECTLY?

Finally, I would like to make a suggestion that, as far as I know, has not yet been explored in the systematic theological literature, but that maintains God's repentance, omniscience, and omnibenevolence, but *also* implies their coherence.[24] The basic idea is that God knows his creatures perfectly and foresees what they will do, but that, for all we know, he does *not* foresee some of his own decisions perfectly, as he might not know himself in such a way that he would know beforehand exactly what he would do in every possible circumstance. Thus, God foresees that the inhabitants of Nineveh will repent. However, he does not foresee how he himself will respond to it until it actually happens. Therefore, God might form the intention to destroy Nineveh, but once he actually experiences the repentance of its inhabitants, he changes his mind and decides *not* to destroy the city. This keeps in God's repentance, because God truly changes his mind. It also implies God's benevolence, as God always does what he deems best in the relevant circumstances. And it upholds God's omniscience, as God knows everything that can possibly be known—and it is impossible for anyone to know beforehand how God will respond to the repentance of Nineveh's inhabitants. In fact, this might well be the most natural reading of a story like that of Nineveh and other episodes in the Bible in which God repents.

Of course, this does not mean that God could repent just *any* decision. There might be certain actions or decisions that God knows he could not possibly repent, as that would be evil. Thus, God will not repent his decision to redeem humankind, to return in Glory, or to create a renewed heaven and earth. There are quite a few biblical passages that mention explicitly with respect to specific things that God will *never* repent (e.g., Ps 110:4; Rom 11:29; Heb 7:21). My father captures this idea in the following metaphor:

> This is how one could picture the Old Testament notion of the repentance of God: it concerns his actions on the level of tactics (God 'repents'), while the overall strategic plan remains firmly fixed (God cannot 'repent').[25]

Some people might reply that it seems to them that if God is to be perfect in every regard he *has to* know himself and his future self perfectly. I have to say that I see no basis for that conviction. Scripture nowhere suggests that God knows his future self perfectly[26] and, as I have

[24] H. Smit, 'Enige opmerkingen over "het berouw van God"', in J. Bouma, J. Dekker *et al.* (eds), *Begeleidend Schrijven: 25 Jaar Theologische Studiebegeleiding*, Amsterdam 1994, 173-190, argues that one should maintain that God is omniscient, perfectly good, and sometimes truly repents. He suggests that when God repents, his earlier decision was provisional and that when he repents, there is a change in God's heart in response to what people do. My account squares well with this, but also proposes an answer to the question *why* there would be a change in God's heart if he knows beforehand what people will do.

[25] Peels, *Shadow Sides*, 69-70.

[26] Paul says in 1 Cor 2:10b-11 that 'the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God'. Here, though, the idea is clearly that we cannot know

argued elsewhere, due to the devastating cognitive consequences of sin for our cognition of God, one should be careful with respect to any intuitions about God that are not directly or indirectly supported by God's revelation in Scripture.[27] This response embraces the validity of logic and shows that there is no contradiction between God's repentance, God's omniscience, and God's perfect goodness. This is because, for all we know, God does not know his future self perfectly, so that he has postponed certain final decisions, awaiting to see how certain free actions of his creatures will affect him.

EPILOGUE

In this short contribution, I have argued that one should take the idea that God repents seriously and that systematic theologians ought to think through the ramifications of this idea, especially in relation to divine omniscience and omnibenevolence, since the combination of these three properties leads to a contradiction. I have criticized several systematic theological accounts of how to think of these properties of God and suggested two ways in which one could deal with the problem. Both options maintain that God repents, that he is omniscient, and that he is omnibenevolent.

Whether God does indeed repent matters. To give just one example: if God truly repents, then petitionary prayer might actually lead to *God's changing his mind* about an earlier action or intention. Of course, if God is omniscient and foresees the future free prayers of human beings, he might still take those prayers into account in making a decision on something. If God actually *repents*, though, something stronger is the case: God might not only take our prayers into account, but come back to an earlier decision of his on that basis. If someone now prays to God, then God might *now* take or revise a decision on the basis of that prayer.

I conclude that systematic theologians should (continue to) take biblical theology seriously and that this will lead, among others things, to systematic reflection on God's character as it is described in the Bible.[28] And that will include the important and challenging idea that God is a God who repents.

God's plans, thoughts, and purposes unless God reveals them; without that, they are only known by God himself. Thus, this Bible verse does *not* say or imply that God knows his future self perfectly.

[27] See R. Peels, 'Sin and Human Cognition of God'.

[28] Cf. the contribution of Hans Burger to this *Festschrift*: 'God's Character and the Plot of the Bible'.

LISTENING TO ONE GOD

Hermeneutics and Unity

Barend Kamphuis

INTRODUCTION

In 2009 a movement for unity between the divided protestant churches in the Netherlands started, called 'Nationale Synode' (National Synod).[1] In commemoration of the famous National Synod of Dordrecht 1618-1619 this movement published a 'Credo', organized several meetings in Dordrecht and many opportunities for faith sharing in small conversation groups of Christians. From the beginning, Eric Peels was involved in this work, and he still is, as a member of the Advisory Board. For all those years I worked together with him on this project, and I am impressed with the energy, the love and the wisdom Eric has invested in it.

In those years, I also collaborated with Eric in the research group 'Biblical Exegesis and Systematic Theology' (BEST) for the program 'Who Is Like You Among the Gods? The One and Three in a Pluralistic Context'. In this article I want to make some remarks about the relation between the unity of God[2] and the unity of the church, and especially about the hermeneutical implications of this relation. I dedicate these remarks to the memory of our good ecumenical cooperation for many years.

THE UNITY OF GOD AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

In John 17 the impressive prayer of Jesus Christ is recorded, which he spoke shortly before his arrest. One of the remarkable features of this prayer is the link between the unity of Jesus and his Father on the one hand, and the mutual unity of the believers on the other.

> I do not ask for these (the disciples, BK) only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. (John 17:20-23)[3]

These words have received much attention in the course of centuries.[4] An important question is: what does the unity between God and Jesus mean here? It is often understood to relate to the

[1] For more information, see www.nationalesynode.nl.

[2] Cf. the contribution of Arnold Huijgen and Arie Versluis to this volume: '"Our God is One": The Unity of YHWH and the Trinity in the Interplay between Biblical Exegesis ans Systematic Theology.'.

[3] In this article, quotes from the Bible are taken from the ESV.

[4] I wrote an article in Dutch about this passage: 'Pleidooi voor eenheid' in: J.W. Maris (ed.), *Opdat zij allen een zijn* (GSEv Reeks, 36), Barneveld 1997, 15-23. See also P.S. Minear, 'Evangelism, Ecumenism, and John Seventeen' in *ThTo* 35 (1978), 5-13.

ontological Trinitarian unity between God and his Son. But at least two counter arguments can be advanced.

The first is that in the Gospel of John the unity between Father and Son has a very visible, concrete, historical character. In a discussion with Jewish opponents, Jesus says:

> If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father. (John 10:37-38)

These words are about the same relation with the Father as in John 17:21: 'you, Father, are in me, and I in you.' However, they are not about an eternal unity of essence, but about a historical unity in works: I am doing the works of my Father. The eternal unity of essence is the background of this, according to the Trinitarian confession, but here, Jesus' unity with the Father in his obedience is at the centre, in the same work of love for the redemption of men.

The second reason not to relate John 17:20-23 directly to the Trinitarian unity, is the fact that the unity of believers that Jesus speaks about is also visible. The goal is 'so that the world may know that you sent me'. But how could the world know that, if it was an invisible unity? So, the unity of the church is as visible as the unity of Father and Son. It is also a unity in obedience and love, a unity in service of the divine love for the world.

These considerations lead to the conclusion that the unity between Father and Son in John 17 has an economical character: it is about the work that Father and Son are doing together in perfect harmony. The believers can share in this harmony. In this way they can be brought to complete unity and thus show the love of God for his Son to the world.

That is why the unity of the church has such an important place in Jesus' prayer. Some lines further he asks his Father 'that the love with which you have loved me may be in them' (John 17:26). That is the focus of this great prayer. The love of the one God is connected with the unity of the church. Faith in the triune God asks for ecumenical commitment.

What are the hermeneutical implications of this situation? As a systematic theologian, I restrict myself in this article to the implications for the hermeneutics of doctrine. How should the doctrine of the church be interpreted from the point of view of the unity of the church that is founded in the love of the one God?

In the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed two of the four attributes of the church are related to this question: that of its catholicity and of course that of its unity. The hermeneutical implications of these attributes will be discussed in the next parts of this article.

CATHOLICITY AND HERMENEUTICS[5]

The catholicity of the church (from Greek κατ' ὅλον) means that the church bears a relationship with 'the whole'. This has two aspects. The first aspect is quantitative: the church is related to the whole of time and space. She is from all ages and all places. The second aspect is qualitative: the church is related to the whole of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. She lives from the fullness of the gospel.

[5] See also my 'The Hermeneutics of Dogma' in: M. te Velde, G.H. Visscher (eds), *Correctly Handling the Word of Truth: Reformed Hermeneutics Today*, Eugene 2014, 69-71.

Both aspects are interrelated. Because the church lives from the fullness of the gospel, she cannot restrict herself to the understanding of the gospel in one time or in one place. That would be not catholic, but sectarian. And because the church is from all ages and all places, she cannot restrict herself to only one element of the gospel. Each time, each situation, asks for a new search in the richness of Holy Scripture. 'Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old' (Matt 13:52). Only with all the saints the love of Christ can be comprehended in all its dimensions (Eph 3:18-19).

The catholicity of the church means that there is a boundary for the church. This is formulated most impressively in the Athanasian Creed, after the confession of the Trinitarian and Christological dogma: 'This is the catholic faith; which except a man believe truly and firmly, he cannot be saved.'[6] The boundary is clear: only those who believe the catholic faith belong to the catholic church. So catholicity does not mean 'anything goes'. The church of all ages and all places is not the church of all opinions. She lives from the fullness of the gospel and not from arbitrary ideas.

But where is this boundary? In this connection, it does not suffice to present a merely external criterion. In the fifth century Vincentius from Lerinum tried to give such an external criterion, in his famous definition of catholicity: Catholic is that which had been believed everywhere, always and by all.[7] He was right that ecclesiastical consensus is an important criterion for Christian faith, but it cannot be a criterion that is always decisive. On the one hand: not only consensus can be found in Christian tradition, but also dissensus. On the other hand: even when there is consensus, the question remains: is this the right consensus? Ecumenical councils are human efforts to understand the truth and they can err. The same is true for the pope. No human being is infallible, according to protestant view.

Holy Scripture is the only standard in classical protestant tradition. Scripture indicates the boundary for the catholic faith. But still then, the hermeneutical question remains: how do we have to understand Scripture?

The churches of the Reformation have answered this question by the formulation of their confessions. In these confessions they brought to expression how they understood the Bible. So, the boundary for catholicity was indicated: in the church, only what is in accordance with Holy Scripture, as confessed in the church, can be accepted.

But there is more to be said about that. Many important questions are discussed in the confessions. But not every question belongs immediately to the heart of the faith. There are differences among the confessions, regarding the covenant of works and the covenant of redemption, the visibility and invisibility of the church, and so on. It is difficult to maintain that differences of view on these matters mark the boundary of catholicity. That is why churches with different confessions (e.g. the Dutch Three forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards) can accept each other as churches of Jesus Christ.

It is important to see that the boundary of the gospel is at its centre, not at its edge. In Christ 'the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily' (Col 2:9). Where fullness is, divine fullness, there is catholicity. Jesus is the centre of Christian faith. He, and only he, marks its boundary. Where

[6] 'Haec est fides catholica, quam nisi quisque fideliter firmiterque crediderit, salvus esse non poterit', H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum, Kompendium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lehrentscheidungen* (Lateinisch-Deutsch ed. P. Hünermann), Freiburg etc. 2005, 52.

[7] Vincentius from Lerinum, *Commonitorium* 2.3 (via J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Vol. 1: *The Emergence of Catholic Tradition [100-600]*, 333).

he is confessed, there is the catholic church. Where he is forgotten, there is no catholicity. The boundary is at the centre.

That is why the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: ‘For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified’ (1 Cor 2:2). Of course, Paul spoke and wrote about many things. But this is the centre, that marks the boundary: ‘Jesus Christ and him crucified.’ That is more than ‘the cross of Jesus Christ’. ‘Jesus Christ and him crucified’, that is the living Lord, ‘the Lord of glory’ (1 Cor 2:8), who was crucified but also resurrected and is now Lord of heaven and earth. The catholic church lives with him, and only with him. Every doctrine and every difference in doctrine have to be tested at this point: what is its relation with Jesus Christ, our crucified Lord? That is the great question in the hermeneutics of doctrine: how, at this point, is the confession of Christ at stake?

So far about the boundary of catholicity. If there is a boundary, there is also room, inside the boundary. One of the most important points of catholicity is that we have to accept and respect this room. Many differences between Christians do not touch the boundary. These differences do not break the unity in the confession of Christ. Unfortunately, in many schisms, this seems to be forgotten. There was unity in Christ, but because of secondary differences in opinion, the unity of the church was broken.

The program of BEST formulates the confession of God in a Trinitarian way: ‘the One and the Three’. Especially the doctrine of the Trinity shows the room of catholicity. He is one God, but he reveals himself in three persons. No one can pretend that she or he understands this completely. The doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery, a revealed mystery, but exactly revealed as mystery. So it should be impossible to exclude each other from the room of catholicity only because of a different understanding of the Trinity.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God. But they cannot be reduced to each other. They are distinct persons, and to each of them different works are appropriated, although it is always one work of the one God. It is not strange that in the history of Christian theology and spirituality one finds time and again different emphases respecting the works of the three divine persons. The providence of the Father, the atonement through Christ, the fulfilment by the Holy Spirit: they have played different roles in different periods and different denominations and in different countries. That is not a stain on the unity of the church. It is the richness of the gospel, it is the divine fullness of Christ, which cannot be fully grasped at any time nor by any single person.

The boundary remains: Jesus Christ and him crucified. But inside this boundary we accept each other with our differences. We learn from each other. And even if we do not understand each other, we praise ‘the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God’ (Rom 11:33), his judgments that are unsearchable, his paths that cannot be traced out. He is the One and the Three: in him we are united, and in him our differences are put into perspective. So again, the unity of the church is dependent on the unity of God. This is an important rule for the hermeneutics of doctrine.

UNITY AND HERMENEUTICS

Unity is one of the essential attributes of the church, according to the Nicean-Constantinopolitan Creed. So it is essential for the church to be one. An essential characteristic cannot be missed. There are many characteristics that are not essential for the church. A church can be big or small, wealthy or poor, old or new: anything is possible. But the church has to be catholic. And

she has to be one. The church cannot be either catholic or sectarian. She cannot be either one or divided. A sectarian Christian church is a *contradictio in terminis*. The same is true for a divided Christian church. A schism is only acceptable if the boundary is at stake: the confession of our crucified Lord. In all other cases we ourselves are in fact at stake: are we still really church of Christ, if we are divided?

This does not mean that unity prevails above truth. In the same prayer in which Christ pleads for the unity of the believers, he also asks his Father to maintain them in the truth: ‘Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth’ (John 17:17). It is a temptation to seek for unity at the expense of the truth. Without truth no unity. The truth of the gospel and the confession of this truth are the only guarantee for the unity of the church.

However, it is also a temptation to maintain the truth at the expense of unity. Remember that a divided church is not a Christian church at all. If, as already quoted before, it is only together with all the saints that the love of Christ can be comprehended (Eph 3:18), then not only is unity dependent on truth, but also the other way around: truth is dependent on unity. That is why in the letter to the Ephesians, after the confession of our need for each other’s help to understand the gospel, the chapter follows in which Paul urges the congregation to be ‘eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace… one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all …’ (Eph 4:3-6). No unity without truth, but also no truth without unity. One God means one truth and therefore one church.

At many places in his letters, the apostle Paul struggles to maintain the truth of the gospel. He even can write that everybody who preaches another gospel, be accursed (Gal 1:8-9). It is totally clear, that for Paul there is a boundary for the church: the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But this same apostle also struggles for the unity of the church. Division is heresy for him. He blames the Corinthians for their divisions. And then he writes: ‘Is Christ divided?’ (1 Cor 1:13) That means: the division of the church damages the truth of the gospel. We have one Lord. The implication of that is: we have one church. If we can have many churches, the implication of that is: we have many Lords. Christ is divided. The truth of the gospel is corrupted.

In 1 Timothy 3:15 the church is called a pillar and foundation of the truth. This is a remarkable saying, because in other places the church herself has a foundation, Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:10-11) or apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ as cornerstone (Eph 2:20). So it is understandable that another explanation of this phrase is proposed, namely that Timothy is meant here as pillar and foundation of the truth.[8] But this would still be a remarkable qualification, because Timothy seems not to be an apostle or prophet. Moreover, the construction of the sentence requires the words ‘the pillar and foundation of the truth’ to be read as an apposition to the word ‘church’.[9]

How can the church receive these high names? We can only understand that if we remember the mutual relation between unity and truth. The unity of the church is dependent on the truth, Jesus Christ, as he is preached by apostles and prophets. But the truth, the ‘mystery of godliness’ (1 Tim 3:16) depends also on the church in its unity. The church supports the gospel and makes the victory of the gospel possible in the world by the power of the Holy Spirit. One God, one church, one truth: that is the message of the New Testament.

[8] J.D. Quin, W.C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (ECCo), Grand Rapids 2000, 311-315.

[9] H.N. Ridderbos, *De pastorale brieven* (CNT-2), Kampen 1967, 103, says that these words ‘without any doubt’ must be read as an apposition at ἐκκλησία.

This results in a simple hermeneutic rule: any interpretation of the Christian doctrine that divides the church cannot be true. Especially in the judgment about other interpretations this rule has to be taken seriously. It is more than time to stop with easy judgments about other denominations. Let Reformed Christians stop blaming the Lutherans for their 'anthropocentric' theology, and *vice versa* Lutherans with their accusation that Reformed theology is rationalistic. Let Protestants stop with their reproach of Catholic sacramental spirituality that it is 'magical', and let Catholics stop saying that Protestantism is individualistic. These examples can be multiplied. There is always a little bit of truth in these accusations, but there is much that is false. The greatest falsehood is that they divide the church.

Following the rule that any interpretation of the Christian doctrine that divides the church cannot be true, means that a price has to be paid for the unity of the church. Loved views should be given up, easy opinions and judgments cannot be maintained. This asks for self-denial. But exactly this self-denial is what is asked for in the gospel. Paul writes in Philippians 3:8 that he counts 'everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord'. The price to be paid for the unity of the church is nothing compared with the truth of Jesus Christ, the incomparable beauty of the gospel.

CONCLUSION

In this article the strong relation between the unity of God and the unity of the church has been discussed. This relation has implications for the hermeneutics of Christian doctrine. For the catholicity of the church the implication is that the boundary for catholicity is at its centre, the confession of the crucified Lord Jesus Christ, and that inside this boundary Christians must leave room for each other with their different interpretations of the gospel. For the unity of the church, the implication is the hermeneutic rule that any interpretation of the Christian doctrine that divides the church cannot be true.[10]

[10] I thank Mr. Aart Plug, Armadale, Australia for correction of the use of the English language in this article.

PART 6:

THE ONE GOD OF THE BIBLE IN HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

JOHN CALVIN'S *MUNUS TRIPLEX*

A Hermeneutic of Salvation History: Alternative to 'Wandering in uncertain and stormy paths'

Paul Wells

In his monograph *Calvin's Doctrine of the Work of Christ* John F. Jansen argues in favour of the traditional two offices of Christ, priest and king, as constituting the essence of Calvin's teaching on the ministry of Christ as Mediator.[1] The prophetic office, added in the final version of the *Institutes* to the royal and priestly offices is, according to Jansen, a dogmatic afterthought and an imposition that Calvin's own exegesis hardly justifies. As such, it constitutes a retrogression on Calvin's part, motivated perhaps by his desire to bolster the centrality of the teaching office in the Reformed churches. Although Jansen's claim merits careful consideration, it does appear that for Calvin the function of the eternal Logos in creation,[2] which is the substantial foundation for all of God's subsequent speaking, could provide adequate theological justification for this construal, even if exegetically it might be hard to demonstrate.

It is probably correct to say that 'in Calvin's thought the doctrine of the *munus triplex* becomes for the first time in the history of dogma a strict doctrinal category and a formula determinative of the shape of Christology'.[3] In this respect, the three offices represent an innovative aspect of Calvin's Christology, particularly as it functions to bind together the person and work of the Mediator and the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises by the incarnate Christ of New Testament witness.

The threefold office is used by Calvin to explain the meaning of Christ's saving activity.[4] As Mediator between God and man Christ embodies the messianic functions of prophet, priest and king.[5] The offices of Christ, which give substance to understanding his person and work, have a long history in Christian tradition.[6] In the *Institutes* of 1536 Calvin refers to the two

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[1] J.F. Jansen, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Work of Christ*, London 1956, 103-120. On the importance of mediation at the time of the Reformation see P. Denis, *Le Christ étendard. L'Homme-Dieu au temps des réformes (1500-1565)*, Paris 1987; H. Schroten, *Christus, de Middelaar bij Calvijn*, Utrecht 1948, and P. Gisel, *Le Christ de Calvin*, Paris 1990, 29-37.

[2] J. Tylenda, 'Christ the Mediator: Calvin versus Stancaro', *CTJ* 7 (1972), 5-16; J. Tylenda, 'The Controversy on Christ the Mediator: Calvin's Second Reply to Stancaro', *CTJ* 8 (1972), 131-157. See also S. Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology*, Cambridge 2004, ch. 1.

[3] R.A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins*, Durham 1984, 31.

[4] See the useful monograph by K. Blaser, *Calvins Lehre von den drei Ämtern Christi* (ThSt, 105), Zürich 1970; also E.D. Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology*, Leiden 1966, 78-80.

[5] Space forbids entering the debate concerning the history of two offices/three offices of Christ. Cf. Jansen and Edmonson quoted above and R.A. Peterson, *Calvin and the Atonement*, Fearn 1999, ch. 3; H. Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics* (transl. G.T. Thompson), Grand Rapids 1950, ch. 18. My comments will concern mainly Calvin's *Institutes*.

[6] F. Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (transl. P. Mairet), London 1965, 225, traces it back to Eusebius (*Hist. Eccles*., I, 3, 9) and says Calvin may have derived the idea from Martin Bucer's *Enarrationes in Evangelia* (1536).

traditional offices, those of priest and king, but later in the *Geneva Catechism* (1541) and in the *Institutes* of 1543 the prophetic office appears. It takes definitive form in the final edition of 1559 in Calvin's exposition of the messianic titles. The three-office Christology sets the scene for subsequent developments in Reformed theology as well as problems that arose through the accentuation of one of the offices over against the others.[7]

Calvin gives as title to chapter 15 of the second volume of the *Institutes*, 'To know the purpose for which Christ was sent by the Father, and what he conferred upon us, we must look above all at three things in him: the prophetic office, kingship and priesthood'.[8] The offices have a hermeneutic function as an aid in understanding why and wherefore Christ was sent, and in understanding the dimensions of the salvation he accomplished through his work. They are a substantiation and an illustration of the unique work of the Mediator. Office implies a representative capacity, understood here as a ministry, a charge, or a function into which Christ was officially inducted as Mediator, with a dual reference to the Father and to humanity.[9] As such, the offices interpret the name 'Christ' who, as Mediator, is anointed in a messianic capacity for his work: to proclaim divine truth as prophet, to intervene as priest, and to rule as king.

Calvin's definition of the offices has no frills, either in the *Geneva Catechism (GC)*[10] *or* in the *Institutes*. Here, as elsewhere, Calvin's hermeneutic rule of brevity and clarity are of the essence:

> *Prophet:* In his coming to earth he was declared messenger and ambassador of the Father; his mission was to give a full exposition of God's purposes and to fulfil all revelations and prophecies (*GC*, 39).
> The prophetic dignity in Christ leads us to know that in the sum of doctrine as he has given it to us all parts of perfect wisdom are contained (*Inst.* 2.15.2).
>
> *Priest:* His prerogative was to present himself to God to obtain grace, and to appease his wrath by offering an acceptable sacrifice (*GC*, 38).
> As a pure and stainless Mediator he is by his holiness to reconcile us to God (…) as priest Christ obtains God's favour for us and appeases his wrath. To perform this office Christ had to come forward with a sacrifice (*Inst.* 2.15.6).
>
> *King:* His rule is spiritual, that of the Word and the Spirit of God, and brings with them righteousness and life (*GC*, 37).
> It would be pointless to speak of this without first warning my readers that it is spiritual in nature. From this we infer its efficacy and benefit for us, as well as its whole force and eternity (*Inst.* 2.15.3).

When the passages from which these excerpts are taken are studied in detail the triple reference of the three offices emerges in bloom. The offices all concern the function of mediation, they refer primarily to God the Father and they bring the benefits of salvation down to earth in terms of divine doctrine, redemption and rule for those who are 'condemned, dead, and lost in themselves'.[11]

[7] Jansen, *Calvin's Doctrine*, 16-23.
[8] J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 1 (eds J.T. McNeill, F.L. Battles), London 1955, 494. Quotations of the *Institutes* are from this version, quotations from Calvin's commentaries and the *Geneva Catechism* are my translations.
[9] Jansen, *Calvin's Doctrine*, 71-72.
[10] J. Calvin, *Catéchisme de Genève*, Aix-en-Provence 1991.
[11] J. Calvin, *Institution*, 2.16.1.

The root of the three-office doctrine is no doubt the eternal Sonship of the Word with the Father. The kingship of Christ has priority over the other offices.[12] As king Christ implements his rule through the priestly office exercised at the cross, the empty tomb and in the eternal intercession as great High priest. As prophet, the Son is not simply the bearer of a message of salvation, but something more profound and meaningful, the Word made flesh in person, the truth-act of God as light coming into the world and as such communicating sovereignty and deliverance.

The three offices bind together in one narrative the saving activity of God in the covenant by anticipation through the divine promise, by enactment in the person of the Son incarnate, and by eschatological proclamation of the eternal reign of Christ. As such they constitute a hermeneutic of the whole of the *historia salutis*. In what follows, the three dimensions of the *munus triplex* will be succinctly presented in terms of anticipation, realisation and eschatological hope.[13]

ANTICIPATION

Firstly, the covenantal promises embodied in God's dealings with his people in Old Testament revelation anticipate personal fulfilment in the future Mediator. The eternal Word is the fullness and culmination of all revelation and as such there is nothing 'before' the truth he makes known in creation and grace. 'Inasmuch as he is the eternal wisdom of God, he is the only fount of all doctrine and all the prophets who have been from the beginning spoke by His Spirit.'[14] The Son is behind the revelation of the Old Testament messengers, who anticipate the coming of the perfect teacher. The prophetic office confers on Scripture the structure of promise and fulfilment in anticipation of something more final. The giving of the law 'until Christ' has a preparatory function and engenders prophetic predictions concerning future fulfilment.[15] It operates in the establishment of the covenant as an implementation of divine kingship. 'God, by providing his people with an unbroken line of prophets, never left them without useful doctrine sufficient for salvation, yet the minds of the pious had always been imbued with the conviction that they were to hope for the full light of understanding only at the coming of the Messiah.'[16]

The content of the prophetic expectation being salvation, revelation has invariably been linked to sacrifice. The priestly office belongs to Christ alone and for that reason any sacrifice before Christ could only be in anticipation of the one final sacrifice; in and of themselves these offerings could not propitiate God. Nor can there be any other sacrifice or priest after Christ.[17] The Old Testament priests are copies and shadows that are to come to an end and Christ alone in his priestly office is the author of salvation. Calvin very often joins the priestly to the kingly office in his commentaries. Commenting Psalm 2:6, 'Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion' Calvin states:

[12] W.A. Visser 't Hooft, *The Kingship of Christ*, London 1948.
[13] On Christology and the movement of salvation history focussed in the resurrection of Christ, see C. Gunton's comments about 'threefold history' in *Christ and Creation*, Grand Rapids 1992, 59-68.
[14] J. Calvin, *Commentaires sur le Nouveau Testament*, John 14:24.
[15] Blaser, *Calvins Lehre*, 27-30.
[16] *Institution*, 2.15.1.
[17] *Institution*, 2.15.6.

> Although David in these words had a regard to the promise of God, and recalled the attention of himself and others to it, yet, at the same time, he meant to signify that his own reign is holy and inseparably connected with the temple of God. But this applies more appropriately to the Kingdom of Christ, which we know to be both spiritual and joined to the priesthood and this is the principal part of worship of God.[18]

The temple and the kingdom go together in the Old Testament theocratic anticipation and sacrifices correctly offered, salvation and blessing of the people went hand in hand: 'by these two things, kingdom and priesthood God testified that he was allied to the children of Abraham'.[19]

All this was temporary and preparatory yet at the same time illuminated by the Messiah who was foretold in the anointing of oil which referred to the Spirit. The unity of salvation and the unity of revelation is in play here; the person of the Mediator is tied to a temporal economy that is incomplete without incarnation. As Richard A. Muller comments: 'The prophet, the king, and the priest are united in Christ, are perfected, and are thereby fulfilled and brought to a conclusion in the one who is both king and priest forever after the order of Melchizedek'.[20]

REALISATION

Secondly, Christ personally fulfils the promise by his appearance in the fullness of time (Gal 4:4). The incarnation of the Mediator brings the three offices to final enactment and concretisation in the person of the Son who receives the messianic anointing. The work of mediation focuses on the human fulfilment of the offices. The historical incarnate Son is anointed as man in the office of Messiah, for how could divinity be anointed? However, what belongs to the human nature is communicated to the person who represents 'a degree midway' between God and us. Calvin states his rule: 'Let this, then, be our key to right understanding: those things which apply to the office of the Mediator are not spoken simply either of the divine nature or of the human'.[21]

As prophet Christ bears 'the perfection of the gospel doctrine'. Quoting Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:18 Calvin comments that Christ 'was anointed by the Spirit to be herald and witness of the Father's grace' and indulges in hyperbole: 'outside Christ there is nothing worth knowing and all who by faith perceived what he is like have grasped the whole immensity of heavenly benefits'. Christ's teaching is enacted and effective because it is truly redemptive. Commenting the same passage, Calvin says Christ 'was endowed with the fullness of the Spirit, to be a witness and ambassador for our reconciliation with God' and 'alone by the power of his Spirit, effects and provides the benefits promised here'.[22]

As prophet Christ brings the covenant to fruition since his message concerns his priestly ministry.[23] The title 'Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world' encapsulates the 'principle office of Christ briefly and clearly':

[18] *Comm.*, Ps 2:6.
[19] *Comm.*, Hos 7:4.
[20] Muller, *Decree*, 32.
[21] *Institution*, 2.14.3.
[22] *Institution*, 2.15.2; *Comm.*, Luke 4:17.
[23] H. Blocher, 'The Atonement in John Calvin's Theology', in: C.E. Hill, F.A. James III (eds), *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Practical Perspectives*, Downers Grove 2004, 283-288.

> He takes away the sins of the world by the sacrifice of his death and reconciles men to God. There are other favours indeed, which Christ bestows upon us, but this is the chief favour, and the rest depend on it; that, by appeasing the wrath of God, he makes us to be reckoned holy and righteous. From this source flow all the streams of blessing, that, by not imputing our sins, God receives us into favour.[24]

Not only is Christ the priest, he is also the offering and the altar and all three have redemptive connotations. The priest is close to the people in experiencing their miseries and Christ 'by his own experience learned what it is to succour the weak'. 'The Son of God had no need of experience, that he might know the emotions of mercy, but we could not be persuaded that he is merciful and ready to help us, had he not become acquainted by experience with our miseries.'[25] As priest, to perform his office, Christ had to enter the sanctuary with a sacrifice, and this he did with his own blood. This was 'a new and different order' from the animal sacrifices commanded by the law. 'The same one was to be both priest and sacrifice. This was because no other satisfaction adequate for our sins, and no other man worthy to offer to God his only-begotten Son, could be found.'[26] As priest, Christ is in addition 'the altar of God, and on him we must offer, if we wish that God should accept our sacrifices'.[27]

Finally, how does the incarnate Son reveal his kingship in the 'days of his suffering'? We have noticed that Calvin insists heavily on the spiritual nature of this office. Christ rules for God and to God by his truth and the power of the Spirit; when Christ came into the world it was by these means that he established his kingdom, overcoming the devil and his works.[28] As Christ accomplished this messianic office, he was gifted with the kingdom. There is no change in the divine kingship of the Father when Christ is appointed to rule 'as vice-regent governing the world', 'since God is the Son and works in him'.[29] For this reason, although 'Christ was anointed as king by the Holy Spirit' Calvin assigns no moment in the life of Christ when he began to reign. The kingdom is always present with him and Calvin is reticent to reduce a spiritual reality to a temporal moment. However, the kingdom is invested in due form at the moment of the ascension. 'Having laid aside the mean and lowly state of mortal life and the shame of the cross, Christ by rising again began to show forth his glory and power more fully. Yet he truly inaugurated his kingdom only at his ascension into heaven'.[30]

On earth Christ's kingdom work extends through his teaching and miracles, considered as expressing the anointing of his human nature with power from on high, in order to overcome the sin and corruption of the world. These manifestations of Christ's power culminate in the victory of the cross, often portrayed by Calvin as the triumphal chariot of the conqueror.[31] Christ entered Jerusalem as a conqueror for his encounter with evil and subdued Satan in a violent

[24] *Comm.*, John 1:29; 1:63.
[25] *Comm.*, Rom 8:3; Heb 2:17.
[26] *Institution*, 2.15.6.
[27] *Comm.*, Isa 60:7. This is a strange expression, but Calvin refers to Matt 23:19 and the fact that the altar sanctifies offerings that would otherwise be unacceptable. He means, I think, that we are only acceptable to God through the faith in the sacrifice of Christ.
[28] *Comm.*, John 18:6.
[29] *Comm.*, John 5:22; 20:26.
[30] *Institution*, 2.15.5; 2.17.14.
[31] Jansen, *Calvin's Doctrine*, 89, refers to the commentaries on Acts 16:22, Col 2:15 and the sermon on Isa 53.

struggle: 'By means of his crucifixion salvation was obtained for the world, and Christ himself obtained a splendid triumph over death and Satan'.[32]

While Calvin repeatedly emphasizes that Christ is victor, nowhere does he diminish the terror and anguish experienced by the Mediator in the encounter with Satan, death, and hell. On the contrary, he speaks about Christ's serious struggle, the weakness of the flesh, wrestling in anguish, pain, the dread of death and the curse of God and his judgment. Only having known this did he 'emerge from the pains of death as Conqueror, upheld by the saving hand of the Father, and after a brief encounter gain a glorious victory over Satan, sin and the powers of hell'.[33]

FINALISATION

Thirdly, the *munus triplex* has an eschatological focus. The messianic work of Christ as Mediator is a unity that expresses how the one Christ was before all things, before us in the promise, how he acted for humanity in the incarnation, and how he is united to his people through his eschatological presence, both now and for ever.[34] For Calvin, Christ continues his mediatorial office in glory as Lord, head of the Church, brother, captain and leader.[35] Christ incorporates us into his body. As Alpha and Omega, the whole alphabet of redemption is written by and in Christ. In considering this continuing aspect of Calvin's thought the link between Christology and its soteriological implications comes into view.

As the steward of the Spirit, Christ continues his prophetic activity in drawing his people to himself and thus fulfilling the Abrahamic promise. The ascended Christ continues the prophetic office exercised on earth because as head he diffuses his anointing to his members. He received it 'not only for himself that he might carry out the office of teaching, but for his whole body that the power of the Spirit might be present in the continuing preaching of the gospel'. Not only so, but the prophetic proclamation leads to deliverance because of the work of the Spirit who extends the external teaching to make it internally effective. As the heavenly master Christ 'not only addresses (us) with the words of his mouth, but also teaches inwardly and effectively by His Spirit'.[36] He is the great high Prophet who not only continues to dispense the 'doctrine of life' outwardly but who shapes the hearts of believers in obedience to the gospel through saving faith. The prophetic proclamation of pardon and healing makes believers citizens of Christ's kingdom.

Beyond the one sacrifice for sin, the office of priest has an eschatological extension in heaven through the intercession of Christ, the advocate at the right hand of God, who pleads the cause of his own before the Father. Reconciliation with God, the finality of the work of Christ is the first part of his priestly office. It is presently expressed through the heavenly

[32] *Comm.*, John 6:15. On the victory over death and Satan see Peterson, *Atonement*, ch. 5, and Edmonson, *Christology*, 133-136. On the victory theme, H. Blocher, '*Agnus victor*: The Atonement as Victory and Vicarious Punishment', in: J.G. Stackhouse (ed.), *What Does it Mean to be Saved?*, Grand Rapids 2000; P. Wells, *Cross Words: A Biblical Doctrine of the Atonement*, Fearn 2006, ch. 9.

[33] *Comm.*, Heb 5:7.

[34] J.T. Billings, *Calvin, Participation and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ*, Oxford 2007, 68-104, and *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry in the Church*, Grand Rapids 2011, 63-94.

[35] Blaser, *Calvins Lehre*, 44.

[36] *Comm.*, Rom 8:15.

mediation of Christ who, by his intercession, continually applies the benefits of his death in our favour to salvation. So 'the intercession of Christ according to Calvin, is not an additional act which Christ performs in heaven, different from His death and resurrection. His intercession is the presence of this death and resurrection themselves before the Father'.[37]

To put it another way, intercession and the remission of sin are two sides of the same priestly activity. Calvin says it better:

> Having entered a sanctuary not made with hands, he appears before the Father's face as our constant advocate and intercessor (*Heb.* 7:25; 9:11-12; *Rom.* 8:34). Thus he turns the Father's eyes to his own righteousness to avert his gaze from our sins. He so reconciles the Father's heart to us that by his intercession he prepares a way and access for us to the Father's throne. He fills with grace and kindness the throne that for miserable sinners would otherwise have been filled with dread.[38]

This is the foundation which makes possible the approach of the throne of grace with 'trust in prayer, but (it is) also peace for godly consciences, while they safely lean upon God's fatherly mercy and are surely persuaded that whatever has been consecrated through the Mediator is pleasing to God'. Not only so, but equally remarkable is the fact that as great high priest Christ receives us at his side 'as his companions in this great office' and we 'freely enter the heavenly sanctuary that the sacrifices and prayers and praise that we bring may be acceptable and sweet-smelling before God'.[39] This, says Calvin, is the meaning of John 17:19, 'for their sakes I sanctify myself'.

Election is in Christ before the foundation of the world and the gift it envisions owes its efficacy to the royal work of the Mediator, as Christ is anointed king for his people's sake. All power is in the hands of the Shepherd-King to 'govern, nourish and sustain us, keep us in his care, and help us. … Christ stands in our midst, to lead us little by little to a firm union with God'. In his kingly office Christ 'is armed with eternal power (and) the perpetuity of the church is secure in this protection. Hence amid the violent agitation with which it is continually troubled, amid the grievous and frightful storms that threaten it with unnumbered calamities it still remains safe'.[40] Christ is ruler over all, but also protector and defender of his own. Believers who know him in this capacity can wait in confidence for his eschatological triumph. Then he will complete the separation of the wheat and the tares that has already begun through the preaching of the gospel.[41]

[37] M.P. Hoogland, *Calvin's Perspective on the Exaltation of Christ in Comparison with the Post-Reformation Doctrine of the Two States*, Kampen 1966, 198-199.

[38] *Institution*, 2.16.16.

[39] *Institution*, 2.15.6.

[40] *Institution*, 2.15.5; 2.15.3.

[41] *Comm.*, Ps 15:1.

ONE IN THREE, THREE IN ONE

Finally, it may be added that the three offices distinguished by Calvin are ultimately not three but one, the one saving office incarnated in the person of the Mediator. The *munus triplex* distinguishes the three, because Scripture does so, in order to accommodate the intricacy of the messianic work to our need of saving understanding and faith.

> The office-bearing is not something rigid but has a wondrous and *saving* effect. (…) In fulfilling this office (Christ) accomplishes the *one* work of salvation. That is why Christ's office does not conflict with his personal spontaneity; in Christ there never existed such a conflict.[42]

The one work of salvation has an historical rooting without which there would be no redemption, no change from sin to grace in history. It also is trans- and supra-historical. In presenting this profound truth, Calvin

> keeps in the foreground the assertion that the incarnation was not the eternal Son's abdication of his universal empire but the reassertion of that empire over rebellious creation. This continuity of gracious order over creaturely attempts at discontinuity depends on the identity of the redeeming Mediator in the flesh with the Mediator who is the eternal Son of God by whom, and with whose Spirit, all things were created according to the Father's will.[43]

Calvin's Christology has not always been valued as it deserves to be, either as an interpretation of the central biblical motif of incarnation, or for its multi-facetted prismic hermeneutical function. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is because its central motifs are theocentric and not functions of a Christology 'from below'. Thus Calvin's perspectives became increasingly counter-current, over against the dominant trends of modernism in recent times; its transcendent aspects became strange to those whose hermeneutic is immanentistic.

This is not only the case in so far as the philosophical or cultural developments of modernism are concerned. It applies also to theological developments within Christianity itself, deeply affected by horizontalism. Calvin's doctrine of the work of Christ as a mediation theology fits nicely neither with the accents of Christology 'from below' nor Christology 'from above'.[44] Although Calvin would no doubt have felt more at home with the latter, it may be doubted that he would have found any accentuation other than a mediatorial one to be totally germane to the biblical witness. In the light of this, and in the context of our current situation, Calvin's three offices still invite attention and present a challenge.

TWO CONCLUSIONS

In the multi-religious and multi-ethnic ambiance that is the air one breathes in the Western world, the call to dialogue with other faiths presents Christology an important challenge. However, prophetic, sacerdotal and royal language are not something which sets Christianity apart from other faiths, even if it is more hermetic to post-Christian agnostics or

[42] G.C. Berkouwer, *Het Werk van Christus*, Kampen 1953 (ET: *The Work of Christ*, Grand Rapids 1965, 62). Italics Berkouwer's.
[43] Willis, *Calvin's Christology*, 99-100.
[44] W. Pannenberg is sensitive to these problems, as seen in the introduction to his *Jesus—God and Man*, London 1968, 30-37.

Schleiermacher's 'cultured despisers'. Calvin's presentation of the *munus triplex* is an encouragement to reflect on the specific nature of Christian confession and revelation in a spirit of openness to those who follow other paths, but for whom prophetic, priestly and royal religious functions are an important constituent in their faith.[45]

Whatever one makes of Emil Brunner's eristic theological method, Brunner no doubt took the bull by the horns when he proposed, in his crucial but largely forgotten work *The Mediator*, that there are fundamentally two types of theology—one that is erected on the basis of the Mediator, implying personhood and finality in revelation, and another based on 'religion without a Mediator', that is either naturalistic or idealistic and falls short of divine personal self-disclosure.[46] By proposing that mediation is the way humans know God and hope for salvation, Brunner recalls Calvin's dictum 'outside Christ there is nothing worth knowing'.[47] Calvin was not saying, of course, that nothing is worth knowing at all, but that all the riches of human knowledge pale in the light of the Word made flesh. The *munus triplex* gives salvation an historical hermeneutic and scope stretching from the past to the future ending in the new creation, centring on the incarnation and fulfilment.

Secondly, Calvin proposes a knowledge of Christ that is real and personal, an antidote to aimless living and something that gives courage to live in a world where disaster can strike at any moment. The tunes of Calvin's variegated narrative of mediation are sweet music because the three offices are 'the way, the truth and the life' (John 14:6). The Mediator is Lord and brother, head of a family and the one who sends his Spirit to unite in mystic union.[48] As redeemer he is ever for us, in and with us.[49]

> Indeed, if this were deeply impressed on the hearts of all, that the Son of God holds out to us the hand of a brother, and that we are united to him by the fellowship of our nature, in order that, out of our low condition, he may raise us to heaven; who would not choose to keep on this narrow road, instead of wandering in uncertain and stormy paths?[50]

[45] D.A. Carson, *The Gagging of God. Christianity confronts Pluralism*, Leicester 1996, 315-346.
[46] E. Brunner, *The Mediator* (transl. O. Wyon), London 1934, 38, 71.
[47] *Institution*, 2.15.3, quoting 1 Cor 2:2.
[48] P. Wells, 'Calvin and Union with Christ. The Heart of Christian Doctrine', in: J.R. Beeke, G.J. Williams (eds), *Calvin: Theologian and Reformer*, Grand Rapids 2010, 65-88.
[49] For a development of these concepts in the context of eschatology see A. König, *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology: Toward a Christ-Centered Approach*, Grand Rapids 1989.
[50] *Comm.*, 1 Tim 2:5.

PROPHETIC PREACHING AFTER THE REGICIDE?

Some Observations on the Sermon John Owen Preached to the House of Commons the Day after King Charles I was Beheaded.

Arie Baars

For centuries numerous preachers have chosen a portion of the prophecies of Jeremiah as text for their sermons, many of which have been published afterwards. Anyone who leafs through this vast sermonic material, will quickly discover that the sermons on Jeremiah concentrate on two major themes. The first of them is the glorious dawn of the messianic age when God will establish a new covenant with Israel (e.g. Jer 30; 31). The second concerns the fierce denunciations against the sins of the people of Israel and their enemies which abound in these prophecies. Usually these denouncements are applied to the national sins and the wrongdoings committed within the church in the time in which the sermons were held. I am under the impression that the majority of the sermons on Jeremiah throughout the ages is mainly of a denunciatory character. Hence it will not come as a surprise that Jeremiah's name is associated with a particular type of preaching: the 'jeremiad'. Originally this term has been coined to denote sermons of puritan preachers in early New England in which they decried the sins prevalent among the settlers and powerfully called their hearers to repentance.[1] However, these messages preached in the colonies had their roots in puritan preaching in Old England, particularly on the fast-days.[2] On these 'days of humiliation, fasting and prayer' the texts for the sermons were regularly taken from the prophets, with some preference for Jeremiah.

In this essay I ask attention for one of the most remarkable fast-day sermons in the history of England. It concerns the sermon the famous Puritan John Owen (1616-1683) preached before the House of Commons on January 31, 1648, the day after Charles I, king of the United Kingdom was beheaded on the charge of high-treason. The text for the sermon was Jeremiah 15:19-20:

> Let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall, and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the Lord.[3]

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[1] Cf. S. Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, Madison ^{2}2012, esp. 3-30; J.D. Carlson, J.H. Ebel (eds), *From Jeremiad to Jihad: Religion, Violence, and America*, Berkeley/Los Angeles 2012, esp. ix-xiii, 111-127.

[2] Cf. A. Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, Oxford 1990, 283-325.

[3] J. Owen, 'Righteous Zeal Encouraged by Divine Protection: with a Discourse about Toleration, and the Duty of the Civil Magistrate about Religion, thereunto Annexed', in: J. Owen, *Works* (ed. W.H. Goold) (= Owen, *Works*) VIII, Edinburgh/Carlisle ^{3}1976, 127-206. I quoted Jer 15:19-20 from the KJV as this is the version Owen used. In other instances in this essay the Scriptures are usually quoted in the NIV.

At first glance, the choice of this text for this occasion seems remarkable, to say the least. This raises the following questions: 'How does Owen preach on this prophetic utterance?' 'To what extent does this sermon have the character of a truly prophetic preaching?'

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Obviously the historical context of this momentous sermon should be delineated first of all.

Charles I

When Charles I (1600-1649) became king of the United Kingdom in 1625,[4] he inherited a number of serious problems from the rule of his father, James I (1566-1625).[5] First of all, during the reign of the latter, the controversy between king and Parliament had deepened, for James I wanted to govern as an autocratic sovereign as much as possible. In some areas, however, he needed the consent of the Parliament for his measures, especially in matters of taxation and the waging of wars. The second controversial issue was the attitude of the king towards the Puritans. With the backing of the High-Church party within the Anglican Church he staunchly defended the divine institution of the episcopal office and demanded every parson to conform to the Book of Common Prayer. These two sources of contention became more explosive during the reign of Charles I, for he was more convinced of always being in the right and less inclined to compromise than his father.[6] With the assistance of William Laud, archbishop of Canterbury from 1633,[7] the measures against the Puritans were made heavier and ministers who refused to obey the Laudian ecclesiastical politics were dismissed from office.

In 1633 Charles I paid his first royal visit to Scotland, accompanied by Laud. Both dignitaries were appalled at the sober liturgy in the Scottish Churches.[8] Hence the king decreed that the Scottish Service Book should be replaced by a new liturgical manual drafted by Laud and very similar to the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. When this 'liturgy of Laud' was to be introduced in a service in St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh on July 23, 1637, rioting broke out which spread rapidly over large parts of the country. As a consequence the Scottish people drew up the National League and Covenant in which they declared on oath to maintain the Reformed Faith and the Presbyterian form of church-government. This implies that they rejected the episcopacy and the introduction of the liturgical innovations of the 'Popish-English-Scottish-Mass-Service Book'.[9] The king regarded this as an act of rebellion and declared war. However, the Scottish Covenanters defeated the armies of the king twice in the First and the Second Bishop's War (1639; 1640). In the Treaty of Westminster (1641) the King had to comply with all the demands of the Scots. His power in Scotland was definitely broken.

[4] Cf. about him and his reign: G.M. Trevelyan, *England under the Stuarts*, London/New York [31]2002, 124-278; J. Miller, *The Stuarts*, London [2]2006, 67-111.
[5] Trevelyan, *England under the Stuarts*, 69-123; Miller, *The Stuarts*, 37-65.
[6] Miller, *The Stuarts*, 72-79.
[7] Cf. about him: J.N. Norton, *Life of Archbishop Laud*, Boston 1864.
[8] The liturgy in the churches of Scotland was based on *John Knox's Genevan Service Book* of 1572 which was thoroughly Calvinistic in character. Cf. W.S. Reid, *Trumpeter of God: A Biography of John Knox*, Grand Rapids, 1974, 134-138; 198-200; H. Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, Morgan [2]1997, 27-34; 115-116.
[9] Cf. A. Smellie, *Men of the Covenant*, London [6]1911, 1-38.

In the meantime the political scene in England was far from quiet as well. In 1629 the conflict between Charles I and the Parliament had reached such a height, that the king dissolved the House of Commons.[10] For eleven years he ruled without calling the Parliament. However, after the disaster of the two Bishop's Wars, Charles was desperately in need of a large amount of money. Therefore, he was forced to call the Parliament together again, but its members refused to grant him money. They first demanded a thorough discussion with the king and his advisors about their grievances. Charles reluctantly yielded to this request and had to stand by helplessly when the House took a number of decisions that did not please him. The more important of these were the following: The obligation to use the Book of Common Prayer in all worship services was withdrawn. The episcopal form of church-government was abandoned. A general synod was called 'to consider all things necessary for the peace and good government of the church'. This synod—afterwards called the Westminster Assembly—was to advise the Houses of Parliament on matters of doctrine, church-government and liturgy.[11] Ultimately, even archbishop Laud was arrested, tried, condemned to death and beheaded in 1645. These stunning course of events was possible, because the number of puritan Members of Parliament had increased and many other members of the Houses were thoroughly fed up with the highhanded government of the archbishop and the king.

In these turbulent times Charles had to flee London and took refuge in York. There he started to mobilize an army in order to overthrow the government in London. Consequently, civil war was unavoidable because also the Houses of Parliament summoned their forces. Sir Thomas Fairfax functioned as commander-in-chief of this so-called New Model Army, while Oliver Cromwell was second in command.[12] Both armies engaged in several battles with varying success, but in 1645 the royal forces suffered a decisive defeat at Naseby. Ultimately Charles I had to flee for safety to the headquarters of the Scottish Covenanters in Newark. After some negotiations the Scots handed the king over to commissioners of the Parliament. In the midst of the ensuing turbulence, the king was sued for high-treason, condemned to death and on January 13th, 1649 he was beheaded. However, many subjects disapproved of this severe sentence, among whom numerous Puritans.

John Owen

John Owen was born in 1616 and when he was only twelve years of age, he was admitted as a student of Queen's College, Oxford.[13] After having earned his master's degree, he started to study divinity. However, in 1637, after two years of reading theology, he abandoned his studies and left Oxford. As a young man of puritan convictions he refused to accept Archbishop Laud's new statutes of the Oxford University. He became a private chaplain and tutor for two well-to-do families and was appointed rector of Fordham, Essex, in 1642. Here he began writing his first theological works and as a consequence his fame as an author on religious subjects started to spread. Owen was made vicar at nearby Coggeshall in 1646, after preaching a notable sermon

[10] Miller, *The Stuarts*, 85-88.
[11] Cf. R.S. Paul, *The Assembly of the Lord: Politics and Religion in the Westminster Assembly and the 'Grand Debate'*, Edinburgh 1985, 52-71; R. Letham, *The Westminster Assembly: Reading its Theology in Historical Context*, Phillipsburg 2009, 27-44.
[12] Cf. C. Hill, *God's Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution*, London [3]1988, 60-68; A. Fraser, *Cromwell: Our Chief of Men*, London [6]1985, 91-94; 111-119.
[13] The most recent biography of Owen is C. Gibson, *John Owen and English Puritanism: Experiences of Defeat*, Oxford 2016. Still important remains also W. Orme, *Memories of the Life, Writings, and Religious Connexions, of John Owen*, London 1820.

before Parliament in the same year.[14] In Coggeshall Owen came also into contact with leading officers of the parliamentary army which besieged the royal troops in nearby Colchester. His meeting with Cromwell was of the highest importance since the latter appointed him to be his army-chaplain and afterwards paved the way to his preferment to dean of Christ Church in Oxford and vice-chancellor of Oxford University. Most likely under the influence of his friendship with Cromwell, Owen was repeatedly invited to preach before Parliament on the monthly fast-days.

Fast-day sermons

Where do these special sermons come from and what is their function?[15] During the final part of the 16th and the early decennia of the 17th century, general fasts and feasts accompanied with appropriate sermons, were held within Parliament at irregular times. They were occasioned by anniversaries of momentous events in the Commonwealth, national calamities or signal victories and deliverances. On December 24, 1641 Parliament decided to have fast sermons preached on a regular basis to both Houses on the last Wednesday of every month. The reason was to be found in the critical situation in England at that moment and more specifically in the troubles in Ireland. The two Houses organized separate services on these fast-days and each chose and invited their own ministers. It is understandable that the Parliament selected those preachers whom it could trust.[16] As a consequence, references to the current political issues were usually either veiled or partisan. After the sermon the House voted thanks to the preacher and invited him to have the sermon printed.[17] If the message was not pleasing to the Parliament, the minister was denied the privilege of having his sermon published.[18]

The basic themes of most fast-day sermons were as follows. There 'was a prophetic insistence upon repentance and return in order to placate divine wrath for sins general and specific. Conjointly a plea was entered for divine mercy to extend temporal as well as spiritual blessings'.[19] So it will not surprise that the texts for those sermons were usually chosen from the Old Testament with a preference for the histories of the kings of Israel and the prophetic and apocalyptic writings.[20]

During the fast-days usually two sermons were held, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. On the day after the regicide, when John Owen preached before Parliament in the afternoon, John Cardell delivered his message in the morning. The programme of monthly fast-day sermons was ended soon after 1649.

[14] This was the first sermon Owen preached before parliament. The text was Acts 16:9. Cf. Owen, *Works* VIII, 5-41.
[15] Cf. H. Trevor-Roper, 'The Fast Sermons of the Long Parliament', in: H. Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: Religion, the Reformation and Social Change*, New York 1967, 273-316; J.F. Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament: Puritanism During the English Civil Wars, 1640-1648*, Princeton 1969.
[16] Trevor-Roper, 'The Fast Sermons', 286, 293.
[17] Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament*, 25-32, 41, 61-62.
[18] Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament*, 88, 92, 95, 131-132.
[19] Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament*, 30.
[20] Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament*, 147-155.

THE SERMON

In this section I will present a brief outline of the main structure of Owen's fast-day sermon which is divided in two parts. First of all Owen uses the context of the entire 15th chapter of Jeremiah to picture *the condition of the Commonwealth* in his day. Subsequently he offers to the House of Commons some *directions for the future* from his actual text (Jer 15:19-20).[21]

The context: the condition of the Commonwealth

In the opening lines of his sermon Owen explicitly states that a lengthy overview of the content of Jeremiah 15 is necessary, because the text of his sermon is closely connected with the preceding passage and its message depends on the previous verses.[22] According to him this chapter contains five distinct themes which are interrelated. He summarizes them and applies each of them to the situation in which his hearers, the church and the commonwealth find themselves.

First of all, the prophet denounces the fearful judgments of God against Judah and Jerusalem (vv. 3-9). In showing his fierce anger, the LORD has different means at his disposal. So Owen concludes: 'When God opens the treasures of His wrath against a sinful people, He uses various ways and means to execute His judgments.'[23] One example he mentions is especially noteworthy: 'To those that cry, Give me a king, God can give him in his anger; and from those that cry, Take him away, he can take him away in his wrath' (Hos 13:10,11).[24]

Secondly, the question is addressed why God visited the people of Juda and Jerusalem with these severe afflictions. The answer is: they were caused by the sins of Manasseh, king of Judah (v. 4; cf. also 2 Kgs 23:26-27). According to Owen this verdict illustrates a principle which in more recent times has been denoted as 'corporate personality', or 'corporate unity'.[25] In this concept the theocratic king is viewed as representing the people: when he transgresses the law, the people will be punished as well. The sermon tersely summarizes: 'Manasseh sins, and Judah must go captive'.[26] However, Owen extensively argues that also the Judeans themselves were accountable for the ungodliness among them and, therefore, were justly visited with God's wrath. They, for instance, did not restrain the king from his sinful ways, but wilfully followed him in his debauchery (2 Kgs 21:9). As a consequence the majority of them deliberately apostatized from the ways and worship of God.[27] According to Owen the actual sins of both king and people during the reign of Manasseh may be reduced to two main issues. They cherished and promoted false worship or superstition (2 Kgs 21:3-9) and cruelty was practised by the king and reigned alike in society (2 Kgs 21:16). The lesson Owen draws from this summary is more or less self-evident:

[21] Owen, *Works* VIII, 143.
[22] Owen, *Works* VIII, 133.
[23] Owen, *Works* VIII, 134.
[24] Owen, *Works* VIII, 135.
[25] Cf. H.W. Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel*, Edinburgh ²1981. The term 'corporate personality' came increasingly under attack since the sixties and the seventies of the last century. See: D.G. Powers, *Salvation through Participation: An Examination of the Notion of the Believer's Corporate Unity with Christ in Early Christian Soteriology*, Leuven 2001, 12-17. Powers opts for the term 'corporate unity'.
[26] Owen, *Works* VIII, 136.
[27] Most Puritans dealt extensively with the subject of apostasy. In 1676 Owen published his treatise *The Nature of Apostasy from the Profession of the Gospel* (Owen, *Works* VII, 1-259), which has been called the definite treatment of this topic.

> When false worship,[28] with injustice by cruelty, have possessed the governors of a nation, and wrapped in the consent of the greatest part of the people who have been acquainted with the mind of God; that people and nation, without unprecedented mercy, is obnoxious to remediless ruin.[29]

The third central theme of Jeremiah 15 is that these judgments are inevitable and that the Lord is inexorable in accomplishing all the evils which he has denounced. In this connection Owen reflects briefly on the first verse of this chapter: Even if Moses and Samuel would intercede, God would not avert his anger. The same may happen to the British Commonwealth, if they persist in the wickedness which has destroyed the nation in the past. The ruin will be total and there will be no remedy, as no prayers will be answered.[30]

In the fourth place Owen discusses the question: 'How does the prophet deport himself under this painful message he has to proclaim?' In his answer he deals with the various emotions the prophet expresses in this so-called confession (Jer 15:10,15-18). One of the more conspicuous ones is that Jeremiah voices his grief in a dramatic way because he is reviled and cursed by people that profess to serve the God of Israel. From this complaint Owen draws the conclusion that God's servants from all ages should be prepared to meet with these kinds of responses to their indefatigable preaching of the Word, their passionate call to repentance and their blameless behaviour. But why are they so dejected under such circumstances? Owen particularly points to the weakness of their faith which is unable to fathom the dark mysteries of God's providence. When God calls them into his service and they only meet with opposition and hatred, they fear they have been mistaken, begin to faint and are ready to leave him. Therefore, Owen impresses upon the hearts of his audience not to be too harsh on Christians in difficult seasons. And they, in turn, should mightily cry to God in their darkness.[31]

The text: God's directions for the future

Owen now turns to the fifth distinct theme he derives from Jeremiah 15 and with that to the second part of the sermon. This theme, however, is of a different nature than the previous ones as it concentrates on the directions God gives regarding the future. These may be found in the proper text of the sermon and are three in number.

First of all the Lord addresses the prophet in his dejection by exhorting him: 'Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them.' This implies that Jeremiah should continue to perform his duty in preaching the Word of God, whether the people will listen or not. Moreover, he should not associate himself with backsliding and rebellious Judah but oppose them with the unadulterated message he has proclaimed all the time. 'If they return, embrace them freely; if not, do thy duty constantly.'[32] Interestingly, Owen immediately applies this message to all those that are in authority, particularly to the government of England. He solemnly warns them not to side with people who live in sin, but to be constant in pursuing the way of righteousness. This implies that the House should labour to call people back—no matter how distinguished

[28] The issue of worship was a prominent point of controversy between Anglicans and Puritans. Cf. Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*. For Owen's view of worship, see R.M. McGraw, *A Heavenly Directory: Trinitarian Piety, Public Worship and a Reassessment of John Owen's Theology*, Göttingen 2014, esp. 81-115.
[29] Owen, *Works* VIII, 137.
[30] Owen, *Works* VIII, 138.
[31] Owen, *Works* VIII, 139-143.
[32] Owen, *Works* VIII, 144.

they are—from siding with 'the enemies of God and the nation'.[33] However, Parliament should also realize that this enemy is active 'within their own walls'. Since the members of the House that opposed the king have come to power, many of them tend to use the same methods as those that persecuted them in the past. One of the most common sins they commit is oppressing people that oppose them, especially in the poorer segments of society. Owen boldly opens his inmost feelings about this issue when he says:

> I heartily desire a committee of your honourable House might sit once a-week, to relieve poor men that have been oppressed by men sometimes enjoying parliamentary authority.[34]

Secondly, in order to assist the prophets—and according to Owen, consequently also the public authorities—in performing their difficult task, God assures them of his unconquerable protection and abiding help. For he promises them: 'I will make you a wall to this people, a fortified wall of bronze.' There is, however, a condition to this promise: 'the Lord will be with them, as long as they are with Him' (cf. 2 Chr 15:2). The question may arise: 'Why is the Lord with those that honour Him by their obedience?' Because his honour is at stake if he does not bless and preserve them. Owen applies this by the following encouragement to the House:

> In such a nation as this, if the Lord now, upon manifold provocations, should give up parliament, people, army, to calamity and ruin, would not the glory of former counsels, successes, deliverances be utterly lost? Would not men say it was not the Lord, but chance that happened to them?[35]

For that reason the Parliament should expect all help from the Lord alone and walk in his ways with upright hearts. They should take heed not to forsake him, for then he will forsake the Commonwealth so that they will become a weak, tottering wall which shall easily be cast down.

The third direction is based on the words: 'They will fight against you but will not overcome you'. The exposition on this encouragement—which at the same time forms the concluding observations of the entire sermon—closes with a moving appeal. Those that obey the word of God should be prepared for opposition. However, they should not despair, for the battle is God's and he will be their shelter and their strength. The opposing party on the other hand should examine themselves whether they are judicially hardened. They are called to turn to God before it is too late.

The sermon ends in a rather abrupt way: Owen states that he will not speak about the last part of his text, viz. the consolation and prosperity the Lord provides, because he is with the prophet and all true believers to rescue and save them.[36] He even assures his audience that it was never his intention to deal with this part at all…![37]

[33] Owen, *Works* VIII, 146.
[34] Owen, *Works* VIII, 148.
[35] Owen, *Works* VIII, 152.
[36] Owen, *Works* VIII, 143.
[37] Owen, *Works* VIII, 162.

OBSERVATIONS

Concluding the overview of this remarkable sermon I make a few general observations.

Exegesis or eisegesis?
No information is available why Owen chose this particular text for his sermon at this momentous occasion. Both his biographies and his personal correspondence are silent about it. From the sermon itself we get the impression that Owen wanted to preach on the following theme: At this crucial juncture the British government should not relapse into the sins of the past, for then God's final judgments will inevitably fall upon the Commonwealth. Instead it should stand firm in the defence of the truth and urge those subjects that have gone astray to (re)turn to the 'ways of righteousness'. Then God will be with the country, bless it and defend it against all its enemies.

In order to reach this goal Owen made a number of crucial exegetical choices. Because he wanted to lay bare the sins of the Commonwealth in the past and to warn against them, he needed a substantial part of the beginning of Jeremiah 15. Consequently almost 40% of the sermon is devoted to verses taken from the context. From this it is evident that the fundamental unity of this chapter is the underlying concept of his exegesis.

However, recent exegesis has convincingly demonstrated that vv. 1-9 and 10-21 belong to a different genre. The first pericope is characterized as a divine announcement of judgment or a divine lament expressing God's sorrow over the disasters he had to visit the people with. The last portion of the chapter is the second of the so-called 'confessions' of Jeremiah. In these final verses the prophet responds in a highly personal and emotional way to God because of the message he has to deliver. The content and form of this confession is closely related to the other confessions in the book. Therefore, the interrelationship between these confessions is very important for the exegesis of these passages.[38] The structure of the confession in Jeremiah 15 consists of six typical features, viz. a complaint (v. 10), a divine response (v. 11-14), an introductory address and petition (v. 15), a profession of innocence (v. 16), a lament (v. 17-18) and an answering oracle (vv. 19-21).[39] In his lament the prophet reproaches the Lord in an almost blasphemous way by accusing him of having deceived him (v. 18). In his answer the Lord addresses his servant personally and urges him to repent. Then he will take him into his service again.[40] In his sermon Owen misses this highly dramatic and personal encounter between the prophet and God almost completely[41] and the exhortation is freely applied to the Parliament and the people of England.

[38] Cf. N. Ittmann, *Die Konfessionen Jeremias. Ihre Bedeutung für die Verkündigung des Propheten*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981; A.R. Diamond, *The Confessions of Jeremiah in Context: Scenes of Prophetic Drama*, Sheffield 1987.
[39] Diamond, *The Confessions of Jeremiah in Context*, 52-78.
[40] Cf. B.J. Oosterhoff, *Jeremia*, dl 2 (COT), Kampen 1994, 134; W.L. Holladay, *Jeremiah*, Vol. 1 (Hermeneia), Philadelphia 1986, 461-464; A. van Selms, *Jeremia*, dl 1 (POuT), Nijkerk 1972, 215-218.
[41] Usually commentators of the 16th and 17th century tend to mitigate the strong language Jeremiah uses here, but they have a much keener eye for his personal struggle. See, e.g., the exegesis of John Calvin and Matthew Henry of this passage: J. Calvin, *CO* XXXVIII, 230-232; M. Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* IV, McLean n.d., 508-511.

Hermeneutics
Behind these exegetical choices lies Owen's hermeneutical conviction that the theocratic structure of the government of Old Testament Israel may immediately be applied to the government of the British Commonwealth in the 17th Century! England is the 'New Israel' and the utterances of the Prophets have direct relevance for state, church and individuals in his own days. This is the common view among the Puritans.[42] However, this concept insufficiently takes into account the unique redemptive-historical position of Old Testament Israel and its theocracy. It is somewhat remarkable that in this sermon Owen draws such a massive parallel between Israel and the British Commonwealth, for at least in one of his other writings he clearly shows some sensitivity of the redemptive historical progression in the Scriptures.[43] He has rightly been called one of the first English theologians who advocates an incipient redemptive-historical theology or a proto-Biblical theology.[44]

Homiletical
The structure of the sermon is rather defective, also in the light of the sermon-structure commonly used by Owen himself and his puritan contemporaries. Puritan sermons had a fourfold or threefold division: (Introduction), Doctrine, Reasons and Uses (=Applications).[45] Owen's sermon does not have a single doctrine, since there are in fact numerous doctrines, parts and observations.[46] The way in which he treats his text raises questions: no less than 40% of the sermon only covers the context and the last part of the text is deliberately left out. The uses do not show a very structured pattern as was customary, but are scattered throughout the sermon, especially the second half. Moreover, because the exegesis is defective, some applications are rather forced. I have the impression that Owen decided to address these particular issues at this crucial juncture of events and that he subsequently sought for a suitable portion of Scripture from which he could elaborate on them. As a consequence this sermon is less satisfactory *as a sermon*. Nevertheless, in many passages Owen shows to have a keen eye for the dangers which loom in society, church and government-circles at the dawn of a new era. He encourages the members of Parliament and presses their duty powerfully upon their hearts, especially in the final section of his message.

Prophetic Preaching?
Is this prophetic preaching? The answer depends on how to define this concept. Now prophetic preaching is usually closely connected with political issues, although in my opinion it should

[42] Cf. E.S. Morgan (ed.), *Puritan Political Ideas 1558-1794*, Indianapolis 1965; W.B. Selbie, *The Influence of the Old Testament on Puritanism*, Whitefish 2005. This idea is also prevalent among the representatives of the Dutch 'Further Reformation' ('Nadere Reformatie') and pietism. Cf. R. Bisschop, *Sions vorst en volk. Het tweede-Israëlidee als theocratisch concept in de Gereformeerde kerk van de Republiek tussen ca. 1650 en ca. 1750*, Veenendaal 1993. Of course, the parallelism in their writings is obviously with The Netherlands!
[43] See his massive Latin treatise *Theologoumena Pantadapa* (*Theological Affirmations of all Sorts*), published in Owen, *Works* XVII (the volume containing Owen's works in Latin). For a recent English translation, see: J. Owen, *Biblical Theology*, Pittsburg 1994, 1-725.
[44] Cf. R.C. Gamble, *Whole Counsel of God*, Vol. 1: *Gods Mighty Acts in the Old Testament*, Philipsburg 2009, 1-10.
[45] Cf., e.g., Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, 182-203; esp. 191-193; J.I. Packer, 'Puritan Preaching', in: J.I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*, Wheaton 1990, 277-290.
[46] Viz. 5 parts and 10 observations which are mixed together.

not be limited to this. Therefore, I propose the following tentative definition: Prophetic preaching implies that the proclamation of the Word has to address current developments in church and society, especially in times of crisis. It has to unmask contemporary dangers and errors which threaten church and state and call to repentance from open sins. Moreover, this kind of preaching has to encourage both congregation, society and government to promote justice, peace and godliness. However, it has to be reserved in dealing too specifically with political problems of the day. Prophetic or political preaching is not the same as preaching politics![47]

Owen's sermon fits this definition in a large measure. Admittedly, he speaks in a very veiled way about the regicide. There were several reasons why he had to choose his words carefully. However, this does not mean that he disapproved of the capital punishment of the king. In a later sermon before Parliament he denounced the beheading of the king as God's righteous judgment over the sins of the House of Stuart ànd of the entire nation.[48] But when it comes to his laying bare the sins of government and people, the urgent call to return to the Lord and the exhortation to seek justice, peace and godliness at this critical juncture: this is prophetic-political preaching indeed!

[47] Cf. W. Aalders, 'Profetische prediking', in: J. van Oort, A. de Reuver *et al.* (eds), *Verbi Divini Minister*, Amsterdam 1983, 7-18; B.J. Oosterhoff, 'Profeet en politieke prediking', in: B.J. Oosterhoff, *Om de Schriften te openen*, Kampen 1987, 126-146.

[48] Owen, *Works* VIII, 315-339.

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Bart & Magda Reinders, Capelle aan den IJssel
Bernhard J.G. Reitsma, Ermelo
Bert & Miranda Renkema, Hilversum
Age Romkes, Ede
Henk Room, Soest
Peter & Heleen Roosendaal, Nieuwe Pekela
Herrie van Rooy, Potchefstroom, South Africa
Wolter Rose, Kampen
Jonard Roukens MA, Delft
Phina Ruiter, Hoevelaken
Johan Schaeffer, Nunspeet
Han & Josien Schenau, Goes
Cees-Jan Smits, Purmerend
Gert-Wim & Urai van der Snel, Oene

Dr. Fanie Snyman, South Africa
Rob & Dorothea Soeters, Amersfoort
Willem van 't Spijker, Hilversum
Klaas Spronk, PThU, Amsterdam
Bé Steenbergen, Zoetermeer
Steensma, Douwe, Feanwâlden
Dr. J.M. Stolk, Reformatorisch Dagblad, Apeldoorn
Eep Talstra, Nieuwegein
Dhr. en mevr. E.H. Tellegen, Oene
Jan Tempelman, Opeinde
Drs. P.W.J. van der Toorn, Bunschoten
Rob & Esther van der Toorn, Leiden
Roelof Upperman, Zutphen
Fam. H.J. Vazquez, Emmen
Dr. Klaas Veenhof, Heemstede
Dr. Bertus van 't Veld, Vaassen
Drs. Henk Venema, GKV Groningen Mission LITINDO, Onnen
Piet Vergunst, Apeldoorn
Arian Verheij, Nijmegen
Arie & Melinda Versluis, Ouderkerk a/d Amstel
Klaas & Ariejanne Visser, Barendrecht
Rob Visser, Staphorst
Wim van Vlastuin, Wezep
Fam. D.J. van Vliet, Ede
Dr. Paul Voorberg, Emmeloord
Hans Voorthuijzen, Kampen
Cor de Vos, University of Münster, Hannover, Germany
Drs. B.P. Vreugdenhil, Breukelen
Dr. P. de Vries, Boven-Hardinxveld
Rien & Pietie Vrijhof, Arnhem
Hans & Johanne van Vulpen, Kesteren
Henk de Waard, Dordrecht
Roelinka van der Wal-Velema & Jakob van der Wal, Baarn
Aart Wallet, VDm, Schoonrewoerd
Dr. Chris van der Walt, Potchefstroom, South Africa
Drs. Ir. G.H. (Gerard) Wassink, Doetinchem
Drs. A.A.F. van de Weg, Abbenbroek
J.Th. (Jan) Weijenberg, Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel
Ton & Meta van der Wekken, Dokkum
Dr. Paul Wells, Aix-en-Provence, France
Jan & Beppie Wessels, Veenendaal
Annemarie & Coen Westerink, Nijkerk
Co & Jaap Westerink, Urk
Tom Wevers, Utrecht
Marien & Jolanda Wijnbergen, Oene
Jan Winter, Bunschoten

Arjan & Eliana Witzier, Apeldoorn
Wim Wüllschleger, Zeewolde
Dr. Hae Moo Yoo, CheonAhn, South Korea
Peter Zaadstra, Kockengen
Karel & Wilma van der Zande-de Roo, Apeldoorn
Hanny van Zutphen, Nieuwegein
Rita & Joop Zuur, Rijswijk
Arie & Margreet van der Zwan, Dordrecht
Ron & Rianne Zwiers-Peels, Gouda