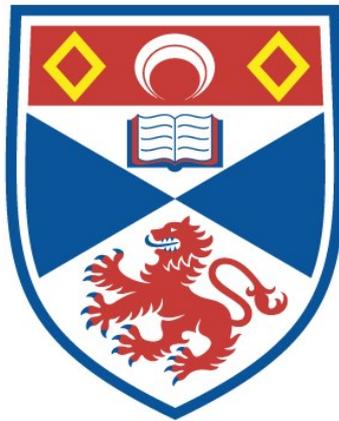


THE LANGUAGE OF FATHER AND THE GOD OF ISRAEL

J. R. Hiles

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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The Language of Father and the God of Israel

**A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

by

J. R. Hiles

March 2001



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ABSTRACT

Studies of the language of father in the Old Testament have sought to show either the centrality of this locus or its peripheral status. Both tend to work on the basis of a *Religionsgeschichte* approach, striving to situate texts that use father language in a wider Ancient Near Eastern setting. While there is doubtless a relationship between Israel's use of such language and that of antiquity, appeal to the latter serves largely to bring divergent views into bold relief.

Language of father is relatively rare in the Old Testament. We indicate where it does appear, and why. The diachronic method is insufficient and word studies are inadequate for the questions, providing only a metaphorical universe of Near Eastern gods and God, which generate such divergent views. Presented here is an accounting of the canon's locus of "God as Father," sensitive to history-of-religion, yet allowing canonical presentation to have its own integrity within the theological universe of the Old Testament.

In order to place matters in context, the first section examines the history-of-religion approach and its logical outgrowth in modern feminism. This section also surveys recent trinitarian defenses of father-language for God, viewed essentially as constructive reaction to feminism, but manifesting in itself failure to accord with Old Testament language and to account for christological issues.

The second section examines Hebrew texts that use father-language. The argument follows closely Scripture's order and character. If a history-of-religions approach focuses on evolutionary and non-canonical treatments, what is the alternative? Only when the issue is handled essentially from within can the relative scarcity of the locus, "God as Father," be acknowledged and light be shed on the reasons for the appearance of such language at all and just what it means.

The final section offers a prudential statement of how father-language functions in the Old Testament and is meant to function in theological speech. Divine paternity is seen in terms of Israel's election by and covenant relationship with her God rather than primarily in general creation. Due to the existence and centrality of the Hebrew *nomen sacrum* direct reference to God in father-language was likely held in symbiotic reserve, until in post-exilic time אב *father* became increasingly a metonym for God. It is in this context that Jesus' understanding and use of father-language is explicable.

CONTENTS

Foreword	
INTRODUCTION	1
<i>PART ONE ~ Tracking Father Language</i>	
History of Religions Approach	6
Feminist Concerns	24
Trinitarian Considerations	66
<i>PART TWO ~ Exegesis of Key Scriptural Sources</i>	95
<i>PART THREE ~ Analysis and Theological Reflection</i>	144
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	187
Abbreviations	196
Bibliography	198
Afterword	

FOREWORD

This study had its beginning in Basel and with Ernst Jenni more years ago than we care to count, when the *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* was in process and אב father was very much on his mind.

Raising a perfectly wonderful family and shepherding destined flocks on both sides of the Atlantic necessarily moved matters again and again to a back burner on relatively low heat, yet with occasional stirrings. But for personal and ecclesiastical calamities of recent years, the need and opportunity to take these things up again would probably not have arisen. When, however, in 1997, Christopher Seitz moved from Yale to St. Andrews, and we were providentially caught up in the draft, the sails were set for one more journey.

Three, sometimes turbulent, years have brought us to this pass. Without the affection, guidance, and encouragement of these colleagues, friends, and family, as well as - and in a very special way - the extended family of Saint Paul's, Brockton, this project would not have been taken up again nor seen such light of day. Our gratitude to each is beyond expression. It is to all of them that we dedicate this labor of love. All are united in singing and so witnessing to the abiding reality that indeed *God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform!*

J. R. Hiles

St. Andrews
May, 2000

INTRODUCTION

T. W. Manson, in his classic work *The Teaching of Jesus* (1948), states matter-of-factly that "the Father is the supreme reality" for Jesus and that the Lord's Prayer to that effect is the sum of his teaching on "the Fatherhood of God."¹

According to Manson's impeccable statistics,² the designation "Father" for God occurs two hundred twenty-two times directly, with four implied uses, in the New Testament. Of these, however, with allowance for parallels in the Synoptic Gospels, and more than one hundred uses in John's Gospel, only twenty-one are said to be attributed to Jesus himself. Moreover, Manson states as a rule that "they are all spoken either in prayer or to the disciples; and they all occur after Peter's Confession."³

Despite overall extensive usage of the word for God in the New Testament, principally in John and Paul, Manson characterises that of Jesus as reticent by comparison. Why so? He states three possibilities. For one, the designation Father for God is indeed the theological commonplace taken over by Jesus from his Jewish teachers. Secondly, it might suggest some sort of metaphysical relationship between God and Jesus. Thirdly, and finally, and Manson's preferred view, the expression Fatherhood of God represents the "core" of Jesus' religious experience, as epitomised in the Garden of Gethsemane.⁴

Manson likewise demonstrates clearly, if briefly, that the concept Fatherhood of God would have been close at hand for Jesus not only in the Old Testament but also in deuterocanonical books, Rabbinical writings, and Qumran literature. Indeed, he holds that the notion was a veritable commonplace in Jewish piety and liturgy.

1 T. W. Manson. *The Teaching of Jesus: Studies of Its Form and Content* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp.113-5. See also J. Jeremias. *The Central Message of the New Testament* ((London: SCM Press, 1965). Somewhat against Jeremias, cf. T. C. G. Gregg, "Abba and Amen: Their Relevance to Christology," *Studia Evangelica V*, ed. F. L. Cross, in *Text und Untersuchen 103*: cf. pp.3-13. See also Rafael Gyllenberg, "Gott, der Vater im Alten Testament und in der Predigt Jesu." *StudOr I* (1925), pp.51-60; Edmond Jacob. *Theology of the Old Testament* London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1958), pp.61-62; H. W. Montefiore. "God as Father in the Synoptic Gospels," *NTS III,1* (1956), pp.31-46, the latter on the question of universal fatherhood as compared to selective fatherhood only of the disciples.

2 *Ibid.*, pp.94-7.

3 *Ibid.*, pp.97-8.

4 *Ibid.*, pp.101ff.

Heavy reliance is placed on George Foote Moore⁵ in presenting the case. Although dated, as Manson, the opinions remain standard on the issues before us. Of the literature between the testaments, Tobit 13.4 is noteworthy. In prayer, after extolling God's greatness and mercy, Tobit exults: "God is our Lord, our Father for ever." Notable, too, is Jubilees 19.29.⁶ When Isaac asks God's blessing upon Jacob, he prays that "God will be a father to (him)."

In *A Rabbinic Anthology*, Montefiore observes that while the Rabbis were not in any sense modernists, that is revisionists, "some advance" on their part with regard to "the doctrine of God, His nearness, (and) His Fatherhood" is to be observed.⁷ The citations are plentiful. To illustrate, an anonymous Rabbi, reflecting on man's improper behaviour and God's grace, presumably with Isaiah 65.17 in view, writes, "My Father who art in heaven, be thy great name blessed for all eternity."⁸ Further, in a comment on Isaiah 63.16 and 64.9, as well as Song of Solomon 2.16, another anonymous Rabbi says, "(You say) 'Thou art our Father.' God says 'You have abandoned your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and call me Father.'"⁹ According to the Talmud, Rabbi Akiba once stood before the ark and prayed *Abhinu Malkenu*, "Our Father, Our King." With such as these, the Fatherhood of God concept appears to have approached formula-like status among the Rabbis. In it, says Charles, commenting on Jubilees, can be seen what beliefs were in a position to have "obtained an entrance into the New Testament."¹⁰

As the Rabbis are observed to have made an advance on the Old Testament with regard to God under the language of Father, the Qumran community appears to have made instead something of a retreat therefrom. A survey of readily available literature from the Scrolls reveals scant evidence of the idea.¹¹ Perhaps the reticence attributed to Jesus by Manson was at play in Qumran as well. Even so, some significant indirect reference to God in the language of Father which may have been

⁵ *Judaism*, Vol. II (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), pp.201-11.

⁶ See also Wisdom 2.16; III Maccabees 5.7; 7.6; Jubilees 1.24, as cited in *Judaism*, p.202.

⁷ *Anthology*, p.xxv.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.65, Citation 180.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.66, Citation 183. As a minimum list of the most conspicuous sayings, see Citations 116, 1006, and 1417. A comprehensive list is given.

¹⁰ *The Book of Jubilees*, p.viii. For a thorough presentation of the sources and the full force and effect of the Fatherhood of God concept in Jewish piety, down to present time, with forty-four involving such a notion in prayer on High Holy Days, see Osterly, *The Religion and Worship of the Synagogue and Laver*. "Abhinu Malkenu: Our Father, Our King!" in *The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy*, eds. Peteuchowski and Brocke.

¹¹ Charlesworth. *Graphic Concordance to the Dead Sea Scrolls*; Martincz, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*; Schiffman. *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*.

known to Jesus are found. Amongst the *Thanksgiving Hymns*, one held by Schiffman to be of great importance in expressing personal religious experience, of the sort Manson senses in Jesus, is this line: "I have been ta(ken) from dust (and) form(ed) from clay."¹² The correspondence of this to Isaiah 64.8 is quite evident. Added to this by way of example are these two noteworthy lines from the *Words of the Luminaries*, Fragments 8 and 14 respectively: "For you called Israel 'my son, my first-born'" and "we too have wearied the Rock with our failings." Similarity to Jeremiah 31.9,20 and Deuteronomy 32.4,18 is plain to see. Finally, in one of the *Teacher's Hymns*, is this: "Thou art a Father to all (the sons) of Thy Truth."¹³

Along with such possible influences on the concept of the Fatherhood of God near at hand, Jesus could very well have come under its sway from afar, so to speak. Ancient Near-Eastern notions abounded in this regard, and likely made their presence felt in and around the Old Testament. Graeco-Roman philosophical and religious influences were also in evidence in the time of Jesus, and may have played a role as well. Historical-critical analysis in the past one hundred years or so has attempted to reconstruct and understand such comparative religious background with regard to the Fatherhood of God notion in the Old Testament and in the usage of Jesus. Moreover, modern feminist concerns on the matter have been raised in the past thirty years or so, particularly in the United States. In turn, this has given rise to robust theological efforts to articulate and defend the concept as expressed in the doctrine of the Trinity. While, in our judgement, none of these quests yield a fully satisfactory view of the language of Father and the God of Israel, it is evident that any current endeavour to arrive at such must of necessity survey their efforts.

*

This study purposes to go behind the history-of-religions approach in all its forms, classical and contemporary, and into the centre of all relevant texts taken together in their entirety, focusing on their occasion and constructive theological meaning. Our overall thesis is this: אב *father* together with בן *son*, with their parallels or circumlocutions, directly or indirectly, with regard to אלהים *God* and יהוה in the Old Testament (without the benefit of *Religionsgeschichte* parallels, contemporary feminist concerns, or late trinitarian clarifications) are sufficient in themselves to have provided a full theological foundation for Jesus' understanding of the fatherhood of God.

¹² *Reclaiming*, p.151. See also Psalm 103.13-14.

¹³ Martinez, *Scrolls Translated*, pp.414.15.

A sub-thesis is that such fatherhood is largely understood in terms of the election of and covenant with Israel rather than in natural, physical paternity of all mankind, except where creation of all things is specifically in mind. We will develop our argument in the following manner.

In Part I, and in order to place the argument in its contemporary context, we examine in outline form the history-of-religion approach, acknowledging its contribution with considerable appreciation, but in the final analysis finding it inadequate to account fully for language under the name “father” in the Old Testament and the community of Israel.¹⁴ Then, we also survey contemporary feminist concerns with regard to “father” imagery, likewise with considerable sympathy for the issues raised, but also finding it lacking in substantial contribution to an understanding of and appreciation for the “father” language presented in the Old Testament. In addition, we attend to trinitarian considerations, as we view them with great satisfaction for their robust defence of trinitarian logic with regard to the notion of “father” in the Christian tradition and creed, yet finding such to be largely a reaction to feminist concerns rather than fundamental affirmation of the Old Testament expression of divine paternity. Besides, christological language is exceedingly problematic for the scriptures of Israel which pre-date christological centrality.

In Part II we examine in exegetical detail the relevant texts employing father-language in the Old Testament. The canonical order and character of the texts are adhered to rather strictly, seeking thereby to determine both their essential *Sitz im Leben* and their substantial contribution to the larger characterisation of Israel’s God under names both יהוה and אב *father*. Our exegesis at this juncture is intentionally close, putting speculation aside as far as possible. Even so, the implicit argument is that only when all such texts and contexts are considered in their canonical fullness and relatedness can the God of Israel be fully comprehended under such mutual designations.

In Part III we turn to analysis of and theological reflection upon the texts examined, allowing a bit more space to supposition. First of all, we consider the relative paucity of Father-language in the Old Testament along with possible contributing factors in such. In this connection we argue that ancient elements within

¹⁴ This is well illustrated when a serious publication *Concilium* (143, 3/81) bears an issue title *God as Father?* and a lead article by Hans Fischer-Barnicol under the title “*Pater Absconditus: The Problem in the Light of the History of Religion*”, concluding with the statement “when the father is lacking so too is the principle that provides the foundation of society,” p.26. It is the adoption of a totally historical and sociological criteria for understanding the canonical Scripture notion of the fatherhood of God.

the religion of the patriarchs as well as distinctive aspects of Israel's overall piety may have exercised considerable control over its theological expressions. We even venture a second sub-thesis, namely that a symbiotic connection may have existed between reserve in pronouncing the *nomen sacrum* and relative rare use of direct fatherhood reference for the God of Israel in the Old Testament. In light of these factors, and reviewing the exegetical fullness of the texts examined, we reflect on elements emerging for an Old Testament theology of the Fatherhood of God, which when canonically and constructively considered, are as rich as they are rare.

PART ONE



Tracking Father Language

HISTORY OF RELIGIONS APPROACH

Christian history of religion commonly understood has been concerned primarily with uncovering its apparent context, that is its Jewish background, as well as the supposed larger cultural complex of the Ancient Near East from whence it emerged. It is, then, essentially a study of comparative religion. For our purposes we shall divide matters between textual and lexical efforts, allowing inevitable overlaps. Throughout, spelling, transliteration, and accents will be those employed in the cited works.

Textual Enquiry

The *Religionsgeschichte* enquiry into the relationship between the religious beliefs of Israel's neighbours in the Ancient Near East and those expressed in the Old Testament has yielded a voluminous number of texts and possible relationships for examination. Most impressive in this regard and for our purposes are the names of various gods and the manners of honorific address toward them indicating some notion of fatherhood.

It is readily evident from such extra biblical sources that some such concept was widespread among the religions of the Ancient Near East. To begin with, the supposed physical descent of a tribe or people from a particular god is clear to see. Moreover, that the social and moral consequences of such descent, authority, and obedience to a given god form the basis of such belief are likewise evident.¹⁵ Finally, for these preliminary

¹⁵ See William Smith. *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1894), p.40. "The relation of a father to his children has a moral as well as a physical aspect, and each of these must be taken into account in considering what the fatherhood of a tribal deity meant for ancient religion."

remarks, the fatherhood of a particular god is often expressed in prayer or song when one is persuaded of a *Kindschaftsverhältnis* to a god.¹⁶

In *Kyrios als Gottesname in Judentum und seine Stelle in der Religionsgeschichte*, Baudissin furnishes a brief but detailed catalogue of textual evidence illustrating widespread occurrence of a fatherhood of god notion among Israel's neighbours. A hymn from Ur repeatedly refers to Sin, the Accadian moon god, as "Father Nanna." Marduk, a local Sumerian god who was elevated to the headship of the Babylonian pantheon is at times designated "Father, Enlil" or some variation thereof. Likewise, the southern Arabian god Wadd is frequently called "father."¹⁷

James Pritchard, with his esteemed collaborators, provides a more extensive collection of such information in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*.¹⁸ Employment of its texts, with a helpful annotation here and there, widens and focuses significantly, even panoramically, the picture of divine paternity upon which ancient Israel doubtless looked. They reveal, to begin with, that the mentioned Sin and Nanna are in fact the same god (the latter being the Sumerian designation for the former), that together a "father" title is given to them at least sixteen times, that he/they are said to have parented two other deities, Ishtar and Shamash, and that may indeed play a role in such titles. Further, the texts show that Marduk was given fifty different titles, of which presumably "Father Enlil" was one, probably indicating that he was in fact "Enlil of the gods," that is the highest ranking one.¹⁹ Moreover, Pritchard shows that the great Enlil, clearly the most dynamic of the great Mesopotamian deities, was likewise called "Father Enlil."²⁰ Finally, this rich collection of texts reveal that Anu, "god of heaven" and leading deity in the Sumerian pantheon, was also called "Father Nanna," that is the great lord, and that Ea, Akkadian for one of the four greatest gods, was designated "Father Enki," this being the Sumerian name of one considered the begetter of mankind.²¹ The complexity of the terminology is readily apparent.

Inasmuch as Israel had most direct contact with Canaanite culture throughout the main part of its history, historians have paid close attention to the form of divine fatherhood as it manifested itself in Canaanite-Phoenician religion. Moreover, since most

¹⁶ See Friederich Heiler, *Das Gebet* (München: Verlag Reinhardt, 1923), quoting L. R. Farnell: *Die Idee der Verwandtschaft zwischen Mensch and Gott gehört zum Alphabet des echten Gebets.* p. 141.

¹⁷ *Kyrios* (Giessen: Verlag Töpelman, 1929), pp.310, 311, 319ff.

¹⁸ James B. Pritchard, ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950).

¹⁹ *ANET*, pp.72, (111). 299. 310 and, especially, pp.389, 90 on a Psalm to Marduk.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.53 and 56.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp.54 and 98.

direct knowledge of that religion comes from the texts discovered at the site of ancient Ugarit (Ras Shamra), primary attention for present purposes is rightly placed there. Otto Eissfeldt's *El im ugaritischen Pantheon* leads the way in this instance. According to the text, the Canaanites called El (the head of the pantheon there) *ab adm*, which is translated by Eissfeldt as "father of man."²² Gray, on the other hand, suggests it is something more like "father of the community."²³ Pope says that the title אב *father*, is one of the most common epithets applied to El, but goes on to concede that it is most frequently limited to the fatherhood of the gods.²⁴ Further in the Ugaritic text in view, there is the expression *tr. il. abh*, translated "bull, El your father," the first word probably indicating his procreative powers. But again, this is usually by gods with regard to their relationship one with another. Even so, and on the contrary, Wright holds that there was indeed a concept of physical fatherhood of El involved.²⁵ Gottfreid Quell largely agrees in his extensive and carefully documented piece on the matter first published in *Theologische Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*.²⁶ It is not at all surprising, Wright goes on, that little is said of the relationship between El and ordinary, mortal men. Therefore, there is little historical evidence to support the idea of physical fatherhood other than what may be deduced from personal names having the element אב in combination with the name of the god, an example being אביאל *El is (my) father*. Accordingly, he concludes that the increased popularity of such names after the beginning of the first millennium, corresponding as it does with the transition to agricultural life, hints that from this time onward the notion of divine fatherhood was understood in a more or less physical sense.

²² *El im ugaritischen Pantheon* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1951), pp.35 and 56ff.

²³ *The Legacy of Canaan* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1957), p.118. Further, "Again, we consider it questionable that *ab adm* is universalistic in its application. The term *adm* may simply mean 'community,' and *ab adm* may thus mean 'He in whom the community is integrated.'"

²⁴ *El in the Ugaritic Texts*. Indeed, he goes on, "There is hardly anything that could be called a creation story or any clear allusion to cosmic creativity in the Ugaritic texts so far exhumed. The closest approach to this sort of thing is the Poem 55, and this is only a theogony of minor gods," p.47ff; see also p.35; Gordon, *Ugaritic Manual I*, pp.139, 335 (No.2015/49:VI:26-27). Somewhat over against this . cf. Pritchard/Ginsburg on El as "creator of creatures," p.143; "Father of Man," p.144.

²⁵ See "The Terminology of Old Testament Religion and its Significance," *JNES* 1, (January-October 1942): "Most of the mythology describes the adventures and struggles of the gods or of some hero like Gilgamesh or Daniel. Personal names, therefore, are our main source of evidence, and, in addition, they are always one of the most conservative elements in a culture," p.409.

²⁶ Band 5. "Der Vaterbegriff im Alten Testament." pp.959-74; in translation in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. His conviction on the matter is captured most forcefully in the original: Der Ursprung für die Bezeichnung der Stammesgottheit als Vater wird in einer bestimmt ausgeprägten Anschauung über die Entstehung von der Blutverwandten zu suchen sein. Wie alles menschliche Leben durch Zeugung entsteht, so ist auch der unergründliche Anfang der Generationsfolge aus des Fortpflanzung von Lebenskraft - nicht eines Menschen, aber eines Gottes - deutbar!" p.966.

On the significance of personal names, the venerable and careful work of G. Buchannan Gray stands out and continues to shed much light. He indicates that besides occasional references to God as father of Israel, the Old Testament frequently records personal names of Israelites as well as neighbouring people revealing the thought that God or gods were thought of as fathers of the people. Of this type, his impressively detailed statistics show that there are thirty-one such, of which twenty-four are borne by forty-one Israelite persons. Even so and even in Israel, concludes Gray, such were not necessarily interpreted in a spiritual sense.²⁷

These judgements will be taken up again below in some preliminary conclusions on this section of our review of the results of historical criticism in these regards. Suffice it to say here that the Wright and Quell case for a physical notion of divine fatherhood among the Canaanites, particularly after the Israelite occupation, seems quite subjective and resting on rather meagre evidence.²⁸

Furthermore, for all the impressive and interesting texts, problems abound in assessing their real relevance and usefulness with regard to the fatherhood of God concept in Old Testament materials. Of first consideration are questions with regard to Baal. Given his prominence in the Ugaritic texts, as well as clear references in the Old Testament,²⁹ it is noteworthy that he apparently nowhere receives the epithet "father." He is a fertility god, son of El, persistently described as "puissant," that is having great potency and power, even in contexts where El is called "father bull El" and "Father Shunem." He is frequently called "prince" and even "lord of heaven." But he is not given the epithet "father." Why not? An enquiry into this is well beyond our purpose, except that the fact tends to confirm Pope's judgement, above, that the fatherhood designated by that epithet was of gods, and as far as can be determined Baal was not such. The same can be demonstrated with regard to the god Ninurta, the son of the great god Enlil. He is

²⁷ *Studies in Hebrew Proper Names* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1896), pp.26ff, 254. At the latter is this strong statement to the final point: "For to attribute to אב in אביה a spiritual sense such as the term "father" as applied to God receives in the prophets, and more especially in the New Testament, is forbidden by the parallel איה ("Brother is Yah"), by the existence of the parallel names among other nations, but more especially by the fact that the name in question together with those related to it in form falls into disuse just when the deeper ideas of the fatherhood of God were developing." See also Martin Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung*, esp. p.68; also Baudissin, *Kyrios*, pp.347ff; Quell, *TWNT*, VI, p.968.

²⁸ Cf. Jeremiah 2.27: "...who say to a tree, 'you are my father,' and to a stone, 'you gave me birth.'" Even here it seems too much to suppose a physical fatherhood. Rather, the prophet appears to be saying that the people ascribe to idols a title that properly belongs to Yahweh. Cf. also v.32, with later exegesis, where clearly it is Yahweh who "gave birth" to Israel.

²⁹ See Gordon, *Ugaritic Manual* (Roma: Pontificum Institutum Biblicum, 1955), p.247 (No. 340 / 70:2; 49:1; 14-15; 9:6; 1:7; 6:30; etc.) and Pritchard/Ginsberg *ANET*, 129-44; 146-51; 153-55. Cf. Judges 8.33; 9.4; Psalm 106.28; Jeremiah 2.8; Hosea 2.8; Zephaniah 1.4.

one of "the house of fifty," that is of highest rank among the gods, and one of fertility, termed "king" and "lord." But apparently he too does not seem to have been called "father." He likewise is not said to have had offspring.

With this, our survey returns to the great god Marduk, given among his fifty different titles that of "Father Enlil," that is the highest-ranking God in the Babylonian pantheon. For all his different epithets, in the texts consulted he seems only once to have received that of "father," that in a psalm to him; even this is not an unambiguous reference to Marduk.³⁰ If all that remains in this connection is "Father Enlil," that is "Enlil of the gods," this may signify only that he was elevated to the premiership of the gods in the Babylonian pantheon. On the other hand, although extolled for his creative powers,³¹ Marduk is not said to have been father of any gods. This, too, lends support to the contention of Pope, that the epithet "father" is apparently limited to the fatherhood of the gods in ancient Near Eastern mythology.

A rough tabular view of the gods mentioned and the references given yields a potentially interesting caveat to Pope's contention. First, those gods having divine offspring (e.g., El, Enlil, Nanna) in most cases indeed bear the title "father." Moreover, those bearing the epithet, but without divine offspring (e.g., Enni, Marduk) have political connections to their status. Those who have been elevated to "enlilship," that is superiority in the pantheon (e.g., Enlil, Marduk), hence called "father," usually possess good qualities; those without divine offspring or "enlilship" (e.g., Anu, Baal), although powerful and dynamic, are often depicted as possessing instead a dark or evil side.

Recent comment by John Miller condemns the lot of Ancient Near Eastern deities as being weak, disreputable, and dysfunctional, so, presumably incapable of any possible wholesome influence upon either Old or New Testament images of the one God they present, particularly that of Jesus.³² Yet, while such deities are indeed at times presented as clearly evil, hateful, and angry,³³ they are also depicted as lords of heaven and earth, good, faithful shepherds, who hear prayers, and whose words are abiding.³⁴ Whatever, such more balanced images of the ancient gods are in many ways consistent with biblical ones, and for this a debt is owed to the historians of religion. Regrettably, they shed inadequate light on our main concern, namely the general paucity of fatherhood

³⁰ *ANET*, p.389, n.19.

³¹ See Frymer-Kensky, *Encyclopedia of Religion* 1, p.201f; IV, pp.124,125.

³² *Biblical Faith and Fathering* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), p.43ff. See also his "Depatriarchalizing God in Biblical Interpretation: a Critique, in *CBQ* 48,1, (January 1986), pp.609-16, in response to an article by Phyllis Trible under the same title.

³³ See Pritchard on *A Sumerian Lamentation and the gods Anu and Enlil*, *ANET*, pp.455-63.

³⁴ See e.g. Pritchard on a *Hymn to Enlil* "...you who are a faithful shepherd," *ANET*, pp.573-76.

designations in the Old Testament and/or the sudden specific expressions of such, largely in the prophets. Perhaps the most that historical research in this realm has revealed, in Frymer-Kensky's words, comparing the great creation stories in *Genesis* with those connected with Marduk in the seven tablets of *Enuma elish*, is "evidence of a shared cosmology."³⁵ On the other hand, this positive aspect must of necessity be followed up with a negative judgement, to the effect that the religions of the ancient Near East and that of the Old Testament did not share a common theology. Accordingly, comparisons between the ancient Near Eastern gods and the biblical God are, at best, only partial and of rather limited value with regard to the fatherhood of the latter.

The nub of the problem here is differing historiography. Although it is doubtless the case that the Israelites emerged from and largely remained within the broad sweep of Mesopotamian culture, as Albright says, "almost unbroken until the end of the Old Testament times,"³⁶ with numerous parallel sagas and ideas, it is equally true that fundamental differences existed. For one thing, despite creation stories implicating heavenly deities, epic and futile human struggles with good and evil, and prayers to the gods for assistance,³⁷ which surely parallel Old Testament ones, the texts consulted also manifest an essentially cyclical outlook on such, related as they clearly are to gods of sun, moon, fertility, and the like, which are, contrary to the linear biblical one, moving from creation to completion under God's providential care.³⁸ Moreover, whereas the available literature on ancient Near Eastern religions sets forth *epics, myths, oracles*, and the like with regard to innumerable gods, the biblical account is clearly expressing a unique sense of *historic memory* in connection with one God's entrance into and control over human events. Most significant of all, there is behind all this *polytheism* on one hand and *monotheism* on the other. The theology, then, is decidedly uncommon.³⁹ Whatever, given

³⁵ *Encyclopedia of Religion* V, p.125; see also her article, "The Tribulations of Marduk, the so-called 'Marduk Ordeal Text.'" in *JAO* 103, (1983), pp.131-41.

³⁶ *Archaeology, Historical Analogy, and Early Biblical Tradition* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1966), p.14.

³⁷ See Pritchard, e.g. on *The Creation by Atum, The Creation Epic, and The Epic of Gilgamesh*, whose "spirit finds no rest in the nether world...lees of the pot, crumbs of bread, offals of the street he eats." *ANET*, pp.3, 60ff, 72ff, 99.

³⁸ Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), discusses the myth of the "dying god" with reference to Osiris, Marduk, and Enlil, observing that such death occurs "in the course of the normal rotation of the seasons." pp.287-94. For a historic definition of ancient cyclic theory, see Toynbee, *A Study of History* (Abridgement of Vol. VII-X of the same title, by D. C. Somervell), pp.55-6, 262-3: "The 'Law of God' reveals a single constant aim pursued by the intelligence and will of a personality...the 'Law of God' was an inheritance from Judaism."

³⁹ Gunkel, on the contrary, in "Die Richtungen der alttestamentlichen Forshung," in *Christentum und Wissenschaft*, held that the Old Testament, as well as the New, are best understood in their "historically conditioned connection with other religions," as quoted by Reventlow in "History of Biblical

dismissal of much of the lexicography that has come with it. And his utter disdain for both biblical theology and lexicography in all their connections is abundantly clear. Straight away, he says:

It is part of the thesis of this book that certain interpretative procedures now in use will almost certainly lead to the distortion and wrong assessment of linguistic evidence.⁴⁴

That the "interpretative procedures" in view are precisely those of biblical theology and Kittel-style lexicography is likewise evident from even a glance at his index, where these two enterprises occupy the largest spaces. Overall, he dismisses these procedures as crassly arbitrary, dubious, fallacious, and wholly perverse, as well as much etymological obsession and illegitimate identity transfer.⁴⁵ Doubtless the same harsh treatment could and would have been given Jenni/Westermann, but their work was very much in process at the time of Barr's writing. In any event, we will deal with these matters somewhat below. As we do so here and elsewhere, it needs to be borne in mind that the lexical works in view are by and large theological and to that extent understandably interpretative.

What, precisely, is to be learned even so from such endeavours with regard to the origin and significance of the fatherhood of God concept? In order, Brown, Driver, and Briggs' *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*⁴⁶ is first with the least to offer for our purposes. It does, with Gesenius, indicate אב as possible stem of אב *father*, accordingly, in Assyrian, "he who decides." Moreover, while defining by texts אב as: 1) father of an individual, 2) of God, as father of his people, 3) head of a household, 4) ancestor, 5) originator/patron of a class, 6) producer/generator, 7) protector of someone or thing, 8) respect for such, and 9) ruler, one is left largely with such mere catalogue. On the other hand, it may be noteworthy that God as father of his people is placed second.

⁴⁴ Ibid.. p.7.

⁴⁵ Ibid.. pp.36, 63, 100, 159, 218. Against Bowman, and his influence on such important ones as Pedersen, Noth, Snaith, and T. F. Torrance on etymologies and key words: e.g. on Torrance, "It is by this kind of argument by association that biblical theology often forces its general and synthetic picture of the Bible upon a particular word or text," p.155; on Torrance and Hebert, "The lack of common sense here must be traced in part to the conviction of the immense uniqueness of the Hebrew language and its total difference from European tongues which so fascinates this school of thought, and to the belief that the great theological truths are latent in the structure of Hebrew," pp.165,166; overall, "...it seems to me clear that the insistence on a synthetic approach, on 'seeing the Bible as a unity,' on overcoming the divisions which literary criticism and religious history caused to appear throughout the Bible, has been much to blame for the exaggerations and misuses of the interpretations of words, especially from their Hebrew background..." p.274. The basic problem, as Barr sees it, is overloading word identity and text interpretation with a Hebrew mindset.

⁴⁶ BDB. 3ff.

After Barr, some might hold that perhaps this is a theological presupposition having its way with the order rather than a purely biblical lexical consideration. Even so, whatever might or might not be involved here will be taken up in exegetical and theological matters below.

The monograph-like articles of Schrenk and Quell in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* deal with the word and concept of father in impressive detail, covering Old Testament, late Judaistic, and Graeco-Roman usage, articulated as well into general, mythical, and religious usage. They were read in German before being brought forth in English by Bromiley and his collaborators, and many of our observations and citations will be based on and coloured by that first blush in German, except where the Bromiley translation becomes useful. In somewhat reverse order, the latter sets forth important parallel usage of father in Indo-European and Graeco-Roman texts. In these are words for father such as *pitar* from Sanskrit, *pater* from Greek, and *pater familias* and *patria potestas* from Latin, indicating a simple head of a single or extended household as well as an all-family instructor. Any one of these is entitled to both obedience and honour, each having within his right discipline over all.⁴⁷

Of far greater importance for our enquiry is the wealth of material assembled on the strictly religious use of the father image. It needs to be noted here that at this point in the lexicographic material ideology appears to deepen and the volume of footnotes increases, suggesting that interpretation of matters comes into play more and more, and that somewhat less than broad scholarly consensus exists as a result. That aside for the time being, Schrenk offers from Indian religion *Dyauiś pitā* "father heaven," from Greek the more personal *pater Zeus* "Father Zeus," and from the mystery cult Helios *pater kosmou* "father of the cosmos." Indeed, on the basis of the latter material, Schrenk terms Zeus "father *par excellence!*" In all this he sees "a basic phenomenon of religious

⁴⁷ Here Schrenk feels obliged to note, *TWNT* V, p.950, n.16, with "much tender love", citing as authority W. Kroll, *Die Kultur der ciceronianischen Zeit I*. Barr influences one to wonder whether this is an idea inherent in the text or rather one imported from elsewhere. Schrenk also points at this juncture to Kroll's attention to the Roman civil order and the concept *pater familias*, that is the father's role as head of the house. Eduard Nielsen in *Oral Tradition*, develops this much further with regard to its possible role in Old Testament life and development: "But the Old Testament also assumes a transmission of the law which is not connected with the great festivals or sanctuaries alone, the father's oral teaching of his household, and especially his sons. There is direct evidence of this in our texts, and there is not the slightest reason to deny that such a teaching in the home took place in a community permeated to the core by patriarchal ideas. The home is a miniature national community..the *pater familias* is 'the center from which the strength and will emanate through the whole sphere which belongs to him and to which he belongs'" the quote within from Pedersen, *Israel: its Life and Culture*, 1-11, pp.63, 58.

history," namely an Indo-European notion of a personal "supreme heavenly God," progenitor and pastor of all creatures. He admits frankly that such an idea is rejected by a majority of scholars, hence some of the footnote discussion.⁴⁸

Subsequent to *TWNT* and Bromiley's translation on possible Greek influences in these regards is the important work of Carl Kerényi, as in *Zeus and Hera, Archetypal Image of Father, Husband, and Wife*.⁴⁹ On Zeus, he says:

The appellation "father" for that which Zeus was - the highest thing that a man could imagine in his correlation with him - could arise only in a patriarchal family.⁵⁰

Further, he observes "That he is the father is as a matter of course the source of his power."⁵¹ From this base, reasons Kerényi, Zeus exercised his *pater* in the realm of spiritual values. He concludes, "While the image of Zeus is not the only father image of Greek mythology, it is the father image of the supreme god of Greek religion."⁵² Moreover, he sees this as probably carried over into Roman *Jupiter*, Indian *Dyauih pitar*, as well as Illyrian *Deipatyros*.

Philosophic and Gnostic expressions of fatherhood are also helpfully catalogued by Schrenk in *TWNT*, which he feels "prepared the way for a spread of the religious father concept" in general and with Jesus.⁵³ Chief among such are those of Plato, in statements like *patera toude tou pantos*, "father of the universe."⁵⁴ It is asserted that this fatherhood cosmology was passed on as a "common legacy of culture," to Gnosticism, stoicism, mysticism, and ultimately Judaism, particularly Philo. Schrenk allows that the notion of divine fatherhood in Philo came from a variety of sources, as Homer's mentioned

⁴⁸ Of von Schroder's contrary view, he says, "(he) rejects the semi-personal form of the idea among the Indians and gives *Dyauiš pita* the sense of primary Deva (man) or radiant heaven," *TWNT* V, p.951, n23.

⁴⁹ Translation, by Christopher Holme, of *Zeus und Hera, Urbild des Vaters, des Gatten und der Frau, Studies in the History of Religions XX*, (1972). See also, Nilsson, *Vater Zeus*. Schrenk says, according to Calhoun's count. "Homer speaks of Zeus as father more than 100 times, mostly in the Iliad," *TWNT* V, p.952..n26.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.47.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.48. "But this aspect pales in comparison with what Zeus is for Homer." From the Iliad, he has this: "Then he (one of the gods) will see how far I am strongest of all the immortals. Come, you gods, make this endeavour, that you all may learn this..so much stronger am I than the gods, and stronger than mortals," pp.48-9.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.59.

⁵³ *TWNT* V, pp.954ff.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.955, presumably, Timaeus 28,c.

designation of Zeus and Plato's indicated usage in *Timaeus*. One is left in doubt that on this view the latter is pivotal for both Plato and Philo.⁵⁵

A brief but close check on Schrenk's documentation of Plato's use of *pater* with reference to god proved less than persuasive, even troublesome. Only *Timaeus* has two clear cut references, namely 28c and 37c, that is "Father of the universe" and "Father that engendered" respectively.⁵⁶ Even more curious is the fact that Taylor's classic commentary⁵⁷ fails even to make specific reference to *pater* in either instance, pointing rather to Plato's attempt to establish "natural theology" as a *science* and perhaps only alluding to personal faith matters (i.e. fatherhood of god notions) in order to make popular and philosophical headway on the issue of scientific theology. As Taylor says elsewhere, he "can only suppose that there was a really unsolved conflict between the Platonic metaphysics and the Platonic religion."⁵⁸ Further analysis by experts in linguistic and textual matters is necessary here to determine the exact extent and meaning of Plato's use of *pater* and its influence on others. On the basis of texts available to this enquiry, too much of the documentation offered by Schrenk appears to rest on a principle of supposed analogy and allusion. Even so, as he says, there is little doubt that the absolute notion of divine fatherhood made its way significantly into Philo's thought world, which was "not just Johannine."⁵⁹

Gottfried Quell's piece in *TWNT* on the father concept in the Old Testament is exceedingly rich in its insights. It moves somewhat awkwardly, from the Septuagint use of *pater* for Hebrew אב to various Old Testament usage, that is basic familial, mythical, metaphorical, and authorial. The parallels with such elsewhere in the larger cultural matrix are insightfully and helpfully indicated. Unfortunately, from our point of interest, much of the emphasis is placed on explicating and appreciating certain uses of Greek renderings of אב, presumably to show Hellenistic sophistication and range.

There is little of significance here with regard to the basic use of אב, except that somewhat unlike Brown *et al.*,⁶⁰ Quell maintains that it is an isolated noun without stem,

⁵⁵ Wolfson, *Philo, Foundation of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962) views him as founder of a new way in religious philosophy, placed as he was between two worlds, the Greek and the Jewish thought worlds. See also Dillon, *Philo of Alexandria*.

⁵⁶ Text by Bury, *Plato, with an English Translation VII*, ((Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), pp.50, 51, 75.

⁵⁷ *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928).

⁵⁸ *Plato, The Man and His Work* (New York: Dial Press, 1927), p.232. See also Culbert Rutenber, *The Doctrine of the Imitation of God in Plato*, pp.58-9.

⁵⁹ *TWNT*, VI, p.956.

⁶⁰ Cf. above, p.13.

and furthermore has no synonyms and very limited meaning. Contrary to Albright's thesis⁶¹ on *paḥad* "fear" of Jacob in Genesis 31.42, Quell sees no ground whatever for translating "kinsman," so perhaps a possible synonym for אב.⁶² Considerable significance is assigned to the possible origin of the expression in children's speech in a totally secular context, pointing to Köhler's important work in this regard in 1937.⁶³ Noldke, too, reviewing Delitzsch's *Wörterbuch* of 1886 and carrying the case back to Gesenius,⁶⁴ rejects as totally unacceptable any notion that אב is related in any way to "build" or anything like it and, by numerous analogies, is connected entirely with the babble or lisping of children. Heiler, in *Das Gebet*, carries such discussion much further, from secular usage to fundamental religious language in prayer, manifest in virtually all ancient cultures.⁶⁵ As for the child-babble notion, Oehl, in his Rectoral Address in Fribourg in 1932, "Das Lallwort in der Sprachschöpfung," had already taken this aspect of linguistic analysis to near ultimate, almost fantastic, lengths. He viewed all primary words in virtually all languages as emerging by imitation from primitive "Verwandtschafts" sounds in connection with *pa* and *papa* for "father" and *ma* and *mama* for "mother." Hence, in the case of the latter simple expressions for breast, suck, drink, and food, then formation of utterances in verbal and structural form⁶⁶ Köhler agreed again in 1956,⁶⁷ in even more thoroughgoing fashion, with numerous others joining the parade in between. A more

⁶¹ *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, p.248f. n.71. He says, "Much difficulty has been caused by the current translation of the archaic appellation *paḥad* as 'terror,' whereas it should probably be rendered 'kindred, kinsman,' as in Palmyrene."

⁶² In support of the Albright thesis, who calls Alt, *Gott der Väter*, in his own defense, see von Rad, *Genesis*: "...a term for God which is extremely old," p.306; Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*: "...it is necessary that it is equivalent to God," *Luther's Works VI* (ed. Pelikan), p.71; somewhat Speiser, *Genesis*: "awesome one," pp.243, 247.

⁶³ "Hebraische Vokabeln II." *ZAW* 14 (1937), pp.169-72; out of his concern not only with children's speech, but also with the form of אב and אב as dual radicals, he says: "Ist der Grund vielleicht der, dass von Natur her *ab* einer Singular tatum ist? Kein Mensch kan mehr als einzigen Erzeuger haben," p.172; see more recent article in *JSS* 1 (1956), p.12ff., as well as p.14, n.63 below.

⁶⁴ *ZDMG* 40 (1886), p.737, citing Gesenius' *Wörterbuch* of 1810.

⁶⁵ See also above, p.5, n.7. To the point at hand, he says: "Das Verhältnes des betenden Menschen zu Gott als Kindesverhältnis Vater ist ein religiöses Urphänomen," p.141.

⁶⁶ *Fangen – Finger – Fünf* (Freibourg, Switzerland: Hess and Co., 1933), pp.115-25. In the same place, he comments on his method of word analysis, against Trombetti's "boring" effort and "fatal error" of having all words rest on three or four consonantal roots, holding that such "false" effort also plagues traditional theology.

⁶⁷ "Problems in the Study of the Language of the Old Testament," *JSS* 1 (1956). He even points to what might be termed extended babble, such as *mamamama* and *babababa*. "Before the child begins to speak it babbles. This means it emits sounds, often prolonged sounds. The parents hearing these babbling cries of their child, recognise themselves as being addressed by the child. They do something more. *They hear words into the babbling of their child.* In this way the Indo-Germanic and the Semitic words for 'mother' and 'father' are developed." p.12f.

recent standard bearer in this movement has been the great Jeremias.⁶⁸ Jenni, too, as we shall see below, follows the same line of reasoning, as does Schrenk⁶⁹ Barr, on the contrary, is devastating in his criticism of such analysis, terming the entire enterprise "old-fashioned, slippery, and doubtful."⁷⁰

Mention is made of the construction בית אבות *father's houses*, with a broadening of the term(s) legally as the Hebrew people moved more and more into urban situations. This concept embraced all in the corporate household or tribe, including wives, concubines, and children from whomever, as well as servants. Attention is drawn to the Exodus 3.13 passages and innumerable parallels with regard to אלהי אבותיכם *God of (the) fathers*. Quell holds the expression to be without particular spiritual content in and of itself.⁷¹ We feel that this judgement may be rather too dismissive and will return to it below, particularly with regard to the highly significant study of the matter by Alt, "Der Gott der Väter."⁷²

From such basic function in the family, due to the patriarchal structure, Quell lays out a pattern of usage with regard to Israelite society entirely consistent with the larger cultural matrix. In this connection, as we have seen above with relation to the surrounding cultures,⁷³ *pater familias*, with his primacy, power, and pastoral position in full evidence came to the fore. Moreover, Quell says, there developed in the latter instance a cult of Yahweh, a tradition whereby the discharge of priestly ministry is thus incumbent on the actual head of the family, so that whoever functions in his place actually

⁶⁸ See above, p.1, n.1; also *ET* 71 (1960), p.141ff., wherein he puts the matter in this homely way, "The first words for a child when it learns to eat wheat are: *abba, imma* dear father, dear mother. *Abba* was a homely family-word, the tender address of the babe to its father; O dear father - a secular word." Note, too, strong opposition from Greig, "Abba and Amen: Their Relevance to Christology," in *SE* V (1968), not only with regard to אב as possible child's babble, but also to comment on the entire Christology Jeremias sees emerging out of it: "The linguistic history of *abba* is probably not what Jeremias imagines it to be, and *abba* was probably already ambiguous enough in Jesus' day..it is not possible to say that we have penetrated behind the kerygma to the historical Jesus and thereby to imply that the Christhood of Jesus is assured." p.10.

⁶⁹ See above, pp.12f; *TWNT* V, p.948.

⁷⁰ "Abba Isn't Daddy," *JTS* 39 (NS, 1988): "If this is thought of as serious discussion and somehow relevant even to the New Testament [!], it is no wonder Jeremias went along the same path," p.32. The thought and terminology is directed to Jeremias, but it has relevance for all undertaking such linguistic analysis.

⁷¹ *TWNT* = *TDNT* V, p.961: "The phrase 'God of the fathers' (Ex. 3.13 etc.) also teaches us that the term 'fathers' did not normally carry with it any relic of numinous contact, since the fathers could not be characterised more plainly than God by a gen. of this kind," p.961.

⁷² (=BWANT III, 12, 1929) *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel. Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel, Band 1*, München: Beck, 1953; translated by R. A. Wilson, "The God of the Fathers." *Essays in Old Testament History and Religion*, Blackwell, 1966.

⁷³ *TWNT* = *TDNT* V, p.956.

acquires the dignity of father.⁷⁴ Such incumbency is also said to be passed on to priests, prophets, kings, and "fathers of the poor" (Job 29.16). Together with all this, of course, is the stipulation of the Decalogue that the father and the mother are to be honoured.

Quell presents quite clearly the ambiguity between the widespread notion of the fatherhood of god(s) among Israel's neighbours and the relatively "sparing" use in the Old Testament. In explaining this, he opines very emphatically that in the latter

religious trust in God is expressed less in language of perception and feeling than in that of thought. It is possible that the concept of the covenant, which proved very adaptable as an intellectual definition of the relation between God and man, worked to the detriment of the father motif, which was alien to it and more closely related to myth.⁷⁵

Related to this, near the end of his piece, Quell returns to the theophorus element in Hebrew proper names,⁷⁶ for example אביאל or אביה. Whoever bears the name is bearer also of a confession, namely that God or Yahweh is "father," which is personal with or without suffixes. Even so, says Quell, whoever makes such a confession can only have been speaking of God metaphorically, as one who possessed spiritual authority and who was characterised, at least implicitly, by love. Despite such understanding of divine authority and love, and even with confession of such in some texts, reserve in speaking of the fatherhood of God is noted as evident in the Old Testament, presumably "lest there should be relapse into outmoded religious forms."⁷⁷ We shall have occasion elsewhere, in light of Barr's criticism, to consider whether such judgements might in fact be a case of interpretative procedure distorting linguistic evidence.⁷⁸

Given its compact format and small print sections, Jenni's article on אב in *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* can likewise be said to be of near

⁷⁴ Ibid. p.962; see also his n.96 and 97 on patriarchy as compared with matriarchy, with discussion as to what elements of the latter may remain among the Hebrews from larger cultural influences.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp.965, 966.

⁷⁶ Although appropriate reference is made to Noth's important work on the subject, the absence of such reference to the equally significant earlier work by Gray noted. See above, p.9,n.27.

⁷⁷ *TWNT* = *TDNT* V, p.970. Further, "Proclamation of Yahweh as God of the people and as God generally did not take over the intrinsically unclear and disputable appellation 'father' without adjusting and modifying it by bringing out the true and constructive point of comparison." Regrettably, what would be 'true and constructive' in comparison is not persuasively presented here.

⁷⁸ See above, p.14. While not desiring to overload the presentation here, these further comments by Quell might be useful: "Perhaps the tradition concerning the beginnings of Yahweh religion gave the word 'father' so minor a place because it was strongly freighted with the ancient mythological content of the tribal religions and could thus give rise very easily to erroneous pagan ideas," p.966, and "This all goes to show that the father concept did not proceed from genuine belief in Yahweh but was imported into and received by it," p.967.

monograph size. He, like other lexicographers, builds on the work of his illustrious predecessors, and one wonders why another such theological lexicon is necessary. Yet he promises to justify the work by taking into account new insights from such fields as "formgeschichtlichen und traditionsgeschichtlichen Untersuchungen,"⁷⁹ and on this he delivers. He puts his very own stamp on things in these regards. He lists in succinct tabular form all twelve hundred and eleven Hebrew and seven Aramaic appearances of the word in its various forms and uses. When asked, while the article was very much in progress, how he arrived at the numbers indicated, he responded modestly and characteristically, "I counted them!" One was left with no doubt whatever that indeed he had done just that.⁸⁰

Typically in dealing with the simple, two radical אב, Jenni touches all bases, pointing out that development of the word is absent in old Hebrew but is to be found in Akkadian *abbutu* and Phoenician *b'bt p'ln* for "fatherhood" as well as Akkadian *abbūtu abazu* "advocate/intercessor." As for the twelve hundred plus Hebrew and Aramaic uses mentioned, he is similarly thorough in pointing to the pattern of suffixes and articles as well as where and in what manner אב *father* stands in complimentary and parallel relationship with אִמָּה *mother*. Carrying this to what in his mind is a logical conclusion he sets forth every conceivable secondary relationship designated by the word. In this he lays out the pattern of "forefather," including eighty times as "forefather par-excellence," of a clan, professional group, dynasty, people (Israel), its three patriarchs, as well as more adoptive/metaphorical uses (usually within a family circle) like founder or leader of professional or prophetic guilds. In the latter and related uses there is even the clear meaning of "spiritual father" and "teacher of wisdom." All of this is to be seen, again, in light of parallels and even further developed uses throughout the larger Near Eastern context. In stunning economy, he deals with the use of אב in connection with the notion of "spiritual fatherhood" as regards both prophetic and wisdom circles, commenting on twelve texts, accounting for thirteen other commentators, and keeping in view the larger Semitic world in just one hundred and ninety words.⁸¹

⁷⁹ THAT I, p.v. of the Vorwort.

⁸⁰ Personal exchange, Exegesis Seminar, University of Basel, 1967.

⁸¹ In a concluding remark to this section, THAT I, p.6, Jenni says, "Jedoch ist hier the Übergang zu אב als Ehrentitel fließend." Reference is made to J. G. Williams' "The Prophetic 'Father,'" *JBL* 85 (1966), pp.344-48 and K. Gallings' "Der Ehrenname Elias und die Entrückung Elias," *ZTK* 53 (1956), p.130f.; the two disagree on whether the title "father" originated with a prophetic guild or was used of them by outsiders as a term of respect. This matter may prove significant in subsequent exegetical and theological reflection.

Jenni is equally punctilious in setting forth what we have already mentioned from his predecessors on *בית אבות* *father's house*, encompassing all in the immediate and extended household, even tribe, under *pater familias*, and this need not be repeated. It does need to be said, however, that he carries the enquiry forward considerably, distinguishing carefully between pre-exilic use confined to blood relatives and heirs and technical post-exilic development embracing tribal entities, that is *משפחה* *clan*. Again, characteristically, two hundred and one such uses are indicated, one hundred and twenty-nine of the late technical sort. Closely connected with this are some forty proper names, as, clearly, *אביאל* *El is (my) father*⁸² and, more problematical, *אחאב* *father's brother*. As distinguished from older research, of say Baudissin and Noth, new investigations by Stamm and presumably Jenni himself hold that a distinction is to be made between proper theophoric sense and purely profane use, which according to Stamm accounts for more than one fourth of the usage.⁸³ An important genitive development of *אב* is outlined with regard to the "god's of" Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and every appearance in singular and plural is indicated. Alt's monumental study *Der Gott der Väter* is referenced as well as those of numerous of his followers, like Albright. But this is another, though quite related matter, to which we shall return below. Another story, too, is the plural *אבות* *fathers*, many of which appearances are said to be neutral, but some of which are weighty in deuteronomic theology and in comprehending God's election,⁸⁴ passed from God to the fathers to the people in the land of Israel. These aspects of Israel's faith are vitally important, and we shall take them up again, too, in greater detail in another place.

In the end, with all his erudition and impressive grasp of the basic, developed, and metaphorical use of *אב* in the Old Testament, Jenni concludes that virtually all appearances of such with regard to the fatherhood of God are essentially mythical and substantially dependent upon a larger Semitic matrix, even as they manifest unique and peculiar

⁸² See above, p.7, of this dissertation.

⁸³ THAT I, p.9, Stamm is cited at *RGV IV*, p.1301. Cf., Gray, of the older researchers, in *Studies in Hebrew Names* (1896), who says, "...these names, and consequently the families bearing them are pre-exilic in origin..(which, however) continued in use among different Semitic peoples," pp.28 and 34. Jenni concludes, "Die religionsgeschichtliche Auswertung muss damit rechnen, dass die Namen einerseits aus Konservatismus weiterwendet werden, auch wenn die bei der Namensprägung aktuelle Situation sich längst geändert hat..dass andererseits auch grammatisch-syntaktische und inhaltliche (metaphorische) Neudeutungen erfolgen können," citing Bauer *OLZ* 33(1930), p.593ff.

⁸⁴ Let this be noted, in Jenni's inimitable words: "Etwa vom 7.Jh. an wird der Plur. 'die Väter' zu einem wichtigen Begriff der theologischen Sprache; er wahrt die heilsgeschichtliche Dimension in den Aussagen über das Volk Israel, das in den Vätern und Söhnen sowohl bei deren Zusammenordnung als auch bei deren Abhebung von einander eine organische Einheit bildet..aus dem Bereich der Väterüberlieferung heraustretend, Erwählung, Liebeszuwendung und Bundschluss als Gaben an die Vater erwählt," *ibid.*,pp.11f.

experiences and understandings. We see in this that he both stands upon the shoulders, so to speak, of his illustrious predecessors in textual and lexical analysis and leads them on. While acknowledging,⁸⁵ with his predecessors, that the Old Testament is quite reserved in employing אב in connections with God's fatherhood, he, like they, offer little by way of explanation for the paucity of such use, other than the stock reason of fear of foreign contamination. And, although allowing, with forerunners in such work, though a bit more thoroughly, that such usage as does occur is related to the election of Israel through the fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he, as his fellow analysts, are of necessity unable to account fully for the context or the sudden and unexpected appearances of the term in the classical prophets, except to suggest that it was something of a tool for combating various pagan nature gods.

Perhaps we have all that is possible from such historical and lexical analysis. Positively, it provides overall deep and fascinating views of the multifarious historical, social, and religious milieu of the Ancient Near East, so the broad background against which biblical happenings may be well understood and better appreciated. Accompanying such is a multitude of fatherly designations for the numerous gods, from which interesting and analogous images of divinity may be drawn. Again, of course, as Miller has rightly observed, such divine ones are in many ways weak, disreputable, and dysfunctional,⁸⁶ so quite marginal for comparison with biblical images. Recent lexical efforts, such as Jenni's, and as promised, have presented significantly more with regard to a terms "theological relevance",⁸⁷ and such is certainly useful overall. The skill with which the material is arranged, transliterated, translated, and commented upon with regard to possible parallels to biblical thought and events impresses the mind. By it much light is shed, and understanding of the Old Testament world is undoubtedly enhanced. On the other hand, while we are hardly competent to critique such massive learning, particularly

⁸⁵ Quoting Schrenk (*TWNT* V, p.951, obviously building upon that), he writes that "...die Anrufung der Gottheit unter dem Vaternamen zu den Urphänomenen der Religionsgeschichte gehört," then adds on his own, *ibid.*, p. 14, "ist das AT in der Verwendung der Vaterbezeichnung für Yahweh sehr zurückhaltend." As for a reason for its eventual appearance, he says, "...mindestens in der poetischen Diktion ein Nachhall mythischer kanaanäischer Vorstellungen anzunehmen, welche sonst in der prophetischen Auseinandersetzung mit dem Vegetations- und Fruchtbarkeitskult scharf abgewiesen werden...," p.15. Reference is also made to Kraus, and it is pointed out: "Bemerkenswert ist die Tatsache, dass erst im nachexilischer Zeit unbekümmert von der Vaterschaft Jahwes gesprochen wurde. Wahrscheinlich hat Dñs die Bahn gebrochen, wenn er ständig davon spricht, dass Israel von Jahwe 'erschaffen' worden sei. Formulierungen wie in Jes 63,16;64,7 sind im Kraftfeld des grossen unbekanntem Propheten entstanden." *RGG* III/6, p.1234. Again, we will return to these matters below.

⁸⁶ *Fathering*, pp.43ff.

⁸⁷ See Biddle's jacket comment on English translation. *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (1979)

in a study such as this, problematic aspects of such an enterprise, at least from a canonical perspective, are also evident. Here we but file them by category:

- 1) given the method and necessary emphasis upon general revelation at the expense of any real possibility of special revelation in the biblical material and to the people of Israel indicated or implied, *it effectively divests the Old Testament of its most distinctive character*;
- 2) consequent focus upon general revelation renders the *characteristic monotheism of the scriptures and Hebrew people at best moot and at worst meaningless*;
- 3) nearly automatic acceptance of apparently parallel Ancient Near Eastern texts as suggesting simple and substantial Old Testament correspondence with and dependence upon such, distorts both and *implies dubious mythological origins*;⁸⁸
- 4) overall, the method suffers - and causes to suffer - from the limits imposed by principles and presuppositions of interpretation necessarily involved in the *selection of texts considered from within and from outside the biblical materials*.⁸⁹

Some aspects of such problematic issues will be taken up further in Parts Two and Three below. For now, we conclude this portion of our enquiry with what and with whom we began, Samuel Johnson:

Such is the fate of hapless lexicography, that not only darkness, but light, impedes and distresses it; things may be not only too light, but too much known, to be happily illustrated.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ For example, Frymer-Kensky, "Enuma Elish," *Encyclopedia of Religion* I, pp. 125f., says, with regard to a Ugaritic myth, "the difference between *Genesis 1* and *Enuma elish* are so vast that there is no reason to talk of mythological similarity or literary dependence. The similarities are evidence only of a shared cosmology, a shared 'science' that saw our world as beginning in water and surrounded by it, a concept also found in early Greece. The importance of *Enuma elish* to the study of *Genesis 1* is that it demonstrates that these concepts were in fact (and were almost certainly perceived to be) common Near Eastern lore rather than data of Israel's revelation, and that Israel used this lore to convey its own independent message. This does not mean that the myths have a Babylonian origin."

⁸⁹ As Ackroyd puts one aspect of such critical consideration in his short review of *TWAT* in *ExpT* 88 (1976), p. 104: "The disadvantages of any dictionary form of discussion of theological matters is the limitation imposed by the choice of which words to include."

⁹⁰ *Dictionary*, Preface.

FEMINIST CONCERNS

Prominent and powerful feminist concerns with regard to the image of God, Christ, and his Church as represented in Holy Scripture have been manifest in the past two or three decades, particularly in the United States. Correspondingly, a massive literature on such has arisen as well as a burgeoning of women's studies in schools, colleges, universities, and theological seminaries. Indeed, the field is already so vast that no attempt will be made to deal with it comprehensively in this study. Rather, we will endeavour only to set forth the principal points of the feminist critique as it touches upon fatherhood of God imagery in the Old Testament. The footnotes and the remarks contained therein will serve as suggested further reading on broader matters.

First Wave

Of course, such concerns were expressed much earlier than the preceding decades. The Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention of 1848, while manifestly concerned with women's civil rights, ventured also into the ecclesial arena with its bold resolution, based on "divinely implanted principles," calling for "the overthrow of the monopoly of the pulpit" and in support of the ordination of a woman.⁹¹ Forty years later, in 1890, Mary Baker Eddy's teaching on the Lord's Prayer spoke in terms of *Our Father-Mother God*, then offered the definition of biblical *Mother* as "God; divine and eternal Principle; Life, Truth, and Love."⁹² She fails to elaborate, but clearly, concern for women's sentiments, broadly speaking, is on her mind. In 1895, Elizabeth Stanton published *The Woman's Bible* and said significantly more in this regard. While the text contains only those biblical passages that are or might be reasonably construed as being favourable to women, her Introduction and Commentary are far more sweeping in condemnation of the Scripture's generally negative attitude toward and impact upon women. Her Introduction says:

The Bible teaches that woman brought sin and death into the world, that she precipitated the fall of the race, that she was arraigned before the judgement seat in Heaven, tried, condemned and sentenced... Here is the Bible position of woman briefly summed up.⁹³

⁹¹ "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions: Seneca Falls, July 19, 1848," *Feminism: the Essential Historical Writings*, p.82.

⁹² *Science and Health With Key to the Scriptures*, pp.16, 592.

⁹³ *The Woman's Bible*, Part I, p.7

In comment on Zipporah's circumcision of her son with Moses, which rite women were unable otherwise to share, Stanton opines:

But so long as the Pentateuch is read and accepted as the Word of God, an undefined influence is felt by each generation, that destroys a proper respect for all womankind.⁹⁴

The contributors to the Seneca Falls Convention, Eddy, and Stanton are, then, to be ranked in the *first wave* of feminism. All were concerned with the *proper rights of women in society and the church*, largely under the category of equity feminism. And in this all were in one way or another expressing, over against the "revealed" biblical picture, the deistic notion that God surely and rationally desires equality and happiness for his creatures.

Second Wave

The past three decades have seen an emergence of a *second wave* of feminist concern come in, with continued interest in equity matters, but with a new and remarkably vigorous emphasis on *gender issues*. It points to the fact that not only have women been denied a proper place in both social and religious structures, and even been oppressed by them, but also to the very real possibility that women have been oppressed by an ancient and universal patriarchal system that effectively denies their true nature. The indictment of the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic religions in this connection has been articulate and thorough going.

Simone deBeauvoir, the celebrated French philosopher and novelist, filed a ground-breaking brief concerning this indictment in *The Second Sex*, published in the original in 1949, shortly after the close of World War II. Granting that "humanity is divided into two classes of individuals whose clothes, faces, bodies, smiles, gaits, interests, and occupations are manifestly different," she poses the question, "what is woman?"⁹⁵ And while further allowing that she is "the Other within a primordial *Mitsein*,⁹⁶ and woman has not broken it," deBeauvoir sets forth what appears to be the principal, even principle, crest of feminism's second wave.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p.76.

⁹⁵ *La deuxième sexe*, ed. and trans. by H. M. Parshley under the title *The Second Sex* (London, Vintage, 1997), p.15.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.19. This technical term or code word is not translated. It could presumably be German for "joint being." It is further said, at this place, that "the couple is a fundamental unity with its two halves riveted together, and the cleavage of society along the line of sex impossible. Here is to be found the

If woman seems to be the inessential which never becomes the essential, it is because she herself fails to bring about this change.⁹⁷

She spoke such a bold challenge and virtual call to action against a contemporary social backdrop of vibrant women's concerns with regard to equal rights, abortion, and political representation in governmental affairs.⁹⁸ Although her analysis of woman's nature and situation are critically debated, pro and con, her importance on the issues involved is beyond doubt. From an interview for *Feminist Studies* in 1979, Simmons and Benjamin have this to say:

Still, we have no theoretical source of comparable sweep that stimulates us to analyze and relentlessly question our situation as women in so many domains - literature, religion, politics, work, education, motherhood, and sexuality. As contemporary theorists explore the issues raised in *The Second Sex*, we can see that in a sense all feminist dialogue entails a dialogue with Simone deBeauvoir. And a discussion with her can be a way of locating ourselves within our feminist past, present, and future.⁹⁹

There is likewise no doubt as to Simone deBeauvoir's essential philosophy as she viewed woman's predicament. In his preface to the English translation, Parshley says straight away that her "'perspective is that of existentialist ethics': her philosophy is focused in the existentialism of Sartre." In sum, it holds that *existence precedes essence!* Such influence and prevailing thought is seen throughout, and nowhere more clearly and forcefully than in this from the conclusion to *The Second Sex*, wherein she puts forth her opposition to any notion of given, eternal feminine nature:

Woman is determined not by her hormones or by mysterious instincts, but by the manner in which her body and her relation to the world are modified through the actions of others than herself. If we appreciate (this) influence, we see clearly that her destiny is not predetermined

basic trait of woman: she is the Other in a totality of which the two components are necessary to one another."

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.19.

⁹⁸ See chronology of the period and deBeauvoir in *Simone deBeauvoir's The Second Sex*, edited by Ruth Evans, pp.xiff. e.g. in France, the Liberation des Femmes (1970); Manifesto of the 343 on abortion, signed *inter alia* by deBeauvoir (1971); in the United States, Equal Rights Amendment (1972ff.); Supreme Court decision on abortion (1973); the publication of Betty Frieden's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), dedicated to deBeauvoir.

⁹⁹ Source not available at this writing, so quoted here from Rosemarie Tong's *Feminist Thought, A Comprehensive Introduction* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1989), p.195.

for all eternity.¹⁰⁰

From a religious perspective such a brief would have been *amicus curia* as far as Jews and Christians are concerned, for deBeauvoir was totally outside such community, and indeed agnostic at best. On the other hand, her early Christian upbringing and later social, philosophical, and psychological learning allows relatively informed attacks upon what she deems the patriarchal paralysis imposed upon women in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. At best, she views the lot as something of an opiate for the masses under their collective sway, quite ironically in the case of women, holding them in a “duped” state senselessly pondering some supreme compensation.

For the Jews, Mohammedans, and Christians, among others, man is mastered by divine right; the fear of God, therefore, will repress any impulse towards revolt in the downtrodden female. This is why women today are still a powerful trump in the hand of the Church. There must be religion for women, ‘true women’, to perpetuate religion.¹⁰¹

Pre-eminent among religious and Christian apologists of the second wave of feminism, at least by notoriety, is Mary Daly. Her work merits primacy of place and space in these considerations. Early on in her career, in *The Church and the Second Sex*, she characterises herself as one speaking out of “pride, anger, and hope.”¹⁰² Such emotions are something of a key to viewing her abiding contribution to the feminist critique. The *anger* is already evident in 1964, when she wrote and published “The Forgotten Sex, A Built-in Bias,”¹⁰³ while still in doctoral studies at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. Primarily, it was rather blatant ecclesiastical ire over women’s exclusion from Church leadership, particularly priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church, mentioned some twenty times directly and innumerable times indirectly in just four thousand words or so. Beneath the surface of this anger lies *the* major concern, namely the patriarchal mindset of Judaism and Christianity, along with the larger cultural milieu

¹⁰⁰ *Second Sex*, p.734.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.635.

¹⁰² *The Church and the Second Sex, with a New Feminist Postchristian Introduction* (New York: Harper Colophone Books, 1975), p.5. Between the first and second editions she has clearly moved from liberal Catholic Christianity to thoroughgoing radical feminism.

¹⁰³ *Com* (15 January 1965), pp.508-11, apparently the first stage of *Second Sex*. The piece is marred by an unnamed and undocumented straw priest of “built-in bias” at the beginning and reference to an unnamed recent book by Jose Idigoras, S.J. at the end. She later acknowledges, in an “Autobiographical Preface to Colophone Edition” of *Second Sex*, p.10, that Rosemary Lauer’s “Women in the Church,” *Com* (20 December 1963), was an “important catalyst.”

in which they were set, and the consequent *patria potestas*, both of which have for modern women the "dimensions of a nightmare."¹⁰⁴ Coming from one who was herself a Catholic, the piece was something of a thunder-clap, for it charged traditional attitudes and policies of cloaking women under the guise of an eternal feminine mystique while all the while deceiving them as to their real identity, holding them in a *status quo*. Moreover, herein is to be seen the elementary influence of Simone deBeauvoir's existential philosophy,¹⁰⁵ as well as the social sciences and notions of cultural conditioning on which both the great French lady and herself clearly rely for their analysis. In commenting on the Church's attitude toward women - from the Old Testament to Christ to Paul to Tertullian to Aquinas - Daly says flatly that its expressions and actions were overall but "reflections of already existing social patterns of the society in which the Church has found herself."¹⁰⁶ This assessment comes out all the more clearly as she calls for "radical surgery" for the removal of the damaging roots of Judeo-Christian androcentrism and misogyny.

What is needed is creative effort to develop a theological anthropology which will study the dynamics of human personality and social relationships from a radically evolutionary point of view..which rejects as alienating to both sexes the idea of a sexual hierarchy founded upon 'nature' and defined once for all..a dynamic and liberating theological anthropology.¹⁰⁷

Even more radically, once having in fact moved "beyond" Christianity, as testified to in the postchristian introduction to the second edition of *The Church and the Second Sex*, Daly declares, in bold new language of her own making:

¹⁰⁴ *Second Sex*, p. 76. The consequences of this nightmare, as Daly sees matters, has been to render women mere 'biological beasts, contributing to social delinquency and even prostitution,' p.55. Moreover, she seems obsessed in this context with "rapism of males" and "burial in patriarchal marriage," pp.29,34,45.

¹⁰⁵ According to Su Waslin, *The Theoretical Contexts of Mary Daly's Thought* (St. Andrews, UK, Dissertation, 1998), pp.54ff, Daly, in a personal interview, denied influence of deBeauvoir's existentialism, claiming instead "nature" as her primary source and category of thought. Waslin largely accepts this explanation. As an example of such difference, she points to Daly's 'salvage' of a belief in otherworldliness in *Pure Lust* and a value attached to the Virgin Birth in *Beyond God the Father*. Even so, such are by Daly selectively twisted out of all biblical, theological, and traditional shape and reconstructed into elements of her own purpose. Moreover, Daly's perceived reluctance, with deBeauvoir, to jettison nature *altogether* needs to be viewed as a desire, at the time of *Second Sex*, for sentimental or strategic purposes, to appear to remain within the Church. Whatever, Waslin seems to confuse details with essential existential philosophical principle, i.e. that *existence precedes essence*, which both deBeauvoir and Daly hold fully. "Serious philosophical differences," as alleged on p.68, do not seem to exist on our reading. "Entrenched Thomism," viewed by Waslin as a hedge against full existentialism, seems but a vestige of former things. We are unimpressed by the argument. On the other hand, Waslin's bibliography of "Selected Secondary Literature on Daly," pp.205-07, is excellent.

¹⁰⁶ *Com* (15 January 1965), p.509.

¹⁰⁷ *Second Sex*, pp.189-90.

When women enter feminist postchristian time/space, whatever might have been genuine in "doctrine" is not lost but rather transformed, wrenched out of the old context, as we are living, willing, thinking, **being** our own thoughts. If some reality to which a Christian doctrine was trying to point survives this leap into the postchristian context, that is all right, but what matters is that **we** survive and keep moving.¹⁰⁸

Here, even more clearly and quite admittedly, the philosophical rationale for such radical surgery is the "atheistic existentialism" of Simone deBeauvoir, built, as it is, upon that of Sartre. After systematically setting forth the "salient ideas" of such on the paramount nature of this life, flexible essences of the same, acquired traits, and pseudo-femininity, Daly concludes that "a fixed human nature, which is supposedly grasped by process of abstraction is but a psychological gimmick" to suppress women.¹⁰⁹

Clearly Daly's early *hope*, as evidenced in the first edition of *The Church and the Second Sex*, was located in Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council. Before laying out "The Case Against the Church," dedicated in a sense to deBeauvoir, she says:

There is no compelling reason to preclude the possibility that a progression is involved. The day-to-day and country-by-country experience of the Church is educational, and it brings about evolution in doctrine.

Moreover, she goes on:

There is mounting evidence of a growing awareness among Catholics that there is a problem. even though its complexity may not allow a very easy formulation.¹¹⁰

Undergirding such hope was Daly's own early conviction that the Church did not "bear the whole burden of guilt" for the "oppression of women," as, sadly, it is "both product and perpetuator" of such, so is itself something of a victim of its own patriarchal structures.¹¹¹ Indeed, Daly points with some confidence to the fact that the Church can

108 Ibid., p.40.

109 Ibid., pp.70-2. See also "The Courage to See," *CC* (22 September 1971), pp.1108-11: "the ethic emerging in the struggle for women's liberation has as its main theme not prudence but existential courage," which makes the "future present in the sharing of hopes." James Hitchcock responds, though his *picce* comes before, with "Women's Liberation: Tending Toward Idolatry," *ibid.*, pp. 1104-07, accusing Daly and others, as Rosemary Ruether, of tending to "reduce all forms of Christianity to radical protestantism." Such charge will be taken up in an overall assessment of feminism's role in our exegesis.

110 *Second Sex*, pp.55-6; also pp.9,25,26.

111 *Ibid.*, p.69.

provide the needed conditions for a St. Teresa's ability to rise above, in deBeauvoir's words, any "ceiling over her head."¹¹² Yet such hope and confidence were dashed with time, for in the preface to the Colophon edition she refers to aspects of Vatican II as "an ant-poisonous,"¹¹³ says she now has little time to say anything on the subject of popes, and declares with clear exasperation that in any case such processes are, again, a matter of "one step forward, three steps backward."¹¹⁴ Daly sums up her disillusionment with both the Catholic religion and the whole of Christianity with her famous conclusion, "Briefly, if God is male, then the male is God."¹¹⁵ The dashing of Daly's hope was complete.

Once hope had turned to despair, the way was open for Daly to express her *pride*, albeit in what seems a rather ironic manner.¹¹⁶ In *Beyond God the Father*, characterised as "a sequel to *The Church and the Second Sex*,"¹¹⁷ she endeavours to indicate that at stake in this work is a "pointing beyond the God of patriarchal philosophy and religion."¹¹⁸ While acknowledging that since the latter her "perspective (of anger and hope) has been greatly radicalised,"¹¹⁹ she proceeds in the former small book to proudly put aside not only the traditional notion of the fatherhood of God, but the whole of Roman Catholic doctrines of Christology, Mariology, Soteriology, and Eucharistic Presence. As for God, the indictment is not only against the idea of speaking of such in terms of fatherhood, but also against even employing nounness to do so. "Why indeed must 'God'

112 Ibid., p.68.

113 Ibid., p.10.

114 Ibid., p.26.

115 Ibid., p.38. See also the perceived effect of the "masculine gaze" of the "young girl" in the Catholic religion, suggested by deBeauvoir, put in these words by Daly: "This attitude is reinforced by the fact that God is called Father, that Christ is male, that the angels, though they are pure spirits, have masculine names...an idea of divinity as male," p.66. Herein, too, is located an early root of the Daly's proverbial feminist dictum. See, too, however, Carol Myers' caution on feminist reaction to and discussion of Scripture's patriarchal orientation in *Discovering Eve* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). "While broadly correct in associating patriarchy with ancient Israel, their assessment of patriarchy as a limiting, harsh, enslaving, or oppressive system, or as a fact that is painful to consider, reveals a serious methodological flaw. They are misusing the term patriarchy as a synonym for male dominance or for a system in which male traits are valued over female ones," pp.25-6. The caution is apt for Daly as well as others taken up below.

116 In all charity, it must be said that a first reading of this word gave the impression, in terms of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, of "a feeling of high satisfaction" (with membership in the Roman Catholic Church). From what is presented here overall, however, apparently intentionally, one is driven to another meaning from the *OED*, namely a sense of "superiority over and contempt for others" (of that tradition, mentioned and unmentioned, from Justin Martyr, Anselm, Popes Pius XII and John Paul, even Aquinas, from whose well she had drawn for two doctoral dissertations, not to mention Barth, Bonhoeffer, and Tillich of the reformed tradition).

117 *Beyond God the Father*, p.xi.

118 Ibid., p.7.

119 Ibid., p.xi.

be a noun? Why not a verb - the most active and dynamic of all?"¹²⁰ Daly, for her part, better names God as Be-ing!

What I am suggesting is that women who are confronting the nothingness which emerges when one turns one's back upon the pseudo-reality offered by patriarchy are by that very act saying "I am," that is confronting our own depth of **being**. What we are experiencing, therefore, is not **only** the sense of absence of the old Gods - a sense which we fully share with Garoudy and Bloch. Our exclusion from identity with patriarchy has had a totality about it which, when faced, calls forth an ontological self-affirmation. Beyond the absence, therefore, women are in a situation to experience presence. This is not the presence of a super-reified Something, but of a power of being which is, and is not yet.¹²¹

Before such Be-ing can emerge in this conception, however, various false deities have to be put aside, namely the "God of explanation, the God of otherworldliness, (and) the God who is the Judge of 'Sin.'"¹²² Although transcendence is mentioned, it is admittedly self-transcendence of women in solidarity.

The ontological hope of which I am speaking is neither this self-deification nor the simplistic reified images often lurking behind such terms as "Creator," "Lord," "Judge," that Sartre rightly rejects. It enables us to break out of this prison of subjectivity because it implies commitment together.¹²³

Daly not only moves beyond God, the Father, but, logically, "Beyond Christolatry"¹²⁴ as well. It is a move which puts far behind all such classical Christian notions as incarnation, trinity, and soteriology, with associated uniqueness and particularity in Jesus. All of these, with Feuerbach, are deemed mere human projections of hapless and hopeless patriarchy. Charging excessive docetism in much Christian

120 Ibid., p.33.

121 Ibid., p.36.

122 Ibid., pp.30,31. Bonhoeffer's "God as a stop-gap due to incompleteness of knowledge," from *Letters and Papers from Prison*, p.190, is quoted for the first false deity, explaining women's status as in "God's plan" and hand. The second, following deBeauvoir, explains women's lot "in this life" as somehow rewarded in another. The third lords it over them by placing them in submission and obedience to men.

123 *Beyond*, p.34.

124 Ibid., pp.69ff.

doctrine, the dogma of hypostatic union of God-Man in Trinity is deemed "as a kind of cosmic joke" among women.¹²⁵ Indeed, she concludes:

As a uniquely masculine image and language for divinity loses credibility, so also the idea of a single divine incarnation in a human being of the male sex may give way in the religious consciousness to and increased awareness of the power of Being in all persons.¹²⁶

Moreover,

The idea of a unique male savior may be seen as one more legitimation of male superiority..a patriarchal divinity or his son is exactly **not** in a position to save us (women) from the horrors of a patriarchal world.¹²⁷

Not only this, but in the new be-ing of women, referred to as "the *Second Coming of Women*," ideas of a male savior are even said to be synonymous with the very "Antichrist."¹²⁸

Swept away, too, is all uniqueness of Mary, so her Immaculate Conception and Assumption of later Catholic doctrine. Whereas the former presumably was promulgated to render Mary worthy of becoming the Mother of Jesus, it in fact appears to reinforce sexual caste. While in classical Christian doctrine Jesus' Ascension is said to be active, suggesting power, Mary's Assumption is thought to be passive, so supporting in fact a notion of "sexual hierarchy."¹²⁹ Even so, claim is laid to Mary, according to deBeauvoir's suggestion, as a remnant and a *free-wheeling* symbol of the ancient Mother Goddess, "whose history preceded the advent of Christianity by many thousands of years."¹³⁰

125 Ibid., p.72.

126 Ibid., p.71. Already in "The Courage to See," *CC* (22 September 1971), p.1108ff., Daly charged that both the Christian doctrine of God and the concept of an incarnate Jesus were oppressive to women, even if only implicitly, so requiring liberation. James Hitchcock's article, "Women's Liberation," in the same journal issue, and in response, accuses Daly and the entire women's liberation movement of reducing "all forms of Christianity to radical Protestantism" and "smacking of idolatry," pp.1106-07.

127 *Beyond*, p.96. See also p.71 on loss of "credibility" ..of a single divine incarnation in a human being of the male sex; p.72 on "precisely the role that a male symbol *cannot* perform."

128 Ibid., p.96.

129 Ibid., p.87.

130 Ibid., p.90.

With such thoughts as these, Daly had for all intents and purposes moved beyond the Roman Catholic Church and even Christianity as commonly understood.¹³¹ As we have noted, having set such entities and their doctrine aside as being neither here nor there, she declared instead that “**being** our own thoughts... **we** [just] survive and keep moving.”¹³² In order to both survive and keep moving in this new be-ing Daly calls for a new sisterhood among women. This is not to be “a subordinate mini-brotherhood, but an authentic bonding of women on a wide scale for our liberation.”¹³³ It is not to be of the Roman Catholic sort, which, sadly, has “been incorporated in a particular way into the brotherhood of the church.”¹³⁴ Indeed, it is nothing other than a revolutionary movement against the entire patriarchal system of the Church and society, with both positive and negative consequences.

The positive refusal of cooptation means the becoming of the sisterhood of women, which is necessary to overcome paralysis, self-hatred of women as a caste, self-depreciation, and emotional dependence upon men for a feeling of self-esteem..Sisterhood is the bonding of those who are oppressed by definition.¹³⁵

Needless to say, the call to sisterhood has been heard widely. While responses have been various, Daly’s primary place in the feminist movement is well established and properly recognised.

Thoughts with regard to this “postchristian” context are set forth in her books *Gyn/Ecology* in 1979 and *Pure Lust* in 1984. But inasmuch as these carry one even more fully into yet a *third and final wave of feminism*, clearly outside Christianity, while other significant exponents are attempting to remain as reformers within the Church, our attention now turns to representatives of them, returning to Daly and the mentioned works below. Such feminists might be referred to as a *wave-form* within the *second wave* of the movement. In 1973, Phyllis Trible gave significant expression to such manifestly

¹³¹ She appeared on her way out at the end of the first edition of *The Church and the Second Sex* (1968), saying that with the “degrading doctrine of exclusive male headship, there is little hope of their achieving adulthood without separating themselves from the Church in some way - if not completely and openly, then partially and clandestinely,” p.187. Indeed, in the preface to the second edition (1975) she came clean and began dating matters A.F., that is Anno Feminarum, p.6. Not only that, but, in Star Wars parlance, the journey beyond was described as into “galaxies in a mind voyage to further and further stars;” see also p.21.

¹³² *Second Sex*, p.40; see p.29 of this dissertation.

¹³³ *Beyond*, p.8.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.60.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.59.

Christian second-stage aspects of the movement in "Depatriarchalizing Biblical Interpretation."¹³⁶ It proved to be a programmatic paper, as it set forth the concerns and even the principal texts of all we have read and will comment on in these present remarks. The method and terminology mark her as a biblical theologian of considerable training and skill, attempting to reconstruct that discipline in the aftermath of its "crisis,"¹³⁷ and to endeavour to "examine interaction between the Hebrew Scriptures and the Woman's Liberation Movement."¹³⁸ If the movement, under the powerful and provocative influence of Mary Daly, as is evident, was confronting women with the unhappy choice of either "the God of the fathers or the God of sisterhood," Tribble points to what seems to her a more excellent way.

The Women's Movement errs when it dismisses the Bible as inconsequential and condemns it as enslaving. But there is another way: to reread (not rewrite) the Bible without the blinders of Israelite men or Paul, Barth, Bonhoeffer, and a host of others. The hermeneutical challenge is to translate biblical faith without sexism.¹³⁹

For one thing, biblical themes of crucial importance "disavow sexism," as Yahweh is "above sexuality" (cf. Deut. 6.4). Moreover, "feminine imagery for God is more prevalent in the Old Testament than we usually acknowledge," for example as one having "birth pangs," being "a comforting mother," and even "a midwife."¹⁴⁰ Finally, as for themes, the

¹³⁶ *JAAR* 41 (1973), pp.30-48.

¹³⁷ See Brevard Childs's *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press (1970). Beginning, in a sense, with Langdon Gilkey's "Cosmology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Language," *JR* 41 (1961) and J. A. T. Robinson's *Honest to God* (1963), "The Biblical Theology Movement underwent a period of slow dissolution. from inside and outside the movement that brought it to a virtual end as a major force in American theology in the early sixties," pp.85-7. Tribble confesses quite frankly that for her "the mighty acts of God proved wanting, and the ensuing years have heightened that deficiency," *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p.xv. Clearly, she was looking in and for a new direction, finding it in feminist concerns.

¹³⁸ "Depatriarchalizing", p. 30.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.31. In her later Postscript to *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), ed. Letty Russell, entitled "Jottings on the Journey," Tribble terms the hermeneutical task undertaken there with an array of reform-minded feminist colleagues as a "journey to discover a biblical faith that yields wholeness and well-being," p.147. Letty Russell's herself, in the chapter on "Authority and the Challenge of Feminist Interpretation, declares that she too has "no intention of giving up the biblical basis of (her) theology," yet says, in David Kelsey's terms, that it must of necessity be Scripture under "imaginative construal," pp.138 and 141 respectively. Katharine Sakenfeld, participating in the same journey, in the chapter "Feminist Uses of Biblical Materials," seeks authority for the Bible in "some understanding of women's rejected history and untold story," p.64. The issues and desired outcomes are straightforwardly put!

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 31,33. See there for scripture references, many of which are credited to an early colleague at Andover Newton Theological School, at which point in time they had together "only begun to explore the topic."

concept of "corporate personality" is said to be of "profound insight" into Hebrew thought and expression. Even so, only one text is placed in evidence, Jeremiah 8.21. In sum, "the nature of the God of Israel defies sexism."¹⁴¹

Turning from general themes to specific textual issues, Tribble exegetes Genesis 2-3 masterfully. Understanding the narrator of both to have employed "an *inclusio* device," or "ring composition," that is with major points at the beginning and end of a passage.¹⁴² From this it is reasoned that in creation female and male are "equal sexes" and that in the garden, with the serpent, the former is speculated to be in fact more intelligent and sensible, a veritable "theologian and translator," handling properly "the hermeneutical task."¹⁴³

Remarkable is the extent to which patriarchal patterns fade; the extent to which the Yahwist stands over against his male dominated culture; the extent to which the vision of a trans-sexual Deity shaped and understanding of human sexuality.¹⁴⁴

Similar exegesis of the Song of Songs, viewing it as a commentary on Genesis 2-3, and assuming the same *inclusio* patterns, yields a similar interpretation.

There is no male dominance, no female subordinations, and no stereotyping of either sex. The woman is independent, fully the equal of the man. Her interests, work, and words defy the connotations of "second sex."¹⁴⁵

In conclusion, "Depatriarchalizing is not an operation which the exegete performs on the text. It is a hermeneutic operating within Scripture itself."¹⁴⁶ There is doubtless a clear

¹⁴¹ Ibid., pp.34,35. Over against this, commentators as diverse as McKane, *Jeremiah 1/2 ICC* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986/1996) and Clements, *Jeremiah*, Int. (Atlanta: John Knox, 1988), make no such reference to the concept. Besides, in a reissue of H. Wheeler Robinson's *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), which Tribble cites from its first issue, Cyril Rodd's Introduction fails to indicate the importance of the notion for feminist hermeneutics and even indicates that it should be abandoned as "hopelessly confused and confusing," p.8.

¹⁴² E.g. 2.18,20; 2.23.

¹⁴³ Ibid., pp. 36-42.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p.42.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p.45.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p.48. See also "God, Nature of in the Old Testament," *IDB*, Supp. (1976), pp.318ff, where this conclusion is "enshrined." Mary Ann Tolbert was greatly impressed with this effort to arrive at a feminist biblical hermeneutic, as well as the somewhat similar approaches of Ruether, Schuessler Fiorenza, and McFague, which we will deal with as some length below. With a definite "bias in favor of the Bible," Tolbert approaches the patriarchal problem with a feminist hermeneutic of paradox, that is understanding God "as enemy and friend, as tormentor and savior, to read the same Bible as enslaver and liberator." See "Defining the Problem: The Bible and Feminist Hermeneutics" in *Semia* 28, (1983),

desire to stand within the Christian tradition, albeit with such vigorous rereading of texts as are here undertaken.

Trible's depatriarchalizing principle was more fully set forth in 1978 in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, with articulation of essentially the same concerns, themes, and texts as heretofore mentioned. As the title indicates, the method of exegesis has undergone some refinement, in what is described as "rhetorical criticism." She defines this as investigation not only along the lines of usual literary criticism but also into "individual characteristics of a literary unit."¹⁴⁷ At least two texts and one story illustrate such refinement and reveal its consequences for feminist concerns and our considerations. "Ephraim my dear son, my darling child," of Jeremiah 31.20, a classic text for the concept of the fatherhood of God in the Old Testament, is reread to be instead a metaphor for "God female."

As we have demonstrated, this strophe belongs to an interlocking rhetoric that is replete with female semantics. More particularly, the very form and content of the poem embodies a womb: woman encloses man. The female organ nourishes, sustains, and redeems the male child Ephraim.¹⁴⁸

Likewise, Isaiah 63.15-16, another text traditionally taken to express fatherhood of God in the Old Testament, is reread instead with major reference to compassion, a motherly quality, so beseeching "the God of the womb to be a compassionate father."¹⁴⁹ Finally, for texts of this sort, "the Rock that begot you / the God who gave you birth," Deuteronomy 32.18, is reread as a "chiasm of object and subject," in other words inversion, which can point "either to the begetting of a father or the birthing of a mother."¹⁵⁰ These texts will be taken up below, but for now this is sufficient to demonstrate the rereading and reader response of a leading Christian feminist in a principal work.

pp.113-26. More than a decade ago, however, John Miller wrote a forceful retort to Tribble's principle in this regard, "Depatriarchalizing God in Biblical Interpretation: A Critique," *CBQ* 48/1 (January 1986), pp. 609-16. Against the notion that God has motherly characteristics, so that fatherly ones are somehow diminished, it is said: "Not once in the Bible is God addressed as mother, or referred to with feminine pronouns. On the contrary, gender usage throughout clearly specifies that the root metaphor is masculine-father," p.614. Moreover, evidence for this and like conclusions is held to be "far from cogent," p.610.

¹⁴⁷ *Rhetoric*. "A literary approach to hermeneutics concentrates primarily on the text rather than extrinsic factors..external concerns supplement one's understanding..yet at the same time stress falls upon interpreting the text in terms of itself," pp.8, 11.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.50.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.53.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.62.

Throughout the centuries, interpreters of scripture have explored the male language of faith, full and overflowing. Yet the Bible itself proclaims another dimension that faith has lost - female images and motifs.¹⁵¹

Texts of Terror of 1984 is said to be a companion of the former work. "Stories of outrage" against Hagar, Tamar, an unnamed woman, and the daughter of Jephthah¹⁵² are reread from a feminist perspective in final form by intrinsic method, "to recover a neglected history" and "to redeem the time." Again, we need not repeat what has already been said or implied with regard to those texts and/or the terror that befell the persons involved. However, some additions to the method of rereading as well as further aspects of interpretation require mention. To the principle of scripture interpreting scripture is added the "use of leitmotifs," as the servant songs, the passion narratives of the Gospels, and, even, eucharistic sections of Paul's letters "to illuminate" the said "sad stories."¹⁵³ They clearly have the character of reader response typology, only not in the customary sense of finding New Testament realities prefigured in the Old, but rather more randomly back and forth, here and there.¹⁵⁴ For example, "Hagar becomes the suffering servant, the precursor of Israel's plight under Pharaoh."¹⁵⁵ Then, somewhat over the top, is this:

Hagar foreshadows Israel's pilgrimage of faith through contrast. As a maid in bondage, she flees from suffering. Yet she experiences exodus without liberation, revelation without salvation, wilderness without covenant, wanderings without land, promise without fulfilment, and unmerited exile without return. The Egyptian slave woman is stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted for the transgressions of Israel. She is bruised for the iniquities of Sarah and Abraham; upon her is the chastisement that makes them whole.¹⁵⁶

151 Ibid., p.200. See also "Feminist Hermeneutics and Biblical Studies," *CC* 99 (3-10 February 1982), pp.116-18. Pointing to something to come, it is said that a feminist rereading and reader response to the rape of a concubine (Judges 19) "interprets the story on behalf of the concubine," p.118, rather than the Levite master, who apparently is only dealing with the general social chaos and scandal of what was clearly deemed deviancy.

152 Genesis 16.1-16; 21.9-21; II Samuel 13.1-22; Judges 19.1-30; 11.29-40.

153 *Texts of Terror* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), p.3.

154 One senses in this something of a *sensus plenior*, that is that the narrator, or the women themselves, know and reveal more than they realise.

155 *Terror*, p.13.

156 Ibid., p.28. Indeed, Tribble inscribes the essence of this on Hagar's simulated headstone. Reference is made to "the irony" of Paul's equating Hagar with the old covenant, Galatians 4.21-31, without explanation. Besides, that text itself is highly debated, particularly with regard to the

Moreover, as Eve, Hagar is thought to be "a theologian," properly "naming the divine and human encounter."¹⁵⁷

In each chapter on the mentioned participants, sections are given to initial, editorial, scriptural, traditional, and current "reader response," as cases may be. Yet such is clearly not enough in certain circles of the sisterhood. At the very end of the chapter on the unnamed concubine, where, in reader response to "unrelenting and unredeemed terror," as it is put, a call is made for recognition of, confession for, and repentance from antifeminism within the Judeo-Christian community. Written boldly in the margin of a copy we were reading, "Wiesel Again!"¹⁵⁸ There is obvious diversity - even division - within the feminist movement.

Rosemary Radford Ruether, another feminist desiring ostensibly to address such concerns from within the Christian community,¹⁵⁹ published in 1983 *Sexism and God Talk*,

conjunction of Hagar and Mount Sinai. See, e.g., J. B. Lightfoot's *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Macmillan, 1914), pp. 180, 193-200: "Hagar is not a person, but an object of thought; being a common local name for Sinai (in Arabic)." Charles Cousar's *Galatians Int* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), e.g. among modern commentators, sees the meaning simply in "parallels between God's dealings with Israel at the time of Abraham and his dealings with his people in the first Christian century," p. 105. Reference is also made to Brueggeman's *Genesis Int* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), p. 184, without comment. He contrasts Hagar and Sarah in terms of kingdoms of necessity and grace respectively, but the point hardly supports Trible's rereading of the text. Von Rad's focus on God's assistance and protection for Hagar and Ishmael, in *Genesis, OTL* (London: SCM Press, 1953), pp. 227-9, on the other hand, does appear to support Trible's portrait of her as a figure of 'contrast,' but somewhat negates the notion that she was 'terrorised' in the process.

¹⁵⁷ *Terror*, p. 18. Others have followed Trible's lead in these matters. Phyllis Bird's "To play the harlot: An Inquiry Into An Old Testament Metaphor" in Peggy Day's *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel* (1989), pp. 75-89, refers by implication to leitmotifs and inclusio devices in the mentioned texts and is particularly incisive on the Hebrew verb *zān* to play the harlot and its metaphorical usage in Hosea to describe Israel's waywardness. Rather than the seeming asymmetric patriarchal tendency, she offers another interpretation. "As a sexual metaphor, it points to the sexual activity it represents. Its female orientation does not single out women for condemnation; it is used rather as a rhetorical device to expose men's sin," p. 89. Susan Ackerman's "And the women knead dough: The Worship of the Queen of Heaven in Sixth-Century Judah" in the mentioned collection, pp. 109-18, attempts a similar gender-nuanced view of Jeremiah's *למלכה* to [for] the queen of [heaven] (Jeremiah 7.18; 44.17, 18, 19, 25). While the prophet heaps scorn upon the women of Judah for their devotion to the female deity, Ackerman sees it as but the male winners writing at the expense of female losers, so obscuring the rich and popular nature of *women's religion* of the day. She says, pp. 109-10, "A more nuanced reconstruction of the religion of ancient Israel, however, would suggest that despite the biblical witness neither the priestly or prophetic cult was normative in the religion of the first millennium. Rather, a diversity of beliefs and practices thrived and were accepted by the ancients as legitimate forms of religious expression.. We must examine the biblical presentations of the orthodox with an eye to the heterodox, seeking, for example, to look without prejudice at those cultic practices that the biblical writers so harshly condemn."

¹⁵⁸ *Terror*, pp. 86, 87. The copy indicated was from St. Mary's Library at the University of St. Andrews, UK.

¹⁵⁹ See "Is there a place for Feminists in a Christian Church?" in *New Blackfriars* (January 1987), being a dialogue between Daphne Hampson and Rosemary Radford Ruether, held on 16 May 1986 in

Toward a Feminist Theology.¹⁶⁰ Of her numerous publications, it presents the full scope of her theology, and clearly ranks her among the foremost of Christian feminists. Elements of such thought, particularly on what is termed "prophetic critique" of patriarchy, were already set forth rather fully in 1982 in "Feminism and Patriarchal Religion: Principles of Ideological Critique of the Bible."¹⁶¹ Developing the critique further, into what becomes "the prophetic principle," or "the prophetic liberating traditions,"¹⁶² it is boldly asserted:

The denunciation of oppressive economic and political power is found in many places in the Prophets. In this context God is seen not as the one who represents the powerful, but one who comes to vindicate the oppressed. God's intervention in history is to judge those who grind the faces of the poor, those who deprive the widow and the orphan.¹⁶³

Accordingly, prophetic liberating traditions are the manifestly operative concepts for feminist theology on this view, indeed the "norm." Moreover, such are evidenced in both testaments, with Jesus understood as the liberator *par excellence*!¹⁶⁴ Feminism, it is said, lays special claim to the prophetic norm of liberation, and even makes its own prophetic contribution to it.

Feminism claims that **women too** are among those oppressed whom God comes to vindicate and liberate. By including women in the prophetic norm, feminism sees what male prophetic thought generally had not seen: that once the prophetic norm is asserted to be central to Biblical faith, then patriarchy can no longer be maintained as authoritative.¹⁶⁵

Westminster Cathedral Hall, London. Against Hampson's heralded departure from Christian faith, which she holds to be "untenable" (p.4), Ruether counters, on pointing to positive changes in the Church, that "Christianity can sustain a feminist interpretation and become a religion of emancipation from patriarchy" (p.13). Hampson, however, seems to have the better part of the dialogue, for she is the more logical and theologically consistent, whereas Ruether appears primarily to use the Church for some other purpose, namely "not to vindicate the Church or to remain enclosed in a Christian future, but to reach out to a new human future, a new future for all earth's beings" (p.13).

¹⁶⁰ Boston: Beacon Press.

¹⁶¹ *JSOT* 22 (1982), pp.54-66.

¹⁶² *God-Talk*, pp. 22ff.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp.24, 25.

¹⁶⁴ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, in *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), pg.17, classifies Ruether as a neo-orthodox feminist theologian; see p.44, below. An unpublished manuscript by Kathryn Green-McCreight designates Ruether as a Christian liberation theologian.

¹⁶⁵ *God-Talk*, p.24.

Regrettably, it is held, such dynamic prophetic critique of society has all too often “fossilized” into ideology of its own, failing to adapt to changing circumstances and so becoming deformed prophecy in ironic triumphal defence of a *status quo*. As such, it becomes but a “tool of the dominant social hierarchies and their religious collaborators.” Put another way, this prophetic critique tended to be interpreted in the early church and its documents “in a spiritual and eschatological way,” so that it is necessary to “read between the lines” of the Bible in order to lay hold of its true relevance for the Church. Notably, goes the presentation, “Gnostic Gospels” and “left-wing Puritan” movements have read and properly understood the prophetic critique.¹⁶⁶ Even more important, proper readings by mainline and marginal movements, on such critical issues for feminists as the Fall, reveal sources which afford Christian feminists creative opportunities within and for the benefit of the Church. In a clear and clarion statement of her agenda for Christian feminism, Ruether says:

The renewal of the prophetic meaning of religious language from its ideological deformations is the creative dynamic of Biblical faith. feminism goes beyond the letter of the prophetic message to apply the prophetic liberating principle **to women**. By applying the prophetic faith to sexism we reveal in new fullness its revolutionary meaning.¹⁶⁷

Postulated is a “hermeneutical circle of past and present experience” which is key to proper God-talk, with *women*’s experience paramount. Such has been wrongly “shut out of theological reflection in the past,” so that traditional Christian theology is viewed as “based on *male* rather than on universal experience.”¹⁶⁸

Feminist theology makes the sociology of theological knowledge visible, no longer hidden behind mystifications of objectified divine and universal authority.¹⁶⁹

Stated is the elemental fact that “revelation always starts with an individual.” Added, however, is the important factor that such

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., pp.34,35.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., pp 31-33.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. e.g. George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), pp.17, 24, 31-2 and Frances Watson, *Text, Church, and World* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1994), pp.157-87, 203-07.

¹⁶⁹ *God-Talk*. p.13. Reference is made to Sallie McFague’s *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language*. The precise location and intent of the reference is unclear. Perhaps it will be clarified when we turn to McFague below..

must always be communicated and made meaningful through some transformation of ideas and symbols already current. The hand of the divine does not write on a cultural *tabula rasa*.¹⁷⁰

Unfortunately, the collection and effectual canonization of such received revelation by the larger religious community sets up winners and losers. In reality, however, "the experience of the present community cannot be ignored." When aspects of what *feels right* and is deemed "*true* by a growing minority of people," a "crisis of tradition" occurs.¹⁷¹ And when such occurs with regard to the full humanity of women, the "critical principle of feminist theology" is engaged.

Whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts the full humanity of women is, therefore, appraised as not redemptive. Theologically speaking, whatever diminishes or denies the full humanity of women must be presumed not to reflect the divine or an authentic relation to the divine, or to reflect the authentic nature of things, or to be the message or work of an authentic redeemer or a community of redemption.

Furthermore, in full pursuit of the *imago dei* in and of women,

The uniqueness of feminist theology is not in the critical principle, full humanity, but the fact that women claim this principle for themselves. Women name themselves as subjects of authentic and full humanity.¹⁷²

Pivotal for Ruether in sorting all this for Christian feminist theology is a constructive and creative dialogue with larger human enterprises that have denounced oppressive ideologies in the modern world, as liberalism, Marxism, and romanticism. "Feminism seeks not simply a feminist appropriation of one or another of these traditions, but a new synthesis of all three."¹⁷³

Ruether's significant effort to lay hold fully of "the countercultural vision" for liberation in both testaments, that is by reading scripture "between the lines," especially in the New Testament, causes her to seek, and even to postulate, a "journey of Western consciousness."

170 *Ibid.*, pp.13,14.

171 *Ibid.*, pp.15-17.

172 *Ibid.*, pp.18,19.

173 *Ibid.*, pp.43-45.

The feminist theology proposed here is based on a historical culture that includes the pre-Christian religions suppressed by Judaism and Christianity; Biblical prophetism; Christian theology, in both its majority and minority cultures; and, finally, the critical cultures through which modern Western consciousness has reflected on this heritage.¹⁷⁴

Given this larger, countercultural vision, suggesting that “the authority of the official canonical framework is overturned,”¹⁷⁵ the call, even imperative, is for nothing other than a canon within and/or beyond the traditional one. Although not said here, *Womanguides* in 1985 makes it perfectly plain that “feminist theology must create a new textual base, a new canon.”¹⁷⁶

While numerous radical feminists employ the term goddess to indicate their thoroughgoing rejection of the God of patriarchal determination and dominance, Ruether chooses instead God/ess to indicate her stance as a feminist-minded theologian within the Christian community.

I use the term God/ess, a written symbol intended to combine both masculine and feminine forms of the word for the divine while preserving the Judeo-Christian affirmation that divinity is one..as an analytical sign to point toward yet unnameable understanding of the divine that would transcend patriarchal limitations and signal redemptive experience for women as well as men.¹⁷⁷

Even so, roots for such goddess usage are laboriously traced to ancient Near Eastern texts, where she finds a “most striking alternative to the symbolic world generated by male

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p.45.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p.34.

¹⁷⁶ *Womanguides, Readings Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1985), p.ix. [To this is added at the same place]: “However, this collection (of poems and parables by students of the Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary) is not the new canon. That will have to emerge from a longer process of community building and a larger consensus of such an emerging community. This is a working handbook from which a new canon might emerge, much as early Christians collected stories about their experience from which they preached the ‘good news’ and from which, eventually, fuller texts were developed and ratified as the interpretive base for the new community.” In as much as the process employed in this instance was a group dynamics one, with the direction, “With paper and marking pens sketch a symbol for your self for God/ess,” one can only wonder what sort of process and prompting produced those writings traditionally deemed canonical. Whatever, Ruether adds this at the end of *Womanguides*: “We are not only free to reclaim rejected texts of the past and put them side by side with canonized texts as expressions of truth, in the light of which canonized texts may be criticized; but we are also free to generate new stories from our experience that may, through community use, become more than personal or individual., for it is precisely through community use in a historical moment of liberation, which finds in them paradigms of redemptive experience, that stories become authoritative,” pp. 247,48.

¹⁷⁷ *God-Talk*, p.46.

monotheism.” In turn, while the patriarchal God of the Old Testament is seen to dominate, the goddess is shown not to have been totally eliminated but rather absorbed, manifesting herself nevertheless in *Sophia* (Wisdom) of the Old Testament and *Hokmah* (Spirit) in the New Testament.¹⁷⁸ Even more importantly for Ruether, vestiges of feminine, goddess traits are found in such biblical notions as liberation from overlords and proscription of idolatry, as well as, very ironically, Jesus’ use of the *abba* designation for father.¹⁷⁹ Detailed Christological matters are well beyond the scope of this study. Yet, it must be said here, most problematic of all for Ruether’s sincere effort to stand within the Christian Church, as well our concern in the exegesis in Part II below, is the question posed at the heading of Chapter Five of *Sexism and God Talk*: “Christology: Can a Male Savior Save Women?” Likewise troubling is what appears to be the answer near the end: “Theologically speaking, then, we might say that the maleness of Jesus has no ultimate significance.”¹⁸⁰

An echo of such interest in *Sophia* theology and vestiges of goddess characteristics in Christian backgrounds is put forth in the brilliant work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. She, too, seeks earnestly to stand within the Christian community, asserting that a postbiblical feminist is in danger of becoming ahistorical and apolitical.¹⁸¹ Inasmuch as she is a New Testament exegete, concerned primarily therefore with its texts and backgrounds, her work is to a certain extent of limited importance for this study. On the other hand, her methods and models for feminist biblical theology are applicable to all who undertake or comment on such discipline, from the point of view of either testament,

178 *Ibid.*, pp.47-61. Phyllis Bird’s “The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus, in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, Patrick Miller, et al., eds. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) sets a new course for Old Testament historiography, a “new answer” with regard not only to the place of women but also to a proper perspective on the supposed dominance of male monotheism. Called for is a recognition that Israelite religion was a “religion of men and women,” with manifestly “distinct roles,” restricted more by a “natural sexual division of labor” rather than essential male malevolence. Accordingly, however, males dominated, particularly in cult centralization, all of which is consistent with other ancient Near Eastern society and religions. Another effort is required to explore the implications of this “new answer” for both human relationships and divine thoughts in Ancient Israel.

179 *God-Talk*, pp.62-5. In a clever piece of interpretation, almost slight-of-hand, it is held that *abba*, as a child’s word, suggestive of love and trust, could have been used by Jesus himself to transform “the patriarchal concept of divine fatherhood into what might be called a maternal or nurturing concept of God as a loving, trustworthy parent.”

180 *Ibid.*, pp.116, 137. Compounding the difficulty, these concluding lines are added: “Christ, the liberated humanity, is not confined to a static perfection of one person two thousand years ago. Rather, redemptive humanity goes ahead of us, calling us to yet uncompleted dimensions of human liberation,” p.138.

181 *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), p.xviii.

and her critique of representatives of the same considered above and below is important. Moreover, remarks on Jesus' use of the term "father" for God is decidedly on point.

In 1983 Schüssler Fiorenza published her pioneering work, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. Before setting forth her own method and model for such reconstruction, she surveys the efforts of other feminist theologians from Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Rosemary Radford Ruether, much as we are doing here, albeit in her own way and for her particular purposes. All such reconstruction has been done and continues to be done, she says, for the sake of the one who has been forgotten, typified in the unnamed woman who anoints the head of Jesus in Mark's Gospel¹⁸² - but manifestly exemplified in the forgotten lot of women in biblical texts and traditions ever since. Ruether and Tribble, along with Letty Russell,¹⁸³ receive considerable and rather severe criticism from Schüssler Fiorenza. At issue is what are termed neo-orthodox tendencies in their feminist interpretations. Ruether sees in the text a "usable past;" Tribble postulates a "personified text," uniting somehow form and meaning.¹⁸⁴ The heart of the matter is plainly stated, in order:

In the last analysis, reduction of the Bible to the prophetic-messianic tradition on the one hand and the concomitant reduction of this tradition to an abstract dehistoricized critical key on the other indicates Ruether's hermeneutical proposal is more neo-orthodox than she perceives it to be. It serves more to rescue biblical religion from its feminist critics than to develop a feminist historical hermeneutics that could incorporate Wicca's feminist spiritual quest for women's power.

[On Tribble]..she does not engage in..a feminist critique of Scripture's misogynist stamp and character as a document of patriarchal culture because her method allows her to abstract the text from its cultural-historical context.¹⁸⁵

By way of definition of neo-orthodox hermeneutics, Peter Berger is quoted, namely "to absorb the full impact of the relativizing perspective but nevertheless to posit an 'Archimedean point' in a sphere immune to relativization."¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Mark 14.3-9; cf. Luke 7.36-50, where the woman presumably involved is identified as a sinner, who anoints the feet rather than the head of Jesus; John 12.1-11, where the woman is named Mary, friend of Jesus, performs the act out of great love.

¹⁸³ On Russell see especially *Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974). This is an important work, distinguishing well between form and content of the biblical message.

¹⁸⁴ *Memory*, p.19.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.19,20.

Schüssler Fiorenza sets forth her own, more comprehensive way in a revealing section entitled "A Feminist Critical Hermeneutics of Liberation."¹⁸⁷ In ten pages cataloging the emphases of main-line feminist theology, such as oppression and liberation, with which she is in plain sympathy, some ten countervailing factors of concern are introduced. These factors are in a variety of conjunctive patterns, which are essential for the full feminist critical hermeneutic proposed. For example,

A feminist critical hermeneutics of liberation shares the "advocacy stance" of liberation theologies but, at the same time, it elaborates not only women's oppression but also women's power as the locus of revelation.¹⁸⁸

Proposed is something more than mere recognition of women's oppression and simple advocacy for redress. Rather, here, and in the larger pattern presented, is a vision for a both/and hermeneutic that reaches well beyond the perceived male-fashioned biblical texts to the larger social-historical background, which is understood as always more congenial to women than has been textually projected. This is particularly true for the New Testament, but it is also seen as suggestive for the Old Testament as well. In the New Testament, such is evident in the fact that women were "not just on the periphery but in the center of Christian life and theology."¹⁸⁹ Albeit of a substantially different degree, and applicable primarily to patriarchal Judaism, a like pattern is at least suggestive for the Old Testament. The apocryphal book of Judith is offered in evidence. She was a woman of great beauty, who was allowed to inherit property and exercise authority, contrary to the prevailing pattern of patriarchal subjugation.

The book of Judith mediates the atmosphere in which Jesus preached and in which the discipleship of equals originated.¹⁹⁰

186 Ibid., p.15, referring to *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, 1967, p.183.

187 Ibid., pp.26-36.

188 Ibid., pp.34-5

189 Ibid., p.35.

190 Ibid., pp.115-18. Given the book's questionable historical character, one wonders why Judith is chosen for this example, particularly when social-historical reconstruction is called for in the suggested hermeneutic. Reference is made here to J. B. Segal's "Jewish Attitude towards Women" in the *JJS* 30 (1979), p.135. Indeed, as is noted, Segal points there to possible "debate in the stormy centuries before and during the emergence of the Christian era." On the other hand, such is placed amidst the development of Hebrew monotheism. This seems problematic, at best, for Fiorenza's facile effort to deal with the issue of women in either testament on the basis of historical reconstruction. The issue will be raised again in summation.

It is appropriate to mention at this juncture that Schüssler Fiorenza, like most feminist theologians, is keenly interested in full empowerment of women. This is quite evident from the focus on the book of Judith. Indeed, power appears to be an operative principle, a category of choice, calling forth an entire system of hermeneutics and establishing a whole new ecclesiology. In criticism of a perceived ineptness in "the prophetic principle" advocated by Ruether, it is said, as we have shown already:

It serves more to rescue biblical religion from its feminist critics than to develop a feminist hermeneutics that could incorporate Wicca's feminist spiritual quest for women's power.¹⁹¹

The sort of hermeneutics called for is nothing less than a system that views "woman's power as the locus of revelation."¹⁹² In the introduction to *Bread Not Stone* in 1984, the ecclesiology indicated is termed "*ekklesia gynaiikon* or woman church," where power is the central element.¹⁹³

A distinctive method for a full-blown feminist hermeneutic is offered. First of all, texts are to be approached *metacritically*,¹⁹⁴ that is with an understanding that they are, by patriarchal plan, at best silent and at worst obfuscated with regard to women; matters in this respect need to be uncovered and extracted, with an understanding that in any event the texts are largely interpretations rather than mere translations. Secondly, in what seems Inspector Poirot fashion, this enquiry is to be conducted in a distinct attitude of *suspicion*.¹⁹⁵ Finally, *historical imagination* is to be fully engaged "in order to break the hold of the androcentric text."¹⁹⁶ The second element in this method is the most distinctive for Schuessler Fiorenza, and indeed sums up her historical-critical approach.

A systematic analysis of androcentric texts does not suffice. It has to be complimented by a feminist hermeneutics of suspicion that understands androcentric texts as ideological articulations of men expressing, as well as maintaining, patriarchal historical conditions. . Androcentric texts and

191 *Memory*, p.19.

192 *Ibid.*, p.35; also p.32.

193 A series of essays apparently expanding and commenting upon *In Memory of Her*.

194 *Memory*, p.42.

195 *Ibid.*, p.60. The term "hermeneutics of suspicion" is employed frequently here as well as in *Bread Not Stone* (1984) and *Searching the Scriptures* (1993), for which no reference or credit was readily apparent. We note, however, that it is used, at least by implication, by Dennis Nineham in "Eye Witness Testimony in the Gospel Tradition IIP" in the *JTS* II (1960), p.258, referring the concept back at least to F. H. Bradley's *The Presuppositions of Critical History* (1874).

196 *Memory*, p.61.

documents do not mirror historical reality, report historical facts, or tell us how it actually was.. Such texts must be evaluated **historically** in terms of their own time and culture and assessed **theologically** in terms of a feminist scale of values.¹⁹⁷

Given this hermeneutical method and its results, “the notion of history as ‘what actually happened’ becomes problematic.”¹⁹⁸ Employing the sociological model of Theissen, that is of three forms of early Christian faith, namely itinerant radicalism (sect), love patriarchalism (established church), and gnostic radicalism (spiritualism), together with the response of Keck with regard to ethos in the early church,¹⁹⁹ Schüssler Fiorenza opts for love patriarchalism as the dominant factor. On the basis of this hermeneutic, the church is seen to have been established not “on the prophets and apostles, who as charismatics belong to the ‘radical’ tradition, but on love patriarchalism, that is, on the backs of women, slaves, and the lower classes.” Such models further

show that the definitions of sexual role and gender dimorphism are the outcome of the social-economic interactions between men and women but that they are not ordained either by nature or by God.²⁰⁰

In a section on “Women in Judaism before 70 C.E.: Perspectives,” three rules indicate the specific applicability of feminist interpretation of New Testament texts and backgrounds, and by general extension, for those of the Old: 1) all texts are to be read and understood as *androcentric*; 2) the denigration and marginalization of women is solely a *projection of male reality*; and 3) the *canons of scripture, particularly patriarchal law*, is more restrictive (in ideology) than actual (in fact) with regard to women.²⁰¹

The issue of canon is the most problematic of all for Schüssler Fiorenza. With Ruether, there is a clear call for a new canon. While, with Fox-Genovese,²⁰² there is no desire to “jettison” all androcentric biblical texts, there is nevertheless a vigorous plea for a view of the “formulation and canonization of the New Testament [and, by implication, the Old] as Scripture” which is more prototype than archetype, that “is critically open to

197 Ibid., p.60.

198 Such is Fiorenza’s preamble to her model of feminist historical reconstruction, *ibid.*, pp.68-95.

199 G. Theissen, “Itinerant Radicalism,” N. K. Gottwald and A. C. Wire, eds., *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics* (1976), p.91; Leander Keck, “On the Ethos of Early Christians,” *JAAR* 42 (1974), pp.435ff; Ethos and Ethics in the New Testament,” in James Gaffney, ed., *Essays in Morality and Ethics* (1980), pp.29ff.

200 *Memory*, p.90.

201 *Ibid.*, pp.108,09.

202 *Ibid.*, p.29, referring to “For Feminist Interpretation,” *USQR* 35 (1979-80), pp.5-14.

the possibility of its own transformation.”²⁰³ Put another way, the Bible is viewed primarily as the “root model,”²⁰⁴ which, in a “hermeneutics of indeterminacy”²⁰⁵ and with *historical imagination*²⁰⁶ may be appropriately transgressed in search of scriptures that for some reason were not included by the Church among the books of the Old or New Testament.

In contrast to the neo-orthodox “canon within the canon,” here is what might properly be termed a *canon outside and alongside the canon*.²⁰⁷

Such an understanding of Scriptures not as a mythic archetype but as a historic prototype provides the Christian community with a sense of its ongoing history as well as its theological identity.. Insofar as it does not define the Bible as a fixed mythical pattern it is able to acknowledge positively the dynamic process of biblical adaptation, challenge, or renewal of socio-ecclesial and conceptual structures under the changing conditions of the church’s social-historical situations.²⁰⁸

In *Bread Not Stone*, in a sentence from whence came the title, it is said of the emerging women-church, of the *ekklesia gynaikon*, that such a view of the Canon of Scripture

..allows us to reclaim the Bible as enabling resource, as bread not stone, as legacy and heritage, not only of patriarchal religion but also of women-church as the discipleship of equals..[so] the Bible can become Holy Scripture for women-church.²⁰⁹

Presumably such new canon as is called for would not only function along side the traditional one, but would in fact boldly subject the latter to a proper critical hermeneutic in order “to make choices between oppressive and liberating traditions.”²¹⁰ There is scarcely any doubt as to which one would be the winner here.

203 Ibid., pp.33,34. It is based on statements in general throughout *In Memory of Her* and *Bread Not Stone*, particularly p.36 of the latter: “The canon includes not only the New Testament but also the Jewish Scriptures..”

204 *Bread Not Stone* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995) , p.36.

205 *Searching the Scriptures, Volume One: A Feminist Introduction* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), p.8, quoting Alicia Ostriker, *Feminist Revision and the Bible* (1993). It is said here that “the title was adopted in order to signify a more interactive approach between reader, text, and context.”

206 Ibid., p.9.

207 Emphasis ours.

208 *Memory*, p.34.

209 Ibid., p.xvii.

210 Ibid., p.14.

In 1982 Sallie McFague published *Metaphorical Theology*. With Ruether and Schüssler Fiorenza she shares the feminist unease on the matter of the traditional canon of Scripture. It is referred to as a "Christian classic," toward which an appropriate attitude of skepticism and iconoclasm is to be brought. Even so, it is quite clear that she, too, desires to take her stand within a Christian context.²¹¹ Indeed, it is asserted that metaphorical theology is "indigenous to Christianity"²¹² and that it accords with "Protestant sensibility."²¹³

As much scriptural expression and consequent religious expression is manifestly metaphorical, like all human thought and language, that is seeing one thing in terms of another,²¹⁴ as rock, fortress, judge, redeemer, and friend for God and Jesus, a metaphorical base or *fund* is postulated for all theological language.²¹⁵ Indeed, the Bible itself is held to be "the premier metaphor."

If we know God by the indirection of the Bible, then the Bible "is and is not" the word of God. The Bible is a metaphor of the word or ways of God, but as a metaphor it is relative, open-ended, secular, tensive judgement ..the premier metaphor, the classic model, of God's way for Christians, but as metaphor it cannot be absolute, "divinely inspired," or final.²¹⁶

Assuming the positions of Gombrich and Gadamer on prejudiced reading, that no 'naked eyes' are cast upon Scripture,²¹⁷ all readers of such are said to be hermeneutical creatures in a never ending cycle of metaphorical thinking, wherein "no judgement is

211 *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), p.x. Reading the preface gave us fond memories. Jessie McFague, the author's mother, who typed the final manuscript, frequently attended services and gatherings at our small congregation in Massachusetts in the mid-1970s. Remembering bits and pieces of conversation then gives one a sense of *deja vu* now.

212 *Ibid.*, p.14. To this is added, and one senses in some emphasis, "not just in the sense that it is permitted, but is called for."

213 *Ibid.*, p.13. Recalling Tillich's terminology, and drawing a comparison with Catholic symbolical theology, it is said: "The Protestant sensibility tends to see dissimilarity, distinction, tension and hence to be sceptical and secular, stressing the transcendence of God and the finitude of creation."

214 *Ibid.*, pp.14ff., 42. The following definition of metaphor is as good as we have seen in this work or elsewhere: "Most simply, a metaphor is seeing one thing *as* something else, pretending 'this' is 'that' because we do not know to think about 'this,' so we use 'that' as a way of saying something about it. Thinking metaphorically means spotting a thread of similarity between two dissimilar objects, events, or whatever, one of which is better known than the other, and using the better-known one as a way of speaking about the lesser known," p.15.

215 *Ibid.*, pp.15, 22.

216 *Ibid.*, p.54.

217 *Ibid.*, pp.55ff. Reference to Ernest Gombrich is through Nelson Goodman's *Language and Art*, pp.7-8; to Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (1982) and *Philosophical Hermeneutics*.

final, no interpretation absolute, no perspective exclusive.”²¹⁸ The implications for Scripture and any notion of a canon of such are abundantly clear.

It means there is no “canonical” or absolute text or interpretation: a text is never “there,” pristine and absolute, but exists only in relationship to its hearers **and** no interpretation can be final, for a text only has meaning in relationship to hearers, all of whom come with different interpretative contexts.²¹⁹

With Keck and Donahue, Jesus himself is taken to be a parable of God. Moreover, on the definition of parable as “dominant metaphor,” Jesus is held to be “an extended metaphor of God.”²²⁰ It is understood, therefore, that “Jesus ‘is and is not’ God.”²²¹ But what are the implications and consequences of such parabolic, metaphorical christology? First of all, it is christology from ‘below,’ thus an avoidance of ‘Jesusolatry.’ Secondly, Jesus’ characteristic expression “father” for God must be understood as relational rather than foundational. Thirdly, the cross is likewise parabolic, a way of speaking about God’s “dealing with evil,” a relational happening on the human rather than the divine/human level.

In contrast to incarnational christology..parabolic christology does not involve an assumption of continuity or identity between the human and the divine; it is not “Jesusolatry,” a form of idolatry. It is I believe, a christology for the Protestant sensibility and the modern mentality.²²²

Rather, pointed to here is what is termed the *root-metaphor* of Christianity, which has “neither divine nor human *nature*.. at its center, but a new quality of *relationship*, a new

218 Ibid., p.58.

219 Ibid., p.57. Desiring indeed to stand within the realm of Christian feminism, a qualification is offered, in what is doubtless held to be a high view of Scripture as well as a hedge against critics: “We shall argue that the authority of Scripture is the authority of a classic poetic text and that such a notion of authority is substantial and enduring, both because *its authority is intrinsic* (the world it presents, that is the reality it redescribes, speaks with power to many people across the ages) and because *its interpretation is flexible* (the world it presents is open to different understandings),” p.59.

220 Ibid., pp. 22, 23.

221 Ibid., p.51. Several references to Leander Keck are primarily from *A Future for the Historical Jesus: The Place of Jesus in Preaching and Theology*(1981); to John Donahue’s “Jesus as the Parable of God in the Gospel of Mark,” *Interpretation* 32 (1978).

222 Ibid., p.18. See also pp.50ff. Obviously, with this christology, there are major negative implications for the issue of particularity. “A parabolic christology relativizes Jesus’ particularity while universalizing the God of whom Jesus is a metaphor. Hence openness to other manifestations and expressions of divine reality is not only encouraged but mandated,” p.52.

quality of being in the world under the rule of God.”²²³ As with christology, this relationship is from ‘below,’ with apparently nothing, or at most very little, from above.

The relationship described between metaphor, parable, and theological model is quite convoluted (not in the negative sense), and well beyond the ability or necessity for this study to unravel.²²⁴ In all, metaphorical theology is itself a metaphor.

What must be done in a metaphorical theology is to open up the relationships among metaphor, model, and concept for the purpose both of justifying dominant, founding metaphors as true but not literal **and** of discovering other appropriate dominant metaphors which for cultural, political, and social reasons have been suppressed.²²⁵

Theology, then, particularly metaphorical theology, serves as an “interpretative grid” to screen out the absolute, literalistic, idolatrous, and irrelevant in religious discourse in creed, dogma, and worship affecting the “root-metaphor” of Christianity, that is the relationship of the human and the divine.²²⁶ On the other hand, such metaphorical theology also functions to screen in relativity, plurality, and equality that have somehow been submerged from the root-metaphor.

A principal Christian metaphor or model is obviously the paternal one whereby Jesus names God “father.” The final and longest chapter of *Metaphorical Theology* is entitled “God the Father: Model or Idol?”²²⁷ It is put as a “test case for metaphorical theology,” for while the model “has been absolutized by some,” it has been “found meaningless by others.”²²⁸ As with other Christian feminist scholars we have considered, particularly Ruether and Schüssler Fiorenza, McFague asserts that the New Testament

²²³ Ibid., pp.108ff. The concept is presumably adopted from Paul Ricoeur’s *Interpretative Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (1976), p.64. In assessing the contributions of Ricoeur and Ian Ramsey, *Models of Divine Activity* (1973), McFague sides with the latter on relationships: “For both Ricoeur and Ramsey, the emphasis is nonetheless on ways of experiencing, although for Ricoeur what matters is a relationship of a specific kind between the divine and the human, whereas for Ramsey what counts is empirically based (on) meaningful talk about the divine,” *ibid.*, 122.

²²⁴ Briefly stated, it goes something like this: metaphor is a manner of speaking about “that” in terms of “this;” parable is a dominant metaphor; model is a permanent metaphor; concepts are indirect interpretations of such; metaphorical theology is an effort to explain the relationship between the lot.

²²⁵ *Metaphorical Theology*, p.28.

²²⁶ Ibid., p.29.

²²⁷ Ibid., pp.145-94.

²²⁸ Ibid., p.145. In the preceding chapter, and in an obviously earnest effort to be broad-minded, as befits metaphorical theology as described, it is said: “Thus if God is not seen to be ‘father,’ but ‘father’ is understood as *one* model through which we interpret our relationship with God, then I suspect many people would feel comfortable about interpreting that relationship through other models as well, including a maternal model,” *ibid.*, p.128.

does not sustain the Old Testament's patriarchal scheme, albeit somewhat revived in Pauline thought. So, too, the existence of goddess religion is mentioned as a mitigating factor against the indicated maleness of God, viewing it as "a cry in the wilderness, a cry of pain and anger against the patriarchal model as oppressive to women."²²⁹ While acknowledging inherent problems in matriarchal absolutism, this challenge is put forth:

Nonetheless, from the reformers' point of view, the greatest contribution of the revolutionary feminist theologians lies in asking the question: whether a feminine model for the divine-human relationship is not only needed but also desirable, not just for women or for adherents of a new religion, but for all people and for Christianity? The revolutionaries have posed the question; it will be up to the reformers to see if the Christian paradigm has any resources for answering it.²³⁰

In answer to the bold query, it is held, above all, that Jesus is a parable of God in pursuit of a relationship of love between God and man. Even while it is acknowledged quite graciously that "father" is a universally accepted and even good model for God when properly employed, as in the use of Jesus, and is, therefore, central to Christianity, it is vigorously asserted that such has been seriously perverted. Accordingly, it is said to be "utterly opposed to the root-metaphor of Christianity," which, again, is the relationship of the human to the divine.

Therefore, I advance the thesis that by attending to the relationship between God and human beings, rather than to descriptions of God, it is possible to find sources within the Christian paradigm for religious models liberating women.²³¹

Moreover, with support found in contemporary commentators such as Jeremias and Moltmann, as well as in luminaries such as Anselm of Canterbury and Julian of Norwich, the seeming hegemony of the paternal metaphor is found not to exclude maternal characteristics of "God as giver and renewer of life."²³² Finally, and presumably of

229 Ibid., p.160.

230 Ibid., p.164.

231 Ibid., p.167.

232 Ibid., p.174. A powerful statement on the joint fatherhood/motherhood of God is cited from Julian of Norwich: "We owe our being to him, and this is the essence of motherhood," quoted from Eleanor McLaughlin's "'Christ My Mother': Feminine Naming and Metaphors in Medieval Spirituality," *St. Lukes Journal of Theology* 18 (1975), p.371. Also notable is the unidentified but supposed quote from Julian of Norwich, "our tender Mother Jesus," p.3.

paramount importance, it is proposed that an openness to Eastern metaphors of God as “friend” yields a suitable companion figure alongside “father.”²³³

Indeed,

As twentieth-century Christians, the model of God as the companion whom we wish to please and who attracts our co-operation may be more powerful model for us than the model of God as father or king who commands us to be obedient children or servants.²³⁴

Such a model or metaphor is held to have the advantage of emphasis on compassion, responsibility, and maturity, that is true immanence. Besides, and in accord with the overall thesis, these characteristics best fit Jesus’ parabolic emphasis upon relationship of the human to the divine.

Third Wave

A considerable third wave of feminism has developed alongside the second wave, overlapping somewhat. Whereas those on the second wave are primarily reformists within the Judaeo-Christian tradition, those of the third wave are genuinely radical, as they have largely given up on the tradition and moved on. Of course, some in this category may never have been part of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and function in areas such as philosophy, psychology, and anthropology. In a sense, therefore, these latter feminists are beyond the basic interests of this study. On the other hand, their criticisms of those who have remained within the tradition as well as their fundamental concerns and insights are of considerable note for our purposes. Three primary exemplars will suffice, one of which we have discussed at length above.

As Mary Daly first led the way as a reformer within the second wave, so she has been a leader of radicals from without, and re-emerges here.²³⁵ In *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* in 1978, she says she is no longer able to speak of God, preferring instead Goddess, and dismisses the Trinity as one of patriarchy’s “mind poisons,”²³⁶ concocted to put down modern “Hags, Harpies, and Furies” (out of ancient

²³³ Roughly one fourth of the pages in this final chapter on the metaphor of the fatherhood of God are devoted to an explication of the friendship qualities of God, i.e. pp.177-190. Looking to the East is, of course, perfectly consistent with McFague’s desire to engage metaphorical theology in the task of breaking the paternalistic “hegemony over the Western religious consciousness,” p.29.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.184.

²³⁵ See p.27ff, p.33ff., above.

²³⁶ *Gyn/Ecology*, pp.xi, 74.

Greek and Roman mythology), citizens of a "Hagocracy," that is feminists, 'struggling to find their source, their stolen divinity.'²³⁷ The language is bizarre, nearly mad, but one gets the message, and certainly cannot miss it in other quite lucid statements.

Radical feminism is not reconciliation with the father. Rather it is affirming our original birth, our original source, movement, surge of living. This finding of our original integrity is re-membering our Selves.. which (are) strangled in the male-mastered system.²³⁸

In 1984 Mary Daly published *Pure Lust*. The title is said to be double-sided, indicating at one and the same time "the deadly dis-passion that prevails in patriarchy" and "the high humor, hope, and cosmic accord/harmony of those women who choose to escape" from such "ontological evil."²³⁹ The political metaphor is carried forward, here naming the situation "bore-ocracy," that is a patriarchal sadosociety "formed/framed by statues of studs, decrees of drones, canons of cocks, fixations of fixers, precepts of pricklers, regulations of rakes and rippers."²⁴⁰ Again, the language is crazy, even scandalous.

In sweeping fashion, this sadosociety is indicted for its phallic lust and resultant asceticism, from Jerome's "fires of lust" to Ghandi's "animal passion" to Dag Hammarskjöld's "poor old body." The verdict is the guilt of universal patriarchy.

Many effects of sado-asceticism shape the foreground through which Wanderlusting women must pass. These are conditions of **imposed** asceticism, in which millions of lives are "lived" out, drained out. They include the massacres of war, racism, imposed economic poverty and famine, environmentally caused ill-health, the subtly spreading drabness, banality, ugliness of the man-made environment, the all-pervasive lies that deaden minds under the reign of the sadostate.²⁴¹

Given this sadostate, in the world and the Church, what are women to do? In a word, separate! This is to say, feminists are, in the said "high humor, hope, and cosmic accord," to remove themselves "from the causes of fragmentation - the obstacles, internal and external - which separate her from the flow of integrity within her Self."²⁴² Even though

²³⁷ Ibid., pp.40,41.

²³⁸ Ibid., p.39.

²³⁹ Ibid., pp.2,3.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p.35.

²⁴¹ *Pure Lust*, pp.36-49.

²⁴² Ibid., pp.370ff. Mary Daly is nothing if not consistent, and courageous in her convictions. According to a Boston Globe news item on 25 February 1999, she is continuing her twenty-five year

Mary Daly drives readers to distraction, her place in the history of both the second and third waves of feminist thought is assured and deserved.

By far the most impressive book we have read with regard to feminism's third wave is Daphne Hampson's *After Christianity*, published in 1996.²⁴³ The heart of the matter between Christianity and radical feminism is put forth clearly in the preface.

Christianity is necessarily heteronomous, in that it understands God as other than the self and known through revelation. Feminists must stand for human autonomy (though not in isolation).²⁴⁴

Drawing insightfully and lucidly on Kant, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, Feuerbach, Bultmann, Barth, and Bonhoeffer, the first part of this opening gambit is said to be precisely so. That is to say, God reveals himself from above to those below, particularly in the Christ event, whether he is viewed from the New Testament looking back to the Old or the other way round. Indeed, this is the so-called 'scandal of particularity,' the claim that there "has been a unique event, an interruption of the causal nexus of history and of nature."²⁴⁵ It is shown to be Kierkegaard's Category 'B' Truth, a Paradox, which "flies in the face of reason, Category 'A' Truth."

Of course, this does not mean Hampson embraces the Category 'B' Truth. On the contrary, such is utterly rejected as untruth and unethical, hence contrary to the best interests of women. In response to the advocacy of such truth by Polkinghorne, it is said:

practice of teaching women-only classes at Boston College, a Jesuit institution, despite federal law and school policy. While, curiously, she is said by university officials to be "discriminating against male students to whom she is denying access," her rejoinder is that men do not understand what it is like to be a woman, and that they tend to be disruptive in the classroom. Such presence, she maintains, "dumbs down" the class and keeps it from "soaring." In a companion Boston Globe human interest article on 23 March 1999, she adds, in her characteristic word-creation way: (Men) have nothing to offer but doo-doo!" She says, of herself: "I'm a positively revolting hag." What else could one from a Hagocracy say?

²⁴³ We approached this work with hesitation and resistance. Frankly, we did not appreciate the title, the idea, or the Kollwitz picture on the cover, which Hampson says 'embodies the book.' Yet we found it to be compelling reading and the most refreshing presentation of both orthodox Christianity, which is totally rejected, and radical feminism, which is fully embraced. One only wishes that it was less polemical against detractors and that the parts were more related to the whole. Whatever, Hampson comes across as a deeply spiritual woman of great integrity. Perhaps she needed to write *Theology and Feminism* in 1990 in order to prepare herself for the candour and clarity before us here. When this study is over, the first thing we will do is pick up the former. See also *Feminism: Its Nature and Implications* of 1986.

²⁴⁴ *After Christianity*, p.vii.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.12.

Now a scientist has as much right as anyone else to take a leap of faith. In other words, one can say that 'given the belief in this kind of a God' certain things might follow. But what we must be looking for (and what I do not find) is proof that a resurrection or incarnation is not incompatible with how we otherwise find the world to be. I have never seen such an argument emanating from one who is informed about modern science.²⁴⁶

Moreover, the presentation continues, Schleiermacher and Bultmann, "two modern (post-Enlightenment)" theologians, who might have been able to deal with the uniqueness of Christianity in that context, "in fact fail" to do so.²⁴⁷ They are simply blown away! With them also goes even more contemporary efforts to deal with Enlightenment issues, namely the minimalist Christological explanations of British theologians John Robinson, John Macquarrie, John Hick, and Maurice Wiles, as well as equally minimalist thoughts on the resurrection by Hans Küng - with the questions, are these Christologies and this a resurrection? In answer and summation is this:

From the earliest days Christians have not simply proclaimed Jesus' message, but a **kerygma**, a message about Jesus..either the Christ event is shattering, or it is nothing. If it is nothing - that is to say, Jesus was just a rather fine human being and that is the end of the matter - then one can take or leave him as one will. No one who is Christian could possibly assert to such a proposition! Christianity is a religion for which people have died as martyrs - not inconsistently if it is true.²⁴⁸

The hammer of criticism falls not only on such male theologians, but equally forcefully on other feminist theologians, especially ones who have been critical of Hampson for departing from the Christian faith with, presumably, less than satisfactory justification. Ruether, Schüssler Fiorenza, and Trible are scorned for merely "transmuting Christianity into a social message" and only "reinterpreting" texts to woman's advantage. They are dismissed with the rebuke: "I have never seen (them) acknowledging the truth of Christianity."²⁴⁹ Such is the integrity and forthrightness of Hampson.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p.24, based on Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*, pp.33-4 on Polkinghorne, "former Cambridge professor of mathematical physics turned priest." All of this is exceedingly well understood and argued, and seemingly with some sympathy. One is tempted to say, if only Hampson had taken the "leap," fully, what a powerful witness orthodox Christianity would have.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., p.21.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p.43.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p.61, 72. Reference is made to a critical review of *Theology and Feminism* by Susan Dowell in *Feminist Review* 38 (1991), pp.95-100, and by Rosemary Radford Ruether in *SJT* 43, pp.390-400, neither of which have we read.

Equally honest and candid is that which is espoused. The Enlightenment is here to stay. Moreover, with the rise of feminism and woman's rebellion against classification as the 'other' in contrast to 'man' (in God's image) has come the fall of Western hierarchy, which was inherited, but which was only a projection of the human structure onto the divine, so that "God was Lord, King, Judge, Father: a greater patriarch than the patriarchs at the top of human pyramids."

Thus the loss of a primordial 'other', consequent upon the rise of feminism, represents the greatest unsettling of religion in four thousand years. If 'no bishop, no king', then we say 'no patriarchy, no God'; or at least no God as God has been envisaged within Western society.²⁵⁰

Further:

I am a feminist. I wish an ethical position in which I do not give over my being to any person or to any God who lies outside myself. Hence it is not simply that I do not believe there could be any truth other than Kierkegaard's 'A'. I also hope that there is none such.²⁵¹

So that which is advocated is rejection of any notion of transcendent monotheism and the adoption of a sense of theistic immanence, marked by "relationality, heterogeneity, multiplicity and a lack of control," wherein "each is valued and allowed to come into his or her own."²⁵² In a hypothetical joust with Barth over the notion of incarnation, as presumably indicated in the parable of the prodigal son, that is of God's journey to the 'far country,' it is asked, "God 'absent'?"²⁵³

While the idea of a transcendent God is rejected, a notion termed 'transcendental function' for the realities of "goodness, beauty, and harmony" is advocated. Though despairing of an external God to establish these matters, postulated is an internal quest for, explanation, and ordering of such like while related to a larger, universal whole,

250 Ibid., p.5.

251 Ibid., p.38.

252 Ibid., p.129.

253 Ibid., p.142. Barth seems always to be read with great understanding and sympathy. Again, what a Barthian might Hampson have been. We do not wish to drive Hampson's disagreements with feminist detractors to ground, but it seems appropriate to add this statement here in order to demonstrate further the essence of her position - and the conviction and integrity with which it is taken: "...women who are feminists and have struggled to overcome heteronomous relationships to others (in particular to men) are unlikely to be prepared to rescind their moral autonomy in a relationship to a transcendent," *ibid.*, p.154.

“a dimension of reality which we may name God” is introduced.

We shall need a much more dynamic understanding of God: as energy, light, power, love and healing. These things themselves should be understood to be what God is: something to which we have access. Drawing on that potential which we have as human beings, we must name those powers which are ours. Indeed it may be that it is only as we come ‘to’ ourselves that we shall come to honour the creation. The kind of theism which I am advocating may be thought to have profound ecological and political implications. We need to find our place in the world and to feel at home in it, rather than looking, as we have to western history, to an ‘external’ God and a life ‘beyond.’²⁵⁴

Clearly, then, Hampson is more than a feminist; she is a woman theologian, properly concerned with those issues, but dealing with more than feminist liberation theology. While pantheism is rejected, a “future theism” is offered, within which or in definition of such is a “theology of experience.”

A theology of experience..places the human self center-stage. God is known in and through the self..In a theology of revelation, almost by definition there is a heteronomous relationship to God..By contrast, in a theology of experience the individual comes into her or his own..The methodological starting point for such a theology is our awareness..Such a theology affirms, rather than seeking to overcome or deny, that which is already given. Moreover, what is notable about such a religious position is that **it in no way requires the Christian myth.**²⁵⁵

As she leaves the “Christian myth” behind, she does so with a parting rebuke for those feminists who continue to hold such a “world picture,” even as re-read and re-constructed: “I can think of no major feminist thinker who is a Christian.”²⁵⁶

While numerous leading figures of both the second and third feminist waves have expressed keen interest in pre-Christian goddess worship, Carol Christ has presented perhaps the most thoroughgoing study of such in *Rebirth of the Goddess: Finding Meaning in Feminist Spirituality* in 1997. From the Greek *thea* “goddess” and *logos* she forms the word theology for her reflections, going all the way back to Neanderthal burial practices 70,000 years ago and up to more modern Orthodox Christian icons to suggest that the most ancient and persistent understanding of the divine was that of “the womb of

²⁵⁴ Ibid. pp.244-51: p.245 for the short quote; p.251 for the longer one; the latter page for the long quote.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., p.283, emphasis ours.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p.252.

the Mother.”²⁵⁷ Inspired by the words of Merlin Stone,²⁵⁸ with impressive historic reference to Paleolithic, Neolithic, and Chalcolithic ages, backed up with figures of Goddesses as much as 27,000 years old, it is held that *she* was understood as “the Giver, Taker, and Renewer of Life,” with “all of nature... part of her body and symbolic of her power.”²⁵⁹ Not only were there these images of the divine as woman, but their existence, as seen for example in Neolithic villages, indicates a fulsome place for women in ancient society.

The primary religious symbol, the Goddess, celebrated women’s roles not only as birth givers, but also as transformers of seed to grain to bread, of clay to pot, of wool or flax to thread to cloth. Given the important social roles of women and the predominance of Goddess symbolism, there is no reason not to believe that women created and played central roles in Neolithic religion and culture.²⁶⁰

Such “peaceful and egalitarian matrifocal societies,” says Christ, were transformed by agricultural technologies and the rise of warfare over property, all of which favoured patriarchy. Indeed, it is maintained that warfare “is the single most important factor leading to the subordination of women.”²⁶¹ Moreover, mythical warrior Gods, such as Zeus and Marduk, slay mythical Goddesses. Hence, it is held that such subordination of women is institutionalized by a certain “theological animus.”²⁶² Even though such deaths of Goddesses at the hands of Gods persisted in Greek myths, was carried over somewhat into Old Testament tales, and is even portrayed in certain aspects of Christian tradition,

257 *Rebirth of the Goddess* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp.xiv, 50.

258 Reference to *When God Was a Woman* (1976), p.1. Christ allows that there were “inaccuracies” in this work, but holds that it served to bring Goddess thought to attention.

259 *Rebirth*, p.55. As for the interesting images of the Goddess presented, it is noted that all are quite voluptuous figures. It is wondered whether this is in praise of the divine’s creativity as woman or simply a comment on human wonder at the female body.

260 *Ibid.*, p.59.

261 *Ibid.*, pp.60,61. It is even said, with apparent great emphasis, that “When warfare becomes a part of life, boys and men are trained to become aggressive, violent, and dominant. The ‘spoils’ of war, offered to men as a reward for killing, are the wealth of other cultures and the right to rape and capture ‘enemy’ women..the rise of the warrior to social power inevitably led to the decline in social power of women as a group,” p.62. The strength of this social critique cannot be gainsaid. Over against this, is the explanation of Phyllis Bird in “The Place of Women in the Israelite Culture,” *Ancient Israelite Religion* (1987), namely “the universal phenomenon of sexual division of labor, which is particularly pronounced in pre-industrial agricultural societies,” p.400. On this, reference is made to M. Rosaldo, “Women, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview,” Rosaldo and Lamphere, *Women*, 18 and J. K. Brown, “A Note on the Division of Labor by Sex,” *American Anthropologist* 72 (1970), pp.1074-78.

262 *Ibid.*, p.62, Note 52. The term is taken over from Jane Ellen Harrison’s *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1903), p.285, and is said to apply only to Hesiod. It seems clear, however, that Christ views such enmity toward women as broadly applicable.

many elements of their survival are evident, despite "the patriarchal lie" and general resistance to the "Goddess hypothesis."²⁶³ Evidence of rebirth is at hand, but that, too, has to overcome the perception that it is nothing more than "a remarkable fable."²⁶⁴

Speaking theologically, then, the Goddess is not simply female, but is said to be mother earth and everything that naturally is. With this, all assumptions of dualism and hierarchy on earth are rejected.

In California, the Goddess is the tallest redwood and the tiniest hummingbird. In New England, intrepid crocuses and exuberant forsythia. In the American midwest, wide open spaces. In Hawaii, ..Pele, the volcano. In Denmark and Ireland, ..holy wells.²⁶⁵

Indeed, the entire universe, that is "the starry heavens, the sun, the moon, and the planets as well as the earth,"²⁶⁶ is held to be the body of the Goddess. In order to avoid abstraction, however, it is said best to confine thoughts more concretely to earthly matters. In any event, since the earth is the body of the Goddess, all notions of divine transcendence are erroneous. Rather, immanence is true! Starhawk is quoted in this regard:

Earth-based spirituality is rooted in three basic concepts that I call immanence, interconnectedness, and community. The first - immanence - names our primary understanding that the Earth, Goddess, God - whatever you call it - is not found outside the world somewhere - it's in the world, and it is us.²⁶⁷

This is pure pantheism, but put by Christ in terms of process theology's *pan-en-theism*, that is, "all is *in* God," so that, for her, "the Goddess is *in* everything that happens in the world..always attempting to persuade us to love intelligently, concretely, and inclusively ..(within) the web of life."²⁶⁸ Indeed, there is something of Gaia thealogy here.²⁶⁹

263 Ibid., p.88, Note 1. Reference is made to the attitude of Moses Finley, *Daedalus* 100 (1971), pp.168-86, quoted in Sarah Pomeroy, *Goddess, Whores, Wives, and Slaves* (1975), p.14.

264 Ibid., p.88.

265 Ibid., p.90.

266 Ibid., p.91.

267 Ibid., p.103. From "Power, Authority, and Mystery: Ecofeminism and Earth-based Spirituality," in *Reweaving the World*, eds. Diamond and Orenstein (1990), p.73. See also, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* (1979).

268 *Rebirth*, pp.104-07.

269 Ibid., pp.105,06. Reference is made to the hypothesis of Margulis and Lovelock, in *Global Ecology: Towards a Science of the Biosphere* ed. Rambler (1984), with regard to the unified functions of the earth as a self-regulating system.

A theology that envisions the earth as the body of the Goddess will recognize, appreciate, and celebrate the great diversity of life within the earth body..if we cannot love all beings in the web of life, perhaps we can at least begin to recognize that each plays a role in creating the things we do love.²⁷⁰

This implied Gaia theology is made quite explicit with regard to the understanding of death. When one's body dies, "the Gaia body will be diminished," with some species of it remaining and new species developing, so that "this is the way of the Gaia body."²⁷¹ With this, Christ had clearly "moved out of Christianity and into Goddess religion."²⁷² As seen here and elsewhere,²⁷³ and although based on some scholarly corroboration, it is a religion which, by and large, rejects notions of external authority and is based almost exclusively on subjective experiences of nature and is steeped in witchcraft (Wicca of Old English) and magic. Even so, it is a religion of remarkable spirituality and moral sensibility, offering "a mythos and ethos that inspires us to hope that we can create a different world."²⁷⁴

With this, we conclude our survey of leading feminist theologians and their concerns with a brief summary and assessment thereof from our perspective. First and foremost, from their point of view, all, with the partial exceptions of Hampson and Christ, who create and maintain their own distinct categories, are primarily *liberation theologians*.²⁷⁵ All, however, including Hampson and Christ, are rightly concerned with the status of women in the Scriptures and throughout culture, ancient and modern. It is unanimously concluded, that, due to the given patriarchal structures therein, wherein God is pictured as male so that man has been for that and derived reasons always and in every way above women. The point is well taken. Some, even among feminists, particularly McFague, have argued that it is primarily a matter of human, metaphorical perception rather than divine reality, and that properly understood the picture, of "this" for "that,"

270 Ibid., p.121.

271 Ibid., pp.127,28. A note is added at this point: "It is beyond the purview of this book to speculate about a time when the sun will become cold and the Gaia body as we know it will cease to exist. But if the universe is the body of the Goddess, even then the processes of birth, death, and renewal will continue," p.204. On moral and ethical dimensions of the perceived Gaia theology, see pp.155-59.

272 Ibid., p.176.

273 See her "Contemporary Goddess Movement" in *Encyclopedia of Women and World Religion* I, ed. Serinity Young (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 1999), pp.379-81.

274 *Rebirth*, p.160. Mythos is said to be "a system of rituals" and ethos is defined as "moral responsibility."

275 Christ, nevertheless, takes great care in the concluding section of *Rebirth* (p.175) to identify herself as part of the "Women's Liberation Group at Yale" during her earlier years of study there, together with Judith Plaskow, the Jewish feminist.

might even be found acceptable among thoughtful women. This point is taken, too, though Hampson argues effectively that that does not change the effects, namely the dreadful and painful consequence of it all for women. It is also maintained in most instances that God as such is without gender, and with this judgement all schools of theological thought, even those of male theologians, are in virtual agreement. It does not appear to be an issue.

Trible is a skilful exegete and biblical theologian, rereading patriarchal texts without "blindness," so that all-male patterns fade, female motifs emerge, and biblical faith is seen without sexism. Ruether, on the other hand, is something of a process theologian, looking to the liberating social critique of the classical prophets, reading between the lines of Scripture to uncover what has been screened out by patriarchal patterns, giving full range for recovery in revelations experienced in present religious communities, being open to gnostic and left wing understandings as well, all the while working on a new synthesis in conversation with the ancient Near East as well as modern liberalism, Marxism, and romanticism; a full plate, with new canons of scripture emerging all the while. Both Tribble and Ruether are charged by Schüssler Fiorenza with being in the main *neo-orthodox theologians* in their separate approaches, and the designation seems right on, and we take it to be so for our classification purposes, for indeed both hold to an 'Archemedian point' in order to guard biblical religion from its more radical feminist critics.

As for Schüssler Fiorenza, she seeks a historical-critical reconstruction of theological thought based on a hermeneutics of suspicion, indeterminacy, and historical imagination, likewise resulting in a new canon employing the "root model" Scriptures properly transformed by modern Christian communities; women's power is viewed as a prominent locus of revelation in all this. It needs to be added, however, that there are in fact elements of defence of biblical religion for women here too, as in the both/and hermeneutics of viewing Scripture as a canonical "root-model," hence an element of so-called neo-orthodoxy. McFague, too, seems to fall into the feminist neo-orthodox category. She holds metaphorical theology to be indigenous to Christianity and part and parcel of Protestant sensibility, properly viewing Jesus as an extended parable/metaphor, the Bible itself being likewise a metaphor, and all theological reflection having the form of a never ending, canon-free search for indeterminate, relative, and necessarily reconstructed truth; eastern metaphorical insights are called upon for help. With her desire to guard Christian faith in the face of all this, Schüssler Fiorenza's neo-orthodox label seems suitable. Daly and Hampson, as well as Christ, will have none of this and have indeed moved on.

Each of the feminist theologians mentioned within the second wave are clearly *historical-critical theologians*. All are involved, in one way or another, with their various emphases, in reconstructing the Christian faith in the wake of the Enlightenment, whether they ultimately defend its legitimacy or depart from it entirely. And all should probably be evaluated sometime, somehow, by someone given solely to the task in terms of the implied standard of measurement put forth by Patricia Demers in *Women as Interpreters of the Bible* in 1992, wherein she looks at such both past and present, from Julian of Norwich to virtually all those whom we have outlined here. An acknowledged feminist neophyte, and presumably of Roman Catholic background, but possessing the innocence such often suggests, she says:

Scholars today work in an intellectual and secular climate that tends to value skepticism over tradition. Unlike the biblical women on whom their writing often focuses, scholars rarely speak on behalf of a community of faith.²⁷⁶

By far the most penetrating critique of feminist theology, of all *three waves*, is that put forth by Susanne Heine in *Matriarchs, Goddesses, and Images of God* in 1989. While it is not our task to critique either feminism or the critiques of feminism, except as such may shed light on our interests, Heine's assessment needs to be briefly stated for just that limited purpose. Even as feminism's essential task is viewed as necessary, it is held, above all, to be "drifting in an ideological stream," without proper "cross-checking and methodological reflection."

Without systematic reflection it is also easy to get entangled in avoidable dilemmas, simple contradictions, which lead a feminist theology that is insensitive to them into dangerous alliances with ideologies of the most varied kind: with antisemitism, with the libertinism of the so-called sexual revolution, with the anti-intellectualism of conservative social systems, and with a fixation on reductionist theory of a scientific kind.²⁷⁷

Moreover, the hidden agenda, the 'best kept secret' of feminism's violent reaction to patriarchy and supposed resultant male triumphalism is not the notion of God's fatherhood but rather abhorrent child sexual abuse, largely by males but also by females. Further, Goddess feminism is unrelated to fact and rests instead on "a barren myth," which is actually contrary to "what moves women today."²⁷⁸ Finally, the evidence for feminism's

²⁷⁶ *Women as Interpreters of the Bible* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), p.8.

²⁷⁷ *Matriarchs, Goddesses, and Images of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), pp.3,6, and 8.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.44.

vaunted matriarchy is actually negative, as such shows, on an example from the Iroquois, only that "the power of women was the absence of men."²⁷⁹ In sum, feminism is classified as a 'midcult,' engaged in 'the sale of prefabricated effects, the preparation of conditions for use along with the product, and with the message a prescription of the reaction that it is to produce.'²⁸⁰

Whatever, the consequences of feminist concerns for the Judaeo-Christian tradition have been mixed. The positive ones have been noted and are incontrovertible. On the other hand, negative outcomes are plain to see. We outline such under the following seven headings:

- 1) overall emphasis on God's immanence virtually screens out any sense of *divine transcendence*;²⁸¹
- 2) near total loss of any notion of *particularism*, that is God's "decisive" entry into human events, 'particularly' in Christ Jesus;²⁸²
- 3) consequent reduction, therefore, of any effective sense of God's *fatherly care, protection, and salvation* in his Son;²⁸³
- 4) virtual jettisoning of an *inspired Scriptures*,²⁸⁴ *reliable Canon*,²⁸⁵ and *close reading* thereof, as well as any proper theological interpretation therefrom;

279 Ibid., pp.97ff.

280 Ibid., p.156.

281 McFague says those of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and presumably others, are "no longer under but with and in God," *Metaphorical Theology*, p.181. Hampson puts matters this way: "God is to be understood not as set over against us but as one with our self-realization," *After Christianity*, p.284. Over against this, Vanhoozer quotes Calvin as saying that "it is not godly for them [interpreters of the Bible] to come out with something out of their own heads," *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), p.316. Sister Elizabeth A. Johnson, a Roman Catholic, asserts that feminism within that tradition, once female as well as male images of God within scripture are fully granted and properly understood (as e.g. Job 38.28-29; Isaiah 66.13), actually enhances a notion of God's transcendence. "The incomprehensible mystery of God is brought to light and deepened in our consciousness through the imaging of God male and female, beyond any person we know," *TS* 45 (1984), "The Incomprehensibility of God and the Image of God Male and Female," p.460; see also her *Friends of God and Prophets, A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of the Saints* (New York: Continuum, 1998).

282 The issue with regard to particularism as compares to universalism has tended, in extremes, toward what Martin Smith termed "Ghetto" mentality as contrasted to "wishy-washy theologie," quoting Hans Küng's clever term (Sermon, St. Salvator's Chapel, University of St. Andrew's, Scotland, 16 May 1999). While somewhat oversimplified and flippant, the point is well taken and the consequences of the matter are properly indicated.

283 Again, McFague puts this attitude as clear as can be: Any theological idea that a "father who will alone protect and save - any such notion must be seen as immoral, irrelevant, and destructive." It is even added, if anything further could be said after that, that "our health and well being equals our salvation," *Metaphorical Theology*, p.185. We have seen nothing in feminist theology that disputes this chilling judgment.

284 Even Carol Meyers, in *Discovering Eve* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), who obviously and sympathetically values Scripture as a "major source" in that quest and for general information on

- 5) departure from *liberation theology* properly understood,²⁸⁶ both theologically and pastorally, in that 'preferential option for the poor' is read, willy-nilly, 'for women;'
- 6) *history of religions, reconstruction* method dictates demise of whatever is involved in items 1) through 5);

biblical times, says nevertheless that "comparative ethnography" is of more vital use in sorting out gender matters in biblical times; see pages 11 following. The attitude seems shared by all the feminist theologians we have read.

285 Although we are uncertain as to the precise significance of this, it seems to us noteworthy that those feminists most insistent upon questioning and supplementing the canon, such as Ruether and Schuessler Fiorenza, are of Roman Catholic background. Perhaps because of the reliance upon tradition, for all its emphasis upon the Old and New Testament communities' role in forming the canon, and the role of the Holy Spirit in governing that process, they are more conditioned to seeing legitimate such activity in current communities. On the other hand, those of a Protestant background seem more inclined to hold to some sense of *sola scriptura*, revised and re-read to be sure. This may be a suitable topic for study in itself.

286 Liberation theology in pure form appears to be established on documents from Vatican II as well as the Medellin Conference of 1968, based on theological notions therefrom, as interpreted e.g. in works as Gutierrez' *A Theology of Liberation* (London, SCM Press, 1974). Namely, 1) *Church equals community*; 2) *Divine Kingdom is Now*; and 3) *Option (preference) for the Poor*, all with emphasis on praxis over ideology. See *Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1975) ed. Austin Flannery, especially *Lumen Gentium*, pp.350ff., *Evangelica Testificatio*, pp.680, 735; see Gutierrez, pp.168ff; also *The Theology of Vatican II* (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1981) by Christopher Butler, pp.62ff, 129ff.; "The Church Universal as the Communion of Local Churches," by Joseph Komonchak in *Where Does The Church Stand?*, *Concilium* 146 (1981), pp.30-35; *Foundation for a Social Theology: Praxis, Process and Salvation* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1984) by Dermot Lane, pp.110-40. In much feminist theology, however, a fundamental reversal of theological method seems to prevail, moving from *action to (theological) reflection*, rather than the other way round, as the mentioned documents appear to present matters. In turn, then, emphasis is on *orthopraxis* (horizontal community considerations) rather than *orthodoxy* (vertical praise), as again the documents contend. If this be so, then clearly feminist liberation theology has placed almost total emphasis on the Option for the Poor, and this almost solely in terms of woman, with but occasional and side glances to the economically poor and deprived, as in South America, where liberation theology emerged and was defined. Feminist liberation theology, therefore, opts for a horizontal understanding of the Church. Even Gutierrez, in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, ed. Judith A. Dwyer (1994), maintains that in proper liberation theology there shall be "neither verticalism nor horizontalism," p.552. Even more directly, Pope John Paul II, addressing the Puebla (Mexico) Bishops Conference in 1979, and while assessing both the potential and the risks of liberation theology said: "The Church feels the duty to proclaim the liberation of human beings, the duty to help this liberation become firmly established." Then, reiterating the earlier words of Pope Paul VI at the Medellin Conference added that liberation is.. "above all, liberation from sin and the evil one, in the joy of knowing God and being known by him," quoted in John P. Hardin's *Modern Catholic Dictionary* (1980), p.318. Paul Wojda notes that official Vatican documents in 1984 and 1986 charged liberation theology with "insufficiently critical" borrowing of Marxist concepts" and with a "single-minded focus on the institutional dimension of sin, to the virtual exclusion of the individual," *The HarperCollins Encyclopaedia of Catholicism*, ed. Richard P. McBrien (1995), p.769. It seems appropriate to note here, too, that a goodly number of feminist liberation theologians, if indeed not the majority, are of the Roman Catholic tradition, from whence, again, it emerged. This, too, may be a topic worthy of study in itself.

- 7) with the lone exception of Tribble among the leading feminist theologians considered, *none even remotely consider the fatherhood of God texts* under consideration in this study.

There is, then, with due appreciation for their contribution to the cause of justice for women in the Church and larger society, little or no direct help for our study from the feminist theologians. We move on.

TRINITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS

It is not our purpose here to deal with the historical and theological development of the doctrine of the Trinity - its origins, its settled teaching at Nicaea, its historical interpretation.²⁸⁷ Rather, we propose only to indicate key aspects of trinitarian discussion during the second half of the twentieth century in general and to detail some specific issues in recent commentary as they seem to touch directly or indirectly upon the notion of the fatherhood of God. Furthermore, as we hold these issues to have been largely responsive, one way or another, to the agenda set by Vatican II, particularly as regards the existential liberation and empowerment of the oppressed, especially women, we see such, like much feminist thought, in this very limited sense, as yet another extension of the history of religions approach.

Current Theological Reflection

In 1972, Joseph Bracken, S.J. published a brief, but notable "overview of current theological reflection" on the doctrine of the Trinity, entitled *What Are They Saying About the Trinity?*²⁸⁸ While he focuses on Roman Catholic thought with regard to updating the classical doctrine of the Trinity, he is fully aware of significant new approaches among Protestant thinkers. The first line of the Preface indicates clearly that,

²⁸⁷ *Sacramentum Mundi* VI, pp.295-308, served as a useful digest in these regards, along with occasional forays into Edmund J. Fortman's *The Triune God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), particularly on the Cappadocians in the East, Augustine in the West, and Anselm in the Middle Ages.

²⁸⁸ New York: Paulist Press. A remarkably similar title was published by Anne Hunt in 1988. We will return to this somewhat below. Ted Peters' *God as Trinity, Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993) efficiently and lucidly "maps" modern trends in trinitarian thought, delineating them well beyond the needs and purposes of this study. We will likewise return to this and to his quite fresh insights and critiques from time to time as they touch directly upon our discussion.

in his mind, however, all such modern reflection is framed essentially by Karl Rahner's *The Trinity* in 1970.

This, too, is a relatively small work, yet its concern is pervasive, its thesis provocative, and its influence extensive. In sum, it deplores the isolation of trinitarian doctrine from Christian piety and theology and advocates its crucial importance.

Despite their orthodox confession of the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere "monotheists." We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged.²⁸⁹

While a serious pastoral concern is evident, Rahner clearly has weightier theological matters in mind, particularly the connection of the doctrine of the Trinity with that of the one God, as articulated by the Roman Catholic magisterium, as well as trinitarian roots in the Old Testament. He is primarily concerned with clarifying the relationship of God's being with his saving action in his Son. In effect, he seeks to close the gap between 'God in himself' and 'God for us.' In this Rahner is clearly standing on the shoulders of Karl Barth, and his appeal for trinitarian thought from the vantage point of Christ's redemptive work and Lordship, which is clearly acknowledged. Moreover, and crucially, great emphasis is placed on God's "fatherhood" not only in terms of Jesus but also in his own unoriginate state.²⁹⁰ With Barth, and inasmuch as the mystery of the Trinity is manifestly "a mystery of salvation," his basic thesis is crystal clear:

The "economic" Trinity is the "immanent" Trinity and the "immanent" Trinity is the "economic" Trinity.²⁹¹

This thesis is not based on the Scriptures alone, as they "do *not explicitly* present

²⁸⁹ *Trinity*, pp.10-11.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.84. The note to this is powerful. "Hereby we refer concretely to the 'person' of the Father, who is not only 'fatherhood' (hence 'notionality'), but the concrete God in the unity of essential aseity and notional fatherhood, concrete unoriginatedness. Should one say that something similar may be said also of the Son and the Spirit, we reply that it is true of them *as* communicated, insofar as they themselves are constituted by the fatherly self-communication. In other words, we can never conceive of a divinity which does not exist either as that of the Father or the Son or the Spirit." Note 6.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.22. The distinction originated with Tertullian. According to Fortman, *Triune God*, pp.108ff, he was the "first in the West to use the word *trinity*," and this in terms of a *unity of substance* between *persona*. See also Bertrand de Margerie, *The Christian Trinity in History* (Still River, Massachusetts: St. Bede's Publications, 1982), translated by Fortman, pp.45ff. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, in *God For Us*, (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), pp.217ff. points to Piet Schoonenberg's caution that strict identity in the axiom's components cannot be made, as 'all thinking moves from the world to God;' likewise Walter Kaiser's query with regard to *newness* in the economic aspect; so too Gordon Kaufman's opinion that the axiom is based on a "pseudo distinction."

a doctrine of the 'immanent' Trinity," but rather on the biblical statements "concerning the economy of salvation and its threefold structure," that is in the Father, the Son, and the Spirit." Since it is the incarnate Logos who at once reveals the triune God and who is mankind's salvation, there is "a Logos with God and a Logos with us." Accordingly, "the immanent and the economic Logos, are strictly the same."²⁹²

Moreover, and contrary to customary opinion, as only the Son, the "Logos with us," could become man, he has a quite distinct relationship with both divinity and with humanity. He is, in accord with the official doctrine of the Church, "consubstantial" with the former and, on the other hand, on Rahner's scheme, significantly more than merely analogical with the latter.²⁹³ He is "not simply God in general, but the Son," so manifest only in the "economic" Trinity.

Here something occurs "outside" the intra-divine life in the world itself, something which is not a mere effect on the efficient causality of the triune God acting as one in the world, but something which belongs to the Logos alone, which is the history of one divine person, in contrast to other divine persons..we cling to the truth that the Logos is really as he appears in revelation, that he is **the one** who reveals to us (not merely **one** of those who might have revealed to us) the triune God, on account of the personal being which belongs to him, the Father's Logos.²⁹⁴

Indeed, it is further held, God's "self-communication possesses two basic modalities: self-communication as truth and as love."²⁹⁵ In order to avoid classical problems inherent in the concept person, while wanting to affirm its propriety, Rahner coins the term "distinct manner of subsisting."²⁹⁶ Such terminology is held to be a hedge against the modern

²⁹² Ibid., pp.22, 33. Rahner's own note is weighty here too: "...this sameness is the one about which Ephesus and Chalcedon both say that it is unconfused, unseparated,..the sameness in which one and the same Logos is *himself* in the human reality not because something foreign (human nature) has been joined to him in a merely additive way, but because the Logos posits the other reality as his way of positing and expressing himself..the difference should be conceived as an inner modality of unity."

²⁹³ Ibid., p.61, on "consubstantial;" DS 71, 526 is cited.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., pp.23, 30. While manifesting considerable appreciation for Rahner's overall thesis and development, T. F. Torrance, in "Toward an Ecumenical Consensus on the Trinity," *TZ* 31/6 (1975), registers the complaint that "much more attention must be given to the first half of the axiom, that the Trinity *ad extra* is the Trinity *ad intra*," thus paving the way for "closer rapprochement with Orthodox and Evangelical theology," p.349.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., p.98. Rahner is sensitive to the dangers of Sabellianism or modalism in his thesis, and says flatly in defense, "*economic* Sabellianism is false," p.38. Even so, Bertrand de Margerie, S.J. says that in this regard his terminology "savors of modalism" and that overall his argument is "more sincere than it is convincing," *Trinity in History*, p.219.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 110, 112,13. "We consciously give up here the explicit use of the concept "person" for two reasons: first because we have presented the "economic" Trinity without using this word, so that

notion of several spiritual centers of activity and so a guard of the *one* essence of God and his *one* self-utterance in the Logos with us, and, equally important, against a "hidden pre-reflective tritheism."²⁹⁷ Further, and presumably more important, by observing that "the Father, Son, and Spirit are the one God each in a different manner of subsisting"²⁹⁸ from the point of view of the *economic* Trinity, one better apprehends theologically the *immanent* Trinity, which Rahner states is his real theme.²⁹⁹ Overall, then, Rahner points to the biblical fact that a distinct 'God for us' in Christ through the Spirit is peculiarly 'God in himself' among men and women (the *God-man*), urges therefore (with Barth) attention to economic trinitarian factors, thus a view of "from below," and so attempts to restore the doctrine of the Trinity to a place of primacy in Christian theology and piety.

Jürgen Moltmann is a manifestly leading figure in new approaches to the Trinity. Already in 1972, in "The 'Crucified God,' God and the Trinity Today," he found Rahner's distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity, as well as his thesis thereto,

our basic axiom does not (yet) urge us to use it; and because we shall presently have to discuss explicitly the use of this concept in the doctrine of the Trinity," p.101. Bracken challenges this, charging that "the same interpersonal categories should be employed in his exposition of the immanent Trinity (as in the economic Trinity)," *op cit.*, p.12. The point seems well taken, as Rahner says the immanent Trinity is his "real theme," *ibid.*, p.83. A further debt to Karl Barth, particularly in the expressions "ways of being" and "manner of being" some thirty-five years earlier, is credited, though not fully paid. Thompson's translation of *Church Dogmatics II* has this on Threeness in Oneness: "Certainly God meets us in the Biblically attested revelation...in constantly different action, always in one of his modes of existence, or better put, distinguished or characterised from time to time by one or other of his modes of existence. But this relatively distinct manifestation of the three modes of existence does not imply a corresponding state of distinctness among themselves. On the contrary, we shall have to say that as surely as the relatively varying manifestation of the three modes of existence points to their corresponding variety among themselves, so surely does it also point directly to their unity in this variety...; we do well to set the centre of the whole investigation not on the concept of Person but that of mode of existence," p.416. In *Dogmatics in Outline*, tr. Thompson (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), p.44, Barth employs "way of being" for God's second and third "divine way of being" in the Son and in the Holy Spirit.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.115.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.114. See pp.109ff.: "The one self-communication of the one God occurs in three different manners of given-ness, in which one God is given concretely for us in himself, and not vicariously by other realities through their transcendental relation to God. God is the concrete God in each one of these manners of given-ness...without modalistically coinciding."

²⁹⁹ Bernhard Lonergan's *De Theo Trino* is taken to be another significant contemporary voice. Bracken holds that one of its key elements is the assertion that the persons of the Trinity possess "a minimum self-identity of personal consciousness," *Saying*, p.5. While such is deemed too bound to classical trinitarian thought and too remote from practical experience, Lonergan's statement in *Doctrinal Pluralism* (being the Pere Marquette Theology Lecture of 1971) suggests instead his break from the former and his enthusiastic embrace of the latter: "A theology is the product not only of faith but also of culture. It is cultural change that has made Scholasticism no longer relevant and demands the development of a new theological method and style, continuous indeed with the old, yet meeting all the genuine exigences of both the Christian religion and of up-to-date philosophy, science, and scholarship," pp.32,33. Besides, Hugo Meynell's *Theology of Bernhard Lonergan* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1986), on the "Systematics of the Trinity," quotes him as saying that such entails primarily "three subjects of a single dynamic and existential consciousness," p.87.

“superfluous.”³⁰⁰ It is rendered so by interpreting Christ’s death as an event between Jesus and his Father, that is within the Trinity, hence “nontheistically” and therefore “no longer a divine mystery.”³⁰¹ All of this allows the suffering of God and man to be viewed in utterly human terms and thus fosters an appreciation of the “dialectic of human life.” Indeed, only this provides a true understanding of the triune nature of God. Moreover, in 1985, in the essay “The Inviting Unity of the Triune God,” he says Christianity must in fact be rescued from monotheism in these things and have the unity of the triune God understood in terms of “the freedom of men and women, the peace of nations, and the presence of the spirit in all natural things.” Indeed, even Israel did not confess “one God” (in either an immanent or economic sense) but rather “one Lord,” emphasising liberation from bondage in Egypt.³⁰² Put another way, God the Father is not to be understood in terms of *patria potestas*, of head over all, particularly over the Son in his suffering for all, but rather in terms of *perichoresis*, that is “reciprocal inherence” one for the other and for all mankind.³⁰³

The Trinity and the Kingdom of 1993 presents Moltmann’s fullest treatment of trinitarian theology to date, being a development of the just mentioned earlier works. It sets him at clear odds with Barth and Rahner on the issue, even as he expresses genuine appreciation for their contributions. He not only finds Rahner’s thesis on the *economic* and *immanent* Trinity “superfluous,” but charges him indeed with “modalism” in his efforts. The three ‘distinct modes of subsistence’ do not represent centers of consciousness, so no mutual Thou, which accordingly renders the entire doctrine of the Trinity superfluous.³⁰⁴ Putting distance between himself, Barth, and Rahner, as well as the entire patristic tradition with their Platonic notions of ‘God in himself,’ Moltmann states the heart of the matter for him:

The distinction between the Trinity’s immanence and its economy must be in the Trinity itself and must be implemented by it itself. It must not be imposed on it from outside. It is only in his account of Christ’s death on the cross that Barth breaks through the unilinear view of correspondence, which thinks of it from

300 In *Essays on Theology, Solidarity, and Modernity* in the Concilium Series, by Johann-Baptist Metz with Moltmann, entitled *Faith and the Future* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), p.96.

301 *Ibid.*, p.96.

302 *Ibid.*, pp.138-42.

303 *Ibid.*, pp.142,23.

304 *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (London: SCM Press, 1981), pp.144ff.

above to below, from within to without. Christ's death on the cross acts from below upwards, from without inwards, out of time back into eternity. The meaning of the cross of the Son on Golgotha reaches right into the heart of the immanent Trinity. From the very beginning, no immanent Trinity and no divine glory is conceivable without 'the Lamb who was slain.'³⁰⁵

The "means of access" to a proper understanding of the Trinity lies not so much in man's experience of God, but rather in "God's experience of us," properly understood.³⁰⁶ And the history of the world is properly the history of God's suffering for man, God's passion. Turning from Greek philosophical notions of God's impassibility toward the gospel proclamation of the suffering and death of Christ, with assistance from the relatively obscure English theologian C. E. Rolt and popular Anglican priest Studdert Kennedy, of some sixty years earlier, Moltmann points to the 'sole omnipotence which God possesses, the almighty power of suffering love in Christ,'³⁰⁷ hence God's passibility. Ironically, in this passibility is God's only impassibility, his only eternity.

He has to go through time; and it is only in this way that he is eternal. He has to run his full course on earth as servant; and it is only in this way that he is the lord of heaven. He has to be man and nothing but man; and it is only in this way that he is completely God..[So], God's eternal self-love leads to a doctrine of the Trinity which is open to the world.³⁰⁸

Such 'passibility' on the part of God as evidenced in God's suffering on the cross and such consequent 'openness' in the doctrine of the Trinity broadens out and is effectively "experienced in the community of brothers and sisters through mutual acceptance and

305 Ibid., pp.158ff.

306 Ibid., p.4.

307 Ibid., pp.31ff. Reference is to Rolt's *The World's Redemption* (1913), with this further powerful quote: "If God would show us Himself, He must show us Himself as a sufferer, as taking what we call pain and loss. These are His portion; from eternity He chose them. The life Christ shows us is eternal life," p.32. Equally significant is this from Studdert Kennedy: "It is always the Cross in the end - God, not Almighty, but God the Father, with a Father's sorrow and a Father's weakness, which is the strength of love. God splendid, suffering, crucified - Christ. There's the dawn," p.35, from *The Hardest Part* (1918), p.14. Such admittedly Anglican influence is noteworthy, particularly for a German theologian of such prominence, so perhaps worthy of a study on its own.

308 Ibid., p.33. With regard to the sacrifice, suffering, and sorrow, reference is made to Miguel de Unamuno's *Dei Sentimiento Tragico de la Vida en los Hombres y en los Pueblos*, with particular attention to the notion of *congoja*, that is "contradiction" with regard to God and Christ, pp. 36ff. Nicholas Berdyaev's *The Meaning of History* is referenced with regard to the associated question of tragedy and the divine, as well as George Buchner's *Dantos Tod* on the matter of theodicy, pp. 47ff.

participation.”³⁰⁹ Indeed, Moltmann says bluntly, “Anyone who denies movement in the divine denies the Trinity. And to deny this is really to deny the whole Christian faith.”³¹⁰

Intra-trinitarian nuances are to be carefully noted. For one thing, there is quite vigorous indictment of “monotheism,” which is seen to be common in both Arianism and Sabellianism, viewed as two sides of the same coin, and visible in the theology of both Barth and Rahner. It allows one to abandon Christ’s divinity in favor of the One God. A perceived better way is put forward.

If the **homousios** does not merely identify Christ with God, but identifies God with Christ as well, then the divine unity can no longer be interpreted monadically. It has to be understood in trinitarian terms. Christian faith can then no longer be called ‘monotheistic’ in the sense of the One God. God’s sovereignty can then no longer be understood as the ‘universal monarchy’ to which everything is subjected. It has to be interpreted and presented as the redeeming history of freedom.³¹¹

Such trinitarian clarity provides then for human freedom as well; indeed the doctrine of the Trinity is “the true theological doctrine of freedom,” which serves to alleviate “religious, moral, patriarchal or political domination.”³¹² Furthermore, the relationships within the Trinity are two-fold social ones. On the one hand, the three persons “are unique, non-interchangeable subjects of the one, common divine substance, with consciousness and will.” On the other hand, linked in love through the Spirit, people are given the opportunity to “rise into inexhaustible mystery of God himself.”³¹³

Although Rahner’s thesis with regard to equivalence of the economic and immanent Trinity is dismissed as superfluous, Moltmann “affirms and takes [it] up” in the final analysis, for “from the foundation of the world, the *opera trinitatis ad extra* correspond(s) to the *passiones trinitatis ad intra*.”³¹⁴ What the Rahner thesis is actually bringing out is the interaction between the substance and the revelation, the ‘inwardness’

309 Ibid., p.158

310 Ibid., p.45.

311 Ibid., p.134. In “Jurgen Moltmann and the Question of Pluralism,” in *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, ed. Kevin Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), p.156, Richard Bauckham suggests that Moltmann would be less misunderstood if he employed “unitarianism” rather than “monotheism.” Ted Peters objects strongly to Moltmann’s equation of monotheism and monarchism, terming it “trivial.” *God as Trinity*, p.40.

312 Ibid., p.192.

313 Ibid., p.171; p.148.

314 Ibid., p.160.

and the 'outwardness' of God's trinitarian nature.³¹⁵ What is more, and perhaps of more importance for Moltmann, is something of a triumph of doxology over theology, pointing as the former does to an eschatological dimension or outcome of all such trinitarian considerations, that is, to a time "when we shall praise and adore thee, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for ever and ever"³¹⁶

The economic Trinity completes and perfects itself to immanent Trinity when the history and experience is 'in God' and 'God is all in all', then the economic Trinity is raised into and transcended in the immanent Trinity. What remains is the eternal praise of the triune God in his glory.³¹⁷

Even as Moltmann worships and extols the elements of the Trinity, in a mystical and near heavenly attitude, he quickly comes back to earth, stating that the Father is not like the father of the church or the country or the family, or even the universe, but rather simply and exclusively 'the Father of the Son' Jesus Christ. Distinguishing between the creation of the world and the generation of the Son, in Christian terms "the Father creates heaven and earth through the Son."³¹⁸ Drawing on the Council of Toledo in 675,³¹⁹ on the nature of the Son, and on the notion of *de utero Patris*, it is asserted that the designation Father is not cosmological but theological. "He is no longer defined in unisexual, patriarchal terms but bisexually or transexually,..as the fatherly Mother of his only begotten Son."³²⁰

One of the most brilliant and creative modern approaches to the Trinity is Robert Jenson's *The Triune Identity* of 1982.³²¹ His preference for complicated eastern metaphysical analysis,³²² together with his own style, makes for difficult reading. Yet, it is

315 Ibid., p.160.

316 Ibid., p.161. The quote is from a formal doxology used in the Reformierte Kirche in Germany.

317 Ibid., p.161.

318 Ibid., p.164.

319 Ibid., p.165. The Council stated, as quoted from J. Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum*: "It must be held that the Son was created, neither out of nothingness nor yet out of any substance, but that He was begotten or born of the Father's womb (*de utero Patris*), that is out of his very essence." Interestingly, Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father* is cited with some authority in this note.

320 Ibid., pp.163,64. Further at this point, "This means a radical transformation of the Father image; a father who both begets and bears his son is not merely a father in the male sense. He is motherly Father of the only Son he has brought forth, and at the same time as the fatherly Mother of his only begotten Son. [Any] one who wants to understand the trinitarian God as Father must forget the ideas behind..patriarchal Father religion."

321 The essence of this is digested somewhat in *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol.1, ed. Jenson, Carl Braaten, et al (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) and further developed in *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), both under the overall subtitle "The Triune God."

322 Even so, with Rahner and Moltmann, Jenson too stands squarely upon the shoulders of Barth with regard to the trinitarian significance of the economic aspects of the Trinity. Jüngel has also played an

exhilarating and enlightening. He states his primary thesis straightaway in the title itself, namely and simply that God's identity consists in Trinity. With due appreciation for Augustine and subsequent trinitarian doctrine in the West, who and which have attempted to 'simplify' Nicene conclusions, Jenson turns East and states that on the contrary such efforts at simplification served instead to 'flatten *identical possession*.' Then he offers this:

What could and should have been said is that the one and identical Godhead, which each of the persons "has," is itself constituted by the relations between those persons, so that the Father, Son, and Spirit play different roles in their realization of deity, and just so each possesses the one and selfsame deity.³²³

Indeed, it is added, the discarding of the "Augustinian doctrine of divine simplicity..is one purpose of this study."³²⁴

A critical step was taken, with the Cappadocians, by examining the relationship between *ousia* and *hypostasis*, rough equivalents from Nicaea onwards, yet manifesting slight nuances. Cappadocian reworking of the terms draws the slight differences out, pointing to *ousia* as what "is," and *hypostasis* as "identifiability." Taking *hypostasis* first, the complexity of the *identical possession(s)* of deity in the Persons of the Trinity is seen in this:

God is Father as the source of the Son's and the Spirit's Godhead; God is Son as the recipient of the Father's Godhead; and God is the Spirit as the spirit of the Son's possession of the Father's Godhead.³²⁵

important role. It may be said, too, with all due respect, that the work is slightly marred by rather awkward syntax, overuse of words like "glissando," and the sense that some of the material need not have been "trudged through" (p.141) to make his case.

³²³ *The Triune Identity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), p.120.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.124. To this, see Colin Gunton's "Augustine, The Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West," *SJT* 43/1 (1990), pp.33-58. Amplifying Rahner's criticism of the dogmatic separation of *De Deo Uno* from *De Deo Trino*, and Augustine's alleged complicity, Gunton charges harshly that "either Augustine did not understand the trinitarian theology of his predecessors, both East and West, or looked at their work with spectacles so strongly tinted with neoplatonic assumptions that they have distorted his work," *op cit.*, pp.41,42.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.106. Reference to Gregory of Nyssa (*Ablabius*) presumably indicates that this is something of a paraphrase from him. Jenson is totally unashamed of his reliance upon the East and Hellenistic influence. Indeed, he says he does not intend to "decry the 'Hellenization' of Christianity or to propose termination of the metaphysical reflection in which the confrontation with Hellenism has involved the gospel. On the contrary, the fault of Western trinitarianism was precisely a failure to carry on the metaphysical creativity begun by the Cappadocians, and so long as the Western church endures, it must be Hellenic," p.161.

The address to God as "Father" is a principle example. The form of address is neither mere analogy nor detailed univocal sexual description. Rather, it is Jesus' historical and filial address, and "this analogical communication between Jesus and Transcendence is *constitutive* for God himself." How so?

It is just and only in that "the Father" **gives**, Jesus obediently **receives**, and their future **is sent to** us that the relation of Creator to creature is established in the evangelical events, that these three are, so to speak, on both sides of the God/creature line..that the three are **God**.

In fact, "our communication with God is thus controlled by his reality."³²⁶ And such reality and relations as these together constitute deity. Furthermore, and of key interest for our overall study, is not only that Jesus' addresses God as Father, but that the "[t]he Father is God of Israel,..one among three identities of the God of Israel,"³²⁷ and that therein is the origin of the identification.

As for *ousia*, if the Father, Son, and Spirit play roles with divinity, are there not three gods? Certainly not, for, again with Gregory, "God" is a predicate "of the divine *activity* toward us."³²⁸ That is, one can only speak of God in terms of what is predicated to him, namely the mutual divine activity of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, as it is deity engaged in such events. And such is divine being. Moreover,

The "one divine *ousia*," the **varied** sharing of which distinguishes Father, Son, and Spirit, and the varied **sharing** of which qualifies their joint act as God, is **temporal unhinderedness**, the fact that the act of Father, Son, and Spirit overcomes all conditions.³²⁹

Jenson brings the issue of the *ousia* and *hypostasis* to something of a conclusion, for the Cappadocians and himself, and indeed for his entire thesis, with this: "There is one event, God, of three identities. Therewith my proposed trinitarian analysis"³³⁰

Significant implications emerge from this analysis. Of first importance for Jenson, and for our purposes, is the divine *name*. In antiquity in general, and in Israel in particular, a person's identity was thought to be enshrined in their name. So for Jenson

³²⁶ Ibid., p.107.

³²⁷ *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, pp.115, 16. "Jesus addresses the God of Israel as "my Father;" this is both the origin of the identification of "the Father" as one of the Trinity and a confirmation of his reality as the one God."

³²⁸ Ibid., p.113.

³²⁹ Ibid., p.166.

³³⁰ Ibid., p.114.

and his notion of triune identity. On testing the authenticity of Moses' call to deliver Israelites out of Egypt, whether or not he indeed knew the Lord, the God of his fathers, he was asked, "What is his name?" The revealed response was "The Lord, the God of your fathers,..has sent me to you; this is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered to all generations" (Exodus 3.13-15). Such is sharpened in the play on words in the same context, namely "I am who I am" (verse 14). Indicated, then, are both a proper name and an identifying description.

Throughout Israel's experience God is named in connection with identifying activity: descending, proclaiming, being merciful, punishing, establishing covenant, blotting out transgressions. Indeed, "identifying God, by backing up his name (with such activity), is the very function of the biblical narrative."³³¹ The process is seen to be precisely the same in the New Testament, only with a new and singular activity, that is "rais(ing) Jesus from the dead."³³² There is no replacement of the Old Testament or the Exodus description, for Jesus is raised by the same God who freed Israel. However, divine activity in the New Testament is "in Jesus' name," as forgiveness, baptism, prayer, gathering, preaching. Above all, from the Great Commission, Jesus commands divine activity in the kingdom "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28).³³³ Added to this is Jesus' peculiar address to God as "Father," which qualifies himself as "Son," confirmed among the faithful in the power of the "Spirit," all three of which "summarize faith's apprehension of God" and the "trinitarian naming" of him.³³⁴ Hence, we have a New Testament "proper name of God."³³⁵

Furthermore, and again, the being of God is *temporal unhinderedness*, that is God in Trinity is free to be related to the world. Swept away with this are all metaphysical Greek notions that God is *changeless*, for with three identities in one, there is no one

³³¹ Ibid., pp.5ff.

³³² Ibid., p.8. Reference is made to Peter Stuhlmacher, "Das Bekenntnis zur Aufwerweckung Jesus von den Toten und die biblische Theologie" *ZTK* 70 (1973): pp.365-403, esp. pp.377-91. Rom 4.24 is the key text.

³³³ While this precise trinitarian naming of divine activity is only here and in II Cor 13.14, its early dominance in the Church is solidly based, being seen in Ignatius of Antioch, Clement, and the Martyrdom of Polycarp, touching upon every aspect of its life, liturgy, and mission.

³³⁴ Ibid., pp.12,13.

³³⁵ Ibid., p.17. In support, see Deborah Belonick's article "Revelation and Metaphor: The Significance of the Trinitarian Names, Father, Son and Holy Spirit," *USQ* 40/3 (1985), pp.31-42. For vigorous opposition to the notion, in Jenson and others, see Susan Thistlethwaite's "On the Trinity," *Int* XLV/2 (1991), pp.159-71. She disputes Gregory of Nyssa's historical and conceptual role in such a concept, and charges rather that it is "a quite modern theological innovation..invented to secure masculine rhetoric of this formula from the critique that it is gender-sterotyping," *op cit.*,p.166. We trust that the consistent appearance of "imminent" with regard to the Trinity in Thistlethwaite's piece is but typographical and not theological confusion.

identity which is without the potential of alteration within itself. This means ultimate divine freedom. Whereas Hellenic thought considered temporal movement a limitation on perfection, Scripture understands God moving in and through time toward a promised perfection in the future,³³⁶ chiefly in his "economic" salvation of fallen humanity in Christ Jesus.³³⁷ Moreover, "nothing can hinder the life and love they enact..[It is] inexhaustible."³³⁸

Finally, the Trinity in all aspects is to be understood in an *eschatological* sense. Contrary to the notion of the timelessness-axiom of Hellenic philosophy, and the "Logos *asarkos*," doctrine of a separate Christ entity in deity that always *was*, "we should interpret it as a final *outcome*, and just so as eternal."³³⁹ Indeed, "to be God is to be Eschatos!" Because God is what is, he fulfills what is, and he has the power of the future to transcend what is, all of which "come together in the event of Jesus' resurrection."³⁴⁰

For the Eschaton is the triumph of an individual whose very individuality is that he does not and need not cling to what **he** is or has, whose very individuality is his unhindered way to others, is his freedom from his merely individual self. In the final community constituted by **his** presence, there will be no end to mutual possibility - and that is the infinity of the biblical God.³⁴¹

It only needs to be added here that God is also Spirit, and inasmuch as the trinitarian procession is not all one way, from Father, Son, and Spirit, but may indeed flow the other way as well, that the Spirit is to be "recognized as differently but equally 'principle and source' with the Father."³⁴²

Catherine Mowry LaCugna's *God For Us, The Trinity and Christian Life* of 1991 is massive in every respect - in concept, in scholarship, and in importance. The theological perspective is firm and focused. The mastery of patristic materials is impressive. And, as

336 This exceedingly complex aspect of Jenson's presentation is digested well in Ted Peters' *God as Trinity*, pp. 128ff.

337 *Ibid.*, pp. 138ff. Augustine, Lutheran scholastics, Barth, Rahner, and Jüngel are invoked here. This is added: "The legitimate theological reason for the "inmanent"/ "economic" distinction is the *freedom of God* [italics ours]: it must be that God 'in himself' could have been the same God he is, and so triune, had there been no creation, or no saving of fallen creation, and so also not the trinitarian history there has in fact been," p.139.

338 *Ibid.*, pp. 165, 66.

339 *Ibid.*, p.140.

340 *Ibid.*, p.168.

341 *Ibid.*, p.171.

342 *Ibid.*, pp. 141, 42. Added here is the assertion that on this thesis, "the believing community is eternity," p.141. The diagrams given on such procession, on pp. 122, 143, and 147, are in themselves illuminating.

the sub-title indicates, the concern for the exercise of Trinity in liturgical expression and daily life is practical and refreshing.³⁴³

Overall, it sets forth a bold corrective to the grave concerns expressed by Karl Rahner. Employing as a point of departure his now famous axiom, that *the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and vice-versa*, as well as his claim that the doctrine of the Trinity is central to the Christian faith, both of which are duly praised and properly upheld for their intrinsic value, LaCugna presents her case in terms of *oikonomia* and *theologia*. These are viewed as "two aspects of the *one* reality," *one* self-communication of God.³⁴⁴

There is neither an economic nor an immanent Trinity; there is only the **oikonomia** that is the concrete realization of the mystery of **theologia** in time, space, history, and personality. **Oikonomia** is not the Trinity **ad extra** but the comprehensive plan of God reaching from creation to consummation, in which God and all creatures are destined to exist together in the mystery of love and communion. Similarly, **theologia** is not the Trinity **in se**, but, much more modestly and simply, the mystery of God.³⁴⁵

Oikonomia and *theologia* are, then, two sides of the same coin, that is one, dynamic movement of God upon the world and mankind in terms of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, understood by what is mystically revealed and realised about such. Viewed on an offered parabola, this saving action is seen as moving in both directions, from top down and from bottom up, with no evident reason "to stop at any one point along the curve...frozen in time," as though Christology were above pneumatology.³⁴⁶ Accordingly, the reality of God in Trinity is to be understood as that which is neither *ad intra* nor *ad extra*, but rather a revelation of him which is *a patre ad patrem*. Even talk of God *in se*

³⁴³ San Francisco: Harper, 1991. An outline of much of what is presented here was published in an article with Killian McDonnell, "Returning from 'The Far Country': Thesis for a Contemporary Theology, SJT 41 (1988), pp.191-215. There it is maintained that the Trinity is the unifying principle for all of Christian theology. In *God as Trinity*, Ted Peters speaks of it as a "real jewel," p.122. Indeed it is, both theologically and liturgically. One cannot help but feel that every bishop (or similar Church leader) would be well advised to have it as required study for parish clergy and theologians of any sort, particularly Chapter Nine, "Trinity, Theology and Doxology," with this as theme: "[T]he Theologian must also be a prayerful woman or man whose relationship with God and membership in a particular tradition nourish his or her reflection on the mystery of divine-human communion...*ortha-doxa*, literally, right opinion about God's economy," *God for Us*, pp.365,66.

³⁴⁴ Clearly great debt is also owed to Karl Barth in these theological considerations, and though not referenced as often as Rahner, acknowledgement of his pivotal role is freely made throughout, particularly in Chapter 8.

³⁴⁵ *God for Us*, p.223.

³⁴⁶ Against this, see e.g. James Barr, who says (with regard to trinitarian and Christological thought in connection with the Old Testament): "The direction of thought is from God to Christ, from Father to Son, and not from Christ to God," *Old and New in Interpretation* (London: SCM Press, 1982), pp.153f.

is to be abandoned in favor of *theologia*, that is contemplation on the “mystery of God’s activity in creation, in human personality and human history.”³⁴⁷ The basic principle is simply this: “Theology is inseparable from soteriology, and *vice versa*.”³⁴⁸

With the abandonment of trinitarian concerns as to distinctions between God’s inner reality and outer saving activity, the way is open to an appreciation of another, quite practical axiom. It is stated so: *Trinitarian life is also our life!*

The doctrine of the Trinity is not ultimately a teaching about “God” but a teaching about God’s life with us and our life with each other. It is a life of communion and indwelling, God in us, we in God, all of us in each other. This is the ‘perichoresis’, the mutual interdependence that Jesus speaks of in the Gospel of John.³⁴⁹

Looking east, as she frequently does, LaCugna points to the *perichoresis* as the key to understanding the heart of the matter. Coming from the Greek theologian John Damascene, the term referred initially to the dynamic character of the relationship between the persons of the Trinity, namely that they were mutually and intimately joined, so that they were said to be inseparable, one. Extending this relational concept to the human level, and employing yet another Greek term, *theosis*, that is “becoming God,” man is said to be in reality “*homoousios* with God.”³⁵⁰ In other words, God’s very being is fundamentally God’s being for mankind, or *vice versa*. Put quite bluntly, the doctrine of the Trinity is all about “*God’s life with us and our life with each other.*”³⁵¹

On the other hand, the sheer immanence of God, as is seen in this unity of *oikonomia* and *theologia*, ought not to shield God’s radical transcendence. Put another way, while God’s self-revelation in Christ, his *oikonomia*, is fully bestowed, *theologia* with regard to God *as it is in itself* is partial, for he remains unknowable in his fullness.

347 Ibid., p.225.

348 Ibid., p.211.

349 Ibid., p.228. Against this very creative but quite radical notion, see e.g. Bernard, *Gospel According to John*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1962/3), p.377; Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983), p.335; Lightfoot, *St. John’s Gospel* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p.299ff.; Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1948), p.325; and Westcott, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954), p.246; all agreeing that the unity at issue is that between the Father and the Son, which might be reflected in the faithful, so that the world might be fully persuaded of the authenticity of their mission, yet hardly offering direct participation in their energies. Schlatter puts best what is in view as Jesus prays, namely “*dass Einsein [of Jesus] mit God.*”

350 Ibid., pp.283; 184.

351 Ibid., p.228.

This gives rise to a paradox in theology: We know the essence of God because it is revealed in the economy of salvation, but we do not know the essence as it is in itself. In other words, we know God in God's energies, God's effects, God's economy.³⁵²

This paradox is overcome by offering praise and thanksgiving to the transcendent God who has manifested his saving grace in immanent acts of salvation "in the person of Christ and in the permanent presence of the Spirit,"³⁵³ his *oikonomia*. This is to say, "soteriology culminates in doxology."³⁵⁴ And because such acts of praise are possible only through the work of Christ and by the power of the Spirit, such praise is God's act as well, indeed his glory. It is a way of life. The way is followed not only in formal, set patterns, but also in "everything that promotes fullness of humanity, that builds up relationships based on charity and compassion - (in) everything that brings human persons closer to the communion for which we were made."³⁵⁵ Extending this to matters of poverty, inequality, injustice, conflict, oppression, and the like, implications for liberation movements of all sorts are clear to see.

Such abundant doxology, such transformation manifests man's divinization, his *theosis*, his *homoousios*, his oneness with God. In such circumstance, Christians are in reality "icons of Christ" and "icons of God."³⁵⁶ Moreover, God is to be thought of as "existing concretely, as persons in communion with other persons." Indeed, "God's *arche* is the shared rule of equal persons in communion."³⁵⁷ Otherwise, one speaks "about a God who does not exist."³⁵⁸ Besides all this, the immanence of God as evident in a true understanding of *oikonomia*, underlines "the principle that God is a 'walking' God, that

352 Ibid., p.325. Apophatic (negative) and kataphatic (positive) theological categories are drawn upon to signify this paradox. LaCugna favours the former in this respect, with these words from Gregory of Nyssa: "Deity is too excellent and lofty to be expressed in words, we have learned to honor in silence what transcends speech and thought," *ibid.*, p.327. In her own words, she says: The *via negativa* leads not into absence or nothingness but into the presence of the God who surpasses thoughts and words and even the desire for God..Apophysis requires letting go of every controlling concept or image for God so that the living God may enlighten the darkness of our minds," p.326.

353 Ibid., p.334.

354 Ibid., p.335.

355 Ibid., p.343.

356 Ibid., pp.346, 347.

357 Ibid., p.395.

358 Ibid., p.225. Support for this notion is said to be found in the Cappadocian view of *ousia* as concrete. It needs to be noted, however, that there it points to hypostatic union between the Father, Son, and Spirit.

the economy is the ongoing but not yet completed providential plan of God.”³⁵⁹ In sum, here is a plea for orthodoxy and orthopraxis in light of God’s revelation in Christ.

Except for historical and theological reference to relations and terminology, as well as various asides on negative implications entailed in patriarchy, LaCugna offers little on the notion of fatherhood of God and its appropriateness of expression. However, in an extended note at the end of the Introduction, which judgements are said to be implicit throughout the study presented, she says references to God as Father are “altogether antithetical” to what the Trinity affirms, accountable for numerous “ideological abuses,” and allows that ‘Mother’ might be an appropriate usage.³⁶⁰

No such survey, however cursory, would be adequate without consideration of Wolfhart Pannenberg. Like others mentioned here, he builds upon the efforts of Karl Barth and fully employs Rahner’s axiom. Only, as Peters says, he “is steaming forward.”³⁶¹ Fundamental to Pannenberg’s movement is the notion of the fatherhood of God in *relational* terms within a triune being. This is at the heart of the message of Jesus, and is also part of Israel’s prophetic utterance. As such, however, it is, on the one hand, totally without sexual connotation and, on the other hand, therefore, utterly unrelated to widespread Near Eastern religious notions, which were patently polytheistic.³⁶² Indeed, given his special relationship to God, Jesus went so far as to render his proper name “Father,” not as a mere time-bound designation but rather as part of a future-oriented enterprise. Moreover, the relationship is so extensive that it possesses both pre-existent and eschatological dimensions. Not only so, but the relationship embraces and involves the Holy Spirit from beginning to end, meaning that this is no simple “biunity” of Father and Son.

The fellowship of Jesus as Son with God as Father can obviously be stated only if there is reference to a third as well, the Holy Spirit. For the Spirit of God is the mode of God’s presence in Jesus as he formerly was of God’s presence in the prophets or in all creation. Yet he is now present with eschatological ultimacy as an abiding gift which was the content of the eschatological hope of Israel, especially in expectation of the Spirit-filled Messiah.³⁶³

359 Ibid., p.359.

360 Ibid., p.18.

361 *God as Trinity*, p.135.

362 *Systematic Theology* 1, tr. G. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), pp.259ff. It is remarked, “Perhaps this is why the idea of God as Father came only late into what Israel had to say about God,” p.261. This opinion will concern us in Parts Two and Three below.

363 Ibid., p.267.

The Spirit of God is given, then, as mediator to believers in order that they might share with Jesus in divine Sonship. It is concluded, therefore, that the Spirit is constitutive of the relationship of Son to Father.³⁶⁴

What more may be said of this “three-fold distinction in the deity?”³⁶⁵ While the New Testament fails to mention the Trinity as such, the doctrine is “a full and self-consistent presentation of the unity of God who reveals himself in Christ.”³⁶⁶ In order to find a basis for understanding the doctrine, “we must begin with the way in which Father, Son, and Spirit come on the scene and relate to one another in the event of revelation.”³⁶⁷ Here again, Barth and Rahner are substantially followed. Yet once more, Pannenberg presses on in his own way toward a view of the essential characteristics of such a God in relationships. Key to both the unity and the relatedness that is involved is the concept of *reciprocal self-distinction*.

Precisely by distinguishing himself from the Father,..[Jesus] showed himself to be the Son of God and one with the Father..[Yet] there must be a counterpart, ..so that on the Father’s side the distinction from the Son is posited by a self-distinction from the Father..[Moreover], the Spirit proceeds from the Father and is received by the Son.³⁶⁸

This is to say, there prevails in these things a “true reciprocity in the trinitarian relations,” “a mutuality,”³⁶⁹ not readily apparent when approached from one aspect of relationships alone. These reciprocal self-distinctions, then, are “constitutive” of each other. For example, while Jesus is clearly designated Son of God, he honors the first commandment by giving God the lordship (John 5.23; 8.50;10.33). Or, “As the Son glorifies the Father on earth, making manifest his deity (John 17.4), so the Spirit will glorify the Son (16.14).³⁷⁰

Crucial to understanding the Trinity in terms of the stated reciprocal relatedness is that such involves an essential and thoroughgoing *three-in-oneness*. Rather than mere

364 Wiles’ objection, from *Reflections*, p.13, that such is not “a datum of revelation” is dismissed. Ibid., p.271.

365 Ibid., p.272.

366 Ibid., p.292.

367 Ibid., p.299.

368 Ibid., pp.310-17.

369 Ibid., pp.213, 14.

370 Ibid., p.315.

“manners of being” with Barth or “distinct manner(s) of subsisting” with Rahner, offered instead is the notion of “living realizations of separate centers of action,”³⁷¹ yoked in a decidedly “unique relational nexus of the perichoresis,” whose sum, however, is not greater than its parts.³⁷² Here, then, is no simple sequential relatedness, as Father begetting Son or breathing the Spirit. Rather, the relationships are seen as dynamic movement in all directions, presumably at once, akin to that developed somewhat by Moltmann and even further by Jenson and LaCugna, yet vastly more far-reaching. With felt support of Athanasius against the Arians, it is quite radically maintained that

[T]he deity of the Father is thus seen in the Son..As the Father is not the Father without the Son., he does not have his Godhead without him.³⁷³

And with what is deemed significant contemporary support from Jenson, it is even more radically held that “the relations are constitutive not merely for their distinctions but also for their deity.”³⁷⁴ Moreover, inasmuch as the Logos mediated creation, his incarnation is the “consummation of..creation.”³⁷⁵

At the conclusion of this section, we return briefly to Joseph Bracken. His framing of current trinitarian discussion as well as his own train of thought throughout the mentioned survey are plainly designed to set forth the positive merits of “a fully consistent process-oriented Trinitarian theology.” Indeed, he is quite forthright on this in an earlier essay, as well as in a conclusion to a series of such in 1977. The essay in view is entitled “Pantheism from a Process Perspective,” and says all we need to know with

³⁷¹ Ibid., pp.319ff. For all the heralded departure from and advance upon the proposals of Barth and Rahner, this terminology and its development hardly seems significant.

³⁷² In a paper delivered at Asbury Theological Seminary in 1991, “The Christian Vision of God: The New Discussion on the Trinitarian Doctrine,” such relatedness in Trinity is referred to as “concrete mutuality” and “concrete dynamics of *perichoresis*,” wherein “the three persons share the same Kingdom and the same essence which nevertheless remains to be primarily the Kingdom and divine nature of the Father,” *The Asbury Theological Journal* 46/2 (Fall 1991), pp.33, 35.

³⁷³ Ibid., p.322.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., p.323. Citing *The Triune Identity*, p.119, on Augustine’s failure to grasp the original intent of Nicene teaching, it is boldly said that “the original point of trinitarian dialectics is to make the relations..constitutive in God.” On the other hand, Jenson’s full endorsement of Cappadocian views in this regard over against Augustine are not fully shared, as Pannenberg, with Athanasius, desires to view matters more strictly in terms of reciprocal self-distinction. Commenting on “Wolfhart Pannenberg’s Doctrine of the Trinity,” *SJT* 43/1 1990, pp.175-206, R. Olson points, on analogy to Rahner’s Rule, to what is termed “Pannenberg’s Principle’: *God’s deity is his rule*,” *op cit.*, p.199. In this regard, however, albeit as somewhat of a Pannenberg devotee, Olson asserts that a “charge of tritheism” remains; *ibid.*, p.193.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., p.327.

regard to his thesis and agenda.³⁷⁶ But that is another story and a topic for another study. In any case, Bracken's judgements in the pieces in view appear to have been prophetic, as the influence of process theology seems pervasive and a tilt toward pantheism evident in key trinitarian thought in the latter half of the twentieth century.³⁷⁷ And with this, we conclude our survey thereof and offer these summary assessments from our perspective.

Karl Rahner's axiomatic efforts have indeed framed trinitarian thought in the latter half of the twentieth century and have had the positive effect of *restoring the doctrine* to prominence in both Christian theology and life. Moreover, the enterprise has been able to *engage leading theological minds*, who have placed the Trinity at the heart of their biblical, philosophical, and systematic theologies, which have generated creative theories, provocative studies, international conferences, and dynamic three-fold praise of God in both formal and informal fashion. With this has come a renewed emphasis upon the *Name Father* in trinitarian understanding, and that of Jenson is particularly suggestive for our study. In all, there has indeed been a significant *closing of the gap* between understanding 'God in himself' and 'God for us,' as Rahner surely desired. Yet negative outcomes are also evident, which we can but outline under these categories:

- 1) heavy reliance upon such notions as "perichoresis,"³⁷⁸ relatedness or reciprocal inherence, not only amongst the persons of the Trinity but also within Christian community, tends toward modalism,³⁷⁹ tritheism,³⁸⁰ and pantheism,³⁸¹ or at least panentheism,³⁸² all *at the expense of monotheism*;

³⁷⁶ *Trinity in Process: A Relational Theology of God*, ed. with Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, and with contributions from such as John Cobb, Lewis Ford, David Griffen, et al. (New York: Continuum, 1977). "I now set forth my own position, which as I see it, mediates between that of the (Whiteheadian) 'rationalists' and that of the 'empiricists,'" p.97. Approaching his position from the doctrine of the Trinity as well as that of a Whiteheadian society, the persons of the former are viewed in terms of "*subsistent relations*; that is subsistent acts of relating to one another and to all creatures. Consistent with a process-relational orientation, their being is their ongoing process of becoming," p.97. Further, "[t]he doctrine of pantheism is vindicated, because the three divine persons and all their creatures share a common life," p.102. See also, "Process Philosophy and Trinitarian Theology," *Process Studies* 8 (1973), pp.217-30; and "The Trinity as Interpersonal Process," *Ecumenical Theology* 13 (1984), pp.97-99.

³⁷⁷ Surprisingly, while his views do indeed seem to be shared across the spectrum of works we have searched, references one way or the other are sparse indeed. Perhaps there is willingness to share the analysis without embracing quite open process thought and pantheistic theology.

³⁷⁸ Originally employed to account for the two natures of Christ, the term came later to be applied to the three relationships in the doctrine of the Trinity. In recent theology, as we have shown, it has been broadened even further to describe relatedness in Christian communities. Quite the contrary, T. F. Torrance, chides Rahner for not "making fuller use of the patristic concept of perichoresis," *TZ* 31/6 (1975), p.348.

³⁷⁹ Donald Bloesch says that in Rahner "we see an emergent subordinationism, [wherein] the Son and the Spirit are merely personified extensions of his divinity," *The Battle for the Trinity* (Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1985), p.91.

Such trinitarian reasoning has been warmly welcomed by all sorts of liberation movements, and for obvious reasons, so presenting a classic chicken and egg question: which came first, the theology or the social process?³⁸⁶ This, too, is part of that other story awaiting another study. For our purposes, however, despite many useful insights as well as the considerable attention given to the Name of God and the notion of his fatherhood within the Trinity, there is little of substantial worth for our study in these general considerations of the matter. We will, nevertheless, return to the thought of Jenson on the fatherhood of God issue in Part Three.

Speaking the Christian God

Largely in response to such renewed interest in the doctrine of the Trinity, as well as the mentioned feminist considerations, an important series of essays was published in 1992 under the title *Speaking the Christian God, The Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism*, edited by Alvin F. Kimel.³⁸⁷ The stated thesis of the editor's own essay, entitled "The God Who Likes His Name," may reasonably be taken as that of the entire collection: "The changes in the names of the Trinity must result in an alienation from the gospel."³⁸⁸ Although the essays display some understandable unevenness, the following concerns stand out clearly in explication of such thesis, and are of some significance for our study.

God-Language

All contributors to the volume hold explicitly or at least implicitly that Christian God-language must be rooted in biblical revelation, that is in something essentially from above. This places them at once and unanimously on a clear collision course with the religious language of feminism, which, according to our exemplars above as well as numerous

Moltmann's notion of pantheism, i.e. how God relates to the world and the world to God, even John Cobb salutes Moltmann and his process propensity, saying "the agreement of process theologians is virtually complete," *Asbury Theological Journal* 55/1 (2000), p.121.

³⁸⁶ Commenting on the Wilson-Kastner definition (in *Faith, Feminism and the Christ*), LaCugna says: "One sees immediately why the idea of *perichoresis* would appeal to feminist and liberation theologians who seek to establish the equality of human persons based on the idea that God consists of three equal persons," *God For Us*, p.272. Even Fenster and Plantinga in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement* (see Note 380, above), who want somewhat to defend socialist trinitarian considerations, observe that Moltmann's position might derive "less from Scripture and creed than from the felt need to ground a favored socio-political theme in the doctrine of God," p.7. It may be noted, too, that Marjorie Suchocki, who co-edited *Trinity in Process* with Joseph Bracken (see Note 363, above), is engaged in both process and feminist theology.

³⁸⁷ Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

³⁸⁸ *Speaking*, p.188.

others to whom they refer, is based primarily on human experience, so primarily from below. As Elizabeth Achtemeier puts matters in the very first essay, the latter have a tendency to rather "invent language for God". Moreover, with Richard John Neuhaus, and in accord with the apparent attitude of the other essayists, such God-language of much feminism is said to be "radically ideological."³⁸⁹ Roland Frye characterises such language as being "more appropriate to political campaigning than to subtle and judicious theological analysis," or just plain "bowdlerizing."³⁹⁰ By contrast, the God-language of biblical revelation is held to be real and reliable.

Such revealed God-language with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity is also said, necessarily, to have its own grammar. Kimel establishes such Christian biblical grammar according to the dictum of Basil the Great, that is, that Christians "are bound to be baptized in the terms (they) have received and to profess belief in the terms in which (they) were baptized."³⁹¹ In other words, Christian grammar is constructed on the basis of "the language of (its) faith," has "divine authority," and is the stipulated "speech and practice of the church."³⁹² J. A. DiNoia says this fundamental grammar is to govern all "patterns of discourse about the triune God."³⁹³ As other languages and grammars, this talk of faith employs figures of speech to make comparisons and to transfer meanings, that is similes and metaphors. Frye's essay brilliantly illustrates such biblical usage in Deuteronomy 32.11, wherein the Lord is said to be "like an eagle that stirs up its nest," a simple simile, and in verse 5, wherein Israel is queried with regard to the Lord, "Is not he your father, who created you?," a powerful metaphor. We will take up this latter text in detail in the exegesis below. In much feminist theology, however, the *as* of the simile has

³⁸⁹ Referring to Jeremiah 2.11, from whence the title of her essay is taken, "Exchanging God for 'No Gods,'" it is bluntly stated: "By attempting to change the biblical language used of the deity, the feminists have in reality exchanged the true God for those deities which are 'no gods.' The Neuhaus reference is to "The Feminist Faith," in *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life* 2 (April 1990): p.60.

³⁹⁰ "Language for God and Feminist Language: Problems and Principles," pp.16, 24. Reference is made by Frye to Susan Schnur's review of Rosemary Ruether's *Women-Church: Theology and Practice of Feminist Liturgical Communities*, with its stinging judgement that in such liturgies "politics is often the doctrine for which the liturgy is the vehicle (a dog wagged by a tail)," *ibid.*, p.18.

³⁹¹ *Speaking*, p.188. Cited is *Epistle 125.3* in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol.8.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 189,90. This notion of grammar does not fit neatly any standard definition, as e.g. in either the *Oxford English Dictionary* or the *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. Perhaps the third use in the former fits, that is "an individual's manner of using grammatical forms," but it fails to carry through to the end of the definition, and is therefore a bit of a stretch. Of course, it is evident that the term grammar relates here primarily to the Scripture's predominately masculine reference to God.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.168.

been confused with the *is* of the metaphor.³⁹⁴ Such confusion is confronted in various ways by at least Garrett Green, Colin Gunton, David Scott, and Stephen Smith in their various essays,³⁹⁵ with Sallie McFague and her *Metaphorical Theology* as the principal object of their critique. The "fatal flaw" in such theology, says Green, is that in an effort to arrive at a genderless God it has taken its "point of departure from human experience" rather than from Scripture. This has resulted in what is termed "role-model theology," in which the best personal and social values of women are projected onto God in true Feuerbach fashion.³⁹⁶ Indeed, Gunton speaks frankly of a "protean" propensity in metaphorical theologies to bend biblical figures of speech into virtually any desired shape, so a "peril of projection."³⁹⁷ Jenson says plainly that fundamental trinitarian metaphors are simply not "disposable."³⁹⁸

Throughout *Speaking the Christian God* runs a distinct thread with regard to the narrative shape of Christian God-language. Based on Kimel's own reference to George Lindbeck's "The Story-shaped Church," which appeared in *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation* in 1987, edited by Garrett Green,³⁹⁹ such considerations may reasonably be said to be of crucial importance to all essayists for a proper understanding of both the Bible and the Christian faith. Robert Johnson holds that the biblical "narrative is at once God's history and ours...a narrative precisely of divine-human history." As such, it "cuts across" the line between God and man - in its own language, with its own unique expressions, establishing ultimately his triune identity in Jesus Christ.⁴⁰⁰ Thomas Torrance maintains that the narrative's "content and form are inseparable."⁴⁰¹ For Kimel, the story is the "paradigm" controlling all theology, proclamation, and praise.⁴⁰² He even opines quite boldly that those who neglect to employ and enunciate this God-language and its narrative account of events are simply "telling a different story" and even creating "a new religion, a new God."⁴⁰³

³⁹⁴ Frye's quote, on p. 37, from E. W. Bullinger's *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, 2nd ed. (1898) is useful: "Simile differs from metaphor in that it merely states resemblance, while metaphor boldly transfers the representation...while the simile gently states the one thing is like or resembles another, the metaphor boldly and warmly declares that one thing is the other."

³⁹⁵ "The Gender of God and the Theology of Metaphor," "Proteus and Procrustes," "Creation and Christ," and "Worldview, Language, and Radical Feminism."

³⁹⁶ *Speaking*, pp. 47-9.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 65,6.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, "The Father, He...," pp. 95-109.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 191. To this is added: "The threefold appellation may thus be said to identify the church, for it encompasses that story which the church tells and must tell in order to be the church."

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 195, 208.

God and Gender

Virtually none of the contributors⁴⁰⁴ have any notion whatever that God possesses gender as such. Moreover, none have any sympathy whatever for a concept of male divinity wherein, and whereby, all authority and dominion devolves to men and results in the oppression of women. On the other hand, all seem utterly opposed to the idea of a genderless God. This apparent contradiction is best clarified by Green. He says, "God is not male, yet the appropriate language in which to describe, address, and worship him is nevertheless masculine."

The masculinity in view, however, is but one "grammatical aspect" of God's self-revelation to the church. In a sense, it is all about the metaphors of biblical God-language, properly "nuanced" and understood.⁴⁰⁵ In sum, as Gunton has it, this metaphorical "Fatherhood has nothing to do with masculinity or the mechanics of sexual reproduction." Yet, with Barth to some extent, he takes care to point up the all-important matter of male-female polarity, as both Genesis and Galatians indicate that "right relations between men and women is at the center of the Christian gospel." Such right relations are achieved only by relatedness to the Father in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. In other words, trinitarian agency itself yields a theology of "otherness in relation," at both divine and human levels.⁴⁰⁶ And in this, says Janet Soskice, one is faced with that which is "ineradicably masculine," that is the death of Jesus, "whose physical masculinity cannot

⁴⁰⁴ Green is somewhat of an exception with his notion of God's kenotic masculinity in Jesus. In a male incarnation God sets up a "dramatic dialectic power and weakness," whereby the crucified is the Messiah, the weak are the strong, the oppressed are the redeemed. "The self-emptying of God presupposes his strength; his 'femininity' presupposes his 'masculinity,' a 'dialectics of power and weakness,'" p.61.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.62-4. Commenting on the subtle and complex nature of biblical metaphor, Green adds: "It is noteworthy that in a Bible whose cultural setting is so thoroughly patriarchal one never encounters an explicit appeal to the masculinity of God for any purpose whatever," p.62. Reference is made to Susanne Heine, *Matriarchs, Goddesses, and Images of God: A Critique of Feminist Theology*, p.138, where she comments that only a suffering male Jesus, vicariously and voluntarily renouncing male power and privilege, could possibly have challenged the male powers of his time. Given Jesus rather low estate, this is a bit far-fetched, but the larger point is well taken.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 78,79. Having great interest in Barth's exegesis of Genesis, we were struck by Gunton's charge of the apostle's "overdependence" upon Ephesians, presumably 5.21-30, although the text is not specifically indicated. The Barth reference should have been *Church Dogmatics* III/1, pp.325-29. Whatever, we fail to see over reliance, but sense only a brilliant exegesis of Paul's appropriate exposition enlightening the matter of male-female polarity. Of course, given the present climate in the face of the feminist critique, Paul himself rather than Barth may be the real problem here. For a stout rejection of both Barth and Gunton, see Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Gender and Redemption in Christian Theological History," *Feminist Theology* 21 (1999), pp.98-108, as e.g.: "The full realization of redemption in Christ in which gender hierarchy will be dissolved, and there will be 'no more marrying and giving in marriage', was reserved for an eschatological completion of redemption which is imminent but still future," *ibid.*, p.100.

be gainsaid."⁴⁰⁷ Moreover, Jenson adds, this Jesus addressed God not as biological father but in filial address as the God and Father of Israel, who, given differences from surrounding religions could in no way be called Mother. Hence, the term Father is no mere metaphor or "trope," as like a father or like a rock, but a fixed theological reality in the terminology of Jesus and, therefore, "determinative for the church."⁴⁰⁸

By virtue of Jesus' usage and trinitarian experience, Jenson further maintains, such expressions are simply part of the dense, analogical, "sacramental" language of the church. Admittedly, Green says, such God-language has often been subject to "male-centered misreadings" in the interest of patriarchal practices. A proper response, however, is not, as radical feminism demands, rejection of the God-language, its "decisive historical particulars," and its distinct metaphors, but rather "re-immersion in the concrete text of Scripture, in all its bewildering and liberating particularity."⁴⁰⁹ As Gunton points out, in his disagreement with Sallie McFague, Christian God-language has never intended to project male gender onto the God by use of the term Father; on the other hand, her metaphorical theology is indeed projectionist, rendering the God of Scripture as "an old man with a beard," suitably replaced by her mother metaphor, which manifestly projects female gender onto her god.⁴¹⁰

God's Name, "Father"

Central to the essays and the publication's unity of approach is the clear conviction that God has a proper name and that it is "Father" as well as "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." As Kimel, quoted by Achtemeier at the outset of the essays, plainly says:⁴¹¹ "Father' is not a metaphor imported by humanity onto the screen of eternity; it is a name and filial term of address *revealed* by God himself in the person of his Son." God, *absconditus*, is said to have overcome feeble human abstractions and revealed his true nature and name in

⁴⁰⁷ "Can a Feminist Call God 'Father?'" *Ibid.*, p.91.

⁴⁰⁸ "The Father, He..," *Ibid.*, pp.104,05. Added significantly, and boldly, is this: "For the entire joint contention of the variously "Arian" or mediating parties in the great struggle of the fourth century can be summarised thus: 'Jesus is the Son of the Father' is a trope. And the entire contention of the Nicene party can be summarised thus: 'Jesus is the Son of the Father' is not a trope..Any who wish to maintain (the former) are at liberty to do so. But they should do it as opponents of the church, not as alleged reformers thereof. The matter at this point is merely one of truth in advertising."

⁴⁰⁹ "The Gender of God and the Theology of Metaphor," *ibid.*, pp.58-60.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-4. On point is this: "Corresponding to the ontological dualism that underlies McFague's theology is a dualism in her theory of language. It is this which enables her both to parody traditional trinitarian theology and to erect after the destruction of a straw man an equally strawy reconstruction, and it involves a major error in the theory of language," p.71.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.6, from an earlier piece, *A New Language for God? A Critique of Supplemental Liturgical Texts - Prayer Book Studies* 30 (1990), pp. 11,12.

Jesus, who called him "my father." According to Forde, "The Father can be understood only in terms of the relation to the Son: God is the Father of Jesus Christ."⁴¹²

Jenson and Torrance carefully indicate, however, that such naming of God is *narratively* different in the two testaments. In the Old Testament, God is not named "Father," but rather "Yahweh," who is pronominally identified as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." The former is a substantive name, the latter, with Calvin, are to be taken as "epithets." In the New Testament, it is precisely this God in either sense, the God of Israel, that Jesus named and presumably prayed to as his "father," and instructed his disciples to likewise pray to as "our father." In this naming, then, Jesus somehow links Israel's divine *sonship* and his own, so that, as Torrance says, an "indissoluble relation between the incarnate Son and God the Father cannot but mean that Fatherhood and Sonship belong to the eternal, unchangeable being of God."⁴¹³ This creates, he says, nothing less than an "ontological bond between Christ and God."⁴¹⁴ Indeed, in the sweep of divine revelation God has revealed himself, and so named himself as "Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

Jenson is careful to add that the God so revealed and named by Jesus is one who has with them "a future in the Spirit."⁴¹⁵ This is to say that the reality, or identity, of God is *triune*, so that by extension from the foregoing revelation, as Torrance puts it, God also thereby "names himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."⁴¹⁶ All three names represent God-language "at full strength" and "highly privileged" metaphor.⁴¹⁷ The trinitarian names are said to be *proper names*.⁴¹⁸ Zeigler says near the end of the essays, almost as a conclusion, that whether or not the names are proper is "immaterial," they are not

⁴¹² "Naming the One Who Is above Us," *ibid.*, p.117. Further, "God is not to be named in analogy to human fathers, not in terms of abstractions like 'fatherhood,' but only in relation to Jesus Christ. There is no exhaustively necessary reason we can cite to show why Jesus should have used this language. The fact is simply that he did. Thus the historical particularity belongs to the essence of the gospel," pp. 118-19.

⁴¹³ Torrance, "The Christian Apprehension of God the Father," *ibid.*, p.136. To this is added: "Hence our thinking and speaking of God, if they are to be true to him, must be in accordance with the actual forms of thought and speech prescribed for us by the nature and movement of God's specific self-revelation to humankind given through Israel and fulfilled in Jesus Christ," p.137.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.132.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.101ff.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p121. Explaining the revelation more fully, he says: "This is not a revelation that can be detached from God, for what God reveals is not something of himself but his very self: he is himself the objective content and reality of his revelation. What God the Father is in his self-revelation through the Son and in the Spirit he is in himself, and what he is in himself he is in his revelation."

⁴¹⁷ Frye, "Language for God and Feminist Language" and Wainwright, "Trinitarian Worship," *Ibid.*, pp.41, 217.

⁴¹⁸ DiNoia, "Knowing and Naming the Triune God;" Kimel, "The God Who Likes His Name," *Ibid.*, pp.185, 191.

replaceable; they name the God of Christian experience.⁴¹⁹ All three names, then, as Jenson says, are simply “determinative for the church.”

Again, despite masculine forms for both Father and Son, such names are beyond gender. “Gender belongs to creatures only,” opines Torrance. On the other hand, he hastens to add, only those terms “prescribed for us by the nature and movement of God’s specific self-revelation to humankind given through Israel and fulfilled in Jesus Christ” may be used in our thinking and speaking about God.⁴²⁰ Classical Christianity has understood this close relationship between that which is revealed and the forms through which such have manifested themselves. Much of feminism presumably has not. The issue at hand, says Anderson, is not the “beyond gender” of Elizabeth Johnson, that is beyond male being normative for human experience or even the maleness of Jesus,⁴²¹ but rather that which is ultimately above, namely “the essential differentiation within God’s own being.” It is not a matter of wrong feminist intentions, but instead wrong theological perception and models, at least the extent to which the intention is Christian. Zeigler, in the end, taking McFague’s effort for example, for at least she prefers personal metaphors for God, says that naming him “mother,” “lover,” “friend” is in fact “blatantly sexual” and for that reason “heretical.”⁴²²

So, *Speaking the Christian God!* We conclude, once again, with a brief summary and, in a sense, expression of appreciation. First, and foremost, here is an unashamedly *robust presentation and defence of orthodox Christian faith and trinitarian form in disagreement with feminism*, which has served well to raise proper theological issues and restore balance to the Church’s dialogue with authentic feminist concerns. Attention throughout to the peculiar *God-language* of revelation, “with which God has revealed himself,” as Achtemeier puts matters,⁴²³ lays out both the terms of the faith and the only possible grounds for discourse with feminism or any other center of concern. Focus on Jesus Christ as both *normative Truth and normative Name of God* sets at the same time the

⁴¹⁹ “Christianity or Feminism,” *ibid.*, p.329.

⁴²⁰ “The Christian Apprehension of God the Father,” *Ibid.*, p.137. Further, “..in the revelation of the divine Fatherhood and Sonship there are authentically anthropic elements which are ineradicable from the reality that God is in the self-determination of his own being, and not just anthropomorphic elements that cannot be avoided in God’s dialogue with human beings,” p.136.

⁴²¹ “The Incarnation of God in Feminist Christology,” *Ibid.*, pp.291, 308. The Johnson reference is to *Consider Jesus* (1990) and “The Incomprehensibility of God and the Image of God Male and Female,” *TS* 45 (1984), pp. 441-65.

⁴²² “Christianity or Feminism,” *Ibid.*, pp. 319, 334. “But by introducing female metaphors, which are blatantly sexual, ‘the sexuality of both male and female metaphors becomes evident.’ We are thus made aware that there is ‘no gender-neutral language if we take ourselves as the model for talk about God, because we are sexual beings.’” The repartee here is with McFague’s *Models of God*, pp.19, 98, 109-16.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, p. 5. “[without which] biblical faith has no language for or experience of the divine.”

proper pattern for interior Christian talk and liturgical practice in the Church. Emphasis upon *God as Father of both Israel and Jesus Christ* indicates in all their relationships the common movement and message of God. All of this is of some significance from our perspective, particularly the insights into the special God-language that names him Father of both Israel and Jesus. We will return to aspects of such in our exegesis and theological reflection in Parts Two and Three below, wherein we will pursue the distinct witness of the Old Testament on the fatherhood of God and the language of Jesus. It must be said here, too, that the essays, for all their insights, do not leave us without areas of moderate concern, which can here be but outlined as follows, albeit not in order of significance:

- 1) as with some trinitarian thought in the former section, God's stated and implied utter "dependence on his Son for his identity," as Kimel puts it,⁴²⁴ which, on its face, goes well beyond any notion of God being touched and moved by human pain in Christ, seems here too to indicate *a tendency toward process theology*;
- 2) for all the illuminating emphasis on the triune Name of God, as likewise in the former section, there is a troublesome *tilt toward tritheism*;⁴²⁵
- 3) closely related to 1) and 2), desire to identify God as "father of Israel and Jesus Christ" is *not matched with acknowledgement of and accord with Scriptures prior to christological centrality*;
- 4) the manner of defining and speaking about God-language and its associated grammar, suggest something of an *in-house word game*, without which play one cannot understand the mysteries of Christian faith, and without which engagement one cannot fully enter upon the larger mysteries of the Church; even the relatively harmless "God likes his name" implies at least a practical "in" theological wisdom, well beyond that available to most Christians, including us, *a near-gnostic episteme*;⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ Ibid., p. 206. Indeed, it is said that "the Father knows himself only in and from the Son..he awaits from Jesus the deliverance of the kingdom into his hands (1 Cor. 15.20-28)." The last verse in the passage cited points instead to the sole sovereignty of God, that is, the opposite of formal dependence, for "the Son himself..[is] also being subject to him."

⁴²⁵ One indication of this seems clearly present in Jenson's brilliant discussion of scripture's pattern of "pronominal reference," *ibid.*, p.100f. He maintains, e.g., that "the *triune* God..is constituted in the action between Jesus and the one he called "Father" and their future in the Spirit," p.101; see also p. 74 of this dissertation, referring to *Identity*, p.120, where he further maintains that "each possesses the one and selfsame deity."

⁴²⁶ Gunton's caution against "the perils of too protean a view of language..[and] the peril of projection," *ibid.*, p.66, reveals an opposite tendency in some of the discussions in *Speaking*, namely the peril of subjection, that is, confining trinitarian considerations to too narrow a language and grammar, spoken only by those skilled in its mysteries.

- 5) added to understandable and legitimate fairness and justice toward women, is a plain and *near-politically correct solicitude* toward the feminist critique, which goes beyond and even clouds necessary theological engagement with the fundamental issues at hand.⁴²⁷

We turn now to our exegesis of relevant Old Testament texts in search of an authentic locus there for the concept of the fatherhood of God in Judaism and therein for Christianity.

⁴²⁷ Such solicitude is in itself doubtless both inevitable and proper in any effort to be fair, reasonable, and balanced. At the same time, however, it does reveal indirectly a sad reason for the appearance of the essays, along with an obvious inability to move the main issues and their discussion beyond those confines. See Ruth Page's review in *Expository Times* 105 (1993/94), p.57. The review is harsh, suggesting, in effect, that the only real occasion for *Speaking* was/is feminism's quite justified "abraiding" of Christian orthodoxy and charging that there is in it "no warmth toward other religions," as though such was in any way the proper brief of the contributors.

PART TWO



Exegesis of Key Scriptural Sources

Our exegesis will be based on a synchronic-historical method. In brief, we will make no effort to reconstruct the tradition-history of the texts examined, so placing them in an assumed diachronic order. Rather, we will handle them largely as they appear in their approximate canonical position. Furthermore, we will not concern ourselves primarily with source and form criticism, except as regards clear matters of vocabulary, style, and rhetoric of the principal forms in view.

The results of the historical, source, and form criticism pioneered by Wellhausen, Gunkel, Albright, and von Rad are assumed and accepted in so far as they expose the fact that Scripture has behind it "a lengthy history of development."⁴²⁸ As Bruggemann well summarises, such criticism has uncovered the strands, life-settings, historical facts, and shapes of this development, and indeed there is "vitality" about it all.⁴²⁹ Even so, while all critical scholars naturally trace every historical aspect of this process from oral beginnings to written strands to more or less finished sections, Childs has discerned and articulated still another crucial element in such process, namely the theological. By this he means the "hermeneutical activity" of the Old Testament community of faith "which continued to shape the material theologically in order to render it accessible to future generations of believers."⁴³⁰ In sum, this historical development together with such hermeneutical activity produced not only "independent books" but also "larger canonical units" in final form.⁴³¹ And in this he is able to enlist an ally in von Rad, who calls for an understanding of "events as Israel saw them."⁴³² By this, however, Childs evidently means Israel in

⁴²⁸ Childs, *Old Testament in Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), p.6.

⁴²⁹ *The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), p.28.

⁴³⁰ *Canonical Context*, p.6.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, p.13.

⁴³² *Old Testament Theology I*, tr. G. M. Stalker (Edinburgh: Oliver Boyd, 1962), p.120. He asserts that Israel did not live in a historical vacuum, but must be viewed from "the sequence and the inner connexion of the world of history as [she] arranged them for her own purposes..[according to] the Credo in Deut.XXVI.5-9," *ibid.*, 121f. Childs says, "The Canonical approach views history from the perspective of Israel's faith-construal, and in this respect sides with von Rad." Yet he is quick to add that "it differs in not being concerned to assign theological value to a traditio-historical trajectory which has been detached from the canonical form of the text," *Context*, p. 16.

receipt of the final form of the text as theologically meaningful. Such accords well, too, with one of the presuppositions of Rendtorff: "the Hebrew Bible is a theological book in its own right, which can be, and must be, interpreted theologically from the inside."⁴³³ Childs boldly characterises comprehension and appreciation of such theological activity on the part of the Old Testament community the "depth dimension" of the exegetical task.⁴³⁴ We will endeavour to move between these historical and theological poles. We will engage representatives of diachronic enquiries throughout, principally in footnotes, for what light they shed on such development as is assumed overall. However, we will not thereby necessarily be adopting their method. In the main, we will endeavour primarily to read our texts along the lines of the canonical perspective.

As Childs further says, "It is the final text..in its present shape which the church, following the lead of the synagogue, accepted as canonical and thus the vehicle of revelation and instruction."⁴³⁵ Again, it is within the context of just such final, canonical form that our exegesis will be carried out. Further with Childs, we understand the necessary distinction between the canonical text and the Masoretic Text, namely that they are "not identical," but rather the latter is "only a vehicle" for the former.⁴³⁶ Although we are unable deal with the history of the canonization of Hebrew Scripture, we generally accept Leiman's judgment that a tripartite canon of law, prophets, and writings, roughly similar to the classification of the Masoretic Text, is in evidence "throughout the first centuries before and after the Christian era."⁴³⁷

We are mindful, of course, as Noth puts matters, that exegesis cannot be undertaken without some "reference to the individual stages of ..literary development."⁴³⁸

⁴³³ *Canon and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p.40.

⁴³⁴ *Exodus*, OTL (London: SCM Press, 1974), p.75.

⁴³⁵ *Exodus*, p.xv. As for historical excursions into pre-text matters, he adds: "In my judgement, the study of the prehistory has its proper function within exegesis only in illuminating the final text."

⁴³⁶ *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (London: SCM Press, 1979), p.100. It is said: "The first task of the Old Testament text critic is to seek to recover the stabilized canonical text through the vehicle of the Masoretic traditions..establishing the best Masoretic text which is closest to the original text of the first century. *ibid.*, p.101.

⁴³⁷ *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1976). He bases this conclusion on evidence from "the Apocrypha, Philo, and Josephus, as well as Christian sources reflecting Jewish practice, such as the New Testament and the church fathers," p.135. As to quantity, following Josephus, he holds that "the canon consisted of 22 books (=MT 24 books," *ibid.*, p.34. He rejects totally the consensus with regard to the Council of Jamnia circa 90 A.D., exemplified by Sundberg's *The Old Testament of the Early Church* (1964). An interesting distinction is drawn between "inspired" and "uninspired canonical literature," *ibid.*, p.14f.

⁴³⁸ *Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p.18. He actually speaks in terms of "constant reference," adding that Exodus, c.g., "is as it were a fabric, skilfully woven from a series of threads, and the only satisfactory way of analysing a fabric is to keep firmly in sight the threads of which it is made up and the material of which the threads themselves are composed."

Even so, our method has been formed by what Rendtorff terms the strengths of premodern, less critical Rabbinic exegesis, namely its practice of taking “the Bible as a whole, disregarding the different sources, levels, redactions, and so forth.”⁴³⁹

Accordingly, our efforts will be guided overall by the exegetical dictum of Cassuto, namely that texts be read “according to their simple meaning, and according to the reasoning of their period, and not in the light of concepts that came into existence at a later epoch.”⁴⁴⁰

Yet, Rendtorff also observes that uncovering the final text of the Hebrew Bible reveals a diachronic factor. The very unity of the final form is not in fact a literary one but rather, as Childs has maintained, the result of a “canonical process” carried out within the “community of faith.”⁴⁴¹ In view of this, he calls for a “holistic reading” of the final, canonical form, holding that “an appropriate understanding of those larger compositions often demands an insight into diachronic developments.”⁴⁴² In commenting on whether or not such new approaches represents a paradigm shift, he offers counsel. “It would not be wise of those working with new approaches to ignore completely the questions posed by former generations of scholars without scrutinizing their legitimacy and their usefulness in highlighting certain aspects or solving certain problems in the given text.”⁴⁴³ We will attempt to keep this in mind as well.

Our canonical reading, together with the assumption that the two Deuteronomy texts considered are probably quite early, at least in substance, indicates that the language of father with regard to יהוה spans the Old Testament books. Furthermore, taking the Hosea text out of canonical arrangement and placing it in chronological order allows the notion of discernable progression in the appearance of such language as well as grounds to explain certain shifts therein. Even granting these diachronic tendencies, we view them as nothing more than reasonable conjectures. Father language is viewed as indeed extending throughout the canon, albeit scarcely, and tradition has viewed such usage as does appear as rooted in Israel’s primal memory.

Any exegetical examination of biblical language is problematic on its face, particularly that of father with regard to the God of Israel. G. Ernest Wright has said, “any image on earth which might be used of deity is a broken one.” Obviously this is also true of any language employed to describe such images, even revealed biblical language,

⁴³⁹ *Canon*, p.22.

⁴⁴⁰ *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1967), p.57.

⁴⁴¹ *Canon*, p.29. The quotations are from the referenced work of G. Sheppard, “Canonization: Hearing the Voice of the Same God through Historically Dissimilar Traditions,” *Int* 36 (1982), pp.21-33.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, p.29.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.30.

inasmuch as such is necessarily couched in human terminology. He points to the principal images of the two testaments, the sovereign, monarchical one of the first and the Father of Jesus Christ one of the second, seeing “no tension whatever between fatherhood and kingship language.”⁴⁴⁴ Added to this is the fact that no figures of human speech, be they metaphors, similes or even efforts at direct reference, convey a true image of their ostensive reference. It is more so when dealing with the language of Scripture, for, as Childs says, “the entire biblical witness is in portraying the God of Israel as different in kind from his creation.”⁴⁴⁵ All of this is further complicated when speaking theologically, as set forth brilliantly in Thomas Torrance’s chapter on the “Logic and Analogic of Biblical and Theological Statements.” Examining the linguistic method of the Greek Fathers, he indicates how they found it “inherently wrong to use expressions like ‘right hand’ or ‘bosom’ or even ‘father’ and ‘son’ as if they meant when applied to God the same thing they mean when used of creatures. [that the logic of such] derives from the reference of these words and statements back or upward (*ana*) to God.”⁴⁴⁶ Frances Young, likewise reflecting on the Greek Fathers says, “The biblical Narratives, read imaginatively rather than literally, but accorded greater authority than merely metaphorical, can become luminous of a divine reality beyond human expression. This is not so much allegorical as sacramental.”⁴⁴⁷ Our exegetical activity will likewise proceed along such *analogical* and *sacramental* lines.

We have selected for examination sixteen texts or clusters, which speak of God with the language of “father” (אב) either directly or indirectly. The said texts are so listed in principal lexicons,⁴⁴⁸ referred to in leading commentaries, and taken up somewhat separately in occasional studies. Our effort is to deal with them all together - in exegetical detail, in their indicated relationship, and in terms of whatever theological conclusions may be drawn therefrom. We take them up largely in canonical order and essentially from that perspective.

A statistical overview reveals that fourteen such references to יהוה in paternal relationship to Israel are by means of the word בן *son/child*, twelve by אב father, and five by עַם *people*, for a total of thirty-one such usages in the texts so handled. In addition,

⁴⁴⁴ *The Old Testament and Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p.118f.

⁴⁴⁵ *Canonical Context*, p.40.

⁴⁴⁶ *Theology in Reconstruction* (London: SCM Press, 1965), pp.30, 33. He adds, “Theological statements, that is reflective statements as to the message and content of the biblical statements, are made, however, not just by stringing together biblical citations, but rather by hard exegetical activity in which we interpret biblical statements in the light of the Truth to which they direct us from all sides.”

⁴⁴⁷ *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.143f.

⁴⁴⁸ Jenni, *TWAT I*, pp.14ff. provides the most exhaustive and informative list.

some twelve obvious parallel or round about locutions with the above, such as *child*, *begotten*, *first-born*, *special treasure*, as well as *clay*, *master*, and *fear*, plus numerous pronominal suffixes on verbal constructions therewith,⁴⁴⁹ raise the number of such references to more or less double the mentioned total. Placing the statistics in tabular form reveals further information. In the early stages of Israel's history all but one reference in these texts is in terms of בן *son* or עם *people*, with but one appearance of אב *father*. Contrariwise, in the late prophetic period, all but two of the references to יהוה and paternity is stated in terms of אב *father*, with but two uses of בן *son*, and no appearances whatever of עם *people*. Furthermore, it is seen from this tabular view, that the expression of choice for such divine paternity early and late, before and after, whatever, are rather equally divided between בן *son* and אב *father*. One senses a paradigm shift. Our exegesis here and our reflections in Part III will attempt to detail this shift, as well as possible reasons for it.

Texts as II Samuel 7.14⁴⁵⁰ and Psalm 89.27 (English 26)⁴⁵¹ are not included, as the mentioned references appear to be to the king. Numbers 11.12 has likewise been excluded due to uncertainty with regard to the gender of האמון *nurse*.⁴⁵² Deuteronomy 1.31 and 8.5 have also been set aside, despite similitudes akin to Psalm 103.13, for both are in contexts having to do with divine presence in battle and associated discipline, for which reason they seem generally avoided by commentators, and so by us.⁴⁵³ Accordingly, our exegesis is to this extent selective and our efforts will be confined to the texts below, or their immediate context, where direct or indirect reference to a concept of divine paternity is rather explicit. Moreover, our focus is largely limited to the extent that such passages shed light on the concept in view.

⁴⁴⁹ As e.g., literally translated, "brought you up" and "established you" in Deut. 32.6; "reared them" and "brought them up" in Isaiah 1.2; "we are the work of your hand" in Isa. 64.7.

⁴⁵⁰ See also II Ch 17.13ff.; 22.10; 28.6.

⁴⁵¹ See also Ps 68.6 (English 5) on "Father of the fatherless," i.e., on a limited sphere of God's care; also its greatly expanded usage in such passages as Deut. 10.18; Ps(s) 10.14ff; 82.3f; 146.9; likewise Job 29.16; 31.18.

⁴⁵² See Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, NICOT, p.204, Note 8, who cites GKC, #122f n.1 to the effect that the gender in question "is only grammatical and the word should be translated as 'nurse.'"

⁴⁵³ Drazin, *Targum Onkelos to Deuteronomy* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1982) notes translation and interpretation difficulties in connection with 1.31, inasmuch as it somehow suggests, in Sheffel's words, "an inappropriate activity for God," p.67. Driver, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, ICC., p.25, says only that similies are "not infrequent" in Hebrew prose, referring only to such usage with regard to "bearing" his people in general. G. Ernest Wright, *The Book of Deuteronomy, Introduction and Exegesis* IB 2, p.387, simply alludes to Driver and adds his own generalizing characterization of "providential discipline." Studies e.g. as Clements', *God's Chosen People* (1968) and Nicholson's *Deuteronomy and Tradition* (1967) touch upon such texts not at all. The similie in Proverbs 3.12 also appears associated with such divine disciplinary action. All such seemed to us an exegetical mine field best left to another day and another study.

Finally, the Masoretic Text provides the basis for the exegesis, and the Revised Standard Version is accepted as adequate translation, except where a more literal sense is found useful for understanding. In translation, parentheses indicate that which is implied, brackets that which is supplied. Given uncertainty as to its pronunciation, as well as evident pietistic inhibition in even uttering such, we have determined not to attempt either transliteration or translation of the so-called Tetragrammaton, except when quoting authorities who have done so.⁴⁵⁴

EXODUS 4.22-23

ואמרת אל פרעה כה אמר יהוה בני בכרי ישראל:
ואמר אליך שלח את בני ויעבדני ותמאן לשלחו הנה אנכי הרג את בנך בכרך:

God is said to have commanded Moses to speak these words to Pharaoh. Bauer terms them the *locus classicus* of the belief that Israel was son of יהוה⁴⁵⁵. There is difference of opinion as to what extent this is so.

In essence, Moses is instructed to inform Pharaoh that the Israelites are indeed the special people of the God יהוה, which people had already requested leave to go into the desert a three-day journey to offer sacrifice, although the power of יהוה had not yet persuaded Pharaoh to grant permission. Should the request be denied, the consequences for Pharaoh would be severe indeed, the death of his first-born son, albeit not until the end of the plagues to follow. Although these matters are not in “strict chronological sequence,”⁴⁵⁶ the logic seems straight forward: if Pharaoh attempts to deprive יהוה of his first-born son, the response will be certain and swift, and Yahweh will respond, bringing about the death of Pharaoh's first-born. Moshe Greenberg, commenting on the indicated parallel between Pharaoh's first-born and Israel's status as the first-born of יהוה, suggesting as they do a possible metaphorical relationship in the former case to “subjects at large,” poses a possible deeper logic for the instruction to Moses. While “the ultimate blow remains veiled,”⁴⁵⁷ Moses may be

⁴⁵⁴ More will be said on this matter in Part III.

⁴⁵⁵ “Gott als Vater in Alten Testament,” in *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 72, p. 484. Some traditional commentators, as Keil, maintain that Israel received sonship in the call of Abraham and in his appointment as “father” of the nation (Gen 12.1ff). Also see Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis*, p.38.

⁴⁵⁶ Childs, *Exodus*, p.102. It is said that such is “not unusual for Hebrew narrative style,” with a parallel in Gen 28.10ff indicated by Cassuto.

⁴⁵⁷ *Understanding Exodus* (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1969), p.109f. “Indeed, comparison of 4:21-23 with 3.19f. shows that we have here a foreshadowing of the entire plague series with emphasis – a unique emphasis – on the rationale of the climactic plague of the firstborn.” Ramban is cited as

instructed to inform Pharaoh not only of the threat against his first-born but also “all the miracles” or plagues that are in fact to precede it. To the extent that all this is so, the notion of divine fatherhood at play here is somewhat enhanced, precisely on the strength of the indicated parallel.

That these words contain the substance of the request of יהוה through the agency of Moses is plain enough. For one thing, they are perfectly consistent with similar requests elsewhere in the same context. Such was made in 3.18, where Pharaoh is informed that יהוה is the God of the Hebrews and that he has indeed met with them. Similarly, in 5.1 Moses is reported as saying to Pharaoh: “Thus says יהוה, God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’” Two reasons for the request to have been put in this fashion seem apparent, one practical and one religious. Practically speaking, it would have been manifestly absurd for a servient people in a foreign land to simply appeal to the Pharaoh's kindness of heart in requesting either a holiday or an exit visa. Yet, if the Pharaoh could be convinced that a god had in fact commanded the matter, he might indeed feel confronted by the authority of one even higher than him, and so consider the request seriously. Besides, stating the request in this way made explicit the basic issue in the spiritual confrontation that was to follow. If Pharaoh had merely refused a request presented on behalf of an enslaved people, it would have demonstrated only his lack of a kind and sympathetic heart for an oppressed people. That fact hardly needs demonstration. However, put in this precise form, the request posed not only a horrible immediate outcome but also a rather ultimate question for the great Pharaoh: Would he submit to the authority of a deity not amiable to his well-known policy of oppression? Or, put another way: Who, in fact, is king - the head of a human power structure, or יהוה, the God of Israel? Childs views the matter as “a head-on encounter between Yahweh and the Pharaoh.”⁴⁵⁸

Even as it appears reasonable enough to take these words as an expression of the content of God's request of Pharaoh through Moses, conveying as they do an understanding of the Exodus event as a clear sign of the utter sovereignty of יהוה over

supposing that the verses at hand are out of place, belonging instead just before the last plague, which hardly seems necessary.

⁴⁵⁸ *Exodus*. Driving the point home, forcefully, Childs goes on: “The conflict is over paternal power, and in the claim of the first-born the God of Israel and the king of Egypt have clashed in a head-on encounter. Later on in the narrative the slaying of the first-born is attributed to ‘the destroyer’ (12.23b), but there was never any doubt within the tradition that Yahweh, the God of Israel, was the ultimate power behind that destruction,” pp.102, 03.

Israel's history, it cannot be taken for certainty that the words are the *ipissima verba* of Moses in such request - or that he understood בן *son* in this instance to indicate a sense of יְהוָה as “father” to Israel. As some maintain, only the hand of a brilliant later redactor may be at work here, incorporating such a notion into the wording of Moses' request. Caution is called for. On the other hand, tradition has taken the idea to be part of the revelation to Moses at the burning bush, and we have no reason to depart here from the notion that the words in view could very well reflect a concept of divine paternity of Israel known in the Mosaic era. As such, it would have been a matter of both spiritual edification and political exodus. Moreover, given the use of יְהוָה together with בני בכרי ישראל *Israel is my first-born son*, not only in the verses under consideration, but in the larger context, the saying on the paternity of יְהוָה with regard to Israel could even be older than the time of Moses. If so, it was gathered it up from somewhere, being something of a redaction in itself. On the other hand, it would be wrong to suppose, on this basis alone, that whatever meaning might have been conveyed in such inherited terms was simply repeated, particularly in view of the special revelation of יְהוָה in this instance.

It needs to be recognised, of course, that the passage itself reveals little on the surface about the nature and content of any such fatherhood of Israel. The words show only that there was such a notion in use. A clue to its meaning is located in the expression יְהוָה itself. According to Cassuto, it is a proper noun indicating the name and particular personality of the One so named, who is both the sovereign of the universe and the deity who chose Israel as his people.⁴⁵⁹ In turn, as our text does clearly state, Israel is so chosen and designated a first-born son for the express purpose of serving, that is honouring the one, sovereign, personal God of its being and reality. In verse 5.1 such service is said to be, above all, ויחגו...במדבר *[their festal] celebrat[ion] in the wilderness*, that is an act of suitable praise, thanksgiving, and sacrifice for their deliverance. The implication is that the One revealed here has the authority to command obedience to just such service.

⁴⁵⁹ *Hypothesis*, pp.15ff. Important in this regard is the origin and meaning of יְהוָה. Over a hundred years ago Driver, in “Recent Theories of the Origin and Nature of the Tetragrammaton”, *Studia Biblica*, pp.1-20, summarised the leading theories of the day: from Friedrich Delitzsch's view that it was a foreign word imported into Hebrew; to F. A. Philippi's rejection of such an idea; to Robertson Smith's contention that it was instead an understandable Hebrew effort to avoid abstraction in understanding Exod 3.14. In accord with the latter, Driver concludes that the purpose of the form is “to show that the divine nature is indefinable, it can be defined adequately only by itself; and secondly, to show that God, being not determined by anything external to himself, is consistent with himself, true to his promises, and unchangeable in his purposes,” p.17f. This judgement has not been superseded in studies since.

Only one textual variant as such is indicated. Verse 23 in the Septuagint has עמי *my people* in place of בני *my son* with regard to Israel, apparently under the influence of verse 21 and presumably on the analogy of 5.1. On the other hand, there is considerable difference of opinion among commentators, as catalogued by Schmidt, as to the source, form, and consequent date of the material in the verses before us here.⁴⁶⁰ Accordingly, says Davies, some such commentators suggest that the verses under consideration, or portions thereof, once stood before either 10.28 or 11.4, so forming an introduction to the tenth and last plague.⁴⁶¹ In our judgment, as Child's says, "the important exegetical issues in the chapter [as well as verse at hand] hardly seem affected by which alternative solution one chooses."⁴⁶² Hence, such matters are taken to be of little or no consequence for the meaning understood here.

DEUTERONOMY 14.1-2

בנים אתם ליהוה אלהיכם לא תתגדדו ולא תשימו קרחה בין עיניכם למת:
כי עם קדוש אתה ליהוה אלהיך ובך בחר יהוה להיות לו לעם סגלה מכל העמים אשר על פני
האדמה:

This text is slightly more revealing than the former one with regard to יהוה and the paternity of Israel. It is couched in the law forbidding certain mourning rites, which are absent in the parallel in 7.6. We chose to deal with the stated text and that particular context, as בן *son/child* is employed and governs the expression in our overall treatment.

The passage is located in a corpus of laws introduced in 12.1, as follows: "These are the statutes and ordinances which you shall be careful to do in the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given to you to possess.." From the very nature of the corpus it is thought by some that the particular rule in this instance, as well as perhaps the lofty status accorded Israel, are from a time rather late in her development. Mayes, for example, holds that the mourning rites involved (so apparently on his view the notion here with regard to God's fatherhood of Israel) are a later deuteronomic addition unlikely at a very early time.⁴⁶³ This is apparently

⁴⁶⁰ *Exodus II, 3*, BKAT, pp.211ff; Smend, Beer opt for J; Forher, Richter for E; Gressmann, Noth, and others for P.

⁴⁶¹ *Exodus*, p.76.

⁴⁶² *Exodus*, p.94. There is harsh criticism here for Noth's "tendency to assign the figure of Moses to a secondary level of the tradition whenever possible," *ibid.*, p.95.

⁴⁶³ Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, pp.238,39.

thought due to the prevalence of such customs as are mentioned here in much later periods, as for example that mentioned in Ezekiel 7.18. Gerhard von Rad, on the other hand, in typical form critical fashion, maintains that all sayings in the Old Testament with regard to *אתם ליהוה אלהיכם* *you (are) sons to יהוה your God*, particularly the one under consideration here as well as those in Exodus 4.22 taken up above and Hosea 11.1 to be looked at below, are “parenthetically, isolated texts.” He asks whether it embraces a fatherhood of God concept. In response, he answers his own question by saying that the expression “a holy people” in the context goes back to the period of the tribal union (Exodus 19.6).⁴⁶⁴ E. W. Nicholson, while commenting on the parallel in 7.6, opines that in general Deuteronomy is “heir to a concept [on election] as old as Israel herself.”⁴⁶⁵ R. E. Clements likewise speaks of “developments and adaptations of ideas that had been in use earlier in rather different contexts.”⁴⁶⁶

There is no compelling reason to conclude that the law at hand represents a later addition to the corpus. It is, von Rad’s powerful contention somewhat affirming, of the same general form as the Decalogue, wherein a statement on the relationship of *יהוה* to his people is followed by forthright commands. Buis and Leclercq have offered an interesting and potentially helpful suggestion, at least to a point, namely that *למת for the dead* may indeed identify “not a man at all, but a God: one of those vegetation gods whose death in autumn was celebrated by solemn mourning.”⁴⁶⁷ Although the suggestion creates certain problems for an overall conception of *יהוה* in distinctive paternal relationship with Israel, which we will deal with in due course, it accords well with the context. It is entirely possible then, though by no means certain, that the lofty designation of the Israelites as *sons to Yahweh, your God* dates from a quite early time. As such, the Israelites are commanded of the one God not to engage in mourning rites for a fertility god, so that verse 2 explains further and qualifies the relationship set forth in verse 1. Hence, as Rashi has it:

⁴⁶⁴ *Das fünfte Buch Mose*, ATD 8, pp. 70-2. “Hat das ältere Israel in seiner Kultsprache Jahwe als Vater angerufen?”

⁴⁶⁵ *Deuteronomy and Tradition* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), p.56. Indeed, he maintains that the contents of the book in final form stands within the traditions of [the] old Israelite amphictyony of the pre-monarchical period,” p.49.

⁴⁶⁶ *Deuteronomy* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), p.56.

⁴⁶⁷ *Le Deuteronomie, Source biblique*, p.115. “non pas homme, mais un dieu: un de ces dieu de vegetation dont on celebrait la mort automne par un deuil solemel.” John Weavers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), relates the reference to Egyptian funerary practices with the cleansing of corpses, and translates there: “you must not engage in purificatory rites,” p.240.

because you are children of the Lord..it is therefore becoming for you to be comely and not cut about and with hair torn out..Actual holiness comes to you from your fathers..so that you are for two reasons bound to keep aloof from these pagan customs.⁴⁶⁸

In rather plain words, then, divine possession, that is the paternity of יהוה אלהיכם *Yahweh, your God*, carries with it the responsibility of holiness in his name upon earth, surely in the face of the other gods of the world. It is even maintained by von Rad that the concept of a holy people together with the proscription of any cult of the dead were part of a *status confessionis* that arose early in Israel, which he terms “a great achievement!”⁴⁶⁹ We sense that the concept of the fatherhood of יהוה was part of this early confession.

Inasmuch as בנים *sons* is employed in verse 1, it could be maintained that there is involved here even a notion of the fatherhood of all individuals. This should not be pushed too far, except in the broadest ontological sense of the creation of all. Surely there is no crude sense of physical begetting of individuals, as was rife amongst the religions of Israel’s neighbors. For clearly, in context, it is only as members of the chosen community that individuals stand in a quite unique and privileged relationship with God in יהוה. Drazin⁴⁷⁰ notes that *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* sought to modify “the concept of ‘divine children’ by translating ‘like beloved children.’” He notes, however, that the *Targum to the Pentateuch* leaves the text as is. In any event, the plural seems to be of little or no significance.

Numerous manuscripts and versions add אלהיכם after יהוה in verse 2, noting such in 7.6. Again, this is taken to be of no importance for our understanding here.

DEUTERONOMY 32. 3-6, 18

כי שם יהוה אקרא הברו גדל לאלהינו:
הצור תמים פעלו כי כל דרכיו משפט
אל אמונה ואין עול צדיק וישר הוא:
שחת לו לא בניו מומם דור עקש ופתלתל:
ה ליהוה תגמלו זאת עם נבל ולא חכם
הלוא הוא אביך קנך הוא עשך ויכננך:

⁴⁶⁸ *Pentateuch*, p.75. Probably the patriarchs are in his mind. See “The God of the Fathers” in Part Three.

⁴⁶⁹ *Deuteronomy*, p.101.

⁴⁷⁰ *Targum Onkelos*, p.157.

The text is considerably more significant for the fatherhood of God concept than the preceding two. Indeed, as there is direct reference, it seems to lay the foundation for subsequent development of the notion. It consists of a series of references in the first half of the *Song of Moses*.

An extensive introduction to the song is given in 31.16-22. According to this, Yahweh reveals to Moses shortly before his death that the future people of Israel will turn to the strange gods of Canaan. On account of such apostasy Yahweh will be angered and allow numerous evils to come upon them. Accordingly, as stated emphatically in verse 31.16, Yahweh commands Moses to write the song in witness against the anticipated זנה אחרי אלהי נכר הארץ *whoring after the strange gods of the land*. Moses is said to be responsive, composing the song and reciting it to the people.

Notwithstanding this account, it is widely held among commentators that the song is of later origin than Moses.⁴⁷¹ The point of view does seem to be that of one looking back on apostasy, and certain literary features resemble those of a later time. On the other hand, von Rad says the song is "quite independent of Deuteronomy." Even so, he is rather equivocal, indicating that parts, as verse 8, seem to be of a very "old tradition," while others, as verse 17, manifest a late Deuteronomistic theology.⁴⁷² Somewhat against this, Eissfeldt has no problem whatever setting the song at least "In the middle of the eleventh century BC."⁴⁷³ He has observed ancient literary features and a form consistent with an ancient Near-Eastern covenant, even recognising positively in the latter regard the opinion of Kline, who unequivocally ascribes the song to Moses himself.⁴⁷⁴ Further, in "Some Remarks on the Song of Moses..," and on the basis of poetic style, vocabulary, and theology, Albright places the song only somewhat later than Eissfeldt.⁴⁷⁵ Wright holds that the Song contains at least material "of sufficient antiquity..to be ascribed to Moses" at the time of the final

⁴⁷¹ See Kaiser, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, with reference to Budde, Sellin, and Bauman. Chapman, in a very recent study, *The Law and the Prophets* (Yale dissertation, 1998), p.290, sees possible influence of Jeremiah. Somewhat contrary, see Driver, *Deuteronomy*, p.348.

⁴⁷² *Deuteronomy*, pp.195-8. Clements shares this view of an "independent existence" for the Song, from "a time before the introduction of the monarchy," *Deuteronomy*, p.16.

⁴⁷³ *The Old Testament, An Introduction*, p.227. He adds, however: "We shall have to be satisfied with assessing the song as *vaticinium ex eventu* put in the mouth of Moses [as with the majority of commentators, whom he names], but we need not accept its dating in so late a period as has been fairly generally thought, during the last hundred years."

⁴⁷⁴ *Westminster Theological Journal* 23 (1960), pp.1-15.

⁴⁷⁵ *VT* 9(1959), pp.339-46. This judgement alters drastically his former much later date, thanks in part, he says, to Qumram fragments.

editing of Deuteronomy.⁴⁷⁶ Obviously then, we are without adequate ground for asserting a clear date or location for such very early material.

Given this range of considerations, the position taken here is that there is no compelling argument against substantial antiquity for the content of this portion of the Song, even back to the time of Moses and God's special revelation to him. Some modifications were probably introduced in subsequent times to make the Song and its accusations more contemporary, so that it is as much a mosaic as Mosaic. Even so, tradition has credited Moses with this quite direct reference to Yahweh's paternal relationship to Israel, and the said substantial scholarship lends some to support such opinion. We see no reason to depart therefrom. Although the use of אב *father* here is problematic on the ground that it is the lone such appearance in the Pentateuch, evidence is insufficient to call the expression into question on that basis alone. In a final analysis, the issue is one of the canonical credibility of the theological truths expressed in the texts at hand, and in their relatedness, to which we turn our attention in Part Three.

Despite the good efforts of Gunkel-Begrich, Mendenhall, and Wright to locate the *Sitz im Leben* of the Covenant Lawsuit form, as outlined by the latter,⁴⁷⁷ it would be utterly futile to endeavour separation of the possible strata in an effort to determine the song's teaching in this regard. We will discuss matters as the song stands. Yet, the text itself is exceedingly difficult. The Revised Standard Version renders verse 5 as

They have dealt corruptly with him,
they are no longer his children because of their blemish.

MT flatly terms the passage corrupt. We will not endeavour to sort out all the problems, but note some in general then move on to a few specific matters of relevance for our purposes. The editor notes the variant readings of the Samaritan Pentateuch and LXX, namely *They have dealt corruptly, not towards him, children of blemish*, but proposes instead, *His no-sons have dealt corruptly towards him*, or *They who are not his children, their blemish is corruption unto Him*. These have been variously adopted by Jewish translators and exegetes.⁴⁷⁸ One senses the dimension of difficulty. Rashi says, "Take it as the Targum has it: *Corruption is theirs, not his*."⁴⁷⁹ We settle on this, as it fits best

⁴⁷⁶ "The Lawsuit of God: A Form-Critical Study of Deuteronomy," *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, eds Bernhard W. Anderson, Walter Harrelson (London: SCM Press, 1962), p.26.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.41-49.

⁴⁷⁸ See Drazin, *Onkelos*, pp.270,71 for full list of the textual problems and efforts to resolve them.

⁴⁷⁹ *Pentateuch*, p.159.

with the preceding verse as well as the overall context. Thus, after asserting the perfect justice and freedom of יהוה from iniquity in verse 4, the song here delivers a powerful poetic indictment against his wayward people. They need not even think they can pervert his justice in dealing with their sins. In all, then, not even an allusion to the fatherhood of יהוה can be found in verse 5.

It is quite a different matter, however, in verse 6, where the Revised Standard Version reads:

Do you thus requite the Lord, you foolish and senseless people? Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?

Compared to the previous verse, this passage is relatively free of textual problems. MT does indicate an additional ה before ליהוה to *Yahweh*, which is treated as a separate word, and which *Targum Onkelos* translates as הן in the manner of an exclamation. Drazin observes that according to the context such probably governs the entire verse, on the analogy of the formula-like pattern present in Genesis 15.3; 29.7; 47.23 and elsewhere. In addition, the Masorah shows an alternate form for קנה (*who*) *bought you*, which seems of little or no consequence, except to emphasise that the people belong to יהוה by divine transaction. Moreover, the Targum goes to great length to underline the foolishness of the people despite having been granted the Torah and all its benefits.⁴⁸⁰ Again Rashi seems to have it right, “Do you mean to grieve Him Who..has bestowed all these favours upon you?”⁴⁸¹

Such ingratitude is obviously magnified by the fact that its recipient is precisely אבך *your[their] Father*. The remaining verses of the song offer an explanation of just what the term and concept mean. יהוה is the one who made, redeemed, and established them. His paternity derives from the fact that he created Israel as a nation, as its elders can testify, צור ילדך תשי. במחללק, *the rock that begot you..who formed you*, as verse 18 has it. This in no way carries the crude sense of physical begetting. On the other hand, it clearly conveys God’s physical, ontological, connection with all reality in general, from his first involvement in creation onwards into every interaction with the human enterprise. As this is so in general, so it is in Israel’s specific history. As von Rad puts it, “This must be traced back to a particular decision of Yahweh himself, who at the division of the world claimed Israel for himself.”⁴⁸²

The solid foundation of all this is represented in the use of צור *rock* in verses 4, 15,

⁴⁸⁰ *Onkelos*, pp.272,73.

⁴⁸¹ *Pentateuch*, p.159.

⁴⁸² *Deuteronomy*, p.197.

and 18, as well as 13, some eight times in all in the song, apparently in anticipation of and preparation for the former statement on the peculiar fatherhood of יהוה of all Israel. It is more than mere literary analogy. Apparently the Rabbis and the Targum found something profound going on in the word in general and with regard to יהוה in particular, for, according to Drazin, they made substitutions for it to make the “metaphor(s) concrete.”⁴⁸³ Perhaps, as Drazin says of צור *rock* in verse 4, with Maimonides, “A rock is an earthly, inanimate object and may have been an inappropriate term for God.”⁴⁸⁴ It might also have been the case, as in *Onkelos*, that they sought substitutes because the term stood in direct or indirect apposition to the יהוה and could therefore not be uttered in such a way and in this immediate context.⁴⁸⁵ Wevers maintains that the translators consciously and “consistently avoided a direct translation, thereby precluding any possible misunderstanding of the metaphor.”⁴⁸⁶ In any event, the concern the term evokes and its absence in these circumstances is conspicuous.

HOSEA 2.1 (English 1.10)

והיה מספר בני ישראל כחול הים
אשר לא ימד ולא יספר
והיה במקום אשר יאמר להם לא עמי אתם
יאמר להם בני אל חי:

Problems abound here. It is not so much a matter of individual pieces within the text, but chiefly the entire verse as well as the one following. Where do they belong? Even MT suggests our location rather than as verses 10 and 11 of chapter one. Some commentators leave them in this place, despite perceived literary problems, as for example the peculiar consecutive forms.⁴⁸⁷ Others, based on the former issue, together with a literary shift from doom to restoration, move the verses in question elsewhere, that is to the end of chapter two or three.⁴⁸⁸ Our disposition constrains us to leave matters as they are.

⁴⁸³ *Onkelos*, p.277.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.270,71.

⁴⁸⁵ As suggested in MT, see the powerful parallels in II Sam 22.3, 32, 47; 23.3; and Eccl 4.6.

⁴⁸⁶ *Notes*, p.510.

⁴⁸⁷ See Andersen-Freedman, *Hosea*. To this and related issues they add: “The knowledge of ancient Hebrew gained through epigraphic studies and related disciplines has provided new ways of explaining the text without changing it. As a result, there is less need to alter the text to remove a supposed difficulty,” p.67.

⁴⁸⁸ On the chapter two option, see Wolff, *Hosea*, p.26, who holds that the verses were placed in their present location by a later editor, possibly with “his own stamp,” but that the “basic content comes from

However, it must in be said, that mention is not made here of a divine paternity as such, but rather of a father-son relationship. We deem this to be of significance in itself. Hosea, in speaking of a future reconciliation between Israel and יהוה, prophesies that in the place where it was said of them לא עמי אתם *you are not my people*, it will be said בני אל חי (they are) sons of the living God. The precise importance of this lies in the parallel between the figure of sonship and that of covenant language. The expression לא עמי אתם *you are not my people* is apparently a formula for annulment of the covenant, as it is the negative of the classic formula for the making of the same, "I will be to you for a God, and you shall be to me for a people."⁴⁸⁹ In speaking of a future reinstatement of broken covenant, however, Hosea abruptly switches to the father-son metaphor. Moreover, it is readily apparent that the covenant relationship between יהוה and Israel is at the core of Hosea's theology. His other, most characteristic metaphor, namely the husband-wife relationship, likewise has to do with a powerful covenant situation. Clearly the standard divorce formula in 2.4, לא אישה כי היא לא אשתי ואנכי לא אישה *she is not my wife, and I am not her husband* is intended to symbolise and state the annulment of the covenant between יהוה and Israel; a constant parallel is drawn between a wife's duty to her husband and Israel's duty to the stipulations of the covenant.

Focusing on the *Nip'al* יאמר *it was said*, which is also usually translated *it shall be said*, Andersen-Freedman point to the form's wide use in naming situations, particularly the change of Jacob's name to Israel.⁴⁹⁰ Thus, employing the symbolic name of his third child, Hosea prophesies that *not my people* are to be *sons of the living God*. A notable reversal! The expression, *the living God*, is rare indeed, perhaps as Brown says, drawn in sharp "contrast to the dead, unreal gods of heathenism."⁴⁹¹

Hosea." For the chapter three option, see Brown, *The Book of Hosea*, who says such a relocation "meets all serious difficulties...completes the story of the prophet's relations with his wife...and supplies the ethical conditions of that restoration," p.10. Against such, G. I. Davies, *Hosea*, maintains that such relocations are "without any justification," p.60.

⁴⁸⁹ Jer 31.27-37. This seems to build upon the Hosea text at hand. On the covenant in *broadest* perspective, particularly on the likely influence of international vassal treaties, especially Hittite, see Mendenhall's splendid piece in the *ABD* 1, pp.1179-1202. For distinct Old Testament usage, see Eichrodt's *Theology of the Old Testament*, wherein covenant is seen as the "central concept" not only for the two volume work but also as the principle "controlling the formation of the national faith" of Israel, pp.13ff.

⁴⁹⁰ Gen 32.29. Andersen-Freedman list other uses of the idiom in name change, i.e. Isa 18.18; 32.5; 61.6; 62.4; and Jer 7.32. Against the theory that a naming ceremony is here indicated, they object on the basis that two names are not involved, and that in any case what is given "is not a name, but a statement," *ibid.*, p.204.

⁴⁹¹ Brown *Hosea*, p.11. Andersen-Freedman, *Hosea*, pp.205ff., details every possible connection of the term with the life-giving reality of the God of the Hebrew Bible as well as those in the surrounding Ancient Near East. See Part One, pp.6ff. of this dissertation.

Primarily, however, it seems to denote the sort of close, intimate covenant relationship between God and Israel typified in Abraham and at Sinai, now broken, but that will be enjoyed again in its renewal. In any event, as Andersen-Freedman say, "the unexpectedness of this title makes it climactic,"⁴⁹² yet, we maintain, not merely to complete the oracle but to declare just such a coming grand reversal and renewal of the covenant. **יִרְעָאֵל** *Jezeel* of verse 2, and the symbolic name of Hosea's oldest son, is also taken to be a key in this regard. Meaning *God sows*, the word play on Israel is hardly accidental. Inasmuch as the valley so named is both a place of extreme judgement⁴⁹³ and exceedingly fertile, the prophecy is not only that the covenant will be renewed theologically, but that Israel's fortunes will be reversed materially and that so they will prosper in the land. Hosea concludes in 14.7, in lovely parallelism, "they shall flourish as a garden; they shall blossom as a vine." Andersen-Freedman find support for such "inversion" in the proposal of *Biblia Hebraica* 3, "which breaks up the phrase, detaching Jezeel from the clause and making it a vocative."⁴⁹⁴ And inasmuch as this flowering is to be under "one head," a reunified Judah and Israel is in view. In all, as stated by Andersen-Freedman, God is sowing a "dramatic transformation from judgement and destruction. to restoration and renewal."⁴⁹⁵

HOSEA 11.1

כִּי נֶעַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶהְיֶה וּמִמְצְרַיִם קִרְאתִי לְבָנִי

This is by far the more important of Hosea's references to **יהוה** in paternal terms. All the more significant is the fact that it is part of the most moving section in the entire prophecy, coming as it does from a normally implacable prophet of doom. Indeed, the striking expression of compassion on the part of **יהוה** toward Israel in verse 8, "my heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender," is among the most moving in all prophecy. Here, says Mays, "the portrayal of Yahweh as a father caring for a son achieves an explicit tenderness and detail unmatched in the Old Testament."⁴⁹⁶ On the other hand, Wolff holds that on literary and form critical

⁴⁹² *Hosea*, p.205.

⁴⁹³ Chapter 1.4 in this context; see also, II Kgs 2.10 on Jehu's role in the "blood of Jezeel."

⁴⁹⁴ *Hosea*, p. 210.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.210. Interesting, too, is their suggestion (following Holladay, et al) that "'the land' in Ancient Israel was a name for Underworld," so that the restoration has a larger theological and even eschatological dimension. Wolff, *Hosea*, p.27, feels that all this "hints at more than it describes."

⁴⁹⁶ James Luther Mays, *Hosea*, p.151. He adds, however, from the firm disavowal in verse 9, "I am God, not man," that only a father is able to show this sort of love for a son. Wright points out, "The Terminology of Old Testament Religion and Its Significance," *JNES* 1 (1942), p.406, that Hosea was

grounds the whole of chapter 11 is “a homogeneous unit, separate from the previous and following context.”⁴⁹⁷

Our primary concern is with *וּמִמִּצְרַיִם קָרָאתִי לְבָנִי* *out of Egypt I called my son* in the verse at hand. Here again, Hosea employs the father-son metaphor to speak of God’s relationship with Israel without actually calling him father. But again, it seems of significance for God’s filial relations with Israel. Deliverance from Egypt is adduced as the origin of this relationship, so that it is directly in the tradition of the “Song of Moses.”⁴⁹⁸ Sonship, then, is associated with the Exodus, and thereby Israel’s apostasy is sharply contrasted with the former goodness of *יְהוָה* to the people. Like the “Song of Moses,” this passage too, indeed the entire prophecy ends on a final note of restoration. Even so, the lone verse in view, as Harper observes, “presents serious difficulties of text and interpretation.”⁴⁹⁹ We hold to the translation above, and the notion of adoption seems paramount. With Mays, *קָרָאתִי* *I called* here seems a clear “election verb,” carrying Israel into a new or renewed status.⁵⁰⁰ Davies, however, asserts that what is involved suggests something quite other, namely that Israel’s designation is “to be seen not so much in terms of adoption, as in terms of the call of a prophet.”⁵⁰¹ This offers an interesting dimension, to which we will return somewhat in Part Three. For now, we have no problem with viewing *לְבָנִי* *my son* in terms of adoption. At the same time, as Wolff puts matters, “the idea of parentage, procreation, and creation is far removed.”⁵⁰² Rather, the emphasis is upon the nurturing of a holy people in the love of *יְהוָה*.

On the matter of nurture, it must be noticed here that, together with “I called my son,” we have in the text immediately further on, in verses 3, *קָחַם עַל דֹּרְעָתִי* *I took*

apparently the first to introduce the word “love,” as in verse 1, in this connection, arising out of the husband-wife and father-son relationships. Given the dominance of God as covenant Lord, he holds that we should not be surprised at the relative paucity of references to his love.

⁴⁹⁷ *Hosea*, p.193.

⁴⁹⁸ See pp.101ff., above.

⁴⁹⁹ *Amos and Hosea*, p.362. In remarkable economy of words, after pointing to passages considered above and ones taken up below, he says: “Israel has already attained sonship; Hosca elsewhere speaks of Israel as husband and wife, not father and son; and the Septuagint and Targums read “his sons;” the following possible renderings emerge: *called my son out of Egypt..; called him to be my son..; out of Egypt I called his sons..; and out of Egypt I called him..*” Harper prefers the latter. Andersen-Freedman offer still another possibility, namely “my child,” without explanation; see *Hosea* p.22, as well as p.576. Political correctness?

⁵⁰⁰ *Hosea*, p.153. In full, he states, “[I]t means summon into a relation. The presentation of corporate Israel as Yahweh’s son understands the election in terms of adoption.”

⁵⁰¹ *Davies*, p.254. In support, I Sam 3.ff., and Isa 49.1 are offered, with further development in Isa 43.1; 51.2, and 54.6.

⁵⁰² *Hosea*, p.198. He adds that this is “otherwise in Dtn 32.6, perhaps also in Ex 4.22f, where Yahweh’s ‘first born son’ is mentioned in parallel to ‘Pharaoh’s first born son.’”

them up in my arms.⁵⁰³ The statement of care seems equally appropriate to mothers and fathers. Some feminist commentators see “taking in arms,” “in cords of compassion,” and “bending down to feed” as clear indications of Yahweh’s motherly instincts. On the other hand, some variants read “his arms” in place of “my arms.” Besides, Andersen-Freedman maintains that the actions indicated are very well those of “an exceedingly gentle father.” In any event, they go on, reliance on verse 3 as well as 4 is precarious, to say the least, for much here is “complex and confused.” The most that can be determined for certain in verses 1-4 is the clear theme, namely “the contrast between Yahweh’s generosity and Israel’s ingratitude.”⁵⁰⁴

While it is the case that all this is squarely in the tradition of the “Song of Moses,” differences between the passages are readily apparent. In the song, יהוה would cut off completely the remembrance of Israel from among men were it not for concern about his own reputation. In Hosea, on the other hand, the anger of יהוה cannot be completely executed, presumably because his compassionate heart will not allow it. As verse 8 has it, איך אתנך אפרים, *How can I give you up, O Ephraim?* Thus, it appears, the compassion of יהוה becomes ultimately a higher principle than the stipulations of the covenant itself. Hence, יהוה withdraws from his people, as he realises that his holiness can only mean destruction of sinful humanity. One hesitates to think it, much less say so, but fatherhood and its associated tender love as expressed here seems to triumph even over demands of divine holiness. Needless to say, theological difficulties arise. For now we are left with this initial theological concern: How can the Holy One dwell among men and yet have compassion?

ISAIAH 1. 2, 4

שמעו שמים והאזיני ארץ כי יהוה דבר
בנים גדלתי ורוממתי והם פשעו בי:

הוי גוי חטא עם כבד עון
זרע מרעים בנים משחיתים
עזבו את יהוה נאצו את קדוש ישראל

⁵⁰³ Wolff says the Masora “is unintelligible,” and offers “(I) who took them in (my) arms,” *Hosea*, p.191. It is difficult to see this as an advance on the RSV translation above.

⁵⁰⁴ *Hosea*, p.583. Wolff offers this: “Yahweh helped Israel grow to independence; in his tender youth Yahweh bore him in his arms and protected him. Israel, however, did not listen to the call of the one who led him out of Egypt, nor did he give attention to the care provided by Yahweh’s fatherly actions,” *Hosea*, p.199. Adding to the complication, there is the switch here from Israel to Ephraim, and it cannot be said that they are in every sense the same.

As in the Hosea passage immediately above, these words of Isaiah are likewise in the tradition of the "Song of Moses" of Deuteronomy 32. This is clearly evident in the common use of "give ear," that is in summoning Israel to account for itself before יהוה. The language is that of a law-court arraignment reflective of legal practices in Israel. Witnesses called in the proceeding are the heavens and the earth, that is, all creation, indicating the extent and seriousness of charges to be brought.⁵⁰⁵ Young points to broader Ancient Near Eastern legal patterns for understanding here, particularly Hittite.⁵⁰⁶ While appeal in such is made to individual gods in heaven and earth, here only יהוה is in view, speaking forth his indictment in verses 2, 10, 18, and 24.⁵⁰⁷ Very importantly in this regard, as Isaiah's reflection on the "Song of Moses" seems to indicate to some extent, indictment is made in terms of the stipulations of the covenant of יהוה with Israel.

Allegation number one is that גדלתי ורוממתי בנים *sons have I reared and brought up*. בנים *sons* presents no textual difficulty in itself, although translations vary quite legitimately between *sons* and *children*, with the Targum rendering *my people*.⁵⁰⁸ In either case, as Clements says, and can hardly be gainsaid, comparing Israel's relationship to יהוה by this designation is old, proper, and a "central feature to the Passover tradition."⁵⁰⁹ Some problems are evident, however, with regard to גדלתי ורוממתי *I have reared and brought up*. On the one hand, the Septuagint renders the first part "bore," presumably as a father, with, as Wildberger puts it, "mit Jahweh

⁵⁰⁵ Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, wonders "whether heaven and earth are called on as never-failing witnesses to the word of God, or so that they may give the assent expected of them in the verdict passed on the people in v.3," p.11. We hold it to be both, and of little consequence for what is said.

⁵⁰⁶ Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah I*, p.36. Reference is made to Huffmon, "The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets," *JBL* 78 (1958), pp. 285-95 and Kline, *Treaty of the Great King*. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, demurs somewhat, saying that "a simple adaptation by the prophet from legal practices (presumably of his day) is sufficient to explain all features that are present," p.30. Whatever, Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, p.105, is offered as evidence that no suggestion of polytheism is to be seen in Isaiah's thought.

⁵⁰⁷ Wildberger, *Jesaja*, BK I, sees "Sechs ursprünglich selbständige Prophetenworte hier zu einer höheren Einheit zusammengestellt: 2-3, 4-9, 10-17, 18-20, 21-26," p.8. No question of authorship is raised.

⁵⁰⁸ Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum*, p.2. On point, Gray, *The Book of Isaiah I-XXXIX* (International Critical Commentary, 1912) holds that translating "sons" here is unsatisfactory, for "though when the Hebrews spoke of children they no doubt thought primarily of sons, the plural ..is not limited in meaning to male children," p.9.

⁵⁰⁹ *Isaiah 1-39*, as Note.

als Subjekt.”⁵¹⁰ Virtually all translations reject this variation. On the other hand, how are the two terms as given to be understood - as but synonyms so used for emphasis, or perhaps for higher “distinctness (in) almost equivalent expression” as Young has it?⁵¹¹ Given the overall context, the latter possibility seems best. It clearly reflects the adoption by and covenant with יהוה, whereby and wherein Israel became a nation of his sons. In any event, Isaiah has introduced straightaway a notion of a relationship to יהוה and to his chosen people in terms of fatherly affection. And in this, the indictment is made plain, standing out in bold relief: והם פשעו בי *but they have rebelled against me*. As Young again puts matters most insightfully, the “emphatic position” here serves “to stress the contrast between the Lord’s faithfulness and Judah’s unfaithfulness.”⁵¹² No specific content is incorporated into the charge, but rather the entire spiritual disposition of the people is in view and on trial in the legal-like proceeding. The comparison of the defendants to dumb animals who know better in verse 3 is exceedingly uncomplimentary, yet serves to heighten the allegations.⁵¹³

Allegation number two, set forth at the end of verse 4, is the most damaging charge of all in the case at bar. It is none other than the קדוש ישראל *Holy One of Israel* who has been wronged. The name is surely pivotal for Isaiah’s prophecy, employed some twelve times in the first half of the book and fourteen in the last half, a remarkable indication of overall unity in itself.⁵¹⁴ As Wade says, it was another, and “popularly synonymous,” way of speaking of the God of Israel, who was by his nature separate “from human sin and infirmity.”⁵¹⁵ It was precisely this One that Israel

⁵¹⁰ “with Yahweh as subject,” *Jesaja*, pp.8ff. Such reading has provoked much commentary, particularly from Wildberger. In the end, he says, while such usage is “not impossible,” it is decidedly rare, so that here one should adhere to MT as is.

⁵¹¹ *Isaiah*, p.38. His broad exposition of the biblical grammar involved here is brilliant. “גדל is ‘making great’ with respect to natural growth (cf. II Kgs 10.6; Isa 23.4; 49.21; 51.18). רוממת points to that higher position toward which the tender and loving father gradually leads his child (cf. Isa 23.4).” In support of this, see WO’C, p.540, #32.3, on the use of the Copulative Waw in such circumstances, that is in “the second of a pair or longer series of perfect forms acting as a semantic unit.”

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, p.39. He goes on to observe: “The word ‘But they’ serves as a *casus pendens*, the force of which is as follows, ‘and they, ..they have transgressed.’”

⁵¹³ Georg Fohrer, *Das Buch Jesaja* 1, p.26, states the tragedy in this best, and it can best be said only in German: “Jesaja verschärft dies noch: Söhne des himmlischen Vaters? Ja, aber schlimmer als das Vieh des Vaters!”

⁵¹⁴ Virtually all commentators concur in this opinion, however such unity is accounted for and explained. Edward J. Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah*, Vol.1, p.8, counts 29 such uses, with only 6 elsewhere. On the overall issue of unity see Christopher Seitz’ “How is the Prophet Isaiah Present in the Latter Half of the Book? The Logic of Chapters 40-66 Within the Book of Isaiah,” *JBL* 115/2 (1996), pp.219-40; see also Rolf Rendtorff, “The Book of Isaiah - A Complex Unity: Synchronic and Diachronic Reading,” *Prophecy and Prophets*, ed. Yehoshua Gitay, pp.109-28.

⁵¹⁵ Wade, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, p.3.

נאצר *had spurned*. In II Samuel 12.14 the identical term is usually translated *utterly scorned*, and that is the most likely meaning here. Moreover, if such a meaning be taken here, the overall sense is that all such actions were taken even in favour of the very enemies of יהוה, hence idolatry.⁵¹⁶ Based on the remainder of the piece, Gray holds rather that the prophet has “ethical offences in mind.”⁵¹⁷ Whether theological or ethical transgression be the case, with evidence here seeming to support the former, all such behaviour is decidedly contrary to the sort of filial piety implicit in the stated notion of fatherly affection. Verdict guilty!

ISAIAH 30. 1, 9

הוי בנים סוררים נאם יהוה לעשות עצה ולא מני
ולנסך מסכה ולא רוחי למען ספות חטאת על חטאת:

כי עם מרי הוא בנים כחשים בנים לא אבו שמוע תורת יהוה:

Here again, reference to a divine paternity is by way of the בנים *sons* metaphor. In this instance, however, such is plainly identified as בנים סוררים and כחשים, *sons or people, disobedient and lying*. The occasion and cause of the rebellion and deceit is clear, namely, as is said in verse 2, לדרת מצרים *wandering down into Egypt* and ולחסות בצל *trusting in (its) shadow*. The inevitable outcome of an alliance with the Pharaoh, or any other nation, is a lack of reliance upon יהוה.⁵¹⁸ Their choice, quite simply, as Christopher Seitz puts it, was “between trust in God and trust in some other form of human security.”⁵¹⁹ Interesting in this regard is the construction חטאת על חטאת *sin unto sin*. Mistrust of יהוה is extreme sin; trust in another instead only compounds the transgression to ultimate proportions, perhaps best understood in the Targum sense of adding *sins [added] to the sins of their souls*.⁵²⁰ In any event, partaking of

⁵¹⁶ See Ezek 14.3.

⁵¹⁷ *Isaiah*, p.10.

⁵¹⁸ Calvin, *Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, Vol.1, pp.353f., delineates both Yahweh’s general and specific prohibition concerning alliances, the former due to danger of corruption by Gentile superstition (Exodus 23.32; 34.15; Deut 7.2) and the latter because it obscured his act of wondrous deliverance from Egypt (Exod 13.17; Deut 17.16).

⁵¹⁹ *Isaiah 1-39*, Int, p.219. Moreover, he says, “The same fundamental trust is required of king, of priest and prophet, of Judah’s rulers, of all God’s people. No scheme, no matter how clever or well conceived, can substitute for the basic stance of faith.”

⁵²⁰ Chilton, *Targum*, p.59. Calvin seems to support this in the sense of mankind’s general tendency to act contrary to the will of God, followed by efforts to justify such by human assistance, hence “stumble again upon the same stone, and double their criminality,” *Isaiah*, p.392. In the sense of earlier negotiations with the Egyptians, which were clearly wrong from the start, Delitzsch views the emergence of “a plan” as “heap(ing) sin upon sin, inasmuch as they carry out further and further to

רוחי *a libation not of my spirit*,⁵²¹ is an ultimate insult to the One who had chosen them and manifest fatherly affection toward them.

Given such contrary, unfilial spirit, the character of this son/people toward the One who called them into special being was a blatant disposition to turn a deaf ear toward or even interfere with the transmission of תורת יהוה (the) *teaching of Yahweh*. Some, as Kissane,⁵²² hold that the rejection has to do only with the immediate situation, but the Targum⁵²³ is probably correct in taking this to refer to the larger Mosaic law, which is the far more profound spiritual rebellion that underlies present disobedience. Moreover, and worse yet, as verses 10 and 11 show, there are even overt efforts to manipulate both seer and prophet.⁵²⁴ To the former they say לא תראו (you) *see not*, and to the latter לא תחזו לנו נבחות (you) *prophecy not unto us right things*. Rather, the blatant request is for חליקות *smooth or flattering things*, and just such quite literal translation is most suitable here. It establishes just how far these sons/people have departed from their heavenly father, קדוש ישראל *the Holy One of Israel*. With Young, all that can be concluded is that "Human Wisdom is more palatable to them than divine truth."⁵²⁵ They have arrived at the other side of obedience - obdurance! And with this, as Seitz says, the indictment commenced in Chapter 1 is complete and final: "Israel has commanded the prophets and seers to 'let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.' There can be only one verdict for such a people: utter collapse (30.12-14)."⁵²⁶

perfect realization the thought that was already a sinful one in itself," *A Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, Vol. II, p.27. Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, p.285, holds that the expression has to do with multiple treaties with Egypt entered into by Ahaz and Hezekiah. Leaving this last suggestion aside, conjured up in any sense is the opposite divine attribute manifest in Christ and expressed best by John as "grace upon grace" (1.16).

⁵²¹ John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, pp.391-93, points to the four possible meanings of לנבך מסכה indicated in BDB (p.650-51), namely *pour out a libation, cast a molten image, weave a web, and negotiate an alliance*, indicating his preference for the latter, as it fits well the former parallel. We hold to the first, for, even metaphorically, it seems to suit best the sense of intoxication with Egypt at issue. Against this, see Slotki, *Isaiah*, p.139, who sees such as "a less acceptable alternative," suggesting something of a toast offered on ratification of a treaty.

⁵²² *Isaiah*, I, p.332: "The *teaching of Jahweh* is not the Mosaic law, but the teaching regarding their action in the present crisis."

⁵²³ Chilton/*Isaiah*, p.59. Somewhat in support of this, see Leupold, *Isaiah* I, p.472: "This is an indication of the fact that the rebelliousness that marked the nation on its march through the wilderness in Mosaic days, is still their distinguishing badge. God may speak; they do not want to be instructed."

⁵²⁴ נביאים is not employed here, but rather seers and visionaries. Young, *Isaiah* II, p.345, views these terms as "practically synonymous," and points to his work, *My Servants the Prophets*, for further comment on their significance. Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, p.295, holds that "there is no distinction in practice (1 Sam 9.9)" between prophets, seers, and visionaries.

⁵²⁵ *Isaiah 1-39*, 345.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 219.

Such attitude toward יהוה is downright shameful. It is not that they thought of themselves as his physical offspring, but, in view of 1.2,4 and 30.1, surely “childlike obedience” is due one who “reared and brought (them) up” as his very own.⁵²⁷ To give this to another, as the Pharaoh, particularly against all counsel to the contrary, as suggested in 30.5, *לכלמה לבשת shame upon shame*.⁵²⁸ Although all this is from a negative viewpoint, it does, according to Luther’s famous allegorical interpretation of the text, raise at least the question of proper behaviour “toward such a great Father.”⁵²⁹

ISAIAH 63. 16

כי אתה אבינו כי אברהם לא ידענו וישראל לא יכירנו
אתה יהוה אבינו גאלנו מעולם שמך:

This appears in the context of an intercession for help, which Westermann terms “the most powerful psalm of lamentation in the Bible.”⁵³⁰ The identity of the one offering this particular portion of the overall piece is uncertain, possibilities ranging all the way from Isaiah or member of his circle/school to an unknown spokesman for the people of the land. In any event, the portion at hand is clearly in response or related, rhetorically or otherwise, to that from verse 7ff. and continuing through the following chapter.⁵³¹ Specifically, it seems to be an utterance intimately related to *עמי המה בנים my people, they my sons* in verse 8.⁵³²

Central to the entire prayer and verse at hand is the double appearance of

⁵²⁷ “All (Israel’s) members are described as sons of Yahweh; this does not refer to physical worship of God, breaking down the barrier between God and man, but to childlike obedience which they owe to their God,” Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, p.294.

⁵²⁸ See *sin to sin* in verse 1. *בוש* and *כלם* both mean *shame*, with the latter having the added sense of *humiliation*, as BDB, pp.483,84. Calvin points to *חדיף reproach* in verse 5, saying “it is afterwards added for the purpose of bringing out the meaning (of shame) more fully,” *Isaiah*, p.393.

⁵²⁹ Pelikan/*Lectures on Isaiah, Chapters 10-39*. “It is as if saying: ‘I have omitted nothing. There is nothing I have not shown. I wanted to be their Father. I chose them to be my children. And not only this, but also I brought them up; that is I bestowed on this people all fatherly blessings, care, protection, a very great increase in number, etc.’” p.7.

⁵³⁰ *Isaiah 40-66*, p.392.

⁵³¹ John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, pp.26ff., sets the entire section in the form of a dialogue sermon between a Levitical Preacher, Zadokite Priests, Israelites, People of the Land, etc. Whatever the legitimacy, it highlights, at least for the verse at hand, interesting possibilities with regard to our central concern.

⁵³² Also possible is *my people, sons who will not betray me*, but this offers nothing that alters the meaning or reference. In any event, contrary to this, see Julian Morgenstern, “Isaiah 63.7-14,” *HUCA XXIII/1* (1950-51). He holds all in the mentioned verses to be “an independent psalm,” so no part of the “literary unit with the prayer which follows in 63.15-64.11,” p.197. On the other hand, Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, p.611, terms verses 7-14 a “historical reminiscence.”

אֲתָהּ אֲבִינוּ *thou art our Father*. With Westermann, it has to be noted that this formulation is “only found in this one psalm.”⁵³³ And Seitz terms its appearance in this form and at this place “stunning.”⁵³⁴ We are, then, at the heart of our exegetical explorations. Key to the meaning of the utterance may be located not only in the matter of who made it but also in the issue of on whose behalf it is made. Who around 440 BC, properly queries Watts, “could this be?” He points to a variety of possibilities, from proper Israelites to people of the land to occupying forces to Zadokite priests, that is a “diversity of persons seeking to work and worship in Jerusalem at this time.”⁵³⁵ This suggests, not improbably, that the clear reference to God’s fatherhood in this “stunning” expression exhibit both great diversity and remarkable unity in itself. We suggest, in this regard, and in any case, that the additional declarations *אֲבִיהֶם לֹא יִדְעֵנוּ* and *יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִכְדֹּנוּ* *Abraham knows us not* and *Israel acknowledges us not* provides some clue. While coming as they might, at least in part, from ones not within ancient Israel’s circle, they nevertheless clearly manifest considerable regard for its institutions. Even if the expression is from the lips or in behalf of proper Israelites, it points to the fact that their earthly, physical, fathers are indeed dead, so unable to intercede directly on their behalf, thus pointing instead to a fatherhood which is eternal, spiritual, and readily accessible. In sum, we see here, in Westermann’s choice words, that “God’s fatherhood is thus in marked distinction to any merely romantic or traditional designation as father.”⁵³⁶

The immediate context in which such powerful confession is made reveals two apparently ambivalent, yet highly complimentary, attitudes within the penitents toward

⁵³³ *Isaiah 40-66*. He adds, “The reason why this designation of God as Father is so rare in the Old Testament is that, in the world in which Israel was set, the physical fatherhood of the gods was a basic feature of thinking in terms of myth. The Old Testament will have none of this,” p.393. See also A. S. Herbert, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*: “The reason for this reluctance to speak of God as father lies in the common understanding, in the world outside Israel of the god as physically father,” p.177.

⁵³⁴ In a forthcoming commentary, at the place under discussion. He adds: “The cry to ‘Our Father’ in the midst of this petition is based upon theological bearings set by the creation story and its aftermath in early Genesis chapters.” We will attend somewhat to this judgement in connection with the next Isaiah text, as well as in Part III.

⁵³⁵ *Isaiah 34-66*, p.329. Passages in support of such diversity in the land are cited: II Kgs 17.24-28; Ezra 4.1-3; Zech 7.1-14.

⁵³⁶ *Isaiah 40-66*, p.393. Delitzsch, *Prophecies*, says *אֲבִינוּ* *our Father* “has not yet the deep and unrestricted sense of the New Testament ‘Our Father,’ p.460; Young, *Isaiah II*, p.488, adds that “nevertheless it is a word of tender comfort, and shows that the theocracy was a work of God and not of man.” Some dated commentators, as Wade, *Prophet Isaiah*, hold that the passage points to a practice of necromancy: “The passage seems to refer to some popular expectation of sympathy and assistance from the deceased ancestors of the nation (cf. Jer. XXXI.15) which had been disappointed; and suggests that the people were now in Palestine where the burial places of the patriarchs existed,” p.401. See also Marti, *Das Buch Jesaja*, p.396.

this eternal "Father." As expressed in verse 17, in a powerful rhetorical form, it is remarked, תתענו יהוה מדרך־כִּיךָ (*you*) *Yahweh, made us wander from your ways*. What could this mean? It is hardly the case that the prophet or the people hold Yahweh accountable for their waywardness. Rather, as Calvin rightly says, the believers in question wandered "because they were not governed by the Spirit of God."⁵³⁷ Once this fundamental spiritual reality was acknowledged, the way was apparently opened for appropriate and effective intercession to this eternal Father. In the text at hand, it is said of him, אתה גאלנו מעולם שמך *you, our redeemer from of old, [that is] your name*. Since Abraham and Israel/Jacob are so prominently mentioned here, the covenant and its ratification with them is doubtless in view. By it Yahweh adopted Israel as his son, hence, as Calvin again says, "boldly and confidently...call on (him) as their Father."⁵³⁸ Since his very name - that is, his being from the beginning and in history, his identity by adoption of this particular people, his character as one who redeems and sustains again and again, his honour - is intimately involved, the relationship is of old in the even larger sense that it is eternal and therefore essentially unalterable.

Trible finds the key to unlocking the meaning of all this in proceeding verse 15, namely in the expression המון מעיך *the yearning of thy heart*. Viewing this as a variation of words in Jeremiah 31.20c, that is *המו מעי לו*, in which she sees the noun meaning womb, she translates *my womb trembles [travails]*, hence locating another feminine metaphor for Yahweh. Noting, however, that verse 16 shifts immediately to paternal language as we have seen, she opines that "this shift in parental language approaches a balance that recalls our basic metaphor, the image of God male and female."⁵³⁹ Such translation and interpretation represents a considerable stretch, so our understanding remains as given.

ISAIAH 64. 7 (English 8)

ועתה יהוה אבינו אתה אנתנו החמר
ואתה יצרנו ומעשה ידך כלנו:

Here once again is the unique formulation *אתה אבינו thou (art) our Father*. Although not of crucial importance, two textual issues need to be sorted out in any effort to determine its precise meaning in this instance. First, the opening *ועתה but now* is taken

⁵³⁷ *Isaiah*, p.357. He adds that "they do not expostulate with God, but desire to have that Spirit, by whom their fathers were guided, and for whom they obtained all prosperity."

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.355.

⁵³⁹ *Rhetoric*, pp.52f. See exegesis of Jeremiah 63.16, below.

by the Qumran text to be *ואתה and you*.⁵⁴⁰ Yet the variant reading has perhaps resulted from either the proximity of the forms or more simply from confusion of α and ψ , in view of which the Masoretic text stands. Moreover, the form is probably to be taken as “emphatic,” marking a “critical point” in the overall prayer.⁵⁴¹ Second, for no apparent reason the Septuagint drops the phrase *ואתה יצרנו you are the one who formed us*. Again, we hold to MT.

On the basis of the given text, a crucial transition in the prayer is indeed in view.⁵⁴² Although יהוה seems to have abandoned his people, and while his eternal fatherhood is nevertheless acknowledged, thoroughgoing personal and communal acknowledgement of sin had not been expressed. Intercession and confession had not yet come fully together. This is at last accomplished in preceding verses 5 and 6. In the former, the prophet or other spokesman says on Israel’s behalf, *וכבגד ערים כל צדקתינו and all of our righteous acts [are] as rags of filth*. The latter expresses a particularly harsh condition, and sobering recognition, referring as they do to the cloths of menstruation.⁵⁴³ In the latter verse it is said of them, *ותמזגנו ביד עינונו and you wasted us away by the power of our sins*. This places the burden squarely where it belongs. The iniquity of the people has hid the face of יהוה, consequently *wasting them*. And with this further acknowledgement of their desperate state, a new beginning is possible. While corporate confession commenced in 63.16, now it moves to an even more profound level. As Westermann puts matters, while in the former the objective reality of “God being a Father” was acknowledged, here the subjective and sobering “fact that the speakers are children” is fully recognised. Moreover, and as such, it should now “be possible to go on living.”⁵⁴⁵ This is the decisive turning point that has been arrived at in Israel’s history.

⁵⁴⁰ See Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Schroll* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), pp.505-510, “Weakening of Laryngeals and Pharyngeals.”

⁵⁴¹ With Herbert, *Prophet Isaiah*, p.180, and Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, p.336, who renders the meaning as *still*.

⁵⁴² Westermann says a ν adversative “in psalms of lamentation, often marks the transition from lamentation to confidence,” *Isaiah 40-66*, p.397; Delitzsch terms the entire *ועתה* an indication of “a turning point in (Israel’s) history,” *Prophecies*, p.472; Watts, even with his notion of a “diverse congregation in Jerusalem (in) the 5th century,” suggests it marks a “critical point in the prayer,” *Isaiah 34-66*, p.336.

⁵⁴³ See BDB, p.723, on its use in the plural absolute in this particular instance, as well as its figurative use for the “best deeds of guilty people.”

⁵⁴⁴ *עינונו* appears to be singular, but BDB, p.731, allows for its plural use. *ותמזגנו* and its alternate readings has offered various possibilities, most reading with the LXX, et al. as *you melted us away*; see e.g. BDB, p.556. We adhere to the more difficult MT reading.

⁵⁴⁵ *Isaiah 40-66*, p.397.

We turn, then, in the text at hand, to the key expression of this momentous turning point, *אתה אבינו אתה thou (art) our Father*. As Israel confesses its sin and presumably is prepared to put the past behind it, their spokesman suggests they do so in the confidence that they are the nation of choice for יהוה, and that they ought therefore be able to look forward to his mercy. This confidence is expressed in the compound simile *אנחנו החמר ואתה יצרנו we are the clay and you are the one who formed us*. While Calvin speaks of the nation, or even the people, as being “formed of despicable clay,”⁵⁴⁶ the emphasis seems to be more on the act of formation than on the lowly condition of the elements. In this regard, too, and more so than in 63.16, Seitz’s contention carries great weight, namely that the fatherhood of יהוה depicted here is better viewed in terms of his larger role as creator than simply covenant maker.⁵⁴⁷ Moreover, the final expression *ידך כלנו רמעשה all of us are the work of your hand*, fits well the notion of creation. Besides, even if broken covenant and prayer for mercy is at issue here, such allusions to the role of יהוה in larger creation applies to both circumstances, and indeed the latter only serves to heighten the former. As Luther says in summary comment on the text: “You are our Father, as well as our Artisan and Potter, and you will restore us who are broken.”⁵⁴⁸ Although Calvin holds that the reference here is to “regeneration,” he allows that in it “God is called the Creator.”⁵⁴⁹ Westermann, too, maintains that the imagery employed here points primarily to “the status of a creature.”⁵⁵⁰ Muilenberg holds that while in the former text the emphasis was on “Father/Redeemer,” here it is on “Father/Creator.”⁵⁵¹ Even if somewhat overdrawn, the comment has considerable merit. Indeed, the invective in 45.9,10 supports this view, where potter, clay, and father are employed in striking parallel pointing to the work of the Creator. Particularly persuasive in this regard is *קנה Maker*, as in Genesis 14.19.⁵⁵² This is surely the sense of the Targum, “we are the clay and

⁵⁴⁶ *Isaiah*, p.371. Speaking of the low estate of the people of Israel, he says “they do not seek the ground of superiority in themselves, but in their origin celebrate the mercy of God, who out of mean and filthy clay determined to create children to himself.”

⁵⁴⁷ See Seitz reference on *Isaiah* 63.16, above. He views *Isaiah* 65-66 as having “an obvious allusion to the early chapters of *Genesis*,...and their significance for adjudicating the problem of broken covenant..., (that) they were being ‘close read’ at this period,...(and that) the reference to ‘Our Father’ in the context of broken covenant and supplication indicates how central the creation account has become in times of distress and estrangement.”

⁵⁴⁸ *Pelikan/Luther*, p.372.

⁵⁴⁹ *Isaiah*, p.371.

⁵⁵⁰ *Isaiah* 40-66, p.397.

⁵⁵¹ “The Book of *Isaiah*, Chapters 40-66, Introduction and Exegesis,” *IB V.*, p.743.

⁵⁵² For other such references in *Isaiah*, see 29.16 and 30.14; elsewhere, see *Job* 10.9, on which the use at hand may be based.

you are our creator.”⁵⁵³ In any event, it seems reasonable to say, with Oswalt, that “God redeems because he has created.”⁵⁵⁴

Finally, here, there is a question as to the meaning of כלנו *all of us*. Watts maintains consistently, and on the basis of statements in 63.7, that the expression is made primarily with regard to the mixed peoples and congregation in Jerusalem at the time.⁵⁵⁵ Indeed, as has been mentioned, the interpretation has merit, and touches on a well-documented social and religious situation. On the other hand, such analysis seems also rather over stated. Inasmuch as they are the words of the prophet, in an almost exhaustive plea, they could rather simply indicate his identification with all the peoples of the land - warts and all.

JEREMIAH 3. 4-5; 19-20

הלוא מעתה קראתי לי אבי אלוף נערי אתה:
הינטר לעולם אם ישמר לנצח
הנה דברתי ותעשי הרעות ותוכל:

ואנכי אמרתי איך אשיתך בבנים
ואתן לך ארץ חמדה נחלת צבי צבאות גוים
ואמר אבי תקראו לי ומאחרי לא תשובו:
אכן בגדה אשה מרעה כן בגדתם בי בית ישראל נאם יהוה:

Oddly enough, it is Jeremiah, a prophet of doom, who seems most among Old Testament voices to express divine filial affection for Israel, the first two occurrences of which are found in the verses above. The larger context in which they appear, namely chapters 2-6, contain speeches thought to have been delivered in the early part of the prophet's ministry.

We place the above four verses next to each other, as we are dealing primarily with the common expression אבי *my father*, yet it is apparent on the surface of the Hebrew text that they have been broken into and that the poetic form has been interrupted, even as the theme and phraseology are similar. שוב *turn away or back* is clearly a key concept and “is played upon in a variety of ways,” as Bright says.⁵⁵⁶ The

⁵⁵³ Chilton/Isaiah, p.123.

⁵⁵⁴ The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66, p.629.

⁵⁵⁵ Isaiah 34-66, p.336.

⁵⁵⁶ Jeremiah, p.25. He points to verses 3.1, 7, 10, 12, 14, 19, 22; 4.1. Indeed, a count shows that the term is employed some eighteen times in the mentioned verses. See also Holladay, “The Use and

overall theme is apostasy, pictured by adultery of the most sordid sort. At the same time, however, as Bright also shows, 3.16-18, consisting largely of prose, is itself a complex piece of material. It is probably inserted here because of the common theme represented by שׁוֹב. Exactly why the totality of verses 6-18 was inserted here is unclear. It may well be but an illustration at hand of the final phrase of verse 5, וַתַּעַשׂ הָרַעוּת וְתוֹכַל *and you have done [every possible] evil thing you could*, hence a substantiation of the dreadful charges set forth in verses 1-5, albeit overall, as Bright puts things, with “a passionate plea for repentance together with Yahweh’s assurance of forgiveness and mercy.” The critical problems of verses 6-18 are a subject in themselves and will not be dealt with here.⁵⁵⁷

Turning again to overall theme and time, and taking the verses at hand to be in some sense a continuation of that in chapter two, which is plain idolatry pictured again by harlotry, a pre-Josianic context is assumed. Indeed, according to Volz,⁵⁵⁸ it was probably the preaching of Jeremiah that “directly” prepared the way for the reforms under Josiah. Bright, too, sees an early, pre-Josianic date, as there “is no hint of a reform that has failed or, indeed, of any reform.”⁵⁵⁹ On the other hand, there are such variations in Chapter 2-6, Cornill’s contention notwithstanding,⁵⁶⁰ that it is unlikely that such is one coherent address.

As for the text proper, the form hanging loosely at the head of 3.1, that is לְאָמַר, is rather awkward yet possibly significant. It is absent in Greek and Syriac versions, and deleted by some commentators.⁵⁶¹ Perhaps, on analogy with 1.4, 11; 2.1, it is part of a lost heading, which may well have given a date or other reference. Supposing such, it can at least be maintained that this particular section was spoken sometime

Significance of the Root *subh* in Jeremiah,” *The Root subh in the Old Testament*, pp.76-81; Clements, *Jeremiah*, p.35.

⁵⁵⁷ It should be noted, however, that, according to Peake, *Jeremiah 1-24*, p.106, Giesebrecht holds that 3.19 follows 18 without division. Indeed, he takes verses 1-5 as an independent prophecy, with 3.6 - 4.2 forming a single unit. “He finds too sharp a contrast between 3.1-5 and 3.19ff” to allow for a single oracle. He is also concerned that the prophet “does not apply the term Israel to Judah alone.”

⁵⁵⁸ *Der Prophet Jeremia*, p.42. “dass Jeremias Predigt die Reform geradezu vorbereitet.” See also, Leslie, *Jeremiah*, p.93.

⁵⁵⁹ *Jeremiah*, p.26. He adds, “At the same time, catastrophe does not seem to be imminent. Rather, the divine wrath is held before the people as no more than an undefined threat (4.3-4), a possibility lying in the future which, at this stage, is both contingent and avoidable.”

⁵⁶⁰ He asserts: “In dem uns vorliegenden Texte bilden offenbar Cap.2-6 eine zusammenhängende Rede,” *Das Buch Jeremia*, p.14. This seems to us improbable.

⁵⁶¹ McKane, *Jeremiah 1*, says it “is a fragment of which nothing can be made and it should be deleted,” p.58. Holladay, *Jeremiah I*, on the other hand, holds that it is part of an “early collection of material destined for the north..followed directly by 3.1-5..[pointing to] the nucleus of the lawsuit into which Yahweh enters (in 2.9),” and although “less plausible” in the present state of the text “is not to be emended,” p.57; he gives the form the meaning *as follows*.

after chapter two and in light of all therein contained.⁵⁶² Accordingly, we take the passages in view as addressed to Judah alone.

The verses at hand are something of a textual mine field. First of all, the variant qere readings *קראת* *you have called* and *רברת* *you have spoken* are accepted.⁵⁶³ Moreover, the editor's suggestion of *הנה* *these things* instead of *behold* likewise makes sense.⁵⁶⁴ On the other hand, *מעתה* *from now* is a problem for the versions and the editor, prompting considerable discussion, much of it focusing on what to do about *אבי* *my father* in verse 4. Some commentators emend this according to the questionable editorial suggestion *גם עתה* *nevertheless*.⁵⁶⁵ For our rather limited purposes, with some old help from Brown,⁵⁶⁶ we accept *just now* with the Revised Standard Version. Finally, there is the key expression itself, *אבי* *my father* in verse 4, with the arguable editorial opinion that it is situated in its present position under some influence of verse 19 and should perhaps be deleted.⁵⁶⁷ We accept MT and leave the form as is. Even so, it must be viewed in the context of other major, unquestionable expressions.

In clear apposition to our principal form in verse 4 is the expression *אלוקי נערי אתה* *a friend of my youth are you*. On a surface level, as in 2.2, where Israel, in the larger sense, is reminded of her devotion to יהוה in her youth, Israel is here presumably in turn reminding him of that past intimate relationship, without however

⁵⁶² Alders, *De Profeet Jeremia*, p.43. This accords with Bright's position. Welch, on the other hand, *Jeremiah: His Time and Work*, pp.507ff, takes an entirely different stance, viewing these utterances as directed by Jeremiah to Israel in the North in an effort to draw it into the purer and stronger life of the capital, focusing as they do on inner repentance rather than the outer reform. Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, p.81f, holds a mediating position, seeing both Judah and Israel as the focus of Jeremiah's prophecy, with their designations often being either synonymous or interchangeable.

⁵⁶³ Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, p.58, says that "the ketib offers the archaic spelling of the second singular feminine (compare 2.20, 33)" in both instances, but our acceptance of the qere readings stand.

⁵⁶⁴ With Volz, Bright, et al.

⁵⁶⁵ See the detailed discussions of Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, p.58 and McKane, *Jeremiah 1*, p.61, where Rashi is quoted as rendering *מעתה* *הלא*, "Will you not abandon your evil as from now?" This is the sense taken up by Freedman, too, *Jeremiah*, p.19.

⁵⁶⁶ Charles R. Brown, *Jeremiah*, p.54 points out that, as in Genesis 12.8, *מן* can here be understood in the sense of *on* or *at*.

⁵⁶⁷ The line up of opinion in this regard is legion, with recent commentators of the same vintage, as Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, p.58 and McKane, *Jeremiah 1*, p.61 taking entirely opposite positions, seemingly controlled as much by interpretive conclusions as by the text. Holladay maintains that the form is "an intrusive gloss from v 19 and does not comport easily with the metaphor of husband and wife basic to vv 1-5." Much earlier, Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia*, p.35, maintained that the form is not original since it does not fit metrically, besides being unsuitable in this context to represent Yahweh's relationship with Israel in the given context. Jenni, with Duhm and others, labels this as "Eintragung" from verse 19. See *THAT I*, p.19; also Rudolph, *Jeremia*, p.22. Furthermore, inasmuch as the husband-wife relationship is involved, not the daughter-father one, it is even suggested that *אבי* on that ground alone may be misplaced. Against this, Welch, *Time and Work*, 59 argues convincingly that "there is no need to change" it, for "abu is used in Babylonian for a husband (ref. Barton, *Semitic Origins*, p.68, n.5) and the usage occurs in both North and South Semitic dialects (ref. Smith, *Kinship and Marriage*, pp.117f.)."

manifesting a corresponding pattern of conduct. She persists in her “unabashed affrontery!”⁵⁶⁸ Yet, as verse 3.3 has it, even though she possessed *תצה אשה זונה* (*the forehead of harlot woman*)⁵⁶⁹ and *תאנת הכלם* (*you refused shame*), she nevertheless had addressed יהוה as *אבי* *my father*, that is the source of her former innocence. This in itself speaks of יהוה election of and covenant with Israel, his fatherhood in that commanding sense. Interestingly, the Targum goes beyond the plain apposition and offers a clear substitution, rendering the total expression *My Lord, redeemer who are from old*.⁵⁷⁰ This comes very close to the sense of our reading.

On the other hand, it is argued,⁵⁷¹ virtually all of the imagery here and in the larger context has to do with Israel as an unfaithful wife. Furthermore, the selfsame expression is employed in Proverbs 2.17 to refer to a woman’s true husband, the one she married in youth. Moreover, in verse 19, below, we have *אשיתך בבנים* *I would set you among [my] sons*, that is a feminine suffix with reference to Israel. Besides, what would be meant in saying that יהוה intended to place his wife among his sons? It could very well be, then, that verses 4 and 5, as well as 19, have nothing whatever to do with יהוה as Father, albeit the principal form expressing such remains undisturbed in verse 19. Rather, with Volz, it might even be asserted that given the clear imagery employed in verses 1 and 2, *אבי* *my father*, is nothing more than a wife’s tender expression for a husband, as mixed metaphors are unlikely if not downright inconceivable.⁵⁷² We reject such conclusion in favour of the former understanding.

Verse 3.19-20 is generally acknowledged⁵⁷³ as continuing the sense of verses 4-5. The apparent antithesis between verses 5 and 19 is no reason to deny their connection. It makes perfect sense, pointing in just such antithetical terms to the magnanimity of the grace of יהוה over against the spiritual “affrontery” of his elect. Moreover, it is impossible to even consider here that the form *אבי* *my father* might possibly be nothing more than a wife’s loving designation for a husband. Rather, יהוה, through the mouth of the prophet, appears to seize upon the superficial expression of such by wayward people in verse 4 in order to make a profound announcement of his own on the nature of *בנים* (*the*) *sons*.

⁵⁶⁸ Keil, *The Prophecies of Jeremiah*, Vol. 1, p.30.

⁵⁶⁹ Freedman, *Jeremiah*, p.19, with the comment “brazen and shameless.”

⁵⁷⁰ Hayward, *The Targum of Jeremiah*, p.55. It renders similarly at verse 19, as we will see below.

⁵⁷¹ Again Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, p.48, citing support of Duhm, Giesebrecht, etc. See note above.

⁵⁷² Volz, *Jeremia*, p.38; Cornill, *Jeremia*, p.32. Inasmuch as *אב* is used, e.g., in Judg 17.10; II Sam 24.11; II Kgs 2.12; 6.21, it is not improbable that a wife might indeed employ such a title as a polite way of addressing a husband.

⁵⁷³ Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion: Studies in the Life of Jeremiah*, p.84, places verse 19 after 2.1-3, and considers verse 20 an isolated fragment. No need for such radical alteration is apparent.

Here again, the text is quite problematic, and some solutions are necessary for a clear understanding. On the other hand, however, Holladay says that textual difficulties and resultant translations of an expression as *most beautiful of all* nations may carry "a deliberate ambiguity which then cannot be translated."⁵⁷⁴ Even so, there are some textual considerations that are helpful. The variant kere readings תִּקְרָאִי *you would call me (father)* and תִּשְׁנִי *(not) turn away [from following me]*, accepted by numerous manuscripts and editions, as well as the Targum and the Vulgate, are taken up here, so speaking of Israel in the singular feminine.⁵⁷⁵ This makes for natural reading, although sense can also be made of MT. The editor's suggestion of reading מִרְעָה אִשָּׁה בְּגָדָה אֶכֶן *a wife has dealt faithlessly* as אֶךְ כְּבָגַד instead with the Greek and Latin versions, presumably on the basis of a misplaced final ך, so strengthening the contrast indicated, is hardly necessary.⁵⁷⁶ The text makes sense as is. The perceived Septuagint problem with בְּגַדְתֶּם literally *you have betrayed*, is no problem at all, for it is manifestly clear that בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל *(the) house of Israel* is in view.

Again, it is not to be understood here that Jeremiah is addressing the Northern Kingdom as distinct from Judah. Rather, it refers to the elect people as a whole, who were represented by the Southern Kingdom following the fall of Samaria and the suspended identity of the ten tribes.⁵⁷⁷ It is in light of this situation that אֲשִׁיתְךָ בְּבָנִים *I would set you among (my) sons* is to be viewed. Israel is personified as a woman, that is a daughter. According to ancient Hebrew practice, as evidenced in Numbers 27.1ff., daughters did not normally share in inheritance when there were sons.⁵⁷⁸ Here, with Eichrodt, יְהוָה "(as) Father..in his intense affection, wishes contrary to custom to give his daughter an equal place in the inheritance with the sons."⁵⁷⁹ While we are drawn overall to Freedman's contention that "the words..assert the universality of God's

⁵⁷⁴ *Jeremiah*, p.60. See also McKane, *Jeremiah 1*, p.82, who says, with regard to the textual difficulties at hand, that "it should be recognised that this is a measure of the profundity of the prophets vision of the future and of the inner tug of war which he has to endure."

⁵⁷⁵ Holladay, *Jeremiah*, p.60, says "it is best to stay with feminine singular forms throughout the whole verse."

⁵⁷⁶ Of אֶכֶן, BDB has, p.38: "emphasising a contrast, *but indeed, but in fact*, esp. after אָמַרְתִּי *I said* or *I thought*, expressing the reality, in opp. to what had been wrongly imagined...Je.3.20 (opp. to the expectation v 19b)."

⁵⁷⁷ See Skinner, *Studies*, p.83.

⁵⁷⁸ For an exception, see Job 42.15.

⁵⁷⁹ *Theology of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, p.238. With this text, Eichrodt sees a significant "transformation of the *hesed*-concept," with Jeremiah clearly portraying "Yahweh's sorrow over his faithless people as the disappointment of a father..(who when he) looks to hear from her the name of the father as a sign of her faithful attachment, meets only gross ingratitude." In this regard, Hosea 11.1-3 is pointed to as well.

Fatherhood,"⁵⁸⁰ it seems at this juncture to read more into this particular passage than is warranted. At least, however, it can be confidently asserted⁵⁸¹ that Jeremiah is here carrying forward the thought of Hosea 11.1, as indicated in our former exegesis. Thus, in delivering Israel out of Egypt and giving it the land, the status of Son and its attendant privileges were properly conferred. So, חמדה נחלת צבי צבאות, *a beautiful pleasant inheritance* [among] *the hosts*, is untangled and understood as indicating the extent, even extravagance,⁵⁸² of יהוה affection and mercy, which ought to have received the cry אבי *my father* - in "token of a child's love and adherence."⁵⁸³ J. A. Thompson takes the intriguing position that יהוה is in fact "commanding Israel to call him" so.⁵⁸⁴ Indeed, this is very near our sense of the text, albeit as יהוה desire for just such a return to childlike innocence on the part of his son. Again, the Targum renders the expression, *My Lord*.⁵⁸⁵ Accordingly, it clearly conveys the notion of reverence, evidenced by Israel's following after יהוה as their Father in every way. As Welch puts it, called for was recognition that

it owed everything to its God; its being and well-being were alike due to his constant and peculiar care. Without his intervention it would have been nothing, but He had also treated it before all the world as His son.⁵⁸⁶

Instead of offering such due recognition, however, Israel behaved as a treacherous wife. Yahweh's fatherly care was returned in utter unfaithfulness. In verse 3.1, רע bears the literal meaning of *companion* or *lover*, but the context clearly warrants the connotation *husband*. Whereas Hosea generally keeps the figures of father-son and husband-wife separate, as in chapters 1 and 11, Jeremiah mixes the metaphors in order to make his point from a variety of angles. For him, the disobedience of Israel as son can only be fully expressed by paralleling it with the treachery of a wife. Jeremiah's use of the two figures here indicates again the strong influence of Hosea.

⁵⁸⁰ *Jeremiah*, 23.

⁵⁸¹ See Welch, *Time and Work*, p.64.

⁵⁸² BDB, p.840, indicates that צבי צבאות, *beautiful among the hosts*, or vice versa, is a construction indicating a superlative degree. See also WO'C, p.267, #14.5, that characterises the form as absolute superlative.

⁵⁸³ Keil, *Prophecies*, 98.

⁵⁸⁴ *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah*, p.207. In explanation, he says, "The RSV interpretation may follow on the translation of the verb as "thought," whereas we have decided to follow the literal meaning *said*. Once that decision is made, the verb form "you will call" can just as easily be translated as *You must call*.

⁵⁸⁵ Hayward/*Jeremiah*, p.57.

⁵⁸⁶ *Time and Work*, p.64. According to Eichrodt, *Theology 1*, p.233, Yahweh, the Father, sorrows over the unfaithfulness of his people.

JEREMIAH 31. 9

בבכי יבאו ובתחנונים אובלים
אוליכם אל נחלי מים בדרך ישר לא יכשלו בה
כי הייתי לישראל לאב ואפרים בכרי הוא:

This and verse 20 below forms part of the so-called Book of Consolation, chapters 30 and 31, which are substantially Jeremiah's own words. However, it appears that 31.7-9 (possibly through 14) constitutes a separate poetic unit within the whole. Moreover, due to vocabulary and ideas reminiscent of the latter part of Isaiah, there is wide agreement among commentators⁵⁸⁷ that they represent to some degree a reworking by that author. The essence of this near consensus goes back to the powerful suggestions of Geisbrecht.⁵⁸⁸ Indeed, fewer passages in the entire book have "evoked sharper disagreement among scholars" than these. Yet, the allusion to Ephraim seems strange at such a late date, and Bright is probably correct in taking at least verses 7 and 9c as "a nucleus of Jeremianic words originally addressed to northern Israel," the remainder being an adaptation of such to the situation of the exiles.⁵⁸⁹ If one assumes that at least Isaiah's influence extends over the entire book attributed to him, as we do, the problems are put into another light. In that case, too, Jeremiah himself or his "school" could very well have incorporated such phrases from his illustrious predecessor (as was done with Hosea), 'adapting and applying' them as encouraging words to the disordered elements in the Northern Kingdom just as much as a compiler of this section might have adapted such to the exiles. We read the unit in question in this light, taking it to have been written in Palestine, but after the destruction of the temple.⁵⁹⁰ Clearly, an exiled community is in mind, with the northern one really in view, as Judah is plainly addressed in verse 23f., whatever the interpolations. The concern of verse 3.12, during Josiah's reign, is expressed anew. In any event, we probably have before us the authentic essence or nuance of Jeremiah's words.

On the other hand, textual problems and suggestions for the verse at hand are few, but they too need to be sorted out in order to grasp the essential meaning in the

⁵⁸⁷ For example, Duhm, Cornill, Peake, Schmidt, as indicated in McKane, *Jeremiah II*, p.793.

⁵⁸⁸ *Das Buch Jeremia*, p.116ff. See in this regard, Isa 35; 40.3-5, 11; 41.18-20; 42.16; 43.1-7; 44.3f; 48.20f; 49.9-13.

⁵⁸⁹ *Jeremiah*, pp.284, 86. See also, Holladay, *Jeremiah 2.*, pp.156ff., who sorts out in infinite detail the early recension to the north from the later one to the south, etc., holding that Jeremiah "directed the core of this material to the north, reshaping it for Judah at the end of his career, in the context of the fall of Jerusalem and consequent exile."

⁵⁹⁰ See 31.8 and 40, respectively.

words before us. For *יבאו* *they shall come* the, Septuagint has *יצאו* *they will go forth*. This may very well be correct, rendering an interesting contrast in the given parallel, and we accept this.⁵⁹¹ The editors also suggest that with the Septuagint *ובתחנונים* *and supplications* be read *ובתחזומים* *and consolations*, and we find this acceptable as well. In addition, the editors say that perhaps *הנה* *here*, at the end of verse 8, should be revocalized as *behold*, and moved to the beginning of verse 9, which seems of small consequence one way or another.⁵⁹² The Targum offers the meaning *(with) great mercies*,⁵⁹³ which seems even nearer the intended sense. Aside from these few items, the RSV renders matters reasonably well.

Clearly, as is indicated in verse 8, the context is a return *מארץ צפון* *from the north country*. According to McKane, a debate arose between Rashi and Kimchi as to the nuance implicit in *בבכי* *with weeping*, whether it refers respectively to the attitude of penitents on their way home or “a kind of joyful catharsis at the end of a long exile.”⁵⁹⁴ It turns, of course, on how the principal emendations discussed above are handled. Continuing the debate, and presumably on the basis of the text as emended, Leslie says:

They had left Israel as tearful captives bound for exile under the harsh regimen of the Assyrian military officers. But *(ובתחזומים אובילים)* they will return led along by the discerning, consoling, providing and compassionate God himself.⁵⁹⁵

Freedman, on the other hand, with the Masoretic reading, takes the matter to be that of consummation through the penitential prayers of the people.⁵⁹⁶ Is the issue one of human disposition or of divine grace? Both are commendable, and either seems possible here, focusing in either case on the heart of the text and the major focus of this study, namely the fatherhood of Yahweh, whose consoling character is unmistakably on offer.⁵⁹⁷ As Calvin has it, Yahweh’s people would be “cast on the

⁵⁹¹ On possible confusion of *ב* and *צ*, see Kennedy, *An Aid to the Textual Amendment of the Old Testament*, p.46.

⁵⁹² The suggestion has been taken up, as McKane indicates, *Jeremiah 2*, p.790, by Volz, Rudolph, Weiser, and Bright, but has resulted in dubious meddling with words in verse 9 and even the charge by Giesebrecht of “ham-fisted borrowing from another passage.” Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, p.185, feels that “this is an unnecessary correction - (the given vocalisation) occurs in a similar context in 50:5.”

⁵⁹³ Hayward/*Jeremiah*, p.131. Reference is made to Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic* IVb. 402, where it is said that “*supplications* here makes little sense.”

⁵⁹⁴ *Jeremiah 2*, p.791. The latter, he says, has been followed Cornill, Volz, Rudolph, and Weiser.

⁵⁹⁵ *Jeremiah*, p.102.

⁵⁹⁶ *Jeremiah*, p.203.

⁵⁹⁷ For other texts having such comfort as a dominant theme, see, e.g., Isa 43.1f; 44.21-3; 49.13-14;

ground, that their calamity might be a kind of death to them," but then return "with joy as in harvest."⁵⁹⁸ *אל נחלי מים בדרך ישר* *by brooks of water [and] in a right way* indicates, as Rabbi Freedman says, that יהוה "will guide them like a shepherd who leads his flocks to a river to quench their thirst."⁵⁹⁹ Holladay is doubtless correct in seeing at least the first part of the expression as "shorthand for the lovely land to which they would return."⁶⁰⁰ In sum, the reason for the return to such a beautiful place, as well as the tender care on the way, is that יהוה is Israel's father and Ephraim is his first-born.

We turn for further clarification to the expression *לישראל לאב ואפרים בכרי הוא* *a father to Israel, and Ephraim, he (is) my first-born*. The context seems to indicate reference in both cases to the ten tribes of the north, although in no apparent way indicating that what is asserted is any less true of Judah.⁶⁰¹ As was observed above with regard to Exodus 4.22, Israel as a whole is the first-born of God. On the other hand, Hosea was seen to employ Israel and Ephraim interchangeably in connection with the exodus and in which all twelve tribes were involved. Here focus is upon the ten tribes, whereby that which is true of the whole covenant community is now applied specifically to the ten in the north. Keil opines that in this those who have been in exile the longest and have the least are given the most emphasis.⁶⁰² Cornill feels that a post-exilic writer would not have used Ephraim with reference to the ten tribes; he attributes it to Jeremiah but, due to supposed late Isaiah influences, places it at the end of verse 5 and as a transition to verse 15. Such sorting out of these materials, the early from the late, the original from the adapted, the authentic from the edited, is difficult to say the least, and well beyond the scope of this exegesis. Yet, with Holladay,⁶⁰³ we

51.3, 12; 52.9. Leslie, *Jeremiah*, p.165, citing Volz, says that here is carried over to the Northern Kingdom "that which elsewhere concerns all Israel."

⁵⁹⁸ *Jeremiah*, Vol. Fourth, p.72. To this is added: "the Prophet means what was afterwards repeated in one of the Psalms, 'Going forth they went forth and wept; but coming they shall come with exultation, carrying their sheaves.' (Ps. cxxvi. 6.)"

⁵⁹⁹ *Jeremiah*, p.205. Cf. e.g. Isaiah 40.3-4; 41.18-20; 42.16. Lest one conclude that such indicate "innovative-ness" with such expressions in the latter part of Isaiah, Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, p.173, holds that indeed they are to be "viewed as variations on these themes in Jrm."

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.185. Interestingly, for *והיתה נפשם כגן ריה* *and their life shall be as a watered garden*, at following verse 12, the Targum suggests the sense of one "full of delights (as in a) saturated garden," Hayward/*Jeremiah*, p.131.

⁶⁰¹ On the other hand, Elliott Binns, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah*, p.233. sees in this the exaltation of Ephraim over Judah. Reference is made to II Sam19.43 Sam19.43; I Chr 5.1-3.

⁶⁰² *Prophecies 2*, p.21f. McKane, *Jeremiah 2*, p.792, says that he too is "not persuaded that..the verse is exclusively an address to northern Israel."

⁶⁰³ *Jeremiah 2*, p.156. With Bright, too, *Jeremiah*, p.285, we would, as regards the genuineness of his expressions here, say: "...although one may expect to find some adaptation of Jeremiah's thought to a later situation, any essential distortion of it is..highly unlikely."

hold that at least the Ephraim reference is clearly from Jeremiah's early pre-exilic sayings, and that there is no reason why he could not have stressed it again in the narrow sense after Judah's exile. He addresses both separately, and here the focus is on the one. Given all this, Holladay has suggested an interesting "nuance" with regard to בכרי הוא *he (is) my first born*. Whereas on the basis of Exodus 4.22 and Hosea 11.1-3 Israel appears to be Yahweh's only son, and Deuteronomy 32.6-9 conveys the impression that Israel is pre-eminent among the nations, II Samuel 19.44 (English 43), by agreement of most commentators, indicates that some among the northern tribes thought of themselves as *first-born* over against Judah.⁶⁰⁴ In either case, this in no way diminishes the sense of a covenant relationship of יהוה with and consolation of the whole of Israel in terms of fatherhood. Indeed, it is enhanced.

JEREMIAH 31. 20

הבן יקיר לי אפרים אם ילד שעשעים
 כי מדי דברי בו זכר אזכרנו עוד
 על כן המו מעי לו רחם ארחמנו נאם יהוה:

This verse as well as the section in which it is placed, verses 15-22, are usually regarded as genuinely Jeremianic, addressed to the Northern Israel, as Ramah, Rachel's children, and, again, Ephraim make evident.⁶⁰⁵ In light of 3.6-13, it is frequently placed in the early part of the prophet's career, probably, as Bright says, while Josiah was engaged in extending his political and religious program into the territory of the erstwhile northern state.⁶⁰⁶ On this same view, such was subsequently applied by an editor to the exiles living in Babylon. In any event, the exiled northern kingdom seems clearly in view.

No major textual difficulties are evident, although the interrogative particle ה and the conditional one אם are absent in Greek and Latin versions. Inasmuch as these versions are largely dependent upon each other, not much weight should be given to such reading. McKane cites Rashi and Kimchi as seeing the particles in question as

⁶⁰⁴ *Jeremiah* 2, p.185. Freedman, *Jeremiah*, p.205, says, however, that "It is doubtful whether priority is intended in the clause. The underlying thought is rather God's love for both sections of His people..(not the exaltation, as some suppose of) the tribe of Ephraim over that of Judah."

⁶⁰⁵ Peake, *Jeremiah and Lamentations* 2, p.269, counts Duhm and Cornill as included in this judgement; McKane, *Jeremiah* 2, p.797, adds Giesebrecht, Streane, Hyatt, and Rudolph to this virtual consensus.

⁶⁰⁶ *Jeremiah*, p.284. Hyatt, *IB, V*, p.1031, locates it during the time of Gedaliah's governance.

“a device for entering a note of complaint into Yahweh’s statement.”⁶⁰⁷ Perhaps, as Snaith says, the use of these particles in tandem is a normal Hebrew construction in double questions.⁶⁰⁸ Even more likely, with Ehrlich, the statement conveys a rhetorical sense in preparation for a “positive” response.⁶⁰⁹ If the suggestion of Holladay be followed, namely “Now comes Yahweh’s reply,”⁶¹⁰ along with the possibility that verse 31.9 followed here, such would summarise the verse at hand by answering directly the question posed in the first line above. For *הנבירי בו* *my speaking (was) against him*, the editor suggests instead *הנבירי* (presumably) *I was alienated from him*, an effort to make sense of the following, inseparably linked formulation, *אזכרנו עוד* *I remember him still*. Such has generated a veritable flood of speculation as to positive or negative sense in the former, even with some thought given to the *speak(ing)* at issue having to do with the giving of the Law.⁶¹¹ The Targum surely views matters here in the sense of *Law upon his heart*, so the overall issue quite positively, and renders these things as something like *mercies overcoming Israel!*⁶¹²

However the foregoing is to be resolved and interpreted, the paternal affection of יהוה for Israel is here expressed in utterly bold anthropomorphic language, exceeding by far the image of a disappointed father as is pictured 3.19-20 above. As indicated in verses 18-19, יהוה has heard Ephraim’s *מתנודד* *bemoaning itself* and its inner cry, *נחמתי* *I repented*. Here he says in return, in most literal fashion, *המז מעי לו* *my bowels groan for him*; he is moved in his most inner parts, “the seat of emotions” in Hebrew expression.⁶¹³ Besides, Ephraim is spoken of as *ילד שעשועים* *a darling child*. Inasmuch as the expression is intensive plural one, he is, quite literally, *a child of delights*. Between יהוה and Ephraim there exists, then, particularly on the former’s part, as McKane so well expresses it, “an old love that will not die.”⁶¹⁴ Eichrodt terms such love “an inner but incomprehensible imperative.”⁶¹⁵ The other particle,

⁶⁰⁷ *Jeremiah 2*, p.801.

⁶⁰⁸ *Notes on the Hebrew Text of Jeremiah*, p.9, the observation being made in connection with verse 3.5, where, however, no textual issues are evident.

⁶⁰⁹ “Die Frageform dient hier nur dazu, die Aussage als eine minder positive darzustellen, so dass der Sinn der Rede ist: ‘Ephraim ist mir doch wohl ein teurer Sohn,’” *Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel*, p.321. See also, Giesebrecht, *Jeremia*, p.169.

⁶¹⁰ *Jeremiah 2*, p.191. Interesting in this regard is the reference to Adriaan van Selms, ‘Motivated Sentences in Biblical Hebrew,’ *Semantics 2*, (1971/72), pp.148f., with the highly interesting possibility: “Is Ephraim my dear son? - of course not, but he could just as well..”

⁶¹¹ See McKane, *Jeremiah II*, p.802, for detailed discussion of the various positions.

⁶¹² Hayward/*Jeremiah*, 132.

⁶¹³ Freedman, *Jeremiah*, p.208. Attention is called, e.g., to the double use of the expression in *Jeremiah 4.19*.

⁶¹⁴ *Jeremiah II*, p.902.

⁶¹⁵ *Theology I*, p.233.

יד *still*, which has vanished in Greek, Latin, and Syriac versions, presumably on the ground of vain repetition, is nevertheless an important little word, as Ehrlich says, on analogy of Genesis 46.29, which then has the force of repeating an important element for emphasis.⁶¹⁶ Besides, the form is an infinitive absolute, appearing as an adverb, so doubtless in all probability to put strong emphasis⁶¹⁷ on *אזכרנו* *I remember him*, still, despite everything, with a love that indeed “will not die.” Here, then, a sense of divine fatherhood is in something like full flower.

Trible finds in the verb *ארהמנו* *I will have pity/mercy on him*, the noun meaning *womb*, hence “motherly-compassion,” so a female image of God. Accordingly, she reads back into the former expression, *המו מעי לו*, again *my bowels groan for him*, taking it as part of the “rhetoric of female semantics” at play, so a “uterine metaphor (of) .the image of God female.”⁶¹⁸ Carroll also speaks in this regard of “Yahweh as mother .and of her uterine love.”⁶¹⁹ Holladay expresses considerable sympathy for the point of view, saying that if such “is not explicit here, it is surely implicit.”⁶²⁰ McKane, on the other hand, opines that the entire basis for such a view rests on “bizarre assumption.”⁶²¹

MALACHI 1.6

בן יכבד אב ועבד אדני
 ואם אב אני איה כבודי
 ואם אדונים אני איה מוראי
 אמר יקוה צבאות לכם הוזהרים ברוי שמי
 ואמרתם במה בוינו את שמך

Although a minor prophet, Malachi seems to have more to say about the fatherhood of God, from a sheer percentage aspect, than any of his major predecessors, that is three expressions of such in just fifty-five verses. What appears at the heart of his message may reveal more about the precise nature and expectation of such fatherhood than all

⁶¹⁶ *Randglossen*, p.322.

⁶¹⁷ See GKC, #113, 2, Rem. 1, on possible sense of *causus adverbialis*, i.e. “to define more exactly the manner in which the action is performed.”

⁶¹⁸ *Rhetoric*, p.50. She renders the term in view *my womb trembles for him*, and the one following “*I will show motherly-compassion upon him.*”

⁶¹⁹ *Jeremiah 2*, p.600. He hastens to add, however, that “the words used are but metaphors,” while calling for “a sensibly balanced theology of divine human interaction using both masculine and feminine terminology.”

⁶²⁰ *Jeremiah II*, p.192.

⁶²¹ *Jeremiah II*, p.802.

who had preceded him, namely *אהב יהוה love (of) Yahweh*, as expressed in verse 1.2. Moreover, as the last of the recorded prophets of the Old dispensation, exercising his office around 450 BC,⁶²² his message comes closest to the commencement of the New. Whether Malachi is indeed the proper name of the prophet, or rather a personification of *מלאכי my messenger* is not entirely clear. It is, in a sense, of no substantial significance for our purposes. Yet, with Childs, R. Smith, Hill and others,⁶²³ we hold to MT and read the name as a proper one. Hill maintains that the name is closely linked with the entire superscription, that is *מלאכי ביד יהוה אל ישראל* *the oracle of the word of Yahweh to Israel by Malachi* in verse 1.1, which “marked (the words) as revealed ‘word of God’ and ‘received canon’ for the Hebrew religious community.”⁶²⁴ Inasmuch as this was something of a technical expression, and while external to the prophetic expression proper, it also doubtless indicated that the words so marked were taken by tradition to be a revelation of יהוה through a particular prophetic personage, and that such was of significance. While, as Baldwin says, “there can be little doubt about the essential unity of this book,”⁶²⁵ some find major disruptions and discontinuities in style and background.⁶²⁶

A brief word on the unusual form of the prophecy is also in order. Essentially it is a catechism, that is a question and answer presentation of the prophets message. Moreover, the precise form of the superscription, *the oracle of the word of Yahweh*, is quite unique, occurring only three times in the Old Testament, here and in Zechariah 9.1 and 12.1. Hill indicates three possible understandings of such tight formulation, namely a construct chain, an emphatic distinction between the first and latter two words, or the latter being in apposition to the former. He opts for apposition, saying such “more narrowly defines the leadword..and indicates the (divine) quality or character of that leadword.”⁶²⁷ It points in itself to the “covenant relationship with

⁶²² P. Smith, *Book of Malachi*, p.7, who says its “*terminus a quo*” is around 510; so, too, R. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*; Coggins, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* allows for a range from 515-330.

⁶²³ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, p.493; R. Smith, *ibid.*, p.298, to some extent; Hill, *Malachi*, p.135, who understands the name to be in “a genitive construct relationship, perhaps after the pattern..in 1 Chr 9.37,” so placing it in closest possible relationship with Yahweh. Hill, we would acknowledge, is by far the most thorough commentary on Malachi in English we have found.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.137. Cited is Tucker’s “Prophetic Superscriptions and the Growth of the Canon,” *Canon and Authority*, eds. Coats and Long (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977). Interesting in this regard is his characterisation of superscriptions as “a genre,” p.56. See, e.g., Isa 1.1; Hos 1.1; Mic 1.1.

⁶²⁵ Haggai, *Zechariah, Malachi*, p.213.

⁶²⁶ McKenzie and Wallace, “Covenant Themes in Malachi,” *CBQ* 45/4 (October 1983), discern a major division between chapters 1-3.12 and 3.13-24, with verses 16-21 representing an addition to the latter; Childs disputes such possibility, *Scripture*, pp.489f.

⁶²⁷ *Malachi*, p.133.

Yahweh,"⁶²⁸ and it is in this sense that both the text at hand and the one following are to be understood and in the context of the mentioned overall theme, *the love of יהוה*.

The passage above seems on the surface to be relatively free of textual difficulties. However, the Syriac and Targum read אב *father* as אביו *his father*. For no apparent reason, other than the fact that such appears seven times in a brief space and in the context, the Septuagint and some other manuscripts add a form of ירא *fear* in connection with אבד *a servant*. Neither of these matters is of great consequence, and the Masoretic text reads perfectly well as is. Further, while not in the text or in versions, אדונים *masters/lords*, has occasioned some difficulty for interpreters, particularly so, says Hill, due to its "synonymous parallelism"⁶²⁹ with אב *father*. While such is rare, the use in this instance is perhaps a proper plural of majesty.⁶³⁰

Central to our concern is precisely this synonymous parallel. Together with it, and his unique dialectical form, the prophet juxtaposes also כבוד *honour* and ירא *fear*. They are not, therefore, to be understood as in any sense counter-opposites but rather as con-substantial in laying hold of and properly responding to אהב יהוה *the love of יהוה*, again the overall theme of the message, as enunciated in verse 1.2. Such is precisely what was lacking in both the people and priests of Israel, the former in responding to the same with utter scepticism and the latter by, as verse 7 puts it bluntly, על מזבחי להם מגאל *offering polluted food upon my altar*. In this the priests had done the worst of all, for by so doing they had become בזוי שמי (literally) *despisers of my Name*. As P. Smith says simply, yet profoundly, "to despise the 'name', therefore, was to despise God himself."⁶³¹ And as R. Smith adds, the opposite of despise is not only "fear" properly understood, but such naturally respectful attitudes as "honour, hearing (listening and obedience), and gladness."⁶³² The indictment of the priests could hardly be more serious or severe.⁶³³ In all this, in this stinging catechism, the priests in particular, but all the people of Israel as well, are to realise that the name יהוה is inextricably bound together with understanding and honouring him as אב *father* in

⁶²⁸ Ibid., p.162.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., p. 175.

⁶³⁰ This is acknowledged somewhat by Hill, *ibid.*, p.175, who makes reference to WO'C #7.4.3; it is fully affirmed by R. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, p.309, who makes reference to BDB #124,i. See Gen 39.2; 42.30; Deut 10.17; Isa 19.4; Hos 12.15; Ps 136.3. For a detailed account of the forms and supposed difficulties, see P. Smith, *Malachi*, p.42.

⁶³¹ *Malachi*, p.26. The commentary here is still brilliant. Citing Geisbrecht, *Die alttestamentliche Schätzung des Gottesnamens*, pp.17f., 67f., 88f., he adds this: "The 'name' and the personality were so closely associated in Hebrew thought as to be almost identical."

⁶³² *Micah-Malachi*, p.312.

⁶³³ See the indictment issue in Deut 32,3ff; Hos 2.1; Isa 1.2ff and the exegesis of such above.

the direct and indirect sense indicated here. Even though its initial reference is first to the priests, and then to the whole people they represent, it is perfectly clear from the subsequent, and indeed parallel employment, that אב *father* refers to the fatherhood and lordship of יהוה. Moreover, it is equally evident that the honour and obligation indicated are in direct reference to the fifth commandment.

Not only is the name יהוה to be properly understood and honoured, but such is to be further grasped in terms of ברית אבותינו *the covenant of our fathers*. This term, too, as *fear*, occurs seven times⁶³⁴ in the short compass and context of this prophecy, as well as in numerous other allusions to the same concept. It appears to be of crucial importance for the overall context as well as our text. In fact, three covenants of יהוה are dealt with in this prophecy, that with Levi, that with the fathers, and that of marriage. Since the covenant notion is specifically and most crucially connected to our next text, we move on to that.

MALACHI 2.10

הלוא אב אחד לכלנו הלוא אל אחד בראנו
מדוע נבגד איש באחיו לחלל ברית אבתנו:

Again, while the verse at hand stands at the beginning of a pericope containing numerous difficulties, that is verses 10-16, the above text itself appears to be trouble free. Even so, certain versions of the Septuagint, Latin, Arabic, and numerous other translations and commentators transpose the first two clauses, presumably, as P. Smith indicates, "to give God the first place, the word 'father' being interpreted of Abraham, or some other man."⁶³⁵ The correct pointing of נבגד *faithless* is an issue, with most interpreters following the Syriac and Targum and reading Qal rather than Niphal.⁶³⁶ Some commentators question the authenticity of the verse entirely. Except for the mentioned pointing issue, we reject such adjustments, for reasons presented below.

Whereas in verse 1.6 its use was clearly metaphorical, the employment of אב *father* here seems more than that.⁶³⁷ For one thing, there is the powerful interrogative

⁶³⁴ Chapter 2.4, 5 (twice, once by implication), 8, 10, 14; 3.1.

⁶³⁵ *Malachi*, p.58.

⁶³⁶ P. Smith, *ibid.*, p.58, commenting on the odd MT form in question, says, "The Niphal..does not occur, nor would it be fitting here."

⁶³⁷ McCasland, "Abba, Father," *JBL*, 72 (1953), p.83, classifies the expression here as "the only clear example of Father as a metonym for God which (he has) observed in the Old Testament." Hill, drawing heavily on WO'C #13.8a and #14.3, says the construction "suggests that Malachi is equating 'father' with 'God' ... [in] specific indefiniteness," *Malachi*, p.224. We will have more to say on both such observations in Part Three, below.

parallel in the very first line, that is *אחד...בראנו...הלוא...אחד is not (he) the one (the) one (who) created us?* It can scarcely be doubted that in this utterance the prophet is identifying *אב father* in the first instance with *אל God* in the second; the parallel is perfectly clear and the identification is complete.⁶³⁸ As Hill points out, while such construction and identification is unique in Malachi among the Twelve, such usage “no doubt echoes”⁶³⁹ similar expressions in Deuteronomy 32.6 and Jeremiah 31.9, as indicated above. Then too, there is the quite obviously significant expression standing squarely in the midst of the parallel, namely *אחד one*, which occurs twice in our text and two times elsewhere in the pericope,⁶⁴⁰ indicating further that *יהוה* is *father* and that he is *One*. With this, according to Hill,⁶⁴¹ Glazier-McDonald concludes that “the paternity of Yahweh..is incontrovertible.” Furthermore, although not in the verse or pericope at hand, there is, again, in the overall context of this brief prophecy the pivotal expression and concept *שמי my name*.⁶⁴² In all, we count seven uses in forty-three verses of unquestioned authenticity. This hardly seems accidental or incidental, and in each instance refers quite clearly to the God of Israel under the language of father. Added to this is the other interrogative in the text at hand, namely *מדוע נבגד איש באחיו why then are we faithless/treacherous to one another?* One form or another of *בגד to be faithless/treacherous* occurs five times here and throughout the pericope.⁶⁴³ Even though faithfulness in marriage is very much in view in verses 14 through 16, it is abundantly clear that in verse 11 faithfulness to *יהוה* is fundamentally at issue, for there Judah *ובעל בת אל נכר has married the daughter of a foreign God*, thus been unfaithful to *יהוה*, the father of all. Hence, this pile-up, so to speak, of crucial terms in this pointed, prophetic catechism.

As stated at the conclusion of the former exegesis, *ברית אבותינו the covenant of our fathers* is manifestly an operative concept linked inseparably to the notion of the fatherhood of God. McKenzie and Wallace set forth a penetrating analysis of this in

⁶³⁸ While some commentators, even current ones, as e.g. Baldwin, *Haggai, et al.*, p.237, take the first instance to be an allusion to human fathers of Israel, as Abraham, Jacob, etc., P. Smith, *Malachi*, p.47, says “human parentage would scarcely be assigned the place of honour, coming first in the sentence, with Yahweh taking second place.”

⁶³⁹ *Malachi*, p.224. He says far more, namely, “it is possible that the prophet is quoting (an ancient or more recent?) a confessional statement about Yahweh (perhaps an allusion to the famous creedal statement of Deut 6:4-5)... [that] Yahweh is both Father and Creator of Israel, *ibid.*, p.225.

⁶⁴⁰ Verses 2, 15, 16.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.224. The quote is not quite precise. The statement she actually makes is “that he created the people is incontrovertible,” *Malachi, The Divine Messenger*, p.83.

⁶⁴² Verses 1.6 (twice), 11 (thrice, plus one by pronoun), 14; 2.2, 5; see exegesis of 1.6, above.

⁶⁴³ See verses 11, 14, 15, 16.

“Covenant Themes in Malachi.”⁶⁴⁴ They delineate carefully the three mentioned covenants, one of Levi (2.8), one with the fathers (2.10), and one of marriage (2.14), taking the overall concept of covenant as something of a golden thread binding the prophetic catechism and message together. Such appears seven times directly and in numerous other allusions. In the case of the Levi covenant, which is to be understood on the basis of internal rather than external reference, the priests have broken it shamefully and stand under the judgement of יהוה. The covenant with Levi was entered into from the side of יהוה because, as verse 2.5 has it, שמי נחת הוא *he was put in awe of my name*. Such covenant is further described as one of החיים והשלום *life and peace*, for the purpose of “serving Yahweh with integrity and instructing the people correctly.” If the terms are breached, המארה *the curse* ensues,⁶⁴⁵ and this is precisely the charge and the consequences Malachi places before the priests in verse 2.2. Even though the priests offered unacceptable food at the table of יהוה, it is this larger disobedience before this One and failure to properly instruct the people in the proper Name indicated that has in fact resulted in such shameful liturgical acts.

The covenant of the fathers⁶⁴⁶ and the covenant of marriage are set forth together in verses 2.10-16 in a way that, despite being in “a difficult passage to interpret,” says McKenzie and Wallace, clearly indicates a parallelism between “acting treacherously against each other” and “profaning the covenant of the fathers.”⁶⁴⁷ In both instances, failure to keep the respective covenants is indicated by the verb בגד *to be faithless/treacherous*, occurring five times in the pericope in this regard, as mentioned above. Herein is an apparent principle: faithfulness to the covenant of יהוה with the fathers requires faithfulness in human covenants, epitomised by marriage; faithfulness in human covenants, as experienced fundamentally in marriage, manifests faithfulness to יהוה. Unfaithfulness, treachery in either is a violation of covenant loyalty. “Yahweh is a partner in the covenant of the fathers and a witness to the covenant of marriage.”⁶⁴⁸ It is a matter both that simple and that profound.

⁶⁴⁴ “Themes” *CBO* 45/4, pp. 549-63.

⁶⁴⁵ The work of D. J. McCarthy on this type of conditional statement of blessings and curses in ancient treaties is cited, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1963), pp. 3, 76.

⁶⁴⁶ While the covenant reference in 3.7 seems to be the Sinai one, 2.10 is taken as a reference to Abraham, so the “covenant of the fathers,” op cit., pp.551,52.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.552.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.553. Further on the covenant of marriage and its relationship to the covenant with the fathers, see Gordon Hugenberger’s *Marriage as Covenant: A Study of Biblical Law and Ethics Governing Marriage, Developed from the Perspective of Malachi*, 1994. Broadening this out, Glazier-McDonald, *Messenger*, p.83, says, “it should follow that all his children, as brothers, display affection and act without treachery in their dealings with one another.”

such could easily be overvalued, coming as they do from a late, minor prophet. On the other hand, he only speaks in such language and theological awareness as has been revealed in the law and the prophets with regard to Israel's identity and infidelity. He was presumably setting forth in his own *analogical* language thoughts that would go "back or upward to God,"⁶⁵⁶ bringing together as it does "the twin theological concepts of God's creation and God's fatherhood of Israel."⁶⁵⁷ We shall weigh up these matters further in Part Three.

PSALM 103.13

כרחם אב על בנים רחם יהוה על ידאיו:

Weiser takes Psalm 103 to be "one of the finest blossoms on the tree of biblical faith," with roots that "reach deep down to where the most powerful springs of biblical piety flow."⁶⁵⁸ Cohen terms it "one of the most joyful compositions in the Psalter."⁶⁵⁹ Moreover, it is manifestly one that "takes the reader to the heart of Old Testament theology,"⁶⁶⁰ one in which "the soul of Israel outran the spirit of the age."⁶⁶¹ Although the psalm bears the designation "of David," and certainly conveys the marks of poetry and song properly attributed to him, its exuberant mood of thanksgiving and Aramaic traces indicate, as Kraus says, most commentators concurring, that it belongs to the post-exilic period.⁶⁶² As no textual or literary problems present themselves with regard to the text at hand, or even the context, we go immediately to it.

The theme of all that is uttered or sung in the psalm is set forth in the opening two verses in notable parallel, "Wiederholung," as Kraus terms it,⁶⁶³ specifically in the expressions יהוה את נפשי את *the name of his holiness*. The most basic meaning of נפש is *breath*, so life force or power from

⁶⁵⁶ Torrance, *Reconstruction*, p.31.

⁶⁵⁷ Hill, *Malachi*, p.255. It is mentioned here that such pairing occurs "only rarely in the OT/HB, heightening the importance Malachi places on issues of marriage and divorce for the social and religious life of Yehud," as we have sought to indicate already in Deut 32.6, Isa 63.16, and 64.7, and to which we return in Part III.

⁶⁵⁸ *The Psalms*, p.657.

⁶⁵⁹ *The Psalms*, p.333.

⁶⁶⁰ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, p. 23.

⁶⁶¹ Forsyth, *God the Holy Father* (London: Independent Press, 1957), p.3.

⁶⁶² *Psalmen*, p.702. While many commentators would want to give it an early post-exilic date, soon after the "happy" return from Babylon (so Cohen), Kraus opts (Anderson concurring) for a late date. "Der Psalm gehört in späte (nachexilische) Zeit. Anspielungen auf die Botschaft Deuterocesajas sind in 9. und in 15f. festzustellen. Bemerkenswert sind die aramäisierenden Suffixe in 3ff."

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.702.

within one's being. **שם** again is the *Name* of יהוה because of קדשי *his holiness*. Accordingly, the psalmist - for himself, for the cantor, for the congregation hearing the psalm - acknowledges deep down, with one's whole diaphragm so to speak, the responsibility of יהוה for and involvement in all things. Of importance, too, is the triple appearance of חסד *mercy*⁶⁶⁴ in verses 4, 8, and 11, elegantly distributed and pointing to the attitude of יהוה toward the whole range of human conditions, that is iniquity, insecurity, and ineptitude in the face of such *holiness and mercy*. It is within this overall context that our text is to be viewed and understood.

The parallel between אב *father* and יהוה in the two parts of the verse could not be more striking, being yoked together on both sides by the repeated expression אב כרחם *as a father pities*, so יהוה *pities*. Moreover, the parallel is made all the more clear by the declaration that all this takes place על בנים *upon/over (his) sons*. The double appearance of *pities*, on each side of the parallel is hardly accidental. In context, as evidenced in verses 4, 8, and 11, but particularly the latter, the *pity* of יהוה is extended appropriately על יראיו *upon all who fear him*, that is, as set forth in verses 1 and 2, who bless, honour, and revere (stand in awe of) his holy Name - and remember all his benefits. It is of the very nature of יהוה the "Father" to be so. Such expresses an essential feature of his character, his חסד *mercy*. And it is to the benefit of his children, and the children's children, as verse 17 puts it, that such is indeed so. Kraus refers to this divine *mercy* as the "Verbundenheit"⁶⁶⁵ of both the text and the people of Israel in relation to יהוה. Yet, as verse 18 makes plain, such is appropriately reserved for בריתו *those who keep his covenant*.⁶⁶⁶ Hence, covenant emerges again as a fundamental factor in the paternity of יהוה.

McKeating has shown how closely the mercy of יהוה is connected to his forgiveness. Verse 12 speaks of הרחיק ממנו את פשעינו *(his) putting from us all our transgressions*. Even so, to understand such forgiveness, it must not be viewed as "an isolated question..(as part of) the concept of salvation as a whole." Here, again, is the mentioned condition: such redemption it is clearly reserved for those who keep covenant. The transgressions at issue, McKeating goes on, "are sins within the

⁶⁶⁴ Better than *steadfast love*, as rendered throughout in the RSV, as the overall context has to do with Yahweh's forgiveness of iniquity and healing of disease. See Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Heseḏ in the Hebrew Bible*.

⁶⁶⁵ "חסד ist die 'Verbundenheit,' das gütige, huldvolle Verhalten im Bundesverhältnis," *Psalmen*, p.704. It is an expression of Yahweh's solidarity with and favourable attitude toward those he has entered into a covenant relationship. Cited are the works of Glüch and Stöbe. See also former note.

⁶⁶⁶ The editor's concern with regard to the shortness of the verse, as well as efforts at reconstruction by Weiser, *Psalms*, p.656 and Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, p.716, have been noted. But MT makes sense as is.

covenant, or lapses from obedience by a man whose ultimate will is to maintain the covenant.”

Faith in the covenant relationship is fundamental to the outlook of the psalmists.

They interpret this covenant not only in national terms but often in terms that are intensely personal and individual.⁶⁶⁷

It is covenant relationship with and obedience to the יהוה, who is creator, elector, and pastor to the nation and individuals of Israel, which is in turn mindful of, reverent toward, and obedient to this holy Name. As Weiser sums up matters, the psalmist is stating the conviction that a “true fatherly love never deserts the child but guides him with a strong hand..(even when he) does wrong.”⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁷ “Divine Forgiveness in the Psalms,” *SJT* 18/1 (1965), p.75. Cited in Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, p.19, and taken up more fully here.

⁶⁶⁸ *Psalms*, p.662.

PART THREE



Analysis and Theological Reflection

The foregoing part of our enquiry has attempted to indicate that a full understanding of the notion of divine paternity in the Old Testament is properly gained by examining the indicated key texts fully and all together. At the conclusion of such examination, however, it is clear that the work is not yet complete - that there are loose ends to be gathered up - textually, conceptually, and theologically. It remains, then, to enquire more fully into certain matters arising, and in their canonical relatedness.

Issue of Paucity

Notwithstanding appearances of a notion of God under language of father in the passages examined, it is evident, on the surface and in precise formulation, that such usage is relatively rare. Not only so, but as we have sought to show, it occurs primarily in the prophets beginning in the latter parts of Isaiah. Moreover, if a late date is assigned for the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32, say, with von Rad,⁶⁶⁹ in the period of the exile, and should Exodus 4.22-23 be assigned, with Noth,⁶⁷⁰ to the Yahwist in the time of David or Solomon, then it is well concluded that the conception of divine paternity is certainly a rather late development in the religious history of Israel.

As we have also mentioned, however, taking the latter opinion and objection first, our exegesis holds that the words in the Song have been enshrined in tradition under the name of Moses, and we choose to leave matters at that. Harrison says that the covenant treaty studies of Kline furnish "significant confirmation of the *prima face* case for the Mosaic origin of the Deuteronomic treaty of the great king."⁶⁷¹ Kline himself maintains that the psalm in Deuteronomy 32 was in fact added by a

⁶⁶⁹ *Deuteronomy*, p.200.

⁶⁷⁰ *Exodus*, p.15.

⁶⁷¹ *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p.649.

theocratic officer.⁶⁷² Even critics of another disposition consider the origin of Song as much earlier than the exile. Eissfeldt, again, places it between 1070 and 1020 BC, albeit as a “*vaticinium ex eventu*,” in the mouth of Moses.⁶⁷³ Considering its style of poetry, vocabulary, and the like, Albright finds its origins only slightly later in the eleventh century BC⁶⁷⁴ It is not at all unlikely, therefore, that that the content received, one way or another, was clearly understood in explicit paternal terms, albeit with perhaps some freedom of poetic expression, hence in a אב *father* formulation, inhibitions indicated below notwithstanding. Even so, the very possibility of early usage returns us, full circle, to the former issue of paucity: if such a notion was known in the Mosaic era on the plains of Moab, and so expressed, why was the expression not more frequently employed? Moreover, if such an idea was indeed revealed early on with such clarity, and in the mentioned form, why is אב *father* not more frequently employed in the tradition as a whole? In a sense, the enigma is heightened.

At least four possible answers have been advanced. First of all, as Quell says, the term “Father” was “strongly freighted with the ancient mythological content of the tribal religions and could thus give rise very easily to erroneous pagan ideas.”⁶⁷⁵ In other words, there was within Israel a fear that such a designation for יהוה would confuse his identity with that of physical paternity as found in surrounding religions of the day. This suggestion has at least two serious flaws. For one thing, the Canaanites, with whom Israel had most contact and from whom the danger of syncretism would have been greatest, did not to our knowledge have a concept of the physical fatherhood of gods, at least not during the time Israel was in the land. Moreover, Gray informs us that in any event the Ras Shamra texts “leave us in little doubt that the Canaanites were less concerned about the worship of El than that of Baal.”⁶⁷⁶ Besides all this, the prophets were not in the habit of avoiding a concept because of dangerous associations with Canaanite religion. For example, nothing was more associated with the corrupt worship of Baal than sex. Yet, as we have seen in our exegesis above, Hosea uses precisely the marriage relationship to characterise true Yahwism to a generation steeped in the traditions of Baal worship. Indeed, Hosea’s

⁶⁷² *Treaty of the Great King*, p.47.

⁶⁷³ *Introduction*, p.227. See the exegesis in question, above.

⁶⁷⁴ “Some Remarks on the Song of Moses in Deut. 32,” *V T IX*, 4 (October 1959), pp.339-43. See also, *Stone Age*, p.195.

⁶⁷⁵ *TDNT V*, p.966. See Wright, “The Terminology of the Old Testament Religion,” *JNES I* (1942), who says there was a perceived fear that at stake was “more of a *physical* than a personal and ethical relationship,” p.411; also, Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, p.145; Watts, “God the Father,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia II*, p.510.

⁶⁷⁶ *Legacy*, p.120

approach was to take the very concept that seemed to him perverted and give it a correct interpretation in light of what he understood to be true Yahwism. In sum, this suggestion presupposes a situation that did not in fact exist. And as far as we have been able to determine, there was no essential difference between what the Canaanites meant by El as “father of man” and the Israelites meant by יהוה as the “father of Israel.”

A second possible answer to the question with regard to the rare usage of the notion of divine paternity in terms of אב *father* is that in early times reference to יהוה in such personal terms was considered too intimate. As Quell again suggests, such intimacy would probably have tended to blur “the sense of distance between Creator and creature.”⁶⁷⁷ This suggestion likewise poses difficulties in light of our study. In the first place, despite somewhat rare usage, we have observed that a notion of divine paternity appeared early in Israelite history and is scattered throughout later generations, albeit in somewhat changing terminology and requiring therefore further analysis. As has been indicated, names containing the element אב together with a divine name are an early phenomenon and appear in material consistent with the Mosaic era. Moreover, in Israel’s early days the father image was not necessarily associated with emotional love as in modern society. Indeed, McCarthy has pointed out that such modern notions of intimacy may actually run counter to stern covenant stipulations necessarily involved in Israel’s primary relationship with יהוה, namely reverential fear, loyalty, and obedience.⁶⁷⁸ Yet further, if fatherhood is taken to be intimate, marriage is even more so. Yet the husband-wife relationship was a favourite metaphor of the early writing prophets. Accordingly, this suggestion can hardly answer the question before us. On the other hand, it may help us state the inquiry more pointedly. That which requires explanation is the wide use of the husband-wife metaphor while the father-son one was so relatively rare.

Still a third, somewhat more plausible answer, is that the concept of divine paternity was simply so familiar that terms of such reference need not be employed, and that accepting such a concept but without expression effectively avoided any possible danger of syncretism. It was plainly unnecessary to enunciate the obvious with regard to true Yahwism as compared to Canaanite perversion, hence allowing the

⁶⁷⁷ *TDNT* V, p.967.

⁶⁷⁸ “Notes on the Love of God in Deuteronomy and the Father-Son Relationship Between Yahweh and Israel,” *CBQ* 27,2 (1965). With regard to Yahweh’s revelation as covenant Lord, which required a proper response in terms of servant/son of reverential fear, this is added: “Of course, we assume that the ultimate motive for this is a careful love, but this is not explicit, much less is it in the foreground,” p.145.

prophets to treat such terminology as but shallow expressions of worship. Even if this were the case, however, one might expect the notion to appear somewhat more often than it does in some form, albeit in somewhat unobtrusive ways. But it does not. Or, one might even expect an occasional polemic against the cheapening of the concept of divine paternity, as Jesus spoke against those having physical descent from Abraham claiming an automatic right relationship with God.⁶⁷⁹ This likewise does not happen.

Fourth, as for possible reasons given for the rare usage of the form אב *father* for יהוה, deBoer has suggested as recently as 1974 that “ancient Israel and Judah.. worshipped motherly aspects of their God” as well.”⁶⁸⁰ This early, much bolder notion of divine motherhood (deBoer even viewing “us” in the creation account in Genesis 1.26 as having “a God and a Goddess as the subject,”⁶⁸¹) was deemed “unsuitable” by the “stabilized piety” of post-exilic Judaism.⁶⁸² Accordingly, such was edited out of the record that has come down to us, allegedly because the editors were men guarding their status. While this is not asserted, and doubtless deBoer would object, we may suppose by the same logic that such piety would also have found god language of this kind problematic because of the physical and sexual implications involved. In any event, although he adheres to a more pervasive presence of a “Father-God” figure in the Old Testament than has been generally acknowledged, and this evidently for his own agenda, we find the thesis rather far-fetched and contrary to our own research and exegesis.

Our study and analysis causes us to bring forth a fifth likely explanation. We hold that the main reason the husband-wife relationship became the favourite metaphor of the early writing prophets rather than the father-son one is precisely because of the definite covenantal character of marriage. The covenant relationship is clearly the major metaphor employed in the Old Testament to describe the relationship between יהוה and Israel. It is to be expected, then, that subsidiary metaphors would serve their purpose best to the extent that they point up the covenantal association. This, as we have seen, is precisely what is found in Hosea. He illustrates the covenant of יהוה with his people by means of another life relationship under a covenant, that is marriage. He explains his procedures with Israel by means of a husband’s actions with regard to his wife. Marriage vows are

⁶⁷⁹ Matt 3.9-10; Luke 3.7-9; John 8.33.

⁶⁸⁰ *Fatherhood and Motherhood in Israelite and Judean Piety*, p.37.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.46

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, pp.31,43. Criticism is evident with regard to cultural conditioning in such piety. Even so, deBoer seems himself conditioned by the feminist ideology of the late twentieth century in which he lectured and wrote, as evidenced by his title and acknowledged debt to Tribble.

appropriately similar to the covenant at Sinai; the people's alliances with other gods and kings are comparable to the outrages of adultery and prostitution; even the divorce formula conveys annulment of the covenant. Thus the marriage relationship found its metaphorical usefulness among the prophets not only because of the love and intimate experience involved, but precisely because it portrayed so clearly and vividly the everyday covenant arrangement and expectation of that between יהוה and Israel.

McCarthy has pointed out,⁶⁸³ and we have sought to show in our exegesis, that even the father-son metaphor, when employed, is likewise set against the covenant framework. Yet that figure of speech is much less adaptable to the situation envisioned. For one thing, such is a natural relationship, as one does not become a son through vows or agreement. It better indicates man's relationship with God through creation than in covenant.

On the other hand, although not exclusively so, the Old Testament is more concerned with the special relationship of יהוה with his chosen, elected, covenanted people Israel than with his natural relationship with all mankind. This suggests a first sub-thesis and hypothesis: יהוה is to be understood above all as Israel's Father-Elector, which thesis will be developed subsequently in our theological reflections. Moreover, there is little danger of one going after another father. Put another way, it is uncommon to disown one's son for his proving unfaithful to the father-son relationship, thus annulling the covenant. On the other hand, the father-son relationship is best suited to portray exactly that aspect of the relationship of יהוה to Israel that both Hosea and Jeremiah desire, as we have seen in the reference to Israel as Ephraim. When the covenant has been broken, the appropriate law suit transacted, the relationship annulled, and punishment inflicted, there is in human terms a sense of utter abandonment. In terms of his love, however, never. Hence, the fatherhood metaphor becomes the most appropriate. No matter how rebellious, a son is still a son. Jeremiah, as we have seen, puts it plainly in 31.20b,
for as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still! Therefore my bowels groan for him (and) surely I will have pity on him!

⁶⁸³ "Notes," *CBQ* 27,2, (1965), pp.144ff.

Matters of Type and Time of Occurrence

The use of אב and אבא to express divine paternity in the sixteen texts handled above are, according to Jenni,⁶⁸⁴ of a mixed sort. By our tabulation they contain thirty-one expressions of the concept in all, plus a dozen or so circumlocutions to the same effect, five expressing one sense of physical relationship or another, eleven speaking in adoptive terms, the remainder addressing matters in an apparent metaphorical way. McCasland classifies usage of the אב *father* form as appellative and metonymic, the former frequent, including Isaiah 1.2, 63.16, 64.8, and Jeremiah 31.9, the latter only in Malachi 2.10.⁶⁸⁵ Such classification is problematic. For one thing, while in a sense all human language is naturally metaphorical, transferring meaning from objective matters to subjective words and images, our enquiry presupposes supernatural objectivity and words, which are by definition metaphysical. It is not always clear how such transfer of meaning takes place, even on the former level. It is even more unclear in the metaphysical sphere. Furthermore, while we do not possess ability to undertake a detailed study of the linguistic factors involved, either in English or Hebrew, the essential distinction between a metaphor and a metonym is not easy to discern by definition or in actual practice, as both have to do with a transferred sense of meaning. McCasland has not clarified this. Even so, we have pressed on with our exegesis above, noting that some expressions are manifestly more than metaphorical, as for example in Deuteronomy 32.6b and Malachi 2.10. We carry on in these enquiries, swept by the sense that "the metaphor of the poet is perfectly true in fact, for life is a stage."⁶⁸⁶

While acknowledging that the expressions of physical relationship to אבא employed in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah emerged somewhat out of formal and prophetic opposition to vegetation and fertility cults, Jenni further holds that the thought put forth in such were largely under the influence of Canaanite mythology and that, with Eissfeldt and Pope,⁶⁸⁷ even the form אבך, *your father* is said to rest upon the Canaanite exclamation *tr. il.abh*, "Bull El, your (i.e. Baal's) father." Again,

⁶⁸⁴ THAT I, pp.15ff.

⁶⁸⁵ "Abba, Father," *JBL*, 72 (1953), pp.83f. While he fails to define his understanding of metonym, we take it in the standard sense of a substitute, as is crown for the monarchy, a horn to authority, or in the scripture sense, life for pilgrimage. He says the lone use of אב in Malachi 2.10 "is enough to indicate that the word has come to be used in this sense by the time of (the prophet), presumably the fifth century B. C." See also his article on "Some New Testament Metonyms for God," *JBL* 68, ii (1949), pp.99-113.

⁶⁸⁶ Mozley, *University Sermons xvi* (1877), p.265, cited in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd Ed., Vol.9, p.676.

⁶⁸⁷ See Part One, p.8, of this dissertation.

we have chosen not to take up references of this sort with regard to the king and the fatherhood of יהוה, which by definition brings the royal ideologies of the ancient Near East into play in that regard and so diverts attention from our principal concern, namely his fatherly relationship with the people of Israel as a whole.

In these, as we have seen, and unlike usage observed in surrounding religions, there is sparse appearance of anything approaching direct address in expressing the fatherhood of God. Only the virtual double appearance of אַתָּה יְהוָה אֲבִינוּ, *you יהוה (are) father of us*, in Isaiah 63.16 and 64.7, has a vocative function. Why is this so? And why the sudden emergence at this relatively late juncture? The questions take us into the realm of speculation. Seitz opines, as noted in the exegesis above, that the emergence of the form at this particular juncture has to do with “adjudicating the problem of the broken covenant.”⁶⁸⁸ Certainly the issue at hand, as we have agreed, is that Israel had wandered from the ways of יהוה and his covenant agreements with them - that they were in spiritual and moral “rags,” but that they were, however, at a critical turning point, finally confessing their sin, and at last fully recognising themselves as the work of his creative “hand.” And with a promised “new heavens and a new earth” clearly dominating chapters 65 and 66, there can be no doubt whatever that creation is in view, that יהוה is indeed father of it all and that he may be properly addressed as such. Based on our exegesis, we would further hold that such address, in all its predicative force, is fully present in הֲלוֹא הוּא אֲבִיךָ קֵנֶךָ *is not he your father who brought you up?*, albeit in rhetorical form. Moreover, with Eissfeldt and Albright, and certainly with Kline,⁶⁸⁹ we would even maintain that in some sense the notion could very well have been in know in time of Moses and the burning bush. If so, there too, as in Isaiah chapters 63ff., the matters at issue are Israel’s well being in light of their election by and covenant with יהוה and the praise due his name.

Of course, the questions of where such an illustrious expression as אב *father* might have been during the intervening years and how it happens to appear full blown only at this late point in the prophetic testimony require yet additional explanation. The just-mentioned connection with creation, proposed by Seitz, may be even further suggestive. Even a glance at Young’s Concordance⁶⁹⁰ yields further ground for possibly fruitful speculation here. Of the forty-five appearances of ברא *create* in the entire Old Testament, in either verb or noun form, it is noted that twenty-one are

⁶⁸⁸ See pp. 118, 122, n.547, above.

⁶⁸⁹ See pp.105f., above.

⁶⁹⁰ Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, Rev. ed. (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1882). p. 210.

located in the late section of Isaiah,⁶⁹¹ more than double the number in Genesis itself. Such pattern of appearance adds to the picture of a prophet with creation definitely on his mind. Even so, the context clearly has to do with the condition of one very special segment of that larger creation, namely Israel's confession of guilt for broken covenant. At the same time, with the renewal of the same by the grace of קדש ישראל (*the*) *Holy One of Israel*, the One focused upon is the One who always keeps covenant with his people, no matter what, particularly if they turn to him in utterly true penitence. His other name says the prophet here is אב *father*. His being named so is sudden, but his character is abiding. This accords entirely with our exegesis.

As Isaiah had creation on his mind, apparently this קדש ישראל *Holy One of Israel* circumscribed and controlled those thoughts. The expression occurs thirty-four times in five books of the Old Testament, twenty-one of these in Isaiah.⁶⁹² Moreover, the usage is rather evenly distributed amongst the early and late chapters of the book. Indeed, while we cannot pursue the matter in this study, the term seems to be one that significantly unites the different parts of the prophetic testimony. Be that as it may, ברא *create/form* and קדש ישראל are so yoked in the thought and speech of the prophet, together with בחר *choose/make covenant with*, as to make a fundamental prophetic pronouncement from on high. It declares, climactically in 66.22-23, that just this Holy One, who has created all humanity and has called and specially covenanted with a select segment amongst it, Israel, all for his own higher purposes, now affirms his character, constancy, and commitment to renewing such matters so that עמדים לפני (*all concerned might*) *endure before (him)* – forever.

Not only so, and of utmost importance, this “startling” occurrence of אב *father* in Isaiah 63.16 and 64.7, as indicated in our exegesis, is always in close connection with יהוה, as in 1.2,4 and 30.1,9. A comparison with the Tetragrammaton seems invited. Its form occurs with virtual unabashed frequency in the Old Testament.⁶⁹³ On the other hand, there developed an increasing tendency not to utter this name of God in reading the Scriptures and certainly not to employ it in ordinary speech. When and why this reluctance arose is unclear. Yet its presence is evident in persistent attempts to pronounce יהוה with vowels of Adoni or Elohim as well as its later utterance only in services in the Temple while blessing the people (Numbers 6.22-27)

⁶⁹¹ 40.26,28; 42.5; 43.1,7,15; 45.7(2x),8,12,18(2x);48.7; 54.16(2x);57.19;65.17,18(2x)

⁶⁹² 1.4; 5.19,24;10.17,20; 12.6;17.7; 29.19; 30.11,15; 31.1; 37.23; 37.23; 41.14,16,20; 43.14,15; 45.11;47.4; 48.17; 49.7(2x).

⁶⁹³ For statistics, see Ludwig Blau, “Tetragrammaton”, *The Jewish Encyclopaedia* 12, p.118: 5,410 times on its own, plus 579 appearances with other divine designations, as אדני *Lord*.

and on Yom Kippur in post-exilic times. It is supposed that such reserve arose out of intense reverence for the *nomen sacrum* while in the Babylonian exile and out of fear of heathen contamination in an unclean land.⁶⁹⁴ Even so, this evidence and such tendency would not have manifested themselves unless there was a prevailing ecclesiastical and popular disposition and consensus on the matter.”⁶⁹⁵ Such suggests a further, secondary thesis and interim hypothesis (stated popularly, and somewhat outside temporal considerations): As יהוה was so holy as scarcely to be uttered, so אב was so personal and familiar as to elicit like reticence, if not utter silence, even though both concepts were of fundamental conviction. They were each the holiest of names. Contrariwise, in a strange symbiosis, as reticence with regard to the former became formalised in Temple liturgy in post-exilic times, so the latter came more to the fore as acceptable, albeit still reserved, expression.⁶⁹⁶

Canonical Location and Canonical Shaping

If our text selection and exegesis is allowed, it is evident that the use of בן and אב to express divine paternity occurs in each division of the Old Testament canon. It seems to us that that fact is significant in itself. Furthermore, such usage is observed to occur at or near the approximate close of one division and the opening of another, understanding with Leiman, however, the “fluidity of the Prophets-Hagiographa (books being freely assigned to either division).” [*Canonization*, p.33.] These facts suggest several things.

We have seen the difficulty with assigning theological priority to “father” language on either a strictly diachronic model (giving value to “original” or “older” attestations), or in terms of simple numerical frequency (how often the Hebrew word occur). When one reads instead in terms of canonical shaping and larger divisions of the Old Testament scriptures, as these begin to take final form, the usage of “father” language can be noted at critical junctures in the canonical shaping of each division of the Hebrew canon. In the final form of Deuteronomy, the editor has placed the language of “father,” in decisive formal song, in the mouth of Moses, specifically in 32.6 and 18, in which he “teaches the people as a testimony against their furrier

⁶⁹⁴ Blau cites Geiger, Dalman, and Jacob in support of this supposition, *ibid.*, p.119. Eisenstein, *JE* 9, p.162, suggests “Oriental etiquette” as an even older source of such reserve in speaking the name of even a teacher (II Kgs 8.5).

⁶⁹⁵ Moore, *Judaism*, p.203. He opines that in rabbinical literature at this time “the paternal-filial relation between God and man is a common theme.”

⁶⁹⁶ See further at pp.165ff. of this dissertation.

disobedience.”⁶⁹⁷ As children of God, such instruction and concern with disobedience presumably comprehended a notion of the “purity of Israel’s worship,”⁶⁹⁸ as indicated in Deuteronomy 14.1-2, which we have understood in our exegesis as “the responsibility of holiness in his name.” We have detected quite ancient elements in all this, but with Childs we also understand them “as an important example of canonical shaping of the final form of ancient tradition.”⁶⁹⁹ Such elements of fatherhood language with regard to God are to be viewed as part of the Law governing the Prophets.

Isaiah is located at a signal position at the head of the major prophets, and the appearance of the father-son conceptually in its opening and closing chapters is notable. Seitz⁷⁰⁰ has drawn attention to the striking emergence of explicit father language in the context of threatened covenant in chapters 63-64. We have provided an exegesis of the passages as within a prayer form. Moreover, Childs makes it abundantly clear that they form part of a spiritualised section, which while placed in an eighth-century context, is “not tied to a specific referent, but directed to the future..to the redemptive plan of God for all of history.”⁷⁰¹ God, then, is to be understood in eschatological terms as the “Father creator” and “Father redeemer” of all for all time. Given the psalm form and bearing in mind the mentioned fluidity between the Prophetic books and the Writings, such canonical shaping might be seen as something of a bridge between the two. Indeed, it is obvious that Isaiah accomplishes the transition from the former to the latter, and its location is significant. Even though, historically speaking, it contains material which is arguably later than the prophetic books which follow (Jeremiah and Ezekiel), it has been given the opening, historically more comprehensive position.⁷⁰² From the perspective of that comprehensiveness, it is fair to conclude that “father” language is understood to be constitutive of Israel’s basic relationship to God “from generation to generation.”

Finally, at the close of the prophetic collection, Malachi may be viewed from a like perspective. Childs states that the “final form of the book reflects a profoundly

⁶⁹⁷ Childs, *Introduction*, p.220. See also, James W. Watts, *Psalms and Story, Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), p.66.

⁶⁹⁸ Childs, *ibid.*, p.218f. It is added: “The demand for purity of worship by means of centralization has been expanded into a major force within the canonical shape of the book.”

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.219.

⁷⁰⁰ See his forthcoming commentary.

⁷⁰¹ *Introduction*, p.326.

⁷⁰² There is a rabbinic citation which places Isaiah following Jeremiah and Ezekiel, on roughly historical grounds (Jeremiah is said to be all judgment; Ezekiel first judgment, then salvation; Isaiah all salvation; see Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), p.1.

theological understanding of the people of God.” Such understanding, couched in the common oracular form, was clearly intended to relate Malachi to the great prophets in such a way as to gather up the essence of the entire prophetic message: the law and the prophets are “an essential unity within the divine purpose.”⁷⁰³ And this unity, the canonical form of Malachi says, is intimately bound together in the unity of אלהים *God* under the designation אב *father*, “no doubt echo(ing)” as he does Deuteronomy 32.6 and Jeremiah 31.9.⁷⁰⁴ Furthermore, such understanding is to be understood in terms of the covenant, from that with Abraham to that of faithfulness in all human covenants. The final form of Malachi, so shaped, apparently intends that all this be a final catechism incorporating the law and closing the prophets.

Psalm 103 may also be viewed, in a sense, as closing the Writings, being canonically shaped accordingly. This is said realizing that in fact it is something of an opening to the remaining songs of praise to God, and that the entire Psalter in Hebrew Scripture opens the canonical section of Writings.⁷⁰⁵ Even so, as the alpha or the omega, such praise throughout is directed toward to the God of the Law, who created all, who entered into covenant with Israel, and who will have mercy on all those properly honoring him. And this praise is entirely consistent with the prophets. In sum, then, Psalm 103.13 strikes a distinct note likewise focusing on יהוה under the designation אב *father*. Psalm 103 understands God as Father through all time.

One final brief note on canonical shaping as a phenomenon. Gerald T. Sheppard has proposed a possibly interesting feature of such shaping. In a study entitled “The Epilogue of Qoheleth,”⁷⁰⁶ he endeavours to move beyond mere redactional observations, concerned as they are largely with accounting for the shift from direct address by the preacher to a third person description of him. Accepting the said redaction, he proposes that the Epilogue is in reality “a thematizing of the book,” such having the effect of providing “an adaptive commentary on Qoheleth.”⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰³ *Introduction*, p.497.

⁷⁰⁴ Hill, *Malachi*, p.224; see p.138, n.639, above.

⁷⁰⁵ See *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, ed. J. Clinton McCann (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), particularly Gerald H. Wilson, “Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalms,” pp.72-82; Walter Bruggemann, “Response to James L. Mays, ‘The Question of Context,’” pp.29-41; J. Clinton McCann, “Book I-III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter,” pp.93-107. See too, Wilson’s *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (SBL Dissertation Series 76; Chico, CA: Scholar’s Press, 1985; “Evidence of Editorial Divisions in the Hebrew Psalter,” *VT* 34 (1984), pp.357; “The Use of Royal Psalms at the ‘Seams’ of the Hebrew Psalter,” *JSOT* 35 (1986), pp.85-94; also Bruggemann’s “Bounded by Obedience and Praise: The Psalms as Canon,” *JSOT* 50 (1991), pp.63-92; and Seitz, “Royal Promises in the Canonical Books of Isaiah and the Psalms,” *Word Without End*, pp.150-67.

⁷⁰⁶ *CBQ* 39 (1977), pp.182-89.

⁷⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.186.

Rather than viewing the positive nature of the Epilogue as sign of a redactor's effort to soften its negative tone, and bring it into line with Proverbs, Sheppard finds sufficient parallels in vocabulary and content to comprehend such range of thought entirely "within Qoheleth."⁷⁰⁸ Further, and specifically, he sees direct correspondence with regard to God's judgment in 3.16-17 and 12.14. In all, however, he observes something at work that "ventures a synopsis of wisdom broader than Qoheleth and unlike that of Proverbs," something that indicates "correspondences between Qoheleth and Sirach."⁷⁰⁹

Sirach 17.6-15 is seen to be concerned with divine adjudication of good and evil, just as Qoheleth 12.14. Not only so, but also in Sirach 2.16 he finds, "Those who fear the Lord disobey not his words; those who love him are filled *with his Torah*." Overall, Sheppard finds between the Epilogue of Qoheleth and Sirach a similar "perspective" indicating a common "estimate of sacred wisdom."⁷¹⁰ Even more venturesome, he detects in the Epilogue's mention of "these" in verse 12 a hint to the "words of the wise" in verse 11, indicating for the writer either an "early canonical division of wisdom" embracing perhaps only Proverbs and Qoheleth or underlining wisdom's link to Solomon as in Qoheleth 1.1.

In sum, one can see that the Epilogue "provides a rare glimpse into comprehensive, canon-conscious formulation of what the purpose of biblical wisdom is."⁷¹¹ Although we are unable to pursue the matter here, the implications for canon-consciousness in the arrangement of our passages and the language of Father for the God of Israel are potentially enormous and doubtless worthy of a study of its own.

The theological significance of "father" language does not turn on either numerical frequency or historicist claims as to early or late tradition. Rather, its significance is to be sought in terms of canonical shaping and the effect achieved by positioning and cross-referencing, in something of the manner Sheppard has shown in his study on the Epilogue of Qoheleth and in his more extended work. This positioning and cross-referencing shows a perspective in which God as father encompasses Israel's fundamental relationship: in creation, with Moses and the Prophets, and into a future whose horizon the Old Testament displays but does not yet know in complete fulfillment. The widescale appearance of father language in the

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid., p.185.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., p.186. Referenced in this regard are the studies of Gasser, McNeile, and Middendorp.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid., p.187.

⁷¹¹ Ibid., p.189. This concept is more fully developed in Sheppard's *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct* (1980). Childs already acknowledged the influence of Sheppard in 1979, *Introduction*, p.79.

New Testament encloses and fulfills this horizon, as the Son speaks the language of father from of old, and then shares that language with Israel, that all may call on the name once revealed as יהוה to God's chosen people Israel. "Our Father who art in heaven" is Old Testament language, that is in terms of אב, given through Christ to the world the Father created and has restored in his Son.

God of the Fathers

One of the most prominent constructions in the Old Testament is אלהי אביך *the God of your father*. On its own and linked together specially with the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as occasionally with David and Solomon, in *status constructus*, in both singular and plural forms of the latter element, the formulation occurs well over one hundred times.⁷¹² A lone text, I Chronicles 29.10, has Israel in the construction rather than the name of an individual patriarch, although it is apparent from the context that such is a synonym for Jacob. Furthermore, approximately one third such appearances overall are in direct apposition to יהוה.

The most thoroughgoing study to date on the background and likely importance of the construction was published in Albrecht Alt's *Der Gott der Väter, Ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte israelitischen Religion* in 1929.⁷¹³ Building on the basis that "Israel came into existence because their tribes united in the worship of the God Yahweh," he asks whether or not the tribes brought a "religious inheritance" with them which "continued and developed" without the necessity of a "radical break with (their) past."⁷¹⁴ Moreover, he is of the opinion that the literary editors composed much of the given traditional materials themselves, so that a first order of business is to go behind such secondary elements and arrive at the genuine tradition of the people, that is behind the classical statements of the Elohist in Exodus 3 and the "conscious intervention of the writer."⁷¹⁵ This endeavour requires a major sifting of the so-called J and E documents, sorting out the well-intentioned but doubtless contrived united formula⁷¹⁶ in the mentioned Exodus passage and so yielding the more authentic and separate ones in Genesis. Of first importance is the individual

⁷¹² A complete list with statistics is given by Jenni, *TWAT I*, pp.11f. Given this information, it is clear that Jer 19.4 is a negative reference and than Dan 11.37 points to a heathen god. In all, Jenni says the term is "einem wichtigen begriff der theologischen Sprache" from the seventh century B.C. onwards."

⁷¹³ This was read in the German original prior to the publication of the said translation, but here we work largely on the basis of the English translation by Wilson.

⁷¹⁴ *Ibid.*, "The God of the Fathers," pp.3,4.

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.12.

⁷¹⁶ Alt characterises the formula as a late "liturgical title" of remarkable persistence, but which "has been so rubbed smooth by time that it no longer betrays anything of its origin," *ibid.*, 11.

formula *אלהי אברהם אביך* *I am the God of Abraham your father* of 26.24, that is without further patriarchal names. Moving on to 31.53, despite its source-analysis difficulties, it is observed that both Jacob and Laban also had a paternal deity.⁷¹⁷ From this Alt concludes, initially, that indeed the patriarchs “were divided according to their tribes in their religious belief and practice,”⁷¹⁸ that is into three separate cults of the gods of the Fathers: Abraham at Mamre, Isaac at Beersheba, and Jacob at Bethel.

With such a question, method, and initial conclusion in mind, Alt has amassed an impressive array of inscriptions from Syria and Arabia in order to compare the *God of the Fathers* and the *Elim*, the local numina, who appear from time to time in the sagas of the patriarchs.⁷¹⁹ He opines that “there is no difficulty in supposing that the Israelite took part at the same time in the worship of the gods whose titles appear here.”⁷²⁰ On the other hand, it is forcefully maintained that in both the Yahwist and Elohist accounts “the God of the Fathers is a living element in these stories, whereas the *Elim* are merely relics.”⁷²¹ Even so, it is said that the editor’s hand is evident in diminishing the role of the local numina while increasing that of the God of the Fathers. So the question is posed: “Was the God of the Fathers in fact an entirely new figure introduced into the tradition by the literary editors?”⁷²² It is answered decisively in the negative. Not only is it evident that the Yahwist is bound by an existing tradition regarding the divine figure in question, but both the Yahwist and the Elohist present throughout that the God of the Fathers and *יהוה*, as revealed to Moses and by name, are “expressly or implicitly one and the same.”⁷²³ The religion of the former and the latter are seen to share “one essential mark,” namely that God and man are related not to a fixed place and time but to the nation as a whole throughout its history. Indeed, “the gods of the Fathers were the *tutors* leading to the greater God, who later replaced them completely.”⁷²⁴

⁷¹⁷ Noting a division of opinion as to which source, Yahwist or Elohist, or both, has had a hand in the verse in view, Alt says, “I do not feel that I can give a certain decision,” *ibid.*, p.17.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁷¹⁹ Gen 14.18ff; 16.13; 17.1; 21.33; 31.13; 35.7.

⁷²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.8.

⁷²¹ *Ibid.*, p.21.

⁷²² *Ibid.*, p.21.

⁷²³ *Ibid.*, p.24. To this is added, “We are more than ever forced to the conclusion that this figure was not created by the Yahwist himself, but must have had a place in the pre-literary tradition. The same is true of the Elohist. The general term for God, *Elohim*, is an even more transparent device for glossing over the older materials.”

⁷²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.61f. Important to mention here is Morgenstern’s comment with regard to Genesis 49.25 and the significance of the indicated North-Semitic god *’El*, identified as *thy Father*. Noting the text is “one passage of unmistakably pre-exilic” date, he says, “’El seems to be portrayed here as the father or creator-god, the source of human life, precisely the same role in which, as we have seen, he appears

It has not been our intention to critique in the strict sense Alt's impressive collection of inscriptions or erudite thesis, but only to indicate its essence and determine its possible importance for our study. On the basis of what has been here observed, we want to make these observations on the way to later conclusions. First of all, his efforts seem either to have been opposed, to have received only partial attention, or to have been merely taken somewhat for granted and ignored, at least in terms of the far-reaching theological consequences they invite and the attention they therefore seem to deserve.⁷²⁵ Of course, and primarily, Noth, Von Rad, and Cross have carried his thesis forward rather magnificently. On the other hand, Moberly's criticism and sub-thesis strikes us as being point on, namely that such thinkers have largely pursued matters on the old agenda, translating "questions of theology into questions of history."⁷²⁶ Secondly, we want to express our own sense, whether or not we agree totally with either Alt's method or evolutionary stance, or have even grasped those fully, that indeed the religion of the Fathers has more significance than has been generally understood. Finally, the religious thought and language surrounding and/or growing out of the Fathers, including the characteristic designation at hand, had to have had a deterring effect on the use of the term אֱלֹהִים for God. The very frequency of the formula itself as well as its doubtless evocative spiritual sense would surely have put a damper on ease of such expression. Then too, inasmuch as יהוה is the very name

more than once in later biblical literature," "Divine Triad in Biblical Mythology," *JBL* 64 (1945), p.26. Assuming Alt's thesis of a religious inheritance from the Fathers which was somehow folded into Yahvism, we find here a left hand authentication of the fatherhood of God.

⁷²⁵ Hofijzer, *Die Verheissungen and die drei Erzväter* (1956), opposes Alt's thesis in general, mainly on the basis of a perceived later date for the Genesis material. On the other hand, according to Hyatt, "Yahweh as 'The God of My Father,'" *VT* 5 (1955), pp.132ff., Gordon, May, and himself accept the main lines of the thesis, but without really planting on the new ground broken. Albright, *Stone Age*, pp.248, acknowledges the effort, but likewise leaves matters at that. Nielsen, *Oral Tradition*, p.58, recognises the importance of the "father's oral teaching." Hamerton-Kelley, *God the Father*, pp.21ff., and "God the Father in Jesus' Religious Heritage," *God as Father?* (1981), ed. Metz and Schillebeeckx, pp.96ff., seems to build upon Alt's work, yet strangely fails to mention him; in the former work he indicates indebtedness to James, *The Worship of the Sky God, A Comparative Study in Semitic and Indo-European Religion* (1963). On the other hand, Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology in Outline* (1978), pp.27-32, pays due attention to the ground-breaking efforts of Alt and draws out their theological relevance in terms of the promise to the God of Abraham and his descendants. Alt himself issues the ultimate challenge: "Old Testament scholars are neglecting a duty if they continue to pass over the tradition of the God of the Fathers without making serious use of the opportunity for comparison offered by this material, which has been lying ready for use for some decades," *Fathers*, p.45.

⁷²⁶ *The Old Testament of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p.124. To this is added: "The point is that theology may have an agenda and appropriate criteria of its own; regrettably, theological issues are sometimes foreclosed by being treated as questions of religious history." See his pp.112ff. for an exhaustive outline of the position of Alt, as well as that of von Rad, Cross, and Gottwald. Also, see section on *Name* below with regard to his main thesis.

of Israel's God, and as such considered, in time, too sacred to be spoken, it is highly likely that it would have also been thought, by the same logic of piety, inappropriate and even spiritually improper to utter אב in an easy and frequent manner. While we have no specific textual evidence, such perhaps came under the theological and social rubric of "things that should not be done" or "not done in Israel."⁷²⁷ Besides, as Alt has clearly shown, since the very "identification of Yahweh with the God of the Fathers"⁷²⁸ was so spiritually fundamental, perhaps liturgically as well as conceptually, the element of faith in one might well have been so self-evident as not to require mention of the other. It would have been unseemly superfluity.

Another formula-like expression of possible significance in connection with the fathers is this found in I Kings 2.10: וישכב דוד עם אבתיו ויקבר בעיר דוד *Then David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.* With some variation, it occurs forty times in the Old Testament, largely in Kings and Chronicles in connection with the death and burial of the kings. A like saying appears in II Kings 22.20, אספך על אבתך *I will gather you to your fathers*; it occurs in similar fashion only in Genesis 49.29 and Judges 2.10, and in a varied form in Genesis 15.15. Clearly all have to do with the burial of the dead, not only of the kings but also, as the Judges passage indicates, "whole generations," that is all the people. And in all instances אבות *fathers* is the invariable element. Jenni terms the formula a euphemism for death, and classifies it as "theologically neutral."⁷²⁹ Be that as it may, the manner of speech and other burial practices has raised the issue of whether or not there existed among the ancient Israelites a cult of the dead, even necromancy.⁷³⁰ Based on the textual

⁷²⁷ See respectively Gen 20.9; 29.26; II Sam 13.12. In the first instance, is the very forceful expression *doing great sins [things] which ought not to be done.* Commenting on the latter, McCarter, *II Samuel*, pp.322f., with reference to Gerleman, Phillips, and Roth, quotes Phillips as saying it is "a general expression for serious disorderly and unruly action resulting in the breakup of an existing relationship whether between tribes, within the family, in a business arrangement, in a marriage or with God. It indicates the end of an existing order consequent upon breach of the rules which maintain that order." See also Anthony Phillips' Short Note "NEBALAH - a term for serious disorderly and unruly conduct," *VT* 25, pp.237-41.

⁷²⁸ *Fathers*, p.13.

⁷²⁹ *THAT I*, p.11.

⁷³⁰ Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, p.119, finds, based on parallels in the latter, that indeed such a cult existed within the former. Against such, deVaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, pp.56-61. See also, Hachlili, "Burials," *ABD* 1, pp.785-94. In the latter, commenting on indications of burial provisions placed in tombs, it is said that "the deceased were thought to need nourishment and the protection afforded both by weapons and symbolically by colored and metal jewelry," p.785. With great care, deVaux distinguishes between the rather rich funerary practices of the Canaanite period and the rather simpler and quite symbolic ones at the end of the Israelite period, observing that "Men's ideas of the fate of the dead had progressed, and their offerings had only symbolic value," p.57. He is also concerned to avoid two frequent extremes in viewing such matters: the argument that there existed in Israel a cult of the dead, wherein the deceased were either feared or

evidence, informed by the studies of deVaux and Hachlili, it is concluded here that the formula and associated burial practices in no way indicate anything like ancestor worship or any sort of communication with the deceased, but only proper and formal religious respect for them as well as provision for some sort of afterlife. In any event, inasmuch as all involved was a decidedly spiritual matter and manifestly focused on the father, it too presented an effective barrier to overly casual and frequent use of אב *father*, not only in precisely such religious circumstances, but in an even broader spiritual sense. There was something of an almost unspeakable spiritual essence about the designation, possibly somewhat reserved for the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that is the God of the fathers or for such ultimate religious experiences as being gathered and buried with fathers and fatherly ancestors.

The Inevitability of Patriarchy

In 1973 Steven Goldberg, a sociologist, published a remarkable little scientific work entitled *The Inevitability of Patriarchy*. He characterises it as theory, "a systematic network of logically interconnected hypotheses which offer a general explanation of specific observations,"⁷³¹ in this instance male-female differences and the fact that the former always dominate. The thesis of the work and the theory is succinctly put:

The universality of patriarchy, male attainment, and male dominance are the social results of the fact that the male has a stronger tendency to exhibit whatever behaviour is necessary for attainment of hierarchical and dyadic dominance, and that this differentiation of dominance tendency is the result of physiological difference between males and females.⁷³²

The ground of both the difference and such outcome is perceived as biological, based on observable inborn hormonal distinctives. The consequence of such biological distinctions is universal patriarchy, defined as "any system of organization in which the overwhelming number of upper positions in hierarchies are occupied by males."⁷³³ Indeed, all anthropologists said to agree, it is further asserted that "there is not, nor has there ever been, any society that even remotely failed to associate

courted, even having a kind of divinity; or the opposite, the contention that such practices and associated rites were little more than expressions "of sorrow at the loss of a loved one.. We conclude that the dead were honoured in a religious spirit, but that no cult was paid to them," p.61

⁷³¹ *Inevitability*, p.13.

⁷³² *Ibid.*, p.64.

⁷³³ *Ibid.*, p.25.

authority and leadership in suprafamilial areas with the male.”⁷³⁴ Moreover, male dominance itself - defined, albeit with greater difficulty, as the one who “takes the lead” in male-female relationships - is said to be “only almost universal, rather than universal.”⁷³⁵ These two realities, patriarchy and male dominance, emanate from the said hormonal differences and manifest themselves in the male’s greater aggressiveness, which in turn allow him to dominate in on-going familial and social encounters, arrangements, and powers. The second part of the book extends such analysis of male dominance to their apparent genius and superior logic as manifest in such endeavours as chess, higher mathematics, and musical composition. This latter part is of no interest to our study.

The book has been controversial, to say the least, and has been criticised harshly, and understandably, by environmentalists, especially by feminists, and particularly in America. Indeed, a revised British edition published in 1977 is clearly a response to such critics. It is hardly the case that Goldberg is anti-feminine, for, indeed, he points as well to “the biological factors within women, which make them unique..(and which indicate that they) have more important things to do.”⁷³⁶ Besides, while according to his research men rule the world politically, he clearly holds that morally “there are more good women than good men.”⁷³⁷ Whatever the negative reaction from environmentalist and feminist quarters, most social scientists and psychologists have by and large accepted Goldberg’s thesis, at least that dealing with patriarchy and male dominance, even eminent female critics as Margaret Mead and Eleanor Macoby.⁷³⁸ In reaction to his impeccable research and statistics, the latter can only say that on this matter or that, “I suspect he is wrong!” Unfortunately, the work as a whole has not received the attention it seems to deserve. While our research into this field is necessarily limited, we found only the Australian sociologist,

⁷³⁴ Ibid., p.27. These suprafamilial areas are said to embrace all political, economic, religious, and social systems.

⁷³⁵ Ibid., p.37.

⁷³⁶ Ibid., p.196.

⁷³⁷ Ibid., p.194. Indeed, here Goldberg seems to point to women as ultimately the spiritually stronger sex. “Women are not dependent on male brilliance (or dominance) for their deepest sources of strength, but men are dependent on female strength. Few women have been ruined by men; female endurance survives. Many men, however, have been destroyed by women who did not understand, or did not care to understand, male fragility.”

⁷³⁸ See the respective reviews in *Redbook* (October 1973), pp.46-52; *Science* (2 November 1973), pp.469-71.

R. W. Connell, giving Goldberg and his theory serious attention, albeit as somewhat "too strong biological-reductionism."⁷³⁹

Whatever the logical errors of argument, or present day correctness on the matter, we are largely persuaded of the essential truth of Goldberg's theory. It certainly conforms to everything we know from history about the structures of human institutions in general. Furthermore, such structures correspond well to those found in the biblical record. Accordingly, while such language with regard to God's identity is necessarily human, and therefore limited, it is by no means "a figment of the human imagination," but rather properly expressive of God's will and truth. As Frances Young further says with regard to the Trinity, but surely with proper reference to the sorts of passages with which we have been engaged:

if the Word of God named God Father, he must eternally and unchangeably have been Father, and therefore must have had a Son..if such names are truly predicable of God, they should be understood in their most natural and obvious sense, though with a heightened and more glorious meaning.⁷⁴⁰

Patriarchal structures and language as found in Old Testament scriptures conform to this universal picture and have indeed been seen to be inevitable. Things are as they are in God's created order. So, as Glazier-McDonald has already shown us, expressions in Scripture with regard to the his fatherhood of אב is undoubtedly "incontrovertible."⁷⁴¹

Emergent Elements in an Old Testament Theology of Divine Paternity

Our exegesis and analysis has furnished sufficient ground to venture certain theological observations with regard to such paternity as is expressed in the Old Testament. Theology is used here in the plain sense of understanding about God, and in this case about his fatherhood as evidenced in the materials with which we have dealt. Moreover, our reflections are substantially in the terms of biblical theology and under the rubric of revelation. We speak, then, in terms of a knowledge of God revealed in and indicated by precisely the being and imagery of fatherhood encountered. It is not, of course, a theology of the Old Testament as a whole, though

⁷³⁹ *Gender and Power* (1987), p.71. Although pointing to certain logical errors, it is allowed that "the hypothesis cannot be ruled out entirely."

⁷⁴⁰ *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, p.142.

⁷⁴¹ See p.138, above.

some have sought to write such systematically on the basis of some of the categories dealt with here, but rather a theology emerging directly out of the passages examined and which we deem to contain essential elements of God's fatherly nature. We are mindful of the problems connected with speaking of an Old Testament theology in terms of a selection of nouns, indeed something of a cross-section, when in fact God's relationship with Israel was almost always expressed in verbal action. We do so, however, in order to understand his father name in the texts we have selected for exegesis. Apparently that name has been somewhat feigned for cause, yet his fatherly character is, nevertheless, discernible through more or less metaphorical clouds.

Name

In his "head on" encounter with the Pharaoh, in Exodus 4.22-23,⁷⁴² Moses indicates that Israel's God is named יהוה. The specific form of the name was given to him in the immediately preceding revelation at the burning bush,⁷⁴³ and, again, we find no compelling reason to doubt that both the experience and expression in view are consistent with the time of Moses.⁷⁴⁴ Indeed, as we have sought to show, this entire expression of יהוה under the language of fatherly relations with Israel might go back beyond Moses. Despite the apparent importance of the name, which henceforth was to take precedence over all other names for God among the Israelites and indeed precede all further revelations from him, nothing specific is indicated about the content of the name beyond the enigmatic "I am who I am!"⁷⁴⁵ A veritable flood of speculation has sought to fill this vacuum. Casutto holds⁷⁴⁶ that the form is a proper noun indicating both the name and personality of יהוה, and this suits well the sense of the text at hand. In commentary, Noth says that throughout ancient Eastern thought "one knew of a reality only if one was able to pronounce its 'name.'"⁷⁴⁷ And this is certainly to say,

⁷⁴² See pp.100ff., above.

⁷⁴³ Exod 3.13ff.

⁷⁴⁴ We are well aware of the long-standing debate with regard to the original form of the name, i.e. whether its long or short (abbreviated) form is primary: see e.g. Albright, "Contributions to Biblical Archaeology and Philology," *JBL* 43 (1924), pp.363ff. and "Further Observations on the Name *Yahweh* and its Modifications in Proper Names," *JBL* 44 (1925), pp.158ff.; also, in response, Burkitt, "On the Name *Yahweh*," *ibid.*, p.353ff.; such considerations are brought up to date, e.g., by Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology in Outline* (1978), p.19. Discussion of such is beyond the scope of this study. Suffice it to say, with Burkitt, as evidenced by the Moabite Stone (Albright, *ANET*, pp.320f.) that "the name of the God of Israel really was יהוה in pre-exilic times," p.353.

⁷⁴⁵ Eichrodt says, "An understanding of the meaning of the name was granted only to the founder of the religion: and in any case it is given almost, so to speak, in parenthesis - the real emphasis falls on the promise of liberation," *Theology*, p.187.

⁷⁴⁶ *Hypothesis*, pp.15ff.; see pg. 102 of this dissertation.

⁷⁴⁷ *Exodus*, p.42.

We seek, now, to determine what יהוה or Moses further reveal or indicate with regard to the name. In the revelation at the burning bush both raise the matter of "The God of your father," יהוה said to fill in the blanks, namely Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Even in this context it is already revealed that the name of that particular God, Israel's God, is in fact יהוה.⁷⁵⁴ Not only so, but the named One is further identified as in some sense the father of Israel, that is to say they are "(his) people." It is further said, although hardly necessary to be said, that a God bearing such a powerful though enigmatic name is naturally to be worshipped, that is praised, honoured, and obeyed.⁷⁵⁵ Moreover, as Deuteronomy 14.1-2 indicates, inasmuch as יהוה is holy,⁷⁵⁶ that is "aloof," in the full sense of the word, from pagan things, particularly gods, so his people ought to likewise be beyond such beings and influence. This attitude is driven home, tragically, in the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32.3ff. Those just designated as belonging to יהוה, and expected therefore to hold themselves aloof from paganism's allures, are instead, as quite bluntly put in 31.16, "whoring after the strange gods of the land." In the face of such appalling behaviour, Moses proclaims in song the name of יהוה: he is quite specifically "your Father, who created you." Moreover, and as such, Yahweh is further identified as "the Rock, who begot [Israel]," not indicating crass physical bearing as with the implied pagan gods, but surely conveying a metaphysical connection that, to say the very least, stretches the mere metaphor. Despite its utter rarity, and with Eissfeldt as well as others,⁷⁵⁷ we have no problem placing this profound affirmation in the Mosaic era. It both fills out the heretofore sketchy image of the name of יהוה and provides an early foundation for later development, albeit under reasonable restraint given the stated greatness of יהוה.

Late Isaiah, as has been seen, is the first of the prophets to somewhat develop the name of יהוה. In his powerful psalm of lamentation in 63.16, he adds significant definition by declaring that as "(Israel's) redeemer from of old, (that is) your name."⁷⁵⁸ Even before this, and quite consistent with the revelation to Moses, he further makes an absolute equation between יהוה, the Father, and the Redeemer from of Old, although the precise identity of those on whose behalf the utterance is offered

dramatically and really be" in coming events. Philippians 2.9ff. is given particular attention in the latter case.

⁷⁵⁴ Exod 3.18.

⁷⁵⁵ Exod 4.23.

⁷⁵⁶ See p.103ff. of this dissertation.

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.90.

⁷⁵⁸ We prefer this more literal translation, as it is both true to the text and at the same time seems accurately to convey the close connection indicated between Yahweh and his name as revealed to Moses. See pp.118ff. of this dissertation.

is unknown. Be this latter uncertainty as it may, it is nevertheless doubtless that the identification and the utterance is intimately related to his other expression קדוש ישראל *Holy One of Israel*, employed throughout the Book of Isaiah and so setting forth the entire theme of the overall prophecy. That all of this is related to the name and nature of יהוה can likewise hardly be in question. The question does remain, of course, with regard to the “stunning” appearance of אב *father* at this juncture. We shall return to this matter again from time to time.

In chapter 1.6, at the heart of his searching catechism, Malachi has יהוה accuse the priests of being “despisers of (the) Name.” Moreover, it is evident that the accusation is clearly directed to all in Israel who are equally guilty of the same behaviour. Fundamental to the expression, the charge, and the implications is the fact that the One speaking is none other than יהוה, who actually takes the name אב *father*, and with this the identification of the two names is complete. Such identification is made even more forcefully in 2.10, where, as we have observed, the metaphor breaks the mould and is indeed thought of as “a metonym,”⁷⁵⁹ Here the יהוה of 1.6 is evidently equated with both אל, *(the) one who created (all)*, and אב, *(the) one (who somehow brings all together)*, both by definition and in fact. That this is so seems plainly demonstrated by Malachi’s repeated and pivotal employment of a related expression, that is שמי *my name*, presumably in order to pronounce something substantial about the name of יהוה without the necessity of overuse or confusion. Indeed, in 2.5, the prophet expresses the concern of יהוה for proper “awe” in the face of this proper name, employing the alternate word. Here, too, we are left with the issue of such rare expression, and why just here? Again, we will be returning to this as we move along.

Another significant use of שם *name* is located in Psalm 103. It is doubtless a late composition, and in just that way throws light on both the ancient and developing notion of God’s being under the language of father in the Old Testament and in Israel. Here, too, in the larger context as prefaced by verses one and two, and as we have sought to show, the psalmist’s expression of choice for יהוה is שם *name*. It is so due to the utter holiness and mercy explicit in the context, for all of which he is to be properly praised. And just this character of being and name is best understood and expressed, as verse 13 plainly has it in exquisite parallel with regard to אב *father*, for as a physical one has mercy on his children, so יהוה, under covenant conditions, has mercy on the children of Israel. The theological facts are abundantly clear: יהוה is One

⁷⁵⁹ To employ again the classification of McCasland, “Abba, Father,” *JBL* 72 (1953), p.53; see above, p.149.

who is creator and redeemer of all, who is therefore to be addressed as אב *father*, and who furthermore is קדוש *holy* and who expects a corresponding awe from all. Indeed, it may be said that not only is יהוה Father, but may be properly addressed as such. Here, then, we may state our secondary thesis and hypothesis⁷⁶⁰ in another, rather more academic way: As יהוה becomes more and more unpronounced *nomina sacra*, so אב *father* begins to emerge in usage in the Old Testament, then in Rabbinic Judaism, and finally in Jesus as a metonym for God, albeit at no time as radical departure, but rather as natural progression. Although we have no specific documentation of direct correlation, there is sufficient ground to suspect some sort of symbiotic pietism between the two terms, such that they were held and used in mutually reserved reverence. Such possibilities merit further study, particularly as they relate to the handing over of the Name to Jesus in the New Testament.

Creation

Given the powerful and sustained influence of Eichrodt, it may seem somewhat out of order here to place Genesis matters before those of Exodus. As he said, it was only “under foreign influence that Israel acquired her eye for the marvels of God’s power in the silent regularity of the processes of Nature.” Indeed he wrote his massive two-volume *Theology of the Old Testament* in demonstration of how Israel rejected out of hand a multitude of creation stories around them in favour of “the power of the God of the Covenant;” they only offered their own account as corrective afterthought, linking them primarily to the history of their peculiar relationship to their God.⁷⁶¹ Even so, in substantial agreement with this viewpoint, and even as our texts began with Exodus matters, we set out here our theological reflections on creation issues as they emerged there and elsewhere in our exegesis. This will afford us opportunity to move on even further and into the heart of theological matters, namely election and covenant.

Assuming, as we do, that a notion of Yahweh’s fatherhood comes from at least the time of Moses, if not earlier, in Exodus 4.22-23 he informs the Pharaoh of a fact

⁷⁶⁰ See pp.152., above.

⁷⁶¹ Quotations are from Vol. I, pp.230-31. Eichrodt has generally been followed in this view: see e.g., all published somewhat simultaneously, Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology* (1978), who maintains that “the Old Testament does *not* speak about faith in the creator or about creation faith,” but rather about Israel encountering “God as a saviour,” pp.85f.; Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology in Outline* (1979), who says that for the Old Testament “an event in the midst of history, furnishes the primary orientation,” p.32; Clements, *Old Testament Theology* (1978), who asserts that creation stories emerged in the literature of Israel in order to assert, against competing gods and stories, that “Yahweh alone is God,” p.76.

of life of immense theological importance for Israel - and for Egypt: בני בכרי ישראל *Israel is my [his] firstborn son!* Moreover, it is not Moses himself but rather יהוה speaking. With Jacob, a matter of immense theological importance is to be observed, namely that it is not Moses but rather יהוה “who designates himself as father by calling Israelites his sons.”⁷⁶² The Pharaoh is thereby expected to obey an authority higher than his own. After all, the fundamental issue at hand is who really is the head of all human structures? Who is responsible for all? Sovereign authority over the entire universe is hereby asserted.

For their part, the Hebrews, who have been singled out from all that exists, are accordingly expected to feast after the One who is ruler over all and who, more importantly, is their peculiar God. After all, who is worthy above him? On the other hand, with Zimmerli, it must be said that the language in this instance “combines a statement of origin with a reference to the bond of love,”⁷⁶³ which has and will engage again our attention in Psalm 103.13. Neither is it to be overlooked that such affection is to be seen in contrast to the fact that in the selfsame text יהוה indicates that he will harden his heart against Pharaoh, even take the life of his firstborn should he refuse full acknowledgement of and obedience to יהוה. In an odd way these latter harsh attitudes on the part of יהוה actually heighten his peculiar relationship with and fondness for Israel. Whatever, nothing less is at issue than the absolute fatherly nature of יהוה.

Even the prohibition of mourning rites in Deuteronomy 14.1-2 likely points to Israel's place amongst a larger creation. Rejecting Mayes' contention that such rites are late, and accepting somewhat instead the suggestion of Buis and Laclercq, למת *for the dead*⁷⁶⁴ may indeed have to do with an early warning against engaging in mourning rites for fertility gods rather than prohibition of later such funerary practices among cults for the dead. If so, perhaps even coming down to Moses from the Gods of the Fathers, this stands as a call to Israel to comprehend itself as a people set among other peoples, with a God who is above and beyond all others, and who expects them to maintain holiness in the midst of it all. Indeed, such would have put a confession on their lips, קדוש אתה ליהוה *holy you (are) to the Yahweh*, thus preparing

⁷⁶² *Theology of the Old Testament*, p.62. He views this as an indication that divine paternity is not merely metaphorical, but quite realistic. It is said: “Yahweh is called father not because he has certain qualities normally connected with this title but because he is the sole genuine creator of his people and of the faithful who make up the people; the figure of the clay and the potter (as Is 64.7) well shows this realist character.”

⁷⁶³ *Outline*, p.26.

⁷⁶⁴ See p.104 of this dissertation.

their whole being for their call out from the lot. With Zimmerli, holiness does not describe primarily ethical behaviour, but rather “being set apart as the special possession of Yahweh.”⁷⁶⁵

The behaviour of select Israel in the midst of a pre-existent scheme of creation is confronted squarely in the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32.3ff. Here again, and on even firmer ground, we take the song to be substantially that of Moses himself. He not only sings at the behest of יהוה against the strange gods of the land, but does so against a backdrop of heavens and earth in verse 1 as well as nations and peoples in verse 8, thus indicating the larger created milieu from which Israel was chosen. Even the image in verse 10 of her being כאישון עינו *as the apple of his eye*⁷⁶⁶ conveys the notion of a larger collection of which she is part. In striking parallelism and powerful interrogative, as we have observed, the creator of it all is designated in verse 6 as יהוה and אב *father*. Although identified in verse 18 as the one who bore Israel, this must surely be traced back, as von Rad told us, “to the division of the world,”⁷⁶⁷ that is to an initial creation and subsequent distribution of its components. Moreover, with the frequently employed term צור *rock*, in clear apposition to the two former designations, the picture presented is that of the physical, indeed metaphysical, establishment not only of the nation Israel but of the whole of creation.

All parts of Isaiah pick up and carry on the theme of creation in the broad sense, always of course from the crucial perspective of Israel’s special place within it. Straight away in chapter 1, clearly in the tradition of the just considered Song of Moses and in the great arraignment, the heavens and earth, that is the whole of a larger creation is summoned to bear testimony against the behaviour of an evidently smaller portion. Numerous passages in the latter part of Isaiah testify to the role of יהוה in the creation of the heavens and the earth, his establishment of the starry host, and even his ability to call it to “stand forth together.”⁷⁶⁸ Moreover, he declares himself to be the one who can “form light and create darkness.”⁷⁶⁹ Westermann asserts that so-called Deutero-Isaiah shows a “radical invasion of new realms” of creation

⁷⁶⁵ *Outline*, p.45. He points helpfully to Exod 19.5-6, which he classifies “protodeuteronomic,” and in which we find further support for placing creation ahead of election for purposes of these theological reflections, although in this text the former is placed within the scheme of the latter: “Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

⁷⁶⁶ Even if the more literal translation, *the pupil of his eye*, be read, the image remains that of a small portion of a larger, external reality.

⁷⁶⁷ *Deuteronomy*, p.197. It is notable, however, that most theologies simply pass over this text.

⁷⁶⁸ E.g. Isa 40.26; 45.12; 48.13.

⁷⁶⁹ Isa 45.7.

terminology.⁷⁷⁰ Although dismissing the notion that so-called Second Isaiah may have originated the belief in creation, McKenzie maintains that the supposed author was “the first to appeal to creation as a motive of faith in the promises of Yahweh.”⁷⁷¹ Then, as we have sought to show, the matter emerges full blown, so to speak, in chapters 63 and 64, with the mentioned sudden appearance in these quite late passages of direct reference to the fatherhood of God, *אתה אבינו* *thou art our Father*. Given Watts’ intriguing suggestion that the words of lamentation are on behalf of a diverse population in the land, all of whom believe that *כלנו ירך ומעשה ירך כלנו* *all of us are the work of your [his] hand*, the combined expression appears to point indeed to universal and eternal rather than simply national creation. Not only so, but *יהוה* and *אב* *Father* are in direct apposition, indicating that the former is to be understood in terms of the latter. Moreover, with prominent reference to being “formed and fashioned as clay,”⁷⁷² the creator is clearly viewed by the author as preceding the covenant maker, a conclusion shared across the ages from the Targums to Calvin to Westermann.⁷⁷³ Added to all this is the mentioned contention of Seitz, namely that the post-exilic community was then close reading Genesis in an effort to adjudicate departures from covenants made in the Exodus.⁷⁷⁴ Such a view is all the more compelling in light of Yahweh’s promised new heavens and a new earth in chapters 65 and 66. To the extent that all this is the case, creation in the broader, universal sense stands in the foreground in the latter portion of the Book of Isaiah.

As indicated in our exegesis, Eichrodt holds that Malachi 2.10 “conform(s) to the line laid down in Deutero-Isaiah.”⁷⁷⁵ Moreover, as Hill has shown us, there are in the text “echoes”⁷⁷⁶ of both Deuteronomy 32.6 and Jeremiah 31.9. Noteworthy in any event, is the presence of powerful interrogative parallels in both 1.6 and 2.10, appearing as they do in the distinctive catechetical form. While the main elements son

⁷⁷⁰ *Outline*, p.37f. While understanding Israel’s role as pivotal, the author’s broad intent, says Westermann, is “all-encompassing, referring to Yahweh’s work at the beginning of the world, at the historical beginning of Israel, and in the present that lies open to the future,” p.38.

⁷⁷¹ *A Theology of the Old Testament*, p.193. McKenzie further holds that former Old Testament accounts of creation are substantially based upon Mesopotamian and Canaanite myths, which it sought to “historicize,” but which it thereby failed to “show with desired clarity the absolute supremacy of Yahweh.” It is further said that it was “Second Isaiah himself, (who) felt the need of a statement of the belief of creation in a form which had not yet been produced,” p.193.

⁷⁷² 45.10 as well as 64.8.

⁷⁷³ See pp.120ff., above.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.103. On the matter of unity within the Book of Isaiah, and Seitz’ proposals on “how the prophetic voice extends throughout,” see also the cited reference to one of his works on p.97 of this dissertation.

⁷⁷⁵ *Theology I*, p.199. See also p.140 of this dissertation.

⁷⁷⁶ *Malachi*, p.135. See also p.138 of this dissertation.

and father together with servant and master in 1.6 are quite obviously synonymous parallels, we take the latter three interrogatives in 2.10 to contain in fact parallel opposites. The first two, that is אב *father* and אל *God*, are parallel synonyms in statement of a truth, requiring only an appropriate positive response. The latter, on the other hand, sets up something of a parallel comparative between what is asserted in the first half of the verse, the natural covenant between the Creator/Father and his creatures, and the breaking of that in unfaithful human behaviour from Sinai to the present. Even though the election of and covenant with Israel is in view, a broader reference to creation seems evident and indeed is consistent with what has already been set down.

While Psalm 103.13 appears focused on the striking parallel between אב *Father* and יהוה and those he especially רחמים *pities*, that is those who in terms of verse 18 “keep his covenant and..his precepts,” namely those of Israel, there is here too a larger creation terminology entirely consistent with what has been observed in the latter part of Isaiah and in Malachi, perhaps even indicating dependence of some sort. In verse 11 there is both an earthly and a heavenly geography, stretching from the east to the west below to the heavens above. Moreover, the one praised sits upon a throne in heaven even as he rules over all.

From the Song of Moses to the “radical” new terminology of Isaiah to the catechism of Malachi to the praise of the Psalmist, we have seen consistent witness to both the creation of Israel and to that out of which she was created and elected. It is not seen as either/or, but both/and. This has significant theological implications, and one dare not attempt to put them in any necessary order. For one thing, there is no essential contradiction between the eternal universe of יהוה and his election of historical Israel. Moreover, and anticipating the next section, by virtue of its election Israel is indeed accountable to both the creator and all other creatures according to Yahweh’s eternal scheme in all its eschatological implications.⁷⁷⁷ Furthermore, there is a necessary progression of Yahweh’s revelation in all such matters. Above all, he is to be understood, addressed, and responded to as Father-Creator.

⁷⁷⁷ Pointing to another unifying concept in the Book of Isaiah as a whole, Clements points to Israel as “A light to the Gentiles” (9.2; 42.6; 60.13), “A Light to the Nations: A Central Theme of the Book of Isaiah,” *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve* (D. Watts; Watts and House, eds., in honour of J. W. D. Watts, 1996), pp.57-69.

Election

Israel's selection by and special relationship to יהוה, and the consequent doctrine of election is, to say the very least, fundamental to Old Testament theology. Manson has said that such is a matter of "adoption (election) rather than..creation," albeit with "universal" significance.⁷⁷⁸ Zimmerli outlines fully the appearances of the verb בחר *to choose/elect* as well as supporting constructions and characteristic circumlocutions to the same effect. It is noted, however, that all the formulations are "predominately verbal, with no abstract noun meaning 'election.'" Moreover, while Yahweh's unique relationship to Israel is set forth in accounts of early actions, the doctrine is taken to be but looking back and reflecting on the mystery of why he "should concern himself in such a special way with Israel."⁷⁷⁹ Our exegesis in Deuteronomy has held, again with Eissfeldt and Kline,⁷⁸⁰ that certain expressions indicated there are possibly from the Mosaic era. So, too, ideas with regard to election dealt with in these texts and reflections may likewise be older than the author of the book. Clements maintains that "the main ideas of such a theology is certainly very much older, and the belief that Israel is Yahweh's people carries with it many of the essential elements of such an election faith."⁷⁸¹ Focusing on a manifestly early passage, Amos 3.2, Donald Gowan says that even there the prophet was not employing the notion of election "in a completely new way."⁷⁸² Eichrodt, too, although he is speaking quite characteristically about the covenant, which he finds strangely absent among the classical prophets, remarks that Amos "speaks of Yahweh's favour in choosing Israel among all nations."⁷⁸³ We proceed on the basis of this established, older understanding of Israel's special status in the midst of the larger created realm.

⁷⁷⁸ *Teaching*, p.92.

⁷⁷⁹ *Outline*, p.44. A relatively early appearance of the notion is noted in Amos 3.2. However, it is added: "the theology of election first takes on its full significance in the period of Deuteronomy, where it developed with great emphasis." See also, Westermann, *Elements*, p.40ff. He points out that the patriarchal stories of Yahweh's unique relationship with Israel are never described in terms of בחר - it "does not occur." To this is added: "In the Old Testament the word has rather a subsequent, interpretative function. It is a late interpretation, looking back from a distance, on what happened. It was not God's election which made Israel into his people, but rather his saving deed at the beginning," p.41

⁷⁸⁰ See pp.106f, above.

⁷⁸¹ *Theology*, p.88. Added is this sober judgement: "What the vocabulary of election adds in the Book of Deuteronomy is a more conscious relating of this special bond between Yahweh and Israel to the existence of other nations: Yahweh 'has chosen you..out of all the peoples,'" pp.88-9.

⁷⁸² *Theology in Exodus*, p.189. Pointing to references concerning Israel's chosen character as expressed in Psalms 135, 136, and 135, and apparently employed in Isaiah 41, it is further observed that such points older ideas coming down from at least Amos through the Psalms to the post-exilic prophets.

⁷⁸³ *Theology I*, p.51.

Indeed, just this adds significantly to the incomparable grace of יהוה and Israel's immense status in relationship to both him and the whole of the created order.

The existence of such older election belief and vocabulary has been observed from the time of Moses, in Exodus 4.22, in the expression בני בכרי ישראל *my first-born son Israel*, whether or not they are his *ipissima verba*. Added to this is his equally clear command to Pharaoh, in verse 5.1, "Let my people go!" Such comes even more to the fore in Deuteronomy 14.2, the so-called "isolated text," namely in the expression עם קדוש *a holy people*, which is likely of Mosaic substance if not expression, and which at least von Rad⁷⁸⁴ traces back to the period of the tribal union. While as such they were to be circumspect in their behaviour, more importantly they were to be mindful of their special being in the holy name of יהוה. Finally, for these likely thoughts and words of Moses with regard to the election of Israel by יהוה is this from his Song in 32.18 (cf. verse 6), צור ילדך תשי...מחללך *the rock that begot you.. formed (hollowed) you*. As von Rad says of this, it goes back to "the division of the world (when Yahweh) claimed Israel for himself."⁷⁸⁵ It was clearly a matter of being chosen or elected.

Hosea's prophecy of future reconciliation between יהוה and עמי אתם *my people* in 2.1 (English 1.10) sets forth the select status of Israel. In the face of his own stinging accusation to the contrary, he affirms, or more properly reaffirms, that they are indeed his choice people. This truth is driven home, to Hosea and the people, when his third son is named "Not my people," in dramatic illustration of the fact that without יהוה Israel is reduced to a collection of nobodies but by his grace, חן, are destined once again to be theological some-bodies. The depth and consistency of this attitude and proclamation is seen in his naming his wife "not my wife." As we have sought to show, all this has to do with disloyalty and broken covenant, but primarily it is to point the way to covenant renewal and Israel's restored election. In this, the prophecy stands squarely in the tradition of the Song of Moses, which likewise contrasts Israel's blatant unfaithfulness to the bountiful faithfulness of יהוה to his chosen ones. Again, as May has shown,⁷⁸⁶ the very expression in 11.1, וממצרים קראתי לבני *out of Egypt I called my son* makes clear this connection between the Exodus and Israel's election to special theological status. There appears little doubt that the verb is an "election" one.

⁷⁸⁴ See pp.106f., above.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid., p.92

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid., p.95.

The first part of Isaiah carries forward the Song of Moses tradition with the use of adoption verbs in 1.2 in the expression *בנים גדלתי ורוממתי sons I have reared and brought up*. We have taken the verbal forms as synonymous for emphasis, both indicating clearly the adopted, elected, chosen status of Israel. The extent of such relationship and the dire consequences of violating it are set forth in the appearance straight away in 1.4 of that expression so characteristic of the book as a whole, namely *קדוש ישראל the Holy One of Israel*. It is precisely he, *יהוה*, the Holy One, with whom Israel is specially yoked and against whom any violation of the bond is charged. It is not just a matter of social misconduct, but rather foul behaviour of the most profound theological sort. It is nothing less, as 30.1 puts it, than *חטאת על חטאת sin to/upon sin!*⁷⁸⁷ Israel is doubly damned on account of its theological privilege. A roundabout confirmation of this privilege and responsibility seems present in the later enigmatic expressions of 63.16, “though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us.” Even though we are not entirely sure who is behind the statement, forlorn Israelites or nondescript people of the land, the words themselves are surely a testimony to Israel’s special, elect identity and institutions. And even as it clearly expresses fundamental difference, it likewise witnesses to some special characteristic. Finally for Isaiah, in 64.7 is the equally puzzling “all of us are the work of your hand.” While, as we have said, the text appears concerned with creation as a whole rather than election of some portion of it, the “all of us” does seem to indicate that some in the entire scheme are more privileged than others.⁷⁸⁸

Jeremiah offers profound theological images in the texts handled with regard to Israel’s select status under *יהוה*. Encapsulated, so to speak, within the dual expression of *אב father* in 3.4-5 and 19-20 are *אלוקי נערי friend of my/his youth*, *בנים sons*, and interestingly *חמדה נחלת צבי צבאות a beautiful pleasant inheritance (among) the hosts*. While within the Old Testament witness they likely refer to the universality of Yahweh’s fatherhood, they seem to indicate here his unique, elected relationship with Israel, “among the host of nations” in some superlative degree.⁷⁸⁹ Besides, the picture in 31.9 of “brooks of water” comments further on the inheritance that is Israel’s in their chosen relationship with *יהוה*. Added to all this is the image of

⁷⁸⁷ Clements, *Theology*, p.165 sees the root of the problem, as 30.2 puts it, in “going down to Egypt,” that is “the antagonism that appears in certain prophets to the making of such treaties...where the acceptance of a treaty might well involve some limited recognition of the existence and authority of other gods,” hence a clear violation of the second commandment.

⁷⁸⁸ See pp.119f. of this dissertation, particularly the referenced opinions of Calvin, Westermann, Muilenberg, and Watts.

⁷⁸⁹ See pp.127f, n.582, above.

Israel/Ephraim as בכרי הוא (*his*) *firstborn*. The fact that the expression has wrongly been taken to give preference to the north over the south is a clear indication that in reality it refers to the elect status of Israel as a whole. In any event, it is status that both glorifies יהוה and at the same time points the way for the other nations. Ephraim is mentioned again as the “first-born” of יהוה in 31.20, clearly indicating the northern kingdom yet evidently applying to the whole of Israel; in the very same place the designation is the equivalent of “a child of delights.” All this describes what McKane calls “an old love that will not die.”⁷⁹⁰ Furthermore, we are almost persuaded that the reading he indicates for דברי בו *my speaking against him* points in some way to the giving of the Law. To the extent this is so, it clearly suggests election of all Israel and the covenant manifest thereby.

Although Malachi’s expressions have been seen to focus primarily on the sad realities of broken covenant, they point equally to election and the prior fact of יהוה אהב *the love of יהוה*, as thematically stated in the very first line of the oracle. This love is apparently to be understood and grasped in the context of another fact, namely that גדול שמי בגוים *great is my [his] Name among the nations*. Appearing twice for emphasis in 1.11, so establishing a secondary theme, it states fundamental facts about the nature and character of יהוה, but also declares that out of its totality his particular love has chosen Israel from “among the nations.” As we have said, considerable discussion has arisen with regard to אהד...בראנו (*the*) *one who created us* in 2.10, whether the reference is national or universal.⁷⁹¹ We have held that it is both, meaning that Israel is both elected to a privileged position among the nations and at the same time has responsibility toward them. All of this is further to be understood and grasped in terms of the fatherhood of all manifest in and by יהוה.

Numerous theological truths and consequences with regard to the matter of Israel’s election stand out in these contexts. These are so even as we bear in mind Westermann’s caution that anything approaching a finished doctrine of such is “an interpretation.”⁷⁹² First, Israel has been elected from among the nations presumably for the sole purposes of יהוה. As the elect, she has every reason to be designated his adopted offspring, that is sons, and people, yet she is under every obligation to be holy, that is wholly devoted to him and so without unseemly involvement with foreign

⁷⁹⁰ See p.133. above.

⁷⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.119f.

⁷⁹² *Elements*, p.41. On the other hand, Eichrodt holds that “Even where the word ‘election’ is not used, the thing itself is implied.” *Theology I*, p.369.

gods or practices.⁷⁹³ Second, the very act of electing implies without qualification that יהוה is by definition totally free to take that decision and so all other decisions with regard to Israel or any others.⁷⁹⁴ Third, such grace toward Israel does not mean that she is intrinsically superior to the other nations, for in fact she is one of the least among them, so as to demonstrate for all to see that her position is on account of his greatness rather than her importance.⁷⁹⁵ Fourth, and above all, the name of the one accomplishing all this is יהוה, the Holy One of Israel. Indeed, he might best be comprehended under the name Father-Elector.

Covenant

The notion of the covenant follows closely on that of election. Clements says that if election "represents the basic viewpoint on why Israel is Yahweh's people, then that of the covenant stands as the most widely used of the concepts. to express the nature of the relationship between them." He presents a concise and positive overview of biblical usage of the covenant "analogy", and is particularly clear on its development in the Deuteronomic tradition while acknowledging that it was not "an entirely novel" idea.⁷⁹⁶ Zimmerli offers an even more penetratingly positive account of the concept's scriptural occurrence, likewise indicating that it is "most fully attested in deuteronomic and deuteronomistic literature" but "also has a place in the earlier documents of the Old Testament."⁷⁹⁷ Obviously, the fullest and most positive view of the importance of the covenant is offered by Eichrodt, who takes it to be pre-eminent among all Old Testament analogies and says that "even where the covenant is not explicitly mentioned the spiritual premises of a covenant relationship with God are manifestly present."⁷⁹⁸ Westermann, on the other hand, cautions that the doctrine of covenant, like that of election, is "problematic:" its essential foundation in Exodus 19f. suffers from "later addition(s);" the word ברית *covenant* originally meant an act

⁷⁹³ Against the tendency to view Yahweh's relationship with Israel as implying a necessary condition of love for her, Fischer says, for example, of the "God in Malachi," *CBQ* 34 (1972), p. 319: "The loving relationship of Israel to Yahweh was a condition, not a cause. The Cause was only God."

⁷⁹⁴ Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament*, puts the issue this way: "Election itself is a manifestation of the majesty and holiness of God and implies the right to take decisions that transcend man. the Old Testament proclaims first and foremost God's absolute power to act according to His holy will," pp.167-8. Zimmerli says Yahweh's choice means he "is answerable for his choice to nothing that he chooses," *Outline*, p.45.

⁷⁹⁵ Deut 7.6-8, the so-called *locus classicus* of the finished doctrine of election, makes this plain.

⁷⁹⁶ *Theology*, pp.96, 101.

⁷⁹⁷ *Outline*, pp.51f.

⁷⁹⁸ *Theology I*, pp.36f. Cited is "the exhaustive discussion" of Sellin, *Beiträge zur israelitischen und jüdischen Religionsgeschichte I* (1896), pp.15ff; Volz, *Mose* (1907), pp.28ff.; *Mose und sein Werk* (1932), pp.108ff. Strangely, Clements only refers to Eichrodt in passing.

rather than an agreement, as is indicated in a covenant theology which is clearly “an interpretation of the Sinai event from a much later time;” and “the so-called ‘covenant formulation’ is to be distinguished” from this verbal form, as the formulation “originally had nothing to do with the word *berit* or the idea of the covenant.”⁷⁹⁹ His sense is that the biblical basis of the concept has been very much misunderstood and accordingly overvalued.

Added to all this is the basic question as to whether the biblical idea of the covenant is primarily a binding agreement between two parties, as that between יהוה and Israel in Exodus 19.5-6, or rather essentially that of solemn promise, like that made to Abraham and David in Genesis 15.18 and suggested in II Samuel 23.5 respectively. Or is it in fact both? Out of such considerations emerge the associated matter of determining whether essential covenant making and so pattern setting was at Sinai or rather distributed over Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and into the new one with the post-exilic prophets.⁸⁰⁰ Or is it all this? One senses the dimensions of difficulty. The sorting out of all these issues is well beyond the scope of this study. All we can do is assess assertions and allusions with regard to the covenant encountered in the texts examined and determine, as far as possible given these difficulties, their theological significance therein. And while we will not repeat such to any great extent here, given the close connection between election and covenant, all the former would in broad terms be a reference to the latter.

In the texts we have examined, which were selected for their reference to God under the language of father, the word covenant itself appears only in Malachi 2.10. On the other hand, the concept is to be found by allusion and indirect reference in virtually all of our passages and their contexts. An early allusion to a covenant by adoption appears evident in Exodus 4.22-24, which Eichrodt terms “an ancient folk-story..already aware that Israel is Yahweh’s first-born son.”⁸⁰¹ Noth, on the other hand, views the text as containing at least some secondary additions to either source J or JE.⁸⁰² Taking as we have the former position, בני בכרי ישראל *Israel my first-born son* and בנים *sons* seem to express ancient elements in a developing exodus confession. As such, they speak not only metaphorically with regard to the fatherly disposition of יהוה, but they also talk of an actual relationship that is binding and even interactive in

⁷⁹⁹ *Elements*, pp.42ff. The example cited from Jer 11.14 is in error, as it should be verse 4. A significant expansion of this is indicated in Deut 26.16-19.

⁸⁰⁰ See Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*.

⁸⁰¹ *Theology I*, p.68.

⁸⁰² ATD 5 (1959), pp.22, 33f.

real terms. There *is* something between them. A sign of this, as we pointed to in verse 5.1, is that *ויחגו...במדבר* and *they (Israel) feast in the wilderness*. The relationship to the one who brought them out of Egypt is expressed in proper praise. Added to this and making the allusion to covenant even more impressive is the circumcision of Moses son by his wife Zipporah. While the episode is likely out of place, the sketchy details of which are beyond us here,⁸⁰³ they clearly convey covenant suggestions in themselves.

Each of the passages from Deuteronomy likewise expresses Israel's covenant relationship with Yahweh in a variety of allusions. Even as these are so situated, some appear, as von Rad maintains, to go back to a much earlier period.⁸⁰⁴ In this connection, *עם קדוש* *a holy people* and *סגולה* *a special treasure* in 14.2 witness to the theological bond, and we hold covenant between Yahweh and Israel. Further, in 32.4, *אל אמרה* *God of faithfulness* would appear to have meaning only in terms of a relationship, a covenant undertaken from the side of *יהוה*, that is an attitude fully commensurate with his "free" disposition.⁸⁰⁵ Along with these is the very pivotal interrogative in 32.6b, "Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?" Even as this declares in quite metaphysical terms the creation of all things by *יהוה* and the selection of Israel out of it all, so too it points to the implicit and explicit bond and covenant between them. Inasmuch as these expressions are apparently quite old, so perhaps going back to the time Moses himself, they could very well speak of the Sinai covenant.

There is little doubt that Hosea places Israel's sonship and their covenant relationship thereby in parallel in 2.1 (English 1.10). Not only so, but *לא עמי אתם* *you are not my people*, hence bereft.⁸⁰⁶ This, as we have also seen, is all the more evident and biting in the symbolic formula of divorce *not my people*. We have sought to shown that it is a formula for annulment of the covenant, with Hosea's depicting Israel in precisely the same terms employed to name his adulterous wife and children. Such covenant connection is made even further explicit in the indicated renaming

⁸⁰³ See Eichrodt, *Theology I*, pp.138, 261, with references cited; he says "the rite had a religious significance from the very first and was understood as an act of dedication witnessing to the fact that the person belonged to the people Yahweh," p.138. In the latter place the even older practice of circumcision is said to be located among "demonistic ideas," absorbed and transformed into Israel's notion of their relationship to God. See also Zimmerli, *Outline*, p.131ff.

⁸⁰⁴ See pp.104f. of this dissertation.

⁸⁰⁵ Westermann, *Outline*, p.43.

⁸⁰⁶ Zimmerli, *Outline*, p.187, says this means "the 'end' of Israel, which owes its existence to its being the 'people of Yahweh.'" Wolff, *Hosea*, p.27 holds that the expression here "meant the dissolution of the covenant as the ultimate radicalisation of Yahweh's judgement."

process, whereby Israel is transformed into בני אל חי *sons of the living God*.⁸⁰⁷ These judgements are likewise compelling in light of the possibility that Jeremiah built his covenant theology on this text.⁸⁰⁸ Moreover, even the expression בני ישראל כחול הים *the people of Israel (shall be) as the sand of the sea* at the head of 2.1 “recalls the promise to the patriarchs”⁸⁰⁹ in Genesis 32.13. It is probably to be related as well to the formula-like saying “dust of the earth” with regard to the covenant.⁸¹⁰ If so, such would surely point to an ongoing such relationship with Israel as a whole. In addition to all this, there is the unique expression in 11.1 וממצרים קראתי לבני יהודה *out of Egypt I called my son*, with the verb an election one, therefore a covenant term.⁸¹¹ Finally, for our texts and context, there are anguished prophetic exclamations in 11.8, “How can I give you up, O Ephraim!..O Israel!” These, too, are read as cries out of a sense of an abiding covenant between Israel and יהוה.

Direct references to covenant are numerous throughout the Book of Isaiah from chapter 24 onwards. Indeed, Eichrodt maintains that “the covenant concept attains its greatest profundity in Deutero-Isaiah.”⁸¹² Mention of the concept is made in early portions of the book, albeit in negative terms as being broken and replaced with a covenant of death.⁸¹³ But indeed, supreme and even everlasting properties only emerge in the latter portions with the servant songs and the hymns of the people in celebration of such things. It is against this background that we turn for an analysis of our texts. Even before the flowering of the concept in the latter portions of the book is the father-son/people imagery we have observed in the passages considered earlier. This is said straightaway in 1.2 and 4, בנים גדלתי ורוממתי *sons I have reared and brought up*. Clearly the old image still has currency in the early portions and points surely to the covenant relationship of יהוה with Israel by adoption. That they נאצו *had spurned* him doubtless implies that some standard existed by which a judgement of the

⁸⁰⁷ Wolff, *ibid.*, p.27 terms this “Hosea’s own creative formulation..(pointing to one) who possesses lordly might over the powers of destruction.”

⁸⁰⁸ See p.110, n.489, above.

⁸⁰⁹ Wolff, *ibid.*, p.26; he adds that what Hosea has to say “is always related to ancient traditions,” cited also are 15.5; 22.17. Given the utter decimation of the population indicated in Hosea’s message, however, it must be seen here, Wolff says, that the “the promise to the patriarchs has become a new eschatological promise of salvation.”

⁸¹⁰ Gen 13.16; 28.14; Isa 10.22.

⁸¹¹ Eichrodt, *Theology I*, p.252, points helpfully to parallel expressions in 12.10 and 13.4 as well as a variety of alternate sayings in 13.5 on guidance in the desert; 13.6 on security in Canaan; 4.6 and 12.14 on prophecy rejected; and 13.1 on violation of covenant expectations.

⁸¹² *Ibid.*, p.61.

⁸¹³ 24.5; 28.15,18.

relationship might be made as the case against them goes to bar in the law-court arraignment indicated; it was a matter of covenant.⁸¹⁴

The father-son metaphor continues in chapter 30, with Israel being charged with partaking of something described as *מסכה ולי רוחי* *a libation not of my spirit* in 30.1 and even being unwilling to listen to the *תורת יהוה* *teaching of Yahweh* in 30.9. While we have chosen to read the first in this way, it can also be rendered *alliance*. Either way, it seems to us as a clear reference to covenant, either of Sinai or with the fathers or both. Such reference is exceedingly plain in our texts. The most direct covenant one is in 63.16: *וישראל לא יכירנו, ויבראם לא ידענו* *Abraham knows us not, Israel acknowledges us not*. While it remains unclear on whose behalf this psalm of lamentation is uttered, with its exquisite parallelism perhaps even lost in liturgy looking to future alleviation of pain, the community as a whole is still mindful of its "continuity"⁸¹⁵ with the past. Even as they look ahead prayerfully with the psalmist, they look back reflectively, theologically, back to Abraham and Israel, to the covenant with the fathers. And as they so sing - or have sung for them - in matching majestic parallelism, it is thereby confessed that all of this is properly comprehended only in terms of *יהוה* as *אבינו* (*their*) *father*. Although, as we have sought to show, similar expression in 64.7 seem to deal with Yahweh as the creator, Calvin is doubtless correct that it also has to do with "regeneration"⁸¹⁶ in those matters that distinguished Israel from the nations, that is their election by and covenant arrangement with him.

If the covenant concept gained its greatest theological profundity in the latter part of Isaiah, it received its homiletical bearings in Jeremiah. Indeed, McKenzie says, "One cannot go to Second-Isaiah except through Jeremiah."⁸¹⁷ This is surely the case with regard to the covenant. Overall the term itself is employed almost three times more often in Jeremiah than in Isaiah. Although the form *שוב* *turn away/back* appears but once in our verses, at 3.19, its use some eighteen times in the chapter indicates its central place in the preacher's mind. Specifically, he is pointing to Israel's status as *בנים* *sons* under *יהוה* *אבי*, *their father*,⁸¹⁸ that is to election and covenant. Further evidence of this is seen the plaintive cry of *יהוה*, *אשיתך בבנים*, *I would*

⁸¹⁴ See pp.113ff., above.

⁸¹⁵ Westermann, *Elements*, p.71: "The collection of lament songs suggests that after the destruction of the sanctuary, the worship service of those who remained was continued only as a lament liturgy. The lament of the people here acquires an eminently important function for the continuity of Israel's relationship with God after 587."

⁸¹⁶ See p. 122, above.

⁸¹⁷ *Theology*, p.115.

⁸¹⁸ This form does not appear in the verses at hand, but we have reasonably interpolated to make our point.

set you among (my) sons, with Israel cast in the image of an unfaithful wife. Clearly Hosea's image in that regard is in mind, but also his saying "out of Egypt I called my son." Hence reference is to the deliverance from Egypt, the covenant at Sinai, and the Song of Moses.

Confirming that this is so, the conferring of the land of promise would seem to be the meaning behind the enigmatic expression חמדה נלה צצי שבואת *a beautiful pleasant inheritance (among) the hosts*.⁸¹⁹ Further to this, at 31.9, is the pastoral promise of renewal, as we have literally translated: "by brooks of water (and) in a straight path." This only makes sense in terms of the covenant, new or renewed, mentioned directly ten times in the three chapters that follow. It is for Israel, named Ephraim, who is the first-born of אב (*the*) father. That all this is indeed a covenant matter is driven home by the expression with regard to Ephraim in 31.20, דברי בו זכר אזכרו עוד *my speaking against him, I remember him still!* Despite considerable speculation on the precise translation, we are persuaded, with the Targum, that the verb דבר has to do with the speaking and delivering of the Law. If this is so, the reference is to the Law of the Covenant.

Even though all other texts with which we have dealt allude to the covenant, or have it within their context, the Malachi one is the first and only to mention it directly within itself. As we pointed out before, the expression ברית אבותינו *the covenant of our fathers* occurs seven times in this brief prophecy, including its appearance in 2.10. In addition, there are numerous allusions to the concept, as Horeb, law, Moses, forefathers, proper sanctuary, etc. In order to emphasise the centrality of this covenant for his overall message, the prophet places it between the covenants of Levi and marriage, indicating that that in the midst is indeed the centre and foundation of all things. Faithfulness to one implies faithfulness to all. Breaks in one causes disruption in all. The maker of this all-encompassing covenant is named אב *father*, and according to 1.11, גדול שמי בגרים *great is my name among the nations*. Whatever this means in its largest sense, it is surely a reference to the Sinai Covenant in general and to the second commandment in particular.⁸²⁰

In Psalm 103.1 the name of יהוה is said to be "holy." And, as set forth in verses 4, 8, and 11, his holiness is ascribed to his quality of "mercy." Such mercy, according to our text, literally translated, is in a special sense showered על בניו *over his sons* and

⁸¹⁹ We have translated quite literally, which we feel captures Yahweh's extravagance both in the giving of the land and in his sad longing for their return to faithfulness.

⁸²⁰ Eichrodt says that Malachi "takes his stand on the ground of the Law - that from the rising of the sun to its going down God's name is great among the Gentiles (as well as the Jews), and in every place a pure offering is made," *Theology I*, p.414.

על יראיו *upon all who fear him*. Any question as to just who these might be is answered in 103.18, that is לשמרי בריתו *those who keep his covenant*.⁸²¹ Although the term covenant does not appear in our text, and occurs but once directly in verse 18, the concept stands squarely in the midst of both our passage and extends throughout “this finest blossom on the tree of biblical faith.”

The theological reality conveyed in these texts and contexts alone with regard the biblical notion of covenant is enormous both for Israel and for all of creation. First of all, it makes perfectly plain - despite ambiguity as to whether it is essentially a singular act or somehow a mutual agreement - that strictly speaking יהוה is one who by nature acts unilaterally. He does not need to do what is done, and he receives nothing automatically from the act beyond his own satisfaction.⁸²² Secondly, the covenant action toward Israel ought to generate loyalty and obedience. If so, further blessings will flow toward her; if not, curses instead will ensue.⁸²³ Thirdly, such covenant action by יהוה carries with it quite specific stipulations with regard to keeping the same intact: obedience to the law, due praise of the covenant maker, and proper remembering of his holy name. Fourthly, while focusing on Israel, the covenant has universal scope, providing “light to the nations” so that the creator’s name might be “great among” them. Finally, and fundamentally, the name of the covenant maker is אב *father*. As he may be named Father-Elector, so also he may be thought of as Father-Covenanter.

Hesed

Eichrodt, citing Nelson Glück, maintains that *hesed* constitutes “the proper object of a *berit*, and may almost be described as its content...a covenant rests on the presence of *hesed*.”⁸²⁴ That the two concepts are, then, intimately related seems well established. He translates חסד as *loving kindness*. The most thorough recent study of the expression in English is Katherine Sakenfeld’s *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew*

⁸²¹ See pp.142f., above.

⁸²² Marchel, *Abba, Père!* states well the great freedom and pleasure of יהוה in electing and entering into covenant with Israel: “Yahve est Père d’Israël d’une façon tout à fait particulière, en tant que cette paternité se fonde sur l’élection et l’Alliancem toutes deux gratuites / Yahweh is Father of Israel in a very particular way, in the sense that his paternity is founded on the election and the covenant, both being free gifts,” p.52.

⁸²³ See Deut 11.26ff; 23.5; Isa 65.15; Jer 48.10; further Neh 10.29; Ps 62.4; 109.28; Prov 3.33. While essentially deuteronomic theology, it conveys the sense of the notions of election and covenant as experienced.

⁸²⁴ *Theology I*, p.232, the reference being to Glück’s classic work, *Das Wort hesed* (1927), p.13.

Bible: A New Inquiry (1978). In an even more current digest of her findings,⁸²⁵ based as they are on secular usage of the term in Hebrew narrative, with a sense of free reciprocal relationships between persons and institutions within the covenant community, she reasons that it is basically “theological shorthand” for God’s “free and uncoercible” provision for Israel in covenant relationships with Abraham, Moses, and David. Moreover, she concludes that all human attitudes in such are “rooted ultimately in the loyalty, kindness, love, and mercy of God.”⁸²⁶ Even so, because she finds all English translations of the term inadequate and misleading she opts instead for transliteration. It is noted, too, that the term is a noun with no verbal form, which occurs some two hundred fifty times in the Old Testament. Given this, we must reckon with the verbal forms אהב *love* and רחם (*natural*) *love*,⁸²⁷ with which *hesed* generally appears. In any event, we confine ourselves to the direct or indirect usage of the latter in the texts and immediate contexts at hand.

Although not employing חסד, Hosea 11.1 speaks plainly of the אהב *love* of יהוה for Israel, manifest in his calling her out of Egypt. Inasmuch as the overall saying is apparently in the tradition of the Song of Moses, such love of יהוה for Israel as is expressed here may well be rooted in and defined by the Sinai covenant, if not even earlier. Reflecting on another song of Moses, in Exodus 15.13, wherein he extols יהוה for Israel’s deliverance by him out of Egypt and at the sea, Hosea could have well remembered that all such is said to have been accomplished בחסדך *in (his) hesed*. Further, recalling the theophany and restatement of the covenant in Exodus 34.1ff., it would likewise be remembered that יהוה, after promising to reveal both his goodness and his name,⁸²⁸ proclaimed to Moses, at the conclusion of verse 6 and the beginning of verse 7, that he is indeed a God of חסד. Not only so, but the revelation there is expressed with force by a double use of יהוה. Although the narrative shows composite signs, with considerable debate with regard to such an expression,⁸²⁹ we read this

⁸²⁵ *IB IV*, pp.377-81; see the excellent bibliography there, particularly of her own works as well as Stoebe, *Das Bedeutung des Wortes Häsäd im Alten Testament*, VT 2, pp.244-54. See also, Wolff, *Hosea*, p.52; Zimmerli, *Outline*, pp.144f.

⁸²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.378, 380. Zimmerli, *ibid.*, p.144, says, (based on passages as Exod 20.6 and Deut 5.10), “we can see how human love for God cannot simply be equated with God’s love for Israel. Israel’s reply is a response to Yahweh’s initiative.”

⁸²⁷ So Zimmerli, *Outline*, p.144. See e.g. Exod 34.6; Ps 18.2.

⁸²⁸ Exod 33.17ff. While Moses is forbidden to look upon the face of Yahweh, he is promised a vision of his character, expressed in the impressive parallel, *graciousness* and *mercifulness*, both sides of which are to be comprehended in terms of his name.

⁸²⁹ LXX suggests deletion of the second appearance. Noth, *Exodus*, p.261, says much of the first half of the verse “is in fact questionable.” Durham, on the other hand, takes the expression to be “a deliberate repetition of the confessional use of the tetragrammaton,” *Exodus*, p.453.

with Cassuto as appositional expansion. As such, it is an intentional underlining of Yahweh's relationship with Israel as indeed covenant under the rubric of *hesed*, defined additionally by such expressions as "mercifulness" and "graciousness."⁸³⁰

Certainly Hosea's own great interest in covenant character and renewal fits well and was probably defined to a considerable extent by the Sinai event. Indeed, it may be that his quest for a definition of that covenant character of יהוה goes back even further. When Abraham's senior servant, probably Eliezer, on his mission to find a wife for Isaac, prays at the well in Genesis 24.12, it is more for the sake of Abraham than Isaac. Specifically, he requests חסד for Abraham. Given the context of chapters 15ff, it is evident that such was already part and parcel of what had been entered into with Abraham, and that the prayer was for renewal of the same. That this, too, formed Hosea's thought can scarcely be doubted. While, again, the term is not employed in the text at hand, its appearance in 10.12, as well as in 2.21 and 6.6, and against this larger background, leads us to conclude that the concept governs all that is expressed with regard to Ephraim/Israel in 11.1 and throughout the chapter, notwithstanding Wolff's contention that the entire piece may be "separate" from what goes before or comes after. It describes precisely Hosea's teaching on the immense regard of יהוה for those whom he elected and called into covenant relationship, so giving his expressions in that regard their distinctive and "unmatched" prophetic quality.⁸³¹

Malachi likewise does not use the term חסד. On the other hand, as we have sought to show, it is clear that the אהב יהוה *love (of)*, as expressed in 1.2, is his overall theme. Moreover, it is equally evident that this affection is in terms of ברית אבותינו *the covenant of (the) fathers*, stated seven times at the heart of the catechism, whether with reference to Levi, the fathers as such, or the state of marriage. It may be reasonably supposed, therefore, that the prophet had *hesed* in mind. "Echoes" of other direct and indirect reference to such from Deuteronomy and Jeremiah support this assumption.⁸³² With Eichrodt, the image of Israel as the "apple of Yahweh's eye" in Deuteronomy 32.10 suggests *hesed*.⁸³³ So, too, the apparent liturgical refrain,

⁸³⁰ See above note on Exod 33.17ff., p.183, n.828.

⁸³¹ See pp.111f., of this dissertation.

⁸³² So Hill, *Malachi*, p.224; see p.121, above.

⁸³³ *Theology I*, p.239. He says, "The poet of Deut. 32 was certainly influenced by this profounder prophetic conception (of *hesed*), when, in order to express Yahweh's kindness to his people, he turned to the tender image of the favourite child, whom the father guards as the apple of his eye.." See p.136 of this dissertation. We maintain that the influence could very well be the other way round, that is an older usage being picked up and carried forward as circumstances required.

“his *hesed* endures forever,” in Jeremiah 33.11 speaks directly of the attitude of יהוה toward Israel, particularly as the editor exults over the prophet’s vision of a new covenant. Here as well, the covenant rests on the presence of *hesed*, the two words being employed, as Eichrodt says, “in zeugma.”⁸³⁴

By far the most powerful representation of חסד *hesed* among the passages handled is that in Psalm 103, which, as Allen says, “takes us to the heart of Old Testament Theology.”⁸³⁵ In the verse undertaken is the expression רחם יהוה. While *hesed* is not used, its central and dominant appearance in verses 4, 8, and 11 seems in fact to define *pity*. As we have shown, the term appears three times in the chapter, pointing in each instance to the solid identification of יהוה with the sad plight of the hearers of the classic psalm, that is with their depth of estrangement, anxiety, and fear on account of their spiritual iniquity and disease. Eichrodt’s views such *pity/hesed*, certainly in the “profounder prophetic conception” in Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, but by extension in this Psalm as well, not so much as a sign of “the condescension of the exalted God” as the divine will seeking “communion with man.”⁸³⁶ On the other hand, such desire for communion on the part of יהוה, particularly with those estranged from him because of their sin, hardly diminishes his more fundamental *hesed* manifest in creation, general protection, and deliverance from enemies. Sakenfeld traces such broader sense of the concept in the Psalms and concludes with the overall judgement that “God’s forgiveness as an act of *hesed* that continues the divine-human relationship is foundational to life itself and undergirds all other manifestations of *hesed*.”⁸³⁷ Indeed, as Eichrodt says with regard to the Psalter as a whole, “the Creation itself is a work of divine *hesed* (Ps. 136.1-9).”⁸³⁸ This conclusion is supported by the אב father form in the text at hand, not only pointing to the one who looks in pity upon the wayward (verses 4, 8, and 11) but particularly to his attitude toward those who in proper reverence keep covenant with the holy Name of the One who rules over all (verses 1, 11, 18, and 19).

⁸³⁴ Ibid., p.233. Much is made of the use of חסד with רחמים (*natural*) love in Jer 16.5, “a quite spontaneous expression of love, evoked by no kind of obligation.” Because such is extended even to the apostate, it is said, further, to shed “a new light on the whole concept,” p. 238.

⁸³⁵ See p.141 of this dissertation.

⁸³⁶ *Theology*, p.239. In further explanation of this judgement it is said, “What began as a *hesed* granted as a matter of course in the *berit* has become, as a result of the thoroughgoing questioning of the old conception, a completely new concept of faithfulness and love,” p.238. See also, Wolff, *Hosea*, “חסד denotes kindhearted actions that, by spontaneous love and the faithful meeting of responsibilities, create or establish a sense of community,” citing 4.1; 6.4,6; 10.12; 12.7, p.52.

⁸³⁷ *hesed*, ABD IV, p.380. Cited e.g. are Ps 6.2ff. (Eng. 6.1ff.); 17.7; 25.6f.; 40.12 (Eng. 40.11); 51.3 (Eng. 51.1); 138.2; 143.12.

⁸³⁸ *Theology*, p.239. Cited e.g. are Ps 33.5; 36.7; 119.64; 145.9.

Explicit and implicit theological significance abounds in all this. For one thing, *hesed* is of the very nature and character of יהוה, expressed in every divine act from creation onwards. Furthermore, such characteristic *hesed* is most fully expressed and experienced in his free exercise of covenant with Israel in all of its manifestations, celebrations, and renewals. Finally, the designation יהוה is best understood in terms of חסד *hesed*, and all this under the name אב *father*; indeed, he may be termed Father-*hesed*.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In comparison to the New Testament one sees a relative scarcity of language depicting God as "Father" in the Old. Such a fact presents "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma."⁸³⁹ We have found minimal help in unlocking all this from the perspective of the history of religions, either in its technical approach, its continuation in modern feminist critique, or in the essentially trinitarian reaction thereto. Indeed, with such the mystery only deepens.

Inductive exegetical examination of and theological reflection upon the principal texts with God under language of father is far more revealing. Doubtless caution was exercised in direct use of father language with reference to God due to fear of contamination by pagan deities, or false association with them. The crass physicality of such religious systems had no part in the Old Testament. Also, on the positive side, there existed within Israel the means for describing and addressing God in the most personal terms possible, that is, in his divine name יהוה. Calling God אב *father* is a kindred notion, but it was not required given this central theological conviction (see Exodus 3.13-15).⁸⁴⁰ We speculated that as this personal name receded in Israel, due to possible misuse or lack of proper regard (e.g. Exodus 20.7), the name אב *father* may have been seen as an appropriate gloss or metonym for the personal name יהוה. קי later formal convention of glossing the divine name as "the Lord" also may have taken root in this period (see, e.g., Isaiah 50.4ff.; Book of Ezekiel).

Added to this, we argued, was a hesitancy to link God and the language of father because of the strength of the formula, rooted in patriarchal religion, the "God of your/our fathers." And finally, given the Hebrew language's tendency toward parallelism and circumlocution, there were numerous ways of witnessing to the fatherhood of God in other words without danger of violating one of these several

⁸³⁹ Churchill speaking of Russia in a radio broadcast on 1 October 1939, in John Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 16th ed., 1992), p.620.

⁸⁴⁰ In this, Moberly takes Moses to be "the archetypal Hebrew prophet..the name YHWH being given for the first time to Moses and through him to Israel," *Old Testament of the Old Testament*, p.24f. Crucial, too, is his connection of the name with the earlier designation "God of your father(s), wherein "the identity and continuity of YHWH as Israel's God with the God known to the patriarchs," p.24.

constraining factors. As Eichrodt says, and we have pointed to, there were “other categories”⁸⁴¹ for such expression.

In the late exilic period texts emerge, as Isaiah 64-65, which show concern over Israel’s covenantal relationship, from Abraham to Moses to David to Zion. One sees this clearly from Isaiah 40 onwards as well as in certain Psalms⁸⁴² Even the Noachic covenant is threatened, as we learn from Isaiah.⁸⁴³ Theological reflection on broken covenant and threatened election drove the authors to consider the most fundamental covenantal and relational bulwark grounded in creation itself. This, in turn, saw the emergence of אב *father* as an appropriate term of address, expressive of the fundamental relationship between the revealed and personal God, יהוה and his children undergirding all subsequent covenants with Israel alone, through the ancestors Moses, David, and “daughter of Zion.”

Relative rarity by direct reference in no way meant poverty of understanding with regard to divine paternity. Rather, there was abundance of experience and expression on the matter. Indeed, Jesus would have found in the revelation to Moses, the spiritual reality of the people to whom he ministered, the preaching of the prophets, and the utterances of the psalmists all he needed to express his own unique relationship to God as “Father.” He needed no “Abba Experience.”⁸⁴⁴

If our assumptions, study, theses, and conclusions are correct, certain implications emerge with regard to those matters which occupied our attention in Part One, namely the history of religions approach to God under father language, feminist concerns therewith, and resulting trinitarian reactions thereto. First and foremost, the God of whom we speak, and whom the Christian Church affirms in the Nicene Creed, is “One God, Maker of heaven and earth.” This *One God* can be understood as none other than the God of the Old Testament, as evidenced in Genesis, Deuteronomy, the Prophets, and in Psalms.⁸⁴⁵ Further, this One God is “confessed” in the same record as

⁸⁴¹ *Theology* I, p.51.

⁸⁴² See e.g. Isa 41.8; 42.21; 48.1; 49.3,8; 51.2; 52.2; 54.9; 60.14; 61.8; 62; Ps.50, 78; 89; 106.

⁸⁴³ See Isa 54.9.

⁸⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.101. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus, An Experiment in Christology* (London: Collins, 1979) carries the concept forward and argues well that such an experience was the “source and secret of [Jesus’] being, message and manner of life,” p.216. Indeed, he says, without an understanding of such an experience, “the historical Jesus is drastically marred, his message emasculated and his concrete praxis. is robbed of the meaning he himself gave to it,” p.269. In our view, such reasoning is strong on the human religious experience of Jesus but all too weak on the overall biblical inheritance we have observed.

⁸⁴⁵ Christopher R. Seitz, “Our Help is in the Name of the Lord, the Maker of Heaven and Earth,” address delivered at Conference of Scholarly Engagement with Anglican Doctrine, Charleston, South Carolina, January 2001, pp.1-13. See e.g., Gen 14.19,22; Deut 32.6; Is 40.28; cf. Ps 115.15; 121.2; 124.8; 134.3; 146.6; further Ps. 8; 104.

One who brought Israel out of Egypt, called the prophets, and gave them a land.”⁸⁴⁶ In all such happenings, says Childs, this One God is a God revelation, of “self-disclosure,... [who] consistently takes the initiative in his pursuit of mankind.”⁸⁴⁷ In sum, God is one and there is one record of his acts and revelation for Judaism and Christianity, the Old Testament. As Barr bluntly puts the case, “In so far as a position is Christian, it is related to the Old Testament from the beginning.”⁸⁴⁸ Or as Keck says from the reverse perspective, “no one can deal with Jesus of Nazareth without confronting the question of God, because his concentration on God and his kingdom is what was constitutive of Jesus.”⁸⁴⁹ All these judgments mean beyond question that the locus of any clear understanding of One God within Judaism and Christianity, as well as language about him, is not found primarily or even substantially in a comparative analysis of religions. Rather such is located precisely within the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

In so far as a history of religions purports to be a Christian study, or even effectively to enter into constructive conversation with Christian history, doctrine, and life, it must of necessity understand and view matters from the perspective of the Old Testament’s doctrine of One God and the characteristic universe of his special revelation. Historical and comparative disciplines have much to offer both Judaism and Christianity for an understanding of their pre-history, history, and development. On the other hand, they have little to contribute if both become submerged in a mythological sea of bare religious relativity and fail to engage fully and seriously with Old Testament reality.⁸⁵⁰

These judgments likewise hold true for the feminist search for fundamental paradigms for God outside Scripture and beyond the established canon, even conjuring up new ones out of the mythological past or locating them in present woman-church movements. Of course, no reputable biblical scholar holds to a view of a male God, and neither does the Old Testament. As Childs puts matters, “The major thrust of the entire biblical witness is in portraying the God of Israel as different in kind from his

⁸⁴⁶ von Rad, *Theology I*, p.121.

⁸⁴⁷ *Canonical Context*, p.41. As to the question of God’s motivation for such revelation, it is said: “It is evident that divine revelation is never grounded in some need of God, as if he were lonely. There is no hint that God required some fulfilment, or even sought fellowship with mankind to express his Godhead,” *ibid.*, p.43.

⁸⁴⁸ *Old and New*, p.149.

⁸⁴⁹ *A Future for the Historical Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p.213.

⁸⁵⁰ See Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament* (*Studies in Biblical Theology 27*; London: SCM Press, 1960).

panentheism, that is, "everything is in God."⁸⁵⁷ While such was clearly an alternative to pantheism, that is God is in everything, it is difficult to see the distinction. Of course, the God of the Old Testament Scriptures is not remote in Israel, for, as Seitz says, "He comes as Judge! Moses sees him face to face. He speaks his word."⁸⁵⁸ Even so, according to the Scriptures, there is an otherness in his revealed holiness, and this essential character cannot be screened out by natural theology under any name. While we are unable here to trace the tradents between pantheism, or more appropriately in this instance panentheism, a notable process theologian, John Cobb, has saluted Moltmann for his thought in this regard, saying that his agreement with "process theologians is virtually complete."⁸⁵⁹ It is evident in the Scriptures that "the One God of Israel is proceeding with his purpose,"⁸⁶⁰ but such progression in no way suggests process in his becoming.

A second implication of our findings is that *Religionsgeschichte*, feminist concerns, and trinitarian reactions have not come sufficiently to terms with the fact that Christian Scripture is a *two-testament Scripture*. The first was the Scripture of Jesus, and the second is about his acceptance and fulfillment of the first. This means the first must be honored as he honored it and understood it, and that both must be dealt with fully in any effort to construct a notion of God as well as Jesus himself. Further, this means, as Childs says, "There is no legitimate way of removing the Old Testament's witness from its historical confrontation with the people of Israel."⁸⁶¹ In the final analysis, this means that all theological discussion and formulation with regard to Jesus and the Scriptures must be exegetically rooted in the two testaments, but not in a fashion as "to distort the witness [or] to drown out the Old Testament's own voice."⁸⁶²

Classical *Religionsgeschichte* has had a major problem in this regard. It is not that the discipline tends to allow the New Testament to drown out the Old, but rather that it has permitted the Old to be swallowed up by the Ancient Near Eastern religious milieu, both in presupposition and in practice. For example, we have noted Quell's summary judgment that our principal concern, the language of father for the God of Israel, emerges *ipso facto* not "from genuine belief in Yahweh but was imported into

⁸⁵⁷ Bertrand de Margerie, *The Christian Trinity in History*, p.252. See page 85, Note 382, above, for more detailed background on the concept.

⁸⁵⁸ "Our Help is in the Name of the Lord," p.10.

⁸⁵⁹ *Asbury Theological Journal* 55/1 (2000), p.121. See page 85f., above.

⁸⁶⁰ Barr, *Old and New*, p.153.

⁸⁶¹ *Biblical Theology*, p.379.

⁸⁶² Childs, *ibid.*, p.379.

and received by it.”⁸⁶³ Regrettably, as Barr has well said, such interpretative procedures are demonstrably prone to “distortion and wrong assessment of linguistic evidence.”⁸⁶⁴ Troublesome as well is the enterprise’s characteristic fault of confusing “common Near Eastern lore” with “Israel’s [authentic] revelation,” as well as its habit of representing “a shared cosmology” as a “shared ‘science.’”⁸⁶⁵ With both features of such enquiry, the unique and monotheistic God of Israel is indeed adrift in a metaphorical universe of Near Eastern gods. The Jenni-Westermann *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* is a notable correction to such tendencies, for genuine theological observations are offered, yet regrettably such are understandably nearly devoid of extensive exegesis. In sum, *Religionsgeschichte* looks to too many testaments beyond the two-testaments of Scripture.

Feminist concerns as surveyed also seriously violate the two-testament rule. Their exponents have been seen to perpetuate the history of religions approach, largely selecting texts from both the Old and New Testaments that suit their presuppositions, looking even more extensively to ancient Near Eastern sources, and building new canons from whatever materials may be found far away or near at hand. To the extent that they draw upon the biblical testaments and subject the materials to interpretative methods so as to “depatriarchalize” the whole in a way that alters the distinct witness of both. In this they wrongly presume that the conceptions of God are crude in the Old Testament and more credible (albeit still in need of adjustment) in the New, thus at best taking up two-testaments in reverse order. In this, they seek to reconstruct God’s own ordering of his revelation.

The most serious reconstruction of the two-testament paradigm comes from the most friendly and well meaning of those we have considered, namely the ones concerned with the Trinity. First, as we have sensed, their overall tendency is to move from Christ to God and from Son to Father. While this may appear to honor the two-testament concept, it seems to us that it does just the opposite. Surely, as Barr puts it, “the God of the Old Testament is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ [but] the Old Testament is the time in which our Lord is not yet come..the Old Testament ‘looks

⁸⁶³ *TWNT* = *TDNT* V, p.967; see p.19, Note 78, above.

⁸⁶⁴ *Semantics*, p.7; see p.13, above.

⁸⁶⁵ Frymer-Kensky, *Encyclopedia* I, p.125f.

forward' to his coming"⁸⁶⁶ Or, as Childs states the matter, "The coming of Jesus does not remove the function of the divine disclosure in the old covenant."⁸⁶⁷

Presenting itself again is the mentioned strong emphasis on *patripassianism*, the chief exposition of which in current trinitarian discussion is presented in Moltmann's *The Trinity and the Kingdom*.⁸⁶⁸ In his zeal for *perichoresis*, that is "reciprocal inherence" between the divine and human, viewed particularly from the cross, he demonstrates what is perhaps the most glaring violation of a two-testament reality. He looks backward from Jesus' death to his coming, virtually canceling out any disclosure or anticipation with regard to his coming in the old covenant. The New Testament is read back into the Old. It is not a question of whether or not God feels the pain of Christ on the cross, for it would be surprising if he did not. Besides not according full value to the One God of the Old Testament, the real error here is failure to honor his prior revelation to Israel on the way to fuller disclosure in Jesus on Calvary. Indeed, as we have already mentioned, it is even stated that "no divine glory is conceivable without 'the Lamb who was slain.'" It is a type of modern Sabellianism.

The third and final implication for these historical endeavours that we would mention here is our sense of the failure of such undertakings to deal properly with the "Sacrament of Old Testament Language."⁸⁶⁹ As previously mentioned,⁸⁷⁰ and as said by Wright, all images and language with regard to deity are "broken,"⁸⁷¹ particularly those speaking in terms of the One God of the Old Testament and Father of the New. Or, as Torrance puts it, "there is a measure of impropriety in all human language of God."⁸⁷² Yet, says Young, focusing on Names revealed in Scripture, and following the lead of Gregory of Nyssa, she concludes that there is knowledge in such "sufficient for our limited capacity," which carries us beyond the "merely metaphorical" and into 'a heightened and more glorious meaning'"⁸⁷³ This is heart of what she terms the

⁸⁶⁶ *Old and New*, p.152.

⁸⁶⁷ *Canonical Context*, p.9. This is preceded by the following: "Although Christians confess that God who revealed himself to Israel is the God and Father of Jesus Christ, it is still necessary to hear Israel's witness in order to understand who the Father of Jesus Christ is."

⁸⁶⁸ See p.70f. of this dissertation.

⁸⁶⁹ We have borrowed this term from Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, p.140ff, paraphrasing it for our Old Testament purposes.

⁸⁷⁰ See p. 97f. of this dissertation.

⁸⁷¹ *Old Testament and Theology*, p.118f.; see p.97f., above.

⁸⁷² *Reconstruction*, p.31. Even so, he goes on, "the primary reference of theological statements is to the Reality of God infinitely beyond and above us, and that, though secondary, the reference of our statements to one another in logical sequence (*akolouthia*) cannot be neglected."

⁸⁷³ *Biblical Exegesis*, p.142.

sacrament of language. We have labored to appreciate and employ this sacrament throughout, and are loath here to be critical of others who have sought to do likewise.

Such imaginative and sacramental reading of the biblical narratives is perhaps understandably beyond the assumed interests of *Religionsgeschichte* readers. On the other hand, as Barr has rightly charged, such reading as they do has often “lead to the distortion and wrong assessment of linguistic evidence.”⁸⁷⁴ This is evidently done on a ground of presupposition that general revelation perceived in the religions of the Ancient Near East is superior to special revelation in the two-testaments of Scripture. Further, while automatically discounting the mentioned imaginative and sacramental reading of two-testaments of Scripture, they seem to accord just that sort of reading to Ancient Near Eastern texts, even maintaining dependence of the former upon the later. This entire procedure represents a serious disregard for the sacrament of biblical and theological language.

Feminist concerns (and we refer here only to Christian ones) present the most thoroughgoing “suspicion” and rejection of the language of the two-testament Scriptures, particularly the first, especially with regard to patriarchal language. The most telling departure from the sacrament of biblical language, especially from that of the Old Testament, is encountered in the thought of Ruether. Instead, she chooses to “read between the lines” in order to discern the “prophetic norm” which is “central to biblical faith.” In this quest, she even loads on “Gnostic Gospels” and “left-wing Puritan” expressions, constructing a hermeneutical circle of past and present experience for all proper God-talk.⁸⁷⁵ Not only so, she goes on to advocate dialogue with pre-biblical religions as well as modern liberalism, Marxism, and romanticism toward a “synthesis of all three” and the creation of a canon beyond the traditional one. Accordingly, such typical feminist theology, while pretending to enhance two-testament language in behalf of women’s liberation, actually rejects it. It has gone on to accept instead whatever goddess has come along. And in this it has failed utterly to lay hold of the true nature of the Name of Israel’s God, יהוה, as well as any suitable metaphors or metonyms for such, as אב *father*, or related expressions. The stern words of Childs are in order here. “When such biblical terms to designate God become stumbling blocks the hermeneutical question must be raised whether the problem lies with the imagery, or with a generation which no longer possesses the needed ‘reader competence’ to render the Bible as scripture of the church.”⁸⁷⁶ Garrett Green, mainly

⁸⁷⁴ *Semantics*, p.7; see pp.13, 23, n. 89, above.

⁸⁷⁵ *God-Talk*, pp.31-35; see p.39ff. of this dissertation.

⁸⁷⁶ *Canonical Context*, p.40.

with regard to Sallie McFague, but applying equally to each of the feminist theologians we have surveyed, speaks of the “fatal flaw” in their thought. They all take their “point of departure from human experience” rather than from the divinely ordered language of Scripture.⁸⁷⁷

As much as we desire to acknowledge recent robust trinitarian thought, especially in the wake of the feminist critique, we are obliged to say that here too it has strayed onto dangerous paths. Moltmann is once again the principal example, specifically in his declaring that “Christ’s death on the cross acts from below upward, from without inwards, out of time into eternity.”⁸⁷⁸ This properly exalts the cross of Jesus Christ, thereby the economic work of God and the Trinity, so illuminating profound nuances in the *intra*-trinitarian identity of both God and Christ. And the argument has been persuasive, with many following in his train. Jenson has sought brilliantly to clarify this identity further, holding that each aspect of the Trinity “possesses the one and selfsame deity..that the three are God.”⁸⁷⁹ He further holds that the One who raised “Jesus from dead” is the same God who freed Israel,⁸⁸⁰ and that he rightly calls him Father. Such conclusion is quite congenial to this study. On the other hand, while the proposal has the appearance of being trinitarian, it is in reality more Christological than trinitarian. The argument is plainly circular, from Christ to God to Christ. In this, it fails to properly honor the progressive character and order of God’s activity as witnessed in the plain language of the two-testament Scriptures, with all persons of the Trinity in their proper linear order. Barr has it right once again: “The direction of thought [in the plain language of the two-testament Scriptures] is from God to Christ, from Father to Son, and not from Christ to God.”⁸⁸¹

Seitz has pinpointed the effect of such Christologizing in response to a recent popular book by Paul Zahl, wherein it is held that “theology is unable to start from God as creator of the universe.”⁸⁸² The problem with this, says Seitz, is that it has more to do with a sort of natural theology rooted in Christ’s benefits rather than thorough awareness of revealed two-testament religion. In sum, “It is not possible to speak of Jesus as this saviour without speaking of the God who sent him..There is no Jesus Christ apart from the prior electing, creating..”⁸⁸³

⁸⁷⁷ *Speaking*, p.47.

⁸⁷⁸ *Kingdom*, p.158f.; see p.71, above.

⁸⁷⁹ *Identity*, pp.107, 120; see p.73ff., above.

⁸⁸⁰ *Theology I*, p.8.

⁸⁸¹ *Old and New*, p.153f.

⁸⁸² *A Short Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). *Shades of Bultmann!*

⁸⁸³ “Our Help,” p.8f.

ABBREVIATIONS

Titles not listed are written in full

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i> , ed. J. B. Pritchard
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BDB	Brown, Driver, and Briggs, <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur <i>ZAW</i>
CB	Century Bible (Old Series)
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CC</i>	<i>Christian Century</i>
CeB	Century Bible
<i>Com</i>	<i>Commonweal</i>
<i>Con</i>	<i>Concilium</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>ExpT</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> , ed. E. Kautsch, tr. A. E. Cowley
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Bible</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>IDB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBR</i>	<i>Journal of Bible and Religion</i>
<i>JE</i>	<i>Jewish Encyclopedia</i> , ed. Isidore Singer
<i>JEA</i>	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament

LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NCB	New Century Bible
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OLZ	<i>Orientalische Literaturzeitung</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	<i>Oudtestamentische Studien</i>
RGG	<i>Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i> , ed. K. Galling
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SE	<i>Studia evangelica</i>
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , ed. G. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, tr. D. Green
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , ed. G. Friedrich tr./ed. G. Bromiley
THAT	<i>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> , ed. E. Jenni, C. Westermann
TS	<i>Theological Studies</i>
TWNT	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> , her. G. Kittel
TZ	<i>Theologisches Zeitschrift</i>
USQR	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testament</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WC	Westminster Commentary
WO'C	Bruce K. Waltke, M. O'Connor, <i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew</i> <i>Syntax</i>
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift für deutschen morgenlandischen Gesellschaft</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

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AFTERWORD

We began reflecting on our concluding thoughts on this study on a Sunday and while attending an afternoon Mass in a local parish church. The Gospel reading was Mark's account of Jesus' healing the leper. How perfectly appropriate, we thought! The leper came to Jesus seeking healing for his abhorrent condition. He placed his condition at the feet of Jesus, with the prayer, "If you will, heal me!" With compassion, Jesus healed him, with instructions that he make no public capital of the matter but that instead that he offer thanksgiving to God through the local priest.

The leper knew of the love of God through Jesus. In response to prayer, Jesus expressed that love in his act of compassion. However despicable the condition, God's love, like that of a father, is ever available. Upon appropriate faith it is released and applied. The only appropriate response is thanksgiving. While it is unknown whether or not the leper offered such, that it is required and expected, is beyond doubt. It is a first principle among God's elect.

Jesus did not come to this realization and practice by some experience out of the blue. He learned it from the Old Testament.