

Pictures, Stories and the Cross: Where do the Echoes Lead?

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Introduction

The breathtaking new book with which Richard Hays has once more redirected a major field of research will be discussed for decades to come.¹ The story of its final production, done at speed and with help when the author was battling a life-threatening illness, adds an extra dramatic twist, but actually the thesis Hays argues, and the way in which he sets it out, was already dramatic enough to keep scholars alert at their desks and awake at nights. The received wisdom used to be that John's gospel gives us the 'divine' Jesus while Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us the 'human' story (albeit with occasional overlaps in both directions). If Hays is even half right in his central argument, this well-worn theory cannot simply be lightly adjusted. It must be abandoned altogether. When we see the (very different) ways in which all four gospels use Israel's scriptures in retelling the story of Jesus, we are bound to recognise that all four see their central figure as the living embodiment of Israel's God. 'The low/high christological categories collapse completely' (280). If we listen hard, we may catch other echoes: of tearing paper as lecture-notes are ripped up, and of frantic typing as old textbooks are rewritten.

Not everyone will like it, of course.² Old habits die hard and there will undoubtedly be resistance. But the case is so strong, both subtle and supple, that going back to the old paths will carry with it a hint of wilful ignorance (if not actually of the more vivid metaphors offered by 2 Peter 2.22). If I were Richard Hays, I would prepare to defend myself against two fairly obvious charges, which I mention here to clear the way for the different questions and proposals I shall then advance.

First, there is no attempt in this book to defend, or even to explain, the way in which 'echoes of scripture' are to be detected. Many critics of Hays's earlier 'echoes' (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989]) have raised good and serious questions at the level of method, and at some point it would be good to see Hays answering them. The discussion of method launched by that earlier book have been vigorous and wide-ranging, an example being the study of Ezekiel by my colleague Bill Tooman.³ Hays's new book contributes to those discussions only obliquely, by the simple method of 'Watch and you'll see': Hays works through many detailed examples in which scriptural echoes are not only detected but, individually and particularly cumulatively, point to a

¹ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016. References in what follows are to this work unless otherwise indicated; italics within quotations indicate original emphasis unless otherwise noted.

² I have not yet seen J. R. Daniel Kirk, *A Man Attested by God: The Human Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), but by all accounts it offers a radical alternative to the views of Hurtado, Bauckham and Hays himself. A new wave of important debate appears to be gathering force.

³ W. Tooman, *Gog of Magog: Reuse of Scripture and Compositional Technique in Ezekiel 38-39* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2011).

resounding and clear conclusion. Like some other kinds of revolution, this book doesn't wait for a negotiated settlement on points of principle, but simply creates new facts on the ground. Let methodological discussions follow fresh readings, for once, rather than precede them! Discussions of method can sometimes postpone, or even neutralize, actual exegesis; this way of proceeding has a bracing, refreshing quality. Not so much a bomb on the theologians' playground, then. More of a sudden cold shower on the overheated heavy machinery of the exegetical industry.

A second problem is that Hays appears almost entirely to skip over the question of how other first-century writers were reading, and echoing, the same scriptural texts. Sirach receives somewhat more sustained treatment, but many other relevant texts such as the Scrolls, *4 Ezra*, and the Wisdom of Solomon are noticed only in passing. Philo receives a brief mention (on the Logos) and a single footnote; Josephus, one footnote. In a sense, as with the comment above about method, this really doesn't matter. Hays's argument stands or falls on the sense his fresh readings make of the Gospels as they stand. And of course to have attempted anything fuller by way of comparative study (on the model, say, of Francis Watson's remarkable *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*⁴) would have doubled the size of the book. But at point after point his proposals cry out, it seems to me, for this kind of second-temple grounding. When he says (5) that early Christian reflection on Jesus was 'fundamentally conditioned by the biblical stories of God's dealings with the people Israel', many would want to stress 'as those stories were being retrieved by other Jews in the second-temple period' – not, of course, to restrict interpretative possibilities to things the evangelists' contemporaries were already saying, but to contextualize them. Hays writes of the assumed or ideal readers with their 'encyclopedia of reception' (e.g. 195, 198, 229, offering thereby an implicit response to some of his methodological critics), but this could be considerably strengthened by demonstrating the ways in which that 'encyclopedia' was variously held by the evangelists' contemporaries.⁵ It might also be strengthened by historical parallels to the combined idea of such an 'encyclopedia' on the one hand (i.e. assuming that readers already knew the texts to be echoed) with the proposal that Luke at least, and to a considerable extent the others as well, were trying 'to encourage the formation of a certain kind of reading community' (276) (i.e. assuming that readers might not yet know the texts but that his work would encourage them in that direction).⁶ Thus, if there are parallel retrievals of crucial texts, it would be good to study them, not least to compare the potentially different treatments. If there are not (and if this seems not to be simply because of the accidents of preservation) then that, too, would be interesting, providing at least a sign that the scriptural echoes Hays is tracking were generated afresh as the first followers of Jesus, 'reading backwards' as in the title of his short earlier treatment, discovered advance signs of the new thing they had witnessed. I suspect there would be plenty of both.⁷

⁴ 2nd edn.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015 [2004].

⁵ Hays credits this idea of an 'encyclopedia of reception' to Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979).

⁶ On 289 Hays speaks of the encyclopedia 'that is presupposed both for the text's production and for its proper reception'.

⁷ See R. B. Hays, *Reading Backwards* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014; London: SPCK, 2015).

These two comments relate to one of the rare moments when a debate with another scholar makes it into Hays's text rather than into the seventy and more pages of detailed, small-print footnotes. He quotes Udo Schnelle, among the best known current German New Testament scholars, to the effect that a 'biblical theology' is impossible for three reasons. First, the Old Testament doesn't mention Jesus Christ. Second, the resurrection of a crucified man 'cannot be integrated into any ancient system of meaning formation'. Third, although the Old Testament may be the most important cultural and theological context for understanding the New Testament, it is by no means the only one.⁸ I am not sure that Schnelle is in fact denying what Hays wants to affirm. By 'biblical theology' he seems to mean a single coherent historical account of the whole Bible through which one might read Israel's scriptures *in their own contexts* and see that they were 'teaching the same truths' as the early Christians. Since that kind of a project is still alive and well the point seems to me still worth making. Hays's own proposal is precisely that the fresh readings of Israel's scriptures are generated by 'reading backwards' from the events concerning Jesus, rather than read 'forwards' from the obvious original meaning of the scriptures. Hays naturally highlights Jesus' fresh interpretation of scripture on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24.13-35), but his treatment rightly emphasizes exactly Schnelle's point, that prior to this moment nobody, not even devout Jews, had any 'system of meaning formation' that could include a crucified and risen Messiah.⁹ Hays is proposing a kind of *reborn* 'biblical theology'; Schnelle is objecting to the 'once-born' kind. Hays cites Martin Luther as an exponent of 'figural exegesis', contrasting him with Schnelle, but I am not sure that Luther's 'figural' readings (such as Hays's opening example, in which Luther sees scripture as the manger in which the Christ-child lies) really advance his case. But more of that anon.

Like most of Hays's work, this book will be the foundation for many other subsequent projects. There are dozens, perhaps hundreds, of potential scriptural echoes in the Gospels beyond those studied here; and there are several important gospel themes which are awaiting fresh study in terms of their biblical echoes. Hays has chosen to focus on the scriptural echoes which highlight the *identity* of Jesus in terms of Israel's God, and as I have stressed this is both necessary, timely and revolutionary. But there is something strange about this focus, excluding as it does certain other potential focal points. I have argued in various places that though the four gospels do undoubtedly understand Jesus in terms of the personal embodiment of Israel's God, this is the key in which the music is set rather than the tune which is being played. The music itself, played in this key, is the launching of God's kingdom on earth as in heaven, through the actions but particularly through the death of the one who was then raised from the dead. Christians in the modern West have grown used to the modernist critique which attacks the idea that Jesus might be 'God incarnate', and it is important to revisit our texts with this question. But when we do we find the texts saying, in effect, Yes, yes, of course we believe that, *but look what happens as a result*. Modernism has

⁸ Hays 3 with 368 n., 6, quoting the German original of U. Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 52.

⁹ Hays cites Rowan Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge* (Eugene, OR.: Wipf and Stock, 1998, 1), speaking of the 'experience of profound contradictoriness' at the heart of the apostolic faith; this, I think, is what Schnelle is meaning.

managed to keep off the agenda altogether the New Testament claim that with Jesus God's kingdom was launched on earth as in heaven. Often the churches have gone along for the ride.¹⁰ Here, too, the evangelists echo scripture in a multiplicity of ways, and Hays's book ought to propel his readers forward to examine these echoes in their turn.

Pictures and Stories

As in Hays's earlier work, there are twin themes jostling together. It is not clear, or not to me, which one will receive the midwife's accolade of 'firstborn', or indeed whether the elder will end up serving the younger. Perhaps this is because the mother – the fertile mind of our author – seems to be in no Rebecca-like distress over these potentially antagonistic twins. In some of his earlier work, particularly *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, the picture seemed to be dominated by *figural* exegesis without obvious links to an over-arching narrative (though narrative was always important in Hays's other work).¹¹ In some of his subsequent work, for instance the commentary on 1 Corinthians, he draws more on the implicit overall *narrative* of Israel's scriptures and the ways in which that narrative is retrieved by Paul.¹² In the present work we are introduced at once to 'figural' readings, as in the example from Luther cited above. There are many 'pictures' in the scriptures which, retrieved in the gospels, enable us to get a three-dimensional and theologically enriched sense of what the evangelists intend us to think. But as the book goes on the sense of a *continuous narrative* becomes more and more important. I do not think this easily counts as 'figural', certainly not in the way many are using that term today to retrieve an explicitly non-historical method of reading scripture.¹³ What we are now dealing with is *historical continuity*, and it looks as though Hays intends the 'figural' readings to be understood *within that framework* rather than as a separate method. The stories contextualise the pictures, or some of them at any rate. But these are quite different things, and those who have stressed the one have sometimes ignored the other, or even warned against it. Which twin is serving which?

This emerges in the treatment of Mark, where Hays traces the way in which Mark's Jesus, warning Jerusalem of its impending fate, is echoing the warnings of Jeremiah. 'As Judgment fell upon Israel in Jeremiah's time, so it looms once again over the temple in the time of Jesus' (29): the 'as' and the 'so' set the two in parallel. But Hays immediately continues by affirming 'the more fundamental promise of God's ultimate design to bring about Israel's deliverance and restoration' (29). Mark 'has primed his readers to expect that his story will focus on the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy of a new exodus and the establishment of God's kingly rule in Jerusalem'. Mark's ideal reader, that is, 'any reader steeped in Isaiah's

¹⁰ See my *How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperOne; London: SPCK, 2012).

¹¹ As, obviously, in his dissertation, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11*. (2nd edn.: Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2002 [1983]).

¹² R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); idem, *First Corinthians* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997).

¹³ E.g. E. Radner, *Time and the Word: Figural reading of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

language', would get the point: Jesus is proclaiming 'the consummation of Isaiah's long-deferred hope' (30), the hope 'that the moment of God's destined intervention is at last at hand' (31). Thus the coming of the kingdom 'is an apocalyptic event, fulfilling Isaiah's vision of a new exodus in which God will lead the people on a way through the desert to return in power to Zion' (44). We might wish that the phrase 'apocalyptic event' could be wheeled off to a retirement home where it might eke out its days in penitence for past misdeeds, but leaving that to one side we find the question pressing: in what sense is this 'figural' exegesis, and, if it is not, does that matter?

When we turn to Matthew, similar questions arise. Hays's sensitive probing into the meanings of the opening genealogy highlights the narrative *continuity* 'between Israel's story and the story that Matthew is about to narrate' (110). A single story-line runs through all the way to Jesus, a story in which 1.17 (the mention of exile as the third marker, after Abraham and David) 'signals that the coming of Jesus portends the end of Israel's exile', so that 'the periodization of the genealogy outlines the *plot* of Israel's story'. This in no way suggests that Matthew thinks of Israel's history as a progressive revelation, a smooth sequence leading up to the final revelation. On the contrary, the genealogy functions 'as a *Sündenspiegel*, a long and tortured narrative in which Israel sees its corporate sins reflected' (111).¹⁴ Matthew's Messiah, in other words, is 'the one who saves his people from the consequences of their sins by closing the chapter of powerlessness and deprivation that began with "the deportation to Babylon"' (111). This larger narrational reading of the genealogy contextualizes, and refocuses, the figural meanings of characters with it. Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba are absolved from the normal imputations, exemplifying instead the inclusion of non-Jews within the family; blame is placed instead on David (and, by implication, Judah) (112). These 'figural' readings work *within* the narrative, not independently from it, though when Matthew goes on to describe Jesus as Israel coming out Egypt (2.13-15) this is, says Hays, a 'figural fulfilment' of the Exodus narrative (113). Matthew is not merely 'looking for random Old Testament prooftexts that Jesus might somehow fulfil', but is rather 'thinking about the *specific shape* of Israel's story and linking Jesus' life with key passages that promise God's unbreakable redemptive love for his people' (116). This too seems to be a figural reading (a specific shape 'back then' which is gloriously repeated 'now') set within a larger narrative continuity.

I do not think that Hays has ever made explicit the way in which these two very different hermeneutical moves relate to one another. The discipline of 'intertextuality' itself, to which Hays has made such a significant contribution and which, indeed, he has introduced into New Testament studies, may need to be sharpened up. If Hays is right in his analysis of the underlying single narrative, the New Testament's use of the Old is not simply a special case of 'intertextuality' but a subtly different kind of thing altogether. If a later composer, writing a new symphony, 'echoes' themes from Schubert's 'Unfinished' symphony, that is one thing. If someone claims to be writing the missing final movement that will appropriately complete the earlier movements, that is something quite different.

¹⁴ Hays is here citing Stefan Alkier, 'From Text to Intertext: Intertextuality as a Paradigm for Reading Matthew', in *HVTSt* 61 (2005), 1-18.

That is the claim – that the events of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection constitute the *narrative continuation and climax* of Israel’s story – that Hays draws out particularly in discussing Luke. Luke, he says, is the most intentional and skilful of the evangelists in telling Jesus’ story ‘in a way that joins it seamlessly to Israel’s story’ (191; also 277). Luke is constantly prompting his readers to consider how the events narrated are linked to earlier events, ‘earlier chapters in the epic’, so as to create ‘a strong sense of historical continuity, an impression that Luke’s story belongs integrally to an older series of stories that the reader is expected to recognize’ (275-6). We might want to press the point, which Hays clearly affirms, that the ‘series’ is itself a single ‘story’, not simply a collection of smaller stories. At the same time (‘pictures’ within ‘stories’ once again) Luke’s writing ‘constantly folds Old Testament patterns into its story’, leaving us ‘with a powerful but indistinct sense of analogy between God’s saving acts for Israel in the past and the new liberating events coming to fulfilment in the story of Jesus’ (192). This seems to me exactly right, but it raises the question, which Hays does not, as to how the continuous narrative and the figural echoes work together – especially, once again, granted that many who advocate ‘figural’ readings do so explicitly against any sense of actual historical continuity. Again for Hays, however, the stories seem to retain pride of place over the pictures: ‘God’s intent to reveal salvation to all flesh was part of Israel’s plotted role from the beginning’ (199). Luke intends his readers to understand Jesus’ story ‘as the narrative continuation of Israel’s story and as the liberating climax toward which that story had moved’ (200; so too e.g. 215).

The pictures, then, are largely held within the stories, or rather the single story of the divine purpose for Israel and also, so to speak, the divine purpose for God himself. Luke’s Jesus is somehow to be identified both with Israel’s God and with Israel/humanity (245). Hays glimpses the huge problems that many will identify at this point, but apart from a few remarks he does not turn aside to ward off potential challenges. On the one hand, as we have seen with his reading of Matthew, he insists that the biblical presentation of the ‘back story’ of Israel is not a smooth Hegelian progress, such as has been imagined by the critics of ‘salvation historical’ readings of the New Testament.¹⁵ On the other hand, any claim that the events concerning Jesus were the unique fulfilment, the divinely intended climax, of the long story of Israel now routinely call down upon the interpreter’s head the charge of being, in some sense or other, anti-Jewish. Hays appears at one point to be warding off this charge, but in fact simply repeats the point that many find objectionable. ‘The theological effects of this hermeneutical program’, he writes, ‘are of wide-ranging significance’, which is undoubtedly correct; but he continues: ‘Rather than setting the church against Israel, Luke presents a continuous story of the one people of God. There has always been one elect Israel, and within that Israel, there have always been those who respond to God’s redemptive action with faith, and others who turn away and are cut off. Luke sees this pattern continuing in his own time’ (277). This again is undoubtedly correct, but it shows why many have insisted that such a reading, while admittedly not ‘setting the church against [historic, biblical] Israel’, does indeed set ‘the church’ over against those Jews of Luke’s day who refused to believe the gospel, thus establishing a pattern of ‘church against [subsequent] Israel’. I have argued

¹⁵ On this, see my *Paul and his Recent Interpreters* (London and Minneapolis: SPCK and Fortress Press, 2015), Part II, esp. chs. 6, 7.

strongly elsewhere against this slur, not least on the grounds that the New Testament writers are not doing ‘comparative religion’ but rather *messianic eschatology*. If any second-temple Jew claimed, as many did, that they knew who the Messiah was, this constituted a typically Jewish claim that *this*, rather than somewhere or somehow else, was how Israel’s God was fulfilling his promises, and that the consequences of refusing to accept this claim would be dire.¹⁶ More needs to be done, I think, precisely if we are to hear and rightly interpret the echoes of scripture in the Gospels, to think *historically* about the first-century situation and not to allow later polemics, of whatever sort, to cloud our vision.

There are surprises in store in Hays’s treatment of John. John, he says, ‘offers fewer signs of interest in narrative continuity than do the Synoptic Gospels’ (288, amplified variously thereafter). There are some senses in which this is true – no genealogies, for a start, and no explicit evocation of Malachi 3. However, the narrative of the returning divine ‘glory’, resonating with Exodus 40 and Ezekiel 43 and expressed specifically in Isaiah 40 and 52 in relation to the long-range promise of a rebuilt Temple, is central. Isaiah 40.3 appears on cue at 1.23, and Isaiah 53.1 and 6.10 are cited towards the climax of the twelve chapters of opening narrative (12.38, 40), with John’s explicit comment that Isaiah said this ‘because he saw his glory, and spoke about him’ (12.41).¹⁷ Hays’s brief discussions of these passages (at, for instance, 292-3) do not attempt to draw out this theme of the returning divine glory, which is all the more surprising in that Hays does see clearly that the gospels are picking up not only the unfinished narrative of Israel (when will the ‘exile’ be over?) but the unfinished narrative of God himself. Israel’s God had promised to return to Zion, and the gospels pick this up and apply it to Jesus (e.g. 252, 257).¹⁸ But this obviously temple-focused narrative fits far more closely with John’s gospel as a whole, and with the scriptural echoes that indicate a great narrative, than Hays appears to allow. He offers a rich exploration of what is obviously a central Johannine theme, of Jesus as the new Temple. But this appears to remain, for him, at the ‘figural’ level rather than the narrational.

This seems to me a missed opportunity. The best known scriptural echo in John, the opening words of the gospel, are of course an echo of Genesis 1.1, and, as Hays sees, a focusing of the creation story on Jesus as the one ‘through whom’ all things were made, resonating with later Jewish themes of ‘word’ and ‘wisdom’. But Hays never explores the possibility that the line of thought from John 1.1 to John 1.14 (in which the Word ‘tabernacles’ in our midst so that ‘we gazed upon his glory’) is itself a narrative, and that at three levels at least.

First, it is the narrative of creation itself. The creation of human beings in the divine image (Genesis 1.26-28) completes the picture of the creation-as-temple which is the narrative of Genesis 1.1—2.3. Second, it is the narrative of creation *and new creation*, involving the

¹⁶ See my *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (London and Minneapolis: SPCK and Fortress Press, 2013), 806-10, and in the index under ‘supersessionism’.

¹⁷ Quotations from the NT are from my own translation, *The Kingdom New Testament* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2011) (in the UK *The New Testament for Everyone* [London: SPCK, 2011]). Translations from the OT are taken from the NRSV.

¹⁸ I have argued that Paul, too, exploits this theme, and that it is in fact at the heart of the earliest Christology: see *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* ch. 9.

rescue, repair and renewal of the old; this points forward to Pilate's famous *Ecce Homo*, 'Here's the Man' in 19.5, and then to the emphatic *tetelestai* of 19.30, which echoes the 'finished' in Genesis 2.1-2. This is not just a random echo out of historical sequence. John is inviting his readers to understand the events concerning Jesus, particularly his death, as the culmination of the vast story of creation and new creation; and, granted all the other things he is doing, this cannot be other than some kind of a *Heilsgeschichte*. That is why, after the 'rest' of the seventh day, John so strikingly opens his resurrection chapter with 'On the first day of the week' (20.1), rubbing in the point at 20.18. Jesus' resurrection is the launch of the long-awaited new creation, consequent upon the victory over 'the ruler of this world' that was won on the cross, to which we shall return presently.

Third, and granted the all-pervasive temple-theme in the fourth Gospel, the line of thought from John 1.1 to 1.14 must be heard as a clear echo of the line of thought from the opening of Genesis to the end of the book of Exodus. The Pentateuch, as we just noted, begins with the creation of a 'temple', the heaven-and-earth reality with the humans as the 'image'. After things go horribly wrong, the rescue operation, first of the human race (through Abraham and his family), and then of enslaved Israel (through Moses and Passover), leads to Exodus 40 where the Tabernacle is constructed, an explicit *microcosmos* or 'little world', with Aaron as the human figure in the middle of it. Genesis 1 and 2 is in principle recreated. The *skēnē* is constructed (Exodus 40.17-29), the cloud of the divine presence covers it (40.34a), and the tabernacle is filled with the glory of the Lord (*kai doxēs kyriou eplēsthē hē skēnē*). This is what John is echoing in 1.14 and then, with multiple other echoes besides, in 1.15-18. And this makes sense of much of the rest of the book.

I was surprised, then, to find that Exodus 40 is not mentioned in Hays's book. But its absence makes it, perhaps, less surprising that Hays can suggest that there is no underlying eschatological narrative in John. When, however, we put the Isaiah references noted above within the triple implied narrative in the Prologue, we are faced once more, as in the Synoptics though by a very different route, with the story of exile and restoration, and in particular the story of the promised return of Israel's God to Zion, all reaching their shocking fulfilment in the events concerning Jesus. This means that in John, too, we would be right to see the manifold and multi-layered web of biblical allusion and echo as held within the large implicit narrative framework, in his case not only the story of Israel but the story of the whole creation. The pictures mean what they mean within the story. Here, not for the first time, one is struck by the theological similarity with Paul, despite the radically different mode of expression.

The implicit tension I observe between Hays's twin proposals, the 'figural' and 'narrative' readings of scripture, can be seen by reflecting for a moment on what we might call the hermeneutical direction of travel. Here Hays's discussion has something in common with the proposals from the last twenty years concerning the 'apocalyptic Paul'.¹⁹ His advocacy of 'reading backwards', as in his earlier and smaller book, sounds very like some of the would-

¹⁹ See again *Paul and his Recent Interpreters* Part II. See too now the collection *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. J. K. Goodrich, B. Blackwell and J. Mastin (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016).

be ‘apocalyptic’ proposals, and fits rather obviously within an overall Barthian reading strategy which refuses to make Jesus the result or product of anything else, including any story, and insists instead on starting with Jesus and working outwards from there. (This can be seen, for instance, in the various proposals regarding the ‘plight’ from which the gospel rescues people: was this problem well known, requiring the solution that was then provided, or did the first Christians reason backwards ‘from solution to plight’?²⁰) Hays’s basic proposal sounds as though it is moving straightforwardly down this line: first Jesus, then, in retrospect, various scriptural figures and themes spring to life. But in this book, as we have discerned, there is something else going on as well. When we ‘read backwards’ in this way *we discover a forward-moving story coming to meet us*.²¹ Of course, when we ‘read backwards’ we see things in the story which had remained opaque, and would remain scandalous, to those without the same hermeneutical starting-point. Yet there were plenty of second-temple Jews telling the story of Israel as the story of creator and cosmos, of the covenant God and the covenant people, as the story of an exiled people in need of restoration, of an enslaved people in need of a new Exodus, of a leaderless people hoping for a Messiah. Hays fully recognises this, though (again because of the scant attention given to second-temple texts) he never really probes the ways in which these narratives worked at the time. Though he fully agrees with my own arguments about the ‘end of exile’, with ‘exile’ treated as a flexible metaphor for the long period of Israel’s sorrow which began with Babylon, he never explores the way in which the all-important text, Daniel 9, was being read at the time. Even when discussing the scriptural echoes awoken in Matthew 18.21-22 when Jesus insists that forgiveness must happen ‘seventy times seven’, he goes quite naturally to Genesis 4.23-24 but not to either Leviticus 25 and the Year of Jubilee or to Daniel 9.24-27 where the ‘exile’ is extended to ‘seventy weeks of years’. Many things become even clearer when these are taken into account.²² And the more we study the Jewish texts of the period the more it becomes clear that the early Christians were by no means the only people who were ‘reading backwards’. That is what the Qumran pesherists were doing with texts like Habakkuk. That is what Daniel 9 does with Jeremiah; and it is what *4 Ezra* does with Daniel.

Anyway, the point is this. Reading backwards, we find forward-moving stories, indeed in many writings a single forward-moving story. However much the early Christians were compelled to tell that complex story quite differently, *it was that story that they were retelling*. They did not say, ‘Forget the old stories; we have a totally new narrative, for which the scriptures will provide us with non-historical figural illustrations.’ They said – and Hays has launched a new way of demonstrating that they said – ‘What has just happened in Jesus the Messiah is the true goal towards which those stories were aiming, even though we now see we had been telling them in a misleading fashion.’ This is most obviously true in the Emmaus Road story in Luke 24, but the same point could be made all through. The problem with invoking ‘figural exegesis’ is sometimes that the narrative dimension is not only

²⁰ As famously proposed by E. P. Sanders in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London and Philadelphia: SCM Press and Fortress Press, 1977); discussed and nuanced in my *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* 747-771..

²¹ I owe this succinct way of putting it to a conversation with Dr J. Davies; see also his *Paul Among the Apocalypses* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

²² I was surprised at Hays’s suggestion that in my earlier work I might be understood to have advocated a literal interpretation of ‘exile’. That, despite misrepresentations, has never been my view.

relativized but not wanted at all, lest its historical emphasis corrupt the supposedly pure truth. Hays's book raises these questions in a fresh way, and I think points to the right answer though without this ever becoming explicit.

The Scriptures and the Cross

All this brings us to what, to my mind, is the strangest omission in this remarkable book. Hays has focused so centrally on the *identity* of Jesus, the theme which in classic theology used to be called his 'person', that he seems to me significantly to have downplayed his *achievement*, the theme that used to be called Jesus' 'work'. Here I can only begin to probe new possibilities, but it seems to me that, not least by following in the ways Hays himself has taught us, new lines of thought open up which somebody ought to pursue further.²³

Many will be surprised that Hays (86-87) is cautious about discerning echoes of Isaiah's 'suffering servant' in the famous Mark 10.45 (the son of man came 'to give his life as a ransom for many'). Subsequent Christian readers, he says, will undoubtedly have heard such echoes, but Mark is pointing us rather to Exodus 24.8, to the suffering Psalms, and to the 'apocalyptic visions' of Zechariah and Daniel. But without wishing to downplay the latter, it seems to me that a stronger case can be made for echoes of Isaiah at this point.²⁴ Hays questions whether the allusion can be sustained by the possible echo between 'a ransom for many' in Mark 10.45 and 'he bore the sins of many' in Isaiah 53.12. But things go deeper than that. Isaiah's servant will make kings to shut their mouths (52.15), just as Mark's Jesus explains that present power-games of 'the kings of the earth' are confronted with a new sort of power (10.42). The Isaianic figure will, by his serving, justify many (53.11), and the whole context of a reversal of expectations, and of earthly power, focused on a redemptive death, fits extremely well with the whole sequence of thought in Mark 10.35-45. We might also cite Mark 14.24, where again, as with many commentators, a strong case can be made for seeing the blood 'shed for many' as carrying Isaianic overtones.

However, this is a comparatively small exegetical detail. Mark clearly offers a scripturally rooted interpretation of Jesus' death; the only question is which scriptures and to what extent. More surprising, precisely in terms of the echoes of scripture, is Hays's contention that Matthew 'has given surprisingly little attention to formulating a scriptural apologetic for the crucifixion of Jesus' (159) and that Luke 'does not explain *why* the cross is part of God's plan' (278). These sentences seem to me to beg for rebuttal. This cannot be done here at any length, but some starting-points may be noted.

²³ Some of what follows is expounded further in my new book *The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus' Crucifixion* (San Francisco and London: HarperOne and SPCK, 2016).

²⁴ See e.g. J. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (2nd edn.: Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004 [1992]); R. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000 [1997]). Elsewhere Hays follows Marcus and Watts fairly closely; it is not clear to me why he departs from them at this point.

The key to it all, in all four gospels, is I think Jesus' announcement of God's kingdom. No surprises there – though the kingdom plays less of a central role in Hays's book than one might have supposed. What matters is *what the kingdom means* and *how it was to be accomplished*. On both counts, all four gospels offer scripturally rooted reflections which reach their climax, in the narrative of each book and in the larger implied narrative of God and Israel, with Jesus' crucifixion. And it is this theme, of kingdom achieved through the cross, which is the evangelists' explanation and interpretation of the cross, echoing scripture in both narrative and figure.

Take Matthew first. Hays rightly noted that the echoes of Exodus in Matthew 2 were designed to portray Jesus as the new Israel. But there is more. Herod the Great plays the role of the wicked Pharaoh, killing all the babies to try to stop the Israel-shaped divine plan going ahead. Acts 4 will quote Psalm 2 of a later Herod, coupling him with Pilate: the kings of the earth did their worst, and God's Messiah was exalted, winning the victory and claiming the whole world as his kingdom. I am inclined to think that Matthew is working with a similar theme. Jesus comes into the world with a price on his head, a price that will eventually be paid; but that ultimate price will result in the ultimate New Exodus. And when Jesus goes into the desert, echoing the narrative of Israel's wilderness wanderings and quoting explicitly from Deuteronomy to ward off the equivalent of Israel's temptations, this is no detached figure, but part of the narrative of the obedient Jesus-as-Israel, whose obedience will be finally tested on the cross, where the same mocking voices assail him.²⁵ This and other points seem to me to provide the basis for a far more thoroughgoing scripturally based interpretation of Jesus' death in Matthew than Hays allows, though of course part of the point is that the four gospels are not exactly expounding what the western church has meant by 'atonement' except insofar as that slippery category can be related to the notion which, as I have argued elsewhere, dominates the scene far more. The *victory* of Israel's God, through the public career and death of Israel's Messiah, is central, and not to be played off against other 'theories'. The creator has defeated all the dark powers that, Egypt-like, had enslaved Israel and the whole world. This seems to me a primary insight of earliest Christianity, reflected variously in the many traditions represented in the New Testament.

Similar things can and must be said about Luke. It has been just as fashionable to say that Luke has no 'atonement theology' as it has been to say that he offers a human, rather than divine, Jesus. But just as Richard Hays has shown the latter proposal to be baseless, so I think we can show the former to be ill-conceived. Again the scriptural clues are central.

The most obvious passage is the explicit quotation of Isaiah 53.12 in Luke 22.37: 'He was reckoned with the lawless'. This more than makes up for the fact that in Luke 22.23-27, in other respects similar to Mark 10.35-45, there is no equivalent of the 'punch-line' of 10.45 which, by its supposed allusions to Isaiah 53, has been regarded as the heart of Mark's theology of the cross. The clear echo of Isaiah 53 in 22.37 ought, one might suppose, to have been enough to start the ball rolling in what has been the unfashionable direction, particularly

²⁵ Comparing Matthew 4.1-11 with Matthew 27.39-44, into which latter passage are also, of course, woven the echoes of Psalm 22 and, for good measure, Lamentations 2.15 as well as the Wisdom of Solomon.

when it is linked to the strong sense, which Hays expounds so clearly, of Luke's narrative of Jesus seen as the climax of the story of God and Israel. In particular, we should not miss Luke 22.53: 'Your moment has come at last, and so has the power of darkness.' Luke understands the cross to be the point at which the dark powers of the world do their worst, in order then to be defeated.

Throughout Luke's passion narrative, in addition, there are clear hints of what in shorthand we may call 'representative substitution'. Israel's Messiah dies innocently under the condemnation which had Barabbas and the brigands had deserved; his innocence is confirmed by the centurion. Luke allows specific biblical echoes to ring out: as Jesus goes on his way he warns the crowds one last time of the coming Roman devastation.²⁶ The time is coming, he says, when people will start to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!', and to the hills, 'Cover us!' This quotes directly from Hosea 10.8, linking the people's rejection of Jesus with ancient Israel's idolatry, the turning away from Israel's God. The point is focused sharply through 23.31, which may contain an allusion to Deuteronomy 29.19: if this is what they do to the green tree, what will happen to the dry one? This is a figure of speech, to be sure, but a figure which means what it means within the narrative which is clearer in Luke, I think, than anywhere else, anchored ultimately not simply to the story of Israel but to the story of Adam himself (see the genealogy in Luke 3). Rome will be the agent of divine judgment on rebel Israel; but Jesus, the obedient servant, is dying that death in advance. He is the 'green' tree, much harder to cut or burn, but all around him are the dry sticks of young revolutionaries, eager for a fight with Rome which they cannot win. 'Not only in theological truth but in historic truth, the one bore the sins of the many': words of George Caird which I have quoted many times at this point in the argument. This is at the heart of Luke's theology of the cross, and it is both rooted in and expressed through his scripturally rooted narrative and its accompanying figural echoes.²⁷

When it comes to the fourth Gospel, nobody doubts that John provides a rich interpretation of Jesus' crucifixion. But there seems little agreement as to where the heart of that interpretation is to be located. The focus of the gospel, as we have seen, remains on the interplay between Jesus and the Temple: when Caiaphas warns his colleagues that it would be better for one person to die in the place of the nation, this is partly to ward off the danger the Pharisees have indicated, that the Romans will come and take away 'our place' – in other words, the Temple – as well as 'our nation' (John 12.48-50). John explains that Caiaphas has prophesied truly: Jesus will indeed die for the nation, 'and not only for the nation, but to gather into one the scattered children of God' (11.52).

This leads to one of John's most profound interpretations of the cross, which comes in the complex and (to our eyes) convoluted response to the request from 'some Greeks' that they might see Jesus (12.20-22). Hays briefly expounds the passage which follows, but to my mind he skips over the telling climax, focusing only on the 'grain of wheat that falls into the ground' (12.24) and the resultant 'bearing fruit', meaning that Jesus will draw all people to

²⁶ See the earlier warnings in e.g. 13.1-9; 13.34-35; 19.42-44 – not to mention chapter 21 as a whole.

²⁷ See G. B. Caird, *Jesus and the Jewish Nation* (London: Athlone Press, 1965), 22; see my *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London and Minneapolis: SPCK and Fortress Press, 1996), 608.

himself (12.32) – the ultimate answer for the Greeks. Granted that the passage is indeed dense and difficult, there is another theme which emerges if we follow the metaleptic link suggested by Jesus’ quotation of Psalm 6.4-5 at 12.27: ‘Now my heart is troubled . . . What am I going to say? “Father, save me from this moment”?’ The Psalm consists mostly of lament and prayer, but it doesn’t stop there. The last three verses indicate how things will turn out:

Depart from me, all you workers of evil,
For the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping.
The Lord has heard my supplication;
The Lord accepts my prayer.
All my enemies shall be ashamed and struck with terror;
They shall turn back, and in a moment be put to shame.

(Psalm 6.8-10)

This fits exactly, it seems to me, with the underlying message of this passage. The Greeks want to see Jesus, and Jesus interprets their request as an eschatological sign: this is the moment when the Son of Man is to be glorified (12.23). That alone, with its obvious allusion to Daniel 7, ought to indicate where the passage is going. ‘The Greeks’ belong to the non-Jewish world which has been ruled over by the dark powers. The combination of Daniel 7 and Psalm 6 declares that these powers are to be defeated, not by Jesus escaping death but rather by him going through it, troubled soul and all. The result will be clear: ‘Now comes the judgment of this world! Now this world’s ruler is going to be thrown out! And when I’ve been lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself’ (12.31-32). Jesus, by his crucifixion – drawing here on the ‘lifting up’ motif which goes back to the figure of the serpent in 3.14-15 – will win the ultimate victory over the powers that have held the world captive. And that will be the moment when the pagan nations, set free from their ancient slavery, will come to worship Israel’s God in and through Jesus. This takes place, after all, at Passover-time, the time for the ultimate Pharaohs to be overthrown. I have argued elsewhere that this discourse has a political as well as a ‘demonic’ reference.²⁸ For our present purposes we need only note that the metaleptic associations generated by Psalm 6 and Daniel 7 not only reinforce what the passage itself says but also point forward dramatically to Jesus’ confrontation with Pilate in chapters 18 and 19, and thence to his shameful, but for John victorious, death.

Underneath all this there is another Psalmic allusion which points in the same direction. This joins together Jesus’ action in the Temple, which most now recognise (though Hays makes less of this than one might have thought) as crucial to the evangelists’ understanding of Jesus’

²⁸ See N. T. Wright, ‘John, Jesus, and “The Ruler of This World”: Demonic Politics in the Fourth Gospel?’ (with J. P. Davies), pages 71-89 in *Conception, Reception and the Spirit: Essays in Honor of Andrew T. Lincoln*, ed. J. G. McConville and L. K. Pietersen (Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock, 2015).

death, and his 'lifting up' both on the cross itself and then in resurrection and exaltation. This point, not recognised in any commentaries known to me, deserves much fuller study. I raise it here partly to celebrate the fact that once one starts enquiring after metaleptic resonances all sorts of texts emerge from the woodwork and ask to be taken into consideration.

In Matthew 21.15 we are suddenly introduced to 'children' who are shouting out 'Hosanna to David's son!' in the Temple. Some have linked these to the 'children' in Matthew 11.25, though there is no particular reason why the youngsters of that passage should suddenly reappear at this crucial point. However, Jesus' response to the chief priests and the scribes is to quote from Psalm 8: 'You called forth praise to rise to you/ From newborn babes and infants too!' Despite a widespread recognition that in the early church Psalm 8, linked with Psalm 110, formed one of the most important scriptural matrices for understanding the events concerning Jesus, nobody to my knowledge has asked the Hays-type question of this passage: what is Psalm 8 doing here?²⁹

As soon as we reflect on the wider themes of the Psalm, a fascinating link appears. 'What are human beings', asks verse 4, 'that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?' Literally, of course, this might be translated 'What is man . . . or the son of man . . . ?' And then the obvious point emerges, indicating that the evangelist was seeing the temple-incident as already linked to the Danielic scene in which 'one like a son of man' is vindicated after a terrible ordeal:

You have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.
You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things
under their feet: all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the
air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

(Psalm 8.5-8)

The evangelist seems to be indicating that the Temple-incident is itself a vital part of a whole narrative in which 'the son of man' is to be exalted. As in Daniel with the 'beasts', and as in Psalm 110 with the 'enemies' who are to be placed under the feet of the coming king (Matthew 22.44), so in Psalm 8: the praise of the sovereign Lord which comes from babes and infants will 'silence the enemy and the avenger' (Psalm 8.2). All this is framed by the introductory and concluding verses, which repeat: 'O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in the all the earth!' In the Septuagint this begins *kyrie ho kyrios hēmōn*, which provides an obvious link to the opening of Psalm 110 (LXX 109): *eipen ho kyrios tō kyriō mou . . .* leading to the promise that 'the Lord' will put 'all things under his feet', just as in Psalm 8 all creation is put under the feet of the human one(s). I think it is safe to say that there were multiple reasons for linking Psalm 8 with Daniel 7 on the one hand and with Psalm 110 on the other, and that together this combination formed a powerful unit, explaining not only that Israel's Messiah, the truly human being, would be vindicated after suffering but

²⁹ On the fusion of Pss. 8 and 110, and their importance in early Christian reflection, see e.g. R. J. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 21-23, 173. The obvious passages are 1 Cor. 15.20-28 and Heb. Chs. 1-2.

that in this whole narrative the ‘enemies’ – dark powers of whatever sort – would be conquered and subdued.

This, as I said, could be considerably explored and expanded. I suspect that there are more secrets there waiting to be uncovered. As that work proceeds, I would simply note a fascinating Johannine link at the same point. When John is describing Jesus’ temple-action in chapter 2, he says that Jesus drove out of the temple not only the traders, as in the Synoptics, but ‘sheep, cows and all’ as well (John 2.15). The Greek for the latter phrase is *ta te probata kai tous boas*; which just happens to correspond to the LXX of Psalm 8.8, where the animals that are put in subjection under the feet of the human figure(s) are *probata kai boas pasas*, ‘all sheep and oxen’. No commentator that I know even mentions this allusion, let alone discusses it. Without the Matthean reference to Psalm 8 at a similar point in the equivalent narrative one might dismiss it as a trivial coincidence. But granted John’s propensity not only for subtle allusion but also for drawing attention to the theme of the exaltation of the son of man, I think we should take it seriously. It begins to look as though, standing behind two very different gospel traditions, we are in touch with a very early interpretation of Jesus’ temple-action in which the whole story was seen as part of the messianic path (made a little lower than God, or the angels) to the messianic exaltation (crowned with glory and honour), resulting in victory over the dark enemies of God and his people and therefore the glad shout of universal praise (echoing the victory-song of Exodus 15) to God as creator and redeemer. From this point the exegete can glimpse, in the mind’s eye, speculative history-of-tradition reconstructions stretching out in all directions. But the central feature is, I think, clear. Already by the time the gospels were being put together Psalm 8 was so thoroughly soaked into the narrative of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem and his actions and fate when he arrived that it kept making its appearance, not only in Paul and Hebrews but in Matthew and John as well. All this, of course, reinforces my sense that Richard Hays, by encouraging us to look for scriptural allusions and the metaleptic significance they may possess, has once again presented us with questions and challenges that will keep us busy for some time.

Conclusion

There are many ways in which one might draw together this brief discussion of one of the most important books on the gospels to be published in my lifetime. Rather than simply sum up, I would like to raise two questions which emerge obliquely but I think significantly.

First, it would be fascinating to explore the question Hays mentions when he says that the narrative typologies used by Matthew (and by implication the others as well) ‘help to create the theological puzzles that Chalcedon and its successors sought to solve’ (189). I am inclined to think that this is the wrong way round. Why should it be thought that Matthew (and the other evangelists, and Paul, and Hebrews, and the author of Revelation) was creating a ‘puzzle’? Were they ‘puzzled’ by it, or did it seem clear to them? Or was the puzzle something that emerged when, in subsequent generations, Christian readers were less in tune with the first-century Jewish world in which – despite the older prejudices! – this way of

looking at things made the sense the early writers thought it made? Might it not be that some writers at least in subsequent centuries, forgetting the Temple-theology at the heart of Jesus' understanding of himself and his vocation, turned the evangelists' rich web of metaleptic scriptural allusions into mere proof-texts on the one hand or allegories on the other? Might it not be the case that the church was moving, steadily though not smoothly, into an intellectual climate which was bound to distort the deep biblical truths the New Testament writers were expressing, and to regard as puzzling what the first Christians found rather obvious? Of course, once the questions had been formulated as 'puzzles' it was much better that they were given wise answers within the new contexts and idioms. But perhaps it would have been better still to regard the earliest Christian writings, not as fuzzy, half-formed statements of truths which would be clarified four centuries later, but as already crystal clear statements, within their own scripture-soaked world, of a vision of God and Jesus that would only appear puzzling when that context was forgotten.

And what about history itself? On the penultimate page of the main text, Hays puts a whole paragraph in italics. This is the heart of it:

. . . the God to whom the Gospels bear witness, the God incarnate in Jesus, is the same as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Either that is true, or it is not. If it is not, the Gospels are a delusional and pernicious distortion of Israel's story . . . (363).

A similar point emerges in an important footnote:

Both the Old Testament type and the New Testament antitype stand together as concrete disclosures of God's activity in the world. (433 note 73)

Both these clear statements point to a question which, though naturally and rightly bracketed out for the whole book, is bound to press back upon the interpreter: did it really happen? Does it matter whether it did or not, and what sort of account ought we to give of that question and of the ways in which we might answer it? This is of course the question of history.

In one of the few places in the book where this question is noted, Hays falls back on a regular distinction: for the present project, he says, he is investigating the ways in which the gospel writers employ biblical echo, not 'reconstructing the history *behind* the Gospels' (389 note 150). But, though this book clearly was not the place to address such matters, it seems to me that the better Hays has argued his case the more pressing they become. There is today a new wave of writers – not New Testament scholars, admittedly, but often using the appearance of historical scholarship – who argue that Jesus of Nazareth never existed, or that, if he did, he did and said few if any of the things ascribed to him in the Gospels. The 'Jesus Seminar' has come and gone. But many in our world, and in our churches, are still asking the same questions; and the more we recognise Matthew, Mark, Luke and John as highly skilled and sophisticated writers, the more we lay ourselves open to the challenge, 'So: what if it turned out (as David Friedrich Strauss argued nearly two hundred years ago) that they made it all up, weaving delightful scriptural patterns but not actually reporting things that really happened?'

At this point the propriety, indeed the urgent necessity, of ‘going behind the text’ emerges with full clarity. (This is where we return to the point I made earlier, that though ‘incarnation’ is indeed the key in which the gospels’ music is set, it is not the tune that is being played.) That phrase, ‘behind the text’, has carried in some quarters an implicit rebuke, made up I think partly of postmodern fears about extra-textual realities, partly of anxieties about leaving Christian faith apparently at the mercy of quirky individual reconstructions, and partly of an implicit appeal to ‘the authority of scripture’. But, while fully granting that texts create their own worlds and invite readers to live within them, it is obvious that some texts at least intend to refer to extra-textual realities, and that if it can be shown that they are wrong then the ‘world’ they are creating might be exposed as a sham. When I read reports of a football match in two newspapers known to support the two different teams, I am invited by the one to enter a world of celebration, and by the other to share a world of disappointment. But I do not expect them to invent the score-line. Indeed, the celebration and the disappointment depend entirely upon that extra-textual reality. Thus, though postmodernists may squeal and postliberals may sneer, all four gospels are claiming to tell us about the actual events which constituted the launching of God’s kingdom ‘on earth as in heaven’. That is the world to which the gospels intend to refer, the world which these texts help us grasp in its multi-dimensional glory. The gospels insist that it was those events which generated the new world of Christian discipleship which they are inviting us to enter, thus forbidding us to reduce that new world to an inner-textual construct or its correlate in personal or ecclesial belief and practice. Incarnation means incarnation. When it comes to the gospels, intertextuality pushes us inexorably towards extra-textuality. The scriptures were not creating a private world, let alone a Platonic one. Hays is right: the evangelists, exploiting scripture’s rich echoes, were indeed intending to speak of ‘concrete disclosures of God’s activity in the world’. And that means history. Once we recognise the four evangelists as first-century Jews soaked in Israel’s scriptures and able to echo them with sophistication, subtlety and power, what is to stop us suggesting that similar things might be said, and perhaps should be said, of the one to whom all four ostensibly refer?