

# **A THEOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE**

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## **PART ONE: THE BIBLE AS A COLLECTION OF BOOKS COMPOSED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL**

### **Chapter One: Introduction**

*Vision and purpose of this book.* This is a book designed to make the reader familiar with the Christian Bible; “familiar,” in a relatively profound way. The goal is to understand how the Jewish Scriptures were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. But we first have to understand how these Scriptures came to be in the first place, and how they came to be understood as being fulfilled by Jesus. This will require a knowledge of history, of the circumstances in which these Scriptures were written, and the purposes which they served. Then we have to examine how they were interpreted. Today we are more than ever aware of the importance of interpretation, or hermeneutics: every text is read or heard from a position, every reader has interests, things he or she looks for, questions he has or answers he seeks, and corresponding methods of interpretation. We shall see how the biblical texts themselves are often interpretations of prior texts, and we shall, I hope, come to respect the fact that there are different interpretations of the same text. Christians and Jews have different interpretations of the same Scriptures, and even different ways of ordering their contents. This fact, rather than disturb or discourage us, should help us to understand the Bible better (our firstmost goal), as well as respect “our elder brothers in the faith,” the Jews. We should never lose sight of the fact that, in a very real way (even as regards the New Testament), these are “their” Scriptures; these are all Jewish writings, and we are indebted to the Jews for this more than we shall ever know, this side of Paradise.

This book is ambitious. We want to get a grip on the whole Bible: not in all its details, of course, but globally, holistically. And we want to have the solid historical basis which is necessary for understanding these texts. Finally, we want to acquire some knowledge about different methods of interpretation, and Church teaching about

inspiration and the issue of possible errors in the Bible. These pages are meant to guide the reader as he or she engages in other reading —and, especially, reading of and *thinking* about, the Bible.

*How to get a grip on the Bible.* The Bible is too massive to grasp as a whole all at once. We have to divide it up. There is a way to divide it that facilitates our grasp of the Bible. It is basically a “Jewish” way. The first part of Scripture we want to delimit are the first five books (traditionally called “of Moses”). This is what Christians know as the Pentateuch, the Jews as the Torah (translated as “Law” in the Greek Scriptures). The second part of Scripture the Jews call “the Prophets.” You know that the expression “the Law and the Prophets” is common in the New Testament (see, e.g., Luke 16:16).<sup>1</sup> Well, the “Prophets,” in the Jewish reckoning, are not just “our” (“Christian”) prophets. The Prophets are divided into Former and Latter. The Former are the books that follow the Pentateuch (four, in the Jewish counting): Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. What is so important about this division? It is extremely important! The Pentateuch begins with creation and ends with Israel, who has left Egypt, still in the exile of the desert, not yet in the Promised Land (they are in the “plains of Moab,” Deut 1:1-5). In Joshua, they conquer the Land. In Judges, they engage in a pattern of sin and punishment. In Samuel, they ask for and get kings, and sinning continues and increases, so that, due to King Solomon’s sins, the kingdom is divided (1 Kgs 11). At the end of the Book(s) of Kings, that is, at the end of the Former Prophets, Israel is again in Exile, that is, back where it started. Now you might say, “Not exactly,” since you know that they were taken to Babylon (“they” meaning the members of the tribe of Judah, the Jews, while the northern tribes had been conquered and dispersed by the Assyrians over one hundred years earlier; see 2 Kgs 17). But exile is exile, and in fact, for one biblical writer, all Israel actually goes back to Egypt! See 2 Kgs 25:26; Jer 43:4-7.<sup>2</sup> This is tantamount to going back to the time when Israel was not yet God’s people, when they were slaves in Egypt, before they

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<sup>1</sup> Here are some abbreviations I use: “e.g.,” *exempli gratia*, means “for example;” “i.e.,” *id est*, Latin for “that is;” “cf.,” *confer*, “compare.”

<sup>2</sup> Although principally it is Judah, we can call the exiled entity “Israel” because it is not just members of the tribe of Judah we are dealing with, but all the inhabitants of the southern kingdom of Judah, including the tribe of Benjamin, Levites from the north, etc.; in a word, God’s Chosen People.

were freed and made the covenant with God in Sinai. But this situation is precisely what Moses had predicted in Deut 28:68; in fact, it is even worse than before.<sup>3</sup>

So now we have something to think about: we have a Pentateuch (let me write Torah, it's shorter), which begins in the beginning and ends . . . and ends at a moment of anticipation, a non-ending, like in a lobby or anteroom, since the most important thing has yet to happen, Israel's possession of the Land.<sup>4</sup> So the first unit, the first five books, are the foundation. The foundation ends with Deuteronomy. Well, Deut is actually also the introduction or prologue to what follows, the "Former Prophets." What the scholars call this next unit of four books (mentioned above) is the "Deuteronomic History." It is the history of Israel's failure to keep the covenant, and of Israel's consequent incurring of the curses contained in the Torah for such breaking of the covenant. So the two units, Torah and Former Prophets, are significant. One is the basis of the other, and both end kind of in the same place, in a place which is not the final destination, in a place of waiting and anticipation, in a place in which reflection, repentance and hope are needed. In the case of the Torah, it is "the plains of Moab;" in the case of the Former Prophets, it is Babylon, or even Egypt (according to the texts we indicted).

Who provides the hope? The Latter Prophets, "our" prophets, and, strangely enough, *these are also four books* (like the Former Prophets). The books are those of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve: four scrolls, a single one for what we call the "Minor Prophets." These prophets speak of the time of salvation, often called the messianic age, or eschatology (the things pertaining to the End, understood in various ways). Christians favor these prophecies, and place these prophets last in their Bible, since we believe that they predict the coming of Jesus Christ. One can basically turn the page after Malachi, the last prophet, and start reading about John the Baptist; some

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<sup>3</sup> At this time I acknowledge with pleasure that I learned the Egypt to Egypt idea from one of my recent discoveries in biblical studies, the work of the brilliant Jewish scholar formerly at UC San Diego, now at Univ. of Georgia, Richard Elliott Friedman. I highly recommend all his books and articles for readability, erudition and insight.

<sup>4</sup> For those who like beer, you'll be amused to know that a great German Bible scholar, the Jesuit Norbert Lohfink, translates Deut 29:5 as saying that Israel had not been able to drink beer (often translated "strong drink") until its arrival in the Promised, that is, had not yet been able to celebrate. English Protestant Bibles, often following the Septuagint and/or the Vulgate, often differ by one verse number or more from the Hebrew text; here, e.g., the *NRSV* has it as Deut 29:6 (keep this in mind when you look up Bible quotes from now on). By the way, the only way to learn the Bible is to look up as many Bible quotes as you can when reading *about* the Bible, until you begin to recognize what the citation refers to. This time invested will be well worth it, and without it, you'll be limping when it comes to biblical studies.

consider his vocation narrative to be, in fact, Mal 3 (including Mal 4, in some Bibles). So, we can “get a grip” on a large portion of the Bible by following the Jewish canon: five books followed by two sets of four books. And these are “the Law and the Prophets” that the New Testament speaks about.

Torah/Law/Pentateuch Former Prophets/Deuteronomistic History Latter Prophets

Keep in mind the double function of Deut as end of Torah and beginning of Prophets. We thus have a four plus pivot plus four plus four setup.<sup>5</sup>

Gen Exod Lev Num + Deut + Josh Judg Samuel Kings + Isa Jer Ezek + The Twelve

The Torah, as we said, tells us about what God did (and the various human responses) from the beginning of the world until a time and place where Israel is about to enter into the great Promise, that of a Land flowing with milk and honey (see the description in Deut 8:7-10). It is also referred to as the place of rest which has yet to be arrived at (Deut 12:9). Now, it is important not to join Deut too much to what follows. Deut functions both as the end of the Torah and the prologue of the Former Prophets (this expression is likewise briefer than “Deuteronomistic History”). As the end of the Torah, it is not really an end, but an anticipation of a new beginning (the conquest and settlement of the Land). It also contains many warnings and predictions of what will happen if the Sinai covenant is not kept. In a nutshell, the punishment (curse) will be Exile, being away from God’s Land, being in a foreign (pagan) land, in bondage or captivity. Whether it is in Babylon or some other place, it is like being back in Egypt before God had liberated Israel and made it his people.

The Former Prophets, based on Deut, tell the tale of how Israel in fact broke the covenant and incurred the curse of Exile. So at the end of the Former Prophets, Israel is again in Exile. The people in Exile can well relate to what Deut says, and can also look to

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<sup>5</sup> There is a lot of scholarship regarding these kinds of arrangements in the Bible, down even to counting the number of verses, and parallels with the New Testament arrangement. The work of the great David Noel Freedman is noteworthy here.

the other parts of the Torah. In fact, most scholars believe that the final redaction (edition) of the Torah took place in the Babylonian Exile (587-538 B.C.E.), with the needs of the exilic community in mind. And it is during and after the exile that the books of the Latter Prophets were gathered and edited by certain Jewish groups in order to present God's picture of the "End Time," when Israel will be saved (we shall need to discuss the elements and descriptions of this "salvation"). It is important to keep in mind that what lies before Israel as a Promise awaiting fulfillment at the end of Deut ("a land flowing with milk and honey") is transformed by the Latter Prophets into a new creation, a new heaven and earth. In fact, the End will correspond to the Beginning, and thus "salvation" will be like a return to the Garden of Eden. Does the expression "New Adam" ring a bell?<sup>6</sup> And so we have gotten a vision, brief as it is for now, of the whole of the "Law and the Prophets." What about the other books of the "Old Testament"?

Well, the good news is that we won't have very much to say about them. Only certain things are necessary in order to get this grip on the Bible. Note, however, that in our approach —following the Jewish canon— we first of all leave out the deuterocanonical books. Don't get confused: the only thing this expression has to do with Deuteronomy is that "deutero" means "second;" Deuteronomy is like a "Second Law" (or Second Torah), updating an older one. "Deuterocanonical" are books considered to be in a "second canon" of the Old Testament and, for our purposes here, are only accepted by the Roman Catholic Church. It would be too confusing to include them in this book. (Protestants and Jews do not consider them Sacred Scripture.) Look at the table of contents of your Bible to see which ones are in this category.

The third category after "Law and Prophets" in the Jewish canon are the "Writings." The most important book there, and the lead-off book, is the Book of Psalms (although it, in turn, is divided into five books, much like the Torah). In the time of Jesus, there was no universal agreement among Jews as to which books were to be included in this category; some Jews actually considered as Scripture many other books than the ones which finally made it in. But the Psalms were very important, and this is the name given

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<sup>6</sup> I anticipate to you that Luke the Theologian has converted "the Promise" into the promise of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5; 2:38-39), the promise of Jesus' Resurrection (Acts 13:32-33) and the promise of our resurrection (Acts 4-8, 23); actually, it is all one thing: God's promise of salvation, realized in Christ (2 Cor 1:20).

to this category in Luke 24:44. For New Testament Christians, the Psalms contained many predictions of Jesus' kingship, passion and resurrection (and priesthood, Ps 110).

So keep in mind that we will not deal with the Book of Ruth as if it came before Samuel, or with Chronicles etc. as if we considered them part of a category called "historical books," as in the Christian Bible. They may well be that, but we are trying to get a grip on the Bible, and our way is easier and makes more sense as an introduction. So take a look at these other books, and note the differences between the different canons. Learn to distinguish the deuterocanonical books, with which we will deal very little. As to the Writings, note that we have a series of 3 + 5 + 3. The first three are Psalms, Job and Proverbs. The middle five are an important unit in Judaism, the *megillot* (scrolls) read in important feasts. Finally, the last three are Daniel (!), Ezra/Nehemiah (again, one book) and Chronicles. In the Jewish (and even Christian) tradition, Daniel is in Babylon predicting the future, Ezra and Nehemiah are reformers in the postexilic period and Chronicles is a fitting end to their whole Bible. The Jewish Bible ends with the good news of the return from Exile, the *going up* to Zion (the first "Zionists," as the *Biblia de Jerusalén* calls them in Ezra 2 and Neh 7) in order to rebuild the Temple. It is a fitting end, because the Second Temple, rebuilt after the first Temple's destruction by the Babylonians in 587 B.C.E., was in turn destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E. So many Jews now await the coming of the Messiah in order to have *him* (or God) build the new, everlasting Temple. Jesus himself spoke about his building a new Temple not built by human hands.

There is an indication in the very primitive source of sayings of Jesus, the "Q source," that Jesus saw the Bible —the only Bible, in his day— as running from, and consisting of, Genesis to Chronicles. Jesus had a consciousness of being in the End Time, in the last generation of present history as we know it. He condemns his generation for rejecting him as God's final emissary, which will result in the final judgment, when all wrongdoing ever committed will be punished. This saying, found in Luke 11:49-51 (compare the "more developed" Matt 23:33-36), describes this wrongdoing in terms of "the blood of all the prophets which was spilt from the foundation of the world . . . from

the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah . . . .” This is most probably the Zechariah of 2 Chr 24:20-21, which tells of the last murder in the Jewish Bible.<sup>7</sup>

We can thus consider the “Writings” as a catch-all category for all that is not “Law and Prophets,” the two principal categories which we will deal with in this book. Our focus will be Torah (especially as set in the time and place of its final edition, or “redaction”), and the Prophets: first the Former ones, or Deuteronomic History, then the Latter ones, but seen chronologically. Here we depart from the order of the Latter Prophets in our Bibles, in order to get a good review of Israelite history from about 760 B.C.E. (the time of Amos) to the last of the Latter Prophets in the postexilic period, and then up to the time of Jesus.<sup>8</sup> We do deal with one author who is among the prophets for Christians, Daniel. The important second part of this book can be dated to *ca.* 165 B.C.E.<sup>9</sup> Chronologically, it is the latest part of the “Hebrew Scriptures” to have been written, and, for Christians, contains important predictions regarding Christ. Some editions of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the “Old Testament” preserved by Christians, place Daniel last; that is, the Latter Prophets begin with the Twelve, followed by Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and finally Daniel.

*A provisionally-final word on the Christian canon.* Due to the interest in placing the Latter Prophets at the end of the “Old Testament,” the Writings had to be divided up and placed in appropriate locations. Thus Ruth, from the time of the Judges, was placed before Samuel. Lamentations is attributed to Jeremiah, and so is placed after him, along with the deuterocanonical book of Baruch his secretary. “Historical books,” like Tobit, Judith, Esther and Maccabees follow the books of the Deuteronomic History. In the middle are wisdom books like Job, Psalms, etc. The Christian canon also has its order and significance, but you can see that for an introductory course, the Jewish division is more suitable. And it should be known that Jews continue to contribute much to our (Christian) understanding of the Scriptures.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Although in Matt 23:35 this Zechariah is called son of Jehoiada. It is not clear who the the prophet Zechariah was son of; see the note to Zech ‘1.1-6’ in the *New Oxford Annotated Bible. Third Edition* (Oxford – New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), 1358 HEBREW BIBLE: due to the existence of multiple Zechariahs, there may have been “scribal confusion” here and there in the transmission of his forebears.

<sup>8</sup> The *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* lists the Latter Prophets in a chronological order.

<sup>9</sup> “*Ca.*”, *circa*, means “around.”

<sup>10</sup> See the “Vatican” (Pontifical Biblical Commission) document “The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible” (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002).





## **Chapter Two: The History of Israel and the Making of the Bible**

*Preliminary remarks.* The purpose of this chapter is to enable the reader to get a good idea of the history of Israel, in its most significant moments and events, and also get a sense of direction towards an outcome, or at least, towards a certain period significant for the understanding of Christian origins (and also Rabbinic Judaism). Already, we see something that would upset some scholars: we are going to look at history with a heuristic purpose and in an interpretive manner. By “heuristic” (from the Greek *heuriskein*, “to find,” as in “Eureka!,” “I have found it”), we mean that we are going to look at the vast history of Israel with a view towards an understanding of how Christianity, or at least the “Jesus movement,” came to be, from a socio-religious point of view. Our review is based on good scholarship, and is not in the first place dependent on a confession of faith. We try to deal honestly with biblical facts, as established by reasonable biblical scholarship. But it must be said that the enterprise is really theological, not based just on reason, but also on faith. It is presented as an interpretation, one consistent with Catholic teaching, though many scholars might disagree with one or more points made. But if the facts are basically grounded on evidence, then the fact that it is an interpretation among other possible ones makes it no worse or different than other interpretations, all other things being equal; that is, the interpretation itself can be judged as to how it has dealt with the facts. But we propose that this interpretation not only takes into account the relevant facts (or the ones it considers relevant), but is a reasonable and useful interpretation for, again, understanding Christian and Rabbinic-Jewish origins.

### **Significant Stages in the History of Israel**

*The origins of the Israelite religion.* Without getting too deeply into a very complex field, we should point out that the earliest “Israelites” seem to have been nomads or semi-nomads who lived in tribal groups (each one made up of clans) and who worshipped tribal deities (known, e.g., as the “God of Abraham,” or the “Fear of Isaac,”

or the Strong One of Jacob”).<sup>11</sup> At some point in the thirteenth and twelfth centuries B.C.E., we find these tribes settled in Canaan, along with other tribes who have brought with them a great tale of liberation from slavery in Egypt. All these tribes are “brothers,” they share the most important things in common: customs, traditions and religion. There is a movement towards integration and consolidation as a people, although this will not come to completion until much later, and even then only imperfectly. Religion will play an important role in this process of unification, but it, too, will undergo a lengthy process of development.

These tribes have common stories, and also learn the great mythologies of their predecessors in Canaan, whose great city was in Ugarit. These predecessors were agriculturists (i.e., sedentary), not nomadic, and worshipped deities that had to do with fertility. They spoke (and wrote, in an old cuneiform language, Ugarit, a predecessor of Hebrew) of a holy mountain of the gods (like the Greek Mount Olympus), Mount Zaphon (“North”), where an old, white-bearded deity named *El* (“God”) reigned, surrounded by his divine council of lesser deities, among whom was a young god named Ba‘al.<sup>12</sup> At some point Ba‘al seems to have taken over, and this storm and rain god would have a powerful influence in northern Israel for a long period of time.

In the process of cultural and religious consolidation which has been mentioned, various points are important. The originally different tribal deities (or, at least, originally poorly-distinguished) are identified as Yahweh, perhaps originally a mountain deity associated with Sinai or Edom; other ancient names are also used for this God, such as *El Shadday* and *Elyon*. A genealogy is created (or reconstructed, if you will), so that they all have a common ancestor, Abram (“Great Father”) or Abraham, who was very old when, miraculously, his wife bore him the son of the Promise, Isaac (see Gen 12; 15; 17). Abraham was destined to be the ‘father of a multitude of peoples’ (the variant name “Abraham” was explained as meaning this), and the emblem of what being blessed is all about; kings would descend from him. Isaac has two sons, Esau and Jacob; Jacob inherits the great blessing from his father and becomes the ancestor of the twelve tribes of Israel

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<sup>11</sup> See Exod 3:13-16; 6:2-3; Gen 31:53; 49:24.

<sup>12</sup> For Mount Zion as the holy mountain, the center of the universe, akin to Zaphon (“north”), see Ps 48:3. Cf. Isa 14:13. On Ugarit, see the work of an expert, MARK S. SMITH, *The Memoirs of God. History, Memory, and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 89; this is a fascinating, readable and very useful book by a friend whom I have known for almost thirty years.

(twelve being a significant number for various reasons).<sup>13</sup> “Israel” (another name for Jacob) is now divided into twelve tribes (although who makes them up is not always consistent; Judg 5 seems to reflect a time when they counted ten tribes). Originally, there were many shrines or sanctuaries where the Israelites worshipped God. It would not be until much later that a specific priesthood would emerge and worship would be limited to the Temple in Jerusalem. Yahweh’s features seem to have been quite definite from the beginning: he was a passionate (usually translated “jealous”) God, the only God for Israel, unrepresentable in any image, though he sat on a throne with cherubim as his footstool. At least, this would be the iconography (the images) that orthodox Yahwism would develop. The Ugaritic El, and ideas associated with him, however, would influence Yahwism, as would the myths of the Mesopotamians, such as that of a great flood. Yahweh would have his divine council (see the beginning of the Book of Job, where the *satan* is part of this “presidential cabinet,” as an attorney general or prosecutor). And he could be represented as an old man (Dan 7:9). However, many scholars point out how much competition Yahweh (and his followers) had for many years, really until the Babylonian Exile (see Jer 44). Elijah the prophet sees himself as alone in this allegiance, when he killed the four hundred prophets of Ba’al in 1 Kgs 18:20-40.

We will deal with the Torah and the stories contained therein at the appropriate time.

*The period of the Judges.* The dates for this period are often given as being from about 1200 to 1050. The tribes have no umbrella government such as a king. They come together usually when under an enemy threat, the great enemy at this time being the Philistines (the Romans named Palestine after them). There were women “judges” (really, leaders or rulers, from a Hebrew verb related to judging and justice), and there was the famous Samson, whose strength came from his hair. Actually, his strength came from God, to whom he had consecrated himself as a Nazirite (eschewing liquor, non-kosher foods and haircuts, Judg 13:4-5; see Num 6 and the notes thereto in the various Bibles). At this time, religion plays a major role in warfare. All acts are religious, and war is one of the most important ones, and so God must be properly revered in his “holy

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<sup>13</sup> Some used to think of twelve worship turns connected to the zodiac (an “amphictyony,” as in Greece), but this is not thought to apply to Israel. Later, there would be 24 priestly turns (or “divisions, lots,” see Luke 1:8); 1 Chr 24.

wars” (Yahweh is a “man of war,” Exod 15:3; see, e.g., Ps 76 ). And “dreadlocks” were an important element of the appearance of the frenzied warrior upon whom the spirit of Yahweh had descended, strengthening him or her (Devorah) for battle; this is probably reflected in Judg 5:2, where Israel, consecrated to God, unfurls its long hair.<sup>14</sup> The period of the Judges, part of the Deuteronomistic History, is described, according to the theology of this school, as one of a pattern of apostasy, punishment, temporary repentance and salvation, only to repeat the pattern again; Judg 2:11-19.

### **The period of the Monarchy (ca. 1025-587)**

*Israel asks for a king.* With the beginning of kingship in Israel, we enter into a more defined historical period. The tribal period was freer (Judg 17:6; 21:25), and more democratic. It retained some of the nostalgia of the nomadic period, and this would last until the end of the monarchic period, when Jeremiah spoke about the Rechabites (Jer 35), and even until today (e.g., the Passover celebration). But as Israel consolidated itself as a sedentary people, it wanted to be “like all the (pagan) nations,” and have a king. We need not doubt that there was strong sentiment against this development. Judg 8:22-23 and 1 Sam 8 reflect this, as does Hos 9:15 (Yahweh began to hate Israel when it got a king). For Yahweh was to be Israel’s king, and now he was being rejected, according to 1 Sam 8:7. The monarchy would also be the beginning of a situation in which one man would be exalted above his brethren, leading an opulent life based on heavy taxation, and otherwise being tempted to oppress and commit idolatry (the two great sins denounced by the prophets). These are the very sorts of things that King Solomon committed, and the ones legislated against in Deut 17:14-20.

Now, kingship was very important in the ancient Near East. The king represented God or the gods. He was responsible for social order, an essential part of which was social justice and equity. The king reigned as did the deity, and had a prominent role in temple worship, temples being considered the earthly reflection of the divine abode. Oftentimes kings built or rebuilt temples, and at such times a prophet might utter an oracle regarding the deity’s favorable response thereto. Such an oracle might concern

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<sup>14</sup> Note the association of the spirit and valor for war in Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6, 19; 15:14.

divine adoption of the king as God's son. This is reflected in a psalm which reworks very ancient Ugarit myths, Ps 89. This psalm reflects a primal victory over chaos after a struggle between divine and "demonic forces" (vv. 10-11). There is a vision concerning King David, vv. 20 and following; God is his Father, and David will have power over the forces of evil. Scholars see a background to this psalm in which Ba'al, as the younger Canaanite god, is invited to share some of the power of the ancient patriarch-god El.<sup>15</sup> The powers of the king to impose justice, resulting in an order in nature reminiscent of paradise (Eden), is reflected in Ps 72, the messianic psalm *par excellence*. Nature will then produce abundant, marvelous fruits and crops.

*Israel under its kings.* The first king Israel had was Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin (like Paul the apostle). Saul went mad and displeased Yahweh, and was removed.<sup>16</sup> David became king, a former shepherd (the great image for a king) turned great warrior, as well as a musician and generally charismatic figure. Remember the ballpark date for David: 1000 B.C.E. David seems to have been an ardent Yahwist, and conquered Jerusalem from the Jebusites. He extended the borders of the kingdom and ruled in peace. It was then that he thought to build Yahweh a house. Until then, Yahweh had dwelt in a tent; Yahweh was thought to reside above the cherubim which covered the Ark of the Covenant (see Ps 80:2; Num 7:89). 2 Sam 7 tells us how David and his prophet Nathan spoke about this. Yahweh complained that he had never thought of leaving his tent-dwelling for a house (this word can also mean palace and temple, as well as other things, in Hebrew). Instead, Yahweh promises to build David a house, that is, a dynasty. David, who has reunited the northern and southern tribes after reigning just over the south (principally, his tribe of Judah), is to be the founder or father of a line of kings, who are to be the only legitimate kings over the people Israel. This is an unbreakable covenant; even misdeeds cannot undo it, although there will be punishment for bad kings (and for their people). This is the messianic prophecy *par excellence*. And closely connected with it is the importance of God's dwelling in Zion, the mount upon which Jerusalem is built; for God will dwell in the Temple there, which will be a source of

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<sup>15</sup> On the polytheistic background of Israel's religion, see SMITH, *The Memoirs of God*, 44, 86-123.

<sup>16</sup> He was crowned at Gilgal, 1 Sam 11:15, the background text to Hos 9:15.

guaranteed protection (or so it was hoped; see the preexilic, and possibly pre-Davidic, Pss 46; 78:69).

David does not get to build Yahweh his temple; this will be up to Solomon. We should note that the idea of a fixed house for God is, like that of kingship, something many are ambivalent about. Even Solomon, when he consecrates the Temple, 1 Kgs 8:27, expresses this. Isa 66:1-2 is harsher, and this tradition is used by Stephen in Acts 7:44-50.<sup>17</sup>

Solomon's is a tragic story. He began humbly, seeking wisdom (1 Kgs 3; Wis 9), but amassed enormous wealth and entered into marriages with foreign women as part of a program of military and economic expansion through political alliances. He is the prototypical case of the dangers of intermarriage for a Jew; the foreign spouse, usually the wife, will turn the husband's heart toward her own gods, and this is what happened to Solomon, 1 Kgs 11 (he had one thousand women!). Keeping up all this was very "high maintenance," and taxes (and expropriations and foreclosures due to inability to pay them) were high. When Solomon died, the northern tribes, none too pleased with this southern (Judean) extravagance, asked his successor son, Roboam, to lighten the load. Roboam gave in to the bad advice of his cronies, eschewing the sounder wisdom of the elders, and retorted that he would be even harsher on them than his father had been. Thus arises what the Deuteronomic Historian views as Solomon's punishment, the division of the kingdom into north and south. This happens in 928 B.C.E.<sup>18</sup> The north will be known as "Israel" (Jacob was associated with the north), the south will be called "Judah," after its principal tribe. The word "Jews" derives from this tribe.

One positive feature of Solomon's reign was that, for the first time, the resources were in place for the patronage of scribes and thinkers who would gather together the ancient stories and create new compositions (along with the "wise" who would collect collections of proverbs and such). Solomon's reign is thought to be the time that the first great biblical writer composed his epic. He (or perhaps she) is known as the Yahwist (J,

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<sup>17</sup> According to some, the text should be read as meaning that the height of Solomon's apostasy was building God a house (David had wanted a tent-dwelling for Yahweh, *but Solomon* built him a *house*).

<sup>18</sup> Thus, the northern kingdom lasted a bit less than 200 years. Or, if another date for the schism is followed, 922, then the northern kingdom lasted almost exactly 200 years.

according to the first letter in German).<sup>19</sup> This writer is responsible for the story of Adam and Eve, and is known for his anthropomorphic view of God (God, like a man, talks afternoon strolls through the Garden of Eden) and is generally optimistic, reflecting the prosperity of the Solomonic court (if not of his kingdom!). As a southerner from Judah, J presents the time and dynasty of David as the fulfillment of the divine promises to Abraham (including, e.g., the extent of the borders mentioned in Gen 15:18-21). An important J text (or, probably, an older text that J uses) is that of Jacob's blessings to his sons, including the famous Oracle of Judah, Gen 49:8-12, which we will have occasion to discuss. Although the importance of J has diminished from the days when Gerhard von Rad exalted it as *the* great theological framework for the Pentateuch, scholars like Richard Elliott Friedman are, I think, restoring it to a more modest, but yet constituent, part of our understanding of the Torah. More on this when we discuss the Torah.

The northern kingdom was larger than that of Judah, and more prosperous. It was also near important coastal cities, ancient Phoenician ports, where the cult of Ba'al had deep roots. Jeroboam I, the first king of Israel, had to deal with the fact that his people would naturally look to the Jerusalem Temple as the place to worship Yahweh, the Israelite God. So he built a golden calf at the northern and southern extremes of his kingdom, in Dan and Bethel, plausibly as Yahweh's footstools, and as rival shrines to that in Jerusalem. This was a problematic symbol, for, although the bull was a widespread symbol of strength (even today, we have "bull stock markets"), and even Israel's God (El, a name often used by the Israelites, and part of every "theophoric" [god-bearing] name, like Michael, Samuel, Daniel, etc.) could be pictured as a buffalo or a wild ox (see Num 23:22),<sup>20</sup> the connection with Ba'al was too close for comfort. The early prophet Hosea prophesied in the northern kingdom during a good part of the eighth century B.C.E., and his whole polemic is against Ba'al worship. He accuses the Israelites of kissing the bull image representing Ba'al, Hos 13:2 (cf. 14:3); see 1 Kgs 19:18.

The whole thing with Ba'al worship is very symbolic. "Ba'al" meant "husband or lord," and, as such, was the provider. In the regions of the northern kingdom, where

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<sup>19</sup> See the discussion of the writer's gender in RICHARD ELLIOTT FRIEDMAN, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987, 1997), 86. This is one of the most fascinating biblical books I have ever read.

<sup>20</sup> The old god El in the Ugarit literature was known by the title Bull El, and his attribute animal was the ox.

farming and animal husbandry were so important (the fertility of the grasslands of the plain of Bashan would give rise to the expressions “bulls or cows of Bashan”), rain and fertility were essential, and Ba‘al had a reputation here. The principal cult was the fertility cult, involving sacred prostitution. By an act of sympathetic magic, that is, by mimicking or magically-enhancing what the forces of nature do through sexual acts, the worshipper hoped to stimulate nature by enticing the nature deities into providing rain and good crops and animals. Thus Hosea launches a “lawsuit” against Israel for breach of covenant (see 8:1), and states that it is Yahweh, not Ba‘al, who is Israel’s true husband and provider, Hos 2:4-25. Hosea himself symbolizes the unhappy marriage between Yahweh and Israel by marrying a “woman of prostitutions,” probably a Ba‘al worshipper or even cult prostitute. Infidelity to Yahweh is called “prostitution” in the Bible (see, e.g., Num 14:33, where Hebrew “prostitutions” is usually translated “faithlessness”). We here get an good idea of symbolism in the Bible.

A lot of the material in the Book of Kings has to do with the northern kingdom. There we find the stories of Elijah, an ardent Yahwist who single-handedly fights the many prophets of Ba‘al, and is worn out in the process. His successor, Elisha, plays an important role in northern politics, including mass assassinations. Elisha witnesses Elijah’s “assumption” (thus has it the LXX), his being taken up into heaven without dying. Elijah and Elisha are ninth-century prophets. Later Jewish tradition will expect Elijah back at the End of Days.<sup>21</sup> The north became notorious for its idolatry and social injustice (again, the two great sins which go hand-in-hand).<sup>22</sup> A great witness to this is the prophet Amos, roughly contemporaneous with Hosea. They both prophesied during the long reign of Jeroboam II (783-743), a time of great prosperity for a few which did

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<sup>21</sup> The other person who was taken up without dying was Enoch, the seventh person after Adam, and this will lead to an important body of literature if not also movement regarding Enoch’s visions and teachings, which of course predate the Mosaic Torah. This may have great significance for understanding Jesus’ theological world-view. Jesus is said to be “assumed” in Luke 9:51 and Acts 1:11.

<sup>22</sup> I think that idolatry is largely magical, and is classically considered to be (in the study of religion) an attempt to manipulate the deity, for selfish purposes. It is thus a “religion” without real ethics; everything is for the good of and in the interest of the worshipper; even God is enlisted to help in this endeavor. It is not a true “religion,” again, in this “classical” sense, since this is defined as the way to achieve union with God, which requires treating God as God, i.e., as sovereign Lord who is over the worshipper’s personal interests and not at his command, or bribable (as Deut 10:17 says). Santeria is a form of magic, and thus illegal drug traffickers and other criminals recur to it for protection.



not trickle down to the many.<sup>23</sup> Amos and Hosea testify, according to Joachim Jeremias, as to how God's patience can come to an end. After Jeroboam II's death, there began a chaotic period of assassinations and short reigns, until the northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians in 722 B.C.E.

The north also wrote down its traditions. The writer (thought by Friedman to have been a priest, and with good reason, since this Pentateuchal source is associated with Levitical circles), is known as E, since, unlike J, he does not call God by his name Yahweh until it is revealed to Moses (J uses "Yahweh" from the beginning). E is usually described as avoiding anthropomorphisms; God reveals himself in dreams. E also emphasizes the fear (or reverence) of God. This source (the second of the four classic Pentateuchal sources) has been most attacked in recent years, but even prior to reading Friedman, I became aware of how useful it is to posit such a source for purposes of explaining how tradents ("bringers") from the northern kingdom brought their traditions to the south after the fall of Samaria (the capital of the kingdom of Israel).<sup>24</sup>

*The kingdom of Judah.* A bit after the reign of Jeroboam II, two famous prophets were active in the south: Isaiah of Jerusalem and Micah of Moresheth. Isaiah would found a prophetic school that prophesied in his name and tradition for centuries. Like Amos and Hosea, his message (basically confined to Isa 1-39) includes many denunciations of injustice and idolatry, but he also upholds a very high notion of the Davidic dynasty and of Mount Zion as God's dwelling. And, although Isaiah could prophesy the destruction of Jerusalem (e.g., in Isa 29), many misinterpreted "Zion theology" as an assurance of safety against enemies, an idea that would play a negative role in popular religiosity (see, e.g., Ps 125:1-2). This will be evident in the time of Jeremiah (the people would feel that having God in their midst protected them even if they disregarded Yahweh's laws, especially those having to do with social justice, since all were quite "fervent" in their worship!). Micah, on the other hand, is not fond of the capital, the seat of the oppressors of "his people," traditional agrarian folk. In his scathing denunciations of social inequity, Micah prophesies that Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, and the holy mount like a high forest (Mic 3:12). This prediction, uttered no later

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<sup>23</sup> Thus, Amos and Hosea are eighth-century prophets, as are Isaiah of Jerusalem and Micah of Moresheth.

<sup>24</sup> A "tradent" is one who brings a tradition with him, or conveys it in a new text that has been formed using this tradition (perhaps along with other traditions).

than 687 (when Micah's ministry ended) took at least a century to be fulfilled (when the Babylonians razed Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple in 587), but it was remembered (see Jer 26:17-18).

From now on, we only have to concern ourselves with the southern kingdom, for the northern one has fallen and really disappeared (see the account in 2 Kgs 17:24-41, regarding the "Samaritans"). There remains only the hope that those tribes shall be reunited in the (eschatological) future with their southern brethren (see, e.g., the famous "two sticks" prophecy in Ezek 37:15-28).<sup>25</sup>

*Noteworthy kings and events in Judah.* Not long after the fall of Samaria in 722 (another one of the biblical dates you really should remember), an important reformer king emerged, Hezekiah, who reigned around 700 B.C.E. He is thought to be the child called Emmanuel in the prophecy of Isa 7:14. At this time, Levites from the north, priests, had fled south as a result of the Assyrian invasion, and they had brought their traditions with them. According to Friedman, the two different traditions regarding Israelite origins, J and E, were then combined into "JE." No doubt this was part of Hezekiah's religious reform, much praised by the Deuteronomic Historian in 2 Kgs 18:1-8. This included centralization of worship in Jerusalem, something that resulted in "a sizeable gathering of Levite priests in Jerusalem," according to Friedman.<sup>26</sup>

But the JE account was not very favorable to other priests. The JE account raised up the figure of Moses; Levite priests who traced their ancestry to him are called by some scholars "Mushites." Other priests traced their ancestry to Aaron; they are "Aaronids." This rivalry would last for centuries, until, in the Babylonian Exile, Aaronids who styled themselves "Sons of Zadok," or Zadokites, would take over the priesthood and demote all priests who were merely Levitical, and restrict access to the altar to their own members.<sup>27</sup> But, again according to Friedman, at the time of Hezekiah the Aaronid priests composed

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<sup>25</sup> Jesus' calling and gathering of the Twelve is symbolic for the eschatological reunification (or ingathering) of all Israel.

<sup>26</sup> *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 92.

<sup>27</sup> Generally, all priests were thought to descend from the tribe of Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob. Moses and his brother Aaron (if we follow the biblical account) were descendants of Levi. But in the Exile, the priesthood was restricted to just one or two branches of the Levitical tribe, and all other branches, often called just "Levites," were demoted to helpers, cantors, catechists, etc. See Ezek 44:10-31; 1 Chr 24. Note that many consider "Sadducee" to be just the Greek version of "Zadokite" (well, the English version of the Greek version!).

a rival document to the Mushite JE. This is the famous strand of the Pentateuch we refer to as P, from the German word for “Priestly.” Friedman is of the opinion that Hezekiah’s centralization of the cult already meant a victory for the Zadokites, and thus, a defeat for the Levites, even before the further consolidation of Zadokite control in the exilic period.<sup>28</sup>

I have gone into this potentially very complicated situation because it is necessary in order to understand several important things. First, there are two broad lines of theology that are in some competition for many years. One is that represented by JE and a bit later, D, in its various forms; the other is P in its various forms. Some familiarity with these theologies is a great help in understanding the Bible. The former is associated with Levitical, and later, Deuteronomic circles. I believe that this “movement” will have a major role to play in collecting and editing the books of the prophets, including eschatological additions, and is a precursor of the “Hasidim” (pious Jews who emerge in Maccabean times), the Pharisees, the Essenes, and of many aspects of the Jesus movement. The other, more elitist priestly group, basically have no eschatology but are centered on the Temple cult and traditions surrounding it, and thus have no real historical view of things (everything is circular, one always returns to the perfect world symbolized by Temple and cult). This movement will look askance at the prophets (though it is associated with some prophets, like Ezekiel and Haggai); and, in its Sadducean derivation, will reject the Prophets as Scripture (i.e., only the Torah is revealed and authoritative). In this Sadducean form (but, according to Friedman, already in P), belief in angels is rejected, as will the later belief in resurrection. Remember that the Pharisees accepted these beliefs (as did Jesus and Paul); see Acts 23:6-10. And another important aspect is that JE and D emphasize Yahweh’s mercy (*hesed*), whereas everything is set in stone for P: every offense has an automatic consequence which cannot be avoided, just dealt with by the cult; there is no room for grace.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> FRIEDMAN, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 210-211. Among the cult objects destroyed in the reform as illegitimate for proper worship was a symbol of Mosaic (Mushite) power, the healing bronze serpent of Num 21:4-9.

<sup>29</sup> See RICHARD ELLIOTT FRIEDMAN, *The Exile and Biblical Narrative. The Foundation of the Deuteronomic and Priestly Works* (Harvard Semitic Monographs 22; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 123. One example of “automatic” retribution is the Land vomiting its impure inhabitants, as in Lev 18:24-29, in other words, exile; see the work of the prodigiously learned Jewish Bible scholar Jacob Milgrom, e.g., his three-volume commentary on Leviticus (in the Anchor Bible series), especially *Leviticus 17-22*

Hezekiah died in 687, and his reform was undone. He was succeeded by his son Manasseh, the worst king Judah ever had, the wickedest, according to the Deuteronomist. Manasseh was reputed to have sawed the prophet Isaiah in half (according to the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, part of the pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament).<sup>30</sup> It is due to his sins that God delivered Judah into the captivity of the Babylonian Exile (2 Kgs 23:26-27). Manasseh ruled for many years during a time when Assyria was very strong, and was exerting enormous pressure on all the kingdoms around. This included pressure to worship Assyrian gods, and practise their cult. Manasseh placed idolatrous altars in the Temple, sacrificed children and brought in many sorcerers and such. He was succeeded by another bad king, Amon, who ruled briefly. It is during this time, pre-reform, that the great (though “minor”) prophet Zephaniah preached. Amon was assassinated, and a very interesting group, called at this time the “people of the Land,” conservative, traditional Yahwists, landholders, many of them country-folk, installed a young boy on the throne, King Josiah.

For the people of the Land —no doubt linked to the “elders of the Land” who defended Jeremiah by recalling Micah’s prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple (Jer 26:17-18)— all hopes for the nation’s welfare, which depended on obedience to Yahweh, were placed on Josiah.<sup>31</sup> A great reform of the cult took place; the Temple in Jerusalem became the only legitimate place of sacrifice. This was possible because now Assyria was in decline (note how biblical events are tied to political realities, an “incarnational” situation).<sup>32</sup> Most importantly, while repairing the Temple, a book was “found.” This is considered by most scholars to be the original nucleus of Deuteronomy, chapters 12-26. The book was read by the king’s scribe or secretary, Shaphan. Shaphan’s son, Ahikam, was told to inquire of Yahweh about this, and it

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(New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1346. He attributes this part of Lev to the “Holiness Code” (“H”), a Priestly updating of original P (‘a form of P’, i.e., within the P school). See also his one volume *Leviticus. A Book of Ethics and Ritual* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 8-16 (on P theology), and 175-183 (on H theology).

<sup>30</sup> The “pseudepigrapha” of the Old Testament (Catholics used to call it OT apocrypha) are books using pseudonyms (fictitiously attributed to famous persons), oftentimes apocalyptic works, which can have extraordinary importance for understanding Jesus’ world. Foremost among these is 1 Enoch. Another tradition has Manasseh repenting (see the beautiful “Prayer of Manasseh” included in certain Bibles).

<sup>31</sup> Jer 1:18; 34:19; 52:15-16, 25, seem to use “people, poor ones, etc., of the land” in the negative sense common after the Exile in rabbinic literature. See *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (D.N. Freedman, ed.; Grand Rapids – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2000), 1027.

<sup>32</sup> The capital of Assyria, Nineveh, fell in 612; this is the subject of the little book of the prophet Nahum.

became “apparent” that all these laws had not been followed, and the people were thus in danger of divine punishment (see 2 Kgs 22). So began the great Deuteronomic reform of King Josiah, praised as the best and most obedient king Judah ever had, 2 Kgs 23:25-27.

These Deuteronomists produced Deut and the Deuteronomic History (the Former Prophets). There are later parts or additions to both these entities. We will speak about Deut and the final edition of the Torah later. We now have to say more about the Deuteronomic History (“DtrH”). It tells the tale of the conquest, but originally did not end with the exile in Babylon. According to Richard Friedman, it originally ended with the account of the glorious Josiah. He is praised in terms equal only to Moses; he is thus like a second Moses (as “Deutero-nomy” is a second Law or Torah). Josiah was the one who really fulfilled the *Shema*, the great prayer of the Jew, “Hear, oh Israel, Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is one. And you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your muchness” (Deut 6:4-5). This is what Josiah did, 2 Kgs 23:25; compare what is said about Moses in Deut 34:10.

But then, calamity! In 609, Josiah went out to fight Egypt (the great empire, to the southwest of Israel, the other empire being Mesopotamian, to the northeast, with little Judah in the middle) and was killed.<sup>33</sup> His reform died with him. We are now near to the great, prototypical punishment of Exile, and the last prophet of the DtrH comes into the scene. He was a Mushite (Levitical) priest; his name was Jeremiah.

*Jeremiah and the Deuteronomic History.* The original DtrH (the first edition) was a Moses to Josiah story. It ended on a happy note, the religious reform and reconquest of lands under Josiah (many think that Isa 8:23b-9:6 refers to him). The second edition reflects that the reform collapsed and that Judah was taken captive, into Babylon (see 2 Kgs 24-25). The final form of DtrH is all about the warnings Yahweh issued his people through “his servants the prophets,” a favorite Dtr expression. The people did not heed these prophets (see 2 Kgs 17:7-23; Jer 7:25-26). A final prophet was sent at this time, Jeremiah. He was not heeded, either, and the catastrophe took place (see Jeremiah’s own description of it in his prediction in Jer 7:32-34). It seems that this role of Jeremiah’s had

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<sup>33</sup> The prophet Habakkuk is usually thought to reflect the discomfiture of the devout after Josiah’s unexpected death belied a central tenet of Deuteronomic retributive theology: those who do well are rewarded and those who do ill are punished.

been prophesied by the greatest prophet of all, Moses, in Deut 18:15.<sup>34</sup> Jeremiah had powerful protectors: the Shaphan family, which we saw were instrumental in the Dtr reform. They would save Jeremiah's life more than once (Jer 26:24).<sup>35</sup>

The final version of the DtrH, as we know, did not have a happy ending (though some see a glimmer of light in the fact that the exiled king was "paroled" and placed under comfortable "house arrest," 2 Kgs 25:27-30). With amazing skill (and economy of words), the story is edited so as to become an "Egypt-to-Egypt" tragedy, as we saw above. In fact, Jeremiah was one of those taken down into Egypt, Jer 43:4-7, with Baruch his scribe or secretary.<sup>36</sup>

### **The Babylonian Exile (597/587-538)**

*The importance of the Babylonian Exile.* Israel's experience of Exile in Babylon, and how it dealt with this experience, are of the utmost importance for understanding the Bible and the ministry of Jesus. Let us begin with the initial events leading up to this exile. After the death of King Josiah, the Deuteronomic reformer, in 609, his son Jehoahaz succeeded to the throne. The prophet Jeremiah is active at this time (his great Temple Speech in Jer 7 is thought by many to mark the beginning of his ministry).<sup>37</sup> Politically, Jeremiah (and his supporters, including the Shaphan family) can be described as the "pro-Babylonian party," since he sees the advance and conquest of Babylon as inevitable. For this, he is accused of treason; see, *inter alia* ("among other things"), Jer 38. The people, along with the king and the false prophets (the "pro-Egyptian party"),

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<sup>34</sup> This predicted prophet would become known as the "eschatological prophet," and identified with Elijah, but, especially, Jesus; see Luke 7:16; Acts 3:17-24; John 1:19-21; 6:14; 7:40, 52.

<sup>35</sup> See also Jer 29:3; 36:10-11; 39:14.

<sup>36</sup> Friedman thinks that the author of the DtrH may be Baruch, in a possible joint collaboration with Jeremiah. But it is clear that later Deuteronomists heavily edited the Book of Jeremiah. The eschatological prophet was expected by many in the time of Jesus (including the Essenes). He was identified with Elijah, as the precursor of the messianic age, in Mal 3:1, 23; Sir 48:10; Mark 15:35-36, and John the Baptist is seen in this role (Luke 1:17; Matt 17:10-13). John's gospel (1:21; 6:14) identifies the eschatological prophet as Jesus, as does Luke 7:16; Acts 3:22-23 (quoting Deut 18:15). Jews still expect him (Elijah), and leave a place for him in the Passover Seder meal.

<sup>37</sup> A Deuteronomistic editor has Jeremiah begin in 627 (before Josiah's reform in 622), but this seems to be in order to give Jeremiah a 40 year ministry like Moses, i.e., from 627 to 587. Remember the discussion above on Jeremiah's being the 'prophet like Moses' of Deut 18:15, the last warning in a succession of prophets before the catastrophe of Exile. Jer 36:2, in one of the prose sections of Jeremiah, may be Deuteronomic composition. Compare Deut 18:18 and Jer 1:9, 7, 17; Exod 4:10 and Jer 1:6.

were confident, and relied, as usual, on Egypt's help against its rival Babylon.<sup>38</sup> Egypt had replaced Jehoahaz with another son of Josiah, whose name they changed (as a sign of vassalage) to Jehoiakim. At this time, Josiah's reform was undone, and Jeremiah prophesies about the punishment that will come. The people seem to be confident that with the Temple (Yahweh's presence) and elaborate cult, everything will be ok; see Jer 7. Babylon defeats Egypt in 605 in the battle of Carchemish, but then Egypt scores, and so King Jehoiakim (of the pro-Egyptian party) rebels against Babylon, 2 Kgs 24:1-7. Babylon attacks and in 597 there's the first deportation. Among the deportees is the priest and prophet Ezekiel. Thus, exile for some begins in 597.

Jehoiakim had died, and his son Jehoiachin had been among those taken in the first deportation.<sup>39</sup> The Babylonians put in his place his uncle, whose name they changed to Zedekiah. Zedekiah was the last king of Judah, from 597 to 587. Under Egyptian pressure, he went along with the pro-Egyptian party and rebelled against his overlords, resulting in the great siege of Jerusalem (the population starved over a two-year period, bringing into effect one of the awful "covenant curses," that of cannibalism; Lev 26:29; Deut 28:53-57; Jer 19:9; Lam 2:20; 4:10; Ezek 5:10). The city walls were breached, the city and most of the countryside were destroyed, and so was the Temple. A "large-scale deportation ensued," wherein all the skilled people were exiled, leaving only the "poorest" to work the Land, 2 Kgs 25:12; see 24:15 regarding the first deportation.<sup>40</sup>

*Israel in a daze.* Israel: the people of God, composed mostly of the tribe of Judah (the "Jews"), was in shock. The Temple —God's house— and Mount Zion, and the promises to David, had not been inviolable after all. Were the gods of the great Babylonian Empire more powerful than Yahweh, the God of this little tribe? It did seem as if Yahweh, the "man of war" (Exod 15:3), had been defeated. One need only read the Book of Lamentations to get an idea of what had happened and how the people felt.

The religious leaders of Israel, under divine guidance no doubt, rose to the occasion. We can point to two different responses, corresponding to two principals

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<sup>38</sup> Good king Josiah, however, had fought against Egypt, which is how he was killed, 2 Kgs 23:29-30.

<sup>39</sup> "The Weidner tablets (*ANET* 308; Albright, *BAR* 1. 106-12) testify to the mild treatment given to this ill-fated king, who became the true representative of the Davidic dynasty for the exiles;" *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 75:112 (article no. 75, section 112). I have been following the historical account in this part of the *NJBC*.

<sup>40</sup> Remember that "theologically," the exile was described as a return to Egypt, 2 Kgs 25:26; Jer 43:6.

schools. For the Deuteronomic school, emphasis fell heavily on the notion of covenant, understood as a bilateral (mutually-obligatory) contract between Yahweh and the people. Israel had broken the covenant, and the curses stipulated to had come into effect. These curses were found at the end of Deut, in chapter 28; similar curses found their way into a book which was the product of the other school, the Priestly. This book is Leviticus, and the curses are found in chapter 26. Note that blessings precede curses in both books, but they are shorter, and never came into effect, since the covenant was broken.

Ezekiel was a force behind the Priestly school. He was a priest turned prophet in the early Exile, and inculcated in the people a deep sense of impurity, of having made themselves unfit to have the divine presence among them. Ezek 36:17 likens what Israel had done to the grossness of menstrual blood. The people had defiled themselves and the holy Land, and the divine dwelling. In the Priestly view, sins and ritual improprieties brought a strange kind of contamination that was utterly incompatible with the holiness of the Land (which, according to Lev 25:23, belonged to Yahweh alone) and the Temple. The Land had had to purge itself of the impurity, vomiting out its inhabitants, as it had done with the previous inhabitants, the Canaanites; Lev 18:24-30. And Yahweh had left the Temple by grades, starting with the inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies, as Ezek 8-11 relates. The exiles were to loathe themselves, Ezek 36:31.

Such was the preaching of this prophet, whose excoriations against Israel amazingly were accepted into the Jewish canon of Scripture (as an example of the uniquely-Jewish capacity for self-criticism), that Israel despaired of being able to continue living. “Our rebellions and our sins are upon us, and we rot because of them: how can we live?” Ezek 33:10. They saw themselves as dry bones (very dead), Ezek 37:11, and nothing short of resurrection would suffice to give them life and hope. This is what Ezekiel sets out to do in the second half of his ministry. He began by preaching personal (as opposed to collective) responsibility: each person would pay for his or her sin, and not carry the burden of their ancestors’ sins; Ezek 18. But it would be Yahweh who would finish the job of conversion, of returning the people to him. Yahweh would wash them with pure water and give them a new heart and a new spirit, an obedient heart of flesh as opposed to an obdurate heart of stone; Ezek 36:24-32. It would be tantamount to a new creation and a return to Eden, Ezek 36:33-37:14. And Israel and Judah —the



two sticks— would be reunited under one Davidic shepherd, who rather than being a king would be more of a prince; Yahweh would be king, as in the days of old; Ezek 20 (esp. vv. 32-33; 37:15-28).<sup>41</sup> And Yahweh would dwell forever more with his people, bound by an eternal (unbreakable, unilateral) covenant, really a promise, without conditions, like the promise/covenant made with Noah and Abraham. Like in the Garden of Eden, Yahweh would once again walk among his people, Lev 26:11-12.

The Priestly school harkened back to the time when God, displeased with human disobedience and violence, repented of having created the earth, and sent the flood. After this cleansing, a new start was made with Noah. After Noah offered up sacrifices to Yahweh, Yahweh made an eternal (or everlasting) “covenant” (translation of Hebrew *berith*) with all creation, never to destroy the earth again; Gen 9.<sup>42</sup> This reassuring idea is found in an important prophecy in the prophet of the later exile we know as Second Isaiah. In Isa 54, it is said that despite the separation that had taken place between the angry spouses, Yahweh and Israel, there had been no divorce. Yahweh had been exceedingly angry, but loves Israel with an eternal love (*hesed*); like with the flood in the time of Noah, Yahweh will never again be so angry with his people. His love is eternal, as is his covenant of peace. In fact, the old covenant made with David —really, the unconditional promises made to him, in 2 Sam 7— will be extended to all the people, Isa 55:3.

And the Deuteronomists also experience that ultimately it is Yahweh’s doing that will turn the people around (and, what is the same in Hebrew), what will return the people to their Land.<sup>43</sup> The people will reflect in their Exile, and will turn to Yahweh

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<sup>41</sup> Ezek 34 is a most important passage for understanding Jesus’ ministry as a shepherd-physician who leads and protects the flock as Yahweh’s lieutenant-messiah. This good shepherd (see John 10) seeks the lost sheep and heals them, and makes them lie down to eat, and makes them “turn” to God. Compare this with the scene in Mark 2:15-17, where Jesus and “sinners” are lying down together to eat a festive meal, and where he calls himself a physician. Key to Ezek 34, and to its parallel in Jer 23:1-8, is the figure of the Davidic Messiah, styled as a “servant.”

<sup>42</sup> Deut uses the same Hebrew word *berith* for their bilateral (mutually-obligatory, or conditional) covenant. This is the word that the LXX (Septuagint) translates into Greek as *diathēkē*, and which in Latin was translated *testamentum*. From these Greek and Latin words we get “testament,” which, as in these languages, has the double meaning of “pact” or “last will of a person pending death.” Paul plays on this double meaning in Gal 3:15-18; cf. Heb 9:15-18. Paul seems to have coined the term “Old Covenant” (or “Testament”) in 2 Cor 3:14.

<sup>43</sup> The Hebrew verb *shuv* = “to turn (e.g., to the Land), return (e.g., to the Lord), change (e.g., Israel’s lot, fortunes), convert, restore” is extremely important. The verb and a noun derived from it, translated as “turned the captivity, or brought Zion’s captives back,” signifies the return from Exile, the end of captivity,

with all their heart. Yahweh will circumcise their heart, so that they may obey him, Deut 30. This is close to the language found in the book of the great Deuteronomic prophet, Jeremiah. In the famous passage, Jer 31:31-34, it is promised that a day will come when Yahweh will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and Judah, not like the covenant which was made in Sinai, which they broke, but a different covenant, whereby the Law (Torah, meaning “divine or priestly teaching”) will be written in their hearts, so that everyone will know how to serve and obey God, and then their sin will be forgiven. When will this take place? According to Deut 4:29-31, it will be “in the end of days.”

*The birth of Judaism.* We have spoken about Israel’s conversion in exile, about the two principal explanations of why exile happened (breaking of the covenant and impurity), and the basis of hope in a future (ability to keep the covenant and cleansing of impurity with a new heart, and other such transformations). We now have to say more about how all this was understood, in religious terms. There certainly were precedents to the kind of religiosity that took shape; Judaism, which we now define here as the peculiar religion that developed in the Babylonian Exile, was not invented out of whole cloth. But it was the religion of a particular elite, members mostly of the tribe of Judah who had been deported; they would call themselves “the sons (or children) of the exile,” “the holy seed (or race), and, of course, “Jews,” that is, members of the tribe of Judah, but not this only. A Jew was one who had experienced this exile, and the conversion experience that took place in it. It was not a merely geographical or even ethnic category (having been born into that tribe which occupied that territory); it was a religious category.

Before the Babylonian Exile, therefore, it is not correct to speak of Judaism or of Jews in this sense (a Jew would then have been merely a member of that tribe). Many scholars emphasize how Yahwism, the religion of the true Jews, was in great competition with other religions right up until the Exile; witness only, e.g., Jer 44: the people worship the Queen of Heaven (a pagan goddess), and complain that the way of life and worship

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when Israel has returned to the Lord and to the Land, has had its fortunes reversed or restored. See, however, the discussion about this in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament. Volume 3* (E. Jenni – C. Westermann, eds.; ET M.E. Biddle; Peabody: Hendrikson, 1997), 1314-1315. A classic text is Jer 30:1-3, the beginning of a section which includes the famous New Testament passage Jer 31:31-34. The kernel of Jesus’ message, as stated in Mark 1:15, has “repent” (in Hebrew *shûvû*, in Aramaic *tûvû*, plural imperative) at its center. Other examples of the multivalence (multiple meanings) of this verb are found in Pss 85:2, 5; 126:1 and Job 42:10. See the parallel between salvation and “restoration of fortunes” (or other translations) in Ps 53:7.

that Jeremiah recommended was less successful for them; Yahwism, at least when practised to the exclusion of all other cults, was just not a “profitable” or beneficial religion.<sup>44</sup> This kind of idolatry is reflected also in Ezek 8. There the prophet gets a virtual tour of the Temple (probably just before the destruction of Jerusalem in 587) and sees all kinds of pagan worship; worst of all, he sees the priests (perhaps all 24 priestly turns plus the high priest) worshipping the sun god, with their backs to the altar and doing some kind of nose-touching ritual (almost like thumbing their noses at Yahweh, though I may be overinterpreting!); Ezek 8:16-17.<sup>45</sup> This generalized situation was such that a Jewish scholar, Ziony Zevit, wrote a book called *The Religions of Ancient Israel*.<sup>46</sup>

In fact, one thing all religious leaders in the Exile were agreed upon is that Yahweh had chosen Israel out from all the other nations to be his special possession. Israel was to be a people set apart (that is, holy, meaning devoted or consecrated to the one true God), a people dwelling by itself, separate from all others; see the famous description in Num 23:9. Israel is a royal people, a priestly people, Yahweh’s kingly people, Exod 19:5-6. It was to Israel that the one Lord had revealed himself; Israel safeguarded a sacred treasure. Everything depended on this. This was what had been put in such jeopardy by the people’s infidelity. See the account of King Solomon’s folly, after having started out so wise, in 1 Kgs 11:1-13. He had been highly favored by God, richly blessed; Yahweh had appeared to him twice. But his wealth and comfort, and his attraction to foreign women, made his heart turn away from Yahweh.<sup>47</sup> There began all

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<sup>44</sup> SMITH, *The Memoirs of God*, 63, points out that these exiles thought their punishment was by the Queen of Heaven for discontinuing her cult, rather than Yahweh’s doing.

<sup>45</sup> I should note that respected scholars like Mark S. Smith --a friend of mine who happens to be Catholic-- insist that such practices would not have been considered illicit or “pagan” before strict Yahwistic Judaism emerged in the Babylonian Exile, and even then, would not impose itself totally; see, e.g., the denunciation of such pagan practices in Third Isaiah.

<sup>46</sup> Third Isaiah, with many references to syncretistic practices (child sacrifice, sorcery and necromancy, etc.), shows that even after the Babylonian Exile the religion of Israel was “in transition;” see BROOKS SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah. Reconstructing the Cultic History of the Restoration* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supp. Ser. 193; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 127. This is a remarkable book, which will be further referred to in these pages. According to Schramm, the struggle to establish the orthodox Yahwistic cult as the only legitimate one “only came to an end with the promulgation of the Pentateuch,” 157, that is, with Ezra, in the fifth century B.C.E. The official Yahwism of the Bible, for Schramm, 178-182, and a growing number of scholars, represents the triumph of what was before the Exile only one “branch” of the religion(s) of Israel, and a minority one at that. Only some reformer kings (like Hezekiah and Josiah) were able to impose this faith of the “Yahweh-only party” (as Morton Smith called it), and this for brief periods only. Jer 44, e.g., is directed at the pagan, syncretistic worship of the exiles in Egypt after 587.

<sup>47</sup> Deut 17:14-20 was written with Solomon in mind.

evil: Israel wanting to join up with foreigners, eating with them, intermarrying, adopting their (pagan) ways. Such mixing was a grave, really insurmountable, danger for the holy people. How, then, to ensure Israel's holiness (dedication to Yahweh)?

The exiles developed traditions which had existed earlier, but which now, in the midst of the pagan (idolatrous) and cultural splendor of a great empire, took a life-and-death importance. Israel had to maintain its identity. Three primary things became the hallmarks (distinguishing, separating traits) of the Jew: the observance of the Sabbath, circumcision, and the special kosher diet. The lifestyle of the Jew, his habits, simply became incompatible with intimacy with the foreign (and all foreigners, unless they converted, were pagans, worshipper of false gods).

The Pentateuch or Torah received its final form (or something close thereto) in the Babylonian Exile. From its first wonderful lines, the Priestly writer reflects the order and separation which should reign in the world, lest chaos overwhelm. In the beginning God gave an orderly form to all things, putting order in what was chaos and confusion. God *separated* light from darkness, the wet and the dry, animals and plants all existed according to their kind. On the middle day, the fourth (please don't say Odin's Day, or Wednesday), God did something most important: he created a big light in the sky (not called Shemesh, the sun god) and a lesser one, too, to govern the religious feast days. And so everything was in order; violating God's order brings chaos and destruction, for God leaves, and danger invades.<sup>48</sup>

Right in the first chapter, creation ends on the sixth day, for the seventh (a perfect number) is Shabbat, when even the Lord rested, sanctifying this day. This is the whole purpose, in a sense, of the whole of the first creation account (by P, Gen 1:1-2:3), which culminates on the Sabbath. It is *not* meant to be a scientific account or worse, chronology, of how God created and how much time he took, as fundamentalists and other misled literalists think. Note how the Sabbath commandment receives the most space in the two versions of the Decalogue, in Exod 20:8-11 and Deut 5:12-15.

We have other interesting instances of how the religious authors inculcated separation and the need to keep proper borders and, generally, obey the natural order.

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<sup>48</sup> For the anthropologically inclined, Mary Douglas, an Oxford university scholar, wrote a seminal work entitled *Purity and Danger*.

Some seem picayunish, like the prohibition against mixing different fabrics in a garment (so much for polyester-cotton blends, though I am not up on the rabbinics here), or sowing different kinds of seed, Deut 22:9-11. The kosher laws (found in Leviticus, the book which the priests placed at the center of the Torah; see also Deut 14:3-21) prohibit the eating of anomalous animals, like the bat, who is a furry bird. A side effect of these prohibitions, if one can speak of such, is that only peaceful, edifying animals are to be eaten, and the pig, banned because of its association with idolatry, turned out to be a health problem anyway (but this was discovered only much later).<sup>49</sup> More fundamental even to Christian morality is the anomalous in sexual activity: humans are not to lie with beasts, nor male with male, etc., Lev 20. This is not in accord with God's created order, and there is no occasion here to discuss whether these issues should be seen in the context of relationships, etc. The biblical text points to an order divinely instituted and desired; a big question is how this order is to be observed. We do not keep the kosher laws in Christianity; might this not also apply to sexual laws? A brief response would be that Christ cleansed (or declared clean) all foods, Mark 7:19, as part of his program to restore the original purity of creation before the fall. In this view, the Torah was only given "because of the hardness of your hearts," Mark 10:5, or, in the Pauline view, as a pedagogue or trainer until the time of maturity came, Gal 3:19-29. But this means that the order which reigned in the beginning (before the Fall) is to be observed, and Jesus used the example of "male and female God created them, so that what God has united let no one separate," Mark 10:6-9. So I seriously doubt that same sex relations can be said to be in accord with God's original intention at creation.

*A further word about Judaism.* Christians should keep in mind the great burden the good Lord imposed on the Jew, the burden of being his witness in a hostile world. How much it has cost the Jew to be faithful to the covenant, a covenant which mandated straying not at all neither to the right nor left, Deut 5:32; 17:11, 20; 28:14. And the

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<sup>49</sup> The famous Jewish prohibition against mixing dairy products and meat arises from the prohibited anomaly in Exod 23:19; 34:26; Deut 14:21, boiling a kid in its mother's milk (the milk is supposed to make it live, not die!). These kinds of legal (halakic, pertaining to Jewish/Rabbinic law) implications drawn from originally much more restricted ordinances often represent the "fence around the Torah" which the Mishna (the pre-Talmudic Jewish code of ca. 200 C.E.) mandates in order to protect against the danger of even coming close to a violation. They do not always result in harsher rules; the "forty-less-one strokes" allowed in floggings is meant to avoid the risk of going over the maximum forty allowed; see 2 Cor 11:24 (the Romans had no limit).

Babylonian Exile was not the end of temptation! Reforms had to take place, such as those of Ezra and Nehemiah in the fifth century B.C.E., and that of the Pharisees beginning in the second century B.C.E. Jesus' radical eschatological program would clash with the much more adaptable, realistic, rational program of the Pharisees; at least, this is how most Jews viewed the situation. The great rivals of Jesus were probably the Pharisees; they certainly were the rivals of the early Church, and this bitter struggle marks the pages of the New Testament.<sup>50</sup> As Christians, we must understand how most Jews fell into step with their traditional leaders, many of whom had themselves been crucified for their beliefs and positions (the Hasmonean —Maccabee dynasty— king Alexander Janneus crucified 800 Jews, most of whom are thought to have been Pharisees, about one hundred years before Christ).<sup>51</sup> This is not at all meant to diminish the uniqueness and significance of Christianity; it is offered in the spirit (and letter) of John 8:32, “you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

*Judaism breaks forth: “Second Isaiah.”* We have spoken of the essential theme of *separation* which marks the new form of the Israelite religion which was born in the Babylonian Exile, Judaism. Its whole tendency could be described as centripetal (turned towards the center, or inward) and introspective. Its great realization can be linked to the thought and preaching of the early exile prophet, Ezekiel: certainly Israel's punishment was immense, so what crime could correspond to it? The emphasis fell on the holiness and purity of Yahweh, the God who dwelt in Israel's midst. This was a “natural” reaction to Israel's situation, and a necessary one, we repeat, to maintain Jewish identity among great pagan civilizations. Judaism indeed has survived centuries of attacks and persecutions and real threats of extermination, until today.

But the very enormity of what Israel experienced was processed differently by a great, though anonymous, prophet of the late Exile. We call him Deutero- or Second-, Isaiah. He is dated to around 540, two years before the new empire, led by the Persian Cyrus, allowed the Jews to return to rebuild their Land and Temple. He is in the Isaian tradition, based on the great holiness and power of Yahweh vis-à-vis other nations and

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<sup>50</sup> The priestly class were, more than rivals of Jesus, enemies with whom there seemed to be no common ground. In regards to the Pharisees (who are mostly absent from the Passion accounts), see the enigmatic Matt 23:1-3.

<sup>51</sup> See, to start with, *NJBC* 75:142. The Pharisees killed in revenge when they had their chance; see JAMES C. VANDERKAM, *An Introduction to Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2001), 30.

their gods; actually, with Second Isaiah we arrive at perfectly clear monotheism, not just worship of Yahweh alone, but the explicit denial that there are any other gods.

Second Isaiah (Dt-Isa) is the prophet who develops the idea that Yahweh, rather than having been defeated by the Babylonian gods, had been in charge all along and had duly warned Israel of the impending catastrophe if it did not repent. Yahweh was Lord of history, and Dt-Isa was a keen observer of the international scene. He knew that the policy of the Persian Cyrus (his lineage is disputed) was to repatriate the peoples that Babylon had formerly transplanted, and that he was a great promoter of regional religious cults and their Babylonian-destroyed sanctuaries. And so Dt-Isa turns his eye outward, centrifugally (away from the center), and has high hopes for what Cyrus will do (he goes as far as to call him Yahweh's unwitting messiah, Isa 45:1, and friend, Isa 48:14.<sup>52</sup>

Dt-Isa is the most important prophet for Christianity. The very expression "gospel" or "good news" comes from him, especially in Isa 40:9 (and Isa 61:1, which is at least linked to Dt-Isa). This expression refers to the end of the Exile. It is linked to the proclamation of Dt-Isa that Israel's punishment is over, that Israel has paid double for her sins, Isa 40:2. A way is to be prepared in the desert for Yahweh, who is coming to lead his people in a new Exodus, much more marvelous than the first. It really will be a new creation, expressed in Isa 65:17 as a new heaven and a new earth (we will draw at times from Tr-Isa to elucidate Dt-Isa, as they are close theologically, thematically and chronologically). This idea of preparing a way for Yahweh in the desert would be "recycled" in the time of Jesus, by John the Baptist. You see, the Exile did not really end with the return from Babylon; one would still be in "Exile" even in his or her own land, if it was colonized, if there was misery and division, if salvation was still a future hope. And so the Essenes, too, appropriated this verse (actually, before John the Baptist!), and retreated to the desert (as a symbolic Exile), to prepare for the Lord's final visitation.<sup>53</sup> Jesus finally proclaims the "Good News" that fulfills Isaiah's prophecy, Luke 4:18-21.

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<sup>52</sup> The simple division of the Book of Isaiah into three parts is as follows: Isaiah of Jerusalem (eighth century), Isa 1-39; Dt-Isa = Isa 40-55; Third- (Trito-) Isaiah (Tr-Isa), Isa 56-66. In fact, parts of Isa 1-39 are not from Isaiah of Jerusalem, notably Isa 19:16-25 (which is very late, perhaps as late as 180 B.C.E.), the "Apocalypse of Isaiah," Isa 24-27 (post-exilic, and maybe late in that period); Isa 34-35, attributed to Dt-Isa (and important for Jesus' healing ministry), and Isa 36-39, an appendix which is taken from 2 Kgs. Note that "Deutero-Isaiah" has nothing directly to do with Deuteronomy.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Luke 1:68; 7:16.

And he, too, will make the final Exodus (see the Greek text of Luke 9:31, or accurate English translations thereof).

As is so often the case in human experience, the great optimism of Dt-Isa met with incomprehension and hostility. We can point to an openness, a “universalism,” which perhaps aroused hatred in the majority of the exiles. Already in Isa 42:1-4, the first of the so-called “Servant poems or songs,” there is a world-wide mission, to the “nations,” that is, the *goyim*, the pagan Gentiles, and to the “islands,” very remote places for the Jews. The “servant,” an honorific title given to Moses and other greats in Israel, is “ambivalent” in Dt-Isa. It is conferred on the exilic community, who has suffered so, and who has something very important to teach the world (the Torah, for one). But it certainly seems to be applied to an individual who was very different from Israel at large, and who was persecuted and finally killed. There is a change from the optimistic tone of Isa 40-48 to the negative, mournful character of Isa 49-55, according to some scholars. But what we will focus on, and it is a choice we make as Christian students of the Bible, are the remaining three “Servant poems,” extremely important in order to understand Jesus’ ministry, Passion and ultimate vindication.

Isa 49:1-6, the second of these poems, begins, again, with an address to the islands and distant peoples. Let us stress this “universalism,” this interest in those who are not of Israel. It is crucial for an understanding of early Christianity (with its opening to the Gentiles), and, linked with passages such as Ezek 34:16 (where the Good Shepherd seeks the lost sheep; cf. Matt 10:6; 15:24; Luke 15:4, 6), also is in line with Jesus’ ministry to “publicans and sinners” (outcasts, another translation of “stray or lost” in Ezek 34:16). The servant here is called “Israel” in the present form of Isa 49:3, but this is probably a “gloss,” that is, an insertion into the text by a scribe or copyist, reflecting the Jewish tradition that interprets the “servant” collectively as Israel.<sup>54</sup> We can stick to the traditional (beginning with the New Testament) Christian interpretation of the Servant as an individual. Support for this is found in this passage itself. The Servant complains that he has labored in vain, and is weary. But Yahweh responds by giving him an even bigger task: his mission (the reason he was “sent,” the Hebrew expression for prophetic

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<sup>54</sup> Such textual analysis is part of Catholic biblical studies; it is very difficult to understand this second poem, specially Christologically, without such analysis here.



commissioning) was not just in regards to Israel (making them return to God); this is too small a task. The Servant shall be a “light to the nations,” so that Yahweh’s salvation (in Hebrew, *yeshuaty*, “my salvation”) may reach the end of the earth.<sup>55</sup>

Isa 50:4-9, the third song, depicts great harassment of the Servant, whose back is struck, whose beard is plucked, whose face is spat upon, and who is insulted. All of this, of course, is reported as occurring in Jesus’ Passion. Let it be said at the outset that all of it is quite likely, almost certain, in crucifixion scenes. Many scholars believe that little is known of what actually transpired in Jesus’ Passion, and that the gospel writers based their accounts on texts such as these. At a minimum, we would say that a historical kernel, known to have occurred, or supposed within a historical certainty, was reflected upon and “theologically” narrated in light of Scriptures such as these, in the conviction that Jesus, risen from the dead and made Lord, had fulfilled *all the Scriptures*; see Luke 24:25-27; Acts 3:18.

Finally, in the famous “Fourth Song of the Suffering Servant” (which begins the Good Friday liturgy), we have Yahweh as speaker at the beginning and at the end, with a group speaking about the Servant in the middle; in this poem, he cannot speak for himself, for he has been killed. The *Nacar-Colunga* Bible called it the oldest prediction of the Passion of Jesus, and it was surely seen as such by the early Church and by Jesus himself. Like Jesus in John’s Gospel and in Phil 2, the account begins with the exalted status of the Servant, and the astonishment he will cause, for who he really was turned out to be totally different than what he appeared to be (that is, a cycle of exalted status, lowering of himself, return to exalted status “redux”). Note that Isa 52:15, normally translated “so shall he startle many nations,” has in the Hebrew “so shall he sprinkle many nations,” using the same verb as in Lev 16:14-16 for the blood-sprinkling which purifies everything on Yom Kippur, the great Day of Atonement. The idea that Jesus’ sacrifice is an eschatological, final and once-for-all atonement is found in Rom 3:25, where the Greek word translated as “sacrifice of atonement, expiation, propitiatory,” is the LXX’s word for the cover of the ark which was sprinkled on Yom Kippur, Heb 9-10,

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<sup>55</sup> See in Luke 2:32 what allows old Simeon to go in peace. The verse from Isaiah is applied to Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:47 as continuators of Jesus’ mission (which began with the outcasts of Israel, but extended to the Gentiles in a very limited fashion).

1 John 2:2 and perhaps elsewhere.<sup>56</sup> I have the hypothesis that the purpose of ritual sacrifice in the Torah is to legitimize the killing of animals for consumption, which was allowed only as a concession, after the Flood, Gen 9:1-7. It can thus be argued that in the eschatological return to God's original creation intention which Jesus' Paschal Mystery inaugurates, there is no further need for ritual slaughter.

The Servant seemed cursed during his life, stricken and punished by God, despised by all. But he was actually fulfilling Yahweh's plan to crush him with suffering on behalf of others, whose sin he bore (and took away, according to the cultic meaning of the verb "to lift"). He was wounded for the confessing group's ("our report") *crimes or transgressions*, the type of offense that could only be wiped out on Yom Kippur (Lev 16:16; cf. Num 15:30-31). The Servant was flogged (received "stripes"), and upon him fell the divine chastisement (*mûsar*, an important disciplinary-education word, cf. Heb 5:8; 12:5-13) that brought us *shalôm*, meaning "salvation" in this context. We were all like stray sheep, and Yahweh placed on him all our guilt (the Hebrew word here, which can be translated "inequity," something "uneven," can be thought to indicate the deformed aspect this Suffering Servant took on as the result of bearing these sins and their punishment; cf. Gal 3:13; Rom 8:3).

The Servant was "oppressed, or afflicted" (this is the Hebrew root which gives rise to *'anawîm*),<sup>57</sup> but he opened not his mouth, like a lamb led to the slaughter (see Mark 14:1-5; John 1:29). He had committed no wrong, but was taken away without just

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<sup>56</sup> Note also that the Essenes and other pious Jews expected the eschatological cleansing of sins (complete forgiveness, thus possibilitating the end of "Exile") on the tenth Jubilee (that is, after 490 years [49 x 10], or seventy weeks of years [70 x 7], as in Dan 9). See 11QMelchizedek, with references to Isa 61; Dan 9:25; and Ps 82. Yom Kippur took place on the Jubilee, Lev 25:9. Interestingly, Israel was in exile in Babylon 49 years (587-538), and thus, was due for a Jubilee, when all slaves returned home, but even after returning, and after Jeremiah's prediction of a seventy year exile had "elapsed," Israel still waited for the end of Exile; see Jer 25:11; 29:10; Zech 1:12; Dan 9:1-3; 2 Chr 36:17-23. Jesus announces his fulfillment of the eschatological Jubilee in Luke 4:16-21, for he says that he is fulfilling Isa 61:1, which proclaims the "liberty" (technical Hebrew term *d'ror*, used only for the Jubilee emancipation or manumission) of Lev 25:10 as finally taken place. It should moreover be noted that the purpose of ritual sacrifice in the Torah is to legitimize the killing of animals for consumption, which was allowed only as a concession, after the Flood, Gen 9:1-7. It can thus be argued that in the eschatological return to God's original creation intention which Jesus' Paschal mystery inaugurates, there is no further need for ritual slaughter.

<sup>57</sup> The *'anawîm* are the "poor of Yahweh," pious Jews who awaited messianic deliverance in the Second Temple period; the key text is Zeph 3:12. They are the "lowly" of the Magnificat, and Jesus describes himself as such in Matt 11:29 (see Zech 9:9), and Paul describes him as doing such in Phil 2:8. Cf. Ps 22:25 (singular *'anî*), 26 (plural *'anawîm*). This is the word used of Moses in the "meek as Moses" passage, Num 12:3.

trial (one possible interpretation of *mishpat* in Isa 53:8). The Servant pours (or empties) his life (or even his “blood;” cf. Phil 2:7) unto death as a sin-offering (Isa 53:10, Hebrew *asham*, probably the term Paul has in mind in Rom 8:3, where he uses the LXX expression which translates *asham* in Isa 53:10.) Thus he fulfills Yahweh’s “pleasure, wish, or business” (cf. the “well-pleased” of Isa 42:1 and Mark 1:11), for which he shall be highly rewarded, for he “lifted up, bore” the sin of “many,” Isa 53:12; this “lifted up” verb (Hebrew *nasa*) means ‘take away sins’ in a cultic setting (see, e.g. Lev 16:22, regarding the scapegoat). “Many,” which in Hebrew appears five times in this poem (including what is translated “great” in Isa 53:12), would become a “buzz-word” among pious groups in the Second Temple period (see, e.g., Mark 10:45; 14:24; Dan 12:2, and the Dead Sea Scrolls). The “Second Temple period” is the usual designation for the period between the return from Babylonian Exile (538 B.C.E.) —or, more specifically, from the rebuilding of the Temple, that is, the construction of the second Temple in 520-515) to the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 A.D. This covers a very important period for Judaism, including the time of Jesus and the activity of Paul, and the incipient separation of Jews into followers of the rabbis and followers of Christ.

We have felt it opportune to set forth at some length the relevance of this fourth poem for Christianity. Like so many things in the Bible, there is much to be learnt from it. Who was this Servant, originally?<sup>58</sup> This is a question that cannot be answered with any certainty. For Jews, he has come to be a symbol for Israel; for Christians, the passage refers to Jesus, who fulfills the Scriptures (again, see Luke 24:26). But we have another task at hand now, and it is to situate this late-exilic prophet known as Dt-Isa in the context of his community. Why was he persecuted? What did he stand for, that aroused such hostility? Answers to these questions will help us understand the (somewhat remote) origins of Christianity.

*A divided community.* Isaiah is the most important prophet for Christianity, and this book encompasses the work of a “movement” or circle which spanned for centuries. Already in “First Isaiah” (of Jerusalem, eighth century) there is talk of disciples, Isa 8:16. In order to try to understand why Second Isaiah (late Babylonian Exile, sixth century) — if he was originally the prophet these chapters tell about— was persecuted, Professor

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<sup>58</sup> See the episode of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-40.

Blenkinsopp has proposed that we look at passages in Third Isaiah (after the Babylonian Exile) that indicate division in the community and persecution or excommunication of “dissidents.” This is extremely important for an understanding of Christians origins, which must be traced to more or less radical and dissident groups in the Second temple period.<sup>59</sup>

Third-Isaiah (Tr-Isa) encompasses Isa 56-66. This is a complex unit involving several writers and editors, but how it begins and ends is remarkable. Isa 56:1-8 announces Yahweh’s imminent coming, and has an inclusive position regarding foreigners and eunuchs, categories excluded by mainstream Judaism (see, e.g., Deut 23:2-9; Ezek 44:9). This seems to be in line with the “universalist, inclusive” attitude of Dt-Isa. Note the mysterious “yet others” who will be united to those Yahweh gathers in Isa 56:8 (Jesus quoted Isa 56:7 in the “cleansing of the Temple,” Mark 11:17). Isa 66:18-22 is astounding: the remotest lands (including islands, as in Dt-Isa) will know Yahweh, and Yahweh will even take from among them “for priests and Levites.”<sup>60</sup> This is all the more remarkable because, as has been said, the priesthood became extremely exclusive in the Exile, limited to the “sons of Zadok” (Zadokites), and mere Levites were demoted; see Ezek 44:10-23. Those who aspired to be officiating priests had to prove their genealogy strictly, see Ezra 2:61-63; Neh 7:63-65.

Tr-Isa has a group behind it who go by the names of “chosen ones” and “servants,” as if they were followers of the Servant of the Lord in Dt-Is. They also call themselves “mourners” and “tremblers” (something like Shakers or Quakers).<sup>61</sup> Isa

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<sup>59</sup> Paolo Sacchi, an Italian scholar of Judaism and Christian origins, places the dissidents of the Second Temple period in southern Palestine (Judah) and identifies them with those who remained and did not go into Exile in Babylon. They did not share the purity concerns developed (or sharpened) by the exiles. Job and Ruth would be two examples of their literature. See also PAUL D. HANSON, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic. The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology. Revised Edition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975, 1979), 263-269; SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 91-92. The south would cherish the gratuitous promise to David, not a covenant (“Pact”) with obligations. This is something developed by the north, and which took over the minds of the exiles (that is, notions of Law, justice, retribution). I think there are problems with some of these ideas, but they are worth considering, and we must do further research into this. Sacchi has a prominent disciple in Gabriele Boccaccini, now at the University of Michigan, who has written about very important topics for the understanding of Christian origins and the two principal “movements” in Judaism, which he divides into “Zadokite” and “Enochic.”

<sup>60</sup> Isa 66:20, according to Blenkinsopp, is a “nervous editor’s” correction of this remarkable passage by attempting to make it say that the role of these *goyîm* (pagans, Gentiles, from the nations) is merely to serve as transporters (“mules,” as used in drug-smuggling terminology).

<sup>61</sup> Another possible name is *mazkîrîm*, Isa 62:6, “those who remind” Yahweh, which sounds a bit like the *maskîlîm* (“wise teachers”) of Dan 11:35; 12:3, 10, about whom more will be said later.

65:11-14 is very much like the Beatitudes-Curses in Luke 6:20-26. Both are instances of “eschatological reversal,” when the ones who now cry, are hungry, persecuted, etc. will change places with their oppressors, who will be punished (something like the “first shall be last and vice-versa; see Matt 20:1-16). Yahweh’s “chosen ones” will have new names and will be part of the new creation, which will be like the Garden of Eden (a return to the Beginning when God’s creation was in order, and all was blessed, before the Fall); even the most dangerous animals will go back to the vegetarian condition (before Noah); Isa 65:15-25; see Isa 11:1-9. This group is not sympathetic to the efforts to rebuild the Temple of the dominant group; God is too great to dwell in such a Temple, Isa 66:1-2 (quoted by Stephen in Acts 7:44-50). They are hated by their own brothers (fellow Jews) and excluded (or excommunicated, the same Hebrew verb as for “stray or lost” in Ezek 34:16, cf. Matt 10:6); they “tremble” at God’s word (in Hebrew, Isa 66:5 has *ha-ḥaredîm*, still used for extremely pious Jews) and are taunted for their expectation of vindication when Yahweh reveals his glory (cf. Wis 2:12-20; Matt 27:43). ‘But it is their adversaries who will be put to shame’, Isa 66:5.

So we have here a picture of a divided community which will be useful for us to keep in mind for later, when we look at more the immediate origins of Christianity in the Maccabean period (or a bit later, say, around the middle of the second century B.C.E.). Along with Dt- and Tr-Isa, we should mention Jonah as a book which depicts a narrow-minded Jewish prophet who is unwilling to obey Yahweh’s command to preach to Nineveh, the capital of the arch-enemy, Assyria. Also Ruth, a Moabite woman, excluded forever by Deut 23:4, but who joins the people of God and becomes great-grandmother of David! These are the kinds of passages which will engage the interpretative ingenuity of orthodox Jews, as other passages require the same skill and imagination (and faith) for Catholics.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> JACOB MILGROM, “Religious Conversion and the Revolt Model for the Formation of Israel.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101 (1982), 173-174, states that Deut 23 is a D polemic (D originates in the northern kingdom) against the southern Davidids; the Davidic throne is vitiated by its Moabite ancestry (David) and Ammonite ancestry (Rehoboam, 1 Kgs 14:21). On the other hand, Egypt and Edom were enemies of the south (Judah) and thus looked on more kindly by D. The rabbis got David out of the jam by declaring that the prohibition against Moabite conversion applied only to men.



### Chapter Three: The Torah

*The final form of the Torah.* And now we come around full circle as we wrap up the crucial period of the Babylonian Exile. We said that the destruction of Jerusalem, of much of the territory of Judah, and of the (first, Solomonic) Temple, was a devastating shock to the Israelites, most of whom were Judeans, but who included Levites probably formerly from the north, Benjaminites, and other Hebrews. Many or most of the deportees or exiles were educated elites, tradents (carriers) of ancestral traditions, and probably also of written documents. In Babylon, a great and ancient culture (Hammurabi is *ca.* 1700, the time of Abraham, but its origins are older), had many traditions, stories of and ceremonies for their gods, and, in general, was a great impetus for Israel to “put on its batteries” (as we say in Spanish, or “get going, mobilize”) and get a grip on itself and its life, in order to make a future for itself (see Jer 29:11). Blenkinsopp has called the endeavor that of finding “a useable past,” that is, making sense of it all in a way that is not paralyzing but hopeful (recall Ezek 33:10; 37:11). And this indeed Israel did, and how. Under brilliant, inspired leaders, Judaism was forged, a faith and a religion of a most resilient and creative people, wise and committed. And their foundational document, or even constitution, is the Torah or Pentateuch.<sup>63</sup>

The final form of the Torah is deeply influenced by the Babylonian Exile and the Judaism it gave birth to. We mentioned the themes of “order vs. chaos,” and of *separation*, as well as the Sabbath and the feast days, which characterize the first chapter of the Bible. Expulsion from Eden is the first Exile, and we still say “poor banished children of Eve” and “after this our Exile” when we pray the *Salve Regina*. The flood is a massive destruction-cleansing which marks a new creation, as the Gen 1:28 blessing-mandate is repeated (although in this now-imperfect order, vegetarianism is no longer the rule: only homicide is prohibited).<sup>64</sup> But something new appears, an everlasting covenant,

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<sup>63</sup> Babylon, or more accurately, the Neo-Babylonian (Chaldean) empire (seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E.), was a stimulus to writing in general, and the subsequent empire, the Persian, may have spurred or even obligated the Jews to come up with a type of constitution, the compromise document (especially between D and P) which came to be known as the Torah; see Ezra 7:1-26. Roman emperors also at times spurred the crystalization of theological doctrines by calling the ecumenical councils.

<sup>64</sup> It seems to me that animal sacrifice in ancient Israel was associated with a blood taboo that required (is the basis of) ritual slaughter (also found in other ancient cultures) and of the future Temple sacrificial system. Therefore Jesus’ eschatological ushering in of the Final Age, which is a return to Eden and, thus, to

signified by the rainbow. It indicates God's commitment and promise to the whole human race, and it is invoked in the late Exile, Isa 54:9-10. But then the Tower of Babel (= Babylon) is erected, and humankind is dispersed (the first such dispersal, in Greek, "Diaspora," which begs for an In-gathering), and a new period, involving one particular people, begins.

Abram/Abraham leaves "Ur of the Chaldeans," that is, Babylon! Tradition has it that he hated its idolatry. He is old and has no children, but is promised a great number of descendants, and his blessed status will affect all nations. He, like Israel later, goes down to Egypt. In fact, Abraham and the Patriarchs, including Moses, are all "resident-aliens, pilgrims, guest-workers;" in a sense, everyone is, on God's Land (see Lev 25:23; Heb 11:13-16, 39-40).<sup>65</sup> Abraham has to have faith and go where God tells him to go; it took lots of faith for the exiles to return to their devastated Land after they were permitted to do so in 538, and many did not, as evidenced by the importance of Babylon for many centuries (e.g., the Babylonian Talmud is dated *ca.* 500 C.E.); Ezra and Nehemiah "returned" (rather, went for the first time) about one hundred years after 538.

God makes a covenant with Abraham. It is really more of a promise, of descendants and land, and circumcision is its sign (as the rainbow was in the Noah covenant-promise); Gen 17. Abraham has the child of the promise, Isaac, but nearly has to sacrifice him. Isaac is not to marry outside his people, and these are in Babylon! (Gen 24:2-4). Isaac is a little-known figure, and some consider him a mere link between

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a vegetarian, non-violent, dispensation (see Isa 11:6-9, in its context), eliminates both killing of animals and the need to ritually slaughter them (especially in the Temple). Jesus' action in the Temple, according to Mark 11:15-17, is a symbolic termination and destruction of the Temple (eschatologically predicted in Mark 13:2); see the section on the Gospel of Mark in the part on the New Testament in Chapter Seven. Matt 5:23 reflects a different view. Luke 17:14-19 is not dissimilar to Mark 1:44-45, where what is praiseworthy is not offering a sacrifice at the Temple, but preaching or thanking Jesus for having accomplished what no Jewish priest could do in or outside the Temple. Note that Luke is silent or every obscure about sacrifices in Acts 21:23-26; in any case, this "final" condescension to ritually-observant Jewish Christians dramatically backfires, and the Temple seems to "peter-out" after this (cf. 7:47-51). Note that though Peter's vision in 10:9-16 refers to animal slaughter (this is due to Luke's more "gradual" or "continuous" presentation of "salvation history," in contrast to Mark 7:19), the point is not so much purity of animals as it is purity of persons, Acts 10:29; 15:7-11. Abel's animal sacrifice, more pleasing than Cain's cereal offering, seems to reflect the ancient nomadic period (preferably to the sedentary culture, as in the case of the Rechabites in Jer 35); see also Amos 5:21-25; Jer 7:21-28 (in a Temple-destruction chapter); Isa 66:1-3 (where it seems that ritual sacrifice is associated with homicide and impure offerings).

<sup>65</sup> See my article "Welcoming the Foreigner: A Biblical Theology View," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 11.2 (Summer/Fall 2004) 226-234.



Abraham and Jacob, the father of the Twelve tribes. Jacob, too, is not to intermarry with the Canaanites, but has to find a wife in his ancestral land, Gen 28:1-9.

Abraham only gets to acquire a little burial plot in Canaan, the Promised Land, Gen 23. The fulfillment of the promises is tenuous. Jacob has many tribulations, including the hatred of his brother Esau (Edom). He is the “wandering Aramean” of Deut 26:5. His name is changed to Israel, Gen 32:29. He, too, goes down to Egypt. And it is there that Genesis ends.

The sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt is prepared by the Joseph story in the last chapters of Genesis, which are thus linked to Exodus. Joseph, representative of the northern tribes of Israel, experiences sibling rivalry, and is sold into slavery in Egypt. He is tempted there by a foreign woman, but wisely resists, and in fact becomes very successful due to his wisdom (ability to interpret dreams) and obedience to God. In this he is parallel to another exile, Daniel; cf. Gen 41:33, 38; Dan 1:17, 20. They are models for the Jew in Exile. Daniel keeps kosher, Dan 1:10-16 (note the separation in eating between Israelites and Egyptians in Gen 43:32). Joseph puts his brothers to the test, but they are all finally reconciled. Actually, it was all due to God’s salvific plan, Gen 45:5-8. All of Jacob-Israel’s family moves to Egypt, Gen 46:8-27 (“names” prepares us for Exod 1:1; the Hebrew name for Exodus is “Names”). In a way —according to the Priestly writer of Gen 47:27— the promise of many offspring is fulfilled (see also Exod 1:7, cf. Gen 1:28). At the very end of Genesis, Joseph repeats his theological interpretation of his story, Gen 50:20, and predicts that God will *visit* Jacob’s children and bring them into the Promised Land, Gen 50:24-25. This is fulfilled in cf. 3:7-8, 16; 4:31; 13:19 (again, see the Greek text of Luke 1:68, or some literal translations).

The Book of Exodus tells the story of how the Israelites were oppressed in Egypt and were freed by Yahweh their God with many signs and portents. The crossing of the Sea of Reeds (“Red Sea” comes from the LXX) will be the prototypical act of liberation for Israel (see, e.g. Ps 106:21-22; Isa 51:9-11). Yahweh has acted on behalf of his first-born son Israel, smiting the first-born of the Egyptians, Exod 4:22-23. By way of Hos 11:1, Jesus will be thought of as having been called from Egypt by God, Matt 2:13-15 (note that his father Joseph also has dreams).

God reveals his Name to Moses, in the burning bush, Exod 3:1-15, although more than the disclosing of a personal name, it is a promise of divine accompaniment and assistance (“I will be with you”). Yahweh is the same God known by the Fathers (Patriarchs) under different names, Exod 6:2-6. God wants to enter into a covenant (in the sense of pact now, or contract, more than of promise), and for this they have to leave Egypt and go meet God in his holy mountain, Sinai. Before they do, however, they will celebrate the Passover, in the first month of the year, Exod 12:1-14. This is the celebration of God’s salvific liberation from bondage.

Various hands are at work in Exod (J, E, P, etc.). For the orderly P writer, the march through the desert takes place in twelve steps. In step seven, the Israelites arrive in Mount Sinai, Exod 19. Sources other than P then report the making of the covenant-contract (with mutual rights and reciprocal obligations). An old law code is found in Exod 20:22-23:33; this is known as the “Book of the Covenant,” which is replaced or updated by the “Book of the Law,” the original nucleus of Deut, 12:1-26:15.

For P, there is no covenant at Sinai; the word which we translate “covenant,” *berith*, is reserved by P for the “covenant”-promise with all flesh at the time of Noah and that made between Yahweh and Abraham, Gen 17:7; this is an unbreakable, everlasting covenant, really a unilateral (unconditional) Promise. We saw how reassuring this was in the Babylonian Exile; Paul, too, makes much of the free (*gratis*, *gracious*) nature of this type of covenant-Promise, which the much later, Mosaic covenant, cannot annul (see Gal 3:15-18). In fact, though, both types of covenant will tend to *merge* in the Babylonian Exile (both expressions are found in Jer, that is, the “new covenant” made after the old one was broken, Jer 31:31-34 [a D-type text], and the eternal or everlasting covenant [a P-type text], Jer 32:36-41). The D (Sinai, or as Dtr prefers, Horeb) covenant (*berith*) is originally a mutually-binding contract; the P covenant (*berith*) is a unilateral, free, promise.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Some scholars disagree that any of the covenants (those we have mentioned and others which we have not) is really unconditional, but for our purposes it is better to describe the P covenant as such. Some basic, often-stated differences between the P and D schools may be noted: P is a priestly, elite group, concerned primarily for the cult and religious law; D is more of a lay group (or, at least, of “defrocked” Levites demoted from altar service in the Babylonian Exile), concerned for civil law and social justice issues (though, according to Milgrom and others, the Priestly subgroup H (Holiness School) incorporated social justice concerns in the eighth century B.C.E. due to the influence of the prophets). Finally, D is eschatologically oriented, P is not. We could trace a line of development from D (who accept the Prophets

The Sinai covenant is ratified with blood, Exod 24:78, in language that parallels that of Jesus in the Last Supper, Mark 14:24 and parallels. A very mysterious meal with God follows, Exod 24:9-11. But if we followed the P account here, the whole covenant account is skipped and what happens at Sinai, Exod 25-31, has to do with the sanctuary (future Temple), priests and sacrifices — naturally!<sup>67</sup>

But no sooner is the covenant ratified than Israel breaks it. In Exod 32, a non-P account, the Sinai covenant is broken, and Aaron the high priest is quite to blame. This is the famous Golden Calf episode, and it is the violation of the very first of the commandments given by God in Sinai, Exod 20:1-6.<sup>68</sup> Thus the covenant is broken from the start; see Deut 9:7, 24; Jer 7:22-26 (“from the day . . . to this day”). A new covenant is thus “immediately” necessary; Moses breaks the Tablets and has to make new Tablets, after praying to God for forty days and forty nights, Deut 9:7-10:11. This is what Deut 28:69-29:12 (or 29:1-13) refers to when it speaks of a “separate or another” covenant made in the land of Moab (the setting of Deut) that Israel could not keep until ‘that day’. It is the day of the conversion in Exile (more about this later).

Let us finish our brief look at Exod. It ends on a very P note. On New Year’s Day, the day of creation, the first day of the week and month, the sanctuary is finished, according to the divine instructions, Exod 40:17.<sup>69</sup> Yahweh is now ready to come down and be with his people, or rather, Yahweh’s Glory is, Exod 40:34-35. In the LXX, it is said that the Glory of the Lord “overshadowed” the Tent (*skēnē*), the same verb said of

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and expect the messianic age) to the Pharisees, and a line from P (who accept only the Torah, and, without the Prophets, do not accept resurrection, angels, divine providence, etc.) to the Sadducees. Another difference is that D prefers to speak of only God’s Name dwelling in the Temple, while P speaks more of a “real presence” in that God’s Glory dwells in the Temple.

<sup>67</sup> Whereas non-P sources refer to the “Ark of the Covenant,” which contains the Tablets of the Covenant made in Sinai, P, who avoids use of *berith*-covenant for what was entered into at Sinai, refers to the “Ark of the Testimony;” see, e.g., Exod 25:10, 21, 22.

<sup>68</sup> Actually, it may be more accurate to speak of golden “calves” or bullocks (Exod 32:4, 8 uses the plural); these golden calves allude to the two golden calves made by the secessionist king Jeroboam I (who created the northern kingdom of Israel) in order to provide cult places for his people (so that they did not have to go to Jerusalem in the south), 1 Kgs 12:26-33. The calves were set up in the extreme north and south of the northern kingdom, and constitute, according to D, the great sin of Jeroboam after which all his successors walked. For Fr. Norbert Lohfink, this sin of Israel in Exod 32, who does not keep even the first commandment, and thus violates them all, and which occurred around the time of the Exodus (1250 B.C.E.), is the start of 700 years of sinning, until around 550 B.C.E., when Israel’s conversion in the Babylonian Exile takes place (or at least is written about).

<sup>69</sup> Note that the new creation after the flood also began on a New Year’s Day, Gen 8:13, when the flood waters dried up. Recall that after the flood, God repeats the blessing/mandate of Gen 1:28, in 9:1.

the Holy Spirit who comes over Mary when she conceives Jesus in Luke 1:35; John 1:14 says that the Word became flesh and “tented” (*eskēnōsen*) among us. Now, with God in its midst, Israel has a special duty to be holy and pure, and this is what the priests set out in the following book of the Torah, the central book, which we call Leviticus, but which is really a book of the Zadokite priests (and not really of the Levites, the rules for whom are found in Numbers).

Let us get our biblical bearings. Israel has been at Sinai since Exod 19. They will remain there until Num 10:11. So much of the Torah, certainly its central portion, takes place on that holy mountain. God has spoken to them amidst a terrible theophany, so that the people fear to die, and plead that it be Moses who serves as intermediary between God and man, Exod 20:18-21; Deut 5:23-31; cf. 18:15-20. With the erection of the sanctuary in Exod 40, Yahweh is now in their midst, and the people are required to be very holy. Having God among them is both a blessing and a great danger. The divine presence in Lev has been compared (by Tikva Frymer-Kensky) to radioactive material, very powerful and useful if handled correctly, lethal if not. The holiness of Israel is the concern of Lev. Israel is to observe ritual purity, in order to keep Yahweh in its midst. If Yahweh leaves, chaos erupts and takes over, and things return to what they were before creation. Concretely, people die or go into Exile; the Land vomits impure people, Lev 18:24-30, and God leaves the Temple, as Ezekiel had seen. Then Temple and city and people are destroyed.

Lev is the central book of the Torah. It is often overlooked by Christian scholars, but this is to not understand the Torah/Pentateuch, the “Law” in the New Testament. Lev is all about Israel’s mandate and desire to be with God, to be able to approach Yahweh. This requires purity, sinlessness. Purity, or cleanness, refers to a certain state wherein certain laws are observed. Jacob Milgrom is probably the greatest expert on Lev, and certainly one of the most erudite Bible scholars ever (Christians today are rightfully thankful to such Jews for opening up to us the meaning of their Scriptures, which have also become ours). One of the main things purity has to do with is activities that connote life and death. Emission of semen and menstruation, where there is loss of life, render impure; childbirth also renders impure, perhaps because it is life-giving, or because there is loss of blood (there is double impurity if the child is a girl, Lev 12:1-5). Corpses render

impure. Note that these are all involuntary offenses; we would not call them “sins,” but the Hebrew words used are in fact those for “sins.” Strikingly, it seems that voluntary or deliberate offenses are not pardonable, except perhaps on Yom Kippur, as Milgrom believes, that is, once a year (cf. Num 15:30-31; Lev 16:16).

We have previously mentioned the kosher laws, and how these and other regulations about propriety (such as not mixing different seeds in a field, or different fabrics in a cloth, not to mention sexual improprieties) reflect God’s divine order in creation, which Israel has bound itself to observe. This should make Israel appear as a holy people. In fact, the highly regimented Jewish lifestyle (one cannot be a slouch and a good Jew at the same time) accounts for much of Jewish interest in legal matters, in study, and for the very disciplined life of the observant Jew. In this, one can see Jews indeed as the “light of the nations” (Gentiles, *goyim*), as they interpret Isa 42:6; 49:6; cf. 51:4; 60:3. This is the reason for much Jewish success in history in the face of odds which have eliminated many other peoples, and which has aroused so much hateful envy among others, including “Christians.” While those who should have been a new creation in Christ groveled in filth, illiteracy and superstition during the Middle Ages, Jews were the object of insane notions (they needed blood for the Passover, or sacrificed Christian children, or were responsible for the Plague) and hateful deportations, massacres and forced baptisms. Let us keep this in mind as we briefly look at Lev.

A few regulations are of interest to us as Christians. Mary was purified, according to Luke 2:22, following Lev 12:1-4 (actually, Luke joins Jesus in the purification, perhaps to signify that neither of them really needed to be purified, and also to intimate their partnership in the redemptive suffering of Christ’s self-offering; see Luke 2:34-35). The language in the LXX in Lev 12:7 is repeated in Mark 5:29 (the healing of the woman with the blood flow); this seems to point to the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice, which purifies from all sin, impurity and illness (all of which are closely related). Such a healed woman, who can now have sexual relations with her husband and conceive (thus the quote from Lev 12, when Lev 15:25-30 would have been more on point), would have no need to offer pigeons in the Temple (Jesus overturned the tables of those who sold them, Mark 11:16). Neither would a poor leper who had been healed by Jesus see the need to

offer such pigeons: why offer the priests anything if they had not been able to heal him, as Jesus had? See Mark 1:40-45.<sup>70</sup>

In Mark 7:19, Jesus is said to have cleansed or purified (or, if you want, declared clean) all foods. Cf. Acts 10:9-16. What happens to Lev, then? How does Jesus fulfill, not abolish, even the smallest points of the Law? (Matt 5:17-19). Without being able to get into a fascinating but very complex series of topics, let us say that, in the Christian view, Jesus restores the original purity of Eden, before the Fall, before impure spirits invade humanity (see Zech 13:2; thus, Jesus' exorcisms, a final defeat for Satan, Luke 10:18), before women are cursed (Gen 3:16), before humankind feels very distant from God. That is why Jesus heals and exorcises, and forgives sins, and saves; he is God acting again in creation, finally, as God did in the beginning (see, e.g., Isa 51:9-11). Lev, in the Christian view, was a symbol, a preparation, a typological reference point (see Gal 3:19-29). The blood of animals, even on Yom Kippur, could not really cleanse the conscience of the worshipper who would draw near to God; Heb 9. It is Jesus who purifies, with the water that would cleanse that Ezek 36:24-29 prophesied, when a new heart would be given to God's people. And with blood, the blood sprinkled on the cover of the ark on Yom Kippur (Lev 16:15-16), which Isa 52:15 seems to intimate, as 1 Pet 1:13-23 says (quoting the Lev refrain, "be holy as I am holy"). Water and blood, 1 John 5:6, as flowed out of Jesus' side, John 19:34. The water of baptism (John 13:10) and the blood of the Eucharist (John 6:51-58). But before we get too elated, consider what a challenge it is to live up to this "pre-Fall" status. We are left with the words of St. Paul in Rom 7:14-25.

So Lev is of central importance, as the cornerstone of Jewish purity concerns (in order to remain God's faithful people), and as fulfilled by Jesus for the Christian. Even for Jews, the requirements of the Torah would change in the messianic age. It is the task and challenge of Christians to really live and act as if they are indeed the redeemed of the messianic age, when everyone will be just (Isa 60:21), swords will be turned into plowshares (Isa 2:4; how close are we to that?), and everyone will be on intimate terms with God (Isa 11:9).

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<sup>70</sup> Jesus' command to offer the prescribed sacrifice (in Lev 14) goes unheeded by the healed leper; the translation of Mark 1:44 should be "as a witness against them [the priests]," as in Mark 6:11; 13:9.

Lev ends with blessings and curses (Lev 26). These parallel those in Deut 28. The people are reminded of the consequences of disobeying God. Note that in these two Torah passages, the blessings are much shorter than the curses. This is because the curses would be fulfilled in the Babylonian Exile; the blessings will be further expounded upon by the Latter Prophets. Note the seven-fold punishments in Lev 26. Hark the priestly reference to sacrifices and to the Land enjoying or making up (sometimes, “paying”) its Sabbaths (Lev 26:34-35, 43). This refers to the Sabbath rest mandated for the Land every seven years (Lev 25). This idea of the Sabbath for the Land every seven years, united to seven-fold punishment, is behind the “seventy times seven” computation for the end of the Exile, in Dan 9:1-3, 20-27; cf. 2 Chr 36:21. The completion or fulfillment of this long period of time was eagerly expected by pious Jews in the Second Temple period, and the object of much speculation and calculation in apocalyptic scribal circles. With much greater simplicity and sound conviction, Jesus proclaims this time as fulfilled in Mark 1:15, which contains the whole kernel of the Gospel message (and of the preaching of Jesus). See also Gal 4:4; 1 Cor 10:11, etc.

One last word about Lev. Lev 26:41 refers to the uncircumcised heart, in the context of conversion in the Exile. Deut 30:6 speaks of the circumcision of the heart by Yahweh, also in the context of exilic conversion to the Lord. This refers to the new heart of Ezek 36:26 and the law written in the heart of the new covenant in Jer 31:31-34.<sup>71</sup> Recall that “conversion” is returning to God and also to the Land, which ushers in a change of fortunes, the end of captivity, etc. There is an expression in Lev 26:11-13 (which recalls Ezek 37:27-28, which speaks of God dwelling with his people as part of the eternal covenant) which Milgrom relates to the Garden of Eden: Yahweh promises that he will walk amidst his people (Lev 26:12, lost in some translations), using the same language as in Gen 3:8. Ezek 36:35 also refers to Eden. This is the eschatological return to God’s original, pure, creation, “Paradise,” cf. Luke 23:43; 2 Cor 12:4; Rev 2:7; 22:1-3. This is also the garden of Jesus’ successful struggle (John 18:1; cf. 12:27; the New Adam obeyed) and resurrection (John 19:41; 20:1); the New Adam, like the first Adam, is also a gardener, John 20:15; Gen 2:15.

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<sup>71</sup> See Ezek 44:7-9, condemning both uncircumcision of heart (spiritual) and flesh (ritual).

The fourth book of the Torah is Numbers. It can be divided into two parts. From Num 1-10, Israel, arrayed as a holy war camp, is all in order, with the divine presence in the Ark of the Covenant in its midst, surrounded by priests, Levites and the tribes in order.<sup>72</sup> But as soon as they leave Sinai, everything breaks down. Numbers — appropriately called by the Jews in Hebrew “In the Desert (or Wilderness)” (*b<sup>e</sup>midbar*), is the story of Israel’s rebellion, lack of faith, disobedience, grumbling and apostasy. This will result in the punishment of not being able to enter the Promised Land, except for the faithful Joshua (Moses’ successor) and a loyal non-Israelite, Caleb (whose name, interestingly, means “dog”), and the youngest Israelites who did not know right from wrong (Num 14:20-38). One of the great sins of the people is to “slander” the Land (Num 13:32; cf. 14:31). They do not consider it fit for habitation, which echoes complaints made during the Babylonian Exile, Ezek 36:3, 16.

Numbers is another Torah book often passed over by Christians. It is important, however, to understand it, in order to get a grasp of what the Torah (the “Law”) is about. For Christians, the Law testifies to Christ (see John 5:39, 45-47). We should note some passages which have relevance for the New Testament. In Num 11:24-30, the Spirit of God is poured on seventy elders, as well as some others who had not been designated for this. When Joshua (somewhat like John the disciple in Mark 9:38-40) asks Moses to prohibit this, Moses in reply wishes that the whole people might receive the Spirit and prophesy. This will then be prophesied by Joel 3:1-2 (2:28-29 in other versions of the Bible), and proclaimed as fulfilled in Acts 2:17-18. We could point to other instances of Torah-Prophets-New Testament sequences (“rereadings”); here we shall only mention one other, Gen 49:9-12; Zech 9:9-10; Mark 11:1-10, which will be discussed below.

The incident with water from the rock in Num 20:1-14 is later alluded to by Paul in 1 Cor 10:4, in an example of “rabbinic” exegesis which is quite creative and imaginative: the rock followed the Israelites in the desert, and was Christ! The bronze serpent which heals the murmuring Israelites in Num 21:4-9 is a “type” (model) of Christ (the “antitype,” what the model prefigured, and what corresponds to it) in John 3:14-15, another example of the New Testament’s “typological” use of the Old Testament. Finally,

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<sup>72</sup> Note that the central book, Lev, is bounded by the last chapters of Exod, regarding the Tabernacle, and the orderly, holy camp in the first chapters of Num; see SMITH, *The Memoirs of God*, 82.



the Israelites arrive in the plains of Moab, the twelfth step, Num 22:1. They will remain there until the end of the Torah, and it is there that Moses will deliver his final speech, which will be the Book of Deuteronomy.

The picturesque Balaam episode in Num 22-24 is noteworthy. The king of Moab hires a famous prophet to curse Israel, but he cannot. Yahweh has him bless Israel instead. Things seem very old in these mysterious passages, which include the one about Israel being a nation apart and different from all others, Num 23:9. God, called 'el (like the ancient Canaanite, Ugaritic father deity, the old man with the white hair and beard), is said be like a bull or wild ox in the difficult passage Num 23:22 (the attribute animal for 'el was the bull.<sup>73</sup> There are messianic references. The most well-known one is in Num 24:17, the famous “star of Jacob” prophecy, which is the background for the star of Bethlehem in Matt 2:2, and which had great significance in the final Jewish revolt against Rome in 132-135 C.E., the “Bar Kochba” (“Son of the Star” = messiah) revolt.

Israel’s final rebellion against Yahweh takes place in Num 25, the episode of Ba’al of Peor. The Israelites fornicated with the Moabite women and thus worshipped their idols, to the extreme that an Israelite and a foreign woman were having sex in or near the holy Tent of Meeting! The priest Pinehas, indignant with holy zeal, pierced them both with his spear, so that the woman was penetrated in her “stomach,” which according to Richard Friedman, may mean her vagina.<sup>74</sup> The punishment fits the crime, as so often in the Middle Eastern world of the Bible. Sex with foreigners, or intimacy with them, always a dangerous temptation to falling into idolatry, is a big no-no in the Jewish Bible; monotheism, the keeping of the divine covenant, and Israel’s divine mission-mandate, are all at stake. Note that the word used for disobedience and rebellion against Yahweh in Num 14:33 is literally “prostitutions, fornications” (often translated “infidelity”). This is the theological situation exemplified by Hosea.

On that note, we finish with Num. What follows can be considered a Priestly supplement we need not discuss. The stage is now set for the final book of the Torah, Deut, which also functions as a hinge, concluding the Torah and introducing the Former Prophets or Deuteronomic History.

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<sup>73</sup> See *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 384.

<sup>74</sup> *Commentary on the Torah* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003), 514 (he says “genital area”).

P, the Priestly School, had a preponderant role in the first four books of the Torah, the Tetrateuch (the great scholar Martin Noth was one of those who pointed this out). P begins the whole Bible, with the first creation account in Gen 1. Lev, an eminently P book, is at the center of the Torah. Some think that if P had had its way completely, we may not have a five-book Torah, at least not like the one we have now. Perhaps, P would have finished with the distribution of the Land accounts in Joshua, so that everything would be in order, and with nothing more to really expect, except the eternal now in the eternal return of the perfect cult, where the heavenly, perfect world is reflected (thus, P is said to not be eschatological, it awaits nothing fundamentally new, and is thus very conservative, as the Sadducees are said to be in New Testament times).<sup>75</sup>

But this is not what happened. In what James A. Sanders calls the “triumph of the Deuteronomistic School,” this school insisted that their book be the fifth and last of the Torah (which would then be a compromise document between the two predominant schools or movements in the Babylonian Exile, those behind P and D). Like the Deuteronomists, this book looks forward to fulfillment; the story is not finished. Israel has yet to enter the Land and come into possession of its inheritance, of the Promise.

*Deuteronomy.* Deut takes place all in one day, the last day of Moses’ life. Although it has P features (the two movements, and their notions of covenant and restoration tend to merge in the exilic period, as we indicated above), it is a D book. This means that Levites are on a par with priests (the demotion of the Levites by the Zadokites, as we saw in Ezek, is not accepted); Aaron, who figures right along side Moses in so many P texts, is only mentioned twice: once, to recall his infidelity in the golden calf episode, Deut 9:20 (Exod 32 is not a P passage), and then to report his death, Deut 10:6; 32:50.<sup>76</sup> The name of the book in Hebrew is pretty Deuteronomistic, “Words.” “Deuteronomy,” however, the name derived from the LXX, is significant; it means “Second Law,” in line with the LXX name for “Torah,” *nomos*, “Law.” “Torah” itself really means “priestly teaching or instruction.” It may be that non-priestly, that is, non-Zadokite, circles, in the third century B.C.E, when the LXX began to be composed, preferred a scribal, legal-study (i.e., proto-Pharisaic) notion as the name for the

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<sup>75</sup> Some think an original P history ended in Josh 19:51.

<sup>76</sup> Milgrom states that Exod 32:15 is an H text, that is, a derivative of P (it does use “Ark of the Testimony”).

Pentateuch, rather than evoke the priestly casting of lots which is behind the name “Torah” (see Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; Num 27:21; Ezra 2:63; Sir 33:3).<sup>77</sup> The name is taken from the LXX translation of Deut 17:18; while the Hebrew says that the king should make a *copy* of this Torah, the LXX translates that he shall “write this *deuteronomium*,” indicating that by that time, at least in the Jewish colony in Alexandria, Egypt, Deut was understood to be a “Second Torah.” We stated that Deut, or its original nucleus (Deut 12-26:15), replaced the old Book of the Covenant, Exod 20:22-23:33. It is interesting to note that the Deuteronomic school is the one that like second things, like the new covenant of Jer 31:31 or the separate covenant of Deut 28:69 (29:1).

In fact, Deut is a going-over of what has happened to Israel “in the desert (or wilderness).” And it is a looking forward to the time when Israel will be back (!) in the Land, although the fiction is that it has yet to enter it (according to Lohfink, when the exiles return with their new heart to the Land of their ancestors, it will be as if for the first time, and they will know, love, obey and worship God properly as if for the first time). Deut has various words it repeats often, and which are characteristic of this school. One of the words is “today (or this day).” Moses is speaking, on behalf of God; this is what the people wanted and asked for, for they had heard God directly, but were afraid to die (Deut 4:15; 18:16). Moses is God’s spokesman for ever more (Exod 14:31; 19:9). This would cause the Jews much difficulty regarding belief in Jesus; John 9:29.

Deut is a preaching and teaching book. It repeats and exhorts to the point of redundancy. We can hear echoes of what this “indoctrination” must have been like in Babylonian Exile, when Judaism was being forged, when that indestructible faith was created or fostered that has remained to this day. Deut is the story of wasted time, the time spent wallowing in the desert, according to one strand of this book. Israel had reached Kadesh-barnea in Deut 1:19-21; in one strand, this is already the Promised Land (I follow the ideas of the great Norbert Lohfink). It was an eleven-day journey, Deut 1:2. Instead, due to the people’s lack of faith/trust, they were turned back and went around in circles for a long time; see Deut 1-2, “forty years.” This is one generation, or one year for every day the Israelites spent checking out God’s gift, according to Num 14:34; cf. Ezek

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<sup>77</sup> See Jer 18:18; Mal 2:7, from non-P sources (i.e., Deuteronomic or Levitical).

4:6; 29:11-13 (applied to Egypt). But another chronology has it as 38 years, Deut 2:14, and this wallowing due to unbelief and sin recalls the paralytic who lay for 38 years at the pool of Bethzatha because he wasn't sure he wanted to be healed (see John 5:6-7, 14).

So Israel's big sin is unbelief (in Hebrew, the verbal root, *aman*, whence we get "amen," connotes holding firm, confirming, trusting). That is why they had to remain in Kadesh all that time, Deut 1:26-45. According to one strand, as we said, this was a total waste. But other hands looked at Israel's desert period differently. In Deut 8:2-6, the desert time was a trial for Israel, who experienced God's providential care, and learned that "one does not live by bread alone, but one lives by what comes out of Yahweh's mouth" (the divine Words). Jesus quoted this to the Tempter when he himself was tried in the desert for forty days and nights.

We have stated that the original nucleus of Deut is 12-26:15. The gist of this new or updated Law has been summed up as "one God, one Temple, one people." This goes back to Josiah's reform in 622, which we saw above. The Deuteronomistic reform which he led abolished all cult places except the Jerusalem Temple; throughout Deut, the fiction is maintained that Yahweh will in the future indicate where sacrifices are to be offered, i.e., in the place where Yahweh will cause his Name to dwell (see, e.g., Deut 26:1-2). Note that this differs from other texts, especially P ones, where sacrifices were offered in various places. Behind this is a dispute between Aaronids and Mushite priests who had different "torahs" (in Hebrew, the plural of *torah* is *torot*); we can't and need not discuss this further, but see, e.g., Jer 7:21-23, which agrees poorly with Lev, to say the least! Jer is closely linked with the Deuteronomists, i.e., Mushites (a priesthood who looked to Moses rather than Aaron as its founder).

Skipping over the original nucleus of Deut, what we want to do here is to focus on those passages of this book which reflect its latest stage, in the late Exile, and which are most eschatological, or forward looking to a time of fulfillment and rest (see Deut 3:20; 12:9-10; 25:19; cf. Heb 4:8). This is the stage of the enduring "today," so often repeated in Deut, addressed to those who have remained "clinging" to Yahweh and are alive "today," Deut 4:4.<sup>78</sup> The covenant entered into is not with the Fathers, but with all those

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<sup>78</sup> The verb translated "clinging" (other versions: held fast, adhered, etc.), is an important Deut verb for closeness to God and his will; it is the verb first used in Gen 3:24 for the marital union. Deut is full of

alive today, Deut 5:2-3. The Sinai covenant (the Deuteronomists avoid “Sinai,” reminiscent of the Babylonian moon god Sin, which sounds alike in the original languages, and instead say “Horeb”) is in the background, but towards the end of the book there is *another*, separate covenant mentioned, Deut 28:69 (29:1). This is the “new” covenant which these new people —the exiles who have survived the purgation of the past generation, the purgation of everyone but Joshua and Caleb and the little ones we spoke about, a purgation which includes even Moses and Aaron, who will not enter into the Promised Land— will enter into when they cross over to the Land, Deut 29:11 (12).<sup>79</sup> This entry into the Land, this *return*, is of one piece with *return to Yahweh*, conversion, and the “change of fortunes” or end of (Babylonian or any other) captivity spoken of by the prophets (e.g., Jer 30:1-3, in a literary unit which includes the famous New Covenant passage in 31:31-34). Note that something very similar is enacted by John the Baptist. He administers a baptism of repentance (or conversion) on the other side of the Jordan (John 10:40), after which the converts cross the Jordan back to the Land as a symbol of their hope of entering into their eschatological inheritance (salvation, the Kingdom of God, etc).<sup>80</sup>

Deut speaks eloquently about this conversion. In Deut 28, we have the curses which will take place if Israel does not keep the covenant. In fact, the Deuteronomic History showed how Israel did not keep the covenant and how the curses took effect. But the fiction here is that the curses are in the future, spoken by Moses; the audience has already experienced them, but the message has the sanction of a prediction come true, and is a valid message for all time. Deut 30 then predicts how, in Exile, Israel will repent and convert. Israel will ponder in its heart everything that happened. But it is Yahweh who will seek Israel, and circumcise its heart, Deut 30:1-6. Then Israel will return and love the Lord with all its heart. Note the emphasis on spiritual circumcision in D; the physical circumcision text in Gen 17 is P. The New Testament will emphasize spiritual circumcision, e.g., Phil 3:3; Rom 2:25-29; 4:9-12; Col 2:11; cf. Acts 15:9; Eph 2:11-18.<sup>81</sup>

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admonitions to love God with one’s whole heart, soul and “muchness” (*m<sup>e</sup>od*, often translated “strength,” is actually an adverb meaning “very,” as in Gen 1:31 (“very good”).

<sup>79</sup> This verse literally says “to cross over into the covenant.” Cf. Deut 9:1.

<sup>80</sup> Note that the Baptist, in the role of Elijah, the eschatological harbinger of messianic deliverance, takes over at the place where Elijah left, that is, the other side of the Jordan; see 2 Kgs 2:5-13.

<sup>81</sup> See also Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4.

Only on that late day will Israel understand and know how to truly serve Yahweh: until that day of the new or separate covenant, Yahweh had not given Israel ears to hear or a heart that understood, Deut 29:3 (4). Deut 4:29-31 refers to the “end of the days” as the time of conversion. This text now incorporates P theology, that of the sworn, unilateral oath-covenant-promise made with the Fathers (“Patriarchs”). This love of Yahweh-God for Israel’s forebears is the unalterable, irrevocable basis for the eternal covenant between God and his people Israel, a covenant God will never renounce; see Rom 11.

At the latest stage of Deut, the gratuity of God’s love and grace overwhelms the notion of human obligation (which is never lacking in Judaism or Christianity, at least in Catholicism). Deut 9:4-6 is a passage which Lohfink calls a precursor of the Pauline doctrine of justification by grace, not works (see 2 Tim 1:9; Eph 2:8; Rom 3:24, 28; Gal 2:16). It is not due to Israel’s righteousness that God has given the Land, since Israel is a stiff-necked people, but due to his promise to the Fathers (whom God will always love), and to the wickedness of the Canaanites (called “Amorites” by the Deuteronomists and others). The word here translated “promise” is literally “word, thing” (*davar*) in Hebrew, but the LXX translated it *diathēkē*, meaning both “covenant” and “testament” (this is where we get “Old or New Testament,” via the Latin translation *testamentum*). There is no Hebrew word for “promise,” but this is its meaning here, and thus Paul uses it in Gal 3:15-18. So in the late stages of Deut, we have a blending of D and P notions of covenant, and God’s grace overwhelms, trumps, so to speak, human limitation.<sup>82</sup> According to Father Lohfink, in the final stages of Deut, the redactor (or editor, whom Lohfink labels “DtrÜ”)

realises that Israel did not observe the Law, does not observe the Law and will not observe it. Thus DtrÜ works out a “theology of justification” for Israel despite the sins and in view of the promises made to the Patriarchs. . . . Thus the Wilderness [the desert] becomes the image of Israel’s relationship with God up to and including the time of the Exile. Israel sins but God acts like a father even if God maintains the curses within the covenant for the case of covenant-breaking.

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<sup>82</sup> Friedman has pointed to the coexistence of the two stages of Deut regarding the nature of God in Deut 4. In Deut 4:24, Yahweh is the jealous (or passionate), fiery God who devours; in Deut 4:31, he is the merciful (compassionate) God who loves the Fathers. In Hebrew terms, says Friedman, this is *el qannā* meeting *el rahûm*. This latter word comes from the Hebrew word for womb, and is thus maternal.

The message (kerygma) to the Exile reader is: Observe the Law, but even if you are unable to observe it fully, have confidence that God will bring you back because of the promises God made to your ancestors.<sup>83</sup>

Deut is a fitting end to the Torah. It recounts all that has happened to Israel since leaving Egypt, to the point when it is about to enter the Promised Land. But which Egypt did Israel leave, and is it entering or returning to the Land? In the final form of the Torah, with the work of the Deuteronomic School finished as far as the Torah and the Former Prophets are concerned (and even some of the editing of the Latter Prophets), Israel is leaving Babylon, another Egypt, according to texts like Deut 28:68 and 2 Kgs 26:26. But, as we shall see, “Egypt” is Exile, and does not end even if Israel is back on the Land. That is why Zech 1:12, after the return from Babylon, wonders when the “seventy year” exile predicted by Jer 25:11-14 and 29:10-14 will end, and Dan 9:2, written many years after the return, tries to interpret what Jeremiah meant (he will be told it really means seventy times seven, or 490, years). Exile ends with final deliverance or salvation. That is what the Essenes, or the Qumran desert community (who had voluntarily exiled themselves to “Damascus,” see their *Damascus Document*, CD-A 6:5; cf. Amos 5:27), believed. That is, around the time of Jesus many in Israel awaited final or messianic deliverance. The Qumranites thus called themselves the Community of the New Covenant, and the “converts” (or penitents) of Israel. They, like the Christian after them,, awaited the fulfillment of the Torah, and especially, what the Book of Deuteronomy predicted.<sup>84</sup> We will examine this further later.

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<sup>83</sup> From page 43 of the class notes prepared for Lohfink’s course, “The Theology of the Wilderness in the Book of Deuteronomy,” given in the Spring of 1999 at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome.

<sup>84</sup> Christianity, beginning with Jesus, however, would tend to view more the very beginning of the Torah, before the Fall, as what had to be restored. Thus, e.g., Jesus goes behind Deut 24 regarding divorce and upholds what God intended in the beginning, Mark 10:1-12. Cf. the “antitheses” in the Sermon on the Mount, Matt 5:21-48. Paul, similarly, will consider the Mosaic Torah as an intermediate, temporary training tool; what needs to be fulfilled are the prior promises to Abraham, see Gal 3:15-29. This happens in Christ, 2 Cor 1:20; cf. Eph 2:13-16. For Luke, the promises are fulfilled by the giving of the Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 2:38-39) and by Jesus’ resurrection, Acts 13:32-33; cf. 24:14-15; 26:4-8.





## Chapter Four: The Latter Prophets (and the end of the Christian OT canon)

*Preliminary remarks.* We have already seen several of the Latter Prophets. Beginning in the eighth century, we briefly discussed Amos and Hosea in the north (kingdom of Israel), and Isaiah of Jerusalem (“First Isaiah”) and Micah in the south (kingdom of Judah). We then saw a seventh-century prophet, Zephaniah (Nahum and Habakkuk follow him, as we shall see). Then came Jeremiah (just before the Babylonian Exile), Ezekiel (early Exile) and Second Isaiah (late Exile). We now turn to the postexilic period and look at the rest of the Latter Prophets and, also, to the prophetic *corpus* (the collection we call the Latter Prophets) in its final edition.

But first, some brief preliminaries. Let us again get our bearings. We have seen the history of Israel as the context for the emergence of the biblical books. We might say that the Former Prophets —Josh-Kgs, the Deuteronomic History— is like the basic, original history, or first history.<sup>85</sup> It can be said to begin in “Exile,” since Israel has yet to cross the Jordan at the beginning of Josh. “Exile” —whether it be Egypt, or Babylon, or being under foreign colonial powers (like the Greeks or Romans) while residing in the Land— is anything short of a truly free life as a child of God (see, e.g., Matt 17:24-27). Exile is anything short of final, messianic salvation. Even Christians, redeemed by Christ and having the Spirit as the pledge, still pray as the “poor, banished (exiled) children of Eve,” and look for a time after “this our exile” (the *Salve Regina* prayer).

The Former Prophets are thus an “Egypt to Egypt” tale of failure, an Exile to Exile story, in its final edition. The Torah, on the other hand, is for Jews the foundational document. It tells the story of creation down to how Israel came to be in Egypt, blessed at first, then oppressed, so that God had to deliver his people from that oppressive Exile. This was the prototypical deliverance or act of salvation. But at the end of this foundational document, Israel is yet in Exile, in the plains of Moab (who are bad neighbors, besides; see Deut 23:4-5; Num 22-24; Gen 19:30-38). Is Israel waiting to enter the Land for the first time? Or is the final form of the text addressed to the exiles in

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<sup>85</sup> There is another “historical” unit, Gen-Kgs, which David Noel Freedman calls the “primary history,” and Mark Smith the “master narrative.”

Babylon, who, now purified with the experience of Exile, as converted, true Jews, prepare to enter the Land and keep the commandments, as if for the first time.<sup>86</sup> Thus, Jer 16:14-15; 23:7-8 says that the “new exodus” from Babylon will make Israel forget the old one from Egypt, similar to what Second Isaiah has to say (see, e.g., Isa 48:20-22; 52:11-12, where the new exodus surpasses the old). In fact, for Dt-Isa the New Exodus is a new creation. Christians will come from Jews who awaited the final end of Exile, the final Exodus, in the time of Jesus, who is said to undergo his own Exodus in Luke 9:31 (testified to by Scripture, that is, the Law and the Prophets, represented by Moses and Elijah).

We have proceeded chronologically with the Latter Prophets so far, and we will continue to do so up to a point. Their chronological appearance in history does not match their order in any of the biblical canons. We will first look at the postexilic prophets, who first appeared after the Babylonian Exile (after 538).<sup>87</sup> These are, in historical order (as best as we can reckon): Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Joel and Obadiah. Jonah, whom we already mentioned, was not a historical prophet (at least, this book is not from the figure in 2 Kgs 14:25).<sup>88</sup> Actually, we are quite unsure about Joel and Obadiah’s time, but this is a convenient way to divide the remaining prophets up. By the time we get to discuss these latter two, we can easily segue into the discussion of the Latter Prophets as a whole in their final edited form.

Haggai is a good prophet to begin discussion of the postexilic period, an important unit of history we call the Second Temple period (from roughly 538 or 515 B.C.E. to 70 A.D, which includes the time of the early Church). The exiles have been back on the Land for some years (at least, those earnest enough about their faith and nation to

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<sup>86</sup> The great scholar Peter Ackroyd has written that only those with the experience of the Babylonian Exile are true Jews; see his *Exile and Restoration* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968). This is evident in Ezra-Nehemiah, where the favoured ones are the “sons of the *golah* (exile),” the holy seed or race, whereas those who remained on the Land, the “people of the land,” are impure troublemakers to avoid. But already Jer 24 had distinguished between the “good figs” (the exiles) and the “bad figs” (those who were not exiled), and Ezek 11:14-20 had proclaimed that Yahweh had gone into Exile with the good Jews and had not remained on the Land with the bad ones. This divisiveness in the community is what we alluded to in discussing Second and Third Isaiah above.

<sup>87</sup> Third Isaiah, whom we looked at, may have appeared only after 538.

<sup>88</sup> According to Blenkinsopp (*A History of Prophecy*), Jonah may be written against the ethnocentric mentality responsible for Isa 24-27, but this book’s satire of Jewish narrow-mindedness can be applied to, and can have arisen in, other situations, including that of Ezra and Nehemiah. Note how self-critical Jews can be so as to include books such as Jonah (and parts of Ezekiel, and many other writings) in their sacred canon. This may be unique in the world.

leave behind relative success in Babylon to go to a Land in shatters). Haggai is dated to 520 B.C.E. His message is simple: you all are in bad shape because you have only looked after yourselves and your own houses and have neglected to rebuild the Lord's House (Temple). That is why the crops are bad and the animals sickly and infertile. But the minute you lay down that first stone, everything will change: nature will respond, and the foreign, pagan nations will finally bring you their treasures (see, e.g., Isa 60-62, considered by some the nucleus of Tr-Isa). Hag predicts the messianic age with a real historical messiah, Zerubbabel (meaning "seed or child or Babylon!"), a Davidic descendant whom Yahweh will use to turn the whole world upside down, and "very soon"! Hag 2:6, 20-23.<sup>89</sup> These were very high hopes to stir, but, unfortunately, it seems that they were possible only during a power vacuum in the Persian Empire. When order was restored with Cyrus's son on the throne (Darius I), Zerubbabel apparently was quickly and quietly removed from the scene. Messianic pretenders are always a no-no when under colonial occupation.

Right after Haggai comes the "original" Zechariah, to whom is attributed Zech 1-8. The second Temple has still not been rebuilt, but that year, 520, the foundation is laid, and the second Temple will be finished in 515. Zechariah is perplexed that all the changes predicted by the likes of Haggai have not taken place; indeed, all is quiet. Is Yahweh still angry after seventy years? (Zech 1:12).<sup>90</sup> Well, not for long, as Zechariah's vision show. The people's fasting and penance will not be in vain when Yahweh finally restores their fortunes. Zech 8 reflects the messianic hopes of the period, now pretty much purged of dangerous political maneuvers. Texts dealing with Zerubbabel are still there, but "disturbed," that is, altered in ways that are difficult to sort out (or read as a smooth whole); see, e.g., Zech 4:6. At some point, two messiahs ("sons of oil, anointed

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<sup>89</sup> The prophet credited with giving the exiles high expectations for rapid change is Second Isaiah (see Isa 46:13; 51:5); Third Isaiah follows him Isa 56:1; see SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 81-82.

<sup>90</sup> Remember that Jer had predicted a seventy year exile in Babylon, after which, presumably, "salvation," or at least, "restoration of fortunes" would come (we can use the terms interchangeably). Calculations of these seventy years could begin at 597, the first deportation, and thus the Exile would end in 527, or at 587 (the more famous deportation and destruction of the first Temple), with the end of Exile at 517 (Zechariah would still have three years or so to wait), or perhaps even 582 (the last deportation). The actual exile in fact can be said to have lasted 49 years, from 587 to 538, the maximum time allowed before a Jubilee was mandated. This is theologically significant. By the Maccabean period, around 165 B.C.E., good Jews still consider themselves to be in Exile (their Syrian overlords threaten to wipe them out!), and several centuries had passed since Jeremiah's prophecy. Thus Daniel will have to ponder this and get angelic help in order to make (an adapted version of) Jeremiah's prediction come true.

ones”) are envisioned, Zech 4:14, indicating a civil messiah (king or governor) and the high priest (who really become the literal or historic messiah —anointed with oil as a sign of leadership over the community— in the Second Temple period). This dual messiahship or dyarchy (two heads, as opposed to a monarchy, with one) will figure in Qumran’s Dead Sea Scrolls.

Malachi is dated to the time before Ezra and Nehemiah (say, about the middle of the fifth century). The reason for this is that Mal reflects a period of great *anomie*, disorientation, distress, dejection, disorder, lack of energy and focus.<sup>91</sup> The word, coined by the great Jewish sociologist Émile Durkheim, literally means “lack of law,” or disorder.<sup>92</sup> The people are tired of serving God, who appears not to reward goodness, or punish evildoers. As in the days of Haggai, deficient animals are being offered to God as sacrifices. Divorce is rampant and priests are derelict in their duties (Mal is attributed to someone from Levitical, i.e., non-Zadokite, circles, “demoted priests” with lots to complain about regarding the officiating, Zadokite priests). What Mal then prophesies is that Yahweh is indeed coming, and that his way will be prepared by a “messenger” or angel. In Hebrew and Greek, one same word means both messenger and angel. Some think that this book was originally anonymous, but was attributed to Malachi, meaning “my messenger,” from Mal 3:1. Yahweh, or more exactly, the *Lord* (in Hebrew, it is not the Tetragrammaton or four-letter divine Name YHWH that is used here, but *adon*, the word for “Lord”), will come to his Temple, and will purify the “sons of Levi” (the Levites), so that they may offer acceptable sacrifices; this sounds like an eschatological reversal of the Zadokite passage in Ezek 44:10-14. It will be a terrible time of purification with fire, of sifting and refining as is done with metals. But then the sun of justice will shine from above (cf. Luke 1:78). Finally, the assumed-into-heaven prophet Elijah is identified as the messenger or precursor of this great and terrible day of Yahweh, and from then on all pious Jews awaited his coming as the harbinger of eschatological deliverance (preceded by a painful but necessary cleansing). Stegemann has called this

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<sup>91</sup> Ezra and Nehemiah, reformers come from Babylon, would presumably have corrected many of the problems reflected in the situation of Mal. They certainly tried, anyway, and Ezra is widely considered to be the “father of Judaism,” and oftentimes the official promulgator of the Torah.

<sup>92</sup> It comes from the Greek, and is a word significantly used in Matt 7:23; 24:12 (often translated “iniquity,” evildoing”). Durkheim may have borrowed it from Matt! (it also appears in 2 Thess 2:3, 7 and other places in the Bible).

last section of Mal ‘John the Baptist’s vocation narrative’. Note how many times “fire” appears in the Matt and Luke accounts of the Baptist’s preaching. We can see why this book has been placed at the end of the “Old Testament;” in preannotated Christian Bibles, one needed but to turn the page and go from Mal to Matt and soon enough into John the Baptist’s ministry. Or go from Mal to Mark or Luke or John.

We now turn to Joel. It is another good book to discuss in preparation for what comes next. Joel seems to stem from an actual historical situation, a crisis due to a devastating plague of locusts. There is a Temple cult which has suffered, and thus the dating to the time of the Second Temple (this prophet is unknown prior to that). But the historical situation is then seen to be symbolic of a cosmic, universal, transcendent reality, called the “Day of Yahweh.” This is the final day of judgment. We tend to cringe at the thought of the Final Judgment, but in the Bible, what the poor and oppressed — usually identified with the pious and God-fearing— cry out for night and day is God’s judgment, when things will be set straight and right. So the Final Judgment is terrible for the wicked, but the great hope of the righteous; see Pss 7:7-13; 76:10. The term “Day of Yahweh” comes from Amos, in whose day it seems to have indicated a great celebration. It was Amos who turned it into a calamity, the punishment for his wicked addressees, who thought that an elaborate cult could stand side by side with great social injustice; see Amos 5:18-27. The Day of Yahweh, often in the Second Temple period simply “that day,” would be synonymous with God’s final visitation in judgment to settle all accounts, and thus it is incorporated into the New Testament, as the “Day of the Lord;” see, e.g., Acts 2:20 (quoting from Joel); 1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2; 2 Pet 3:10.

Joel has bequeathed to us the prophecy of the universal outpouring of the (Holy) Spirit, as a sign of the cosmic transformation in the End Time; this is the passage (Joel 3; 2:28-32 in some Bibles) quoted in Pentecost, Acts 2:17-21. Joel takes up —recycles, rereads, adapts— passages from prior prophets. Isa 2 and Mic 4’s famous “swords into plowshares” is turned around into a reversal, as a sign of the final battle and judgment. Apocalyptic images such as the winepress of God’s fury, and the darkening of the astral bodies, and Yahweh roaring like a lion, are found in Joel. Finally, the mountains will distill wine, and the hills milk, in the new, eschatological creation.

As far as Obadiah is concerned, we will only point out that his name seems generic enough, “Servant of Yahweh,” a typical designation for prophets, especially in Deuteronomic literature. Obad’s whole concern is to prophecy the destruction of Edom, Israel’s archenemy (or one of them!).<sup>93</sup> The Day of Yahweh is near (Obad 15), and thus, so is his kingship, Obad 21.

We have thus now seen, however cursorily, all the Latter Prophets in chronological order (without looking very much at the later additions found in these books). Note that this (only approximate) “chronological order” differs from the order they have in the canon. Before we look at their final form, we can set out a schema of the fifteen Latter Prophets in more or less the chronological order these individuals had in history, as follows (separating out the three major prophets from the Twelve, in the 3 + 12 pattern evocative of Abraham-Isaac-Jacob and the Twelve tribes:

|                |                 |              |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Isa Jer Ezek   |                 |              |                 |
| Amos Hos Mic   | Zeph Nah Hab    | Hag Zech Mal | Joel Jonah Obad |
| eighth century | seventh century | post-exile I | post-exile II   |

*The final form of the Latter Prophets.* We will now follow the order in the canon. Note that all the Prophetic Books in the Hebrew Bible, both Former and Latter Prophets, are highly indebted to the Deuteronomic School. The Former Prophets are the “Deuteronomic History,” and the *corpus* (body or collection) of the Latter Prophets was edited by “Deuteronomists,” so that its final edition, the one we have and use in our Bible, is deeply influenced by “members” of this school or movement. We can then attribute the Torah mostly to the Priestly School, and associate the Prophets much more to the Deuteronomic School, which also provided the last book of the Torah as an open

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<sup>93</sup> Ultimately, the “archenemy” are the evil forces opposed to God’s kingship. Interestingly, Edom is Esau, Jacob-Israel’s twin brother; the two struggled even from the womb! Gen 25. Interestingly, in the time of Jesus, King Herod the Great and the other Herods descended from the Edomites, called *Idumeans* by the Romans. As half-Jews, they at times tried to ingratiate themselves with the Jews, which accounts for Herod the Great’s massive rebuilding or refurbishing of the second Temple, from 20 B.C.E. to very shortly before its destruction in the war with Rome, 70 A.D. (and thus the end of the Second Temple period). John 2:20 took place in 26 A.D., if we count 46 years from 20 B.C.E.

conclusion (looking to eschatological fulfillment, we could say) and as a hinge or pivot to the Prophets, both Former (history of failure) and Latter (predictions of the messianic age of salvation).

We can trace the conservative Sadducees to the Zadokite priests who had such a preponderant role in the final edition of the Torah (Deut is there only as a compromise, an agreement between two different schools and theologies). According to Friedman, in the P texts there are no angels; we know that the Sadducees, unlike the Pharisees, only accepted the Torah (not the Prophets), and did not believe in angels, the messianic age, resurrection or divine providence: in a word, in eschatology. The Pharisees, like the D school, was a mostly lay movement, i.e., not priestly; they were not really elitists (the Sadducees were aristocratic), but wanted to “democratically” extend the priestly regulations to all the people of Israel (they did disdain unobservant Jews). D is associated with northern, Levitical circles. Their hero was Moses, while the P hero was Aaron. The Levites were demoted by the Zadokites in the Exile, and could not longer officiate at the altar (their role seems to have become one of “catechists,” “altar servers,” cantors). We have seen that prophets like Mal, stemming from Levitical circles, have much to criticize the Zadokite priests, and look forward to a day when Levites will be pure enough to offer sacrifices.

The final additions to the Latter Prophets are the work of circles which cannot be described as “Deuteronomic” without risk of “Deuteronomic imperialism;” these circles are not in principle opposed to the Deuteronomic movement, but it may be best to simply describe them as “apocalyptic” and eschatological. Blenkinsopp, in the important work *Prophecy and Canon* (1977), thought that these circles may be the precursors of the pious Jews known as *hasidim* which appear in the Maccabean period (which is important and which will be discussed later). All these things are much debated today, and need not concern us too much. Here we adopt the position that there was a conservative priesthood in the Second Temple period, Zadokite, which got along quite well with the imperial powers. Their successors, the Sadducees, will get along well with the Romans (and have the most important role among all the Jewish groups in the arrest of Jesus and his crucifixion by the Romans). Another, very broad group, had Deuteronomic origins, and was much less conservative, accepting the Prophets and their predictions of a future,

eschatological age of salvation which would change things around in this world. Within this broad group, many subgroups would form, some more radical than others. Some of these groups we can describe as the “Daniel group,” the Essenes and/or Qumranites, Enoch-type groups, and a bit later the Pharisees. With ties to all these groups in one way or another will be the “Jesus movement” in the first century C.E.

We will now look at the final form of the Latter Prophets. Whereas the Torah seems to have been “canonized,” that is, considered sacred, revealed and unchangeable by about 400 B.C.E, the Latter Prophets were worked on (added to, etc.) until the second century B.C.E. Understandably, we will look at passages which are of most interest to Christians; I consider most of these passages as being later than the work of the prophet to whom they are attributed, but no categorical position is taken in any case.

*The Book of Isaiah.* We have seen that there are at least three “Isaiahs,” First, Second and Third, spanning centuries. Note how “inclusions” (words appearing at two extreme points that link up what comes in between) give this book unity: “heavens, earth, rebel” appear at the beginning and end of Isa, along with “fire, new moon, Sabbath.”<sup>94</sup> Late parts of Isa include Isa 34-35; Isa 35:5-6 lists healings of the blind, deaf, lame etc. which will be considered in Judaism as the “works” (or deeds) that the Messiah was to perform; see Matt 11:2. Isa 24-27 is known as the “Isaian Apocalypse;” Isa 25:6-8 is thought to be the basis for the idea of a messianic, eschatological banquet when all tears would be dried and death would be no more; this is behind Jesus’ many meals with “sinners,” and generally festive attitude (Mark 2:19; Matt 11:19). Isa 26:19 mentions “resurrection” of the dead. Isa 19:16-25 may be about the latest addition to any of the Prophets (possible as late as 180-170), and is astoundingly “inclusive” regarding former archenemies, Assyria and Egypt. We already briefly mentioned a famous messianic passage, Isa 11:1-9. Let us note here that it reflects the idea that the messianic age will mean a return to Paradise, where there is no violence (everyone is vegetarian, even lions and wolves) and everyone will be on intimate terms (in Hebrew, “knowledge”) with God. Related to this esteem for David and his dynasty is “Zion restoration theology.” We find this especially in Isa 60 and 62.<sup>95</sup> Note that here foreigners will get their comeuppance;

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<sup>94</sup> See the list in SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 161-162.

<sup>95</sup> Note that this eschatological image or element is present in Rev 21. Cf. Gal 4:21-31; Heb 12:18-29.



they will be transporters of the Diaspora Jews, bringing them back to Jerusalem, and will then be the ones to do all the heavy lifting. We see that these two types of passages, taken at face value by many Jews throughout history, constitute a barrier to belief that Jesus was the Messiah. Have swords been turned into plowshares (Isa 2; Mic 4)? “What has changed?,” asked Jews like Nahmanides in the forced disputations between Jews and Christians in the Middle Ages. Christians are challenged to produce more Francises of Assisi, Mother Teresas and John Paul II’s, and show by their fruits that they are already living in the messianic age of redemption, following the words of the Sermon on the Mount (so beloved of Mahatma Gandhi, who said that ‘Christianity is wonderful, but, oh, those Christians!’).

*The Book of Jeremiah.* We only note Jer 23:1-8; 33:14-22. These predict the coming of a “shoot” (descendant) of David who will rule righteously (the latter passage also refers to the Levites as priests, in good Deuteronomic fashion). Jer 23 is very similar to Ezek 34 (which we will shortly see) in denouncing bad shepherds and announcing the ingathering of the lost or scattered sheep (the “Remnant;” cf. Jer 44:13-14). A good shepherd, David, will emerge. As we noted, it will be a new Exodus which will make the first one be forgotten. We have already said something about the famous “New Covenant” (or “Testament”) passage, Jer 31:31-34 (see Heb 8:6-13).

*The Book of Ezekiel.* We note that this is a work closely associated with P and with the Zadokites, but it has undergone “editing” by much more “mystical” and apocalyptic hands. However, neither should we always sharply separate priestly from apocalyptic; the Essenes or Qumranites (more on them later) were both. Ezek was probably the book which had the most trouble being accepted into the Jewish canon.

Ezek 38-39, at times called “pre-apocalyptic,” is the classic passage for the end of the world final battle. It is read toward the end of the lectionary cycle in the Jewish synagogue. Eschatological views of salvation cannot dispense with the idea that a final trial and purification will take place, closely related to the pains it will take to defeat evil that is so entrenched. At the time of Jesus and later, Judaism will have the notion of the

“pains or travails” of the Messiah, akin to childbirth; see John 16:21; Rev 12:1-17; Mic 4:9-10; Isa 26:17-18; 66:8-9.<sup>96</sup> This, of course, is quite related to Jesus’ Passion.

Ezek 40-48 is all about the future, eschatological situation when there will be a new Temple (probably made by God, not humans; see Exod 15:17-18). Many of the images from these chapters, such as medicinal trees that give fruit every month, and abundance of water and fish, were taken up by New Testament writers (see, e.g., Rev 22:1-2; John 21:4-12). In the *eschaton*, new names are given; at the end of Ezek, *y<sup>e</sup>rushalaim*’s (Jerusalem’s) name will be *yahweh-sham*, “Yahweh is there.”

*The Twelve (Minor) Prophets*. Original Hos was probably only directed to the northern kingdom, and the message was pure doom. The last edition includes Judah and references to the Davidic king (Hos 3:4-5). The end of the book is positive. Note that the famous “after three days he will revive us” passage in Hos 6:2, originally a sign of Israel’s superficiality in returning to the Lord, became, already in the Targum (Aramaic translation-cum-explanation of the Hebrew Bible) a reference to resurrection (cf. 1 Cor 15:4 and the Passion predictions).

We have seen what we need to see of Joel. Note its affinities with Amos, which accounts for their being placed together; e.g., they have similar endings, with references to wine-distilling hills and to Yahweh roaring from Zion. Amos was really a prophet of doom (see Amos 3:12; 9:1-4), but the end of Amos is a famous prophecy that David’s fallen “hut” (more modest than the house=dynasty of 2 Sam 7) will be repaired; this is quoted in Acts 15:15-18. This became an important “messianic” text (Qumran). Associated with the messianic era was abundance of wine; see Gen 49:11-12; this is behind the miracle (sign) in the wedding at Cana. We should note that marriage between God and his people is an image of the age of salvation; see Hos 2:18-22; Isa 62:1-5. In the New Testament, Jesus is the bridegroom (John 3:28-29; Rev 19:7-9; Eph 5:25-32). If you want a clear example of Deuteronomic redaction, see Amos 3:7, a prose passage

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<sup>96</sup> On the suffering of the Messiah in Judaism, see W.D. DAVIES, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism. Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Mifflintown, PA: Sigler Press, 1998, reprinting of fourth edition, 1980, orig. ed. 1948), 279-284.

(which interrupts the poetry) with the classic Deuteronomic expression “[my, his] servants the prophets”).<sup>97</sup>

We have already pointed out that Obad is all about the final defeat of an archenemy of Israel, its brother (!) Edom. In the symmetrical, binary world of the Bible, an Oriental (Middle Eastern) world where things occur in two's, where every action has a reaction, the world is seen in dualistic terms. Israel has enemies, and their defeat is part of salvation. In the final judgment, there are winners and losers. In the apocalyptic view, the heavenly, good realm wages war against the evil underworld (even if the fight takes place in the heavenly spheres, the defeat of the wicked will cast them down deep; see, again, Luke 10:18; cf. Isa 14:12-15; Rev 12:1-17). Most of the prophets have “oracles against the nations (*goyîm*, pagans),” and indeed this was probably the original part of their job description; see, e.g., Isa 13; 15; 17-21; Jer 46-51; Ezek 25-30. Amos innovated when he, first of all, included Israel among the doomed, Amos 2; in a great example of Jewish ethics and high capacity for self-criticism and even condemnation, Amos 3:2 indicates that due to Israel's relationship with Yahweh, it is held to a higher standard.<sup>98</sup>

Jonah is another monkey wrench in the typical function of prophecy. Jonah is sent to the archenemy Nineveh, capital of Assyria, to preach conversion from its evil ways. He refuses and goes in the opposite direction, because he fears that it will work and Assyria will no longer be an enemy! Everyone (all the pagans) is depicted sympathetically in this booklet, except the Hebrew prophet Jonah, who is asleep and complaining the whole time, concerned with trivialities. Finally, humorously, Nineveh does convert and everyone, including the animals, puts on sackcloth as a sign of repentance. Jesus alluded to this in Matt 12:41; Luke 11:32.

Micah is noteworthy for its duplication of Isa 2:2-4 in Mic 4:1-4, which adds the verse about everyone sitting under his or her vine and or fig tree in perfect tranquility in

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<sup>97</sup> Amos 8:9-10, which prophesies a day when the sun will go down at noon and there shall be mourning as for an only son, is reflected at the cross in Mark 15:33.

<sup>98</sup> Many have thought that Yahweh punishing his own people for misdeeds is unique among religions, but this does not seem to be the case. A famous biblical scholar who taught at Columbia, Morton Smith, but who waged a “one man war” against the credibility of the biblical faith, points out many texts in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament* [this standard reference work is commonly abbreviated ANET] (J.B. Pritchard, ed.; Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1950, 1955<sup>2</sup>; supplementary materials, 1969), where the deities of various nations punish their own worshippers for wrongdoing; see Smith's article, “The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 71 (1952), 135-147. Those of weak faith beware!

the messianic age (this became a rabbinic symbol for studying Torah; see John 1:48-51). Prior to about 200 C.E., Christians did not participate in any civic duties which involved homicide (including judgeships and the military). Some Christian groups are pacifists to this day. The famous prophecy regarding the birth of the Messiah-shepherd in Bethlehem, Mic 5:1-4<sub>a</sub>, is quoted in Matt 2:6 in the episode of the Magi. The end of Mic, as of so many other prophets, is considered postexilic.

Nahum is basically an oracle against Nineveh. Habakkuk contains the famous line “the righteous (or just) one will live by faith (or faithfulness), Hab 2:4, quoted in Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38 (and so important for Martin Luther’s theology). Hab 3, a tremendous hymn of the divine warrior theophany recited in the Liturgy of the Hours, seems to be a later addition, as it is not found in Qumran copies of Hab.<sup>99</sup> Here Yahweh is conceived as a Canaanite storm God, with rays shooting out of his hands and wielding a mace, dressed in dark clouds as He manifests Himself in a storm theophany, accompanied by Phoenician deities (Dabr, the lightning god, and Rashp, “Plague”). God will save his Anointed and destroy the wicked, Hab 3:13. See another great image of the divine warrior in Isa 63:1-6, which gave rise to the famous “Battle Hymn of the Republic;” cf. Rev 14:14-20; 19:11-21. Zephaniah is another “cosmic” prophet, who begins with the menace of uncreation, Zeph 1:2-3; cf. Jer 4:23, which repeats the words “waste and void” of Gen 1:2 in inverted sense. “Devastation” is a theme in this first part of Zeph, as he rails against the arrogant idolaters who will become the menu in the terrible banquet to be celebrated in the Day of Yahweh, Zeph 1:7-9. The Hebrew word for this devastation, *shoah*, is used for the Nazi holocaust of the Jews in World War II. In the Middle Ages, the funeral hymn *Dies irae* (“Day of Wrath”) was inspired by Zeph 1:2-18. But, again, the end of Zeph speaks about the purified Remnant, chastised and humble, who “on that day” will commit injustice no more, but will rest in peace, Zeph 3:11-13. This passage gave rise to the notion of the *‘anawim*, the spiritually-poor of Yahweh, the lowly of the Magnificat (also Jesus, in Matt 11:29, and the “poor of spirit” of the Beatitudes). Note the hymn to Zion which follows, and the praise to Yahweh as King in her midst. The booklet ends with a great prophecy of restoration and ingathering (with reference to the lame and the stray); the last words, “turn the captivity, restore the

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<sup>99</sup> SMITH, *The Memoirs of God*, 114. however, thinks it may date to the monarchic period (before 586).

fortunes, etc.,” is an end-of-Exile reference (cf. Ps 126:1). Remember that Zeph is dated to about 640 or before. What exile could this verse refer to? Originally, probably the Babylonian Exile, but, as we have seen and will further see, it can refer to any Exile prior to final salvation.

Haggai we have seen. It is dated to the very start of the Second Temple period, and is all about —what else?— building the second Temple! Hag 2:15 predicts that before “a stone upon a stone” of the new edifice is placed, divine blessings will begin. Jesus is quoted as using the same words in the Greek of Mark 13:2, but in order to predict the destruction of this second Temple. And in fact its destruction forty years later, in 70 C.E., marks the end of the Second Temple period.

We have seen Zech 1-8, contemporary to Hag. We now come to the last units of the Latter Prophets. These are three units which begin with the word “oracle” (Zech 9:1; 12:1; Mal 1:1), and which originally may have been anonymous pieces. Zech 9-11, “Second Zechariah,” contains the famous “messianic entry” prophecy, in 9:9-10. The double (parallelistic) reference to a “donkey” (really, one *purebred jackass*, cf. *NAB* here) evokes the same double reference in Gen 49:8-12, the Oracle of Judah, which predicts (as a blessing of Jacob) that Judah, the Lion (see Rev 5:5), will always reign over Israel, at least until the mysterious Shiloh comes (this was interpreted messianically beginning with the LXX and in rabbinic Judaism). Now, in the messianic age, donkeys can be tied to the vine without concern that they eat the grapes, since there is so much abundance; one can even wash one’s clothes in wine! Recall the hills that distill wine, and Cana. Matt 21:1-9 is so intent on showing that Jesus literally fulfilled this prophecy that it seems that Jesus actually sits on two animals! (v. 7). Mark 11:1-7, on the other hand, seems (according to Blenkinsopp) concerned to stress the tying and untying of the colt, as in Gen 49:11; I have called this the unleashing of the eschatological events in Jesus’ last days. Zech 11:12 has the famous “thirty pieces of silver” referred to in Matt 27:3-10; it is the paltry sum for which Yahweh has been valued. We hope to discuss why Matt says he’s quoting Jer, without even mentioning Zech.

Zech 12-14, another unit, is full of the phrase “on that day,” in Hebrew *bayom ha-hû*. There are many obscure passages here. These passages in Dt- and Tr Zech were very important for the understanding of the Passion of Jesus. Zech 12:10 has the famous “they

will look on him whom they have pierced” (John 19:37), with reference to mourning as for an only son (recall Amos 8:9-10 and the darkening of the sun at noon).

Zech 14 is a most important passage. It speaks of the eschatological battle in the Mount of Olives, the place where in Jewish tradition the Messiah is to appear. Yahweh will combat there (it seems that this rarely-mentioned hill takes on importance after Ezek 11:23 says that the Lord, going into Exile with his people, stood over this hill to the east of the city).<sup>100</sup> Jesus himself eschatologically enters Jerusalem from there (Mark 11:1-11), delivers his eschatological discourse from there (Mark 13:3), and spends his last nights there (Luke 21:37), including his final struggle (*agōnía*, Luke 22:39, 44).

After the divine victory, Yahweh will come with his holy ones (angels). There will be no more darkness, and living waters shall come out of Jerusalem. Yahweh will finally be King over all the earth; it will be ‘only Yahweh, his Name only’, fulfilling the *Shema*, Deut 6:4-5. This is the Kingdom of God (or Kingdom of the heavens, in Matt’s circumlocution). There will be survivors from both Jews and Gentiles (cf. Isa 45:15-26) of the final combats, and they will celebrate the greatest and most joyous of Jewish feasts, *the feast par excellence*, Sukkoth, or “Booths, Tabernacles.” This is a feast associated with light and rain, both reflected in this chapter. Everything will be holy (all will have been purified), even horse-bells and pots and pans, and there shall be no more merchants in the House of Yahweh of the (heavenly) hosts. Note that in this classic eschatological passage, no Messiah is mentioned; it is a good example of the fact that there are eschatological, salvific (and thus, loosely-speaking, “messianic”) scenarios where the eschatological Messiah does not figure (though he figures in Zech 12:8-13:1).<sup>101</sup> This is important to keep in mind, so as not to oversimplify descriptions of Jewish eschatological expectations (when indeed these existed, which depends on which groups we are talking about in a time when Judaism is quite pluralistic).

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<sup>100</sup> Yahweh actually goes into Exile *ahead* of his people (Yahweh has had to leave the polluted Temple); SMITH, *The Memoirs of God*, 67.

<sup>101</sup> As SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 75-78, points out, Third Isaiah has no notion of the restoration of the Davidic dynasty, which had been so important for the original Isaiah of Jerusalem in the eighth century. In Second Isaiah, the Davidic covenant is democratized and extended to all the people, Isa 55:3. This is one of the clearest marks to distinguish Isa 1-39 from Isa 40-66. The restoration of Judah takes place without a messiah: Yahweh will rule directly (cf. 1 Sam 8). Cf. the idea of God’s people being blessed in the seed of Abraham (= Christ, Gal 3:16, 29), by virtue of being *in Christ* (and Christ is seed of David, Rom 1:3, whose seed is blessed according to 2 Sam 7:12; Ps 89:5, 30, 37; cf. Acts 13:34).

Jesus went up to celebrate Booths in John 7, and on the most solemn day of the feast, he spoke of himself as offering or providing living water, John 7:37-39. There is much discussion over who he is, and if we skip the episode of the woman caught in adultery (which belongs in Luke), John 8:12 has Jesus say that he is the light of the world, another Zech 14-Sukkoth theme. Zech 14 is a very eschatological passage, and ends with a reference to a changed Temple, which is behind John 2:13-22.

We end up with our last Latter Prophet, Mal, the third unit which begins with “oracle,” except that here a twelfth book has apparently been created, named after “my messenger” (*malachi*) in Mal 3:1, so as to round off the three plus twelve pattern (the twelve fit into a typical scroll, whereas separate scrolls were necessary for the three major prophets). Note that all this time we have not included Daniel among the Prophets. In the Jewish canon he is in the third category, the Writings. We will deal with Daniel separately, because of his unique importance; he appears as a book latest of all in the Hebrew Bible, and will provide us with a good occasion to discuss the more immediate origins of Christianity. Note, however, that in some editions of the LXX the Twelve are placed before the four great Christian prophets, so that the last prophets are Isa, Jer, Ezek and Dan!, and thus Dan is the last book in these editions of the Greek Old Testament.

Mal, however, is the standard end of the Christian Old Testament. This is due to the preparation for the coming of the Lord in its final part, which identifies the precursor or harbinger as Elijah, returning to earth after his ascension or assumption (LXX). After the Torah was “canonized,” or really, accepted as unchangeable Scripture around 400 B.C.E (although scholars will object to this gross oversimplification, and there are variant Torahs among the Samaritans, etc.; for our purposes, we say that Torah was “established” in its final form around 400 B.C.E.), the next to be so “established” were the Prophets, around 200 B.C.E. (again, I am aware of the complexity of many issues regarding “canon”). Daniel was too late to be included in the Prophets even if this was desired (which can be debated).<sup>102</sup> But note that, at the end of the Prophets, when all that Judaism had as “established” (this is my cop-out expression to avoid saying “canon” when it is probably anachronistic, that is, out of sync with what had developed as of that time) was

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<sup>102</sup> Blenkinsopp, in *Prophecy and Canon*, 118, says that “Misgivings about *K<sup>e</sup>tûbîm* [Writings] were, of course, due to Daniel, which speaks of the coming of God’s kingdom in an uncomfortably precise way.”

in fact only the “Law and the Prophets,” we find the “Torah of Moses” being placed alongside of “Elijah” (representing both Former and Latter Prophets) at the end of Mal. This is an appropriate close to the two major units of Scripture in the Jewish Bible. We shall see that for Christians, what comes next is the New Testament, while for Jews, the Writings follow. To them we now turn.



## Chapter Five: The “Writings” (and the end of the Jewish canon)

The “Writings,” a section of Jewish Scripture called the “Psalms” in Luke 24:44 (cf. prologue of Sir 8-10, 24-25), is for us a convenient category. In Bible courses, I can use it as a “catch-all” category that I leave for last (as time permits) for works that are not as important for an understanding of the Old Testament as are the Law and the Prophets (with the exception of Daniel). I can even throw in some deuterocanonical books, though these are not included in the Jewish canon. But here we have occasion to discuss some of the books contained in the Writings, and even one or two deuterocanonical books.

But first, let us note that, according to a great canonical expert, James A. Sanders, in his classic *Torah and Canon*, the Psalms occupied at one time a border position between Prophets and Writings, and could actually be considered part of the Prophets (David was considered a prophet; see Acts 2:30).<sup>103</sup> Thus, all Scripture can be called prophetic: the Torah was written by the greatest prophet, Moses, Deut 34:10 (in fact, everything that follows, in the Jewish tradition, is only commentary on the Torah and must conform to it); Joshua and Samuel (to whom were attributed Ruth, Judges, and Samuel) were prophets, and also Jeremiah, to whom was attributed Kings. So Torah, Former and Latter Prophets, and in some sense, even the Psalms/Writings, are the work of prophets.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, the Psalms, which is the first book in the third division of the Jewish Scriptures (the “Writings”), and which at one time gave it its name (as in Luke 24:44), is actually a five-book document, like the Torah.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Also at Qumran, Apocryphal Psalms (I) (also known as 11QPs<sup>a</sup>, 11Q5 and 4Q88), XXVII 12, in GEZA VERMES, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Penguin Books, 1962, 1997<sup>4</sup>), 307. This is the best popular edition to have, and its introduction is excellent.

<sup>104</sup> It is also interesting to note that the “eschatological prophet” which we have already mentioned is found at or towards the end of the Torah, Deut 18:15, and certainly evoked at the very end in Deut 34:10, and is identified with Elijah in the Jewish tradition, but is also associated with Jeremiah at the end of the Former Prophets (Jeremiah’s ministry lasted 40 years, like Moses’, and he also had trouble speaking, etc., so he is ‘a prophet like Moses’ at the end of the significant (Deuteronomic) history contained in the Former Prophets. Then Elijah, in this eschatological prophetic role, is mentioned at the end of the Latter Prophets (end of Mal) and, finally, he appears in the guise of John the Baptist, or, in other New Testament traditions, is Jesus. “Prophecy” is thus found throughout the Bible (see Luke 24:25, 27; Acts 3:18, 24; 10:43; 2 Pet 1:19-21).

<sup>105</sup> See SMITH, *The Memoirs of God*, 78-79.

First, let us divide up the Writings in a convenient way. We have a three plus five plus three pattern. The first three books are Psalms, Proverbs and Job. Then come the Scrolls, *Megillot*, Ruth, Song of Songs, Qohelet (Ecclesiastes), Lamentations, and Esther. These five scrolls are read in Jewish feasts; we will not discuss them hardly at all (as we shall not discuss Prov and Job). The last three books are Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles. These are important, but Daniel we will separate out for special treatment.

*The Psalms.* We single out the Psalms because of their importance in Christianity. Jesus mentions them in Luke 24:44 as having to be fulfilled, and David, their author, is the father of the Messiah and a prophet, inspired by the Holy Spirit, Mark 12:36.<sup>106</sup> We cannot of course spend too much time on this topic, but certain psalms were very important for the understanding of Jesus, his nature, mission and Passion. Ps 2:2, 7 speaks of the Messiah as God's begotten Son. Many psalms are the prayers of innocent sufferers, and these are applied to Jesus; other psalms are quoted in the New Testament, or alluded to, or evoked. Ps 16, quoted in Acts 2, seems to assert the non-corruption in the grave of "David," but is applied to Jesus. Other psalms are royal psalms. Ps 22 is the famous psalm whose opening words Jesus says on the cross, whether in Aramaic (Mark) or Hebrew (Matt).<sup>107</sup> It ends on a note of triumph. Ps 45:7 seems to refer to the king as *elohim*, God; see Heb 1:8.

We want to focus here on a few psalms that have to do with Jesus' Passion and exaltation. Ps 69 has been called the most "quarried" for the Passion; the "waters reaching to my neck" have been linked to the ancient topic of the "river ordeal" (a classic putting to the test, going back to Canaanite-Ugaritic times). It speaks of false witnesses (v. 5), and v. 10 is quoted in John 2:17. V. 9 says that the psalmist is estranged from his brothers; along with Pss 38:12 and 88:9 (cf. 27:10; 31:12, another great Passion psalm), this may account for the absence of Jesus' mother in the synoptic crucifixion scenes (see Luke 23:49, which uses the same word for "acquaintances" as Ps 88:8,18, in LXX Ps

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<sup>106</sup> 4Q171, in the Qumran literature, also presents the Psalms as a prophetic book which refers to the future and which has thus to be interpreted; see SMITH, *The Memoirs of God*, 161.

<sup>107</sup> The translation of v. 17, at times "they have pierced my hands and my feet," is problematic and difficult; the LXX has a verb meaning "dig a hole, excavate." This is an opportunity to say that we cannot make biblical texts in the Bible say what we want them to say (this is like genetic engineering, one can't gauge the consequences). Note that this psalm is quoted for the casting of lots for Jesus' garments in John 19:24.

87:9, 19); all the Scriptures must be fulfilled in Jesus. (Jesus' mother is present in John as the new Eve, faithful and obedient in a reverse role.)

The other psalms that I want to briefly discuss have to do with the Davidic Messiah. Ps 2 (already mentioned) was linked in the Jewish tradition with Ps 110, and they are thus associated in Heb 1:5, 13; 5:5-6 (cf. Mark 14:61-62). Ps 2:1-2 is quoted in Acts 4:25-27 to explain the (Lucan) mention of Herod and Pilate as together involved in Jesus' Passion. Note that Acts 4:27 calls Jesus both "Holy Servant" and "Anointed," or Christ-Messiah ("anointed" is "Christ" in Greek and "Messiah" in Hebrew). This is an instance of combining originally separate titles or roles, such as servant and messiah, in concepts of the final redeemer figure, which were being developed in certain Jewish groups at the time. The word for "servant" here, *pais*, is the one used in LXX Isa 52:13. It can also mean "child or boy."

Ps 110 is noteworthy because it calls David (presumably) "my Lord," *adony* (same noun as in Mal 3:1, applied to Jesus in some traditions). Read messianically-eschatologically (as Jesus read it in Mark 12:35-37), it is an argument that the Messiah may be greater than David's son. "Sitting at God's right hand" became a symbol of Jesus' exaltation after his death and resurrection; see Mark 14:62 (note the association with the "son of man coming with/in the clouds" of Dan 7:13); Acts 2:33-35; Heb 10:11-13; 1 Pet 3:22. The Letter to the Hebrews makes much of the declaration in the psalm that the addressee is a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. Jesus was not from the priestly tribe of Levi, but from the messianic tribe of Judah. But Melchizedek was a priest without genealogy, eternal, who had blessed Abraham in Gen 14 (the superior blesses the inferior), and Abraham gave him the tithe. The whole tribe of Levi was in Abraham's loins, and thus, the whole priestly tribe, in Abraham, recognized Melchizedek's superiority. Jesus was declared high priest forever according to Melchizedek, in the Christian reading of the psalms, and thus, "replaces" (or fulfills) the Old Testament priesthood and sacrificial system; Heb 7.

One last psalm which we will look at is usually not well-known to beginning Bible students. Its opening words, in Latin (*Misericordias Domini in aeterno cantabo*) are associated with Saint Teresa of Ávila, and they are placed in the caption above her head on the famous painting by Fray Juan de la Miseria (to whom she complained about

how he portrayed her eyes). It is Ps 89. It is actually about the eternal covenant (promise) extended by Yahweh to David's seed (= "descendants," but the fact that this word is in singular in Hebrew and Greek was used to advantage by "messianists;" cf. Gal 3:16). Scholars have pointed to its "widespread influence" in the New Testament, the Nestle edition of the Greek New Testament listing some twenty allusions, including Luke 1:51 (Ps 89:11); Heb 1:6 (in conjunction with 2 Sam 7 and Pss 2 and 110); 1 Pet 4:14 (Ps 89:51-52); John 12:34 (the Christ remains forever).<sup>108</sup>

What is remarkable about this psalm is that it uses a Ugaritic background, very ancient, to stress the prerogatives of the Davidic (messianic) king. In the background is the ancient god El surrounded by his divine council (the "holy ones," or "sons of El" = "sons of God" or divine beings). Some scholars have thought that the younger, upstart god Ba'al is in the background, and that David has his role, except that it is vis-à-vis Yahweh (in other words, in this psalm, El is played by Yahweh and David plays Ba'al). David's throne is eternal, as is his dynasty (cf. Luke 1:32-33). Ancient cosmogonies (struggles between gods in creation accounts) are evoked: God stills the proud, swollen seas and slays the great sea monster Rahab (cf. Isa 51:9-11; Mark 4:37-41). Eschatology, what happens in the End, will correspond to what was the case in the Beginning. Ps 89 is full of such ancient imagery, among the most powerful in the Scriptures. There are visions here regarding the Anointed One, who will have full dominion (over Sea and Rivers, personalized forces in the Ugaritic literature; cf. Zech 9:9-10), and he shall be God's first being and highest king.<sup>109</sup> He is also the faithful witness (Ps 89:38; cf. Rev 1:5).

We shall stop here with the Psalms. This should give us an idea of how rich the Bible is, as God's human way of communicating to us divine, spiritual realities which far surpass our capacity to fully comprehend.

*The other Writings.* We skip over the following two books, Proverbs and Job. The following five books are the *Megillot*, "Scrolls," read at Jewish feasts. Song of Songs

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<sup>108</sup> See DONALD JUEL, *Messianic Exegesis. Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 107-108.

<sup>109</sup> "Highest," in Ps 89:28, is 'elyon, a title of God in the Old Testament ("Most High"), and here also evokes Ba'al; see PAUL MOSCA, "Ugarit and Daniel 7: A Missing Link," *Biblica* 67 (1986) 416-517; "Once Again the Heavenly Witness of Ps 89:38," *Journal of Biblical Literature* (1986), 27-37; cf. Isa 55:3-4. The Davidic throne is "quasi-divine" by virtue of immortality; cf. the two thrones in Dan 7:9.

is read on the Sabbath during Pesah (Passover); Ruth in Shavu'ot (Weeks, Pentecost); Lamentations on the eve of Tish'ah be-Av (the ninth day of the month of Av, when tradition has it that both the first and the second Temples were destroyed); Qohelet (Ecclesiastes; ironically, on the Sabbath of Sukkoth, that is, a gloomy book on the most joyful feast!); and, finally, Esther, on Purim, a seemingly profane feast. Esther is the most important Scroll, *the Megillah*.

Now for the last three books. First, Daniel, which we will treat separately. We have already noted that its inclusion in the Jewish canon was problematic. The other two books are the last ones in the Jewish or Hebrew canon. There are Ezra-Nehemiah (as one book) and Chronicles (one book). Both are quite related, and may be, as many think, by the same author, a Second Temple period priest. In fact, there are parts in Ezra and Nehemiah which are hard to assign to one or the other.

A word about number of books. Judaism now reckons twenty-four books in its canon: five in the Torah, four and four in the Former and Latter Prophets respectively, and eleven in the Writings. An ancient reckoning was twenty-two books, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. This was achieved by putting together Ruth with Samuel and Lamentations with Jeremiah. Christians turn the 24 into 39, by dividing up certain books kept together as one by Jews. Catholics add seven deuterocanonicals (in a "second" canon), to arrive at the figure of 46 (not including the deuterocanonical parts of Esther and Daniel).<sup>110</sup>

The last books of the Jewish Bible are very significant for their canon, as the Latter Prophets are for Christians. Ezra and Nehemiah were fifth-century B.C.E. reformers come from Babylon, where they held high positions, to help their coreligionists in the Holy Land. There are debates as to their dates and whether they were in fact contemporaries. Ezra was a priest and a scribe learned in the Torah, and he is considered the father of Judaism, giving it its "finishing touches" (as it were, and for the time being, but certainly as far as the fundamentals). Some think that the authorization he has from the Persian imperial overlords is to enforce the final version of the Torah; see Ezra 7. Nehemiah, a layman, cupbearer to the Persian king, Neh 1:11, is credited with social

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<sup>110</sup> The Roman Catholic deuterocanonicals are: Tobit, Judith, 1-2 Maccabees, Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah (Bar 6), Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) and Wisdom.

reforms (such as leveling out economic disparities in order to create greater social cohesion, as well as to follow the Torah more strictly) and with rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem; Neh 2.<sup>111</sup>

At the risk of seeming to focus on the negative, I want to point to a famous passage in Ezra which demonstrates the harsh measures which preserving Jewish religious purity could demand. In Ezra 10, it is mandated that foreign wives and the children of those unions be dismissed, under penalty of excommunication and loss of all property (which went to the Temple in this theocracy). Even priests had violated the prohibition against intermarriage (a main cause of idolatry).<sup>112</sup> Cf. Mal 2:10-16; this is a principal reason for dating Mal to the time before Ezra's reform.<sup>113</sup> Blenkinsopp, Paul Hanson, and others have associated this with the narrow views of the theocratic leadership in conflict with the likes of the "servants" and "tremblers" of Isa 66:1-5 who represent a more "universalistic" and inclusive view. Note the use of the term "covenant" (*b<sup>e</sup>rith*) in Ezra 10:3, which Blenkinsopp has linked to Mal 3:13-18.<sup>114</sup> Note also, however, that the covenanters in Ezra call themselves "tremblers" (*ḥaredîm*), like the presumably opposite group in Isa 66:5.<sup>115</sup>

We now reach the end of the Jewish Bible. Chronicles begins with Adam, evoking the beginning of the Torah, and in fact is like a purified recapitulation of all the Scriptures which precede this last book.<sup>116</sup> But it carries the story a bit forward, to the time when the end of Exile was decreed according to the will of Yahweh, the God of

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<sup>111</sup> "Cupbearer" and "eunuch" sound a bit similar in Greek, and in fact, such servants tended to be eunuchs. Some good Greek manuscripts in fact call Nehemiah a eunuch, but this is doubted by scholars such as Blenkinsopp.

<sup>112</sup> See the end of Nehemiah, Neh 13:23-31, with mention of Solomon's infidelity due to his marriages with foreign women.

<sup>113</sup> It should be borne in mind that prophecy was thought to have ended with this last prophet, Malachi, or, if one wants, with the last books of the Hebrew canon, that is, with Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, about 400 B.C.E.; see 1 Macc 4:46; 14:41; cf. Ezra 2:63 (awaiting a priest who knows how to use Urim and Thummim). Thus it is all the more significant that John the Baptist should appear as Elijah *redivivus* (reborn, or "used again," as in old stones used again in a new building): it marked the resumption of prophecy, and thus, of God's activity after many silent, inactive years. When Yahweh thus "awakened" (see Isa 51:9-11 again), it would finally be the time of salvation, a new creation in the End Time to restore what God had begun to do in Genesis according to his eternal intention and plan.

<sup>114</sup> See Schramm, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 169 (they are a "common group"), citing Blenkinsopp, "The 'Servants of the Lord' in Third Isaiah," *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 7 (1983), 1-23.

<sup>115</sup> Blenkinsopp thinks there is "a definite connection between the [*ḥaredîm*] of Isa 66 and those of Ezra 9-10. . . . For Blenkinsopp, Third Isaiah and Ezra are moving in the direction of sectarianism;" see SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 113

<sup>116</sup> Neh 9 is a one chapter summary of "history" from creation to Persian domination.

heaven and in fulfillment of the word spoken by the last prophet before the Exile, Jeremiah.

Chronicles follows the Deuteronomic History in its basic storyline, but purifies it of much that is negative. It presents an ideal picture for Israel. The great king is David, but he is seen more as a cult founder and promoter than as a warrior.<sup>117</sup> Solomon's apostasy is omitted. Everything revolves around the Temple and its personnel; a harmonized picture emerges of everything and everyone in their place, Zadokite priests and Levites, cantors and helpers of various kinds.

The verb *shuv* ("repent, return") occurs often in Chr. This is an element added to the Deuteronomic History which is positive and hopeful; even the wickedest king, Manasseh, repented (cf. 2 Kgs 21; 23:26-27; 2 Chr 33:1-20; see the beautiful "Prayer of Manasseh" found in some Bibles). Ezra-Nehemiah lists those who returned to the Land after the Babylonian Exile (called "Zionists" in the *Bible de Jérusalem*). Chr ends with the account of Cyrus' decree, after mention of Jeremiah's prophecy of seventy years of Exile, 2 Chr 36:21. Note that there is a reference to the Land "paying" (the verb really means "enjoy" here) its unobserved Sabbaths (Sabbatical years, per Lev 25:1-7). This is also part of the version of the covenant curses in Lev 26 (as opposed to Deut 28). We thus have the first approximation to the notion that "Exile" —the time and space of being away from God due to sin, the period before conversion, repentance, the time before the New Covenant if you will, the time of forgiveness and return to the Holy Land and God's presence, the "change of fortunes" and end of captivity— would last not exactly seventy years, as Jeremiah had said (but what did he mean?), nor just 49 years (587-538, the period between Jubilees), but a fuller time. It will be revealed to Daniel that Jer 25:11 should be read as meaning "seventy" and "weeks" together, or seventy weeks of years (490 years, or ten Jubilee periods). As we mentioned quoting Blenkinsopp, orthodox Judaism was uncomfortable with such precise timetables.

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<sup>117</sup> According to SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 159, "The Chronicler emphasizes the liturgical function of the Davidic monarchy at the expense of its political function;" "Third Isaiah has no need of a Davidide;" and in Ezek 40-48, "the king, or rather the [*nasi*] ('prince'), is conceived as ruling over 'a kingdom without politics';" citing his mentor, the Jewish scholar Jon Levenson, now at Harvard. These different views of the Davidic king or his "messianic" successor are important to keep in mind in the study of Jesus' "messianic" ministry.

But Chr does mention both Jer and Cyrus' decree, and thus, in a sense, announces the end of "Exile." But the final words of the Hebrew Bible have an enduring meaning for Israel, until the Messiah they expect comes. The final words of the Hebrew Bible are a call to return to the Land, to rebuild the Temple. But which Temple? The second temple was destroyed by the Romans. The final Temple will be built by the Messiah, or not by human hands, and will last forever. Note that Ezra-Nehemiah (e.g., Ezra 6:14-15) know of the rebuilt (second) Temple, but this book is placed *before* Chronicles. This is to give Chr its enduring value of theological hope, much as the Deuteronomists knew of the conquest of the Land under Joshua, but chose to end the Pentateuch with the book of hopeful expectation that is Deut. Note also that the return to the Land after the Babylonian Exile is depicted in the same terms as the conquest under Joshua; cf. Josh 3:7-17 (also parallel to crossing Red Sea); Ezra 9:1-2; Deut 7:1-6.<sup>118</sup>

But the call to Jews is there, at the end of their Bible: return, return to the Land. In Hebrew terms, *go up*, as one always does when going to Zion (one *goes down* to Egypt!). "To go up" is the last word in the Jewish Bible, *w<sup>e</sup>ya'al*, the verb whence "holocaust" comes from.<sup>119</sup> Today, those Jews who pilgrimage to the Land of Israel, or immigrate there, are said to make the *'aliyah*, the "going up," as in the titles to the Psalms of Ascent, Pss 120-134, recited when going to the Temple in Zion. Genesis ended similarly, with God's promise that He would make the Israelites *go up* from Egypt to the Promised Land, in the day of his visitation, Gen 50:24-25, when He would bring Joseph's bones out of Egypt; cf. Jer 27:22. And so we see the meaning Jews give to their Bible by placing this book last. It speaks of return to the Lord, return to the Holy Land, in the time of the end of all Exiles, in the time of God's saving visit, at the "end of the days." In fact, the Hebrew name for "Chronicles" is the "Book of the Things (or Events) of the Days."

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<sup>118</sup> See SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 60. The "verb "to mix" in Ezra 9:2 is from the same root as the noun "mixed [multitude]" in Exod 12:38, the rabble which causes all the problems in Num 11:4.

<sup>119</sup> Holocaust is a Greek word meaning "whole burnt" offering. The Hebrew word is *'olah*, "something that goes up." On being pilgrims and going up, etc., see my "Welcoming the Foreigner: A Biblical Theology View," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 11.2 (Summer/Fall 2004) 226-234.



## Chapter Six:

### **The Book of Daniel, Jewish Apocalyptic, and the Intertestamental Period As the Background for Understanding Christian Origins**

*Historical introduction.* The second century B.C.E. (beginning in 199) is a very important period for Judaism.<sup>120</sup> Many of the hopes held by the nation had not been fulfilled. The Persian empire, who had permitted their return (or, at least, the return of those most patriotic and religious among the exiles: these were the ones who returned to the devastated Land), but who had ruled over them through a priestly theocracy who left much to be desired (at least in the opinion of certain groups, including those whom we have termed “dissidents,” reflected in Third Isaiah, Jonah, etc.), were succeeded by the Greeks in 333 B.C.E. After the untimely death of the rather noble Alexander the Great in 323, his vast empire was divided up into four regions, headed by the *Diadochi* (“successors”), his former generals. Most relevant for our Jewish people were the rulers of Egypt, the Lagids or Ptolemies (whence the various Cleopatras would come from), and, to the north, in Syria, the Seleucids. A prominent name for the rulers of this kingdom was Antiochus, and thus several cities were called by this name, including the prominent one in the early Church, where we were first called “Christians,” Acts 11:26.

The history of this period is fascinating and complex, but we will get to the points that are important for our purposes.<sup>121</sup> If messianic hopes had been nurtured from the time of Haggai in the early postexilic period (around 520), the desperate situation came to a head with the coming to power of the Syrian king Antiochus IV, dubbed “Epiphanes” (as in Epiphany, or manifestation of the divine); he was so cruel some punningly nicknamed him Epimanes, or madman. His desire was that all his subjects be thoroughly Hellenized, that is, good Greeks.<sup>122</sup> Greek culture, of course, had been spread by the great Alexander, himself tutored by Aristotle. This was a great culture of art, politics (democracy is a Greek word!) and philosophy (another Greek word!). The center of Greek life was the polis (city, whence “politics”), and the center of the polis was the

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<sup>120</sup> In fact, control of Judea switched from that of the more benign Ptolemies to that of the ultimately disastrous Seleucids around 199 B.C.E.

<sup>121</sup> The main source is JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Books XII-XV.

<sup>122</sup> Not unlike the purpose of the Inquisition, by the way: national unity via religious uniformity.

gymnasium (from the Greek word for “naked”), where sports were played along with other civic activities. Jewish culture had adopted many features of the Greek world. In the great city of Alexandria, Egypt, Jews had stopped using Hebrew, and this is why the Septuagint had been composed beginning in the third century B.C.E. In the second century, Jesus ben Sira’s grandson had translated “Ecclesiasticus” into Greek (complaining along the way that this was not such an adequate language in which to render the potent Hebrew). But for devout Jews —I think we can call them *hasidic*, “pious,” despite objections being raised by scholars— such acceptance of Greek ways and such commingling of customs was a recipe for blurring identities and watering down Torah-observance. To begin with, the very sign of the covenant, circumcision, was under attack: it was considered a horrible mutilation by the Greeks, and painfully evident in the gymnasium! So Jews who wanted to blend in tried to disguise it; see 1 Macc 1:14-15 (at the beginning of this book!); 2 Macc 4:7-17.

But soon it became much more than simply “blending in.” Antiochus IV actually forbade the practice of Judaism, prohibiting under penalty of death circumcision and all Sabbath and festival observance, and forcing Jews to eat pork. This occurred in 167; Antiochus had already plundered the Temple in 169. Worst of all, he desecrated the altar and set up an altar to Zeus Olympios. On 25 Kislev 167 B.C.E., a pig was sacrificed on it; see 1 Macc 1:54 (verse numbers differ among the Bible versions). This is what was literally called the “abomination of the desolation” in Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11.<sup>123</sup> “Abomination” was a classic word for idol, something Yahweh and all good Jews detested; see, e.g., Jer 7:30. “Desolation” indicates how appalled, astonished, speechless, a pious person became after having witnessed such a sacrilege.<sup>124</sup> This was a moment when a Jew had to decide whether to abandon the ancestral faith and loyalty to Yahweh, the God of the Fathers and of the Exodus, or assimilate to Greek, pagan, ways, as many Jews in fact did. We owe Jesus Christ and our Christian faith to the fidelity and heroism to the point of enduring torture and martyrdom of these faithful Jews, the victims of the first *pogrom*, the first attempt to wipe out Jews and with them, Judaism (but, alas, only the *first* such attempt).

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<sup>123</sup> Jesus used the expression in Mark 13:14.

<sup>124</sup> The combination of “abomination” and “desolation” may stem from combining Jer 7:30 and 7:34 (“because the Land shall become a waste (ruin or desolation);” cf. Jer 44:22.

This is when the Maccabees rose up, a priestly family from Modein (but probably not Zadokites; 1 Macc 2:1 may be an insertion or change in the text to support the fact that the Maccabean dynasty did assume the high priesthood).<sup>125</sup> At this time, “mighty warriors” called “Hasideans” (the text is in Greek), which some consider to be the Greek version of Hasidim (“pious Jews;” these Hasideans were quite observant of Torah, 1 Macc 2:42) joined the guerrilla war against the Seleucid Syrians.<sup>126</sup> The prowess of the small number of Jews against a much larger enemy was comparable to that of modern day Jews when they were immediately attacked by all their Arab neighbors upon declaring independence in 1948. The Maccabees were successful, and exactly three years later, on 25 Kislev 164, they were able to rededicate the cleansed Temple. The feast of its renewal or rededication is Hanukkah (it fell on the same day as Christmas in 2005).

We will limit ourselves in the discussion of this convoluted period to what is of most interest for understanding Christian origins. First, we should stress the pluralism that prevailed in Judaism until the destruction of the second temple in 70 C.E., when Judaism regrouped under the rabbis and consolidated itself along the lines of Pharisaic halakah, that is, the Pharisaic interpretation of Torah. This Pharisaic-rabbinic predominance would exercise a control over orthodoxy similar to what the nascent Catholic Church would do as heresies of various sorts emerged in the first and especially second centuries.

Note that in the time of Jesus, in the New Testament, we hear of Pharisees and Sadducees, and perhaps even of “Zealots” (Luke 6:13; Acts 1:13?; the “robbers, bandits” of Mark 15:27; John 18:40 describes Barabbas with the same term which Josephus uses for the insurgents whom we call the “Zealots”). These were three of the four sects or “philosophies” that Josephus writes about, the other one being the Essenes. We have seen that in the Maccabean war some “Hasideans” joined the struggle, and this term refers to

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<sup>125</sup> See LEONARD J. GREENSPOON, “Between Alexandria and Antioch. Jews and Judaism in the Hellenistic Period,” in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World* (M.D. Coogan, ed.; Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 327.

<sup>126</sup> In 1 Macc 7:13, the Hasideans are the first to seek peace; in 2 Macc 14:6, Judas Maccabee is said to be one of them and a warmonger. In the Old Testament, we have not only the precedent of Holy War, with Yahweh the man-of-war leading it, but that of the consecrated Nazirites, who may be behind the text of Judg 5:2 (see the *Bible de Jérusalem* note), and perhaps also, as a few think, that of the Rechabites (Jer 35; see 2 Kgs 10:15-28). An early reference to “pious (or devout)” Jews in the “hasidic” sense is found in Isa 57:1, literally “men of *hesed*.”

pious Jews who were very observant of the Torah. Many used to speak of them as the Hasidim, which gave rise to the Pharisees, the Essenes and the circles from which Jesus came. We could add the “Daniel group.” Today this is quite disputed and often considered an oversimplification. But what is clear is that Judaism was divided into opposing factions at the time of the Maccabean uprising. To begin with, there were the assimilationist Jews, who adopted Greek ways to one extent or another (many to the point of apostasy), and other Jews who took the Torah much more seriously.

To wrap up our brief historical overview, we know that the Maccabees were victorious in 164 B.C.E, and that this ushered in a period of some one hundred years of independence (or relative independence) for the Jewish nation (it would not be so again until 1948). We can consider the end of this relatively free period to be 63 B.C.E, when the Roman armies under Pompey begin the period of Roman occupation. Within this period of “independence,” the Jews were able to expand their territory. Noteworthy is the conquest of their classic archenemy Edom (by John Hyrcanus, in 129 B.C.E.) and the destruction of the Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerizim (also by John Hyrcanus, and now dated to 111/110 B.C.E.).<sup>127</sup>

The Maccabees had created a dynasty, known as the Hasmonean dynasty after one of their ancestors (mentioned by Josephus). As happens with many revolutionary groups which topple a corrupt government and then take over, the new rulers were likewise soon corrupted. At least, this was the view of many in Israel. Chief among the problems was the assumption of the high priesthood by Jonathan Maccabee in 152. For many scholars, this was a major factor in the creation of opposing factions, including the Essenes. In addition, there were serious disputes as to how to interpret and apply Torah. One of the sons of John Hyrcanus, mentioned above, Alexander Janneus, may have been the first Hasmonean to adopt the title “king,” which we have seen was problematic for many. He was also high priest, and aroused opposition; thousands of Jews were killed at his orders, and he crucified hundreds of Jews who had been his former comrades.<sup>128</sup> Most of these are thought to have been Pharisees.

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<sup>127</sup> See *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 496. Recall that we said that the Herods were Idumeans, “Edomites,” from this ethnic group forcibly converted by the Jews; *ibid.*, 627. On Samaritan worship in Mt. Gerizim, see John 4:20.

<sup>128</sup> See GREENSPOON, “Between Alexandria and Antioch,” 337-338.

At this time (around 100 B.C.E.), we see the Pharisees as a party wanting to maintain faithfulness to the Torah according to their interpretation (or *halakah*, meaning ‘way in which one should walk’). They seek influence in national life, and are a reform group with democratic ideals (they want to extend priestly purity regulations to all Israel). They are creative in their theological and scriptural views, are learned, adapt divine Law to changing circumstances. They are not conservative, like the Sadducees, who believe only in written Torah, but not in the Prophets, or angels, or resurrection. Like Roman Catholics and others, Pharisees believe in Tradition, stemming from an oral Torah that God delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, and which was transmitted mouth to mouth in a chain of authorities until the present day (actually, most or all of this oral Torah was finally written down in the Talmud probably by the sixth century C.E., in Babylon!).<sup>129</sup> The fortunes of the Pharisees fared better after Alexander Janneus, their former crucifier, on his deathbed “summoned his wife Alexandra and pleaded with her to listen to the Pharisees.”<sup>130</sup> We now have a little background to understand the disputes between Jesus and this reform party seeking influence (which they finally obtained, since they are largely responsible for Judaism having the shape that it has to this day —and surviving all that it has!).

Another party which we must briefly look now at are the Essenes. We will have to say more about them later, in regards to Jewish apocalyptic and the intertestamental period. But now, to conclude this historical overview, we want to illustrate the divisions that existed in this pluralistic Jewish world, divisions which arose largely because of the devout faith of “dissidents” who opposed what they viewed as corruption in religious affairs (religion normally cannot be separated from politics, and back then this was inconceivable). The Essenes are interesting for many reasons, but, to begin with, because

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<sup>129</sup> In an addition to the Mishna, the first codification of rabbinic law *ca.* 200 C.E. (the Mishna plus the commentary known as Gemara constitutes the Talmud), known as the “Sayings of the Fathers” (*Pirque Avot*), it says: “Moses received the Torah [both oral and written] on Sinai, and handed it down to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; and the prophets handed it down to the Men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment; raise up many disciples; and make a fence round the Torah;” JOSEPH H. HERTZ, *Sayings of the Fathers* (New York: Behrman House, 1945), 13-15. I thank Rabbi Donald Crain for the gift of this book. From the Men of the Great Assembly (in Hebrew, *k<sup>e</sup>neset*), the oral Torah was transmitted by pairs (“yokes”) of rabbis down to the time of the Talmuds (Palestinian, *ca.* 400 C.E., Babylonian, *ca.* 500 C.E.).

<sup>130</sup> GREENSPOON, “Between Alexandria and Antioch,” 339. He feared that his lack of popularity was due to having opposed them (an indication of the esteem in which many or most Jews held the Pharisees).

they physically separated themselves from national life and retreated to the desert, in a voluntary Exile as “penitents” or “converts,” awaiting the time when the Exile would end and they could *return* (remember that this verb in Hebrew can also mean “to do penance, convert”).

There is a huge amount of study and writing regarding the Essenes. Most scholars view the community that has given us the Dead Sea Scrolls as Essene (more about the importance of these scrolls later). Some distinguish between a more generalized Essene movement and a stricter, more “monastic” and even celibate branch which settled in Qumran, the site where the scrolls were found (on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea). Most scholars date the rift in Judaism which led to the separation of this group known as Essenes to about the middle of the second century B.C.E. (i.e., *ca.* 150). The Essenes were of the Zadokite line, legitimate priests, as the Hasmoneans were not. Further, there were bitter disputes about Torah and how to apply it, and even disputes about the religious calendar. The Essenes used an ancient (probably priestly) solar calendar, while Jews had adopted the Babylonian lunar calendar. The importance of this cannot be exaggerated. Proper observance of feasts and sacrifices was crucial, and different calendars led to certain days being either the right ones or not in which to worship God (note the quartodecimal dispute in Christianity regarding the date of Easter). The calendar was of immense importance for many devout Jews, and it may be that discrepancies as to what day Jesus celebrated his last Passover Seder according to the Gospels (the Synoptics and John apparently being at odds) may be resolved by positing that Jesus and his followers used a non-official calendar much like the Essenes had their own calendar.<sup>131</sup>

*The Book of Daniel.* We now come to a work that is extremely significant. It is the latest work of the Hebrew Bible, and is in fact not written in Hebrew (!), but Aramaic, the language which prevailed after the Babylonian Exile in everyday life. The sacred language, of course, was Hebrew, and I adhere to the view that the beginning and end of Dan were translated into Hebrew in order to kosherize this book for inclusion among the

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<sup>131</sup> The great scholar of the Jewish calendar was Annie Jaubert. She is not always convincing, but certainly thought-provoking. Her work has importance for the chronology of Jesus’ last days. The great pseudepigraphal (“intertestamental”) book defending the solar calendar is “Jubilees,” and it was very important at Qumran.

holy books.<sup>132</sup> We have seen that the book had its problems being accepted. It is in fact full-blown apocalyptic, and even contains quite precise predictions of when the time of the End will come. The Writings were not “canonized” until probably 100 C.E. By that time, Dan had made it, due to its reputation, use and popularity, but apocalyptic works in general were frowned upon by the cautious Jewish leadership. These works had fed the wild hopes of the insurgents in several Jewish uprisings, notably the war against the Romans from 66 to 73 C.E. (Masada), which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and of the second Temple in 70. There were other uprisings around 115, and a second great revolt (under the messianic Bar Kochba, the “son of the star” of Num 24:17, whence the “star of Bethlehem” of Matt 2:2) in 132-135, which resulted in the Romans turning Jerusalem into a pagan city from which Jews were barred. So the wise and prudent rabbis had good reasons to frown upon apocalyptic and the terrifying scenarios they cherished of eschatological battle. Today, we have a very similar phenomenon with Islam, where many desperate or sometimes “merely” very angry people share the notion that if they but light the spark, God will take care of causing the conflagration. Apocalyptic is extremely relevant today. Daniel and his “group,” and similarly-positioned Jews, including Jesus and his early followers, constitute a most interesting and inspiring case of faith and devotion rightly (as we believe) carried to the “apocalyptic extreme.”

Dan takes its name from a very ancient personage, mentioned along with two other ancients, Job and Noah, in Ezek 14:14. This in itself is significant. Daniel, *daniyy’el*, or *dan’el* (“God judges”), was known from the Ugaritic literature as a wise and righteous man.<sup>133</sup> Apocalyptic literature is based on visions from the heavenly world, usually granted to very ancient figures (such as Enoch, an antediluvian —before-the-Flood— patriarch, Gen 5:21-24; Jude 14). Such a scenario seems to be evoked by the use of the name Daniel here, although he is literarily situated in the Babylonian Exile. The ancient, pre-Mosaic character of the apocalyptic visionaries will be seen to be relevant later on in these pages. We merely note it for now in the case of Daniel, which,

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<sup>132</sup> The Aramaic parts of Dan are found in 2:4<sup>b</sup>-7:28.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. JOHN L. MCKENZIE, *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York – London: Macmillan, 1965), 171. Ugarit was a civilization in the area of Phoenecia/Syria/Lebanon (to the north of Israel, one hundred miles north of Beirut, on the coast, modern day Ras Shamra) which predated the arrival of Israel in the Holy Land by hundreds of years. As we have indicated, the influence of its myths, and its language, are powerfully felt throughout the Bible. See SMITH, *The Memoirs of God*, 89-105 and *passim*.

otherwise, is a relatively “tame” apocalypse, and as much an integral part of orthodox or traditional Judaism as is possible for an apocalypse (it did make it into the canon!). Similarly, the apocalypticism of the New Testament is quite tame (as opposed to “wild-eyed,” if you get my drift), with the possible exception of the book from which came the name for this type of literature, the Book of Revelation (in Greek, *apokálypsis*, the first word in the book).<sup>134</sup>

Dan is divided into two parts. Daniel is a young man in the Babylonian Exile, and is described in terms parallel to Joseph, another young man in Egyptian Exile. Both are said to be wise and understanding (Dan 1:17, 20; Gen 41:33, 39), but these are God-given talents, Gen 41:38-39; Dan 2:21-23. Both resist the temptation to adapt to pagan ways, and both are able to interpret dreams.

The two parts of Dan are united by references to the Kingdom of God and by a schematization of world history whereby ages dominated by pagan empires are represented by images; in the first part, these ages are represented by a statue composed of a descending order of metals, from the head of gold to the feet of clay. A stone (which has significance in the Bible, see e.g. 1 Pet 2:6-8), without human intervention, hits the feet of clay on which the whole statue stands and brings it down (pulverizes it, like the molten calf in Exod 32:20) all at once; Dan 2:31-45. In the second part of Dan, the empires are represented by beasts; Dan 7:1-8. Another idea that is present in both parts is that of God’s dominion, in Aramaic *sholtan*, in the Greek of the LXX *exousía*. This word is used in the gospels and is usually translated “authority” (as in Mark 1:22, 27; 2:10). It belongs firstly to God (Dan 3:33; 4:31[NRSV 4:3, 34]; 6:27, who grants to it whom he will (Dan 4:29 [NRSV 4:32]), for a time to the beasts, Dan 7:6, but it will be taken away from them, Dan 7:12, 26 and given to “one like a son of man,” Dan 7:14, and to the saints of the Most High, Dan 7:27.

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<sup>134</sup> By “wild-eyed,” I am referring to gory battle scenes, such as those of Isa 63:1-6; Zech 14:12-14; Rev 14:14-20; 16:1-20; 19:11-21. Note that it is God who fights, but that belligerent humans are only too eager to prod him on (see Matt 26:51-54). See 2 Chr 20:13-30. Regarding the Qumran “War Scroll,” R.E. BROWN, “Dead Sea Scrolls,” in the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 67:88, states that “Although the author seems to have drawn upon the military terminology of his time, the war is conducted according to theological designs rather than according to scientific military strategy. The dominant theme is that if the forces of good (or of light) are organized according to the proper semiliturgical scheme and if their standards and trumpets are properly inscribed with prayers, God will favor them and victory will be ensured.”



The Book of Daniel as we have it, though it probably incorporates old stories in its first part (Dan 1-6), is widely agreed to date from *ca.* 165 B.C.E. It is thus the latest book in the Hebrew Bible (the latest book in the Catholic Bible is Wisdom, a Greek work from around the turn of the eras).<sup>135</sup> Dan 7-12 was composed during the Maccabean war against the Seleucids, which began in 167, but Dan does not know yet of the Maccabean victory in 164. Thus the date pretty close to 165.<sup>136</sup>

Daniel has dreams and visions in the night. This is the stuff of apocalyptic, divine revelation full of images at times terrible which have to be interpreted. The interpreter is usually an angel, and angels there are in Dan, including Gabriel and Michael. Daniel's great vision of the beasts coming out of the sea in Dan 7 is the beginning of the scenario which apocalypticists yearn for: the return to the state intended by God in the beginning of creation (the End will correspond to the Beginning, in eschatological thinking, and apocalyptic has much to do with eschatology).<sup>137</sup> In the beginning, in Gen, God had tamed the unruly Sea. He had made a good creation, and had given Adam (mankind) dominion over the beasts (Gen 1:28). This was the intended order. But sin had crept in and dominated, corrupting the earth, Gen 6:11-12, causing God to repent of having created. The "beasts" (the pagan empires; see, e.g., Ezek 34:5, 8, 25, 28) now dominated over mankind, especially over Israel. This was an inversion of the intended divine order, and this state of things would be reversed when God —perhaps after awakening from a long slumber— would act again, for the last time, in a new creation much greater than that in Noah's time or in the time of the New exodus of the Second Isaiah, and, certainly definitively, for good. This would be the Kingdom of God, the messianic age, the time of God's visitation and salvation.

And so dominion ("authority") was taken from the beasts, in Daniel's vision, and given to "one like a son of man," Dan 7:9-14. Daniel sees thrones set up; on one sat the Ancient of Days, evocative of the Ugaritic El, the "Father of Days," dressed in white with

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<sup>135</sup> The suffering of the righteous "son of God" at the hands of the wicked in Wis 2-5 is echoed in Matt 27:43 (Wis 2:18-20); cf. Ps 22:8-9.

<sup>136</sup> We do not discuss here the deuterocanonical sections of Dan, including Dan 13-14. In our discussion here, Dan ends with Dan 12, a very significant ending.

<sup>137</sup> See, again, Isa 51:9-11.

white hair. And who was the other throne for? For some rabbis, it was for the Messiah.<sup>138</sup> See Ps 89 and its references to David the Anointed and his seed, the divine council, the taming of Sea and smashing of Rahab the Sea Monster, the divine throne, the divine sonship of David etc.

It is a Final Judgment scene, and the books of account are opened. Myriads of angels serve the Ancient God. Then Daniel sees that with (or on) the clouds came “one like a son of man,” Dan 7:13.<sup>139</sup> The expression means “human being,” in Hebrew “son of Adam.” This individual is given the dominion which was taken away from the beasts; he was given an everlasting dominion, and glory, and all the pagan nations will worship him, and his kingdom will never be destroyed. In the LXX, the word *exousía*, translated as “authority” in the New Testament, appears three times in Dan 7:14, as does the Aramaic *sholtan*. This represents the eschatological reversal of the evil state of the world in the interim period between the good original creation and the new eschatological creation.

This coming state of things is the Kingdom of God, as Dan 7:15-28 shows. In this section, those who receive what the “one like a son of man” was said to be given previously are the “saints of the Most High.” The “one like a son of man” was thus originally a collective entity, “he” represented a group, the good Jews who had remained faithful during Antiochus IV’s pogrom which attempted to wipe out Judaism. But many scholars see that the expression may also indicate an angelic being, such as Michael, who appears in Dan 12:1, as the angel assigned to Israel and in some way representing Israel (see Deut 32:8 for the idea that each nation had its own “angel”). In any case, the expression “son of man” became, in the Jewish tradition, a term for the Messiah. This is the way that it is used, mostly by Jesus himself, in the gospels. In other Jewish works, like 1 Enoch, which we will discuss, the term has become merged with the Servant of Isaiah. Thus this passage is extremely significant for an understanding of the gospels, Christianity and the New Testament.

In Dan 9:1-2, the prophet (as Matt 24:15 calls him) is pondering what Jeremiah meant when he prophesied that the Exile would last seventy years. Daniel prays and

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<sup>138</sup> We will have occasion to discuss Matt 25:31, where the Son of Man, accompanied by all his angels, sits on the throne of his glory to conduct the Last Judgment.

<sup>139</sup> Jesus speaks of the Son of Man coming with the clouds, e.g., in Mark 13:26; 14:62.

confesses his guilt and that of his people. In Dan 9, we see that this book is devoted to the Law of Moses and uses Deuteronomistic language, and the verb *shuv* in 9:13. As a result of his plea, the angel Gabriel flew to him and explained how he should read Jer 25:11-12; 29:10. In Hebrew, these texts were written only with consonants, without vowels. Vowels were inserted in the Hebrew text of the Bible centuries later. One determined how to vocalize words by their context, as is done in modern Israeli Hebrew today (few words are printed with vowels, when this is necessary). The word “seventy” in Hebrew is transliterated *shv’ym*, but this is the same as the word for “weeks”! “Seventy” would be vocalized *shavu’im*, and “weeks” is vocalized *shiv’im*. Gabriel is telling Daniel to read the consonants both ways, thereby arriving at “seventy weeks of years” instead of merely “seventy years.”<sup>140</sup>

Daniel, in good apocalyptic fashion, is trying to determine when the awful state of things will end. It is not “just” about the great threat of extermination of his people and their observance of the Law of the true God which will disappear with them if they are all destroyed (all the faithful ones, that is). It is about when God will finally intervene in this horrible world —such it was for his servants who had not adapted to the world’s ways; cf. John 17:14-18. Daniel believed in the words of Jeremiah, but seventy years had long passed (if we keep in mind that his audience is living *ca.* 165 B.C.E.).<sup>141</sup> How could Jer be interpreted so as to validate his prophecy? The answer had been provided by angelic revelation. There was now reason to hope that the wait would not be too long. We should note that knowledge of the period after the Babylonian Exile was very poor among Jews, so 490 years (70 x 7) was a pretty good estimate. But Dan in fact tries to be very specific; in 7:25, he mentions three-and-a-half years (1,260 days); in 8:14, he speaks of 2,300 evenings and mornings, perhaps 1,150 days; in 12:12-13, still other numbers are given. Although some have tried ingenious ways of making sense of all these figures, I think that what we have are revisions of prior calculations which were disproved but which, in

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<sup>140</sup> See the article by MARC Z. BRETTLER, “The Hebrew Bible’s Interpretation of Itself,” in the *New Oxford Annotated Bible. Third Edition* (Oxford – New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), 473 ESSAYS. If to English-speakers the consonants in “weeks” and “seventy” are not even close, note that “weeks,” e.g., in Italian is *settimane*, and “seventy” is *settanta*.

<sup>141</sup> Recall the expectation that Jeremiah’s prediction would be shortly fulfilled in Zech 1:12, not long after the Babylonian Exile (in 520).

true biblical fashion, are allowed to stand side by side in “seeming” contradiction as food for Talmudic and other minds.

We have gone on at some length here because the passage reveals much about biblical interpretation, and also because the notion of a period of time which must be completed or fulfilled will be exceedingly important for Jesus and the early Christians, as it was for many Jews in the intertestamental era.

We now come to the end of the Book of Daniel. The short section we know as Dan 12 (chapter divisions were unknown in the Bible until the Middle Ages, verse numbering not until the sixteenth century) is a most remarkable conclusion to the latest book of the Hebrew Bible. It tells of the final battle to be waged by the great angelic prince Michael against the evil forces (cf. Rev 12). The world had never experienced such anguish (in Greek, *thlipsis*, an important apocalyptic term for the final tribulation; cf. Mark 13:19) before. It is then that the final judgment books of account will be examined in order to mete out reward and punishment.

But for this, resurrection is necessary, and Dan 12:2 is the only totally unambiguous statement of the resurrection of the dead in the Hebrew Bible (cf. 2 Macc 7). “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awaken,” some for everlasting life, others for scorn and everlasting *dēraon* (a special type of shame only found elsewhere in Isa 66:24; Yahweh’s servants shall view the corpses of the wicked who rebelled against him; their worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be the *dēraon* of all flesh [living creatures]).<sup>142</sup>

What does “many” (or “multitude”) mean? This is debated, and it could be argued that only the very good and the very wicked (as opposed to the mediocre or lukewarm) shall rise for judgment. The Bible at times avoids the “all flesh” expression (as in Isa 40:5; Job 34:15 etc.) and uses “many.” This is the expression used by Jesus in Mark 10:45; 14:24; Matt 22:14 (“many are called, but few are chosen”), or by Simeon in Luke 2:34-35. It echoes Isa 52:13-53:12, where, as we noted, *rabbîm* appears five times (once meaning “great,” in 53:12, otherwise meaning “many”). It virtually means “all,” but stops just short of this. There is probably a link to the fourth Servant poem here, as we shall see.

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<sup>142</sup> This last verse of Isa is so terrible that it is read before v. 23 in the synagogue.

We are told that a special group will shine like the stars in the firmament.<sup>143</sup> They are the *maskîlîm*, translated “wise teachers” or “learned.” There is no good translation. It is a special term, from the verb *sakal*, “to act prudently, be successful, teach.” The *sakal* keeps quiet in bad times, Amos 5:13. The messianic king will be *hiskîl*, Jer 23:5. According to the Jewish scholar H.L. Ginsberg, the term is coined from the verb applied to the servant in Isa 52:13, “Behold, my Servant *shall prosper (yaskîl)*.”<sup>144</sup> The Servant and the *maskîlîm* both “justify many” (Isa 53:11, bearing their sins; Dan 12:3, sometimes translated “teach or lead to righteousness”). In Dan 11:33, these *maskîlîm* make many understand, but suffer martyrdom in the process. These *maskîlîm* are said to be refined, purified, made white, “until the time of the End,” which is still a bit in the future.<sup>145</sup> So these martyrs of the Seleucid pogrom suffer for others, or vicariously, like the Servant of Isaiah 53.<sup>146</sup>

We can posit a group of righteous, pious (and, in this non-technical sense, “hasidic”) Jews behind Dan (“the Daniel group”). More specifically, the leaders of a specific type of resistance to the Seleucids; they called themselves *maskîlîm*, echoing the Suffering Servant and the other persecuted servants in the latter part of the Book of Isaiah. They *do* understand (Dan 12:10; cf. Mark 13:14), even as they go through the eschatological trial which refines as precious metals are purified (cf. Wis 3:1-8; 1 Pet 1:6-7).<sup>147</sup> Most scholars believe that Dan 11:34 refers to the Maccabees: armed struggle is only a “little help.” The Daniel group is commonly thought to be pacifist, unlike the Maccabees (who innovated the permission to fight on Sabbath), and perhaps already intuited the corruption that the Maccabee (Hasmonean) dynasty would represent. With the Daniel group, we have another glimpse of Jews divided into various factions. This group, however, is of particular interest for understanding Christian origins.

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<sup>143</sup> Cf. Matt 13:43. Since stars represented deities in antiquity, some scholars see hints of deification (divinization) in these expressions.

<sup>144</sup> See his article “The Oldest Interpretation of the Suffering Servant,” *Vetus Testamentum* 3 (1953), 400-404.

<sup>145</sup> Note the same language used for the martyrs in the “great tribulation,” Rev 7:13-14, except they have washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb (cf. Gen 49:11).

<sup>146</sup> The Qumranites also suffered and made atonement (expiated) for sin, and for the Land. The *maskîl* (“instructor”) figures prominently in the Dead Sea Scrolls, as does the term “many” (or “multitude”).

<sup>147</sup> Fire is an integral element of this final purification. The Qumranites shared this view, as did John the Baptist and Jesus (Matt 3:11; Luke 12:49-50; cf. Mark 9:49; Acts 2:1-4; 15:7-9).

Dan ends with a couple of mysterious calculations as to the time of the End. One must wait patiently (“patient endurance,” in Greek *hypomonē*, is a standard New Testament term for holding out until the End; see 1 Thess 1:3 [noun]; Mark 13:13 [verb]). Daniel is told to go rest and await his lot “at the End of the days.” And thus ends the book which is placed at the end of some versions of the LXX (e.g., Rahlfs’ edition of the *Septuaginta*).

### **Jewish Apocalyptic and the Intertestamental Period: 1 Enoch and Qumran**

*The importance of this topic.* Christianity cannot be understood without some knowledge of Jewish apocalyptic, which flourished in the intertestamental period (from about 200 B.C.E. to about 100 C.E., by which time most of the literature included in the New Testament had been written) and beyond. Thus, “intertestamental” means “between the two testaments,” and it is the period which concerns us now. Knowing a bit about this period is very important, because the ideas and expectations contained in the Hebrew Bible and the LXX continued to develop into the time of Jesus and beyond. We cannot understand Jesus’ message, ministry or Passion, or early Christianity and the New Testament, without understanding the religious thought-world in which they lived and breathed. Our main witnesses for this is the literature which flourished in the time between the Testaments, but which did not make it into the Jewish canon or the New Testament (with some exceptions, since some Christian canons do contain one or more of these works, usually called “pseudepigrapha,” because they are written under pseudonyms).<sup>148</sup>

Apocalyptic dominates much of this literature and period. It is a time of great expectations, when God’s final theophany, or Parousia (appearance) would take place and he would finally save his people.<sup>149</sup> One of the elements of much apocalyptic is in fact the calculation of the time of the End, as we saw in Dan (cf. Rev 1:3; 12:12, 14;

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<sup>148</sup> Catholics used to call these books the “apocrypha” (hidden”) of the Old Testament.

<sup>149</sup> SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 80, states that “Wanke has argued that the matrix of virtually all post-exilic prophecy is located in the mental climate created by Second Isaiah’s proclamation that the time of judgment was at an end and the time of Israel’s salvation had arrived.” One could point also to Haggai’s insistence around 520 that the turn-around (the *peripeteia*, or sudden change in a Greek story) would be “in a little while,” Hag 2:6, 18. The unfulfillment of these prophecies led to the dejection which is manifest in Malachi about seventy years later, Mal 2:17.

22:10), but this is corrected in Mark 13:32. Essential to Jesus' proclamation, however, is that "the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God has drawn near" (cf. Mark 9:1; 13:20; 1 Thess 4:15-17 [an apocalyptic text]; 1 Cor 7:29). We shall see certain features of apocalyptic literature (and perhaps get a glimpse of the people behind it) by briefly examining two representative bodies of work, which are otherwise extremely important for understanding the New Testament. I should further note that in my opinion, the original apocalyptic notion is the prophetic one that true prophecy derives from access to the divine, celestial, court, the *sôd* of Yahweh (something like God's "kitchen cabinet"), where he deliberates with his advisers, as it were. The word is at times translated "council, counsel, plan, secret." In the background is the divine council of the Ugaritic literature, with El presiding over the "sons of El," that is, the lesser deities. This is thought to be behind the plural "let *us* make Adam in *our* own image," Gen 1:26. A good example of this is the scene in Job 1:6-12, where the Satan, a prosecuting attorney (as later the Johannine Paraclete is like the defense attorney) has his role. A very explicit presentation of the *sôd* and its deliberations is in 1 Kgs 22, where there is also a "lying spirit" similar to the Satan; cf. Zech 3:1-7. Thus, many prophetic books are entitled "vision," and this indicates access to the divine council, like "hearing it from the horse's mouth." See, e.g., Isa 1:1 (cf. Isa 2:1-4, and the dialogue in which the prophet participates in Isa 6:1-11; 40:6); Amos 1:1; 3:7; 7:1-9; Jer 23:18, 22 (access to the *sôd* means one both sees and hears God's word). So "apocalyptic" has to do with divine revelation, which is what the name means in Greek (in Spanish, Rev is called *Apocalipsis*).<sup>150</sup>

*1 Enoch.* Many beginning Bible students may not recall ever hearing of Enoch or the work known as "1 Enoch" or the "Ethiopic Apocalypse of Enoch." This work is explicitly cited in Jude 14, which mentions that Enoch was "seventh after Adam" (see Gen 5:1-18), and prophesied about "them" (certain evildoers in Judas' own time).<sup>151</sup> There are many other less explicit references or allusions to 1 Enoch in this epistle. This is an indication that circles behind the New Testament writings held 1 Enoch in great

<sup>150</sup> PAOLO SACCHI, *L'apocalittica giudaica e la sua storia* (Brescia: Paideia, 1990), 42, says that when prophecy ceased in Israel, that is when apocalyptic emerged, as a new kind of revelation (by illumination) denoting a new kind of salvation. This book has been translated into English.

<sup>151</sup> Note the references in Jude to improper commingling of "flesh;" this is a reference to the sin of the angels in Gen 6:1-4 (who had sex with human women) and of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen 19:1-11, who had sex with the two angels who had visited Abraham. The importance of this will be seen shortly.

esteem; perhaps here we could mention the great similarity between Matt 25:31 and 1 Enoch 62:5 (where the Son of Man likewise sits on the throne of his glory to judge).<sup>152</sup>

1 Enoch is part of the canon of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Although 1 Enoch has close affinities with important elements of the gospels and of the New Testament, it was rejected by Judaism and seldom copied, and this probably had much to do with its non-inclusion in the standard canon of the Christian New Testament.<sup>153</sup> The Ethiopian Church highly esteemed it, and although the original languages were Semitic (Aramaic, perhaps some Hebrew), the only complete copy we have of 1 Enoch is the Ethiopic translation from a Greek translation.

Why are we interested in 1 Enoch? 1 Enoch represents an alternative form of Judaism operative in the time of Jesus, when, as we have stated, there was much pluralism and no dominant party; if there was a “dominant” party, they would have been the Sadducees and others linked to foreign rule, and these not only were not popular with the majority of the people; they had little to do with the thought-world of pious Jews of the type we encounter in Jesus and those who had most in common with him and his followers (except as adversaries, of course). Paolo Sacchi, a provocative Italian scholar, along with his disciple Gabriele Boccaccini, even posit two main divisions in Judaism, that of “Zadokite Judaism” (mainstream Judaism, including the Pharisees, which makes the appellation “Zadokite” a bit strange) and “Enochic Judaism.” Without going that far, I would point to several factors in Enoch which I believe are very important for understanding Jesus’ views and those of the New Testament.

First, as some point out, 1 Enoch may be a sort of Pentateuch, five books (plus appendices), that contrast with the Mosaic Torah. In fact, the Torah and the Sinai covenant are of little importance in 1 Enoch, which takes “a dim view of the Jerusalem

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<sup>152</sup> A popular edition of this type of literature is the two volume work edited by James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*.

<sup>153</sup> Tertullian (around 200 C.E.) disagreed with those Christians who were so influenced by the Hebrew canon; Augustine recognized that truths were to be found in the “Old Testament apocrypha,” but pointed to the fact that the paucity of copies of books like 1 Enoch, and the fact that the Jews had not transmitted these texts anywhere near as carefully as the canonical texts made them very unreliable, and “impossible to validate ‘because of their age’ [Enoch was an antediluvian patriarch; how could his book have survived the Flood!];” WILLIAM ADLER, “The Pseudepigrapha in the Early Church,” in *The Canon Debate* (L.M. McDonald – James A. Sanders, eds.; Peabody: Hendrikson, 2002), 224. 0



Temple and its cult;” the real Temple is in heaven.<sup>154</sup> Enoch is much prior to Moses. Early Christianity, and Jesus himself, had an eschatological mind-set: the End Time would be a return to the state originally intended by God in the beginning, but which went awry due to sin and the Fall. Examples of this are Jesus’ going behind Mosaic legislation, as when he criticizes Moses’ allowance of divorce and remarriage (in Deut 24) by saying that it was not so in the Beginning, Matt 19:3-8. The contrasts or antitheses in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5, and Matt is considered by many to also be a five-book work) are presented as Jesus’ own exposition of God’s will, and as a modification of Mosaic Torah (or, at least, as an authoritative interpretation of God’s will that goes against the grain of dominant Jewish tradition); cf. Mark 7:1-23, which contradicts not merely Pharisaic interpretation of Torah (*halakah*): by “cleansing or declaring clean” all foods, what does Jesus do to Lev? Paul, also, in Gal 3:17, goes behind the Mosaic covenant back to the Promise made to Abraham, which “trumps” the Sinai covenant. And the prologue of John definitely contrasts Jesus and Moses.

Secondly, 1 Enoch has a “preterhuman” view of sin (Sacchi). Sin is not due originally to human fault, but has a cosmic origin; it is due to the primal sin, sins committed by angels beginning on the fourth day of creation. The world is profoundly defiled, impure, because of this; it is under the dominance of evil spirits. The Flood was only a superficial cleansing; a cleansing by fire would be needed.<sup>155</sup> This is in line with the deep pessimism of apocalyptic: the world is in such a bad, utterly corrupt state, that only a new creation by divine intervention will suffice to remedy it. Mere reform has

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<sup>154</sup> See GEORGE W.E. NICKLESBURG, *1 Enoch 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 50, 55. The Qumran “Temple Scroll,” which has a rewritten Torah, avoids all mention of Moses, the mediator, to stress that their interpretation of Torah and supplements to it are direct from God. They criticize Solomon’s Temple and await the eschatological one God will himself build, which will be a new creation. Like the Enochians, Qumran follows a solar calendar. The name of God for them is an ‘almost hyposticized divine presence’; see LAWRENCE H. SCHIFFMAN, “The Theology of the Temple Scroll,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 85, No. 1-2 (Jul.-Oct. 1994), 109-123. He is of the opinion that in the Qumran scroll known as “MMT” “the period of return expected by Deuteronomy has indeed dawned” (123).

<sup>155</sup> See GABRIELE BOCCACCINI, *The Roots of Rabbinic Judaism, An Intellectual History from Ezekiel to Daniel* (Grand Rapids – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2002), 91. Note the theme of fire in the ministry of John the Baptist (Matt 3/Luke 3), and this theme as well as the omnipresence of evil spirits requiring exorcism in the ministry of Jesus. Cf. Eph 6:10-13; Col 2:15. One could also point to Jesus’ cleansing or purification of the leper in Mark 1:40-44 and of the woman with the blood flow in Mark 5:25-34; menstruation rendered very impure (see Lev 20:18). Purity was of enormous concern to the “Enochians,” but they did not see the solution in the Temple cult. Cf. John the Baptist’s non-Temple baptism “unto the forgiveness of sins.” Jesus’ “cleansing of the Temple” was really a symbol of its destruction. More on this later.

been proven to be inefficacious. Where were the effects of the new covenant of Jeremiah 31, or the other covenant of Deut 28/29, or the new heart of Ezek 36? Clearly, all that had been done after the Exile consisted of temporary, half-way measures. Devout Jews of the Enochic type expected, demanded, needed, much more.<sup>156</sup>

Thirdly, the approach to time of 1 Enoch and related literature was different than that of mainstream Judaism. This book advocates the use of a solar calendar, perhaps an ancient priestly calendar older than the lunar calendar adopted in Babylon. Enoch himself had lived a significant 365 years, Gen 5:22-24, before being taken up to God (only Elijah was likewise privileged), where he received his revelatory visions.<sup>157</sup> The Qumranites also espoused a solar calendar, and this was a significant “dissident” position to take vis-à-vis “official Judaism.” It is possible, as Annie Jaubert has argued, that Jesus and his followers celebrated Passover on a different day than most Jews, which would explain a significant discrepancy between the Synoptic and Johannine chronologies for the crucifixion (Passover before the crucifixion in the Synoptics, after according to John 18:28; 19:14, 31). Further, in the 1 Enoch section called the Apocalypse of Weeks, all history is divided into ten units called “weeks,” and

the ten ‘weeks’ total seventy units, itself a highly significant number in light of Jeremiah’s prediction that Jerusalem would be desolate for the seventy years of Babylonian control . . . and the decisive “week,” that is, the one in which the actual author lives and when the great turning point in history will begin is the seventh. As  $7 \times 7 = 49$ , the total brings to mind associations with the biblical jubilee (which the author of *Jubilees* [another work advocating the solar calendar and very important at Qumran] and others understood as a forty-nine-year unit).<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Both 1 Enoch and Qumran will depict a “heavenly, eschatological high priest commissioned to cleanse the polluted earth;” NICKLESBURG, *1 Enoch 1*, 54. In 1 Enoch, it is the archangel Michael (which some associate with the Danielic Son of man); in Qumran, 11QMelchizedek, it is Melchizedek, “portrayed as a divine hypostasis,” (Rabbi) JOSEPH M. BAUMGARTNER, “Messianic Forgiveness of Sin in CD 14:19 (4Q266 10 I 12-13),” in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Technological Innovations, New Texts & Reformulated Issues* (D.W. Parry – E.W. Ulrich, eds.; Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill Academic, 1999), 537-544.

<sup>157</sup> See also Heb 11:5.

<sup>158</sup> VANDERKAM, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 104. In 11QMelchizedek, mentioned above, “Melchizedek is to proclaim liberty [*dʿror*, Lev 25:10; Isa 61:1] for all the Sons of Light by releasing them from the burden of their sins. This will take place on the day of Atonement at the end of the tenth jubilee;” BAUMGARTNER, “Messianic Forgiveness,” 539. Jesus proclaims the eschatological “liberty” of Isa 61 in Luke 4:18-21 as being fulfilled “today.” I believe that what we are to pray for in the Lord’s Prayer (“forgive us ur sins”) depends on our forgiving others their sins *and debts* (Luke 11:4) as in the Jubilee year cancellation of all indebtedness; see the Sabbatical year provisions in Deut 15:1-3.

We recall the use of “weeks” in Dan 9 to interpret Jeremiah’s prophecy, and to provide calculations for the end of the period before salvation arrived. In both, as at Qumran, the period is that of ten Jubilees, or 490 years. In the Qumran document 11QMelchizedek, which announces eschatological forgiveness of sin on the tenth Jubilee, this final Day of Atonement is identified with the “good news” of Isa 40 and Isa 61 (which mentions the “anointed [messiah] of the Spirit”). Jesus does not seem to have formed part of the scholarly, scribal, esoteric circles which cultivated such intricate calendrical calculations, but when he proclaimed, as part of the kernel of his message, that the “time was fulfilled,” he may well have had in mind something like the end of the period of waiting prophesied by Jeremiah, Second Isaiah and Daniel; his use of the Jubilee word “liberty” in Luke 4 points to just such an idea (this would not be just another Jubilee to be repeated after another 49 years!).

The most celebrated section of 1 Enoch are the “Parables or Similitudes,” chapters 37-71, now “Book Two” in the manuscripts.<sup>159</sup> This is the latest part of 1 Enoch to have been composed, but we have not yet given any dates of composition for 1 Enoch. Roughly, the earliest parts are from the third century B.C.E.; Aramaic copies of the “Astronomical Book” (the earliest chapters of 1 Enoch) have been found in Qumran dating “from a time not far from 200 B.C.E.”<sup>160</sup> The date of the Similitudes is disputed; since 1 Enoch was so important at Qumran, why do the copies not contain the Similitudes? The Qumran settlement was destroyed in the war of the Jews against Rome, in 68 C.E. So some scholars think that the Similitudes were composed after that date. But very prominent Enoch scholars, like George Nicklesburg and James VanderKam, believe that they could date from the end of the first century B.C.E. or early in the first century C.E.<sup>161</sup>

It is in the Similitudes in which the Son of Man figures so prominently. He is a combination redeemer figure: Son of Man hidden before all eternity, but also the Messiah

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<sup>159</sup> Formerly the second book was that of the Giants; recall that a race of giants was the product of the illicit sexual union of angels and human women in Gen 6; it was the spirits of these giants loose in the world which unleashed such evil in the world, an evil which was beyond human strength to overcome, according to Enochic lore.

<sup>160</sup> VANDERKAM, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 89.

<sup>161</sup> VANDERKAM, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 110; NICKLESBURG, *1 Enoch 1*, 7: “This section, which will be treated in volume 2 of this commentary, appears to be the latest of the Enochic texts and probably dates to the late first century B.C.E.”

and the Chosen-Righteous Servant of Isaiah. He sits on his “throne of glory” to judge, just like Jesus the Son of man in Matt 25:31. Note how this represents a development from the time of Dan 7 *ca.* 165 B.C.E. There it is not clear that the “one like a son of man (human being)” was the Messiah (though Jewish tradition would arrive at this later). Neither is there a clear connection between the “one like a son of man” and the Servant of Isaiah, although the “saints of the Most High” (who are described as receiving the Kingdom, dominion and other prerogatives in terms very similar to the “one like a son of man,” Dan 7:18, 27), via the *maskilim*, seem to be linked to the Isaianic servants. But all these connections, or rather, combinations or confections, occur clearly in the Parables or Similitudes of Enoch.<sup>162</sup> There are many other relevant features of this literature, known to Jude and other New Testament writers, and to Jesus himself, which we could discuss, but cannot, in the context of this introduction. But at least we know that Jewish groups were engaged in the same kind of “unitive exegesis” (as F.F. Bruce said of the Qumran texts) as the New Testament writers, and Jesus himself, were doing at the same time. This situates the Jesus movement in the context of the late Second Temple period and its religious ideas, images and expectations, and allows us to better, more fully and accurately, interpret the biblical texts.

*Qumran.* On the northwest corner of the Dead Sea, beginning in 1947, were found numerous scrolls written in Hebrew (most), Aramaic (fewer) and Greek (only a few), which date from about 200 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.<sup>163</sup> This is an amazing library probably hidden away in the caves of Khirbet Qumran (Arabic for “the “ruins of Qumran”) by an Essene group, in order to prevent its destruction during the war against Rome 66-73 C.E. It was accidentally found by Bedouin shepherds, and has provided us not only with the oldest copies of the Hebrew Bible (and the only complete scroll of Isaiah, for example), but also with the writings and biblical interpretations of very pious Jews who were Jesus’ contemporaries and who shared many similar ideas with John the Baptist, Jesus and the early Christians. It thus is a very important find in order to understand Jesus’ world, and that of the early Church. No, Jesus is not mentioned in the Scrolls, nor is John the Baptist, despite the sensationalist claims that have been made, often by fanciful amateurs, at times

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<sup>162</sup> One important difference, however, is that although the Son of Man in 1 Enoch delivers those who suffer, he does not himself suffer; see VANDERKAM, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 112.

<sup>163</sup> See VERMES, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 10, 13.

by opportunistic scholars. And, no, the Catholic Church did not hide the Scrolls for fear that it would destroy Christianity, as certain movies suggest.<sup>164</sup> In fact, the original international team of Dead Sea Scrolls scholars included several Catholic priests, who broadly lectured and published on the Scrolls. Most noteworthy among them was the great French Dominican Roland De Vaux, a worthy successor at the École Biblique et Archéologique Française in Jerusalem to the eminent Père Marie-Joseph Lagrange, O.P., the founder of modern Roman Catholic biblical studies.<sup>165</sup>

Let us begin our discussion of the relevance of Qumran for the New Testament (and for Jesus) by pointing to a remarkable foundational text. Both the Qumranites and John the Baptist are associated with the beginning of Second Isaiah, “in the desert (or wilderness) prepare the way of the Lord,” Isa 40:3; Mark 1:3; “Community Rule,” 1QS VIII, 14. Now Second Isaiah, in the late Babylonian Exile, proclaims the good news of liberation: the exiles have already paid (expiated) for their sins and can now return to the Land in a New Exodus far greater than the one from Egypt; this is the end of the captivity, the reversal of fortunes, the time of salvation and new creation. The Qumranites, aware that in the time after Isaiah sin had not stopped and salvation had not come, withdrew into an “artificial” Exile in “Damascus” (actually, the Desert or Wilderness of Judea), to prepare for the coming of the God of judgment and salvation.<sup>166</sup> They were the community of the New Covenant of Jer 31, the true Israel, the “converts or

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<sup>164</sup> There are no New Testament texts which are clearly dependent on anything composed by the Qumranites. There are many ideas which are paralleled in the Scrolls. Two passages which have language quite close or identical to that found in Qumran are “sons of light” passages (the Qumranites called themselves the “sons of light”), 1 Thess 5:5; Luke 16:8; John 12:36, and 2 Cor 6:14-15 (Belial or Beliar was the name for the devil in certain circles, including Qumran). When discussing the ideas of Qumran or of the Scrolls, I am referring to their extrabiblical writings. By the way, at least partial copies have been found of all the books in the Bible except Esther. At the time of the community’s disappearance from Qumran (ca. 68 C.E.), it seems clear that there was no fixed canon of the Hebrew Bible (that is, after the Torah and the Prophets, different groups considered different books to be in or out), and the text of the Hebrew Bible was not yet uniform (the Qumran manuscripts, e.g., have different spelling, etc., at times contents). Qumran is thus important both for the history of the biblical text and of the canon.

<sup>165</sup> See the colorful descriptions of the charismatic De Vaux in EDMUND WILSON, *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea* (New York: Oxford, 1965), 45-48. See also the references to him in the index of FRANK MOORE CROSS, *The Ancient Library of Qumran. 3rd Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1958, 1961<sup>2</sup>, 1995<sup>3</sup>).

<sup>166</sup> “Damascus” as a place of Exile is mentioned as such in an early text, Amos 5:27. The voluntary Exile of the Qumranites was still on the west side of the Jordan, that is, within Israel. “Damascus” may thus have been appropriate as a name, since it was nearer than Egypt or Babylon. Note that the quote from Amos 5:27 in Acts 7:43 has “Babylon” instead of “Damascus”!, and this does not come from the LXX. In the New Testament, Rome is called “Babylon” in 1 Pet 5:13 and in Rev.

penitents (or, if you want, “returnees,” *sh<sup>e</sup>vy*: these are all possible translations of this derivative of the verb *shuv*; CD col. xix-xx) of Israel.”

This is a most important concept. Our main thesis throughout these pages has been that “exile” is a metaphor or a metonym (a figure of speech used to refer to another thing, in this case, a deeper, spiritual or theological reality) for the time before “salvation,” or, in more Jewish terms, before entry into the messianic age or into God’s rest or inheritance. After the Babylonian Exile, the Jews had returned to the Land, but this was not the end of Exile, as witnessed by Zech 1:12 and Dan 9:1-2. Here we have the Essenes, or the Qumranites (which may have been the stricter, more committed branch of the more spread-out Essene movement, which Josephus numbers at 4,000), voluntarily exiling themselves in preparation for God’s coming, viewed as a divine manifestation to take place after the eschatological battle between the “sons of light” and the “sons of darkness,” to be followed by the final judgment and redemption. This is a simplified description of what “they” expected (scholars make many distinctions between documents, periods, etc.), but, essentially, the Qumranites (the people who copied, composed and preserved the Dead Sea Scrolls) expected the End Time in the near future. They did penance, saw themselves as “converts, penitents,” in Exile, awaiting the coming of one (or two) Messiahs, as well as the Eschatological Prophet (of Deut 18:15). They practised sexual abstinence (probably not actual “celibacy,” which is renunciation of marriage), probably to maintain themselves in the state of ritual purity required for the impending holy war.<sup>167</sup> They performed many ablutions, ritual washings associated with purification. They awaited the “anointed of the Spirit” of Isa 61 and a heavenly, eschatological redeemer who would finally cleanse from all sin and bring the final forgiveness (perhaps that spoken of in Jeremiah’s New Covenant passage,

Jer 31:31-34; cf. Heb 7-8). The “holy spirit” (which the Essene community has) purifies from all iniquity, and sin is atoned for; 1QS 3:7. In 4:21, the “spirit of truth” is

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<sup>167</sup> VERMES, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 83, says that “The symbolic approach of the sect to sacrificial worship may account for Essene celibacy (where it was practised). Sexual abstinence was imposed on those participating in the temple services, both priests and laymen; no person who had sexual intercourse (or an involuntary emission, or even physical contact with a menstruating woman) could lawfully take part. More importantly still, bearing in mind the central place occupied by prophecy in Essene doctrine, clear indications exist in inter-Testamental and rabbinic literature that a similar renunciation was associated with the prophetic state.”

sprinkled over the person like lustral waters which cleanse from all defilement, including that of the unclean spirit.

Let us again look at 11Q Melchizedek, the remarkable Qumran document we briefly discussed above. This will give us the opportunity to get a good glimpse of this Jewish sect's expectations for the End Time of "salvation" (I place this word in quotation marks because it is mostly a Christian word now and might lead one to impose foreign categories on Jewish ideas). The fragments which have been published stress the Jubilee "release" of all debts; here "release" (*s<sup>e</sup>mittah*) comes from Deut 15:2, though Lev 25:13 (regarding the Jubilee) is also quoted. The Qumranites viewed Sacred Scripture as referring to their own days (like the early Christians did); the particular Qumranite commentary (or midrash) on Scripture, applying it to their own time, is called *peshet* (interpretation). This is their commentary here:

for G[od]. Its interpretation] for the last days refers to the captives, who [. . .] and whose teachers have been hidden and kept secret, and from the inheritance of Melchizedek, fo[r . . .] . . . and they are the inherita[nce of Melchize]dek, who will make them return. And liberty will be proclaimed for them, to free them from [the debt of] all their iniquities. And this [wil]l [happen] in the first week of the jubilee which follows the ni[ne] jubilees. And the d[ay of aton]ement is the e[nd of] the tenth [ju]bilee in which atonement shall be made for all the sons of [light and] for the men [of] the lot of Mel[chi]zedek. [. . .] over [the]m . . . [. . .] accor[ding to] a[ll] their [wor]ks, for it is the time for the «year of grace» of Melchizedek . . .<sup>168</sup>

Note the following. Various Hebrew Bible passages are interpreted as referring to the End Time. The whole tenor of the passage is that "liberty" (the *d<sup>e</sup>ror* of Lev 25:10 and Isa 61:1) will be proclaimed to the "captives," from the verb *shuv*. This "liberty" (release from debts, slavery, captivity, etc.) takes on the form also of forgiveness of sins, in the context of the Day of Atonement (on which the Jubilee is to take place, Lev 25:9). It will be on the tenth Jubilee, that is, after 49 x 10 years, or on the 490<sup>th</sup> year, as in Dan 9. This is called the "year of grace," as in Isa 61:2 (quoted by Jesus in Luke 4:17-21). The Qumran text further on also explicitly refers to "the messenger who proclaims peace, who brings good news, who proclaims salvation," of Isa 52:7, and interprets this messenger as

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<sup>168</sup> *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition. Volume 2 (4Q274-11Q31)* (F. García Martínez – E.J.C. Tigchelaar, eds.; Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill; Grand Rapids – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1997), 1207. The last three dots are mine (I stopped quoting); the other dots are in the text. The brackets indicate *lacunae* (gaps) and the conjectured restoration of the passage. I have omitted the verse numbers found in this edition.

“the Anointed one of the spirit, concerning whom Dan[iel] said, [Until an anointed one, a prince (Dan. ix, 25)] . . . .”<sup>169</sup>

There is also in Qumran the notion of an eschatological high priest who will expiate sins. This is found in a text which is similar to an intertestamental work known as the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, and specifically, the Testament of Levi. Rabbi Baumgartner describes the figure in the Qumran passage, after briefly quoting from the passage, thus:

“His word is like the word of the heavens, and his teaching according to the will of God. His sun will illumine the world and his fire will burn to all the ends of the earth.” Despite this glorification, he is depicted as the object of rejection and calumny on the part of his antagonists, much like the Suffering Servant in Isaiah. Yet, he is to atone for all the children of his generation . . .

\* \* \*

The claim that [to atone for] always refers to ritual expiation is contradicted by the occasional usage in both biblical and Qumran usage of this phrase for divine forgiveness. Moreover, even if we take [*kipper*] in the sense of expiation, the allusion to the hostile disparagement suffered by the priest suggests that like the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:10) his humiliation was itself considered to constitute an [*asham*], a guilt offering for the sins of his generation.<sup>170</sup>

We could say much more about the Qumranites and their Dead Sea Scrolls. They were a priestly sect who had separated themselves from Jerusalem and its Temple, which they deemed corrupt and in the hands of the wrong priests. They are thought to have been Zadokites who became apocalyptic under the influence of the Teacher of Righteousness, after ‘groping in the dark like blind men for twenty years’. They hated the Pharisees and were much stricter than them, but unlike most priests, became very eschatologically-oriented and apocalyptic, cherishing and interpreting the Prophets whom the Sadducees rejected. We have to stop here. But I hope that what we have seen sheds some light on the

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<sup>169</sup> This quotation I took from VERMES, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 501, omitting his italics. The “Anointed of the spirit” is a reference to Isa 61:1. Cf. Acts 10:38.

<sup>170</sup> BAUMGARTNER, “Messianic Forgiveness,” 540. I omitted two footnotes, the Hebrew text at the end of the first paragraph, and transliterated the Hebrew words and placed them in brackets. The asterisks denote that I skipped part of the text I was quoting from.



world in which Christianity emerged. This is what we hope becomes clearer in what follows.



## Chapter Seven: Jesus, the Early Church, and the New Testament

### Jesus of Nazareth

*John the Baptist and the historical origins of Jesus' mission.* John the Baptist has been linked with Qumran. The main thing they have in common is viewing their vocation in terms of Isa 40:3, “a voice cries out in the wilderness prepare the way of Yahweh.” I have left out the punctuation on purpose, as interpretations will differ (for the Qumranites, they were to be in the desert preparing the way of the Lord, as John the Baptist seems to have done; the LXX has the voice crying in the wilderness). John the Baptist was on the eastern shore of the Jordan baptizing, John 10:40, while the Qumranites were on the western shore. What John the Baptist seems to be doing is calling Israel to *return* to God (the *shuv* verb), that is, to repent or convert confessing their sins, being baptized (bathing or being washed) as symbolic of final purification (see Ezek 36:24-29). This will result in the new heart that finally obeys God, or at least, it is a preparation to receive this new condition. John comes proclaiming “a baptism of repentance *unto* the forgiveness of sins” (in Greek, *báptisma metanoías eis tēn áphesin hamartiōn*), not forgiveness itself; that is, it prepares you for the final judgment (by fire, as in Mal 3), after which you are declared or found to be righteous, and thus “forgiven” and saved.<sup>171</sup> One is coming after John who is mightier and who purifies with fire, not mere water. This the Christians applied to Jesus. Note that fire purification was expected in Mal 3, Dan 11-12 and the Enochic literature. Cf. the combination of water and fire in Isa 4:4-6.

Unlike the Qumranites, John's baptism was probably a once-for-all act (the Qumranites' ablutions were daily and often), and those who were baptized crossed the Jordan to effect their return to the Land as a symbol of the end of Exile and the beginning of the End Time for which they had prepared by their penance. In this John may also well be in an eschatological-precursor role, probably that of Elijah, the awaited final

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<sup>171</sup> Cf. HARMUT STEGEMANN, *The Library of Qumran. On the Essenes, Qumran, John the Baptist and Jesus* (ET of 1993 German orig.; Grand Rapids – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans; Leiden – New York – Köln: Brill, 1998), 220. The late Prof. Stegemann's book has had a profound influence on my understanding of Jesus' eschatological ministry, as reflected here.

messenger of Mal 3 (or 4, in some Bibles). John was dressed like Elijah, is identified as Elijah by Jesus in Matt 11:14; 17:13, and is on the other side of the Jordan where Elijah had left this world (2 Kgs 2:6-14) to return in the End, according to Jewish tradition.<sup>172</sup> So John the Baptist in essence is announcing the final Exodus, the final end of Exile; this is what Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets, were discussing with Jesus in his Transfiguration, according to the Greek original of Luke 9:31. This is confirmed by John's connection with Isa 40, which is the foundational text of the New Exodus.

Are there other links to John and the Qumranites? John is said to be from a priestly family, Luke 1:5. His father, however, was probably not an Essene, if he officiated in the Temple. Some speculate that John, like expelled Essenes, lived in the desert eating what kosher food could be found there, namely, wild honey and locusts. Here the titillating links end, however, and we are left quite short of any solid evidence of the Baptist ever having been an Essene: it is possible, but nothing more. The crucial difference between them is that John is calling on all Israel to conversion, rather than withdrawing away from all the impure Jews. In fact, it seems that, as with Jesus, publicans and prostitutes, whom the Qumranites would have condemned, were better prospects for John than the religious authorities (cf. Matt 3:7, probably redactional, with Luke 3:7; Matt 21:32). This openness of the Baptist to sinners tallies ill with the Qumranites' hypersensitivity to the purity of the assembly, where no one even with any physical defects could be admitted, including 'tottering old men'; Rule of the Congregation (1Q Sa II 3-8).<sup>173</sup>

We know for certain that Jesus went to be baptized by John in the Jordan. The evangelists, believers in Jesus' divine sonship and sinlessness, were "embarrassed" by this memory. Mark, the first of the canonical gospels to be written, simply has the scene, although marks (pardon the pun) of his redaction (the way in which he tells the story for his particular purposes and theology) are discernible. The next gospel to be written, Matthew's, has a baptism "under protest;" this is the account we tend to recall, where John the Baptist protests that it is *Jesus* who should be baptizing *him*, whereupon Jesus

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<sup>172</sup> Certainly with theological interests, the fourth gospel has John the Baptist denying he is Elijah or the final prophet, John 1:21.

<sup>173</sup> The reason for this, however, was the beautiful notion that their liturgical assemblies were joint activities with the heavenly (angelic) host. Compare, however, Jesus' attitude to the blind and lame who approached him in the Temple, Matt 21:14.

replies that it is fitting to fulfill all righteousness (a major Matthean topic). Luke removes the Baptist from the scene by placing him in jail before back-handedly saying that, ‘oh, by the way, Jesus was baptized along with all the people’. John, the last gospel, has no such account or scene, but echoes of it remain in the reference to the Spirit, John 1:29-34.

Why did Jesus go to be baptized? Historically, Jesus was a pious Jew who awaited God’s reign. He was not satisfied with a society (and a world, to the extent he pondered it) which was corrupt, wracked by inequalities, and worse of all, under the rule of a foreign, pagan power, Rome. Jesus read Israel’s Scriptures, and knew that God’s kingdom was expected to come in the End Time of salvation, when God would finally visit his people. He knew that this would entail a judgment, which spelled ruin and punishment for the wicked, and salvation and reward for the good. It is clear that the immediate vehicle for these ideas, with the added feature that all this would take place in the very near future (“the axe is laid to the root,” Matt 3:10), was John the Baptist.

Jesus probably was a disciple of John the Baptist.<sup>174</sup> It is unlikely that he merely joined a crowd that was going to be baptized, though this is possible. It is clear he believed that John was a prophet. This is itself significant, given what we have said about prophecy having ended 400 years before. And if John was dressed like Elijah, this indicated that he was the End Time prophet or, at least, the precursor of the coming judgment. This places Jesus in eschatologically-oriented Judaism.

We have spoken of the probable significance of baptism on the other side of the Jordan: crossing the Jordan then symbolized entry into the Land, the final *return*, the end of Exile, the New and final Exodus (to which the good news of Isaiah 40:9 referred; see Luke 3:18). Jesus accepted this. A humble, penitent spirit was a prerequisite for this *return*, which as we have repeated, is the multivalent Hebrew verb *shuv*. Jesus, it seems, heeded the Baptist’s call and went to be baptized.

What happened then? Here we must leave the realm of history and *interpret* things. I here give my interpretation based on my careful study of the gospels as well as understanding of human psychology, spirituality and mysticism. I prefer to try to stick to Mark as much as possible, since it is the first gospel on which Matt and Luke (and

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<sup>174</sup> For an interesting but fantastic account of what kind of discipleship this might have entailed, see BRUCE CHILTON, *Rabbi Jesus. An Intimate Biography* (New York – London etc.: Doubleday, 2000).

perhaps even John) relied for much of their account. Mark tells us that upon emerging from the water, Jesus saw the heavens open and the Spirit coming into him in the form of a dove, and heard the voice of God saying that he, Jesus, was his “beloved Son” in whom God was pleased.

We can only speculate as to what happened and what it meant for Jesus. Being proclaimed “Son” in this manner points, in the first place to messiahship (as in Pss 2:7; 89:27-28, or 2 Sam 7). Jesus was crucified as “King of the Jews,” that is, for being considered to be a messianic pretender. The best basis for this accusation, politically, is Jesus’ “messianic entry” into Jerusalem during the national liberation feast of Passover, where he was acclaimed as king by the crowds (here John 12:12-15 is more historically reliable than Mark). We shall have occasion to discuss other “messianic” traits of Jesus. But we have now seen the link between the voice and being the Messiah (an End Time expectation).

The divine voice (and Jesus may have been seeing and hearing the divine court as the prophets did) calls Jesus “beloved” and says that God is “well-pleased” with him. It is clear, exegetically, that Mark is hereby linking Jesus with Isaac, called Abraham’s only beloved son in Gen 22 (“the sacrifice of Isaac,” which never took place), and with the Servant of Isaiah (Isa 42:1, in the first of the Servant poems, is quite similar).<sup>175</sup> The question is, did Jesus see himself in these roles? My answer is that he indeed did, and that such a clear sense of mission and purpose all the way to his death on the cross can only be based on a most profound, life-and-mission-defining mystical experience (cf. Paul’s in Gal 1:15-20). It would be foolhardy, I submit, to second-guess the Markan account here and doubt that Jesus had any such notions about himself.

Recall that by the time of Jesus, a multiplicity of redeemer figures, such as Son of man and Messiah, not to mention the Servant of Isaiah (which in the Targum, the Aramaic translations-cum-explanation of the Hebrew Bible, is identified with the Messiah, although dating is problematic), had been combined all into one, as evidenced by the Similitudes of Enoch. We hope to show that Jesus, in his preaching and activity, acts like the Messiah of the End Time, as well as “eschatological agent” of God’s Kingdom. It is much debated whether Jesus spoke of the “Son of Man” always in

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<sup>175</sup> In Hebrew, one word can mean both “only” and “darling, beloved.”

reference to himself, or whether he expected the Son of Man as a different individual to show up on earth after him (e.g., as in Mark 13:26-27).<sup>176</sup> We do not have to take a position on this question here, but if Jesus forgave sins and interpreted Torah in a manner that went behind Moses, as he certainly seems to have done, I maintain that there was no room or need in his “theology” for a further, and presumably greater and more definitive, redeemer figure than he himself. We cannot in these pages make the whole argument, but I hope what follows will locate Jesus more fully in the definitive, eschatological scenario.

After this baptismal experience, Jesus went into the desert to meditate. It seems that he now saw himself in a mission role that surpassed anything the Baptist’s “movement,” or continued discipleship with the Baptist, envisioned. While in the desert, who can doubt that he was “tempted” or put to the test there, probably in regards to what being the Messiah entailed. Many expected and clamored for a warrior to finally defeat Israel’s enemies; they certainly had enough biblical texts to support this. Jesus must have been tempted to eschew the suffering role (cf. the prayer in Gethsemane). I do not believe that suffering was a tangential aspect of Jesus’ mission as he understood it. I believe that Jesus identified himself with the Servant of Isaiah, who suffered and carried (expiated) the guilt of others. I think this was what the voice he heard clearly intimated, and I think that it was part of the “messianic package” as delivered to him in his baptism (combining redeemer figures, including the Chosen One and the Servant of Isaiah, as in 1 Enoch); see Luke 12:49-50, where there is reference both to the purification by fire the world needs and to Jesus’ “baptism” (now understood as his Passion). This may become clearer as we proceed.

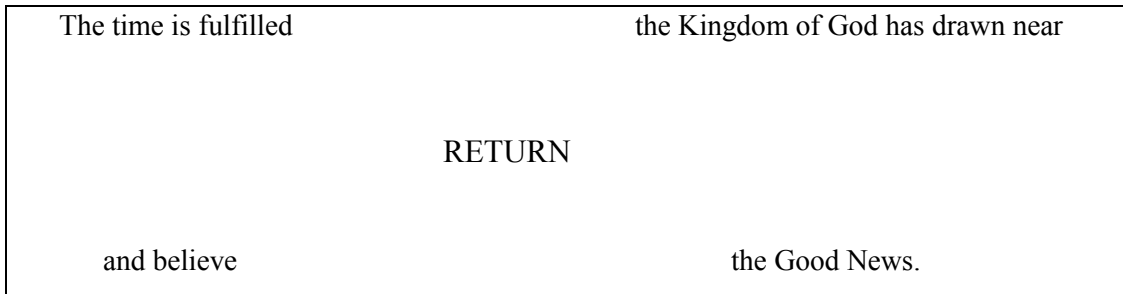
### **Jesus’ Proclamation and Ministry**

*Jesus’ proclamation.* The gist of Jesus’ preaching is most adequately summed up in Mark 1:15. There are five elements here, which might well be expressed in a chiastic structure.<sup>177</sup> The five elements are:

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<sup>176</sup> It is clear that for Mark Jesus is this Son of Man. Our question supposes that Mark writes for his own purposes, and may have composed things which elaborate or modify what Jesus himself may have said. Biblical interpretation is a difficult task, and we will discuss it later on.

<sup>177</sup> “Chiasm,” from the Greek letter *chi*, which is in the form of an X, is a typical form of Semitic composition wherein a central statement is flanked by other, associated phrases which are related to each



The “time fulfilled” refers to the whole period of waiting for the End Time of salvation, with or without explicit reference to the kinds of eschatological calculations made in Daniel, Qumran or in other intertestamental literature; see Gal 4:4; Eph 1:10. We can believe that Jesus declared Isa 61:1 (a passage which includes a spiritually-anointed Messiah preaching Good News to the poor and proclaiming the “liberty” of the Jubilee year) fulfilled as he read it, Luke 4:17-21. Note that, although Luke omits it, the full Isaian passage ends with the announcement of “the year of goodwill of Yahweh and the day of vengeance for our God” (Isa 61:2).<sup>178</sup> I disagree with those scholars who think that everything said about Jesus in the gospels is the work of the evangelists, to the extent that one is left wondering just how much in the dark this Jesus whom the evangelists later followed must have been during his earthly mission!

Secondly, if the Kingdom of God has drawn near, the time of salvation and defeat of God’s enemies is near. We shall see that Jesus “enacts” this in his ministry (the signs of the coming of the Kingdom).

Centrally placed is “return,” in Hebrew *shûvû*, in Aramaic *tûvû* (plural imperative). This is “conversion, penitence,” but also “return” to God and to his “Land,” in the New Testament, the “sphere of the Kingdom, or of salvation” (see Luke 16:16;

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other as likes or opposites. The pattern is thus a + b + c + b<sup>1</sup> + a<sup>1</sup>. So with “c” in the middle, picture “a” going from the top left of the x to the bottom right (“a<sup>1</sup>”), and “b” going from the top right of the x to the bottom left (“b<sup>1</sup>”). One of the best examples is Mark 14:58 (in the word order of the Greek text):

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| (a) I will destroy                     | (b) this man-made Temple        |
| (c) AND IN THREE DAYS                  |                                 |
| (b <sup>2</sup> ) another not man-made | (a <sup>1</sup> ) I will build. |

The key here is at the center (the reference to the resurrection), which explains the saying; cf. John 2:19-22.

<sup>178</sup> As SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 145, notes, “to the prophetic mind good news for someone implies bad news for someone else.” See Rev 18:20.



Matt 7:13-14). This is the New Exodus of Second Isaiah into the “Promised Land” (see Heb 11). This is borne out by what follows.

“Believe” is the most important demand in Jesus’ ministry. “Faith” is the Hebrew reliance on God, standing firm, confirming what God has said, trusting and obeying his Word. By this faith Abraham was justified, or declared righteous, Gen 15:6. Israel’s great sin in the Exodus desert was lack of this “faith,” Deut 1:29-46, and it resulted in the Exile of wasted time in the desert wilderness, away from God’s promise.<sup>179</sup> But now is the time of the New Exodus, and this proclamation must be believed.<sup>180</sup>

What must be believed is the “Good News,” the term Isa 40:9; 61:1 uses for the final “Exodus,” the eschatological visitation of God to his people, in order to save them; see Luke 1:68.<sup>181</sup> For Second Isaiah, the time of punishment was over, Israel had already paid double for her sins (Isa 40:1-2).<sup>182</sup> So, if we were to detect a chiasmic structure in Mark 1:15, the “time fulfilled” element corresponds to the “Good News of the Final Exodus”/no-more-waiting element. The “Kingdom has drawn near” must be believed (elements b and b<sup>1</sup> in the chiasm). The pivot in the center is the double-duty “return,” meaning both “repent” and “return to the Land” (= “enter-the-sphere-of-salvation”). The first meaning of “return” (repent) is the condition necessary for “return” in the second sense (salvation); the form of behavior one should “convert” to will be discussed shortly (the “ethics of the Kingdom”).

Now we shall see what forms this “eschatological visitation” of God took in the ministry of Jesus. There are three aspects of Jesus’ ministry that I want to focus on, and that in some sense can sum it up: the eschatological ingathering, the signs of the Kingdom or “works of the Messiah,” and the “new Teaching (with dominion).”

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<sup>179</sup> Cf. Deut 2:14 and John 5:5-14.

<sup>180</sup> The “Suffering Servant” is linked to this New Exodus of Second Isaiah, and the report about him must be believed; see Isa 53:1; John 12:37-41.

<sup>181</sup> “Visitation” can also have a connotation of judgment: salvation for those who obey God, condemnation for those who do not; see Luke 19:46.

<sup>182</sup> This message of consolation of Second Isaiah is qualified by Third Isaiah, who must deal with the question of why the “New Exodus,” in the sense of eschatological, final salvation (or, as the Germans call it, the *Endtheophanie*), has not taken place: it is being prevented by the people’s sins. What distinguishes Second from Third Isaiah is that for the latter, a new kind of judgment must take place, one that will divide true Israel from the ones who are wicked and do not obey God; this new (or additional) judgment must precede the promised restoration; see SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 127, 139, 143. This is a “radical transformation,” as Israel is now defined not by birthright, but by proper adherence to Yahweh’s cult, 158; cf. John 1:11-13; Rom 9:6-8; Phil 3:3.

*The eschatological ingathering.* Essential to the notion of Exile is Dispersion, which is the word used of God's punishment in driving the people out of the Land. In Greek, this is the word "Diaspora." And so, essential to the image (and reality) of salvation is ingathering, expressed as the reunification of the Twelve Tribes in Ezek 37:15-28 (just before the beginning of the eschatological section of Ezek).<sup>183</sup> This is the meaning behind Jesus' gathering of the Twelve disciples or "apostles," a firm historical datum. But the Davidic servant-prince in Ezek 34 also gathers the stray sheep unattended by the leaders of Israel, healing them after seeking them out like a shepherd, and making them lie down to pasture (eat), and protecting them from the evil beasts. He also confronts the "fat ones," and judges between them. This is all part of an eschatological peace scenario leading up to Ezek 36, where the Garden of Eden is mentioned as part of the new world which shall arise when God purifies his people and gives them a new, obedient heart.<sup>184</sup> In a similar passage, Jer 23:1-8 talks of David's righteous "Sprout" (or "Branch"), a messianic term, who is a "prudent" (*hiskil*, from the same verb as in Isa 52:13 and the *maskilim*) king who shall save Judah in a new Exodus which will make one forget the first Exodus.<sup>185</sup>

Jesus had (perhaps hosted) many meals with "lost sheep" (the word in Hebrew came to mean "excommunicated"). He was sent to these "stray sheep" of the House of Israel, Matt 10:6. These were the "sinners" looked down upon by observant Jews (especially Pharisees; the rabbis would call them "people of the land," *'am ha-arets* in Hebrew; cf. John 7:47-49). The scene in Mark 2:15-17, even if redactional (reflecting Mark's own composition), surely was typical of what Jesus did: they are at meal, reclining in the Jewish festive manner (see Mark 2:18-22; it is eschatological wedding time!), and so, enacting the scene with the sheep at pasture in Ezek 34:15. The talk about those who are ill and need a physician echoes Ezek 34:16, with its seeking out the stray and healing terminology. So Jesus is ingathering Israel, an eschatological expectation associated with the Messianic, Davidic shepherd. This was one of Jesus' most significant

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<sup>183</sup> Cf. Jas 1:1. See Ps 107:2-3 for the juxtaposition of redemption and ingathering.

<sup>184</sup> Note that the Promised Land itself is described in paradisiacal terms in such texts as Jer 2:7; 3:19; Zech 7:14, and that the punishment, or the result of the people's sins, is a return to chaos and uncreation, cf. Zeph 1:2-3; Jer 4:23.

<sup>185</sup> On "Sprout," see also Jer 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12; cf. Isa 11:1-9 (different word for "branch" in v. 1), a major "return to Eden" passage (vegetarian lions, harmless vipers, etc.!).

“messianic” activities, certainly part of the reason for his following. These meals could take on a more “cosmic” character, in ways which are hard to visualize now. In John 6:1-15, the fourth gospel’s version of the feeding of the multitude, at the end the people acclaim Jesus as the “eschatological prophet” (of Deut 18:15, and thus, as a sort of new Moses) and want to make him king (Messiah). One can see how the religious leadership of Israel would look askance at Jesus: the Pharisees would resent his breaking the very boundaries between pure and impure that they so strove to inculcate; the more worldly and conservative Sadducees would be very nervous about messianic uprisings (see John 11:47-54).

*The “signs of the Kingdom,” or the “works of the Messiah.”* The “messianic age” (I put the words in quotation marks because an actual “Messiah” may not be part of some such scenarios) was expected to bring healing and forgiveness. In fact, these two things are closely related, as modern psychology can attest. The text of Isa 6:10 (in both the Hebrew and Greek versions) says “lest they turn and I *heal* them,” while the Targum (the Aramaic explanatory translation) and Mark 4:12 both have “lest they turn and I *forgive* them.” In John 5:14, Jesus suggests that the long-lying paralytic had brought his illness on himself. In the episode of the woman with a long-standing blood-flow, the Greek text (not always apparent in translation) alternates “save” and “heal;” in Mark 5:28, the woman says she will be saved (presumably only from her illness—although this condition, which rendered her childless, was tantamount to death; cf. Judg 11:37) if only she can touch Jesus’ cloak; when she does so, she is described as cured, 5:29; in the end, she has been *saved* by her faith and *healed* of her malady, 5:34, and can go in peace.

Texts attributed to Second and Third Isaiah speak of “miracles” (Hebrew speaks rather of “signs,” as in the gospel of John) which will take place in the Messianic Age. Isa 35:5-6 say that the blind will see, the lame shall walk and the deaf shall hear. Isa 26:19 says that the dead shall awaken.<sup>186</sup> We have all heard of Jesus’ miracles in this regard; there can be no doubt that Jesus was known as a healer, and there are even precedents in the Hebrew Bible for raising one at least presumed to be dead, 2 Kgs 4:18-

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<sup>186</sup> We should here take the opportunity to note that behind Jesus’ meals many have seen the “messianic banquet” of Isa 25:6-8, which, like Isa 26:19, is in the “Apocalypse of Isaiah” (Isa 24-27).

37.<sup>187</sup> A key text to understand this as the “works of the Messiah” is Matt 11:2-6, where, in fact, the Baptist, in prison, has heard of “the works of the Christ (“Christ” is the Greek version of the Hebrew “Messiah”).<sup>188</sup> These works are listed in terms similar to those in Isa 26 and 35. Lepers were not part of that scenario; this may just be an area where Jesus exceeded expectations (no man could heal a leper, see 2 Kgs 5:7), but it could also be related to “purification,” a topic which we will discuss shortly. The other component of Matt 11:2-6 is the reference to Isa 61:1, the passage about the Prophet-Messiah anointed by the Spirit who preaches Good News to the humble (*‘anawîm*, often translated “poor,” as in the LXX). So Jesus is bringing about healings and well-being, which are related to forgiveness, as part of the signs that the Kingdom of God has drawn near; see Matt 12:25-28; Luke 11:20.<sup>189</sup>

This brings us to Jesus’ exorcisms (note the connection between illness and Satan in Luke 13:16). These have been held (i.e., by the prominent E.P. Sanders) not to have been expected of the Messiah (Sanders says there were far too many of them for this to be the case!). Zech 13:1-6, a late passage as we have seen, speaks of a day when there shall be a cleansing fountain to wash away sin and impurity; on “that day” (an eschatological term), idols and prophets and unclean spirits will be no more.<sup>190</sup> Jesus was certainly known for his exorcisms. Here we must interpret this activity within the context of his eschatological ministry, so that it is more difficult to separate history from theology; our sources, the gospels, have so mixed the two that I think it would be pointless (as well as impossible and unnecessary) to attempt to view Jesus’ exorcisms while trying to set aside the theological presentations of them in the gospels (especially

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<sup>187</sup> Jesus’ raising of the dead all involve one who has at most recently died, with the exception of Lazarus, which we will have occasion to say something about.

<sup>188</sup> This passage suggests the historical reality that Jesus’ leaving John the Baptist’s discipleship (and probably taking some of the Baptist’s disciples with him, John 1:35-36; cf. 4:1; 10:40-42) may not have been a totally smooth separation. John continued to minister in his way, and into the time of the early Church some had heard only of his baptism, Acts 18:25; 19:1-4. The two movements (those of Jesus and John) differ in lifestyles: John’s disciples fast, Jesus’ do not (Mark 2:18-22; cf. Matt 11:18-19). Jesus, however, relies on the validity of the Baptist’s eschatological ministry, which started it all for him, in his dispute with the religious leaders, Mark 11:27-33. When I say that the separation may not have been “totally smooth,” I mean that John seems to not understand (or perhaps even agree with) Jesus’ ministry, Matt 11:2-3. Jesus, on the other hand, has high praise for John, Matt 11:7-15. There is no doubt, however that there is a sharp division between the time of the Law and the Prophets as the time of expectation, and the time of the Kingdom, which is that of the Good News of liberation, Matt 11:13; Luke 16:16.

<sup>189</sup> Note that in the gospels, Jesus is the “stronger one” who binds Satan; cf. Mark 1:7; 3:27; 5:4.

<sup>190</sup> Note that “clean” and “pure” and “to cleanse” and “to purify” are identical terms as used herein.

Mark's). So with this caveat or disclaimer, we proceed to our third topic in the eschatological ministry of Jesus, his "new teaching."

*Jesus' "new teaching."* The beginning Bible student may wonder what the connection between exorcisms and "teaching" (old or new!) may be. It is clear that the final defeat of evil was an eschatological expectation in many like-minded Jewish circles in the Second Temple period. We have seen biblical texts that spoke of purification and the new heart (Ezek 36), of the end of sin (Zech 14; one could add, e.g., Isa 60:19-21) and evil spirits (Zech 13:1-2), of evil beasts (Dan 7; Ezek 34:28; 36:29-35), in a type of return to Eden (Isa 11:1-9). Jesus is depicted as the "strong one" who destroys evil spirits (Mark 1:24), who bound Satan (Mark 3:22-30), to deny which is the unforgivable sin.<sup>191</sup> Jesus himself, in what appears to be an apocalyptic vision, saw Satan fall from the sky, Luke 10:18. So this is clearly a sign of God's eschatological victory, or the beginning of it.

Jesus calms the sea in Mark 4:39 using exorcism commands exactly like those in Mark 1:25. The sea was the realm of chaos which God had tamed in creation. From it arose Daniel's evil beasts, which had turned topsy-turvy God's original creation plan (that Adam dominate over the beasts). After creation, God had repented of having created and had sent the Flood, but evil had continued and multiplied, and God had seemed to fall asleep. Certain circles awaited a new purification, a definitive one, this time with fire (recall the discussion of 1 Enoch, above). But God now seemed so distant that even prophets had become extinct, for hundreds of years now, according to late Second Period chronology.

Isa 51:9-11 summons Yahweh to *wake up*, to repeat what he did at creation, when he slew the sea monsters! To repeat what he did in the first Exodus, when he parted the sea. Note the parallel between this passage and Jesus sleeping in the boat before he "exorcizes" the sea, Mark 4:37-38. Jesus' exorcisms represent God's finally "waking up"

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<sup>191</sup> Jesus' exorcisms as presented in *crescendo* in Mark 1:23-26; 3:11; 5:1-20; this last exorcism, of "Legion," involves the highest confession of Jesus as Son of the Most High God. The eschatological priest in the "Old Testament pseudepigrapha," *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, Testament of Levi 18:10-11 was expected to bind "Beliar" (Satan); cf. Mark 3:27. For the importance of evil or unclean spirits in the Qumran literature, see PAUL J. KOBELSKI, *Melchizedek and Melchireša* (Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 10; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1981) see pages 4 and 45 on Belial (variant of Beliar). See also MARINUS DE JONGE – A.S. VAN DER WOUDE, "11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament," *New Testament Studies* 12 (1965-1966), 306, 310 footnote 5, 314, 316.

and acting again, as he did in creation. This will be the final, new creation. The waiting period was over.

Many of these ideas I have taken from the remarkable work of the late Harmut Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran*, cited above.<sup>192</sup> For this great scholar, Jesus' activity—symbolizing and effectuating God's eschatological redemption—meant that what the Jewish Scriptures announced and prepared for was being fulfilled.<sup>193</sup> God was at work again to save, and the goal of the Jewish Scriptures was being fulfilled. Things were returning to their pre-Fall state, before evil and impurity came into the world (at least for those who were entering God's Kingdom). For Stegemann, this represents a going back to the pre-Fall Torah, to Gen 1-2, which then relativizes, or 'totally changes', the rest of the Torah.<sup>194</sup> Jesus is cleansing lepers and healing women with blood-flows, thereby rendering the Temple sacrificial system superfluous (sacrifices were offered after the afflicted person somehow got well—not by any cultic act!—in order to reinstate him or her into the cultic community). From his exorcisms and healings, "Jesus inferred that, in the current event of the Reign of God, the restoration of the order of creation that had prevailed before the Fall was occurring;"<sup>195</sup>

Jesus can critique the "post-Fall Torah" as having been necessary due to what can only be considered to be a temporary "hardness of heart." "In the Beginning it was not so," says Jesus when asked about divorce (Jewish parties at the time did not question divorce, only the grounds for it).<sup>196</sup> In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus seems to be giving a "new Torah" (remember that "Torah" first of all means [priestly] "teaching, instruction, doctrine").<sup>197</sup> In Mark 7:14-23, Jesus is said to cleanse (or declare clean; it is the same

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<sup>192</sup> Here, see especially pages 251-257. However, I am offering up my own interpretation of Jesus' eschatological ministry, and not simply following everything that Stegemann writes.

<sup>193</sup> This is the meaning of Matt 5:17-19, although this very Jewish gospel has enigmatic statements regarding what Torah-observance entails (see, e.g., Matt 23:1-3).

<sup>194</sup> I myself would stress that the main purpose of most of the Torah was to separate Israel from idolaters, idolatry and impurity (obstacles to worship and obedience of the true God), and that, with Jesus, true worship of the true God is being opened for all, starting with the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." Cf. STEGEMANN, *The Library of Qumran*, 253-255.

<sup>195</sup> STEGEMANN, *The Library of Qumran*, 253.

<sup>196</sup> See Mark 10:1-12. Matt 19:9's seeming exception for *porneia*, usually translated "sexual immorality" (but it is not the word for adultery!) is probably a reference to illicit unions which are not valid marriages and which should, by all means, be discontinued. The issue of divorce as viewed at Qumran is less clear to me at this time.

<sup>197</sup> Some posit a five-book division in Matt. For discussions of how a "new or other Torah" could have existed (or been understood) in Judaism, see W.D. DAVIES, *Torah in the Messianic Age and/or Age to*

difference) all foods. Separation between Israel and the nations, or between the Israel that is pure and the Israel which is not, in order to protect the pure monotheistic faith (which is the rationale for the Mosaic Torah), is no longer necessary in the time of the Kingdom for those who are being recreated as they enter it.<sup>198</sup> Likewise Paul, who proclaims “a new creation in Christ” (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15), goes behind the Mosaic covenant (*b<sup>e</sup>rith*) to the Abrahamic Promise (also *b<sup>e</sup>rith*), Gal 3:16-18.

At this point, we should briefly describe the “ethics of the Kingdom.” Jesus experienced God as finally starting the eschatologically-awaited salvation of Israel (and implicitly, of the whole world). God had “awoken,” as Isa 51:9-11 had pleaded, and this meant that God was working again as he had done in creation (the New Exodus announced in Dt-Isa was also conceived as a new creation; cf. 65:17). The pre-Fall conditions of Paradise were to prevail, after the struggles of the Kingdom were over (see Matt 11:12, a difficult text transmitted differently in Luke 16:16). No more violence (the pre-Noachic food laws, for example, contemplated vegetarianism, cf. Gen 1:9-10 and 9:3-6), but, more practically, God was ingathering his people, he was offering them forgiveness of sins, a place at the messianic feast.<sup>199</sup> Matt in particular emphasizes that God is our “heavenly Father” and that we are all brothers; God rains on just and unjust alike, Matt 5:43-48. We are to love our enemies, as God has accepted his enemies, those who did not do his will prior to their turning to him; cf. Rom 15:7.<sup>200</sup>

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Come (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1952), esp. 70-74; see also the index in his *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism. Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Mifflintown, PA: Sigler Press, 1948, 1955, 180, 1998); DAVID DAUBE, “*ἐξουσία* in MARK I 22 and 27,” *Journal of Theological Studies* XXXIX (1938), 52-59; Daube is a great scholar of rabbinics, but his treatment of Jesus’ “new teaching” in Mark 1:22, 27 is extremely poor, as we hope to demonstrate. See also Daube’s *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (Peabody: Hendrikson, 1956; 1998 printing), 212-216. Recall that in “advanced,” or at least, somewhat dissident, circles such as those behind the Enoch literature, there may have been “other Torahs,” and thus the five-book composition of 1 Enoch. Texts such as Jer 7:21-23 reflect, according to Richard Friedman, the competing *torot* (plural of *torah*) of different and opposed priestly groups.

<sup>198</sup> Mark 7:19 may not go back to the historical Jesus, but may well be a gloss (explanation by the evangelist or a redactor). Luke presents things as having taken place much more gradually in Acts 10 (as is Luke’s custom in accordance with his theological style).

<sup>199</sup> See footnote 64 above.

<sup>200</sup> If any sect of Judaism taught hatred of enemies (seen as enemies of God), it was that of Qumran. The wall of separation between Jew and Gentile established by Torah to preserve Israel pure from idolatry is called in Eph 2:14-15 a “wall of hatred or enmity” which Christ has broken down, abolishing in his flesh the commandments of the Torah. Analogously to Jesus’ “ethics of the Kingdom,” SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 119, says that “Isa. 56.1 expresses the conviction that ethical conduct is determined by eschatological expectation,” footnote omitted. Jesus’ prayer for the forgiveness of his executioners in Luke 23:34 is considered to be unique in the Bible (cf. Acts 7:60).

God is active again in the world, and his proximity, as manifested by Jesus' signs of the Kingdom, should give us great confidence (faith) that God will take care of us; his providential hand is evident in nature, in the flowers of the field and in the little sparrows, Matt 6:25-34; Luke 12:6-7. God's great rival is money, Matt 6:24; 1 Tim 6:10; Heb 13:5. Only one person called to follow Jesus refuses, the "rich young man." Jesus in Luke 14:33 says that discipleship requires renouncing one's right to one's property.<sup>201</sup> As an illustration of Jesus' teaching, remarkably geared to surprise and shock (the Kingdom is like a man who throws his valuable seeds all over the place, or who pays his workers the same no matter how much they worked, and God is like an Oriental patriarch who runs to meet his profligate son), let us look at Luke 6:36-38. Using Semitic rhetorical analysis (which I learned from Prof. Roland Meynet, S.J. at the Gregorian University in Rome), this passage would be in *crescendo*, spiraling upwards in ever-increasing intensity:

Be compassionate, as your Father is compassionate;  
do not "judge" [= sue a debtor], and you will not be "judged" [sued by God],<sup>202</sup>  
do not "condemn" [= obtain a judgment against your debtor], and you will  
not be condemned [by God, who will respond in kind],<sup>203</sup>  
dismiss [the lawsuit], and you will be dismissed [as a defendant];  
give, and it shall be given to you:<sup>204</sup>  
a good measure, pressed down, shake, running over  
. . .

The whole world, as the Thomistic tradition teaches, is God's (Ps 24:1; 1 Cor 10:26), and belongs to all, to apportion and distribute as best meets the fulfillment of the *common good*; see the (idealistic) description of the early Church in Acts 4:34-35. The only Christian description of the final judgment is in Matt 25:31-46 (we have already mentioned certain affinities it has with 1 Enoch); the criterion for "salvation" is meeting the physical and emotional needs of the needy, not proper confession of faith; cf. Matt

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<sup>201</sup> Cf. Paul's radical renunciation of his right (*exousia*) to a wife, to a salary for his preaching and to eating meat in living in 1 Cor 9:4-12, 8:13. In 2 Cor 8:14-15, Paul says that equality should reign, rather than gross economic differences between people. See also 2 Cor 9, a great mini-special collection homily.

<sup>202</sup> Cf. Matt 18:23-35. The Lukan version of the Lord's Prayer has "sins" for what God forgives us, and "debts" for what we forgive others. The Matthean version uses the Aramaic "debts" in both instances.

<sup>203</sup> See Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; our Jubilee, eschatological forgiveness depends on our first having forgiven our debtors (in every sense).

<sup>204</sup> Give to your debtor; he is poor, that is why he could not pay you!



7:21-23; “iniquity” here, *anomia* (“lawlessness”) is what will increase in the last days, Matt 24:12, through lack of love.

Now we can go to the passage which founds our subtitle “Jesus’ ‘new teaching’.” It is Mark 1:27. After Jesus has performed his first “miracle,” the exorcism of the man with the unclean spirit who protested that Jesus had come to destroy “us,” “everyone” was astonished and describes the exorcism as “a new teaching according to dominion; he commands the unclean spirits and they obey him” (like the sea in Mark 4:41).<sup>205</sup> Jesus, in Mark 1:22, at the beginning of the pericope (= passage, or scriptural unit), is said to teach with *exousía*, and not like the scribes (the people are “amazed,” as they are at the end of the unit, 1:27). Now this word is usually translated “authority,” but this can mislead: one can easily think that this means that Jesus spoke as if he knew what he was talking about, or with more conviction or eloquence than the scribes. And, like so many things in Mark and in Scripture, this kind of interpretation may well hold, on a surface reading (at a superficial level). But *exousía* comes from Dan 7:14 (see the discussion above), and denotes the plenipotentiary (full authority) that Jesus has as the Son of Man. It goes well beyond great speaking or teaching; it is a dominion (the translation of the Aramaic *sholtan* and the Greek *exousía* in Dan 7:14) based on God’s dominion (also referred to in Dan, and given to whomever God wills) now at work in the End Time. It is the dominion of the Kingdom, which is given to the Son of Man, here understood no longer as the original collectivity (“the saints of the Most High,” as in Dan 7:18, 27), but as an individual. One may dispute if Jesus could have spoken of himself historically in these terms. We have said that things can be quite blurry in this regard, but add that, increasingly, the historical skepticism, late dating, etc. regarding what is said in the Bible is giving way to surprising discoveries and interpretations that show that however much the biblical text is theological, the historical “kernel” on which it is based may be growing before our eyes like the mustard seed of the Kingdom.

One passage can illustrate this issue regarding the Son of Man. It is Mark 2:1-12, the story of the paralytic lowered through the roof. The scene itself seems real enough.

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<sup>205</sup> I owe this understanding of Mark 1:27 to the book of a scholar with whom I agree very little, BURTON L. MACK, *A Myth of Innocence. Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 233-235. On the topic of “dominion” (in Greek, *exousía*) in Mark, and many other aspects of our discussion here, see EMILIO G. CHÁVEZ, *The Theological Significance of Jesus’ Temple Action in Mark’s Gospel* (Lewiston, NY – Queenston, Ontario: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002).

We have stated that healing and forgiveness overlap in the Bible, and especially in the gospels. Like the paralytic in John 5, sin is related to the malady. In Mark 2:5, Jesus forgives the man's sins, after witnessing "their" faith (whether that of his companions only or also of the paralytic cannot be determined here). The man in John 5 apparently also has faith, or obeys Jesus, upon his command, and is told to sin no more.<sup>206</sup> Faith saves, and Jesus can declare sins forgiven (by God, but cf. John 8:11, "neither do I condemn you"). Being healed as a sign of the Kingdom which is entered by "faith" (in the biblical sense, meaning fidelity, trust and obedience, like Abraham's) results in sins being forgiven; one is ready for the judgment (cf. Matt 11:20-24).

And so Jesus' "new teaching" is the defeat of evil and impurity. It is like a new Torah which provides access to God, which purifies and allows intimacy with ("knowledge of") God, an eschatological hope (see Isa 11:9; Jer 31:34; Hos 2:16-22). It is the Torah written in the heart of Jer 31:31-33, in the new heart of the purified people of Ezek 36:24-29 (cf. 2 Cor 3; Rom 7:6). It is the new Torah/Teaching of the new creation God is working through Jesus as his eschatological agent (who, like God the Father, is now at work even on the Sabbath, John 5:17). What the Mosaic Torah (Gen 3-Deut 34, according to Stegemann) did was to prepare Israel for the time of the New Exodus, of salvation, keeping it pure among the nations, witnessing to the true God (although this was never done perfectly nor universally, as even the Church does not follow Jesus perfectly or universally).<sup>207</sup> But the new Torah is not really a different Torah; it is the Torah as fulfilled by Jesus; see Luke 24:25-27, 44-46; John 5:39, 46).

But we now have to see how Jesus ushers in this new Torah which he has begun to "teach" with his signs of the Kingdom (of God's new, eschatological creation). How does one receive this Torah written in the heart, how is one purified and able to obey God in the new, definitive way, how is Jeremiah's new covenant and circumcision of the heart to take place, when sin is forgiven so that all shall have access to intimacy with God?<sup>208</sup> This takes us into the mystery of the Suffering Servant who is also the Son of Man.

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<sup>206</sup> Cf. the sinful woman in Luke 7:47, whose sins are forgiven due to having loved much; "believing" and "loving" are thus closely related if not identical; see Jas 2:26; Gal 5:6; 1 John 4:7-8, 12, 20.

<sup>207</sup> See Gal 3:19-29, on the temporary purpose of the Torah (the "Law"). Cf. Rom 3:21-26; 10:4; John 1:17-18; 6:32-35, 46-51 ("bread" being closely related to God's Word, Deut 8:3; Amos 8:11; Sir 15:3).

<sup>208</sup> Recall such texts as Ezek 36:24-38; Deut 30:6-14; Jer 31:31-34.

## Jesus' Passion

Historically, Jesus was executed as a messianic pretender (“King of the Jews”) by the Romans (“under Pontius Pilate”), most probably at the instigation of Jewish religious leaders, probably priests.<sup>209</sup> Jesus had a significant following among the Jewish general population, and would have been looked upon with sympathy (see, e.g., Mark 11:18; 12:12; 14:2). Had there not been such support, no one would have bothered with Jesus, not even the ruthless, probably anti-Judaic Pontius Pilate. It is clear that the gospels massively play down the Roman role in Jesus’ execution, presenting Pilate as weak. But Pilate was so ruthless against the Jews that he was removed for this reason, and was known to execute many even without trial.<sup>210</sup> In the period when the gospels were written, the great rival and adversary of Christianity were the Jews, the majority of whom had not accepted Jesus as Messiah. A theological controversy with these Jews colors the Passion accounts.<sup>211</sup> The first gospel, Mark, was written probably around the time that the Jewish revolt against Rome was starting, or perhaps was just over (66-70 C.E.), and probably in Rome. In any case, already in 64 C.E. the Christians were unpopular enough in Rome to have been blamed by the emperor Nero for the great fire that destroyed much of the city (and that many thought Nero himself had started).<sup>212</sup> During this time Peter and Paul were martyred, by the Romans, and a great persecution led to the deaths of many Roman Christians (there was great rivalry and bitterness between Jews and

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<sup>209</sup> John’s gospel seems most historical in presenting discussions among the Jewish leaders (11:47-50), followed by the more immediate interrogations at the house of the high priest before handing Jesus over to Pilate, 18:12-28. Note that in John the Romans are already in on Jesus’ arrest, 18:3, 12.

<sup>210</sup> See the description of his prefecture by Father Fitzmyer in *NJBC* 75:168. Pharisees are mostly out of the Passion narratives, and it is unclear how many of them were in the Sanhedrin at that time. Jesus’ lethal enemies are said to have been the “high priests.” In Luke 13:31-32, some Pharisees seem to warn Jesus that Herod Antipas seeks to kill him. Jesus calls Herod “that fox;” this gives us an idea of how prophets like Jesus antagonized, or at least, provoked, authorities with their language, and makes us realize that religion and politics were inseparable in that time and culture; see Matt 23:13-36. They are still inseparable, it just depends what kind of religion (e.g., one limited to things of the individual soul, possible only where all bodily needs are met) and what kind of politics (e.g., one where the only moral issues have to do with sex, while war, poverty and the planet are simply left in the hands of “trusted” leaders). Note that Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.5.2 (116-119), says John the Baptist was killed because Herod feared his preaching would start an insurrection. See Matt/Luke 3:7; cf. the famous account of his martyrdom after a dance in Mark 6:17-29.

<sup>211</sup> The Passion accounts are also full of references to Scriptures (Old Testament) which are being fulfilled; note that Jesus’ disciples do not understand the Scriptures in this way until Easter: Luke 24:25-27; John 2:22; 12:16.

<sup>212</sup> Not to mention the expulsion of Christians from Rome under Claudius, in 49; see Acts 18:2.

“Messianic Jews” in Rome). Now, Christians were a Jewish sect who followed a crucified “Messiah:” that he was crucified was certain, that he was considered a messiah, equally clear. This made the Christians enemies of the Roman state. Jews in general were not well looked upon, but were protected in the practice of their faith due to its ancient origins (which Romans respected). Once Christians separate out from Judaism, or are expelled from the synagogue (see John 9:22, 34), they lost this protection of tolerance. So, without adhering to the disputed views of S.G.F. Brandon in *Jesus and the Zealots*, we can say that the evangelists had strong apologetic (and prudential) motives to paint a historically-incredible Pontius Pilate and a Jewish crowd who seems to turn on Jesus overnight; see Mark 15:11.

But what kind of “Messiah” had Jesus been?<sup>213</sup> Jesus had exercised a “messianic” ministry, evident especially in the ingathering of Israel as the shepherd of such passages as Jer 23:1-8 and Ezek 34. Note that in Ezek, the messianic shepherd is a “prince” and not a “king” (though cf. Ezek 37:24). Likewise, no one should proclaim himself “messiah;” this God should do, by giving him victory.<sup>214</sup> Jesus had mandated secrecy regarding his messiahship during his ministry, but now, as things came to a head with his confrontations with the “bad shepherds” in Jerusalem (see Mark 12:1-12), Jesus did not back down from his role, though he mostly kept his mouth shut during the interrogation at his trial; Mark 14:60-61; 15:2-5; cf. Luke 23:9; Jer 11:19; Isa 53:7; the pious Jews did not defend himself—he might not be innocent after all—but waited to see if God would defend him.

Jesus could have defended himself (he seems to do so in John 18:20-23, 33-37), and could have left the jurisdiction. We have stated at the outset that Jesus’ initial “messianic” experience at his baptism (“you are my beloved Son”) was joined or combined with the mission of the Isaianic Servant, destined to suffer and carry the sins of

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<sup>213</sup> The gospels present the following irony: Jesus, the true Son of God, was executed as a false messiah (insurgent), while Barabbas, a false “son of the father” (that is what his name means in Aramaic), but a true insurgent, is released.

<sup>214</sup> Thus Bar-Kochba (proclaimed Messiah by the great Rabbi Akiva) called himself “prince” (*nasī*) in the revolt of 132-135; see CHÁVEZ, *Theological Significance*, 23, fn. 53. Note that the expectations of Jesus’ disciples prior to Easter are very “worldly,” that is, typically Jewish as depicted in the Hebrew Bible. Note that two of his “main” disciples want special places in his Kingdom, Mark 10:35-40; note that Mark has “glory” instead of the certainly original “Kingdom” in Matt 20:21 (but Matt softens the episode by blaming their mother!).

others (“many”). We also know that the *maskîlîm* (“wise teachers”) in Dan 11:35; 12:3, 10 were to be purified through suffering in their role as “justifying (or making righteous)” “many,” as the Servant is said to do in Isa 53:11. The *maskîlîm* are following in the Servant’s footsteps, perhaps also expiating for the Land and for others as the Qumranites saw themselves doing. Here the “one like a son of man” who receives the Kingdom of Dan 7 would seem to be related to these *maskîlîm*, and thus a text like Mark 10:45, where Servant and Son of Man are combined into an individual, Jesus, who comes to give his life as a ransom for “many,” could well have come from Jesus’ own mouth. In addition, pious Jews expected a final putting to the test, “temptation,” before the messianic age came. The tradition would refer to this also as the “birth pangs of the Messiah,” and Jesus speaks of this in John 16:21; cf. Rev 12:1-6. All this, coupled with purification texts like Wis 3:5-8 (see the surrounding context, and cf. Matt 27:39-44), and the notion that a father disciplines his child, help understand how Jesus saw his Passion.<sup>215</sup> Furthermore, there was a tradition that true prophets were killed, and Jesus saw himself as last in the line of the Prophets (who had prophesied the messianic age or Kingdom which Jesus was inaugurating); see Mark 12:1-12; Luke 13:31-35.

One last word about Jesus’ possible self-understanding regarding his Passion. Jesus had been baptized by John in the Jordan, symbolizing the new and final Exodus. He had heard the heavenly voice proclaim him Son and Servant. Jesus was thus aware that he still had a different kind of “baptism” and exodus to accomplish; see Luke 12:50; Mark 10:38.<sup>216</sup> Thus, the final Exodus would require his Passion, as Luke’s Transfiguration scene indicates (Luke 9:31 has “exodus” in Greek, at times translated “departure”).<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> “Divine discipline,” in Hebrew *mûsar*, in Greek *paideia*, is found in Isa 53:5 (“the discipline [*mûsar*] of our salvation [*shalôm*] upon him;” Ps 16:7 (verb), cited in Acts 2:22-28. Jesus struggled with this mission to suffer (cf. Isa 53:4-6, 10), as reflected in Gethsemane (another passage the evangelists would not have made up) and in Heb 5:5-10; cf. 12:5-12 (*paideia*).

<sup>216</sup> One of the ancient images for a terrible trial is the “water (or river) ordeal,” a being put to the test. The psalm considered to be the “most quarried” for material to illustrate Jesus’ Passion, Ps 69, begins with such an ordeal.

<sup>217</sup> Some scholars have seen in John 3:14; 12:32 (regarding Jesus’ being “lifted up”) a reference to crucifixion going back to an early, Aramaic tradition and probably to Jesus himself. “To be lifted up” in fact in Aramaic (but not in Greek or Hebrew) can mean both “to be exalted” (like the Servant in Isa 52:13) and “to be crucified.” “Being lifted up” as a reference to crucifixion occurs with some frequency in Qumran. In Aramaic, see Ezra 6:11; cf. Deut 21:22-23; Esth 7:10; 9:13; the targum (Aramaic translation) of 1 Chr 10:10.

Later on, we will have occasion to flesh out the theological understanding of Jesus' Passion by briefly looking at how the New Testament, especially Mark and Hebrews, understand the significance of Jesus' sacrifice.

### **The Early Church**

*Preliminary remarks.* We divided Jesus' ministry into three aspects, the eschatological ingathering, the signs of the Kingdom or of the Messianic Age, and Jesus' new "Teaching" with dominion. Now we will see three correlative aspects of the early Church, only in inverse order: Jesus' resurrection, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the mission to the Gentiles. The pivot between these two sets of three is the Passion (3 + 1 + 3 = 7). The resurrection corresponds to Jesus' dominion (*exousía*), which is that of the Son of Man (an expression used by Jesus in his Passion predictions).<sup>218</sup> The outpouring of the Holy Spirit as sign of the messianic End Time clearly corresponds to the "signs of the Kingdom and of the Messiah," and obviously the mission to the Gentiles corresponds to the ingathering of the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." We can diagram it as a concentric or chiasmic presentation as follows:

- (a) Jesus' eschatological in-gathering
- (b) the signs of the Kingdom or of the messianic age
- (c) Jesus' New Teaching with *exousía*
- (d) Jesus' Passion
- (c<sup>1</sup>) Jesus' resurrection
- (b<sup>1</sup>) the gift of the Spirit
- (a<sup>1</sup>) the mission to the Gentiles

*The resurrection of Jesus.* There is no Church without the resurrection. Jesus' disciples expected an earthly kingdom, and prominent roles in it; see Matt 19:27-28; Luke 22:28-30. Thus, after the crucifixion (during which "they all fled," Mark 14:50),

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<sup>218</sup> All the connections between Son of God, Son of Man, Jesus' *exousía*, new Teaching, Passion, etc. are more fully discussed in CHÁVEZ, *The Theological Significance*. Below, we will cover this more complex topic a bit more when we briefly discuss Mark.

they were dejected, disappointed at the failure of Jesus to have brought messianic liberation to Israel, Luke 24:13-21; cf. Acts 1:6). But Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to Simon Peter and the Twelve, and to many others; 1 Cor 15:3-8. This is the earliest account, or list, of the resurrection; the stories of women at the empty tomb would not have been the earliest, official statements (women were not considered to be very reliable in that society).

The resurrection was proof to the disciples of Jesus' victory as "suffering Messiah." This was extremely unexpected (it is commonly said that in no case was the Jewish Messiah supposed to suffer, although this may have to be nuanced or qualified). One could not combine two more opposed things than "Messiah" and "crucified;" being crucified was a curse, Gal 3:13. But as risen from the dead (also unexpected, since the resurrection would be a collective act, see Dan 12:2; Jesus was the "first-fruits," 1 Cor 15:20), Jesus was recognized as Son of God in a unique way (Rom 1:4), and as "Lord" (in Greek, *kyrios*, a title used for emperors and applied to Yahweh in the LXX, though this may have been a Christian practice).<sup>219</sup> This is the early proclamation (*kerygma*) of the Church, Acts 2:36; Phil 2:5-11; faith in Jesus brings salvation, Acts 4:12.

The risen Christ ("Christ" is Greek for the Hebrew "Messiah;" the early Church would rapidly adopt Greek as its language, a sign of its separation from Judaism) is the new, eschatological Adam, who obeyed God and submitted to God's plan instead of trying to usurp divine prerogatives like the first Man; this is the meaning of the "Christological Hymn" in Phil 2:5-11 (with Suffering Servant allusions). This new Adam gives us a new kind of life which the old Adam had utterly frustrated by his sin (which had brought death); cf. Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:45.<sup>220</sup> In baptism, we die with Christ in order to be raised with him, Rom 6:1-11; we are, like him, a new creation, 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15, or at least being transformed into one, 2 Cor 3:18; cf. 1 Cor 15:51-52. We are the body of Christ, incorporated into him, 1 Cor 12:12-27.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> The gospel of Mark proclaims Jesus as Son of God from the beginning, but this was known only to God the Father and to demons until Jesus dies as he does on the cross, and the first human can then realize who he was, Mark 15:39.

<sup>220</sup> Christ the new Adam will be in Paradise, Luke 23:43, and may be its Gardener, like the first Adam in Gen 2:8, 15, John 20:15 ("misunderstandings" in the Bible are usually deliberate, especially in John; see also Mark 14:58; 15:29 (Mark is driving home a point).

<sup>221</sup> I fancy that Paul's inaugural vision of the risen Lord (in his "conversion;" the meaning of this term must be explained), in Acts 9:5, 17, 27 (cf. 1 Cor 9:1; 2 Cor 12:2-4; Gal 1:15-16) was of a huge man, a colossus.

It is the resurrection of Jesus which decides everything for the Christian (see 1 Cor 15:14-19). It is the resurrection that is the starting point for the Christian, from which he or she then reads the Scriptures in order to understand and contemplate the mystery of God (and not to use them as proof-texts: the Scriptures are susceptible of different interpretations). It is the resurrection which enables us to have access to God in Christ (Rom 4:23-5:2; Heb 9:11-14; 10:19-22). We experience the risen Christ through the testimony of the Apostles, in the Church, in whom testifies the Holy Spirit; cf. John 15:26; 2 Tim 1:14; Rom 8:16.

*The Holy Spirit.* Like the “messianic entry” into Jerusalem, the gift of the Spirit is an instance of an initial Torah text being reread in the Prophets and then fulfilled in the New Testament.<sup>222</sup> In Num 11:29, Moses wishes that “all the people” could prophesy because Yahweh had given them his Spirit. In Joel 3 (2:28-32 in some Bibles), the prophet predicts that after some unspecified time, God’s Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh, so that both men and women of whatever state shall prophesy, amidst great cosmic portents (fire, smoke, as in the great Sinai theophany “on the third day,” Exod 19:16-18). Jesus had promised the Spirit (John 15:26, called the “Promise of my Father” in Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5) after his death and resurrection, and now, “in the last days” (as Luke notes in Acts 2:17, doctoring or tweaking the Joel passage), the Spirit comes down on Pentecost.<sup>223</sup> Pentecost was the Jewish feast of Weeks (*Shavu’ot*), on the fiftieth day after Passover (thus the Greek name Pentecost, “Fiftieth”). It was like the culmination of the time of celebration after the national liberation feast of Passover, and pilgrims stayed

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In mystical Judaism, there is a work called the Shi‘ur Qomah which, in order to stress the majesty of God, attributes enormous dimensions to him, like soles which cover the whole universe; see *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (R.J.Z. Werblowsky – G. Wigoder, eds.; New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 638 (St. Augustine, in his Commentary on 1 John, Tract. 7,10 [Office of Readings for Wednesday of the 19th Week in Ordinary Time], rejects this notion). In the Pauline epistles, see Eph 1:22-23; 3:17-19; 4:10, 13-16; Col 1:18-19, 24. There is a provocative reading of 1 Cor 15:6, “then (or afterwards) he appeared over (or above) five hundred brethren,” although *epanō* in this sense requires a genitive, and here we have the dative. But see footnote 309 below.

<sup>222</sup> Gen 49:8-12 is the Oracle of Judah, where Jacob’s blessing of this son predicts that he will, like lion, rule over Israel always, and “when Shiloh comes” (interpreted as referring to the Messianic Age), Judah will tie his donkey (and foal of a donkey, in Hebrew parallelistic composition) to the vine etc. This prophecy is evoked in Zech 9:9 (double mention of the donkey gain) and is fulfilled in the gospels (in Matt 21:1-7, literally on both animals!, in Mark 11:1-6, with inordinate attention paid to tying and untying the beast), in what I have called the “unleashing of the eschatological events.”

<sup>223</sup> In John 19:30, Jesus upon dying (his Glorification, in John inseparable from his Exaltation) hands over the Spirit, which is received by the disciples in 20:22.



in Jerusalem from Passover to Pentecost.<sup>224</sup> Note the storm-noise and fire mentioned in Acts 2:1-4. Those who received the Spirit then prophesy, speaking new tongues in what many have seen as the reversal of the dispersion and confusion of tongues in the Tower of Babel episode (just before the call of Abraham and the start, if you will, of “salvation history,” Gen 11).

The Spirit could come upon persons who were preached the Good News, as in Acts 10:44-48; Gal 3:1-5, or when praying, as in Acts 8:15-17. The gifts of the Spirit (in Greek, *charismata*) were the signs, or proof, that one was a new creation in Christ (cf. Heb 2:1-4; Rom 7:6; 2 Cor 5:17; 1 Cor 12:1-11). It is proof of being a child of God, Rom 5:5; 8:14-17), and is the guarantee or seal of salvation after the Final Judgment, 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13-14; 4:30.<sup>225</sup> The first Christians were all Jews who did not immediately think of going to the Gentiles, but once they witnessed that Gentiles, too, received the Spirit, they had no trouble admitting them into their numbers; Acts 10:45; 15:7-11; 19:6.<sup>226</sup>

The Holy Spirit, understood thus as the great sign of eschatological deliverance, the gift that allows access to God (Eph 2:18) and as a “seal” keeps us safe in the Day of the Lord, represents the whole hope of Israel: it is the real content of what God had promised, Acts 2:37-39 (in Gal 3:29; 4:6-7, the Promise is that of divine sonship and inheritance).<sup>227</sup>

*The mission to the Gentiles.* Jesus’ mission —this is a proper term, from the Latin “to send;” “to send” was a technical term for commissioning a prophet in the Hebrew Bible— was “only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” Matt 15:24.<sup>228</sup> He probably had contacts with “Gentiles” (from the Latin *gentes*, “peoples or nations,” in Hebrew *goyîm*, in Greek *ethnē*, those who were not Jewish), but they are beyond the confines of his mission. Jesus had enough to do gathering the “lost sheep” of Israel (cf. John 7:35;

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<sup>224</sup> In Jewish tradition, Shavu‘ot celebrates the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, or the renewal of the covenant. See SMITH, *The Memoirs of God*, 81, with references to 2 Chr 15:10-14; Jubilees 6:17.

<sup>225</sup> Cf. Rom 4:11.

<sup>226</sup> Note the relation between purification or circumcision of the heart and the Holy Spirit: Col 2:11; Phil 3:3; Acts 7:51; 15:8-9; Mark 1:8. Membership in the people of God in the Old Testament was marked by circumcision, Gen 17, but cf. Jer 9:25-26.

<sup>227</sup> But for Luke, the line between the Holy Spirit and resurrection may blur, related as they are (Rom 8:11); cf. Acts 13:32-33; 24:14-15; 26:4-8.

<sup>228</sup> In Greek, the verb is *apostellō*, whence “apostle” (applied to Jesus in Heb 3:1).

8:48; 10:16; 11:52; cf. the Q saying in Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34). But his “inclusive” attitude, his acceptance of reprobate Jews (ostracized by the Pharisees and other groups), figured mightily in his eschatological ingathering of the “ Twelve Tribes” (cf. Rom 15:7-12).

There were precedents in the Hebrew Bible for the participation, if not inclusion, of Gentiles into God’s people: in Isa 2:2-4, “at the end of the days” all the nations shall come to the Temple of Yahweh to be taught the ways of his Torah, resulting in universal peace. In Zech 8:23, “on that day” ten Gentile men (a *minyan*, a Jewish quorum) will grab a Jew by his cloak and tell him they want to go with him to be with his God. The Servant is to be a light to the nations, Isa 49:6 (applied to Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:46-48). In the late “globalization” passage Isa 19:23-25, there shall be good communications among former archenemies, Assyria, Egypt and Israel, and all three shall be God’s people. But there were also less “democratic” passages, such as Isa 60:10-16, where the Gentiles are to be transporters who will do all the heavy lifting in the restoration of Zion, and Ezek 44:9, where no foreigner, not even residents of Israel, shall enter the Temple (cf. Ezek 47:22-23).

The first Christians were all Jews. Jerusalem was their center, and this church or local assembly was headed by a conservative, observant Jew, James the “brother of the Lord.”<sup>229</sup> Some of these Jewish-Christians were from the Diaspora, called “Hellenists” in Acts 6:1. There was friction between these Jewish-Christians of Greek culture and the Jewish-Christians of Palestinian culture (called “Hebrews” in Acts 6:1). Seven Hellenistic Jewish-Christians were instituted as deacons to serve the “Hellenists.” It was with Hellenistic non-Christian Jews that Stephen engaged in such vigorous debate, which led to his martyrdom, Acts 6:8-15; 7:55-60. Stephen shows himself to be quite radical in his rejection of the Temple; Luke, the author of Acts, has Stephen accused of speaking against the Temple and the Law, and Jesus’ “threat” to the Temple and to the Mosaic

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<sup>229</sup> See Gal 1:19; 2:11-14; cf. Acts 15:5-21; 21:17-26. We will touch on whether Jesus had siblings later on. The “Letter of James,” attributed to this brother or relative of Jesus, is a conservative Jewish-Christian document which corrects abuses of the Pauline doctrine of justification through faith and not works, stating that Abraham was justified through works, which perfected his faith, Jas 2:21-26. “This James died for the faith at the hands of the high priest Ananus, shortly before the Jewish revolt (Josephus [*Antiquities*] 20.9.1 [197-203]; for a probably more legendary account, cf. the witness of Hegesippus cited by Eusebius [*Ecclesiastical History*] 4.22.4.

Law is placed on Stephen's lips, Acts 6:13-14.<sup>230</sup> After Stephen's execution, there was a persecution against the Jerusalem church, and the disciples were dispersed. Some went north to Syria, still only preaching to Jews. But some Cypriots and Cyreneans (Jews from these places seem to have been rather "radical," to judge from their revolts against Rome a few decades later) began to speak also to "Greeks," announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ.<sup>231</sup> This was momentous, and for the first time the Jesus movement differentiated itself enough from Judaism as to get a new name, "Christians;" see Acts 11:19-26.

The Good News of Jesus Christ was not accepted by most Jews (Luke is probably exaggerating in Acts 6:7; 21:20). The first preaching about the crucified and risen Messiah took place in the synagogues. Acts reports that there were violent reactions, and Paul describes himself as a pious, zealous Pharisee who sought to destroy the Church, Gal 1:13-14; Phil 3:3-6. The Pharisees were probably Jesus' great opponents in the realm of religious ideas—they both summoned Jews to follow a specific program, the Pharisees one of observant Judaism according to their oral law and interpretation of the Torah, Jesus a radical, eschatological pre-Fall Torah.<sup>232</sup> Although the gospels, and Church tradition, have largely caricatured the Pharisees as extremely nit-picking legalists without a heart, in fact their program for Judaism was more progressive, flexible, rational and adaptable than others, and not only did it largely impose itself in the form of rabbinic Judaism after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. and the loss of influence of the priestly Sadducees, their views as carried forward by tradition have much to do with the seeming indestructibility of Jews and Judaism, despite the massive efforts to destroy them (up to and including the recent Teutonic "final solution"). In fact, Rabbinic

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<sup>230</sup> Note that Stephen and Paul resemble Jesus in the accounts in Acts. Luke's gospel has no accusations against Jesus regarding the Temple. The early Christians in Luke-Acts go to the Temple, Luke 24:53; Acts 2:46; 3:1-10, etc. The Temple "fizzles out" in Acts once the riot of Acts 21 occurs. A bit more on this later on.

<sup>231</sup> This reading is very uncertain. Some good manuscript copies (manuscript copies are all we have as "witnesses" [evidence] for what the "original" text said) have "Hellenists," others "Greeks." Since there already were Hellenists in the sense of Greek-speaking Jewish Christians, the better reading here, or at least, the meaning here, must be "non-Jewish Greeks."

<sup>232</sup> See Mark 7:1-13, where Jesus lambasts Pharisaic traditions as merely human. These would be the "traditions" of the fathers of Gal 1:14, similar sounding to the "Sayings of the Fathers" in the Mishnah, one of which would be to "build a fence around the Torah" to avoid breaking it in the slightest. Jesus and the Pharisees nevertheless shared important beliefs, so that they could debate; from the Sadducee priests, there would be more brute opposition. Recall that Pharisees invited Jesus to meals (Luke 7:36), and many joined Christianity at least for a time (Acts 15:5, though Luke says many priests did the same); cf. Acts 23:1-11.

Judaism inculcates the biblical (especially Deuteronomic) value of *love* of God, and knows some version of the “Golden Rule” regarding love of neighbor (cf. Tob 4:15).

We tend to imagine the historical Jesus (as presented in some movies) as a handsome, radiant man with a halo around his head, before whom the crowds swooned, all, that is, except some nasty-looking dark guys with crooked noses, the hard-of-heart “Jews.” The fact is that everyone in the real “movie” was Jewish and pretty much looked alike, and that Jesus represented quite a fringe movement in Judaism. Whatever disciples he gathered around him were not too sophisticated, and abandoned him when it became apparent that the “worldly” (as were almost all messianic conceptions) they had placed on him were about to be cruelly dashed. Jesus’ radical eschatological program, especially the ingathering of Israel, hinged on his “worldly” success; otherwise, it would seem to be far-fetched and even absurd (how many prostitutes and sinners have you invited to dinner recently?). But the unexpected had happened: Jesus had been raised from the dead and constituted Lord. He, in his person, was the realm or sphere of salvation. But this was an experience not granted to all. As in all things, short of being ‘knocked off your horse’ (like Paul), personal and sociological dispositions had a lot to do with acceptance of the Good News of Jesus Christ preached by the apostles. Most Jews did not accept the Good News. The program presented by the Pharisees was more in accord with all that they had been taught regarding the Law Moses (see John 9:29). We must keep in mind that faith in Jesus, whether as a result of a resurrection appearance (cf. Matt 28:16-17) or from the preaching of the Apostles or their successors (Rom 10:17), is a gift. We shall have more to say about Israel’s non-acceptance of the Gospel, and its significance, when we discuss Paul.

And so, after repeated “bad experiences” going to the synagogues, with threats to “from now on” go to the Gentiles instead (Acts 13:44-52; Acts 18), Church and Synagogue parted ways, and the Church took on an increasingly Gentile character. The great “ingathering” was of *really* lost sheep (cf. Matt 15:26; Gal 2:15), but this was read as being in God’s plan all along (Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-6; Matt 22:2-10; Luke 14:16-24). The end of Acts finds Paul in Rome, receiving all who came to him, but with the statement that “the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and *they* will hear it.”<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> “They,” placed before “and” in the Greek text, is emphatic.

## The New Testament

*Preliminary remarks.* The early Church did not set out to write a “New Testament.” Jesus had fulfilled the Holy Scriptures, meaning “the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms,” Luke 24:44. His return in glory was eagerly awaited as imminent; see Mark 9:1; 1 Thess 4:15. But ‘the Lord tarried’, Matt 24:48; 2 Pet 3:3-4. So after the Good News was preached and short lists of sayings or miracles were composed, there came into being the writings we call the gospels, in order to preserve the memory of Jesus’ ministry and passion, and later, accounts of his origins. Unlike the Jewish Scriptures, the writings which make up the New Testament (NT) were in Greek.

In this introductory text to the Christian Bible, we will limit our remarks concerning the NT to a brief overview of its contents, with a special look only at the most important writings, especially as they relate to what was presented regarding the OT.

*Paul.* The earliest writings in the NT are the letters of Paul. These were written in response to problems in the communities he had founded. We will briefly say something about those letters which come from his hand, (mostly) leaving aside the later “deuteropaulines.”

1 Thessalonians, the earliest writing of the NT, reflects the eager expectation of the Parousia. 2 Thess, probably not from Paul himself, reflects a later situation where the delay of the Parousia has resulted in idleness and abusive behavior.

Galatians is to a Gentile community which has fallen under the spell of preachers who promote certain Jewish observances. These may be forms of accretions to Christianity in order to fortify its efficacy, like an unneeded dietary supplement, or these preachers may be like the “superapostles” in the Corinthian correspondence who present themselves as more qualified, authentic Jews than Paul, with better credentials and with a more authentic (more Jewish) gospel.<sup>234</sup> Paul, angry and very protective (and defensive)

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<sup>234</sup> I know of a group in South Florida led by a man who dresses like an orthodox rabbi and who says he discovered he was Jewish along the way, but who preaches “Yeshua ha-Mashiah” (Jesus the Messiah), and speaks about “Rev Shaul” (‘Rabbi Paul’). He speaks of the Torah as if binding in its entirety, but his congregation is made up mostly of simple Central Americans; I bet few if any are circumcised. The man speaks with a fake-sounding accent, seemingly to make one think his native Spanish has become influenced by his frequent stays in Israel. He knows a good bit about the Talmuds, however, and is interesting to listen to. But he would seem to be totally at odds with Paul’s teaching in Gal.

about his foundation, strongly argues for the revealed nature of the Gospel and the eschatological rupture it represents.

Paul vigorously defends his apostleship in Gal, in order to validate “his gospel” in the eyes of this community. He had been a zealous Pharisee, committed to the observance of the commandments of the Torah (Jewish tradition would number them at 613) according to the strict Pharisaic interpretation (*halakah*). But he had had a revelation, an apocalypse by God of his Son Jesus, and became convinced that he had been called from the womb (like Jeremiah) to be apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 1:11-16; cf. Jer 1:4-5). This experience was not of human origin; it was not due to reading and interpretation of Scripture, not even, protests Paul, consultation with the apostles who had been before him (though Paul admits having met (consulted?) with Peter for two weeks. Paul’s conviction was that “Christ was the end/goal of the Torah” (*telos* means both, Rom 10:4). Hellenistic Judaism had already been cultivating the idea that what was important about the Torah was not its dietary and ritual regulations meant to separate Jew and Gentile pagan, but rather its monotheism and high ethics. Now Paul was convinced that justification, being put right with God so as to be ready for the judgment and thus be saved, was to be found (literally) *in* Christ, by being “inserted” into Christ (see., e.g., Phil 3:7-9; Rom 8:1). In this one body, there could be no division anymore between Jew and Gentile (this division at table was what got his goat so much in Gal 2:11-14; cf. Rom 14:13-23). This purpose of the Torah, this barrier between Jew and pagan protecting the people of God from idolatry and dangerous mixing, was fulfilled in Christ: in Christ there was no longer Jew or Gentile, man or woman, Gal 3:23-29); as the later letter to the Ephesians puts it, on the cross Christ had nailed all these regulations of the Torah, destroying the wall of hateful separation and creating a new Adam, reconciling both Jew and Gentile in his one Body, Eph 2:14-18. Thus, it makes no sense for the Galatians to buy that there is a better product available to them than Paul’s gospel; this would undo the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice, Gal 2:15-21.

In the Corinthian correspondence, we see that Paul has to struggle with what seem to be the beginnings of Gnosticism, a dualistic “heresy” that maintained that salvation was by *gnōsis*, knowledge (the realization) that the material world was an illusion of no value and that one’s goal was to attain divinity by being wholly spiritual. The Corinthians

overvalue knowledge, wisdom and eloquence, and Paul has to insist that true power comes from the God who revealed himself and saved us through his weak, crucified Messiah, who was raised in power and victory after his humiliation. We are strong when we realize the weakness of the flesh and put our trust in this God, but without seeking to escape the flesh. For the Corinthians, this Gnostic-type dualism had led them to countenance sexual depravity and to deny the resurrection (1 Cor 5; 15:12).

Already in 2 Cor 5:8, Paul envisages dying and going to be with the Lord (a change from 1 Thess where he expects to be alive at the Parousia). In Phil 1:23, this becomes even more marked. It seems that the expectation of an imminent return of Jesus cooled off rather quickly. Phil is remarkable for being addressed to Paul's favorite community, the only one he accepted sustenance from (his proud refusal to accept support for preaching the Gospel, 1 Cor 9:15-18, had led the Corinthians to suspect something fishy was going on, 2 Cor 12:11-18; cf. 8:20). Paul only went to places where the Gospel had not been preached (Rom 15:20-21, giving as the reason the fulfillment of Isa 53); once he had founded a church, he zealously guarded his territory. There was a tradition that the Gospel had to be preached to all nations before the End, Mark 13:10. Paul at one point intended to go to Spain, which would be like the farthest reaches of the known world, Rom 15:22-32. This trip would enable him to visit the church in Rome, something he very much wanted to do.

Paul was almost as apprehensive about his visit to Rome as he was about his trip to Jerusalem: he feared opposition from the Jews who saw him as a denigrator of the Mosaic Torah, a man who had turned his back on Judaism. In Rome, too, there were not only Jews who might oppose him: apparently Christian Jews of a very conservative bent in regards to Jewish observances could turn in their fellows to the authorities for persecution and death. So Paul decides to write his greatest "treatise," the Epistle to the Romans, to explain his position regarding Jew and Gentile, and his gospel.

Rom argues that all have sinned, Jew and Gentile, and have "fallen short of the glory of God," 3:23. The Gentile had God's law written in the heart, the Jew received it in Sinai, but neither had kept it, and both are therefore subject to judgment and condemnation. But in these last days (see 1 Cor 10:11), God has revealed his righteousness in a strange way: like a rich person who can show how rich she is either by

rubbing it in the face of a poor person or by making the poor person rich himself, God has chosen to justify sinners in Christ and thus show his great righteousness, Rom 3:21-26. God in Christ has overlooked the sins committed previously, and by faith in Christ “justifies” or makes us righteous. Recall that this is what the Suffering Servant was supposed to do, Isa 53:11; cf. Mark 14:24. Paul states that the way God did this was by “putting forth” Jesus as *hilastērion*, variously translated “propitiation, sacrifice of atonement, etc.” But this Greek word is the LXX translation for the cover of the Ark of the Covenant which was sprinkled with blood in order to expiate sins on the great Day of Atonement, Lev 16 (the center of the Torah). On this day, all sins were forgiven. Recall that the Servant is said to sprinkle many nations in Isa 52:15, and that eschatological expiation was expected to take place on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) in the tenth Jubilee in Qumran circles (alluded to in Isa 61:1 and Luke 4:18). Jesus’ fulfillment of what Lev 16 prefigured, in the Christian view, is the major topic of the Letter to the Hebrews.<sup>235</sup>

Paul had been very struck by the fact that Jesus, an innocent man, had died for others on the cross (Rom 5:6-8; Phil 2:5-11). The former Pharisee who had seen a curse in crucifixion now saw that Christ had become this curse, Gal 3:13, even “sin,” 2 Cor 5:21. In Rom 8:3-4, *peri hamartías* should not be translated “for the sake of sin” or “to deal with sin,” but “as a sin- or guilt-offering; *peri hamartías* in the LXX translation of this type of sacrifice in the Old Testament, and is the translation of the Hebrew *asham* — another type of sin- or guilt-offering— in Isa 53:10. For a pious Pharisee concerned with purity and the meticulous keeping of the Torah, the level of Jesus’ self-humiliation would never cease to amaze Paul, Gal 2:19-20.

Many scholars consider Paul to be leading up to the summit of Rom, the chapters concerning the Jews, Rom 9-11. Paul begins by expressing great anguish over the fact that his brother Israelites are mostly not *in Christ*, to the extent that, somewhat similarly to what was said about Jesus above, Paul would be willing to be “cursed (anathema) away from Christ,” that is, outside the cherished sphere of salvation, for the sake of his fellow Jews. Paul then engages in a reflection about an issue which troubled many

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<sup>235</sup> In the Epistle of Barnabas, an early writing of the “apostolic fathers,” ch.7, Jesus is likened to the scapegoat of Lev 16.



Christians (and in particular the Lukan community, as we shall see): why had the first intended *destinataires* of the Gospel (Acts 3:25-26) largely rejected it?

Paul argues that the Old Testament often spoke of only a remnant of the people as remaining faithful to Yahweh, and that this is the “true Israel” (similarly to Qumran). Israel as a whole had sought righteousness in what had become, after Christ (as far as Paul was concerned), *their* way, not God’s (cf. 1 Cor 1:17-25). The purpose of the Jewish Torah had been fulfilled in Christ, Rom 10:1-4. Salvation is by confessing Christ. But has Israel then been rejected by God due to their rejection of Christ? No! God, who remains faithful (cf. 2 Tim 2:11-13) to his people —based on his unconditional love for their Fathers, Rom 11:28-29— used Israel’s rejection of the Gospel to “send” it to the Gentiles (all things work for the good for those who love God, Rom 8:28). There is a divine *dialectic* at work here. The Gentiles are to show the fruits of being in the Messiah so well that Israel is thus made jealous, Rom 11:11-15.<sup>236</sup> No Gentile should look down on any Jew, boasting (no one can boast, Rom 3:27; 1 Cor 1:29); the Gentile is like a wild branch almost unnaturally grafted unto a good olive tree, and could be more easily *cut off* than can a natural branch be *lopped off*. The Gentile must acknowledge that he is sustained by the tree’s roots, and not the other way around. If Israel’s stumble meant salvation for the Gentile, what will their being raised up again be but a resurrection from the dead, Rom 11:11-15. And Paul goes on to declare a “mystery” (indicating something he has learned by divine revelation): when the fullness of the Gentiles comes into the Body of Christ, then *all Israel will be saved*. Paul does not specify how. “God’s gifts and calling are irrevocable,” Rom 11:29. This dialectic, whereby Paul sees God’s mysterious plan at work, explaining the continued coexistence of Jews and Gentiles in a mutually-enriching relationship, leads him to finish these sublime chapters with a doxology, a hymn glorifying the wisdom of God.

One last word about Paul, however, as sad as the ending of Acts (although all works out in the end, in God’s plan). When Paul had spoken to the other apostles in Jerusalem, and had gotten approval for the gospel he preached to the Gentiles and they had shaken hands, he was asked by the Christian Jews of Jerusalem to remember their

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<sup>236</sup> Needless to say, Christians on the whole have fallen so short of demonstrating these messianic fruits that Israel seems to be far from jealous. This is the great Christian task, and it is one more of deeds than words.

poor, Gal 2:1-10. He then took up a collection in his Greek churches, and went to Jerusalem (with some trepidation, Rom 15:25-32) to deliver these funds. Koester and others have seen here a fulfillment of those prophecies, especially in Isa 60, that speak of the wealth of the Gentiles streaming into Zion; see Rom 15:27. In Jerusalem, Paul is asked to show that, despite the rumors, he is not against Torah-observance; he is asked to pay for the costs incidental to a vow (sacrifices, haircut, etc.) that some men had taken (Paul himself had taken such vows, Acts 18:18), Acts 21:17-26. But when he was in the Temple, a riot broke out when “some Jews from Asia” accused him of bringing Gentiles into an area of the Temple prohibited to them (a notice that violation of this prohibition was on pain of death was displayed in the Temple). Paul was arrested, appealed to Caesar, and thus arrived in Rome a bit differently than he had planned. It is ironic that a collection from Christian Gentile to Christian Jew, which Paul had seen as part of his ministry of reconciliation, 2 Cor 5:18, was the occasion of a riot and an arrest due to interfaith misunderstandings, and ultimately led to Paul’s execution.

*The Gospel of Mark.* The first gospel to be written that we possess is that attributed to Mark, by tradition Peter’s interpreter. This is actually a writing that seems to call itself a “gospel,” unlike many others (including the Gnostic so-called “Gospel of Thomas” dating from the end of the first century at the earliest). Mark seems to have been written before the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. Its author, contrary to what has often been said in the past, shows himself to be a masterful theologian and writer. Jesus is here the Son of God, but this is known only to the post-Easter community; in Jesus’ lifetime, only God his Father and the demons know this. This Son of God is the Messiah, but not of a political kind; never is “kingdom” Jesus’ in Mark (cf. Matt 20:21 and Mark 10:37; Matt 21:5-10 + 2:1-6 and Mark 11:10). Jesus is also the plenipotentiary Son of Man, but combined with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, as in the Passion predictions, including the programmatic verse 10:45. Jesus is the savior, who saves by his death, and only then can a human being (the centurion) recognize that he was the Son of God (forming an *inclusio* with Mark 1:1).

Mark represents an abrupt break with Judaism, and was written to a Gentile community, probably in Rome. Jesus declares or cleanses all foods in 7:19; all are kosher! Jesus has come as the Suffering Servant-Son of Man “to give his life as a ransom

for many,” 10:45. I have understood “ransom” as referring to, among other things, the ransom (*kopher*, from the Hebrew atonement-expiation verb, as in Yom Kippur) of Exod 30:12, which every Israelite had to pay as the price for his entry into the Promised Land (we could understand here “salvation”). This had to be paid in “sanctuary sheqels,” and so was the principal reason for the money-changers’ tables in the Temple area during Passover time. Since Jesus pays this figurative ransom, there is no need for such tables anymore; thus, the so-called “cleansing of the Temple,” Mark 11:15-17. Jesus has also healed lepers and women with blood-flows, so that these persons, if poor, would have no need to buy pigeons either (Jesus overturned their tables as well). And, unique to Mark, Jesus’ prohibition that any (sacred) vessels be carried through the Temple signifies that the blood-flow of animal sacrifice in the Temple has been stopped; Jesus has given the Temple and its cult an infarct (a heart attack), since the eschatological name of the Temple is “house of prayer,” as in Isa 56:7. Jesus’ further citation of Jer 7:11 in Mark 11:17 additionally alludes to the destruction of the Temple he predicts in Mark 13:2 (Jer 7 is about the destruction of the first Temple by the Babylonians). This destruction (or infarct) had already been symbolized by the “cursing of the fig tree” episode (the fig tree completely withers), which, divided into two, surrounds the “Temple-cleansing” verses.<sup>237</sup>

*Matthew.* Unlike Mark, but basing itself on Mark (plus “Q,” a collection of Jesus’ sayings that Matt shares with Luke, plus his own source), Matt is a very Jewish gospel even in its flavor. Some have divided Matt into five books, like the Pentateuch, and seen his Jesus depicted as a new Moses. Matt speaks of the Torah as in no way abrogated by Jesus, but fulfilled, 5:17. Clearly his Jesus is at odds with the Pharisees and their halakah, or way of interpreting Torah (see, e.g., Matt 12:1-8), but compare Mark 7:1-23 with Matt 15:1-20. Matt is more circumspect in his phrasing (a sign of Matt’s *redaction* of Mark), does *not* make all foods clean (cf. the compromise position regarding what is edible even in the primitive Church, Acts 15:19-21, 28-29), and ends the pericope (biblical unit or passage) by seemingly disagreeing merely with Pharisaic hand-washing, and not with

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<sup>237</sup> In my doctoral dissertation published as *The Theological Significance of Jesus’ Temple Action in Mark’s Gospel* (106-108), I show how a real cleansing, as depicted in 1 Macc 4 and 2 Macc 10 contain some seven elements which Mark has *in an opposite sense*. By the way, Mark 1:44, the command to the healed leper to offer a sacrifice, has to be understood (and translated) “as a witness *against* them,” in line with Mark 6:11 and 13:9. The leper, of course, does not go to the Temple but preaches Jesus instead.

Levitical dietary laws (*kashrut*). Matt 23:1-3, apparently in an effort to minimize or eliminate differences between Jesus' teaching and that of the respected Pharisees, has Jesus merely criticize Pharisaic hypocrisy, not their teaching, in what is nevertheless an enigmatic verse.

But for Matt, Jesus is the eschatological Messiah, who not only correctly interprets Moses, but relativizes him by holding up as the standard of righteousness (a favorite Matthean concept, first applied to kindly Joseph in Matt 1:19), the righteousness of the Kingdom; see 6:33. Moses allowed divorce only temporarily, but in the Beginning it was not in God's plan, Matt 19:1-9 (*porneia*, "fornication or immorality," but *not* "adultery," probably refers to illicit unions prohibited by Jewish law or custom which should of course be discontinued). Adherence to Jesus allows one to fulfill God's will (another favorite Matthean concept) easily, for Jesus' yoke (cf. the yoke of the wisdom = Torah in Sir 6:30 [Hebrew]; 51:26), is "merciful," *chrēstōs*, Matt 11:30. God's will is what Torah (literally) *pointed to* (some explain the verbal root behind *torah* [teaching] as originally meaning "to point;" "to shoot" an arrow is another meaning of the verb, as is "to make rain;" cf. Hos 10:12; Joel 2:23).

Matt has given us many passages which are unique to him. The story of the Magi, the flight into Egypt, the Sermon on the Mount (Luke has a briefer "sermon on the plain"), "Church instructions" in Matt 18 (of the four gospels, only Matt uses "church," *ekklēsia*, twice, once here, the other time being in the charge to Peter the Rock, the prince of the apostles, 16:17), the parable of the wise and foolish virgins and the scene of the Last Judgment (recall the very similar language of the Son of Man coming in glory and sitting on the throne of his glory in 1 Enoch), Matt 25. One of Matt's favorite expressions is "to become or make oneself a disciple of the Kingdom" (see the wise scribe who makes use of *the old and the new* in Matt 13:51); his gospel ends with the risen Jesus' declaration that all *exousia* ("dominion") has been given to him on heaven and earth, that we are to make disciples (recall that the Mishnah urges the same) of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Triune God and teaching them to keep all that Jesus has commanded. Jesus' promise that he is with us until the end of the age forms an inclusion with Matt 1:23 ("he shall be called Immanuel, which means 'God with us'").

*Luke-Acts.* The expectation expressed in Mark 9:1, the coming of the Kingdom in full force during the lifetime of “some standing here,” is already tempered in such texts as Mark 13:10 (the Gospel must first be preached to all nations), and definite timetables are excluded by Mark 13:32 (not even the Son knows!), although the period of the final trial is to be shortened for the sake of the elect, Mark 13:20. This seems to be the opposite of 2 Pet 3:9, where the long delay of the Parousia that some complain of (and sneer about) in this latest of NT writings is explained as due to the Lord’s patience. In Matt 25:5, 19, a “long time” is expected to transpire before the Lord returns. In Luke-Acts (this is Luke’s two-volume work), the Kingdom is within or among us, Luke 17:20-21 (but cf. 9:27; 10:9, 11; 11:20). It is the Father who knows when the Kingdom of Israel will be restored, Acts 1:6-8; the task of the disciples is to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth, and not be looking up to heaven for signs of Jesus’ return, Acts 1:11.

For Luke, accordingly to Hans Conzelmann’s famous thesis, history is divided into the time of Israel, the time of Christ and the time of the Church. Unlike Mark, who presents an abrupt rupture between ‘Old and New Testaments’, Luke presents a gradual picture of development, God tenderly moving things along with all gentleness; the poet Dante called Luke *scriba mansuetudinis Christi*, “the writer of the meekness of Christ.” From beginning to end of his two-volume *opus*, Luke shows respect for the Jews (especially Pharisees) and Jewish institutions, traditions, the Law of Moses and the Temple. The gospel begins and ends in the Temple, but the Temple I think “peters out” after the great riot takes place in it apparently due to a misunderstanding regarding whom Paul had brought into a restricted area, Acts 21:15-36.<sup>238</sup> Old Jews (Shimeon and Hannah) awaiting Israel’s deliverance greet the child Jesus in the Temple as his family fulfills the Law of Moses. Jesus fulfills all the hopes of Israel, Acts 24:14-15, and the Gospel is meant for, and preached to, Jews first, Acts 3:25-26.

Scholars believe that behind this gradualness and insistence on the *reliability and certainty* of the Gospel message is a worried community (see Luke 1:1-4). The Gospel of Jesus Christ went out to Israel as its first *destinataire*, but Israel largely rejected it, and

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<sup>238</sup> Stephen’s speech in Acts 7, before his martyrdom, anticipates the time of the end of the Temple by citing Isa 66:1-2; Temple building here seems to be an act of rebellion, and references to the Temple as “made by human hands” connote idolatry, since this is a common term for idols; see Pss 115:3-8; 135:15-18.

thus became reprobate itself (see the parable of the messianic banquet, Luke 14:15-24). Had God rejected his people? This was a question Paul, whom Luke had accompanied, struggled with in Rom 11. Luke is at pains to show God had been faithful to his Promises; it was Israel who had largely rejected the Gospel. Note the following “exact fulfillment” passages in Luke: 1:55, 70; 2:20, 29-30; 19:32; 22:13; 24:26-27; Acts 2:33; 7:17; 13:23-33. I would say that despite the strong words at the end of Acts (28:28), the final word in that book is that Paul received *everybody* in his rented lodgings in Rome. Although Luke knew of Paul’s death by the time he wrote Acts, he preferred not to end on such a negative note, for God’s saving plan will not end in failure.

The “gentle scribe” is particularly concerned with the poor and outcast.<sup>239</sup> Unlike Matt, whose protagonist in the infancy narrative is Joseph, in Luke it is Mary. Luke in fact pairs a woman with a man in many of his scenes: (in Luke, Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Hannah, Simon the Pharisee and the woman sinner, the man who loses a sheep and the woman who loses a coin, the women on the Via Crucis; in Acts, Mary and the praying community, Ananias and Sapphira, other prominent women).<sup>240</sup> Women accompany Jesus, Luke 8:1-3, and are taught by him, 10:38-42. The Magnificat is a hymn of the *‘anawîm*, the “humble, bowed-down ones” of the Lord. Economic positions and states in life are reversed in the eschaton (End Time of salvation): the hungry God fills with good things, the rich he sends away empty. Lest we spiritualize too much (cf. Matt’s “poor in spirit”), Luke has blessings and curses with no such qualifiers, Luke 6:20-26. Jesus has no place “at the inn,” and is placed in a manger; poor, despised shepherds are the first to see him.<sup>241</sup> Only Luke has the story of the man who stored up his grain only to die that night, 12:13-21. Only he says to invite those who cannot repay you, 14:12-14, and that one must renounce all goods in order to be Jesus’ disciple, 14:33. He makes the “young rich man” stay and listen to what Jesus says about the greater difficulty the rich have in entering the Kingdom of heaven, Luke 18:18-27. In

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<sup>239</sup> Matthew, however, is also greatly concerned for the “little ones” and the “least;” Matt 10:42; 18:6, 10, 14; 25:40, 45. He also stresses that God is our “heavenly Father” and that we are all siblings.

<sup>240</sup> Not to mention those in Paul’s letters, e.g., Rom 16:1-16.

<sup>241</sup> Scholars have seen an *inclusio*, a deliberate link, between Jesus’ being placed in a *manger*, where animals eat, and the Last Supper, where Jesus gives himself to eat. This is done by the use of the word *katáluma*, which appears only in Luke 2:7 and 22:11. It is translated “inn” in 2:7 and “upper or guest room” in 22:11, but probably means ‘the upper quarters’ where people stay as opposed to the lower quarters where animals were put for the night.

the story of Lazarus, it is the rich man whose name is not important, and again, the roles are simply reversed in the afterlife, with no explicit ethical considerations, but simply that one had it bad here and the other good and things are now reversed, Luke 16:19-31.

But mercy triumphs in Luke. Jesus heals the ear of the servant struck in Gethsemane, Luke 22:51, and forgives his executioners, 23:34. He promises Paradise to the repentant evildoer, 23:39-43. In fact, “all the crowds who had assembled,” at the sight of Jesus’ death, *beat their breasts and turned* (penance and conversion terms).

In Acts, Luke *continues* his work by presenting the Church, under the Twelve Apostles, as spreading over all the earth amidst persecution. The Twelve, including Judas the betrayer’s replacement, are qualified by having been with Jesus from the beginning, from the time of John’s baptism, until after his death and resurrection, when they continued to eat and drink with him! There can be no doubt that they are authentic witnesses to the risen Christ; they knew Jesus both in his earthly and risen flesh (see Luke 24:36-43; Acts 1:1-3, 21-22).<sup>242</sup> Peter is the spokesperson for the Church, the first to preach in Pentecost (Jesus had appeared to Peter first, Luke 24:34; cf. 22:31-32). Peter and John are sent to Samaria to see the results of the preaching there, Acts 8:14. It is Peter who has the revelation that all foods have been declared clean by God, and who can thus admit the Roman centurion Cornelius into the Church, Acts 10-11. Persecution causes the Church to venture out, and increase. The hero of the second part of Acts is the “converted” Paul (Paul’s “conversion,” if we use this term, must be understood as his arrival at the hope of Israel; see Acts 26:4-23). But it is to Peter and to the Jerusalem church, with James the brother of the Lord at the helm, to whom Paul must go to resolve the issue of whether Gentiles who become followers of the Way (as Christians are sometimes called in Acts) need to also obey the Mosaic Law. Peter speaks first, then James, and this after a long debate; there may be lessons for us here. Finally, “the Holy Spirit and us” (Acts 15:28; cf. 5:32) decide what to do, and it is a (temporary) compromise, a middle position, to accommodate the Jews in the assembly who cannot bear blood-eating and for whom other pagan customs are taboos, besides, of course, the sexual immorality that many Greeks were notorious for.

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<sup>242</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 5:16. Paul is usually thought not to be included in the definition of “apostle” that Luke uses, with the exception of Acts 14:14. Paul, of course, strenuously defends his apostleship (Gal 1:1; 1 Cor 9:1-3) and includes himself (last) among those to whom Christ appeared, 1 Cor 15:3-8.

The rest of Acts is the story of Paul's missionary journeys, on some of which he was accompanied by Luke (the famous "we sections"). In Acts 21, Luke is at pains to show how there really has been no violent rupture between Judaism and Christianity: "thousands and thousands" (Luke may be exaggerating here; cf. Luke 12:1 ["myriads = groups of ten thousand]) of observant Jews have become believers. But, as we related above, Paul's conciliatory act of going to the Temple backfires and the riot for which he is arrested and ultimately executed occurs.

Acts ends with the arrival in Rome, the capital of the empire, where Paul is under house arrest, living for two years in rented lodgings, unhindered in his preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ; cf. 2 Tim 2:9.<sup>243</sup>

*The Fourth Gospel.* With this gospel, traditionally attributed to "John," we come to a sort of closing of the first part of the NT, five books which may in some way correspond to the Pentateuch.<sup>244</sup> Indeed, there are significant correspondences between this gospel and Genesis. In Greek, they both begin the same way, "in the beginning." The Word of God figures prominently, as does light and darkness, and creation. Except that the Word becomes flesh and "tents" among us, as God did at the end of the Book of Exodus, 40:34-35.<sup>245</sup>

Christ can also be said to be the New Adam in this gospel. This is clearest in two garden scenes, one being the place of his struggle to do God's will (John 18:1; see 12:27-28, with echoes both of Gethsemane and the Lord's Prayer), when Jesus, unlike the first Adam, overcomes temptation and obeys God the Father's will; and the resurrection scene with Mary Magdalen, in which he is "mistaken" for the gardener (like Adam in Gen 2:8, 15). "Mistakes" in the Bible are usually and probably always deliberate, in order to make a point.

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<sup>243</sup> One of Luke and Paul's favorite words is the Greek *parrēsia*, the "free and open speech" of Acts 28:31 (and of free citizens). This is what is sadly unacceptable in certain societies, who are afraid of the free exchange of political and religious ideas.

<sup>244</sup> For interesting reading of these type of musings, see the two-part interview of the great Bible scholar David Noel Freedman (by Hershel Shanks), "How the Hebrew Bible & the Christian Old Testament Differ" (*Bible Review*, Dec. 1993, 28-39) and "The Undiscovered Symmetry of the Bible" (*Bible Review*, Feb. 1994, 34-41, 63).

<sup>245</sup> Luke 1:35 uses the same verb "overshadow" as in the Greek of Exod 40:35 (regarding the cloud, which is the divine presence). Note the presence of "glory" in both John's prologue and this Exod passage.



Certainly Jesus' mother (never called "Mary," but "Woman"), is depicted as the New Eve. She is present and obedient in Jesus' first sign at Cana, sort of "unleashing" Jesus' eschatological ministry (and hastening the "hour" of his Passion and Glorification) with a sign that the superabundance of wine prophesied by such texts as Gen 49:11-12 and Amos 9:11-15 is already taking place. And Jesus' Mother is at the foot of the Cross, that eschatological tree so unlike the tree of the Fall in Gen 2-3. Mary is there with the Disciple-Whom-Jesus-Loved, ready to be splashed with the life-giving (and cleansing) blood and water from Jesus' side, in counterpart to Eve being taken from Adam's side; this is the birth of the Church, of which Mary is symbol and Mother.<sup>246</sup>

Who was this "Beloved Disciple"? The fourth gospel is full of symbolism, and deliberately never identifies who this disciple is (he is the one who wrote "these things" in John 21:24). Curiously, John the son of Zebedee and brother of James is never mentioned; Church tradition (I would use a small "t" here) has identified him with John the son of Zebedee, but it seems to have conflated or combined several "Johns" in the primitive Church, including the John of the Book of Revelation, who simply calls himself "servant" and "prophet," Rev 1:1; 22:9. The "Beloved Disciple" (BD) first appears in the Johannine Last Supper. Like Jesus was in the bosom of his Father, this special disciple ("apostle" is not a Johannine term) is in the bosom of Jesus, and it is to him that even Peter has to go in order to ask Jesus his question. The BD knows the high priest (John 18:15-16, leading scholars to posit that he was a Jerusalemite, not a Galilean), and goes in while Peter stays out, until the BD has him come in. It is the BD alone of the disciples (Peter has denied being one, 18:17) who is at the foot of the cross, along with Jesus' mother. And finally, the BD outruns Peter to the empty tomb and, although he lets Peter in first, it is the BD who is first to believe, John 20:3-9.

I believe, with many scholars, that this gospel underwent two editions. One is that of the "evangelist," the person who actually composed this unusual gospel (so different from the others called "synoptics," since all three can be placed side by side and viewed jointly). He seems to represent a very avant-garde Christian tradition going back to a great figure who was a disciple of Jesus but not one of the Twelve. By the time this last

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<sup>246</sup> See the very interesting article by E.C. HOSKYNS, "Genesis I-III and St John's Gospel," *Journal of Theological Studies* 21 (1920) 210-218.

of the canonical gospels was written, there had been much reflection and development in Church doctrine and sacramental life. Departing from what had already been done in the Synoptics, “John” (as we will call him for convention’s sake) presents a cosmic, almost intergalactic picture of the Son of God who becomes a man in order to reveal the Father (whom no one, not even Moses, had ever seen, John 1:18), in order to glorify the Father and be in turn glorified (on the cross), and then to return to the Father and send the Holy Spirit. Certain themes dominate this gospel, such as light and darkness, and life and death. Jesus’ “cleansing” of the Temple takes place in the beginning of John, 2:13-22, so that there is no immediate or close connection between this event and Jesus’ death (as in the Synoptics), but rather, it is the greatest “sign” of all, the raising of a man dead four days (Lazarus), which ironically results in the decision to kill Jesus, John 11:45-54.

An important feature of this “late” gospel is that, not totally unlike Luke, eschatology, and more specifically Jesus’ Parousia, is “realized” (as opposed to “future,” say the scholars), that is, in accepting Jesus and believing him, one has already passed from death to life, 5:24 (eternal life is to know Jesus and his Father, 17:3), while whoever rejects Jesus has already been judged, 3:18.<sup>247</sup> So, along with a very high “Christology,” which some early heretics took to be evidence that Jesus was not really human; realized eschatology which seemed to contradict Jesus’ future coming on clouds, with a trumpet blast, etc. (see, e.g., 1 Thess 4:13-18); a leading role to a BD who was not one of the Twelve; and, to some extent, perhaps more emphasis on a spiritual or sapiential understanding of sacraments (“sapiential” refers to wisdom; see the interplay of both “levels” in John 6), this fourth gospel ran the risk of falling out of orbit into some dangerous, uncharted part of space, and out of the emerging Catholic Church. So a “redactor,” an editor or other type of “finisher” of the gospel made a second edition. The high Christology remained —this was one of the BD’s and/or his community’s great contributions, although the writer of the “Johannine Epistles,” thought to be the redactor of the gospel or close to him, has to insist that Jesus “came in the flesh”— but the realized eschatology was tempered with references to the future judgment and resurrection (see John 5:28-29). The Eucharist receives (some may dispute that these verses are later) the most graphic descriptions in the NT: John 6:54-63 uses a verb which

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<sup>247</sup> Cf. Eph 2:6.

means “chew”). And finally, Peter is “rehabilitated” in an additional chapter, John 21, which follows the conclusion of the first edition in 20:30. Three times (corresponding to the three denials) Simon Peter is made to aver that he loves Jesus more than the others, and three times he is given the role of shepherd of Jesus’ sheep. Like Jesus, Peter will extend his arms on a cross, in order to glorify God like Jesus. And finally, Peter follows Jesus like a true disciple, and the BD now follows *him*, 21:20.

*The Letter to the Hebrews.* Jesus had clearly been perceived as a prophet, and had a following as messiah (king), but an important OT institution did not seem to apply to him, that of the priesthood. Jesus was known to be from the messianic tribe of Judah, not the priestly tribe of Levi, Heb 7:11-14. A Christian genius reflected on this and produced what was probably a homily which is entitled “to the Hebrews.”

In eschatological fashion, Jesus is said to be the Son finally sent by God after a succession of prophets. This Son, like the awaited messianic King, reflects the nature of God, and is above all the angels. He has accomplished the longed-for purification of sins that was at the heart of the Torah (literally, in its central book Lev, and perhaps in the center of this center, Lev 16) and prophesied by the Prophets (Heb 8:8-13 is the longest OT quote in the NT, that of Jer 31’s New Covenant). Jesus was sinless, a qualification no OT priest could claim, but he was, unlike the priests who were separated from ordinary Jews, close to suffering humanity. As Son, he is owner of God’s house, and thus superior to Moses, who was a mere household servant. And Jesus was able to enter into God’s true Temple, in heaven, with a perfect sacrifice, that of himself, in perfect obedience, as opposed to the repeated entries of the high priest into the Holy of Holies, year after year on Yom Kippur, with the blood of animals.

But how to think of Christ as a priest? The author of Heb is a great biblical exegete. Jesus had been proclaimed God’s Son, as in Ps 2:7, and had sat at God’s right hand, as stated in Ps 110 (these psalms were read and understood together in the Jewish tradition). Ps 110 stated that the “Lord” (applied to the Messiah, or to someone even greater; see Mark 12:35-37) was “priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.” Heb says that Melchizedek, a priest known from Gen 14, was greater than Abraham, because he blessed Abraham while Abraham gave him the tithe. And the whole priestly tribe of Levi was not even born yet, but was in Abraham’s loins as he acknowledged

Melchizedek's superiority. This is the high priesthood achieved by Jesus, or given to him by God, as a result of his once-for-all sacrifice which finally purified from sin and gave real access to God; see Heb 7:20-25; 9:11-10:18.

We spoke about the OT as able to be understood as a story of Exile and the Promise of the end of Exile. Heb 11 is the basis for this idea. It is about the faith of our ancestors, who were all "pilgrims," that is, "resident aliens" (the Hebrew *gēr*) without permanent abode (like the "squatters" of Lev 25:23).<sup>248</sup> They sought the "Promised Land" (Heb 11:9). Heb 4 had spoken of the long-for rest, the eternal Sabbath, which we must all strive to attain (cf. Deut 3:20; 12:10; 25:19; Josh 1:15). The Land was a symbol of resurrection (as in Acts 26:6-8), Heb 11:9-10, 13-19, 35, 40; cf. Ezek 37:12-14. And our ancestors had not been meant to attain this "something better" (a favorite term in Heb) without us who come later.

Heb is full of exhortation, including the magnificent passage on "education, correction, discipline" (*paideia*, the Hebrew *mûsar*), Heb 12:5-13. Our eyes must be fixed on Jesus, the one who has begun and will bring to perfection our faith, 12:1-5.

*The Book of Revelation.* Finally, we come to the last book in the Christian Bible, the *Apocalypse of John*. Notice that its author is "exiled" or banished to an island. He encourages seven churches to persevere in tribulation, since Jesus, the Lamb but also the Lion of Judah, has already triumphed (Rev 5:5-6).<sup>249</sup> Koester has opined that the author uses apocalyptic imagery to address an audience for whom this type of literature and ideas have undergone a revival, but that in fact the author corrects or modifies many features of normal apocalyptic (this book is not pseudonymous, it is not to be sealed, the place and time of writing is not fictitious, etc.). We cannot discuss it in any detail; we would like to point out just a few links with the first book of the Bible. First, look at Rev 12. This is about a Woman who is the Mother of the Messiah, in pain and about to give birth. Recall the idea of the "birth-pangs of the messiah" that we discussed. Paul Minear has seen significant links between Rev 12 and Gen 1-3, including astral bodies, the

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<sup>248</sup> Again, see my article "Welcoming the Foreigner: A Biblical Theology View," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 11.2 (Summer/Fall 2004) 226-234.

<sup>249</sup> Judah washes his clothes in wine, Gen 49:11, the *maskilim* in Dan 11:35 will be washed and whitened as part of their purification, and those who come out of the great tribulation in Rev 7:14 have washed and whitened their clothes in the blood of the Lamb. Note a possible link here with Matt 23:33-36, where the "brood of snakes (or vipers)" will be help responsible for all the blood since Abel to the time of Zechariah, which may mean 'all the bloodshed in the Bible'.

woman and her labor pains, the ground which once received the blood of Abel but now is washed clean, the snake-devil, etc.<sup>250</sup>

The last chapters of the Bible, Rev 21-22, have a river of life and a tree of life (Gen 2:9-10), and the curse (barring access to Paradise, Gen 3:14-24) is removed. In the eschatological city, the New Jerusalem who is the Lamb's Bride, the servants of God see God's face and are with God and the Lamb; there is no need for a Temple. All is light with no darkness, and God will wipe away all tears. The prophecies are all fulfilled, but may the Lord come soon!<sup>251</sup>

### **Conclusion to Part One**

We have gone through the whole Bible under the rubric of Exile and Exodus. The Bible begins with creation, when God is intimately present in Paradise, but to which quickly follows sin and the first exile, from Eden. The cleansing of the Flood is insufficient and indefinite. The story of Abraham leads to a little foothold in the Promised Land (the family burial plot), but is one of "sojourning" with no homeland, as will be the story of other "Patriarchs." Joseph goes down to Egypt and is a model exile there, and promises that God will visit his family, but the rest of the Torah is the story of how Israel left Egypt only to wander in the desert for a generation. The divine presence was with them in the Tabernacle, but there was apostasy and punishment and ever-lurking curses to be fulfilled. The end of the Torah, Deut, finds Israel in the waiting room of entry into the Land.

Then follow the Former Prophets, or the "Deuteronomistic History," which begins with the conquest of the Land, but concludes as an "Egypt-to-Egypt" or Exile-to-Exile story. In the Jewish Bible, the Latter Prophets follow, placed by Christians at the end of their Old Testament; for both Jews and Christians, they prophesy about the coming of the

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<sup>250</sup> See "Far as the Curse is Found: The Point of Revelation 12:15-16," *Novum Testamentum* 33 (1991), 71-77. On footnote 8, page 75, he states that "No fewer than ten motifs in Genesis may be found in Revelation: the role of the ancient serpent; the conflict between the serpent and the woman; the association of the serpent with the beasts of the earth; the conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; the injury done to the head of the serpent by the woman's seed and the injury done to the woman's seed by the serpent; the accent upon the act of giving birth and its painful character; the strategic use of the terms brothers and blood, with the implicit contrasts between two brothers and their two deaths; the prominent, multiple, contrasted roles assigned to the mouth of the earth."

<sup>251</sup> See the many cross-references to passages of the OT in these chapters.

final or messianic age of salvation. Finally, the Jewish “Writings,” beginning with the Psalms, are another category of Holy Scriptures which are interpreted differently by Christians and Jews. Christians see the Psalms as fulfilled in Christ, as they do all the Jewish Scriptures, while Jews can be said to conclude their Bible with Chronicles, which look forward to a time—still in the future for Jews— when the “messianic Temple” will be rebuilt in the age of salvation yet to come.

We then looked at the “intertestamental period” as one exhibiting much pluralism in Judaism, including writings of groups with significant similarities to Christianity. Finally we described Jesus’ ministry as evocative of salient messianic expectations of the Second Temple period. He began under the influence of John the Baptist, who heralds the final Exodus (end of Exile) of the “converted, penitents or returnees” of Israel and enacts it by a baptism of repentance in which the Jordan is symbolically crossed. Jesus was thus baptized, and experienced God’s revelation that he was God’s only/beloved Son and also the Servant of Isaiah. This sacrificial mission, seen as the purifying baptism of fire which would finally cleanse the earth as the Flood had not done, issued in God’s vindication of the one who had taken the Curse upon himself: the Resurrection. The Church is born out of its experience of this saving event, and as the time in which it expected the Lord to return is prolonged, it continued to reflect on what God had done and what God had foretold in the Scriptures, and started producing Holy Scriptures of its own. Significantly among them is the Letter to the Hebrews, which sees Jesus as the high priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,” with a lineage going back to the time of Abraham in Genesis, and who fulfills what the very center of the Torah, Lev 16 and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) only symbolized in a temporary way. This return to the Beginning in the End Time inaugurated by Jesus is in line with Jewish eschatological expectation, except that only Christians (and Jesus before them) have proclaimed it as already taking place. But, in dialectic with Judaism, the consummation —and, we might say, clear and widespread signs of the messianic age— still awaits Jesus’ *second* coming. This is the world that the final book of the Christian Bible, the Book of Revelation, presents to us, very much in terms of a return to Paradise, when there is no more curse and God can

again walk among his children.<sup>252</sup> In the meantime, we study God’s Word and struggle to keep it, and continue to pray as the “poor banished children of Eve.” In the next part, we will discuss important Church doctrines about the Bible and how it is to be interpreted.

### **End of Part One**

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<sup>252</sup> Note that the Moses’ song celebrating the Exodus from Egypt is what is sung in Rev 15 as part of an End-Time vision (together with the final plagues).

