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The Old Testament as a Whole

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Introduction

As part of the Bible the Old Testament (O.T.) yet stands over against the New Testament (N.T.) as the old dispensation against the new dispensation, the old covenant against the new, the recollection of promise over against the record of fulfilment (Hebrews 8 and 9 etc). F. F. Bruce shows convincingly that *This is That*, but the wholeness and separateness of the O.T. are, for all that, valid concepts for Judaism and Islam and canonical concepts for christians.

This wholeness of the O.T., and its separateness, have been illustrated in many ways, and these ideas have been the pre-supposition of much of the modern critical study of the O.T. In the present reaction and in the swing to a more biblical centred interpretation these ideas should not be overlooked. So, in the present context, and for the present purpose, the fourfold figure of wholeness, of totality, given in the Epistle to the Ephesians (3.18) will serve as a framework. In that context of "the whole — or every — family in heaven and on earth" (v.15), of "all the saints" (v.18), of the love of Christ, and of "all the fulness of God" (v.19), the apostolic writer speaks of comprehending "what is the breadth and length and height and depth" (v.18). These four terms, in themselves a figure of wholeness or totality (cp. Job 11: 8-9), have no doubt their final reference in Ephesians in the love of Christ, even if their more immediate reference is not to the object of knowledge

so much as to the activity of comprehending. These four figures will be used in what follows to set forth the wholeness of the O.T.

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The Breadth

THE first dimension of the Ephesian figure is Breadth, and, transferred and applied to the O.T., will serve to illustrate the universal and international character of that book. So many readers of the O.T. recall that the Testament displays the edge and end of its outlook and mind in the narrow particularism and exclusive nationalism of Ezra, Nehemiah and The Books of Chronicles. This point of view is a characteristic and lasting feature of the O.T. faith, but these nationalist and separatist traits are by no means the whole story. On the other side of its watershed the O.T. reveals a broad and far reaching vista.

Abram is bidden to walk through the length and breadth of the land (Gen. 13, 17), and Satan, the public prosecutor in the Book of Job, reports that he has been "going to and fro on the earth and . . . walking up and down on it" (Job 1,7; 2,2). The Psalmist asserts that the LORD is to be praised,

"From the rising of the sun to its setting" (Ps. 113:3), and another rejoices that Israel's sins are removed from them.

"as far as the east is from the west" (103.12).

This awareness of breadth, of which so many personal as well as geographical examples could be given, rests of course on that universalistic outlook

which is so fundamentally a part of the O.T. The general reader of the Testament may then accordingly be surprised to realise that this universalism is in part inherited from the Canaanites, Israel's predecessors in the promised land. Gen. 14. 17-24, describes the pre-Israelite and non-Israelite God of Jerusalem, El Elyon — God Most High — as maker and so owner of heaven and earth, and this theology is further elaborated in the Song of Moses:

> "When the Most High (El Elyon) gave to the nations their inheritance,
> when he separated the sons of men,
> he fixed the bounds of the peoples
> according to the number of the sons of God (So, LXX).
> For the LORD'S portion is his people,
> Jacob his allotted heritage (Deut. 32, 8-9).

According to the Elyon theology described in these verses, El Elyon — discovered in Genesis 14 as the non-Israelite and pre-Israelite god of Jerusalem — settled the various nations in their separate territories, and one of the allocations was the settlement of Yahweh and His people, Jacob, in their appointed place. These two passages from Genesis and Deuteronomy exhaust our "knowledge of the Most High" (apart from Num. 24:16), until the days of David are reached. Then as the Concordances show, references to El Elyon are greatly multiplied (cp. 2 Sam. 22:14 and the twenty references in the Psalms). This evidence tends to support the view that when David captured the ancient city of Jerusalem, there began that syncretism of Yahweh, the God of Israel, with El Elyon,

the god of Jerusalem, which released into Yahwism and Israel that breadth of universalism under consideration.[1] A non-Israelite City, Jerusalem, became the capital of David's new kingdom, and eventually, the religious capital of the world, and its non-Israelite deity, El Elyon, confirmed a dimension of universalism already, no doubt, nascent in Yahwism.

This deposit of Canaanite universalism in the mind of Israel would not have been accomplished if Israel's account of the world was empty of international features. Already Israel had a view of its God as making the "earth and the heavens" (Gen. 2. 4b), as intervening in the affairs of Babylon (11: 1-9), of Egypt, (12: 17) etc., as disposing of all the territory between the river of Egypt and the Euphrates (15: 18-21), and as displaying a decisive role later in Egypt (Ex. 1-15) and in the conquest of Canaan (Joshua 1-24). On the other hand, if nothing quite as explicit as the ancient Egyptian claim for the Sun God as

"Sole Lord, taking captive all lands everyday",[2] occurs in the early traditions of the O.T., nevertheless the international journeys of Abram, Jacob and Joseph, the early theories of the first mankind, and then of the second, the Noachic, and the Yahwistic and Priestly Tables of Nations in Gen. 10, show the international character of some of Israel's early thinking. No wonder then that Millar Burrows

1 cp. e.g. H. H. Rowley: "Zadok and Nehushtan" in *J.B.L.* Vol. LVIII. Part II. 1939 pp. 113-141; and A. S. Kapelrud *Central Ideas in Amos, Oslo.* 1956.

2 cp. J. H. Breasted *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, pp. 315-317, and also Ikhnaton's hymns, pp. 323-331.

writes: "With the Roman period, which witnessed the birth of Christianity, the growth and spread of the Church, and the writing of the New Testament, the field of our interest expands far beyond the borders of Palestine, including a greater territory than at any other time since the age of the patriarchs".[1]

Situated as Israel was, as the land bridge of three continents, the inherited patterns of Canaanite universalism, and the indigenous experiences of Israel's own international travellers inevitably produced in the theology of Jerusalem, and in the ideology of David's monarchy, a breadth of understanding so well illustrated in the Psalms, in the teaching of Amos, and Isaiah and of course notably in the world visions of the Second Isaiah. The known international content of the days of Moses, the imperial backgrounds of the great prophets of the O.T. and especially the almost world-wide horizons of the exilic and early post-exilic ages, continue and crown the international concerns of the ancient people of God. Here then are the foundations for the international character of the O.T.

On the one hand the claim is,

"His kingdom rules over all" (Ps. 103: 19); on the other the invitation is,

> "Look unto me and be saved,
> all the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 45: 22).

Such verses illustrate the vision of breadth in the O.T. but a third line of interpretation also presents itself. The word for breadth in the O.T. is used

[1] cp. Millar Burrows: *What Mean These Stones* par. 85 p.112.

geographically as we have seen in Gen. 13: 17, and generally of measurements of width and breadth, of buildings, for example, and of the furniture and furnishings of the Temple and its courts. The word also describes a personal and psychological dimension. Breadth becomes a figure of deliverance (cp. Gen. 26: 22; Ps. 4: 1) of the limitless greatness of God (Job 11: 7-9), and of the breadth of Yahweh's commandment (Ps. 119: 96). This psalmist's experience was:

> "I have seen a limit to all perfection,
> but thy commandment is exceedingly broad",

but of Solomon it is related:

> "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and largeness of mind, lit: breadth of mind . . ." (1 Ki. 4: 29; Heb.; 1 Ki. 5: 9).

This Hebrew root for salvation, meaning to be broad, spacious, is also the root of the name Joshua in the O.T. and of Jesus in the N.T. Such examples show the importance of the idea of breadth in terms of personal salvation.

The international outlook of the O.T. people is a compound of inheritance and discovery. Of inheritance because they learnt so much from their Canaanite neighbours, especially in Jerusalem; of discovery because of the international setting of their history. In their own personal understanding they did not betray their inheritance or misinterpret their experience.

The Length

THE second figure of the Ephesian foursome is length, and will be used in the present context to illustrate the course of O.T. history. Israel discovered her breadth as she made her way through her length. Length, like breadth, is mainly used in the O.T. with cubits as a measurement, but the adjective 'long' is used as a measure of time with 'days' (Ex. 20: 12), with 'life' (Gen. 48: 15), and with 'time' (Gen. 26: 8; Num. 20: 15 etc.). Both testaments often reflect the story of the length[1] as in the one

1 For two recent surveys the reader may be referred to R. H. Dentan, *The Knowledge of God in Ancient Israel*, N.Y., 1968, especially chapter 1 "The Mystery of Israel", pp. 3-31, where he follows the sequence "a tribal confederation, a kingdom and a church", and now "a modern secular nation . . ." p. 15, and also to J. A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon*, where the treatment of the Prophets as a whole is more successful than his treatment of the Pentateuch or rather Hexateuch as a whole. Having rightly pointed out that "The Bible comes to us out of the ashes of two Temples, the First or Solomonic Temple, destroyed in 586 B.C., and the Second or Herodian Temple, destroyed in A.D. 70", (p. 6), he then neglects the clues of "cataclysmic crises" (p. 5), in favour of the geographical coincidence whereby Abram's settlement in Canaan began at Shechem, and whereby the promise is "symbolically fulfilled" in Joshua 24 also at Shechem. The geographical inevitability of Shechem scarcely suffices for a theory of canonical Torah whereby Deuteronomy becomes a stumbling block and the Judges are virtually omitted. It could also be argued that the mention of the land in Gen. 12: 1 assumes the promise of the land, and that 12: 7 is more the identification of the land than its bestowal, that Abram's purchase of Ephron's field is the proper beginning of Abraham's settlement, and that Joshua in his speech at Shechem does not mention Shechem, though locality is such a pronounced feature of the entire speech. Thus while I agree with Sanders' rejection of the view that "all biblical history is divided into five periods" (p. 59), I am sorry that he has not followed the 'bondage' clue with which he began (pp. 5-6).

verse summary, 1 Sam. 12: 8: "When Jacob went into Egypt and the Egyptians oppressed them, then your fathers cried to the LORD and the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place." The *credos*, with which G. von Rad has made us familiar[1], as in Deut. 6: 21-23; 26: 5-9, Exod. 15: 1-18, Josh. 24: 2-13, tell the story from a patriarch to the Settlement. Amos 2: 9-10, Isaiah 5: 1-7, such Psalms as 78, 105, 106, 135: 8-12, 136 and Ezek. 16 recount the length. Similarly the parable of the Wicked Husbandman in Mark 12: 1-11 which becomes part of the autobiography of Jesus Himself, and such historical reviews as that of Stephen in Acts 7, and of Hebrews 11 summarise the story of the length in Scripture.

With such precedents from the Bible before us, and realising of course that the examples do not always include the same items, or indeed cover the same generations and even centuries, how then may the length of the O.T. be set forth? In size the O.T. is almost three and a half times as long as the N.T., but since the O.T. follows the history from many centuries over two millennia, and the N.T. history is confined almost to one century only, the first of the christian era, then, comparatively speaking, there is actually more of the N.T. than there is of the O.T.

Sanders mentions the cataclysmic crises of 586 B.C. and A.D. 70. These dates ushered in exile and dispersion for the Jewish people, but two other periods of bondage occur. Indeed the four periods

1 cp. conveniently, G. von Rad, *Genesis* (O.T. Library) "Introduction" pp. 13-42.

of Israelite or Jewish bondage are the clues to the four major periods of Biblical history.

The first period is the patriarchal, which is inaugurated by fair promises of land, family, fame and the blessing 'of' or 'for' many peoples.[1] The frequency of the word 'bless' etc. in Genesis 12: 1-3, as in Gen. 1: 22, 28; 2: 3; Gen. 9: 1 etc., shows how blessing is a corollary of beginnings in O.T. thinking. Yet the bright beginnings of this patriarchal period disappoint, for the descendants of Abram and Jacob find themselves exiled in the land of Egypt, and later their life threatened with the destruction of their male offspring. Instead of being bearers of blessing to all the families of the earth, they are in bondage, the slave builders of Pharaoh's store cities, Pithom and Raamses (Ex. 1: 1-14). The statements in Ex. 1: 7 reflect those in Gen. 1: 28 except that the verbs 'subdue' and 'have dominion' of Gen. 1: 28 are omitted in Ex. 1: 7 as no longer true or relevant. This first period begins well and ends badly, but in spite of the apparent failure and disappointment a legacy remains for these slaves. This legacy is the promise of a land for their habitation, a promise which succoured Jacob on his death (Gen. 47: 29-30; 48: 21), and Joseph too at his end (50: 25). Thus von Rad claims: "This very ancient promise of land in the patriarchal stories formerly meant what it said; of course, immediate possession."[2] How this ancient element

1 By using the word 'of', Abram is intended as the source of blessing, and by the word 'for', he is intended as the standard of blessing for many others.

2 G. von Rad *op. cit.* p. 21 and cp. the same author's *The Problem of the Hexateuch and other Essays*, 1958, 1966 (English) p. 83 where von Rad says "the promise of the land is an original element of the pre-Mosaic cultus of the God of the patriarchs". In the same context he speaks of "very old tradition", or of "this extremely ancient element of patriarchal religion".

was worked out in the later literary patterns and theological evaluations cannot now command further attention. The legacy of the promise of the land became a permanent part of their inheritance, and ever gave Israel's families a hope for another day.

The second and decisive period of Israel's story begins with liberation from Egypt (Ex. 11-12), deliverance at the sea (Ex. 14), covenant and commandment at Sinai (Ex. 19, 20, and 24), Presence and Proclamation in the dawn of Israel's covenanted community life. The story is marred of course by the idolatry of the calf (Ex. 32), and by the wanderings and murmurings in the Wilderness, but progresses through the days of Joshua (Ex. 33: 11 — Joshua 24: 29-31), and into the days of the Judges. Where then may the limit, or end of this second, the Mosaic-covenantal, period be set? The period will end somewhere before kingship emerges in Israel, and some pointers exist for identifying this limit. First the unknown prophet of 1 Sam. 2 predicts both the end of the cultic arrangements made from Egypt on, and a new cultic alternative (cp. 1 Sam. 3: 14). Secondly, the Philistine victories at Aphek (1 Sam. 4: 2-11) reverse "the power of the mighty gods" . . . "who smote the Egyptians" (4: 8), and lead to the Philistine occupation of the land which Saul failed to overturn. Thirdly, if the Ark really was a Mosaic institution, and is referred to in Ex. 35: 7[1] as paralleled by Deut. 10: 1-5, its loss to the Philistines is described by Phineas' wife (1 Sam. 4: 21-22) as "The glory has

1 cp. G. Henton Davies *Exodus* in the Torch Commentary, *ad loc* and B. G. Childs *Exodus* S.C.M., O.T. Library *ad loc.*

departed from Israel." Fourthly, if the period begins with covenant and law, then surely the Book of Judges with its repeated:

> "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyman did what was right in his own eyes,"

(Jdg. 17: 6, 21: 25), not only describes the anarchy among the tribes prior to the rise of the monarchy, but retrospectively reflects the breakdown of the Mosaic covenant. Fifthly, the "Presence" revealed and discovered at Sinai (Ex. 19, 24, 32-34) is lost in the departure of the glory from Israel, and, sixthly, the open proclamation so frequent at Sinai (19: 3-6, 9, 10-14, 21-22, 24, 20: 1, 24: 1-2, 12-14 etc.), comes to an end in the confession in 1 Sam. 3: 1 "and the word of the LORD was rare (scarce) in those days: there was no frequent vision."

At the end of the days of the Judges, a crisis point thus occurs in Israel's story. Of course this does not imply the extinction of the Mosaic-covenant, for both the work of Moses and the covenant idea were permanent assets in Israel's faith. Yet both Moses and covenant fade in the records and are overshadowed by the figure of David, and the ideas, including covenant, associated with him. The end of the days of the Judges thus marks a transition point in Israel's history. In spite of individual exploits and Samuel's faith "there was hard fighting against the Philistines all the days of Saul" (1 Sam. 14: 52), for the Philistine hegemony appears to have been fairly complete, and Israel was tributary to an enemy in their own land.

So the Mosaic period which began with liberation, with law and with proclamation, runs out with the Philistine conquests, the prevailing anarchy, and the scarcity of the divine oracle. Nevertheless, a legacy remains for the people. This legacy is compounded of the experience and faith of the Presence, the memory of the proclaimed tradition of oracle, law and covenant, a legacy which was to come to greater fruition in the remaining pages of the Bible and in the experience of the ancient people of God and of the Christian Church.

The third period of Israel's length is well-defined. This, the royal period, begins with the rise of the Davidic Kingship, the liberation from the Philistine yoke, the new national identity of the people and empire of Israel and Judah, and the erection of the Temple in the days of Solomon. This royal period ends with the exile of the Davidic Kingship, the destruction of the Temple in 586, and a third bondage of Israel, their second in a foreign land — the exile in Babylon. If the end of this royal period reverses its beginnings, nevertheless it bequeaths an abiding legacy in the ideology of the Davidic Kingship, transformed into the messianic prophesies of Isaiah of Jerusalem (Is. 9: 27, 11: 1-10 etc.) into the servant Psalms of the Psalter (cp Pss. 18, 22, 49, 116 and cp. Is. 38: 9 ff[1]) into the Servant Songs of the Second Isaiah, into the Danielic figure of The Son of Man, in one word, Messiah. The legacy of the royal period is the Messiah and the Messianic kingdom.[2]

1 cp. I. Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* p. 176 n. 4.
2 ib. p. 176 n. 1.

The fourth and final period of O.T. history is of course the so-called Post-Exilic Period from The Return to the end of the pre-Christian era. The period is well defined as to its limits, and though it is not always well documented, is unlike the other periods in that it begins and ends in subjection. Nevertheless the remarkably tolerant Persian overlordship permitted the reconstruction and dedication of the Second Temple as the focus of national life, the repair of Jerusalem's wall under Nehemiah's leadership, and the promulgation of a law code which Ezra the Scribe had brought back with him from Babylon.

The cliche that the people of God went into exile a kingdom and returned as a church is basically sound, and the Temple, the wall, the Law and the new national pride and exclusivism represent a day of hope, achievement and courage amidst conditions of inflation, poverty and despair (Hag. 1). Yet those institutions in which Judaism realised its new identity were to be tested and suspended by the Greeks. The Temple was desolated by the abomination; Sabbath, Law and even Jewish nationhood came under the Seleucid ban. The war of the Maccabees and the Hasmonean years of independence only delayed the inevitable fate. The Jews lost their temple and their land, and fortified by Torah and nationhood alone, were to give way to another line of development seen as Gospel, Divine Kingdom and Christian Church which marked not a new period but a new epoch in the development of world religion. Even the legacy of this last period of Judaism, the legacy of ierocratic community and synagogue, were to be

inherited by the Christian community and the Church.

The "Length" of the O.T. may thus be interpreted as four periods of fair beginnings and desperate endings. Each bestowed its legacy, Land, Law, Messiah, Church, which in turn directed the ongoing life of the nation, but which were to be transformed into eternal values in the New Testament. The promised land of the Jews became their rest, and thus found its consummation in the eternal rest of the people of God; the law of the O.T. was destined to be transformed into the New Commandment of the Gospel, the Messiah was found to have arrived in the person of Jesus Christ, and the people of God found their final expression as the Church and the Body of Christ. So the legacy of the "Length" of the O.T. lives on in the values of the christian faith.

In her experiences of breadth and length, Israel spelled out her discovery of a "long-suffering" God, but that discovery also carried the hallmark of sublimity.

The Height

THE third Ephesian figure is "Height", and this inevitably points to sublimity and the O.T. doctrine of God, for sublimity, as has been remarked, was Hebrew by birth. Religion signifies, says Coleridge, "the act and habit of reverencing THE INVISIBLE as the highest both in ourselves and in nature . . .[1]" Edwyn Bevan has also familiarised us with the theological reference of the figure of Height. In his work on *Symbolism*, he devotes two chapters to this theme, and many illustrations are given.

The Bible generally, and the O.T. in particular, is a book about God[2], and its pages unfold and proclaim the many sided character and activity of God. The O.T. begins with a portrayal of the divine creator and successively, displays the portraits of God as Lord, as Redeemer, Lawgiver, Covenant maker in Exodus, as Guide and King in Numbers, as the Lord

1 The quotation is from Essay III of *The Friend* and is given by Basil Willey in his excellent study of *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, London 1972, p. 134. Compare also S. T. Coleridge *Table Talk*, July 25, 1832.

2 R. H. Dentan, *op. cit.* p. 3, says: "The central figure of the Bible is a community called Israel. The Bible is also, of course, a book about God, and might accurately say that God is its hero; . . .". Dentan's second sentence is the more accurate. The R.S.V. Concordance gives almost 54 columns of references to God. (pp. 729-756), slightly over 39 columns for the O.T. Just over 33 columns of references are given to Israel, including less than 2 columns in the N.T. So if one example of the argument from quantity is so decisive, the arguments from status is not less so, for God is and can only be the Subject. S. A. Cooke used to point to the microcosm of Yahweh, Israel and Palestine as the fundamental pattern of the Bible.

of history, people and places in the Early Prophets, as the Righteous Ruler and Fount of Righteousness and Mercy in the Prophets, as the supreme and universal Lord and Israel's God in the Psalmists. These images only begin to reveal the wealth of the portrayal and the rich language employed to set forth the God of the O.T.

The O.T., however, is not merely a book about God. It is in some sense and to some extent a book about God by God. To use the word autobiography would be both unwise and factually erroneous[1], but an abundance of passages which describe and proclaim the divine being and activity are couched in the first person singular. Scholars have used such terms as *autokerygma*[2], *Selbstvorstellungsformel*[3], divine self predication[4], divine self-asseveration[5], to describe these holy affirmations and avouchments[6] of the being of God. This divine autology could be even better described if some such word as '*autobiologia*' could be coined to point to those 'I am' declarations by the divine Author in the O.T.

Central to these divine 'autobiologia' are the words "I am Yahweh", ("I am the LORD"). This brief, all

1 References to writing by God (Ex. 32: 16 and cp. 31: 18, 34: 1, Deut 10. 2 and Jerem. 31: 33) do not contribute much to the divine autology of the O.T.

2 cp. W. Vischer.

3 W. Zimmerli: "Ich bin Jahwe", *Geschichte und Altes Testament* Beitrage zur historischen Theologie, No. 16 Tubingen: Mohr. 1953 p. 182.

4 J. K. Kuntz *The Self-revelation of God*, Westminster Press, Philadelphia 1967, p. 63, Note 19, and cp. G. Henton Davies *Exodus* in *The Teachers' Commentary*, Revised Ed. S.C.M. 1955, p. 135, Exod. 4: 18 *ad loc.*

5 Kuntz *ibid* p. 62.

6 cp. Deut. 26: 18 *A.V.* and *R.V.* for the use of the verb avouch in covenant formulae.

inclusive sentence, the sovereign sentence of all Scripture, to which nothing may be added whether by epithet such as 'Your God', or by clause, such as "who brought you out of . . .", without taking away some of its meaning, is the heart of the divine revelation in the O.T.[1] The saying is in itself total, and even the longer form 'I am what I am', is repetitive, for the first two words are defined, explained by their repetition, so that the first two words of the autologion are also the last two words. The relative pronoun could perhaps be begun to be explained by further words such as Whoever, Whatever, Whenever, However, and Why.[2] If such assertions also suggest mystery and indefiniteness, they are nevertheless contained within the wholeness of the primal, inclusive 'I am'.

Many examples of the autobiologia could be given, and each reader of the O.T. would have his own list. Some favourite examples may be cited. The well known oracle which surely speaks for itself, and may not be omitted is:

"For thus says the high and lofty One,
who inhabits eternity,
whose name is Holy:[3]
"I dwell in the high and holy place,

1 Any addition particularises and therefore omits. If "your God" be added, a limitation is implied. If "who brought you out of Egypt" is added, then Ur of the Chaldees and every where else is omitted. This feature of inevitable limitation by addition is not often remarked upon by those who discuss the 'I am' saying.

2 cp. G. Henton Davies *Exodus S.C.M. Torch*, 3: 13-15 *ad loc* p. 72.

3 cp. the continuation in The Magnificat, Luke 1: 45, and the Lord's Prayer, Matt. 6: 9, Luke 11: 2.

and also with him who is of a contrite and
humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble,
and to revive the heart of the contrite . . ."
(Is. 57: 15).

The theistic claims of Deuteronomy 8, as expanded in Deut. 10: 17-22, as contrasted not only with the worship of false gods (8: 19), but the usurping claims of an exclusive humanism (8: 14, 17) are definitive.

A passage which must rank among the most sublime in the O.T. is the story which relates the movement and proclamation by Yahweh in Ex. 33: 17-34: 9. The problems of interpretation in these verses are about as severe as anywhere else in the O.T., and the commentaries must be consulted. In the present discussions several assumptions not unreasonable in themselves, must inevitably be adopted simply to set forth a possible meaning of the passage.

The first assumption is that the LORD is the subject of all the verbs in Exod. 34: 5-6. This means that it was the LORD who descended in the cloud, who took up his station with Moses there, and who Himself proclaimed the name of the LORD, passing before Moses and proclaiming as he passed. This assumption is reasonable because 33: 19 predicts the events described in 34: 5-6.

The second assumption is more arguable. In 33: 18 Moses makes a request to God: "I pray thee, show me thy glory", and the question is whether God's reply which follows immediately grants or refuses Moses' request. The reply is: "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my

name "The LORD . . . But," he said "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live" (33: 18-20). In the sequel as God's glory passes by, Moses' face is covered and he does not see God's face, but after God has passed by Moses does see God's back. The view taken here is not that God's glory is an 'invisible Beyond', comprising Face and Back, so that God's reply partially grants Moses' request, i.e. You shall only see the back of my glory. The view here taken is that by God's glory is meant His face, and by His back is meant His goodness, so that God declines Moses' request. He refuses to show Moses His Glory, i'e. His Face, as He comes towards Moses, but after He has by-passed Moses, He removes His Hand from before Moses' face, and so permits Moses to see His back, that is, His goodness. Men enter into the secrets of God from behind, for God is almost invariably known from His benefits.

The third assumption is that because God declines Moses' request He nevertheless confers upon His servant a compensation prize. 'You cannot see my glory, you cannot look upon my face. You may only see my back, but nevertheless I will give you the privilege of hearing me call upon, i.e. proclaim, — utter aloud — my name — Yahweh'. God addresses Himself, and Moses is allowed to overhear the Name though not to see the sight.

The fourth assumption is that the story is not primarily intended as a story of revelation. Of course a story which speaks of God manifesting Himself or speaking offers and amounts to a revelation. But the aim of the action of God is rather to permit Moses to overhear God's dialogue with Himself. Moses is not

intended to be the recipient of a revelation. He is intended to be an observer of God's back, and the auditor of God's speech to Himself.

> Three simple conclusions follow.
> First, God in transit is the speaker.
> Secondly, God speaks His Name. He says: "The LORD, THE LORD etc."

Thirdly, God obviously cannot address anyone by His Name except Himself. So in speaking His Name he was either talking to no-one i.e. calling out aloud without any reference to any recipient, or He was addressing Himself, and presumably enjoying the sound, the syllables and the image of His own Name.

The mythopoeic imagination of this passage, anthropomorphically crude in its verbs and action, mysterious in the meaning of its content, baffling in regard to the identity of its author, is the height of the heights of the portrayal of God in the O.T. With this passage O.T. interpretation must come to terms, for besides it all the theophanies fall short in their meaning and impact, not even excepting the vision of God by Moses and the Elders (Ex. 24: 1-2, 9-11), nor the confrontation between the LORD and Elijah, 1 Ki. 19: 9-18), nor the call of Isaiah (Is. 6: 1-13), nor of Jeremiah (Jerem. 1: 4-10), nor of Ezekiel (Ezek. 1: 4-28).

Many more stories and sayings in the O.T convey the richness and variety of the divine autology of the Testament.

Such divine affirmations describe the being and activity in the past, the present and for the future,

and numerous examples of all three groups may be cited.

The Decalogue is authenticated in the being of God, and in what became Israel's gospel in the words:

> "I am the LORD, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Ex. 20 2.

The first divine autologion in Second Isaiah which abounds in such affirmations is

> "I the LORD, the first,
> and with the last I am He" (Isaiah 41: 4).[1]

The frequent formula "before me" with its many applications[2] points to the prevenient activities of God in dwelling (Ex. 25: 8, cp 29: 45-46), meeting, speaking with Israel (Ex. 25: 22), and walking among Israel (Lev. 26: 12).

Many scholars have expounded the experience and doctrine of God in The Psalms. For example, H. Wheeler Robinson[3] spoke of the four circles for the mediation of the inner life of the Psalmists, the Temple, the Community, History and Nature. Theodore H. Robinson wrote of "The God of the Psalmists"[4] and H. Ringgren of "The Concept of God"[5]. One of the fullest expositions is that of G. S. Gunn[6]. All these

1 cp. Rev. 1: 17 etc. for a continuation of the Alpha and Omega sayings.
2 cp. Tabernacle, altar, ark, Temple, etc.
3 cp. D. C. Simpson, *The Psalmists*, Oxford 1926, Essay: "The Inner Life of the Psalmists". pp. 45-65.
4 cp. D. C. Simpson *op. cit.* Essay: "The God of the Psalmists" pp. 23-24.
5 H. Ringgren, *The Faith of the Psalmists*, S.C.M. London 1963, pp. 47-60.
6 G. S. Gunn, *God in the Psalms* Edinburgh 1956.

and others have not surpassed the exposition of the faith and worship of the Psalmists by Hermann Gunkel[1].

The sublimity — the height of Israel's encounter with God — both in the record of the divine revelation that was given to her, and in the response Israel was able to make, shows that these people had learnt the way into the presence of God, and found the vocabulary to describe that approach, and had learnt too how to behave and what to say when they found themselves in the divine Presence.

1 H. Gunkel, *Einleitung in Die Psalmen*, 2nd Edition Gottingen 1966.

The Depth

DEPTH is the fourth and final item mentioned in Ephesians to describe the figure of totality. The idea of 'depth' is used in the O.T. in several ways. It figuratively describes the sea through which the Israelites passed in safety (cp. Ex. 15: 5, 8; Ps. 77: 16; 106: 9; Is. 51: 10; 63: 10), and it also refers to the ocean (cp. Ps. 107, 24, 26; Is. 44: 27; Amos 5: 8; Ezek. 27: 34).

More germane to the present purpose is the use of the figure of depth and related words in contexts of totality. Gen. 49: 22-26 describes the fortunes of the tribe of Joseph, and depicts the blessings which will fall to their lot. Included are the

> "blessings of heaven above,
> "blessings of the deep that couches beneath"

(v. 25 and cp. Deut. 33: 13; Job 33: 7, 11: 8; Ps. 148: 4-7; Prov. 3: 20; 8: 27f). Ps. 135: 6 is a good example:

> "Whatever the LORD pleases, he does
> in heaven and on earth
> in the seas and all deeps".

Such examples show that the words 'deep', 'depths', like height, are sometimes equally and neutrally subordinated to express the figure of totality. Thus the Ephesian conception of totality though fuller and

more complete, has its antecedents and counterparts in the thinking of the O.T. itself. Job 11: 7-9 actually combines the four Ephesian elements in a figure of totality, itself devoted to the mystery of God. The N.E.B. translation reads:

> Can you fathom the mystery of God,
> Can you fathom the perfection of the Almighty?
> It is higher than heaven; you can do nothing.
> It is deeper than Sheol; you can know nothing.
> Its measure is longer than the earth
> and broader than the sea.

Inevitably 'deep' and 'depths' afford a parallel to the figure of 'height' in describing the greatness of God. The Second Isaiah reminds us that God's thoughts are higher than man's thoughts (Is. 55: 8-9), but the Psalmist exults:

> How great are thy deeds, O LORD
> How fathomless thy thoughts!
> (Ps. 92: 5 N.E.B. and cp. 36: 6; Job 12: 22;
> Dan. 2: 22, and Romans 11: 32).

The greatest use of the figure of 'Depth', however, in the O.T. is to express not a component of totality, or a parallel to Height, but its opposite, and this usage brings us into the world of sin, suffering and death, the experiences of Sheol and the Pit. The depths of Sheol (Ps. 86: 13 nd cp. Is. 14: 15) are a place of deep distress (Ps. 130: 1; Lam. 3: 55), a land of gloom and deep darkness (Job 10: 21), the gates of which are the gates of death, the gates of deep darkness (Job 38: 17).

The prophet Ezekiel depicts the end of the city of Tyre with vivid imagery, for,

> "when I bring up the deep over you, and the great waters cover you",

then Tyre will be destroyed, will come to a fearful end, and will be lost beyond recovery (26: 19-21).

This passage shows the dreadful character of the 'depths' as these are depicted in the O.T. Such Psalms as 44, 69 and 88 and the Psalm of Jonah (Jonah 2), also depict the horrors of the depths. But these Psalms add new features. They describe conditions of defeat and misery by means of complaints that God has cast off his people (Ps. 44: 9, 23), or that He hides His Face, or has forgotten the affliction of this people (44: 24). Similar figures are found in Ps. 69 (cp. vv. 1, 17), and again, without any prospect of relief, throughout Psalm 88.

The prayer recorded in Jonah is particularly instructive, for it describes not only the depth of despair (Jonah 2: 1-6), but also mentions two aspects of the depth experiences which may be considered in these pages. These are the role of remembrance and the loss of the presence of God.

Remembrance is a function of the experience of the depths, and the bearing and relevance of this activity of remembrance are patent both in the experience of Israel in exile and of Christ in his passion.

> When my soul fainted within me,
> I remembered the LORD . . . (v. 7).

Israel came to her depths in her exile in Babylon. Some of her ancestors had known bondage in Egypt,

and conditions of subjection during the overlordship of the Philistines. The Babylonian Exile was the bitterest experience of all. This exile was an end experience for Israel, predicted by Amos for the northern kingdom (Amos 8: 2) and by Jeremiah and Ezekiel for the southern kingdom in too many passages to be listed. The Book of Lamentations describes this experience of Israel, whereby her relationship with God seemed to be at an end, worship was suspended, her history, indeed her life, seemed to have come to its end.[1]

In this time of end, Israel began to remember God and to recall the great institutions of her former life, the temple and its festivals, the Presence and her long pilgrimage.

> Jerusalem remembers
> in the days of her affliction and bitterness
> all the precious things
> that were hers from days of old (Lam. 1: 7).

Israel began to recall her memories, to preserve them and to transmit them. In this end experience Israel continued the debate with herself about herself (Lam. 2: 13).

The Book of Job was equally concerned with the debate, for the issues for Job are also the issues for Israel, cast as they were into the same situation of despair and seeming destruction. Israel sought help in her ancient story, as Job indeed recalled his former

1 cp. S. A. Cook, *The "Truth" of the Bible*, 1938. This book greatly emphasises the significance of the exilic period for Israel, for religion and for the religious development of mankind. Also the seminal discussion in P. R. Ackroyd. *Exile and Restoration*, 1968. pp. 7-12, pp. 237-247.

days (Job 29). Israel rescued the themes of her former life, recorded them and transmitted them. No doubt Isaiah 40-66 not only preserved the themes but idealised them and projected them not only as the themes of what might have been, but no doubt would be again in the days to come.[1]

The significance of the "remember' theme in the Last Supper of Jesus with His disciples on the night in which He was betrayed, needs only to be mentioned to be realised.

Secondly, the prayer of Jonah introduces us to yet another horror of the deep, namely, the experience of the loss of the Presence of God. Out of the depths comes the cry:

> "Then I said, I am cast out
> from thy presence;
> how shall I again look
> upon thy holy temple?".

The cultic context of this passage is obvious, for the divine presence is associated with the temple. As such the passage is one example of this idea of the loss of the presence which is part of Israel's thinking. This loss of the presence, whether by rejection (e.g. Ps. 84: 1 and Lament, espec. c. 2) or by with-drawal (Ezek. 10f; Is. 49: 14 etc.) is the final experience of depth. The most poignant expression of this experience is, of course, the opening words of Psalm 22:

"My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?"

destined to become the cry of dereliction on the cross

1 cp. Ackroyd, *op. cit.* p. 233.

(Mk. 15: 34). In Haggai 1: 7, the Hebrew word for 'that I may appear' is defectively written without the letter 'H', which is the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. "The Jews saw in the omission" of this letter, "a reminder that as Rashi puts it, there are five things that were in the first sanctuary, but not in the second, viz., the ark, urim and Tummim, the fire, the shekinah, and the Holy Spirit."[1]

The exile then saw the loss of the presence, and this is the severest experience of the depth dimension. In turn this has led S. A. Cook to speak of "the 'Rediscovery of God' which we find in the second Isaiah" . . . followed after the lapse of centuries by the next step — the revelation of God in Christ".[2]

The Re-discovery of God was only a promise in The Second Isaiah (e.g. cp. Is. 40: 9 and 52: 6, 7, 8.) and the Shekinah was said by the Jews to be missing from the second Temple. How then had the Jews lost the presence? Had they lost a theology of that presence which was merely cultic and which associated the presence with the Temple, and instead gained a theology of the presence linked with, for example, a city (Ezek. 48: 35)? The other possibility is that they had mostly lost the presence, and that that presence was only found again by the successors of the Jews, by the christians with their doctrine of God in Christ.

If the loss of the presence is the severest experience of an end time, then of course the question arises how the cry of dereliction on the cross is to be understood, and again how the end consciousness of this present

1 Quoted from *I.C.C. Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah* ad loc p. 52.

2 S. A. Cook, *op. cit.* p. 23 and cp. p. 22.

century with its sense of the death, or loss, or irrelevance of God is likewise to be interpreted. Thus the 'depth' of Israel becomes relevant for the cross of Christ and for contemporary christian thinking at the end of the twentieth century.

Conclusion

THE O.T. — "a great and precious gift of providence" — as S. T. Coleridge puts it in his third letter, is thus commended in the preceding pages.

Its breadth depicts its international outlook; its length affords a theistic interpretation of the historical and social life of a nation ; its height displays its religion as a religion of sublimity; its depth helps us to understand what is meant by godlessness.

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