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Eugene E Lemcio



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THE QUEST FOR CONTEXT AND MEANING

Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders

EDITED BY

CRAIG A. EVANS

AND

SHEMARYAHU TALMON



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KERYGMATIC CENTRALITY AND UNITY IN THE FIRST TESTAMENT?

Eugene E. Lemcio

INTRODUCTION

Quite obviously, one cannot do justice to such a difficult, controverted, and significant subject as the unifying center of the First Testament (FT) in the course of a single essay. And the question mark at the end of the title makes clear how tentative my own suggestion will be. I proceed only because of the freedom which this genre of writing allows for responsible pot-boiling. It's the sort of exercise that our friend, colleague, and honoree would approve of, having turned up the heat on recipes new and old once or twice himself. Furthermore, an emerging climate within our discipline in general and the particular character of this volume of essays (concentrating on the text *qua* text as they do) provide a context for re-opening and re-invigorating a debate which after two hundred years has been declared impossible to resolve at the historical level and irrelevant for doing theology.

But why this harsh, two-part verdict against the quest to identify the unifying center of the FT, and, for that matter, the Second Testament (ST) as well? As one examines the surveys of research charting the history of these efforts, it is possible to infer a number of reasons for the current impasse.¹ First, the proposals made seemed alien to the spirit of the text. They used terminology which bore little resemblance to the idiom of the Scriptures. The categories suggested appeared to be externally-imposed rather than emerging from within the biblical materials. At times, trans-textual realities were invoked: "the living God," "the experience of Israel," etc. These and other schemas sometimes lacked formality and concreteness, tending more towards the abstract and inferential. To the extent that single themes, such as love, grace, righteousness, etc. were proposed, to that extent

¹ G. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (4th ed; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 139-71; idem, *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 140-70.

they minimized (or could not accommodate and integrate) the multiple and diverse character of the documents and their pluriform motifs. Furthermore, there arose the suspicion that some, if not most, of the preceding were a function of the scholar's own subjectivity, either as a matter of individual prejudice or ecclesiastical commitment. The latter would bring with it a particular point of view and means of expression (Calvinist, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and in more recent years, the ideology of various -isms).

Methodological differences tended to reduce the possibility of consensus even further. Scholars have been unable to agree on the literary-descriptive or reconstructive-historical *nature of the task*. In other words, there is currently no common mind as to whether one is to look for that which is unifying and central within the documents of the canon as canon, or whether one should search for these features among the traditions and persons who subsequently produced the documents which were later canonized. In the former, if an answer is to be found, one needs to look within the texts; in the latter, it is to be found behind them.²

Moreover, even those who confined their search to the writings have not agreed upon the *scope* of the investigation. There is the quantitative question. How much of the canon needs to be represented? Will a simple majority do? Would a substantial minority satisfy? Then, of course, there is the qualitative issue. Because neither the texts themselves, nor the communities which produced and preserved them, define or identify "central" and "unifying," one had to appeal to significance and consequence. But these categories were not free of a high level of subjective interpretation, especially in the absence of agreed-upon criteria for methodological control. Therefore, by the end of the nineteenth century, the search for a unifying, central core to the FT produced no consensus.

With the flourishing of form criticism in this century, the quest was made more problematic as scholars focused on the diverse

² Of course, one need not view these projects as mutually-exclusive. In fact, the history of research shows that writers sometimes opted for a combination of both. Each activity is legitimate and important. However, a substantial case can be made that, unless the final redaction and literary composition are fully understood, all (traditio-) historical study is premature and its results therefore at risk. Ideally, if literary conclusions match historical ones, then any thesis becomes doubly confirmed.

communities which handed on traditions orally.³ Prospects for successfully identifying the axis around which all else in the FT revolves became even less likely after the Second World War. Redaction critics demonstrated how diverse are the points of view exhibited by individual biblical writers functioning as author-theologians and not merely as preservers of oral tradition. In fact, there was a series of articles in *Interpretation* during the sixties which attempted to identify the particular kerygma (usually understood as "message" or "theme") of select biblical writings.⁴ Although it could be argued that some, if not most, of the claims for diversity were overstated, the main point became firmly established. Hence, the search for unity and centrality would seem more daunting even to the most intrepid explorer.

Apart from these technical barriers, there is the current, prevailing mood or mindset within the guild of biblical scholars itself. The concern persists that the quest for unity and centrality may signal a desire to return to some form of anti- or ahistorical dogmatic theology. Moreover, researchers worth their salt want to steer clear of anything which even hints at apologetics, both because that is an unworthy motive for doing scholarship and also because of the stigma which the fraternity of scholars attaches to such activity. For example, *Neutestamentler* Hans Conzelmann allegedly dismissed Oscar Cullmann's thesis of a unifying *Heilsgeschichte* as being particularly congenial to ecclesiastical authorities.⁵ And J. I. H. MacDonald attributed the initial popularity of C. H. Dodd's thesis of

³ For an example from the ST of how such analyses had direct impact on the structure and content of a New Testament theological work, see Wilhelm Heitmüller's article, "Zum Problem Paulus und Jesus," *ZNW* 13 (1912) 320-37 and its appropriation by Rudolf Bultmann in *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols., New York: Scribner's, 1951-55) 1.vii-viii; 2.v-vi.

⁴ R. E. Murphy, "The Kerygma of the Book of Proverbs," *Int* 20 (1966) 3-14; J. M. Myers, "The Kerygma of the Chronicler," *Int* 20 (1966) 259-73; G. M. Landes, "The Kerygma of the Book of Jonah," *Int* 21 (1967) 3-13; M. Barth, "The Kerygma of Galatians," *Int* 21 (1967) 131-46; R. E. Brown, "The Kerygma of the Gospel According to John," *Int* 21 (1967) 387-400; M. Rissi, "The Kerygma of the Revelation to John," *Int* 22 (1968) 3-17; W. Brueggemann, "The Kerygma of the Deuteronomistic Historian," *Int* 22 (1968) 387-402; F. F. Bruce, "The Kerygma of Hebrews," *Int* 23 (1969) 3-19. See Brown, above, who defines the kerygma as "its central salvific message" (p. 387).

⁵ He reportedly lamented to Old Marburgers that form and redaction criticism, as practiced in Germany, was not done elsewhere(!).

a kerygmatic center within the ST⁶ to a flaw in character: "Such widespread acceptance of a hypothesis that was by no means exhaustively argued suggests that it spoke to some psychological need on the part of the English-speaking theological public."⁷ Furthermore, there is the more subtle constraint upon those who want to reconsider the question: unity and centrality do not resonate with the spirit of the age which values diversity and pluralism.

DEFINITIONS, ASSUMPTIONS, AND METHOD

Consequently, one will have to work especially hard at examining the impulses which drive (and inhibit) such an effort, including my own. A way of proceeding is to distinguish between the *motives* of an investigation and the *uses* to which results are put. So long as apologetic intentions do not dictate the outcome in advance, one can reduce the chances of ideological readings of the text. And we must be even-handed. Should objections, say, to a Lutheran interpretation of scripture be any more serious than against an ideological one? Finally, all who value truth must reject bowing the knee to the *Zeitgeist*, whose reign is temporary, local, and often demagogic.

Since the volume of essays honoring Jim Sanders has as its dominant approach the investigation of intertextuality, it already circumscribes the arena of the discussion: the texts of the canonical FT. So, one ought not make any apologies or offer disclaimers for a study that is primarily literary in scope. Consequently, my own contribution will bear these features, too.⁸ Furthermore, the focus will be less on how texts *per se* are handled by various authors than on the manner by which biblical writers work with their primal story, which I shall refer to as the "*kerygma*." This term will signify an announcement, recital, or narrative. From among the variety of stories available, the task is, of course, to identify the basic, primal,

⁶ C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936).

⁷ J. I. H. MacDonald, *The Articulation and Structure of the Earliest Christian Message* (SNTSMS 37; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) 3.

⁸ To keep this investigation manageable, I shall confine my attention to the thirty-nine canonical writings of the Hebrew Bible, knowing that eventually the deuterocanonical documents of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions need to be included. My suspicion is that an analogous phenomenon can be detected.

or central one which unifies and integrates the whole.⁹

Given the history of research summarized above, why do I not speak of a central, unifying *theme*? The reason is simple. One of the major points of contention among scholars lies in the variety of topics proposed: virtually equivalent to the number and diversity of interpreters. Furthermore, themes are static. They often resemble categories found in the table of contents of a *systematic* theology, which the Bible clearly is not. Subjects tend to be treated exclusively and singularly, rarely reflecting the more complex, multiple, diverse, and inclusive character of biblical expression. *Narrative*, on the other hand, *embraces* themes. The following statement will serve as an example of the difference: "In remembering his promise to Abraham and Sarah, God graciously redeemed his people with a mighty hand." Within this sentence, there are the subjects of fidelity, grace, salvation, power, and community. Systematic or dogmatic theology, as historically practiced, has usually converted qualifying elements into nouns, extracted them from the story, separated them, and then organized all within a schema of varying degrees of artificiality. (Ironically, biblical theologians, though decrying such an approach, have sometimes taken a similar tack). However, recital accommodates multiple and diverse topics, orders them (allowing some flexibility), and then relates all according to the integrative character of the story line. Consequently, an attempt to develop a fully-biblical theology (and a biblically-oriented systematic theology) might try employing a kerygmatic (i.e. narrative) approach to organizing its component parts.¹⁰

In addition to these more narrow considerations, one can say that the very nature of Scripture itself is narrative, a point almost too

⁹ While some might object that "kerygma" is a proclamation made to outsiders, I need only recall that Jesus preached the near-arrival of the Kingdom of God to his own—the people of God (Mark 1:14-15). The Greek herald announced news to his community. "Creed" or "confession" functions in a complementary way. It expresses one's response to the story: "I believe / confess that . . . [kerygma related]." The community commits itself to the truth of the recital and pledges allegiance to God, its protagonist. Each is the flip-side of the same coin. One is declaration; the other, assent.

¹⁰ Hasel (*Old Testament Theology*, 133-38) reports the shift in discussion which occurred when John Barton and James Barr sought to move attention from history to story, from tradition to narrative. I support such an emphasis, going further to suggest a particular story which unifies and centers the FT.

obvious to make these days. While aware of the excesses of what might be called "narrativism," one may still make the following incontrovertible points. Quantitatively speaking, story abounds. Furthermore, much of non-narrative (ethical codes and cultic manuals) is framed by it. Speaking more qualitatively, one can show that recital lies at the foundation of statutes and commandments. The rationale for obeying them ("why these statutes?") comes from an account of the community's origins. Other material (some wisdom literature) presupposes it. If these definitions, assumptions, and methodological approaches be allowed for the sake of argument, then I shall proceed to show why I am inclined to answer affirmatively the question posed by my title.

THESIS AND ABSTRACT

There is an eight-member "form" which recites God's promise to the patriarchs and his delivering Israel from Egypt. This archipelago identifies the range of mountains and foothills on the ocean floor which constitute the unifying center of the FT. The back-bone of island-peaks may be named with the well-established, though contested, term, "kerygmatic" (either the act or content of heralding). Regarding it as "unifying" and "central" can be justified by the following considerations, beginning with *quantitative* ones. The bifocal recital can be found in all of Tanakh's major and minor canonical sub-units (with heavy concentration in Torah) and in every major era of Israel's salvation history: ancestral call and wanderings, liberation from Egypt, wilderness dereliction, conquest and settlement, monarchy (united and divided, north and south), exile, and restoration. Thus, pervasiveness becomes a criterion for centrality and unity.

Furthermore, this narrative *in nuce* may be regarded as central and unifying because of certain *qualitative* factors. An extreme example of the need to move beyond numbers might help. Simply by its frequency, "and" could be regarded as the key. However, it is without consequence. Thus, significance is a clue to centrality. By this I mean that the outline of promise and deliverance appears in connection with the most fundamental aspects of the community's life. The elemental story is told at covenant making and renewal ceremonies both on the verge of Israel's entry into the Promised Land and in the wake of its return from exile in Babylon. Recital of

Yahweh's foundational promise to the "fathers" and subsequent rescue from Egypt of their descendants lies at the heart of Israel's response in worship at major, annual, cultic events as well as on unique occasions such as Solomon's prayer at the Temple's dedication. Subsequently, its highlights were sung during Temple worship. The elemental story provides the ground of ethics, the keeping of the Great Commandment and the commandments. Centrality is indicated, too, by the kerygma's appropriation of the widespread, foundational myth of the world's creation and of Israel's deliverance. Thus, when quantity (frequency) and quality (significance) go hand in hand, it is possible to speak of unity and centrality with a lesser degree of subjectivity than might otherwise be the case.

The advantages of this narrative approach to the centuries-old, elusive quest for centrality and unity are numerous. It transcends the limitations of using thematic and topical categories. While the latter are static, unitary, and exclusive, recital includes multiple and diverse themes, integrating them within a dynamic story-line. Furthermore, the text-based nature of this proposal reduces the trans-textual (and, therefore, elusive) character of other suggestions (e.g. "the living God," "the experience of Israel"). Internal, native, and natural, it should limit the imposition of external and ideological categories foreign to the text but at home in ecclesiastical dogma or the current spirit of the age. The "form's" own idiom could help to minimize the use of artificial, technical terminology. By being formal and concrete, it reduces the subjectivity which bedevils abstract reconstructions of tradition and history.

THE "FORM"

Arguing for unity and centrality is easier if one can demonstrate a degree of formality in the proposal. In other words, without demanding an inflexible sequence, it is reasonable to expect that certain items recur. And this informal formality ought to occur within a circumscribed amount of text and within discrete documents rather than to range over several chapters and among several books. Otherwise, such defusion increases the already-easy drift into deep subjectivity. The "form" which I propose has eight components, two halves reciting the themes of promise and deliverance:

- (1) God
- (2) promised / swore

- (3) land / covenant fidelity
- (4) to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob / forefathers.
- (5) God
- (6) delivered / led up / led out
- (7) his people / our (fore-) fathers
- (8) from Egypt.

ITS SCOPE: THE QUANTITATIVE CASE

This pattern can be found numerous times in fifteen (just over one third) of the protocanonical documents, a significant minority judged by the following considerations. All of the major and minor canonical units of the Hebrew Bible contribute instances. Torah is represented most fully; and Tanakh provides substantial testimony. Examples from the Former Prophets appear in Joshua, Judges, and 1-2 Kings. The pattern occurs among the Latter Prophets: Isaiah and two members of the "Scroll of the Twelve," Hosea and Micah yielding their testimony. From the Writings come Psalms, Nehemiah, and 2 Chronicles. Furthermore, each significant epoch of the biblical story contains the "form." And it is imbedded in the major literary genres: narrative, prophetic oracle, and poetry.

TORAH

Genesis

One would not have expected to find in Genesis examples of both the promise and the deliverance, since the latter only begins to be told in Exodus. Yet, as early as chap. 15, Yahweh confirms the original promise (12:1-3) made to the heirless Abraham (vv. 5-7). Further assurance of its fulfilment in future deliverance (vv. 13-15) is interwoven with an account of the establishment of a covenant sealed with sacrifices offered by Abraham but initiated by God (vv. 9-11, 17-18). Near the end of the book, in 50:24-25, the dying Joseph declares that God will indeed bring Israel out from the land of Egypt into the land which he swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Exodus

Although partial examples of the pattern occur in 3:6-8, 16-17 (no reference to land or covenantal obligations) and 33:1-2 (Moses rather than God leads them out), the full outline appears on two occasions. In what amounts to a second commissioning, Yahweh recites the account of his appearances to each of the three patriarchs

with whom he established a covenant to give them the land in which they have been sojourners. He has heard the cries of his people and promises to bring them out from Egyptian bondage (6:2-8). Later, when liberated Israelites incur God's wrath from their orgiastic worship of the golden calf (32:1-11), Moses uses the eight-membered narrative to dissuade him from destroying them (vv. 12-14).

Leviticus

This configuration subsequently becomes the means of assuring later generations who find themselves exiled because of covenant violations (26:38-41). Confession and repentance will cause Yahweh to remember his covenant with Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham. He will remember the land. The covenant made with their ancestors whom God brought out of Egypt remains inviolate (vv. 42-45).

Numbers

Numbers 14:13, 23 parallels Moses' intercession for the people when they committed idolatry at the foot of Mount Sinai. At 32:10, God's wrath is not abated against the generation which came up out of Egypt. Except for Caleb and Joshua, no one twenty years or older will see the land which he swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (vv. 11-12).

Deuteronomy

By far, the greatest number of complete occurrences of the "form" are found in Deuteronomy. In some cases, instead of promising land, Yahweh expresses his love for the fathers (4:37-40; 7:6-8; 10:14-22) and swears to be the people's God (29:13-28). The first instance of the pattern promising land belongs to the Shema. Having achieved what God swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they are not to forget the Lord, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage (6:10-12). Moreover, this memory is to be passed on to children when they ask about the origins of the statutes given by Moses (vv. 20-23). He again reminds the Israelites of this legacy as they prepare to cross the Jordan River (9:26-28; 11:8-10). Finally, this narrative of promise and deliverance is to be recited at the Feast of Firstfruits. After setting the basket before the altar, one is to "do the tell" about the Ancestor, a wandering Aramaean who went down

to Egypt (26:1-15).¹¹

THE FORMER PROPHETS

Joshua

In the covenant renewal ceremony at Shechem, Joshua on God's behalf begins the patriarchal narrative with Terah, Abraham's father, an idolater. To the son, Yahweh "gave" Isaac while in Canaan. To Isaac, he "gave" Jacob and Esau, to whom he gave Mt. Seir for a possession. Under Moses and Aaron, he brought the fathers of the present generation out of Egypt (24:1-6). After marvelous acts of deliverance, God led them into a land for which they had not labored (vv. 7-13). In response to Joshua's admonitions and warnings (vv. 14-15), the people swear their loyalty (vv. 16-18).

Judges

After less-than-successful efforts at settling the land, an angel of the Lord confronts the Israelites at Bochim for their failure to abide by the strictures against co-existence and their compromise with the inhabitants (2:2-3). This brief litany of complaints is introduced by the even more succinct statement of the now familiar story: "I made you go up out of Egypt, and have brought you to the land which I swore to your fathers; and I said I will never break my covenant with you" (v. 1).

1 Kings

At the Temple's dedication, Solomon opens and closes his prayer citing God's deliverance from Egypt (8:16, 51-53). In between, however, the King refers to the land given by God to the fathers. That this is not simply a general reference to Israel's ancestors is evident in the attention given to the foreigner, the alien whose prayer Yahweh will answer so that "all the peoples of the earth may know thy name and fear thee, as do thy people Israel" (vv. 40-43). The purpose of the covenant established with Abraham and Sarah seems

¹¹ The expression, "doing the tell," comes from the final scene of a book and movie which appeared in the mid-eighties (cf. J. D. Inge, *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome, a Novelization* [New York: Warner Books, 1985]). A colony comprised mainly of children, having found refuge in a Sydney devastated by worldwide nuclear war, gathers regularly to preserve their sense of identity and provide hope for a future. A young teenage girl begins each session by narrating the events which led to their life together.

on the verge of fulfillment.

2 Kings

Although in the land, and long-since free of threats from native populations, the people of God experience the trauma of civil war and the hostility of their neighboring states. In the regime of Jehoahaz of Samaria, Syria rather than Egypt oppresses Israel. Nevertheless, the author explains that the people escaped destruction and loss of the Lord's presence; he showed them graciousness, compassion, and respect because of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (13:22-23). Thus, promise is invoked to interpret deliverance which occurred between bondage in Egypt and exile in Babylon.

THE LATTER PROPHETS

Isaiah

With the destruction of the southern kingdom, the prophet comforts the people of God in Babylon, both with a metaphoric reminder of their ancestral heritage and by a mytho-poetic account of their original deliverance:

Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were digged. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for when he was but one I called him, and I blessed him and made him many (51:1-2).

Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not thou that didst cut Rahab in pieces, that didst pierce the dragon? Was it not thou that didst dry up the sea, the waters of the great deep; that didst make the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over? (vv. 9-10).

The original Exodus experience and its grounding in the patriarchal promises become the foundation of the prophet's hope for a second Exodus: "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing" (v. 11).

Hosea

The foregoing appeal by a prophet of the southern kingdom had earlier antecedents in the north. During the reign of Jereboam II, the word of the Lord came to and was "empersonated" by Hosea. God's case against Israel begins with the experience of its namesake, the patriarch Jacob, whom God favored through struggle with his angel

(12:3-4). In Syria, he served for a wife by keeping sheep. By a prophet, the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt (vv. 12-13).

Micah

Initially directing his critique both to Samaria and Jerusalem, Micah closes his book with confidence that God will be true to Jacob and show mercy to Abraham as pledged to the fathers long ago (7:20). As in the days of the generation which came up out of Egypt, Yahweh will yet perform wonders for his people (v. 15).

THE WRITINGS

Psalms

Singing the praises of Yahweh's wonderful deeds occupies Psalm 105, whose author recounts the salient events of promise and deliverance from the times of the patriarchs through the Exodus. God has remembered the covenant made and confirmed with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give them and a thousand generations the land of Canaan (vv. 1-11). Though few in number, the original families enjoyed protection from the resident nations among whom they were aliens (vv. 12-15). Through Moses and Aaron, Yahweh ravaged Egypt with signs and wonders, finally bringing his people out with the wealth of their captors (vv. 16-38). Because of the promise made to Abraham, all of their needs were met on the way to the lands inhabited and "developed" by heathen nations (vv. 39-44). This was the purpose of observing his statutes and keeping his laws (v. 45).

Nehemiah

That they did not and suffered the consequences is graphically chronicled in several summaries which appear in exilic and post-exilic literature. The one bearing most on this thesis occurs in the covenant renewal ceremony under Ezra. After acknowledging God as the Creator (9:6), its recital of the people's history begins with the choosing of Abram from Ur of the Chaldees and renaming him Abraham (v. 7). His faithfulness led Yahweh to make a covenant bequeathing the land of several peoples to the patriarch's descendants (v. 8). Its fulfillment followed liberation from Egypt and instruction at Sinai (vv. 9-15).¹²

¹² Although no complete instance of the recital in question occurs in Ruth, a canonical neighbor of Nehemiah in the Writings, important echoes of it do occur. In

2 Chronicles

It is fitting that the last book of Tanakh should maintain those elements of the story which the first set forth. There is here (6:5, 25, 31-33) a virtual replica of Solomon's prayer at the Temple's dedication in 1 Kings 6. In a document so concerned with royal commitment to liturgical correctness and Israel's identity as a separate people, it is noteworthy to find included that openness to the foreigner, the subject of universal blessing promised to Abraham and Sarah.¹³

ITS SIGNIFICANCE: THE QUALITATIVE CASE

Having attempted to make the case for centrality and unity from primarily quantitative perspectives (its pervasiveness), it is necessary to move towards more qualitative ones. By the latter, I mean that the primal narrative appears in the most significant eras of the people's history and community life, as the following endeavor to show.

KERYGMA AND COVENANT

That the eight-part form is found in the promise made to Abraham where it is called "covenant" (Gen 15:5-7, 13-16, 18) is another witness to its centrality. Kerygma and covenant are linked in Yahweh's assurances to Moses after Pharaoh doubled the burden of Israelite slaves (Exod 6:1-8, esp. vv. 4-5). Furthermore, the promi-

place is the Mosaic legislation regarding gleaning and the transmission of property, wherein the Moabitess plays such an important role. In the end, the hope is that she will build up the house of Israel, just as Rachel and Leah, the wives of Jacob, did. Boaz's house is to be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, the patriarch's son from whom kings were to come. And Ruth became the great-grandmother of king David himself (4:11-22). That this foreigner (whose race originates from the incestual union of Lot and his daughters!) could play such a significant role is a testimony that the goals of the Abrahamic Covenant, as reflected in Solomon's prayer, are being met. Consequently, the patriarchal, Sinaitic, and royal elements of the story converge.

¹³ While I have not cited any example from wisdom literature, it is the case that Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs have internally (redactionally?) and canonically been linked to Solomon, who did recite the narrative at the Temple's dedication, according to 1 Kings 8 and 2 Chronicles 6. Thus, one can say that the kerygma attracts themes and literatures which themselves do not contain the pattern per se.

nent place and repeated use of the divine name in this connection (vv. 2, 6, 7, 8: אֲנִי יְהוָה) also underscores how central these issues are.

Centrality is in evidence at covenant renewal ceremonies on the verge of Jordan under Joshua (24:1-18) and on the brink of Israel's restoration in Judah under the leadership of Ezra (Neh 9:7-11). The high moments of entering the promised land and returning to it are fittingly marked by a recitation of those earlier, foundational events that had made the subsequent ones possible. Kerygma and covenant belong together. On both occasions of covenant renewal, a written testimony was produced for subsequent generations (Josh 24:25-27, Neh 9:38).

KERYGMA, THE COMMANDMENT, AND CODES

That the kerygma should be identified with The Commandment certifies its foundational character. In Deut 6:4-5, the Shema testifies not only to the unity of God, but to the duty to love and obey him alone with one's entire being. This is, of course, an expansion of the first word of the Decalogue (v. 14; cf. 5:7). Sandwiched by these variations on the theme lies the elemental story about the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, on the way to being fulfilled by the deliverance from Egypt (6:10-12).

Likewise, such faithfulness must extend to all of the "testimonies, statutes, and ordinances." These are to be taught and spoken of from dawn to dusk and in every place, aided by physical reminders (6:6-9). When rationale and meaning for such observance are sought by subsequent inquisitive (and, perhaps, incredulous?) generations who were not part of nor privy to the original events, one is to tell one's "son" about the deliverance from Egypt into the land promised to the people's ancestors (vv. 20-23).

KERYGMA, CULTUS, AND CALENDAR

It will be useful to distinguish two kinds of cultic acts: those performed *ad hoc* or occasionally and those which occur regularly. To the former belong instances of covenant making and renewal, the recitation of the Shema, and the son's instruction. Of separate and unrepeatable cultic acts which might be cited, Genesis 15, mentioned above in connection with covenant, heads the list. Here the covenant is sealed with sacrifices initiated by God himself. The foundational story is integrated with worship (vv. 9-11, 17-21).

One of the more dramatic and public occasions of the kerygma's link with the cult occurs during Solomon's prayer at the Temple's dedication recorded in 1 Kings 8 and 2 Chronicles 6 (thus straddling two canonical units: both Former Prophets and Writings, and two traditions: both the pre-exilic, royal and the post-exilic, priestly). Animals beyond counting had been sacrificed (8:62-63). More significantly, the cloud of Yahweh's glory weighed so heavily on the premises that the priests could not perform their service (vv. 10-11). In the 2 Chronicles account, divine fire ignited the sacrificial victims (5:6, 13-14; 7:1-7).

If we use the classic (but still useful?) form critical notion of *Sitz im Leben* (not simply the moment of a form's emergence, but the context of its *continuous* or at least *regular* use), what does one find? It happens that our proto-narrative occurs in instances of annual, community worship. Thus, during the annual Feast of Firstfruits or Weeks (Deut 26:1-4, 10), after setting the basket before the altar, one is to tell about the Ancestor, a wandering Aramaean who went down to Egypt . . . (vv. 5-9, 15). The dual motifs of Abrahamic promise and Mosaic deliverance also appear in Psalm 105:7-15, 42 and 23-38, respectively. The psalm, by definition, was to be sung (in the shrine?) repeatedly--although it is not clear on precisely which occasion.

KERYGMA AND KINGSHIP

That king Solomon himself presides over the Temple's dedication and prays thus (1 Kings 8; 2 Chronicles 6) links the establishment of the monarchy to the two-part, foundational story. In each instance, the covenant made with David privately (cf. 2 Sam 7:14-16) is reiterated publicly in this momentous, liturgical setting. Furthermore, the recital of promise and deliverance occurs at the covenant renewal ceremony in Jerusalem for the community returning from Exile in Babylon. In the narration of God's dealings with Israel, the litany of sins underscores the failure of Israel's *kings and princes* to make good on all that God had accomplished earlier in her history and on her behalf. Although Ezra, the priest, officiates at this occasion, the account is recorded by Nehemiah, the *political* head of the community (who nonetheless shows extreme zeal for the religious well-being of God's people. See 9:34 and chap. 13).

KERYGMA AND CHARISMA

The formality and stability of this kerygmatic form does not militate against the flexibility and freedom enjoyed by those who transmitted it, as evidenced in the prophetic tradition, especially, where both the Abrahamic call and the Exodus from Egypt are retained. However, any claim by God, mediated by the prophets, to be doing a "new thing" is not absolutely novel; it is grounded upon the old. As we saw in (Second) Isaiah, the announcement terminating the Babylonian captivity adapts the very Exodus motif which it adopts. However, it does so by reworking the motif of Yahweh's conquering the dragon. In the prophet's hands, it can either celebrate God's act of creation (Ps 74:12-17) or it can anticipate final, eschatological victory (Isa 27:1; cf. Revelation 12).

KERYGMA AND COSMIC MYTH

Significantly, this is itself an adoption (stability) and adaptation (flexibility) of motifs common in the ancient Near East.¹⁴ So far as the Exodus portion of the pattern is concerned (Isa 51:1-2, 9-11), the fact that a primal myth which dealt with such foundational matters as cosmic and historical origins is a sure indicator of its centrality. That it enjoyed international and cross-cultural distribution also testifies to its fundamental character. This kerygma deals with archetypal issues.

KERYGMA AND CANON-BEHIND-THE CANON

In thus promoting the existence of a formal kerygma which centers and unites the FT, I am not advocating a canon-*within* -the-canon. To regard the kerygma as central is not a value judgement any more than saying that the axle is central to the wheel. Materially speaking, axle, spokes and rim, diverse in shape and function as they are, together make up a wheel (although it might be said that an axle is a proto-wheel). So far as their role is concerned, spokes direct motion away from the center while the rim contains the motion within boundaries, returning it to the center by means of the same spokes. One originates, another transmits by adaptation, and the other stabilizes. Centripetal forces balance centrifugal ones, thereby making "wheelness" possible. It might be more correct and modest to

¹⁴ A. Y. Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (HDR 9; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976).

suggest that the basic recital served as a canon-*behind*-the-canon, the measuring rod by which multiple and diverse documents were acknowledged as integral and complementary. It is the meta-story which I have in view. This is not to be confused with the plot of an "historical" work such as 1 Kings. Rather, I am referring to that story-behind-the-story upon which the plot hangs. The questions to be asked are, "Which recital gave the community its origin and which carried it through? Whose story began generating the tradition(s) and the literature(s)? Which kerygma best explains the emergence of canon at all?"

¹⁵ My attempts to identify a kerygmatic, unifying center for the ST have detected a six-member "form" in nineteen of the twenty-seven writings representing the Gospels, Acts, Pauline and catholic letters, and Revelation. This kerygmatic skeleton differs from the one proposed here in several significant ways. No mention is made of the commitment to Abraham and rescue from Egypt. The second half calls for a response. Although heavily theocentric (God originates the saving event and is the subject of the response), the agent of salvation is Jesus. See the Appendix in my monograph, *The Past of Jesus in the Gospels* (SNTSMS 68; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 115-31. This chapter combines the results of two earlier studies, "The Unifying Kerygma of the New Testament," *JSNT* 33 (1988) 3-17 and 38 (1990) 3-11.

However, there are significant traces of the FT phenomenon here and there. It is intriguing to find how Matthew, in a very short space, alludes to, adapts, and gives an ironic twist to the themes which I have been treating in the present article. Jesus is identified early on as the "Son of Abraham" (1:1) who, because his own people oppose the prospect of his kingship, force Joseph, Mary, and their Child to flee for refuge to that former land of bondage (2:1-14). When the coast becomes clear, the holy family settles in Galilee, fulfilling Hosea's prophecy (11:1), "Out of Egypt have I called my Son" (2:15). In Hebrews, more attention is given to Abraham and Moses in that citation of faithful heroes and heroines than to any others. (See 11:8-12, 17-22 and 23-29 for the parallels). A fuller development of the eight-member kerygma is to be found in Stephen's speech (Acts 7:1-36). Of course, other ST authors, especially Paul, deal with Abraham and Moses. However, the emphasis is less on land, in the case of the former, and more on Sinai, so far as the latter is concerned. Were I to press the alliteration *ad nauseum*, analysis of these texts could be labeled, *Kerygma and Christ* and *Kerygma and Kirk*.

CONTENTS

W. D. DAVIES

Paul and the New Exodus 443

J. LOUIS MARTYN

Paul's Understanding of the Textual Contradiction between
Habakkuk 2:4 and Leviticus 18:5 465

ROBERT W. WALL

"The Perfect Law of Liberty" (James 1:25) 475

REGINALD H. FULLER

The *Vestigia Trinitatis* in the Old Testament 499

PART FIVE

EARLY JEWISH AND RABBINIC INTERPRETATION

ELLIOT N. DORFF

Hammer on the Rock: Ongoing Jewish Exegesis 511

MICHAEL FISHBANE

"Orally Write Therefore Aurally Right":

An Essay on Midrash 531

ZIONY ZEVIT

The Gerizim-Samaritan Community in and between Texts
and Times: An Experimental Study 547

LOUIS H. FELDMAN

Josephus' Portrait of Jethro 573

LESTER L. GRABBE

The 70-Weeks Prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27) in Early Jewish
Interpretation 595

MICHAEL A. SIGNER

Do Jews Read the "Letter"? Reflections on the Sign (אֵינֶן)
in Medieval Jewish Biblical Exegesis 613

LEWIS M. BARTH

The Ban and the "Golden Plate": Interpretation in *Pirke*
D'Rabbi Eliezer §38 625

Index of Ancient Writings 641

Index of Modern Authors 663

CONTENTS

PETER W. FLINT

The "11QPs^a-Psalter" in the Dead Sea Scrolls,
Including the Preliminary Edition of 4QP^s 173

JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH

Intertextuality: Isaiah 40:3 and the Serek ha-Yahad 197

JOHN J. COLLINS

A Herald of Good Tidings: Isaiah 61:1-3 and
Its Actualization in the Dead Sea Scrolls 225

JAMES C. VANDERKAM

The *Aqedah*, *Jubilees*, and PseudoJubilees 241

KENNETH E. POMYKALA

A Scripture Profile of the Book of the Watchers 263

PART THREE

TEXT AND CANON

LEE MARTIN MCDONALD

The First Testament: Its Origin, Adaptability, and Stability 287

EUGENE ULRICH

The Community of Israel and the Composition of
the Scriptures 327

BRUCE CHILTON

Biblical Authority, Canonical Criticism, and
Generative Exegesis 343

EUGENE E. LEMCIO

Kerygmatic Centrality and Unity in the First Testament? 357

PAUL E. DINTER

The Once and Future Text 375

ALEXANDER ROFÉ

The Historical Significance of Secondary Readings 393

JOHANN COOK

Contrasting as a Translation Technique in the LXX
of Proverbs 403

PART FOUR

THE FIRST TESTAMENT IN THE SECOND

CRAIG A. EVANS

From "House of Prayer" to "Cave of Robbers":
Jesus' Prophetic Criticism of the Temple Establishment 417