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A holy nation:
Israel's call to holiness in a canonical perspective

Jo Bailey WELLS

Ph.D
1997

Abstract

In Ex.19:6 God calls Israel to be 'a priestly kingdom and a holy nation' (Ex.19:6). This thesis addresses the meaning and significance of this call, as it is interpreted through the canon of Scripture.

I argue that in this call to holiness lies the essence of God's purpose in choosing Israel for himself. The Torah addresses the subject of holiness at its most fundamental level: holiness concerns living faithfully in covenant relationship with YHWH. The priest represents a special example of holiness.

In Isaiah and Ezekiel holiness is developed particularly in relation to Israel's place among the nations. Israel's holiness is to be a focus for the nations. Even so, the focus remains primarily on Israel itself, as the dwelling-place of God's holy name.

The covenant with Moses stands, in the Hebrew canon, in the context of the covenant with Abraham. The call to be a holy nation fulfils God's promise to bless Abram. He will become a great nation with a great name, and be a blessing to others.

The covenant with Moses stands, in the Christian canon, in the light of Christ - the supreme priestly, holy figure. The notion of holiness is reappropriated and recast. 1Pet.2:9 explicitly cites Ex.19:6. God's call to be 'a priestly kingdom and a holy nation' is opened to all peoples by the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Thus Gen.12:3 is fuflilled anew.

Within the Christian canon there are different voices concerning holiness and its implications for the life of faith. There are shifts and tensions, not least regarding the place of other nations in relation to God's chosen people. Heard together, however, the voices yield a harmony which provides a depth to the Church's self-understanding, and especially to the significance of Ex.19:6.

A holy nation:
Israel's call to holiness in a canonical perspective

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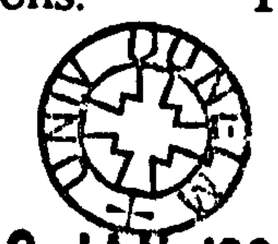
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Submitted for the degree of Ph.D.
to the University of Durham
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1997

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*, New York: Doubleday 1992
ANET	J.B.Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (3rd edn, with Supplement)
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ASTI	*Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute (in Jerusalem)*, Leiden
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments, Zürich
BDB	F.Brown, S.R.Driver & C.A.Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*
BI	*Biblical Interpretation*, Leiden
Bib	*Biblica*, Rome
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BHS	*Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 1990
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament, Neukirchen-Vluyn
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Manchester
BT	*The Bible Translator*, United Bible Societies, London
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*, Rome
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament, Leipzig, Stuttgart
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*, Paderborn
BZAW	Beihefte zur *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, Giessen, Berlin
BZ NF	*Biblische Zeitschrift: Neue Folge*, Paderborn
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Washington
CJT	*Canadian Journal of Theology*, Toronto
CTM	*Concordia Theological Monthly*, St. Louis
DBSup	*Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément*, Paris 1928ff.
EA	*Ex Auditu*, Allison Park, PA
EncJud	*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Jerusalem 1971-2
ERT	*Evangelical Review of Theology*, Exeter
ET	English Translation
ETL	*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, Louvain
EvQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*, London
EvT	*Evangelische Theologie*, Munich
ExpTim	*Expository Times*, Edinburgh
FOTL	The Forms of the Old Testament Literature, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, Göttingen
GOTR	*Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Brookline, MA
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament, Tübingen
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*, Pittsburgh, PA
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs, Cambridge, Massachusetts

HTKNT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, Freiburg
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies, Cambridge, Massachusetts
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*, Cincinnati
HUSLA	*Hebrew University Studies in Literature and the Arts*, Jerusalem
ICC	*International Critical Commentary*, Edinburgh
IDB	*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. G.A.Buttrick, 4 vols., Nashville: Abingdon, 1962
IDBSup	*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplement*, Nashville 1976
Int	*Interpretation*, Richmond, Virginia
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Boston
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*, New Haven
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*, Philadelphia
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Chicago
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*, London, Philadelphia
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, Sheffield
JSNTSup	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, Supplement Series, Sheffield
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Sheffield
JSOTSup	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series, Sheffield
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*, Oxford
KD	*Kerygma und Dogma*, Göttingen
KJV	King James Version
LXX	The Septuagint
Miss	*Missionalia*, Madrid
MT	Masoretic Text
NAB	New American Bible
NCB	New Century Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NF	Neue Folge
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament, Grand Rapids
NIV	New International Version
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*, Leiden
NovTSup	*Novum Testamentum*, Supplements
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch, Göttingen
NTS	*New Testament Studies*, Cambridge
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NRT	*Nouvelle Revue Theologique*, Tournai
NTS	*New Testament Studies*, Cambridge
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology Series, Philadelphia and Minneapolis
OTE	*Old Testament Essays*, Pretoria
OTG	Old Testament Guides, Sheffield
OTL	The Old Testament Library, London and Philadelphia
OTS	*Oudtestamentische Studiën*, Leiden
RB	*Revista Biblica*, Buenos Aires
RE	*Review and Expositor*, Louisville, KY
RHPR	*Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses*, Strasbourg
RQ	*Revue de Qumran*, Paris

RSPT	*Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*, Paris
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RTL	*Revue Theologique de Louvain*, Louvain
RTR	*Reformed Theological Review*, Melbourne
S	Syriac text
SamPent	Samaritan Pentateuch
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology, London
ScEsp	*Science et Esprit*, Montreal, Bruges
SJLA	*Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity*, Leiden
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*, Edinburgh, Cambridge
ST	*Studia Theologica*, Lund
SwJT	*Southwestern Journal of Theology*, Fort Worth, TX
TynB	*Tyndale Bulletin*, London
TB	*Theologische Blätter*, Leipzig
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G.J.Botterweck & H.Ringgren; Grand Rapids, 1990
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G.Kittel & G.Friedrich, tr. G.W.Bromiley; Grand Rapids, 1964-76
THAT	*Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, ed. E.Jenni & C.Westermann; Munich/Zürich, 1971
TSFB	*Theological Students Fellowship Bulletin*, London
TThZ	*Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift*, Trier
TV	*Theologia Viatorum*, Berlin
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*, Basel
Vg	Vulgate
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*, Leiden
VTSup	Supplement to *Vetus Testamentum*, Leiden
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary, Dallas, TX
WBT	Word Biblical Themes, Dallas, TX
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, Tübingen
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, Giessen, Berlin
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neuetestamentlich Wissenschaft*, Berlin

Introduction

i. Overview of thesis

This thesis addresses two questions. The first and major question is: What does holiness mean, according to its presentation in various parts of scripture? The second, subsidiary question is: What do the varying dynamics in the presentation of holiness say about a Christian reading of scripture, and vice versa?

Holiness: what does it mean?

The whole of this thesis represents a wrestling with this question. The answer is not straightforward since, as I seek to show, the subject of holiness is treated in different ways in different parts of the Christian canon.

My argument is as follows. The notion of holiness characterises Mosaic Yahwism and much of the Pentateuch, Israel's foundational torah. Yet there is no significant appearance of the term or the concept of holiness in the book of Genesis, insofar as it relates to the story of Israel that begins with Abraham.[1] The introduction to holiness, in Israel's story, comes in Exodus: the place at which Moses encounters God in a burning bush is described as 'holy ground' (Ex.3:5). This 'call-narrative' at the mountain of God initiates the story of Israel as a nation, a story which is prefaced by the revelation of God's name as YHWH and by Moses leading the people out of Egypt. It is as if the story of Israel is *officially* inaugurated when Israel reaches Mount Sinai (Ex.19), with the making of the covenant between God and his people Israel. It is here, in a summary statement of the purpose of the covenant, that Israel is called to be holy:

> Now therefore, if you will obey my voice
> and keep my covenant,
> you shall be my treasured possession
> among all peoples.
> For all the earth is mine;
> and you shall be to me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation (Ex.19:5-6; my translation).

---

[1] The reference in Gen.2:3 to the Sabbath occurs in the context of the primeval history narratives (Gen.1-11). These are stories with universal application which precede and preface the particular story of Israel which begins with God's choice of Abraham. They are clearly presented from the hindsight of a mature Israelite faith: the language and perspective of Gen.1:1-2:3 is commonly ascribed to P.

I take these verses to be pivotal for understanding Israel's life and identity under God. The purpose of Israel's special election is summarised in the call to be - as a nation, in the context of all peoples - priestly and holy. The concept of holiness encompasses the present reality and the future plan for Israel as God's elect. A close examination of these verses is therefore the starting point of this thesis, in chapter 1, and the following two chapters pursue the subject of holiness and the related theme of 'priestliness' as they are developed in the rest of the Pentateuch. Holiness focuses, primarily, on faithful adherence to God's covenant laws in all aspects of worship and life.

Outside the Pentateuch, the Hebrew scriptures place particular emphasis on the language of holiness in two other Old Testament books: Isaiah and Ezekiel. The presentation of the subject of holiness in each of these books of prophecy is addressed, respectively, in chapters 4 and 5. It is in Isaiah that the notion of holiness is related fundamentally to the character of YHWH, a character which is indelibly imprinted on his people Israel. On the basis of the relation of YHWH's holiness with Israel, Ezekiel explains how God acts for the sake and purpose of his holiness, and urges Israel to do the same. In both Isaiah and Ezekiel there is a heightened awareness of God's special relationship with Israel *vis-à-vis* other nations, and this is related to the subject of holiness.

Chapter 6 of this thesis looks back to God's promise to Abraham, that through him 'all the families of the earth shall bless themselves' (Gen.12:3). This is the context for understanding YHWH's covenant with Moses, just as both covenants offer the background for understanding the new covenant in Christ. So I consider how far the Abrahamic promise lies open to being re-read in the light of subsequent developments in the canon, and how its concerns might be understood to relate to the concerns of holiness.

Chapter 7 considers the treatment of holiness in a New Testament context, in the First Letter of Peter. Considering the New Testament canonically, in terms of the present position of its writings (rather than historically in their likely order of formation), the early parts of the New Testament are relatively silent on the subject of holiness, at least with regard to usage of the specific term 'holy/holiness'. In 1Peter, however, holiness emerges as a central concern. I examine 1Peter for its understanding of the meaning of holiness in the light of Christ. Here is a conscious re-evaluation of an Old Testament concern, with many

direct quotations and among them a reference to Ex.19:6. This comes in the context of a passage describing the elect status and calling of the people of God through Christ,

> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy (1Pet.2:9-10; RSV).

The understanding of holiness which is developed through the New Testament is dependent on and bears resemblance to its Old Testament counterpart, yet it differs in certain fundamental aspects. These continuities and discontinuities are necessarily brought together in my conclusion, in conversation with the concerns of a Christian reading of scripture. This concerns the mutual and dialectical nature of hermeneutics.

Re-reading parts of the Old Testament in the light of the New, it becomes possible to see ways in which the call to holiness at the election of Israel is open to being re-read in the light of the election of Christ. Both of these readings can be understood with the perspective of hindsight as fulfilling, at least partially, God's promise of blessing to Abraham and through him to his descendants and to all the families of the earth.[2] The concept of holiness, whilst belonging to God, expresses a purpose and a place of belonging which is destined for all.

A Christian reading of scripture

Through the variety of voices in scripture on holiness, it is not difficult to discern a nexus of recurring themes and associations. A list might include: purity, monotheism, other nations, possession/belonging, priesthood, election, royalty/majesty, blessing, behaviour/morality, righteousness, wrath, glory and worship.[3] There is no doubting that here is a thread which may be seen to run throughout scripture and to contribute to its unity. I argue, for example, that throughout the Bible the essence of holiness is tied to the unique character of God, according to which he is beyond all human definition, above all human power and deserving of all human worship, yet through which he longs to relate to human beings. This essence is shown in his promise to Abraham, even though the terminology of holiness is absent in the patriarchal narratives.

---

[2] Cf., for example, Wright (1991: 21, 142).

[3] Cf. Vriezen (1958: 149-162); Muilenburg (1962: 616-25); von Rad (1962: 204-7) and Terrien (1982: 99-108).

I have explored how the themes which relate to holiness are seen in different ways in different places in scripture. The interconnections between these different presentations must not be allowed to mask the diversity and plurality which exist within scripture. Indeed, even what constitutes 'scripture' differs for Jews and Christians. Though for Jews the definition of 'Bible' is different, the Church presents the Old Testament and New Testaments together as one book. Christians thus read this book as a whole. So the different voices are heard together: they form a chord, a chord which can be heard in different ways depending on the way it is played and the relative emphasis given to each part of the whole. This thesis presents one way of hearing this harmony, a way which seeks to be sensitive to how each note is played in the light a Christian reading of the whole canon. It is not the only way; but it is my hope that it is a way which might be suggestive for the on-going task of biblical interpretation in general.

ii. Method and assumptions

Now that I have explained *what* I am doing in this thesis, I shall address the subject of *how* I am doing it. But first it will be helpful to establish what I am *not* doing here. Although I focus on the subject of holiness, this thesis attempts neither a systematic theology of holiness[4] nor a biblical survey of the historical development of holiness.[5] There are a variety of such studies, and these can be found elsewhere.

Of these, undoubtedly the classic is that of Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*. Otto understands holiness in terms of the generic form of a religion; for him it is a category of interpretation, unique and essential to the sphere of religion.[6] Adopting a particular view of holiness - a 'mystical creature-feeling' which he calls the 'numinous' - he searches for this in Mosaic Yahwism as well as in other faiths. This foundationalist, *a priori* approach tends

---

[4] There are two phenomenological studies which have become landmarks in modern religious studies: Otto (1928) and Eliade (1961; 1963). Cf. also Terrien (1978; 1982); Gammie (1989). Also Ringgren (1948) and Jenson (1992), though these studies are limited in scope to the prophetic and Priestly works respectively.

[5] Many of the standard OT works of reference consider the subject of holiness, such as Theological Dictionaries (e.g. Muilenburg 1962: 616-23; Cazelles/Costecalde/Grelot 1985: 1342-1483), OT Theologies (e.g. Eichrodt 1961: 270ff.; von Rad 1962: 205ff.), and Histories of Israelite Religion (e.g. Ringgren 1966: 45ff.; Fohrer 1973: 169ff., 314f.).

[6] There is 'no religion in which it does not live as the real innermost core, and without it no religion would be worthy of the name' (Otto 1928: 6). Muilenburg (1962: 616) also describes holiness as 'the "given" undergirding and pervading all religion; the distinctive mark and signature of the divine.'

to value non-rational experience over the rational aspects and the ethical content in the Israelite notion of holiness.[7] Whilst the 'numinous' can certainly be found in the Hebrew scriptures,[8] it is but one element of a far richer category. Contrary to this phenomenological approach, my starting point is the lexical occurrence of the particular Hebrew term קדש in the scriptures.

This must be distinguished from other types of lexical study, however. Among some scholars it has been conventional to begin with an examination of the etymology of a word or concept.[9] In the case of holiness, קדש, there are two common hypotheses. The first suggests that the root of the word means 'separate'; the second, that it comes from 'brightness'.[10] These are not apparently related to each other, however, and it is difficult to identify any clear association of these origins with their usage in the Old Testament.[11] My interest lies not with the *origins* but with the *use* of קדש as it appears in biblical texts. So I take my lead from its occurrence in the canon, and from its interconnections with other matters according to the context.[12] This thesis therefore begins with a close study of the key verses in Exodus where holiness becomes a central concern in the Bible. My starting point is: what does Ex.19:6 mean, from the point of view of Christian scripture?

---

[7] In his discussion of the numinous expressions in the Bible, Otto insists on the strength of the numinous dimension of the name of YHWH, as opposed to the strongly rational and moral content conveyed by the name אלוהים ('elohim'), though he claims the division between these is not complete. While his understanding of holiness is misplaced, his association of holiness with the name YHWH is correct. Cf. von Rad (1962: 205-6) who describes holiness as 'rigorously bound' to the very nature of YHWH: 'The holiness of all that is sanctified derives from its having been brought into contact with YHWH'.

[8] For Otto (1928: ch.10) holiness is evident *par excellence* 'in the religion of the Bible'.

[9] E.g., on holiness, cf. Snaith (1944: 21-50); Vriezen (1958: 149ff.).

[10] Although the Semitic root *q-d-s* has a history which antedates the biblical period considerably, the etymology is uncertain and nowhere else does its usage parallel that of Israel. See Snaith (1944: 21), Muilenburg (1962: 617), Gilbert (1983: 205-8) and Levine (1987: 242-4). The old consensus that the original etymology was 'separation' (cf. Baudissin 1878: 20; Costecalde 1985: 1356-61) has now been abandoned (e.g. Müller 1978: 590; Gilbert 1983: 257).

[11] Cf. Barr's (1966: esp. 111-114) criticisms which apply to the older Biblical Theology movement, of which Snaith is representative. Barr argues that it is *usage* (not origins) that is determinative of meaning.

[12] As Levine (1987: 241) argues, 'the language of holiness will lead us to a consideration of the *idea* of the holy'. This averts the danger in purely lexical studies of isolating individual words from their context, and assuming a common essence or meaning between them, whatever their origin or use. Gammie (1989: 5) seems to reverse the method of Levine, starting with the idea of the holy, and then carrying out a lexical investigation of holiness.

In essence, I am seeking to provide a fresh interpretation of the final form of scripture with an eye to the particular subject of holiness.[13] This enterprise is best understood with reference to a "canonical" approach to scripture, of the kind associated with the work of Brevard Childs.[14]

A canonical approach

Among some scholars, there is a growing sense of the limitations within common historical-critical approaches to biblical study.[15] In response to this, a canonical approach offers a re-visioning of the task of biblical interpretation. This is more than simply another methodology: it is a whole perspective which seeks a non-reductive theological understanding of scripture.[16] The canonical approach focuses on the Bible as canon[17] of the Church, i.e. as a complete and normative collection of writings which are given authority by those who situate themselves within the story. This authority belongs primarily to the final form[18] of the text, the text which the Church has received as 'word of God' down the centuries, and continues to receive today.

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[13] This work is therefore to be distinguished from those which examine holiness with particular reference to the projected sources in the Pentateuch, e.g. Gilbert (1983); Jenson (1992); Knohl (1995) and, to an extent, Muilenburg (1962) and Gammie (1989).

[14] See Childs (1995: 1-17) for a recent summary of his approach to scripture and Childs (1979: 69-106) for a more detailed exposition of his canonical approach with regard to the Old Testament. Critical appraisals of Childs' approach may be found in monographs by Barr (1983; also 1988: 3-19); Brett (1991), Scalise (1994) and Noble (1995).

[15] On this subject, note the comments of de la Potterie (1982: 92), 'The critical historical method is necessarily limited and reductive. It plays a legitimate and even necessary role, provided it recognizes its limitations, but it becomes unacceptable when it claims to be the sole method and seeks to be applied in every possible area, or when it condemns every other approach, for example, that of faith.' It should be added that the designation 'historical-critical method' potentially oversimplifies the enormous range of ways in which scholars have applied critical historical insights to biblical study.
For a somewhat overstated account of the decline of the historical-critical method, cf. Maier (1977).

[16] After surveying some of the historical-critical OT introductions in his own *Introduction* (1979: 15), Childs writes, 'I am thoroughly convinced that the relation between historical-critical study of the Bible and its theological use as religious literature within the community of faith and practice needs to be completely rethought'.

[17] Childs employs the term 'canon' broadly (the lack of the article signals this broadness; cf. 1980: 53) to denote concepts of both authority and reception, in order to express the process and effect of the transmitting of religious traditions by a community of faith. Thus it includes the complex historical and theological process by which Jewish and Christian communities came to recognise certain books as scripture, as well as the final phase of the process, the canonisation. This definition of canon is to be distinguished from that of others (e.g. Sundberg 1964; Barr 1983).

[18] The expression 'final form' is a theological description of the biblical literature as the community of faith has received it and which it claims to be a normative witness to God's revelation. Scalise (1994: 50) suggests that this emphasis on the final form of the text is the most controversial aspect of Childs' approach, though for many "literary" approaches 'final form' is now commonplace.

Childs contends that it is precisely the canonical shape that has been ignored - indeed, atomised - by historical critical interpretation:

> The modern hermeneutical impasse has arisen in large measure by disregarding the canonical shaping. The usual critical methodology of restoring an original historical setting often involves stripping away the very elements which constitute the canonical shape. Little wonder that once the text has been anchored in the historical past by "decanonizing" it, the interpreter has difficulty applying it to a modern religious context![19]

The result is a loss of theological insight within the community for whom the Bible is religious literature. Childs illustrates this as follows:

> The issue at stake can be illustrated by another medium. Many of Hollywood's movies on biblical subjects - several of Cecil B. DeMille's productions come to mind - seem to reflect the latest historical knowledge on ancient Hebrew clothing, housing, and even language, but then miss the main point of the story... . It is simply not the case that the more historical and literary knowledge acquired, the better one is able to understand the biblical text... Rather the issue turns on the use of proper discernment. How does one wisely use historical-critical tools in illuminating the canonical text?[20]

The priority of the canonical text does not pre-determine the use of any single interpretative method for understanding it.[21] Although the hermeneutical dilemma of historical criticism provides the point of departure for Childs' canonical approach, this does not mean the insights of such methods cannot be useful.[22] In commenting on the theophany at Sinai in Ex.19f., Childs observes:

> There is great need not to allow evidence from the earlier development of the text to undercut dealing seriously with the final stage of the text. This does not mean that the modern exegete can operate with the present text midrashically.... One must be aware of a depth dimension and of a variety of forces which have been at work, while at the same time concentrating one's efforts in interpreting the biblical text before one.[23]

Thus Childs considers the history of interpretation of a text - both the insights of modern critical commentators and those of a pre-modern stance - as essential for its understanding,

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[19] Childs (1978: 49).
[20] Childs (1980: 129-130).
[21] It is for this reason that Childs eschews the description of his approach as 'canonical criticism', since it is not an alternative method to other forms of text criticism but a framework within which to use them.
[22] Barr's major criticism of Childs focuses on a perception that the historical interests of scholars are prohibited, or at least marginalised, by the canonical approach, thus neglecting questions of truth such as 'what really happened?' (e.g. 1992: 136). This is widely understood as a misconception of Childs and his aims (e.g. Sheppard [1983: 2-4]; Childs [1979: 71ff.; 1984a: 67]; Fowl [1985: 176 n.13]; Noble [1995: 3]). Rather, it is that, for Childs, historical interests must be harnessed in the service of wider theological interests; they are not an end in themselves.
[23] 1974: 364-365.

given the role of tradition for one's understanding of a text.[24] The tradition might include a variety of different interpretative methods - both diachronic and synchronic approaches. The canonical approach to biblical hermeneutics is the grounds for a methodological pluralism which may be of great value to biblical studies.[25] What matters, for Childs, is the question of the *tradition* which is adopted by the interpreter. 'The genuine theological task can be carried on successfully only when it begins from within an explicit framework of faith.'[26] Childs places himself squarely within the tradition of the church's confession that the canon is the scripture of the church.

The idea of 'interpretation within faith' begs the question of the meaning of 'faith'. Scholars have often construed the term in a narrowly individualistic sense.[27] Childs, however, is arguing for the importance of the structures of life and one's placement within them - in particular, the significance of placement within the life of the Church and the assumptions and practices that go with it. Theology then becomes 'faith seeking understanding'.[28] Childs thus offers a critique of a certain kind of distancing of interpreter from text, which has often been held to be necessary for theology to qualify as a "scientific" discipline in an age when science was the norm of knowledge.[29]

It follows that I seek to provide an exegesis which does not simply use the biblical text as "objective" *data* but which begins and ends with a commitment to the biblical text as sacred scripture, according to the form in which the Church receives it.[30] A variety of critical methods are used in the interpretation of texts, according to their usefulness for achieving a

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[24] E.g. Childs (1979: 82). Childs is rather disappointing in practice, however. He makes little use of either modern or pre-modern commentators in his later works, especially in his *Biblical Theology* (1992).
[25] This challenges the view of those who accuse Childs of totalitarian tendencies, e.g. Scalise (1994: 71f.). For an impressive defence of methodological pluralism in the area of NT study, cf. Schneiders (1982).
[26] Childs (1964: 438).
[27] Cf. the assessment of the 'faith' element among German confessionally-oriented scholars of the post-war era in Childs (1995: 1-3).
[28] Cf. Lash (1996: 150-163).
[29] Cf. Childs (1995: 5), 'the many serious attempts at a theological compromise that would build a confessional biblical theology directly on the foundation of a historical-critical method (Eichrodt, von Rad, Zimmerli, Bultmann, Jeremias, Stuhlmacher, Küng) have... failed'.
[30] This expresses a commitment to work with the *canonical text*. This is not identical to any extant text, since even the Masoretic tradition has preserved a small degree of flexibility and diversity. The task is to establish the 'original' i.e. the first Masoretic text which was stabilised and established as authoritative by virtue of its recognition as 'canon'. The difficulties at the text-critical level are illustrated most poignantly in the differences between MT and LXX, *both* of which have been "received" by the Church.

theological understanding of the final form.[31] Furthermore, this study entails integrating the witness of the different sources according to the way they are integrated in the final form. This contrasts with the studies of holiness which have focused on, for example, the so-called priestly documents in isolation from and to the exclusion of other texts.[32] My task, therefore, is both descriptive and constructive, with the aim of offering a biblical theology of holiness.[33]

Biblical theology

It is not uncommon for Old Testament scholars to include a section on New Testament themes in their writings. I have done the same. But unlike many, a canonical approach to biblical theology does not entail extending Old Testament categories into the New Testament literature,[34] or tracing the development of historical trajectory. Rather, I have sought a more dialectical process. I examine holiness in the Old Testament in its own right - listening to it as a discrete Jewish voice - and I examine holiness in the New Testament, with a particular eye to its dependence on and borrowing from the Septuagint. Whereas the Old Testament may be understood independently of the New, the reverse is not the case. I then seek to hear both voices together: not fusing them, or separating them, but listening to them in concert. That is, I seek to re-read the parts in the light of the whole, so as to allow for a fruitful dialectic between the parts and the whole.

> The crucial factor in a canonical approach lies in recognizing that the concept of the Old Testament's own right has dramatically been altered because of its new context within the larger Christian Bible... The exegetical task thus becomes one of doing justice to the unique sounds of each witness within the context of the entirety of the Christian Scriptures.[35]

The main concern is, how does one understand the notion of holiness in scripture? What does it mean, given the variety of presentations? How can the Christian be true to a theology of holiness in the light of Christ while yet remaining sensitive to the Old Testament presentations and to the canonical shape of scripture as a whole? I do not believe there are single simple answers to these questions. But I do believe that the canonical approach of

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[31] Cf. Moberly (1992:2ff.).
[32] For example, Jenson (1992).
[33] In saying this, I mean to emphasise that I combine both elements of Stendahl's famous description of the task of biblical theology, understanding what a text *means* in relation to what it *meant*. He held the elements essentially separate: the proper task of biblical theology was purely descriptive (1962.I: 418ff.). Cf. Childs (1964: 433ff.) for further discussion.
[34] Childs (1984: xvi).
[35] Childs (1995: 13-14).

Brevard Childs represents a valuable, heuristic tool for addressing these questions and for achieving a biblical theology of holiness, i.e. an integrated biblical, theological understanding, for those who seek to understand their identity and calling as a 'holy nation'. This understanding is likely to be multiform in structure, allowing for the variety within the biblical witness whereby holiness means different things in different parts. This pluralism itself contributes something in response to the question of what, after all, is acceptable to God.

The different patterns are not a simple licence for 'anything goes'. Such usage would fail to recognise the integrity of any one of the patterns, let alone their interrelation. The differing parts of the canon have to be heard together, and to be held in creative tension. Thus there have to be decisions about what is more and less important within the literature as a whole, yet without holding a canon within the canon as might be said of Bultmann or Käsemann. Identifying some passages as key is not a licence for ignoring or steamrollering the rest. The process of seeking an integrated theology of holiness is a response which makes sense of the variety within scripture yet treats these differences within their wider perspective. Given that it maintains a sensitivity towards the shape of the canonical whole, this might have something to offer the larger question of how to read scripture as a whole.[36]

My starting point for the reading of scripture in this thesis has been God's formation of his people, Israel, which begins with the revelation of himself to Moses by the name YHWH (Ex.3) and is ratified at Sinai by means of a covenant (Ex.19-Num.10). I have called this the inauguration of Mosaic Yahwism. In relation to this pivotal moment, the biblical material may be divided into three sections: that which belongs to this era, that which preceded it and that which succeeds it. These correspond to the three 'dispensations' within scripture identified by Moberly.[37]

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[36] Schmidt (1988: 292) makes a similar point while discussing Ex.6:2-12. 'Thus Ex.6,2f on the one hand preserves the insight into the diversity of God's way of revelation, and thereby into the change of human worship or even understanding of God, and does not deny a "more" in knowledge of God; and on the other hand confesses the exclusivity of the same one God. In this way the text seeks to hold together discontinuity and continuity, difference and identity, and even in "faith" to declare the unity in change. Does not this idea and judgment of the Priestly writer's faith spur us similarly to think through and confess that which is common to "Old" and "New Testament" within the difference which the prophet (Jer.31,31-34) saw?'

[37] Moberly (1992: 105ff.) argues that the relation of the Yahwistic narratives (Exodus-Malachi) to the patriarchal narratives (Gen.12-50) bears significant parallel with that of the New Testament to the Old Testament.

In each of these sections, I have identified certain key passages. First, and at most length (in chs.1-5), I have considered the major notions of holiness in Mosaic Yahwism. Within this dispensation there are a variety of dimensions and contours, all of which fall within the covenant call of YHWH at Sinai (Ex.19), a call which began at the burning bush (Ex.3). Secondly (in ch.6), I have examined the patriarchal narratives that lead up to the summons to holiness at Sinai, focusing in particular on God's call to Abraham with which they begin, Gen.12. This is the preface to the story of Israel, and so it is appropriate to examine it with the perspectives of hindsight and insight obtained from a subsequent part of scripture, wondering how such a text might be open to re-interpretation in the light of the story of Israel. Thirdly (in ch.7), I have examined some of the New Testament material on holiness, in its own right and with its conscious dependence on Old Testament understandings, focusing in particular on 1Pet.2. Again, my interest lies in the re-interpretation of an Old Testament presentation of holiness in the light of a new understanding of God, through the person of Christ.

iii. Aims and purposes

Having discussed *what* I am doing in this thesis and *how*, I now want to suggest *why* I am doing it. There are two reasons. The first concerns the subject of my theological interests, the question 'what does holiness mean?' The second concerns the method I have adopted, the validity of a canonical approach.

A biblical theology of holiness

God is holy and he calls his people to be holy. What is the significance of this? Much evangelical theology, in particular, hangs on the matter of holiness. Consider, for example, the comment of Motyer, 'Holiness is supremely the truth about God'.[38] Yet how can this be the case if we find no holiness among the patriarchal material, and a marked absence of the terminology also in the gospels? This is typical of an evangelical understanding of holiness which has tended to depend on an uneven one-dimensional understanding - in this example, focused on Is.6:3 - without acknowledging the weight of other presentations of the concept or, for that matter, its absence. Indeed, wherever a diversity in scripture is recognised, this is

commonly seen as a problem to be resolved - a "contradiction" - in the movement from the particular exegeses to a unifying reflection on the common factors of their subject matter.

There is evidently a plurality of presentations of holiness, and in particular that of the difference between patriarchal and Mosaic faiths and between Israelite and Christian faith. The canon does not eliminate the diversity, though clearly it restricts the diversity of these witnesses and it identifies common factors within it. But this is not the point of the canon. Whereas the diversity of the biblical witnesses has so often seemed an insuperable impediment to any kind of biblical theology, rather it can be viewed as pointing to a reality which itself transcends the diversity of the witnesses to it. Thus Childs' proposal for a biblical theology envisages a further movement back from the subject matter to a fresh level of interpretation of the texts in the light of the understanding gained from the parts of the whole biblical witness.

What might this mean for the subject of holiness? The variety of expressions of holiness must allow for a limited theological pluralism. The answers to the questions of how God's holy character is expressed, and of *what* is the acceptable response to his holiness, will vary according to context and circumstance. It is this very variety of expression and response which points to a common goal beyond: the complete realisation of the status of believers as belonging to God. God's people are, indeed, *his*. This state of belonging is expressed most fully in worship.

Canonical interpretation in practice

The subject of holiness raises well the problem of how Christians are to understand the discrete witness of the Old Testament and form an integrated theological understanding of the canon as a whole. Indeed, the particular subject of holiness raises this problem just as much within the Old Testament as between the Old and the New Testaments. Although Childs' canonical approach is not directly a matter of how the Bible should be read (as a unified whole), this concern for theological interpretation is part of a larger proposal for a biblical theology belonging to the church which is founded on meaningful contact with its scriptures.

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[38] Motyer (1993: 76-77).

Some who have criticised the work of Childs have done so on the grounds that his theoretical statements are not always well complemented by his exegetical procedures.[39] That his approach is controversial, and even problematic, is not a reason not to attempt to follow his programme and apply his approach heuristically to a particular set of interests in scripture. This thesis represents an example of the canonical approach in practice. It is a practical application, not a theoretical discussion. So, we may judge the approach by its fruit.

Note: Quotations from the Bible are taken from the Revised Standard Version (substituting 'YHWH' for 'the LORD') unless otherwise noted.

[39] Consider, for example, Barr (1992: 135); Bauckham (1994: 247).

Chapter 1
'A priestly kingdom and a holy nation': Examination of Ex.19:5-6

1.1 Introduction

My study of holiness begins at that point in the Scriptures where God declares Israel to be his chosen people:

> Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples. For all the earth is mine, but you, you shall be to me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation (Ex.19:5-6a).

The reasons for beginning with Ex.19:6 are as follows. The event of the election[1] of Israel at Sinai is also the event at which God calls his people to be holy, a quality which (until this point in the canon) has never yet been used of Israel.[2] Its significance for the current study is therefore paramount. One implication of this association is that the characteristic of holiness is made a distinguishing factor in marking out Israel as YHWH's elect.[3] It is the purpose of this thesis to explore the meaning and significance of this distinguishing feature as it is presented in the biblical literature as a whole.

From Ex.3, holiness is tied up with the knowledge of God as YHWH; from Ex.19 it is firmly linked also with Israel, the people of God. It describes the status and the vocation of God's people both in relation to Him and also in relation to other nations. The context suggests that the goal of the whole Sinai covenant is contained within this invitation: that Israel become a holy nation.

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[1] Although the specific Hebrew term for election, בחר, does not occur in this passage (nor anywhere, used of God's choice of his people, prior to the book of Deuteronomy), subsequent texts which make reference to these words at Sinai do include the term (see, for example, Dt.7:6; 14:2). Clearly we have the concept if not the term here in Exodus: Israel as 'God's own' is discussed from a universal perspective and the notion of covenant is made explicit (v.5). Thus the idea of choice is presupposed; cf. Westermann (1978: 33f.).

[2] The prior occurrences of קדש in the canon are applied to sabbath (Gen.2:3; Ex.16:23); ground (Ex.3:5); and mountain (Ex.15:17). These are incidental for the concept of holiness as applied subsequently to Israel. See further below.

[3] Election and holiness are associated together in many other texts also; these are examined below.

This chapter consists of a careful study of this central text. As discussed in the introduction, attention will focus on the final form of the text and the primary task will be that of interpretation. The examination of context and form is not intended to ignore or prejudge historical-critical matters; rather, the concern is to consider chiefly those questions which are fruitful for an interpretation of the literary material as it has been received by the community of faith. Given that the core of God's message to Israel in these verses is presented by means of poetry, a study of the literary form will provide the most important key for interpretation.

1.2 The presentation of holiness in the book of Exodus

1.2.1 Theophany of the burning bush: Exodus 3

The first reference to holiness in the story of Israel lies with Moses' encounter of God as YHWH at Horeb.[4] Moses sees a bush which is on fire but not burning up (v.2). He then hears a voice demanding that he take off his shoes, because the ground on which he is standing is holy (v.5). As Gilbert points out, it seems that this ground was not holy prior to the revelation of YHWH. It is his presence that makes it holy.[5] What follows from YHWH is an expression of concern for the sufferings of God's people in slavery, a promise of deliverance and a call to Moses to lead his people out of Egypt to a land flowing with milk and honey (vv.7-10). This is followed by a self-disclosure of the divine name YHWH (v.15). From this story onward, then, the holiness of the mountain becomes associated with the presence of God as YHWH (not just the presence of the divine).[6]

This story is the foundation for all that ensues.[7] The rest of the book of Exodus (and, indeed the whole story of Israel) flows out of this theophany. Not only the revelation of the divine name (YHWH) and the divine nature (holiness) but also aspects of the style of the narrative suggest that an important new beginning is depicted here.[8]

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[4] The first use of קדש in the book of Genesis (2:3) lies outside Israel's particular story which begins with Abraham. There are two other uses of the root in Genesis. The first occurs as the name of a place, Kadesh (14:7; 16:14; 20:1), and the second in describing Tamar as a prostitute (38:21f.). Neither of these uses bear direct relation to the concept of holiness as revealed subsequently. See further ch.6 on this subject.

[5] 1983: 209.

[6] Gilbert (1983: 210).

[7] Rendtorff (1985: 140) describes it: 'Chapter 3 begins like an aetiological saga about a holy place (vv.1-6), but then becomes a divine discourse with a wider scope'.

[8] Moberly (1992: 5-26).

The most significant of these aspects concerns the use of the phrase הר האלהים ('the mountain of God') in 3:1. Mount Sinai-Horeb is the ground that is declared holy (3:5), and the mountain is described as YHWH's own, where he is present, the place of his sanctuary (15:17). It is to this mountain that Israel travels after escaping from Egypt, where it encounters YHWH corporately and at which it is called to 'priestliness' and holiness. It is no coincidence that the same language is used elsewhere of Mount Zion; the similarities are both typological[9] and 'genetic'.[10] As Moberly points out, 'Sinai is portrayed as the archetypal sanctuary, the holy place at which access is restricted and controlled.'[11]

1.2.2 Terminology of holiness in the book of Exodus

The incidences of קדש later in the book of Exodus confirm this understanding of Sinai. Out of a total of ninety-three occurrences of the root קדש in the book of Exodus, at least seventy-eight concern the sanctuary of YHWH. Four of these relate to the restrictions concerning access to Mount Sinai itself in ch.19;[12] virtually all of the rest occur in chapters 26-40 and relate to the tabernacle which is built at Sinai and eventually carried to Zion. Because it is the holy place where God is present, its furnishings, its ministers and its offerings must all be protected, restricted and made holy.

The first thing that Moses is told at the burning bush is אל־תקרב הלם ('Do not approach', Ex.3:5). There is need for caution, respect and an 'access permit' where God is so intensely present. He is not to be encountered lightly. In each incidence relating to God's presence, rules are laid down. In this instance, Moses' 'permit' involves taking off his shoes. In ch.19 the rules concerning who has access, and how, are carefully spelt out and even repeated (vv.12-13; 21-24). As the narrative continues, YHWH's holy presence with Israel on Sinai becomes focused in the tabernacle (Ex.25:8; 29:38-46; 40:34-8), where the rules

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[9] The references to God's holy mountain in Ex.15:13, 17 could equally refer to either Sinai or Zion. The phrase הר יהוה ('mountain of YHWH') refers to Sinai in Num.10:33 and to Zion in Gen.22:14; Is.2:3; Mic.4:2; Zech.8:3 and Ps.24:3. The phrase הר קדשי ('my holy mountain'), on the other hand, refers consistently to Zion: see Is.11:9; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11, 25; 66:20; Ezek.20:40; Joel 2:1; 3:17; Obad.16; Zeph.3:11; Ps.2:6. Zion is also denoted by 'your holy mountain' (Ps.15:1; 43:3; Dan.9:16), 'his holy mountain' (Ps.3:5 [ET4]; 48:2; 99:9), 'the holy mountain' (Is.27:13; Jer.31:23) and 'glorious holy mountain' (Dan.11:45).

[10] I use the term 'genetic' here with reference to the tabernacle, the portable symbol of God's presence, which is created at Sinai, carried to Zion and incorporated within the temple.

[11] Moberly (1992: 102).

and regulations are detailed even further, until YHWH chooses another mountain in which to make his sanctuary.[13]

A few references to קדש in the book of Exodus designate Israel's religious institutions.[14] In view of the comments above, the use of קדש may seem surprising at these points. In each of these few texts, however, the reference to holiness is not especially significant to the narrative. They do not disturb the 'plot' in which the meaning and significance of the holiness of YHWH unravels in his dealings with Israel. Rather, they can be explained by reference to the context of the writer(s). Writing from a subsequent period in the history of Israel, the understanding of the concept of holiness had surely developed and such institutions had become commonplace.[15] The language of any historical narrative inevitably contains such presuppositions and overtones.[16]

This phenomenon of historical anachronism in story-telling is well illustrated by Ex.19. Moses is told to 'consecrate' (וקדשתם) the people (v.10; cf. 14) and the 'priests' are told to 'consecrate' themselves (v.22). This involves the people washing their clothes (v.10) and abstaining from sexual relations (v.15) as if this were an established procedure for consecration. No further comments are made. Likewise, the text seems to assume that the sons of Aaron had been assigned to priestly office (v.22). Yet the institution of the Aaronide priesthood is not recorded until Ex.29. It is only on the basis of the narrative of Ex.19 that we learn that God's purpose was to bring about his holiness among his people, to which end the procedures for consecration, including that of the priesthood, were laid down.

There is one further occurrence of קדש in Exodus and this is undoubtedly the most significant and most surprising of all. In the book of Exodus the usage is unique: as an adjective, קדש is used to describe, not a mountain or tabernacle or institution, but Israel. At the outset of the second recorded theophany in Exodus, the encounter in which the covenant

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[12] Ex.19:10, 14, 22, 23.
[13] That is, Mount Zion (see 1Ki.8:1-13).
[14] Consider, for example, 'holy assembly' in 12:16; 'consecrate the firstborn' in 13:2; and 'holy sabbath' in 16:23, cf. also 20:8, 11; 31:14, 15; and 35:2.
[15] In the case of 13:2, 'consecrate the firstborn', there may be a further theological significance. Here the anticipation of Sinai may be caused by the desire to develop the significance of Passover in its narrative context.
[16] The description of Horeb as 'the mountain of God' in Ex.3:1 provides a clear example of presupposition, for the mountain surely only warrants such a label as a result of the story which ensues. Moberly (1992: 9).

is presented to Moses, YHWH speaks directly to the people of Israel and promises that 'you shall be to me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation...' (Ex.19:6a).

It may be argued that an emphasis on the holiness of God permeates chapters 19-24, given the narrator's concern to present YHWH's viewpoint which, at times, appears to ignore the response of the people to the theophany in 19:16 and 20:18-21.[17] At the outset of the Sinai narrative, however, the focus is placed very firmly upon Israel. YHWH promises them that they will be a nation with the characteristic of holiness. According to the biblical narrative which comes prior to this revelation in the Pentateuch, this is a characteristic which is associated with the presence of YHWH, revealed to special people (such as Moses, their leader), which requires caution and commands fear, and which belongs to the place where YHWH dwells (Sinai-Horeb). If the words here were not placed on the lips of YHWH himself, they might sound blasphemous. For this is a statement suggesting that people can, in some way, become like God. Exploring what this means for Israel is the purpose of the rest of this chapter and, in a sense, of this whole thesis.

1.3 The Context of Ex.19

1.3.1 The context of theophany

There are three theophanies at Sinai in the book of Exodus, 3:1-4:17, 19:1-24:11 and 32:1-34:35. These form a convenient framework for understanding the whole narrative.[18] Each has been described as concerned for 'the theologoumenon of the name'.[19] As discussed above, it is on the basis of the first, where the divine name is revealed, that the genre is characterised: by an expression of YHWH's presence on the mountain *par excellence* and by mediation through encounter with Moses.

Exodus 19 introduces the second theophany. This parallels the first theophany in terms of genre and also in the reference to 'holy', even though there is significant

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[17] Chirichigno (1987: 476).
[18] Johnstone (1990: 47).
[19] Terrien (1978: ch.3).

development in the story of God's call to Israel.[20] It is appropriate, therefore, to begin an examination of Ex.19 with an eye to the context provided by Ex.3.[21]

The second theophany begins with a careful specification of time and season, which is marked out in relation to the great chain of events stemming from the first theophany. Furthermore, no sooner than Israel encamps at *the mountain* (v.2b) does the MT describe Moses as 'going up *to God*' (עלה אל־האלהים, v.3a). 'God' and 'the mountain' are used virtually synonymously on the basis of the reader's understanding of 'the mountain of God' from Ex.3.[22]

A further reference to Ex.3 is to be found in the imagery of God's presence on the mountain. One emphasis of the whole theophany tradition is upon the *visio dei* which the representatives of Israel experience on the mountain. Although God describes himself as coming in a thick cloud (19:9), the narrator speaks of YHWH descending on the mountain in fire with unusual smoke (19:18). The imagery of fire recalls that of the burning bush.

Most significant for this thesis is the appearance of the term קדש in the direct speech of YHWH himself (19:6). In the first use of the term in a divine speech (3:5), it refers to the mountain, a place which is firmly associated with meeting God by the special name of YHWH. In the second, Ex.19:6, it refers to the people, those who are now firmly associated with the name of YHWH whose character he longs that they adopt.

1.3.2 The context of the Sinai pericope

Ex.3 provides the opening link of a whole chain of events which make up the story of Israel. On this 'macro' level, in its parallel typology with Ex.3, Ex.19 opens up the second link of the chain; it consists of 'episode two' of YHWH's revelation at Sinai, the revelation of his plan for Israel.

On the 'micro' level, however, within the narrative of this second theophany (chs.19-24), I suggest that Ex.19:1-8 imitates Ex.3 in providing the introduction and

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[20] This parallel has even been described as a biblical analogy, along the lines of an 'Alterian' type-scene. Chirichigno (1987: 476); cf. Alter (1981: 88-113).

[21] Rendtorff (1985: 13) comments on Ex.3 that 'the mountain of God and the making known of the divine name already point forward to what happens on Sinai (chs.19ff.).'

[22] The LXX differs from the MT at this point and describes Moses as going up to the mountain of God in v.3a, making the narrative internally consistent. This seems to ignore the consistency of the wider narrative, however, whereby Ex.19 clearly assumes Ex.3, thus emphasising the linkage. The motive behind the LXX translation may have been reverence, to avoid 'localising' God, as in the LXX of Ex.24:10.

explanation to the subsequent section. This theophany is but one part of the larger Sinaitic account which runs from Ex.19 to Num.10.

It has been common in scholarly debate to isolate 19:3b-8 from the succeeding Sinai narrative on grounds of the language, style and content of these verses. The vocabulary bears some similarities to Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic literature.[23] Yet in style, as Patrick points out, the text is 'too compact, formal and poetic for Deuteronomic paraenesis. It has the style of a solemn ceremony, not the smooth-flowing prose of persuasive speaking'.[24] Wildberger viewed the verses as a most ancient liturgical formulation of Israel's election, functioning as a prologue in the manner of Von Rad's 'credo'.[25] The point is that in content the text has an eye to summarising the whole Sinai pericope, both its historical framework and its theological themes.[26]

Whether or not the present position and formulation of the text is redactional,[27] the thrust of these observations for the current concern is to raise the profile of this passage within the Sinaitic narratives. Ex.19:3-6 is a crucial speech for introducing the central chapters of the Pentateuch; it presents the rest of the Pentateuch from a new perspective, namely the unique identity of the people of God.

Within the book of Exodus as a whole there seems to be very little conscious shaping of sections. Rather, the marks of shaping exist on smaller units, such as the legal corpus of 19-24, the covenant broken and restored in 32-34, and the building of the tabernacle in 25-31 and 35-40. Despite the fact that the book, taken as a whole, presents itself as an historical narrative telling of Israel's earliest experiences before entering the land, there are remarkably few markers of chronological time. These are made with reference to the departure from Egypt and are given only at 19:1 and 40:17, between which there exists a period of less than one year. The result is a seemingly uneven division of detail within the

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[23] Notably, the particular words סגלה ('treasured possession', v.5) and וגוי קדוש ('holy nation', v.6) and the phrases 'you have seen' (v.4), 'all that YHWH says we will do' (v.8) and 'keep my covenant' (v.5) are relatively frequent in Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic literature, and unusual outside it. See Haelvoet (1953), Noth (1962), Perlitt (1969), Hyatt (1971), Nicholson (1973) and Renaud (1991) for discussion of these aspects. Those scholars that argue these verse reflect an older covenant tradition attribute them to E. See Muilenburg (1959), Wildberger (1960) and Beyerlin (1965).

[24] Patrick (1977: 156).

[25] Wildberger (1960: 14-16).

[26] Cf. van Zyl (1992: 264ff.), who explains how each of the phrases of the formula sums up a different narrative section of the Pentateuch. Cf. also Perlitt (1969: 169); Childs (1974: 360); Durham (1987: 260).

canonical shape of the book, with emphasis on the events at Sinai - beginning with the all-important verses, 19:1-8.

As far as one acknowledges *any* conscious shaping in Exodus, then, it is surely focused here at the outset of ch.19. All of the above observations point to the seminal importance of these verses in introducing a new period in the story of Israel's beginnings, the period of encampment at the foot of Mount Sinai. This episode begins, as we have described, by stating its relation to the prior event, also a theophany at Sinai, by which this one is made possible. This and other aspects of the first few verses of the chapter suggest they are composed as introduction for what follows. Not only are links made with past events, however, but with forthcoming events too. The giving of the law (Ex.20-23) and the sealing of the covenant (Ex.24) are also anticipated.

However loose the actual literary connections of 19:3b-8 with what follows, these thematic connections are firm. The passage is an introduction which anticipates through summary the action of the next chapters, the giving of the covenant and the requirement of obedience, and presupposes the ratification of the covenant which is performed in 24:3-8.[28] The structure is chiastic.[29] Nicholson is typical of many scholars in describing Ex.19:3-8 'as being an anticipatory summary and interpretation of the Sinai pericope as a whole, which begins with this chapter and culminates in the record of the ratification of the covenant in 24'.[30] As Childs puts it, chapter 24 'brings to completion the sealing of the covenant which had been first announced in 19:3. The repetition by the people of the same response (19:8 and 24:3, 7) marks the beginning and end of one great covenant event'.[31]

I suggest that the significance of this great covenant event for Israel's future - the privileges and the obligations - are contained within the introductory speech of YHWH, 19:3b-6. In this nutshell we find a summary of the purpose of the covenant, presented from the mouth of YHWH himself. Here is given the goal of Israel's future.

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[27] This is likely; cf. Zenger (1971: 165, 207-8); Childs (1974: 360-1); McCarthy (1978: 270-2); Nicholson (1986: 164, 174-5).

[28] Rabbinic interpretation has commonly identified 19:3-8 with the covenant ceremony of ch.24. For a modern discussion of this relation, see Nicholson (1986: 164-178).

[29] Patrick (1977: 145-57) suggests that 19:3b-8and 24:3-8 (together with 20:22-23) form a narrative framework around the covenant code which show signs of belonging to a single source. Sprinkle (1994: 27) proposes that the chiasm evolves around the central principle of 'the fear of God' inspiring obedience (rather than sin, see 20:18-21), introduced in 19:5-6 and recurring in 24:7.

[30] Nicholson (1982: 83); cf. Childs (1974: 360f.) and Patrick (1977: 145-52).

1.3.3 Summary

The discussion of the context which surrounds the text under scrutiny, Ex.19:5-6, has provided many clues concerning its interpretation. The preceding theophany in Ex.3 sets up an association with YHWH, his special presence at the mountain and his quality of holiness. The words of YHWH in the theophany recorded in Ex.19 introduce the whole of the Sinai narrative and summarise the salient features of the covenant: God's history of faithfulness (v.4), Israel's call to obedience (v.5) and God's promise of privilege (v.5b-6). The remainder of the chapter suggests the terms on which Israel may meet with its God at Sinai, restrictions which develop the significance of relationship with a God who is holy. All of these features provide background for the focus which now follows on Ex.19:1-8.

1.4 The Structure and Form of Ex.19:1-8

1.4.1 Outline of Approach

The whole Sinai pericope has presented many challenges to scholars on account of numerous literary difficulties within the text. There are many tensions which seem to arise out of ch.19 alone[32] and these illustrate well the extreme complexity of exact source division in the book of Exodus, a problem which has evoked the widest possible disagreement among scholars.[33] Durham goes so far as to suggest that Ex.19 may be 'the one most reworked passage in the whole Bible'.[34] This historical point has an important theological implication: the repeated attention received by this account of YHWH revealing himself to Israel and calling them to a special identity and role serves to underline its centrality for Old Testament theology and faith.

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[31] Childs (1974: 502f.).

[32] Consider, for example, the frequency of Moses' trips up and down the mountain (v.3, 14, 20, 25); the repetition of the warning for the people not to overstep their bounds on the mountain (v.12, 21) despite the report that they are fearful and fixed at the foot of the mountain, v.16f.); the alternate descriptions of God, as dwelling on the mountain (v.3), yet also descending periodically (v.11, 18); the dual imagery of God's presence, in volcanic smoke and fire (v.18), and in rainstorm and thunderclouds (v.9, 16, 19); and the variation concerning whether Moses is with the people (vv.10-19) or alone (vv.20-25) or with Aaron (v.24) and/or with other priests (v.22) when he meets God.

[33] Childs (1979: 165). For the variety of source analyses, compare those that have stemmed from the Wellhausen school: Bäntsch (1903), Gressmann (1922) and Noth (1962). For a comparison of more recent analyses, see Jenson (1992: 222).

[34] 1987: 259.

The historical uncertainties have frequently led to a fragmentary analysis of the narratives and an implicit denial of their unity. Furthermore, those scholars who have attempted to demonstrate the homogeneity of the literary work have been accused of 'generally failing to explain the literary difficulties which have been discussed by source and tradition critics'.[35]

Far more fruitful, for this portion (at least) of the Sinai pericope, have been those approaches which consider the poetics of the text, i.e. literary aspects such as the structure and development of the plot and the characterisation.[36] This is the approach I adopt below. In view of the poetic, metric character of 19:3b-6 a synchronic, literary study of the divine discourse seems particularly appropriate.

1.4.2 Introduction: vv.1-3a

There is an elevated style in the opening verses of the chapter, even though their purpose is only to provide a place and time setting.[37] Vv.1-2 (in the Hebrew) have a poetic rhythm of 2:2:2//2:2 when read according to the accents. They are composed of a perfect and four *waw*-consecutive clauses, telling the reader that Israel arrived at Mount Sinai in the third month after they had escaped from Egypt. It is marked as a very special day ('on that very day') because it marks the completion of an itinerary and the reaching of a goal: Israel has reached the special mountain where God is present. There is a careful specificity and precision with respect to the past and the present. What follows clearly stands in contrast to this journey from Egypt; the scene is being set as a prelude. It is as if everything that has gone before, since YHWH called Moses to take his people out of Egypt (Ex.3), has been leading towards this moment.

The circumstantial clause in 19:3 - 'And Moses went up' - marks the beginning of a new episode which is then characteristically followed by a string of *waw* + imperfect clauses.[38] Moses' action carries an urgency and an eagerness: the narrative strains forwards towards a significant event. Without any delay the purpose of God's bringing Israel to Sinai is announced to Moses through a voice out of the mountain (v.3b-6).

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[35] Chirichigno (1987: 457). He cites the work of Greenberg, Licht, Jackson and Rivard in this regard.
[36] See, for example, Muilenburg (1959), Chirichigno (1987) and Sprinkle (1994).
[37] Cassuto (1967: 223).

1.4.3 Genre of YHWH's speech: vv.3b-6b

The text of this speech follows a rehearsed, formal, parallelistic style;[39] thus it stands out from the surrounding frame of narrative prose.[40] Even though 'the discovery of how the material once functioned does not itself solve the exegetical problems involved in the present narrative,'[41] it is useful to observe that form-critical work has identified it as following a stereotyped pattern of covenant renewal.[42] The observation is useful for highlighting how this text differs from the norm: notably, over the covenant conditional, a matter which is fundamental to the current interpretative concerns.

Recent literary analysis of the material has highlighted a rhetorical pattern of communication between YHWH, and Moses and the people, which is a characteristic of the Sinai narratives. Parallels are found in Ex.19:8c-20b; 20:18-21 and Ex.19:20c-25; 24:1-8. Chirichigno has identified five parts to this pattern: Moses ascends the mountain; YHWH addresses Moses; Moses comes down from the mountain; Moses addresses the people; and, finally, the people respond to Moses.[43] The significance of this pattern in general is to emphasise the communication of YHWH with both Moses and the people.[44] Two features of relevance here are highlighted by this analysis.

Firstly, both YHWH's speech and the people's reply are presented in direct discourse. Alter regards the primacy of direct discourse is a characteristic feature of biblical narrative.[45] It serves to 'bring... the speech-act into the foreground'[46] and focus attention on the main content of the speech, contained here in vv.4-6a. Indeed, the reference to 'my

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[38] Circumstantial clauses are commonly used to mark the 'boundaries' of episodes; see Anderson (1974: 79) and Berlin (1983: 57). According to Berlin, 'Often a story opens with a narrated summary, or background, and then proceeds to the scenic section, generally marked by the beginning of the dialogue'.

[39] The style and structure has been well-documented; see esp. Muilenburg (1959), from which other studies have taken their lead.

[40] It is this feature which has been the starting point for the many source-critical assessments which have attributed the text to a source other than E. See, for example, Patrick (1977: 145-157).

[41] Childs (1974: 366).

[42] For parallels, see Josh.24:2ff. and 1Sam.12:1ff. The set form proceeds from the proclamation of God's mighty deeds (v.4), to the conditions of the covenant (vv.5-6) and then to the response of commitment (vv.7-8). This text is exemplary of the *Gattung*, cf. Mendenhall (1955), Muilenburg (1959) and Baltzer (1971).

[43] Chirichigno (1987: 460-1). There is a similar discussion of three rhetorical patterns involving YHWH-Moses-people in Buis (1978: 257-270).

[44] This is an adaptation of the pattern employed in the story of the plagues in Ex.7-11, in which there is privileged communication between God and Moses introduced by the formula 'and YHWH spoke to Moses' (a phrase found here in Ex.19:3b). Vater (1982: 64-66).

[45] Alter (1981: 67-9); cf. Berlin (1983: 64-72); Licht (1978: 30-33).

[46] Alter (1981: 67).

voice' in YHWH's own speech and 'all that YHWH has spoken' in the people's response serves to emphasise this direct speech of YHWH. Muilenburg describes the language of this direct address as that 'of proclamation and urgent call to hearing, of stress upon the first and second persons, the *I* and the *Thou*...'[47] This emphasis is made even more evident by the presence of two similar clauses at the opening (v.3) and closing (v.6) of YHWH's speech, forming an *inclusio*[48]:

> Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell *the sons of Israel* (v.3b)
> These are the words that you shall speak to *the sons of Israel* (v.6b)

The text twice suggests an anxious concern to communicate something to 'the sons of Israel' and, indeed, to any reader of the Hebrew text. We are drawn in to discover the content of this message.

The pronounced 'I-Thou' style makes it clear that the message concerns the nature of the YHWH-Israel relationship. There is a repeat of אתכם ('you') in v.4 and לי ('to me') in v.5. Muilenburg describes this 'producing a remarkable climactic effect in the *I-Thou* relation, which is enhanced by the assonance of the whole unit.'[49] The climax occurs at v.6a: 'you shall be to me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation'.

The second note points to the 'democratic' nature of this theophany.[50] The address is plural. In comparison to the pattern of message and oracle communication found earlier in the story of the plagues (Ex.7-11), there is less emphasis on the privileged communication between God and Moses, and more on that between God and his whole people. Later in the Sinai narrative, the commandments are given in the second person singular (20:2ff; 34:11, 14, 17). But here in Ex.19, the oracle belongs equally to the people as to Moses, and in due course they all encounter YHWH for themselves at Mount Sinai (19:17; 20:18-20).

The narrative stresses several times over that Moses' role is simply as 'go-between': to relate YHWH's exact words to the people and their response back to YHWH (v.3c, 6c, 7b, 8c-d). At this point, Moses is not privileged in being given personal communication. The conversation is essentially between YHWH and the people. The direct discourse is that of

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[47] Muilenburg (1959: 352).
[48] As a chiasmus it is incomplete. The *inclusio* is defined by Watson (1984: 282-3) as an envelope where only the extremes correspond: A... A.
[49] Muilenburg (1959: 353).
[50] Cf. Noth (1966: 331-2).

YHWH and the people, not Moses. Whereas the theophany of Ex.3 and the communication which followed it represents an encounter between God and Moses, the theophany of Ex.19 and the conversation which follows it is essentially between God and the whole people of Israel.[51]

1.4.4 Poetic form of YHWH's speech: vv.3b-6b

In the conviction that a significant portion of the message of the carefully crafted words of YHWH lies in their literary form, I now turn in more detail to their composition. Although there is general agreement among scholars that these are poetic lines containing rhythm and symmetry, there is little consensus concerning the exact parallels and the chiasmus which may be identified.

Muilenburg suggests that the verses are 'so closely woven and the structure so apparent that the excision of any line of verse actually mars its unity and destroys its literary character'.[52] He represents the structure of vv.3b-6b in similar fashion to that below:[53]

3b Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell *the sons of Israel*:

4a You (אתם) have seen what I did to the Egyptians,
4b and how I bore you on eagles' wings,
4c and brought you to myself.

5a And now (ועתה) if you will obey my voice
5ab and keep my covenant,
5b you shall be my own possession among all peoples;

5c for all the earth is mine,

6a and you (ואתם) shall be to me a kingdom of priests
6ab and a holy nation.

6b These are the words which you shall speak to *the sons of Israel.*

Within the envelope formed by the instructions to Moses concerning 'the sons of Israel' (v.3b, 6b), Muilenburg identifies a further envelope formed by the lines beginning with the emphatic second person pronoun אתם, which encloses the main message. Combined with the emphatic ועתה, he suggests that these pronouns bring about three divisions in the

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[51] Gammie (1989: 16) notes a 'democratization' in Ex.19 but in a rather different matter: 'for ... in order to approach the divine holiness, cleanness is required not only of priests but of laity as well'.
[52] Muilenburg (1959: 351).
[53] Muilenburg (1959: 352).

message, as separated in the schema above. The first forms a parallel with the second, since both are tricola.

Since each division culminates in its last line, the words being stressed are 'and brought you to me', 'you will become to me a סגלה' and '...holy nation'. Given that the message as a whole builds up to a crescendo, the climax of the whole message lies in its last line, וגוי קדוש (v.6ab):

> It is precisely this final line which contains the burden to the whole message, as is shown by the introductory pronoun אתם, the preceding *for all the earth is mine*, which serves to set it apart and yet to relate it to the whole, and by placing the גוי קדוש in the crucial position it requires. Indeed the whole message culminates in these words.[54]

The focal point of YHWH's speech is a new description of Israel's function and character. The call to obedience is aimed at realising this special identity; it is not the call to obedience, but the identity which it creates that receives the emphasis.[55]

Muilenburg's analysis is a valuable one; there is little with which I wish to argue, and there is much to commend it. Not least, it supports my thesis concerning the paramount importance of the appearance of קדש in v.6a. Yet there seems to be one significant omission. Muilenburg seems to skip over the small phrase of v.5c, 'for all the earth is mine'. In his schema, this dangles uneasily between the second tricolon beginning with the emphatic ואתה and the final section, a bicolon opening with ואתם, while belonging to neither. Could it not be linked with v.6a to turn the final bicolon into a tricolon, thus increasing the symmetry of the message? Muilenburg simply writes that it sets apart the final and most important line and yet relates it to the whole. This seems to contradict his earlier statement that every line is crucial, for it does not strike me that, according to his analysis, the excision of this line would 'destroy' the literary character of the composition.

According to Patrick the composition contains three 'complete synonymous parallel lines' in v.3b//6b; 5a; and 5b//6a; while verse 4 he calls 'narration in parallelistic style'.[56] He understands the phrasing rather differently to Muilenburg, in terms of a (mostly) paired

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[54] Muilenburg (1959: 353).
[55] van Zyl (1992: 268).
[56] Patrick (1977: 146f.). He points out that '5b breaks the pattern of synonymous parallelism, probably to relax the repetitious style. 5b is both the apodosis of the preceding conditional and the assertion explained by the *ki* clause in 5b' (146 n.6).

pattern of long lines followed by short lines (counting the words but excluding pre . positions attached to a construct state).[57] Thus we find the following 'rhythm': 4/3 (v.3b), 5/4/3 (v.4), 4/2 (v.5a), 4/2 (v.5b), 5/2 (v.6a), 6 (v.6b). He notes that, in every 'pair' except v.5b, the longer line often possesses an element that carries over to the following line or lines, thus showing they form a unit: כה in the first bicolon (v.3b), אתם ראיתם in the tricolon (v.4a), ועתה אם in the next bicolon (v.5a), and ואתם תהיו־לי (cf. והייתם לי in 5b) in the final bicolon (v.6a).[58]

It is interesting to note again that v.5c, 'for all the earth is mine', does not fit the schema very comfortably. Likewise, it upsets the 'complete synonymous parallel' that Patrick suggests for v.5b and 6a. This parallel would seem more fitting if v.5c were added to v.6a, as suggested previously. It seems to be that, though Patrick offers a very suggestive analysis, some of his conclusions go further than may fully be justified.

1.4.5 Parallels and climax: vv.5b-6a

What conclusions may we draw concerning the interpretation of these verses (3b-6b) on the basis of their structure? Clearly recognisable is the chiastic frame (v.3b, 6b) within which the main message is organised and builds up to a climax in v.6a. Also clear are certain rhythmic parallels, which may also be synonymous, each consisting of a longer followed by a shorter line and existing *within* rather than *between* verses:

v.3b: Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob
and speak to the sons of Israel

v.5a: And now if you will listen to my voice
and keep my covenant

v.6a: And you will be to me a priestly kingdom
and a holy nation

Patrick *assumes* the synonymity of these parallels. What are the grounds for this conclusion? On the surface of it, this may seem patently obvious in the case of v.3b and 5a, and thus, perhaps it may be presumed in the case of v.6a, whose phrases are unique in the Old Testament and thus difficult to assess. But since the 1980s the notion of the synonymity of parallel lines has been widely modified, complemented by the notion of continuity ('A,

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[57] Whether word count is an index to Hebrew metre is, of course, open to dispute.
[58] These carry-over words function as structural clues in the passage. See below.

what's more, B'[59]) and consequentiality.[60] Kugel and Alter place the emphasis on the difference between parallel lines, the second adding new information containing an intensification or a progression, rather than just going over old material in new words.

Linguistically, both phrases of each parallel in v.3b and v.5a follow the same syntax construction and word order (verb + noun). Each word pair is parallel not only in its grammatical aspect, but in certain semantic and phonological aspects also. Thus within each word pair one can recognise (limited) assonance: תגיד//תאמר, לבני//לבית and ישראל//יעקב in 3b; שמר//שמע and בריתי//בקלי in 5a. Similar word pairs are found in other texts; for example, the parallel 'house of Jacob//house of Israel' occurs frequently among the prophets and nearly always the pairing occurs in this order.[61] Even though the double formula 'say//tell' is unique,[62] the functional correspondence and intensification is straightforward. This is also the case for v.5a; the voice of God is frequently a term used to refer to God's word[63] or law.[64] This is brought to a focus in the second line by the notion of 'covenant' (as elsewhere[65]) just as the verb שמע which may be used for obeying as also for listening,[66] is focused by the verb 'to keep'.

The case of v.6a does not precisely follow that of the parallels in v.3b and v.5a. Syntactically, the structure is different: there is one verb for both nouns. There may be a lexical parallel between the two nouns and their descriptors, but these are not straightforward to identify.[67] Unlike the other two, this parallel cannot be established on phonological or semantic grounds either: there is no pairing of sounds in the Hebrew, nor can a relation between the meaning of the paired terms be proved at this stage, given that

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[59] Kugel (1981).
[60] Alter (1983, 1985).
[61] E.g. Is.46:3; Jer.2:4; Amos 9:8-9; Mic.3:9. The simpler parallel Jacob//Israel is even more common (cf. Is.9:8; 14:1; 27:6; 29:23...). In a very few instances the word pair occurs in the reverse order (cf. Is.41:8; Ezek.20:5), but this is so rare as to demonstrate the significance of intensification in all other cases.
[62] Haelvoet (1953: 375).
[63] E.g. Dt.33:9; Ps.119:17, 67, cf. Ex.24:7.
[64] E.g. Ex.23:21; 23:22; Num.14:22; Dt.8:20; 13:4; 13:18.
[65] See Is.24:5; Jer.11:6; Ezek.16:59, 17:18, 19. The order of the word pair is found reversed also; see Ps.78:10; 89:35 [ET34]; 103:18; 105:8; 132:12.
[66] For 'obey', e.g. Ex.7:16. For 'listen' or 'hear', e.g. Ex.20:19; 22:22 (ET 22:23); 24:7. Often there is an intentional *double entendre*, e.g. Ex.15:26; 19:9.
[67] It is a moot point, whether ממלכת כהנים consists of two absolute nouns in apposition or a construct noun attached to an absolute noun. This is discussed below at *1.6.3*.

both phrases are hapax legomena. Justifying the parallelism of these lines is altogether a more delicate issue.

The parallel in v.6a can only be established on the grounds of the literary structure of the whole speech of YHWH. Given the rhythm of the whole speech, the parallel is to be expected. Between verses 3b and 5a there are three phrases (these make up v.4). There are three phrases also between v.5a and v.6a, according to the analysis which I propose below:

then you will become my own possession
from among all peoples
For all the earth is mine

Thus we are left expecting another 'double' at this stage, the climax of the speech; and we are given two titles for God's covenant people: ממלכת כהנים ('priestly kingdom') and גוי קדוש ('holy nation').

There remains one problem for understanding the structure of vv.3b-6b, and it is one which bears great significance for my thesis. It concerns v.5c, 'for all the earth is mine'. This phrase was found to fit awkwardly into the analyses of both Muilenburg and Patrick.[68] The problem is compounded on the conceptual level: as part of v.5b, it *seems* to be justifying the previous promise that 'You will be my treasured possession among all peoples', yet it is hard to see the logical relation. Given that the text already states 'among all peoples', it either appears redundant or contradictory. My suggestion is to associate the phrase instead with v.6a.

Mosis has carried out a detailed grammatical study of vv.5b-6a, on the basis of which he challenges the punctuation of the MT.[69] He suggests that the soph pasuq belongs after 'among all peoples' rather than after 'for all the earth is mine'. This implies that this phrase belongs with v.6a, giving to the presentation of the promise a chiastic structure, as follows:

A		You will become my own possession
	B	among all peoples
	B′	Indeed, all the earth is mine
A′		But you, you shall become to me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation

[68] Most commentators describe it, at the least, as parenthetic. See, for example Childs (1974: 367) who notes that it disturbs the poetic balance of the sentence.
[69] Mosis (1978: 1-25).

This analysis has significant implications for the interpretation of these verses. Firstly, it makes clear that the text is not only concerned to establish the nature of YHWH's relation to Israel, but also Israel's relation to others. It explains what סגלה means in the wider context of God's world: why and how Israel is special. It is not difficult to see the statement as one which is affirming to the whole earth, all peoples, as well as to Israel.

Aware of the tension this sets up, the speech continues with an explication of the promise to be a סגלה. The repeated use of the expression היה לי ('to be for me') in A and A′ underlines forcefully the dimension of election, while playing on the contrast. The second half of the chiasmus is a restatement and development of the first half. It begins with an affirmation that the whole world is YHWH's possession, yet that Israel has a particular place at the heart of it.[70] We may take the *waw* of ואתם to be adversative, with which Israel's privilege and responsibility within this world is stated: 'But you, you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'[71] We may understand these two titles, therefore, not only as explanation and intensification but also as qualification of סגלה, specifying Israel's place at the heart of God's earth.

In summary, a poetic analysis of YHWH's speech in vv.3b-6b suggests that v.6a consists of its own internal parallel, following a pattern from v.3b and v.5a, and it also operates as the closing line of an envelope that begins with v.5b. Both features point to this line as the climax to which the whole speech progressively builds and both provide a clue to its meaning. As a parallel, 'priestly kingdom' progresses to 'holy nation', and as a chiasm, both phrases develop the notion of 'treasured possession' in v.5b.

1.5 Further comments on individual verses

1.5.1 Verse 4

YHWH refers to Israel's experience of what he has done, and thus urges them to recall who

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[70] This pattern of speech, beginning with the large picture and focusing down on some particulars, may be noted also in, for example, Dt.10:14f. and Is.42:5ff. Note that we find the exact reverse in Dt.7:6, which is the pattern of the first half of the chiasm, Ex.19:5b.

[71] It is likely that the LXX takes the *waw* as adversative, with the translation δε, although this can also mean 'and'.

he is and what he is like - his power, his protection and his presence. Buber suggests that the image is one of the utter dependence of Israel on YHWH's care.[72] As noted above, the stress lies on the last of the three phrases, that God has brought Israel to himself. Literally, this may be taken as a reference to the mountain where his presence may be encountered dramatically and intensely. It seems reasonable also to understand it in terms of Ex.3, in which God revealed himself to Israel in a new and more intimate way, by the name of YHWH. As suggested above, this would not be a surprising allusion, given the subject of holiness which follows.

1.5.2 Verse 5

Here YHWH explains to Israel the manner of the relationship with him in which they are invited to participate. It seems that on the condition that they are obedient and faithful to his covenant, certain blessings will ensue. Here is the core of the passage which Muilenburg suggests to exemplify the covenant *Gattung*, consisting of a conditional statement promising divine favour for obeying YHWH's will or threatening punishment for disobeying. Certainly he cites many examples of this type of speech.[73] However, vv.5-6 appears to differ from his model in the aspect of 'conditional promise', in that the relationship of protasis (the statement of condition) to apodosis (the result of meeting the condition) is not consequential. The connection is far more subtle. Rather, as Patrick puts it, 'the protasis is a *definition* of the requirements of the position or vocation designated by the titles of the apodosis.'[74] Obedience is the *basis* for the identity of the covenant people.[75] In other words, to be YHWH's own possession, his priestly kingdom and holy nation, entails submitting to his will. Israel is invited to accept this offer. Thus the 'if' is not a conditional suggesting cause and effect, but almost the reverse. It describes a logical relation between responsibilities and privileges, in which Israel is invited to participate.[76]

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[72] Buber (1946: 102).

[73] E.g. Gen.26:26-30; 31:44-50; Ex.15:22-26; 23:22; Lev.26:2-45; Num.32:20-27; Dt.8:11-20; 9:13-15, 22-25, 26-28; 28:1-6, 15-19, 58-60; 30:15-20... Muilenburg (1959: 355 n.2).

[74] Patrick (1977: 149).

[75] van Zyl (1992: 267).

[76] Widely interpreted as a conditional, this material has been contrasted with, for example, the covenant breaking and renewal narrative in Ex.32-4, illustrating the different views regarding the issue of covenant within the text. But this matter touches on a wider issue of the role of context in interpretation. In my view, in its present context the 'if' of v.5 *cannot* be read as a conditional (at least, not in any absolute sense) given the later narrative illustrating that the covenant may be broken and yet re-made.

The statement that Israel will be a people treasured by YHWH, therefore, is not to be seen as a reward for obedience; rather, it is a consequence of the covenant which YHWH is making here. At some point in the future (the perfect with *waw*-consecutive of היה represents a future tense), they will become a סגלה; exactly *when* (under what circumstances) this happens, and what it involves, remains an open question. Clearly it describes Israel's relation to YHWH in comparison to that of other nations.

1.5.3 Verse 6

As already noted, the verse begins with an emphatic 'you yourselves.' This does not merely underscore Israel's uniqueness as described in the preceding verse; it also underscores the choice of these particular descriptions for *Israel*, however surprising they may sound. Both descriptions present difficulties which are examined in more detail below. It suffices to say here that all three of the titles in vv.5b-6a (סגלה, ממלכת כהנים and וגוי קדוש) are assumed to be closely related and to develop progressively (from the first to the second to the third) in the intensity of their meaning. Each is a referent for the same subject: the communal house of Jacob, the collective sons of Israel (relative to all of YHWH's other peoples), to whom the whole discourse is addressed (v.3b and v.6b) and who reply to the promise in unison (v.8).[77]

1.5.4 Verses 7-8

Although Moses transmits the message to *the elders*, it is noted that '*all* the people answered *together*', stressing the democratic character of the theophany and the communal unity of purpose and desire. Their response to *do* all that YHWH has spoken presupposes v.5a and can only be understood as a commitment to obey the covenant law. Patrick suggests: 'If our passage is an offer, then we would expect a response of acceptance or rejection, and the pledge of obedience constitutes an acceptance.'[78] This launches the relationship into effect: the future sense of the verb היה in v.5b and v.6a is now realised in the present. Thus, at the moment the people make this pledge they become YHWH's own possession, his kingdom of priests and holy nation. Following Buber's existentialist interpretation of Sinai, the covenant is 'not a contract but an assumption into a life

[77] This directly contradicts the view of Moran (1962:7-20).

relationship'.[79] If they had refused to pledge obedience, there would have been no story to tell: the fact of the telling presupposes Israel as YHWH's people.

1.6 Analysis of key terms in Ex.19:5-6

On the basis of the poetic structure of Ex.19:3b-6b, we have identified the thrust of YHWH's speech as designating the new position and vocation of the people of Israel, relative to all of YHWH's other peoples. This is a result of the gift of a covenant and a corresponding special status, and it is described in vv.5b-6a:

you shall be to me a סגלה
among all peoples.
For all the earth is mine (כי לי כל־הארץ),
but you, you shall be to me a ממלכת כהנים and a גוי קדוש.

Given the parallels which have been identified, it has been established that the meaning of each of the three titles expands and intensifies the one before it. I shall turn now to examine the implications of each, as well as the phrase in between.

1.6.1 סגלה (v.5b)

This term, in Akkadian as well as Hebrew literature,[80] has royal associations. As far as other biblical references are concerned, it is found in 1Chr.29:3 and Ecc.2:8 to signify treasure, such as gold and silver or that of the jewel in a crown belonging to a king. Equally it is a term used metaphorically, especially in Deuteronomy, applied to God and speaking of his elect, although in each of these situations it is used in connection with עם ('people').[81]

All of these texts are considered to be late, thus historically as well as canonically we may suggest that they depend upon the theological usage in Exodus for their meaning.[82] The reverse argument has little strength. Nevertheless, they provide clues to suggest that here in Ex.19 the term signifies royal treasure and is used metaphorically to describe the special

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[78] Patrick (1977: 149).
[79] Buber (1946: 103).
[80] Greenberg (1951: 172ff); see also Dumbrell (1984: 80-105).
[81] Dt.7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps.135:4; Mal.3:17.
[82] There are those who argue for a common authorship between Ex.19:3b-8 and Deuteronomic-Deuteronomistic literature, but Muilenburg (1959: 351-2) represents the more common view in a JEDP

status of the people of Israel. They belong to God in special way, and this special way has royal associations.

The referent of the term can be taken for granted given the context, particularly since there follows a phrase referring to all other עמים. At the same time, by its royal resonance, the term preserves a divine transcendence: as the possession of YHWH's crown, Israel depends on him (as described in v.4) and recognises him as King and Lord (by the obedience described in v.5a). Precisely in the statement that follows, 'for all the earth is mine', God claims this lordship, which also stretches over all peoples. Exactly *how* Israel's special place works out in this earth full of other peoples is not yet clear; rather, v.5b is a statement of affairs, albeit one which begs an explanation.

1.6.2 כי לי כל־הארץ (v.5c)

It is, of course, significant that the titles used to describe Israel as a covenant people are interspersed with two references to others (v.5b and v.5c). What the reader is given is not a description of Israel in isolation, but in relation to the whole of God's earth. Because of the covenant, Israel is a *special* possession among all peoples. Does this not leave a mystery: how can this be, given that YHWH considers all people as belonging to him? I suggest that the succeeding lines hint at an explanation, and underline the importance of the relationship with 'covenant outsiders'.

This phrase is not simply a tautology of the preceding clause. Rather, as a parallel, it develops and intensifies it. The preceding promise, 'my special possession among all peoples', demands an explanation concerning the place of Israel *and* the place of the nations in YHWH's world. I propose an interpretation which is at odds with the Massoretic punctuation. If the soph pasuq were placed so as to precede rather than follow the phrase of v.5c as argued above, then it would be easy to see how it could serve as preface for v.6a, delineating for the reader that aspect of v.5b that v.6a is explaining. This may be seen more clearly with a paraphrase:

> You will be to me a treasured possession
> among all peoples.
> In fact, all peoples are my possession,

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analysis, arguing for an historical dependence whereby the Deuteronomist borrows from the Elohistic covenantal *Gattung* - and, therefore, possibly the vocabulary also - of Ex.19.

> But you, you ...

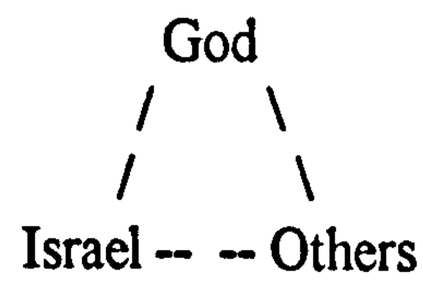
On the basis of this expression, then, the reader may conclude that the succeeding two titles describe how Israel is *special* or *treasured* in a manner that distinguishes them from other peoples. It is not feasible for the expression to denote that Israel is any *more* 'possessed' by YHWH than any other peoples, for all are his possession.[83] Rather, it must therefore be that this people are special in the sense of some distinguishing characteristic or role. The reader is led to expect verse 6a to elucidate this.

Given this conclusion concerning the relation of the clause in v.5c to v.6a, the conjunction כי with which it begins could be understood to imply a causal link. Thus:

> Because all of the earth is mine,
> Therefore you yourselves will be to me...

This is an option to which we should remain open.

The preceding and succeeding phrases are concerned with defining the status of *Israel* with respect to YHWH, relative to (yet distinct from) 'all the earth'. The context of theophany is sufficient to designate the status of *YHWH*, as Lord of all. It seems that what this phrase is concerned with, therefore, is the status of '*all the earth*' with respect to both YHWH and Israel, in order that Israel understands itself and its God *in relation to others.* The concerns could be represented in a triangular fashion:



This phrase precludes a narrow-mindedness or egocentrism as a result of Israel's election. Israel is necessarily related to all of God's people, though this relationship is different from that which ordinarily exists between other people groups.

The exact nature of Israel's special relationship with other peoples, and what this means, is not spelt out here. There is a silence on this subject which leaves room for interpretation on the basis of subsequent developments. All we can conclude is that this relationship matters; v.5b cannot be allowed to imply absolute exclusivism or to encourage a

ghetto mentality. Although the relationship in no way implies a situation in which Israel is defined in terms of a hierarchy with respect to other peoples, or in terms of a specific *mission*, such interpretations are clearly possible. The succeeding titles which describe Israel must be examined before any further conclusions are drawn.

1.6.3 ממלכת כהנים (v.6a)

Not only does this title present a unique juxtaposition of two (otherwise common) terms in the Old Testament, the grammatical construction is also uncertain. It is therefore not surprising to find ancient translations of the text paraphrasing it differently. There are at least four variations: the LXX renders it βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα, 'a royal priesthood'; the Vulgate reads *regnum sacerdotale*, 'a priestly kingdom'; the Syriac Peshitta, 'kingdom and priests'; and the Targhums read 'kings (and) priests'. Likewise, the title has left much to the imagination of modern interpreters.[84]

The great variety of interpretations may be attributed to the fact that the Hebrew construction is ambiguous. Technically, ממלכת may be taken not only as a construct form (of the usual absolute ממלכה) but also as an absolute. If the latter, then it stands in apposition to the noun כהנים which follows it, as in the Syriac translation 'kingdom and priests' (although there is no 'and' in the MT).

Taken as a construct, which is the most natural reading of ממלכת, it is still possible to read it in either of two ways. The first noun can express an attribute of the second, resulting in the LXX rendering 'royal priesthood'. Alternatively, the second may describe the first, which is more common, as in the Vulgate translation 'priestly kingdom'.

Overall, it is my view that this last approach seems the most likely: taking the title as two nouns in the usual order of construct relation to each other, in which the second

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[83] The terminology suggesting possession, in the case of Israel and 'the peoples' in v.5b is identical; the term is לי ('to me').

[84] Consider the following selection to illustrate the variety. Scott (1950: 218) suggested it describes Israel as 'a kingdom set apart like a priesthood'. For Galling (1928: 27) it is not a technical term but simply designates Israel as worshippers of YHWH (a counterpart of the idea of separation from the worship of other gods expressed in גוי קדוש). Bauer (1958: 283-6) supposes it refers to a specific ruling class within Israel, 'kings who are priests' or 'priest-like kings.' In similar vein, Moran (1962: 7-20), and closely related Caspari (1929: 105-10) and Fohrer (1963: 359-62), argues it should be understood in some way as 'a royalty of priests'. And Wildberger (1960) suggests it is an honorific title of YHWH's lordship over Israel to be applied to Israel's lordship over the nations.

complements the first. If, as stated earlier, ממלכת כהנים stands in a parallel relationship to the second title, גוי קדוש, then we have further reason to understand it this way. As Cody has pointed out, גוי and ממלכה are a common word pair and belong naturally together.[85] Thus, for the most literal translation, we have 'kingdom of priests'.

The term 'kingdom' carries over the notions of royalty which were implied in סגלה. If YHWH is king, then it follows that the people over whom he exercises his kingship will be his kingdom. Because of YHWH, Israel has royal associations. God's kingdom is made up of people who submit to his kingship, i.e. who 'listen to his voice and keep his covenant' (v.5a). This kingdom is qualified by the term 'priests'. The most obvious interpretation of this is to suggest that the people over whom YHWH exercises his kingship will be priestly.[86]

What does it mean for Israel, God's kingdom, to have a priestly character? The immediate context of Exodus 18 and 19 provides some clues concerning this identity. On a minimal understanding, it suggests those who are concerned with approaching God, who are 'consecrated' to him and his service, and who specialise in things sacred. Priesthood is both a status which is given and a function which is demanded.[87] It is a special expression of separation and devotion.

In contrast with those individuals who are described as priests,[88] the use of the term here describes the totality of God's people. The whole of YHWH's speech is addressed to corporate Israel (v.3b, 6b) and the people as a whole reply to it (v.8a).[89] The concern here is with the priesthood of *all* believers (the community of faith) not, as much protestant

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[85] (1964: 3); cf. 1Sam.8:20; 1Ki.18:10; 2Chr.32:15; Ps.46:7 [ET6]; 105:13; Is.13:4; 60:12; Jer.1:10; 18:7; Ezek.37:22; Dan 8:22; Zeph.3:8.

[86] In contrast, Renaud (1991: 149) suggests that ממלכת carries the weight of the whole expression כהנים ממלכת since an adjective merely qualifies the manner of being royal. But this would seem to push a grammatical point too far, a point that the LXX overlooks (inverting the sense to 'royal priesthood'), in a situation consisting in any case of two nouns in succession.

[87] See further chapter 3 which explores a theological understanding of priesthood in the Old Testament.

[88] For example, Jethro (Ex.18:1) and the priests associated with Aaron (Ex.19:22, 24).

[89] This stands in contrast to Moran's (1962: 7-20) interpretation who argues that the phrase 'a kingdom of priests' does not refer to the totality of Israel but only to a part of it, the priesthood, on the grounds that the two terms in v.6a are not parallel or synonymous, but rather complementary. Thus, along with the 'holy nation' the priesthood forms a totality with the people. But to draw this conclusion involves the rather dubious claim that ממלכת can occasionally be found to carry the meaning of 'king' rather than 'kingdom'.

interpretation has traditionally taken it to mean in the light of 1Pet.2, the priesthood of *every* believer (each individual within the community).[90]

1.6.4 גוי קדוש (v.6a)

This title is also a unique expression in the Old Testament. Because of this, it has been common to interpret it with reference to its closest semantic parallel, עם קדוש which occurs several times in the book of Deuteronomy.[91] On three occasions, this is accompanied by a description of Israel as YHWH's סגלה ('treasured possession') also.[92] It seems reasonable to assume, on an historical as well as a literary-canonical reading, that these texts take their lead from the material in Ex.19.

The translation of the vocabulary contained in this title is relatively straightforward. More interesting is the choice of terminology used. The use of גוי rather than עם bears significance; these terms are *not* used interchangeably in the Bible.[93] Speiser's analysis is instructive. Firstly unlike עם, גוי is never possessively construed with YHWH or with the possessive suffix. עם is found hundreds of times with pronominal endings, suggesting it is something subjective and personal.[94] גוי, rather, is something objective and impersonal: there is not the least hint of personal ties in the concept of גוי . The term is more often used to denote foreign nations, הגוים ('the nations'), i.e. those from which the subject (usually Israel) commonly distances itself.[95]

The second major distinction is drawn from a study of the typical verbs which are found in association with the two terms.

> A גוי can be made, established, founded, or the like. Egypt 'came into being' as a גוי (Ex.9:24). Such states are not "born" all at once (Is.66:8). They can, however, go out of existence (Jer.31:35). As opposed to all this, an עם just is; it is a physical fact. As for its

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[90] For the classic discussions, see Luther (*De Instituendis Ministris* and *On Christian Liberty*) and Calvin (*Institutes:* iv: iv: 9). For an example of a modern commentator, see Beer (1939: 97) and Köhler, cited by Schrenk (1965: 249).

[91] Dt.7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:18-9; 28:9.

[92] Dt.7:6; 14:2; 26:18-9.

[93] Rost (1934: 125-48); Speiser (1960: 157-63); Cody (1964: 1-6).

[94] This conclusion is confirmed by the appearance of עם as an element in personal names, such as Ammishaddai, Amminadab and Ammiel, where it functions as a kinship term, and in kingship idioms, such as Gen.25:8, 17; 34:16; Ex.30:33, 38; Ruth 1:16.

[95] Cody (1964: 5) suggests the term is linked to the notion of foreign relations.

> behavior, an עם can eat and drink, be faint and suffer thirst, quarrel and complain and weep, tremble or flee or hide in caves, come into the world and eventually be buried.[96]

In effect, an עם is a discrete group of persons (it is composed of individuals, איש[97]) whereas a גוי is a collective, regimented body whose indivisible unit is the אדם, i.e. the mortal who is merely one of a crowd, a statistic.[98] This difference is illustrated in texts where עם and גוי are juxtaposed (Ex.33:13; Dt.4:6b).

What may we infer from the promise that Israel be a 'holy nation' rather than a 'holy people'? The use of גוי suggests that Israel is not necessarily a group made up of kinship ties in the sense of close family connections and consanguineous ties. It is something different that brings these people together as a *nation*. And as a nation, the people have a structural unity with which they have political relations with other nations.[99]

What is more, it is a body which is *formed, founded, established*; the term 'nation' assumes a maker and sustainer. The context here is already stressing that Israel is constituted by YHWH alone (Israel has done nothing to effect its own existence or status) and it is perpetuated by means of obedience to YHWH. In other respects, Israel is no different from הגוים ('the nations'). If anything, the use of the term גוי identifies Israel with them. Only through their relationship with YHWH are they unique. It is this tie that brings them together and holds them together. This uniqueness is expressed completely and concisely in the one adjective קדוש.

For Israel to function as a nation, a deep unity of spirit and purpose is suggested that brings it to behave collectively. The terminology leaves little room for individual action which does not foster this communal experience and purpose of nationhood. Such collective action was expressed in ממלכת כהנים as discussed at *1.6.2.*

Finally, the general paucity of possessive constructs or pronominal endings in conjunction with גוי merely stresses the significance of קדוש. On its own, Israel described as a גוי would imply something objective and impersonal. In association with the word

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[96] Speiser (1960: 160).
[97] Cf. 2Sam.15:30; 16:18.
[98] Cf. Job.34:29; Ez.36:13.
[99] Gilbert (1983: 238).

'holy' here, the implication is diametrically different. The presentation of holiness so far in the canon leads to an understanding of this adjective which may serve as equivalent to a pronominal ending. If קדש is associated with the presence of YHWH, then on a minimal understanding Israel as 'holy' means 'to be in his presence' or 'to be identified with him' or even, 'to be his'.

But there is more which may be invested in this term, based on the context in which this word forms the final climax. Recalling the other themes of the divine discourse, then it develops the notions of utter dependence on YHWH (v.4), complete obedience to him (v.5a) and acknowledgement of his kingly rule over the whole earth (v.5b). Moreover, it forms the climax of two parallels: together with the other terms of v.6a it develops the implications of סגלה, and it also intensifies the parallel which immediately precedes it, 'priestly kingdom'.

The first of these parallels provides a straightforward and primary interpretation for קדוש. The term 'treasured possession' is intensified jointly by 'priestly kingdom' and 'holy nation'. If it is seen that the first develops the notions of royalty, then it is just as clear to recognise how the second develops the aspect of belonging to God. Fundamentally, I suggest, the adjective 'holy' describes that with which God's presence abides, or that which belongs to YHWH. For Israel to be a holy nation, founded by YHWH, is to live in his presence and be his.[100] Whereas all the earth is לי (v.5c), Israel belongs to God in a particular kind of way, denoted by the term 'holy'. Israel lives in his presence; Israel is particularly close to him.

The second parallel, within v.6a, suggests that Israel as a holy nation progresses the idea of Israel as a priestly kingdom. It is likely that, as with the paired language in v.3b and v.5a discussed above at *1.4.5*, 'holy' corresponds to 'priestly' as 'nation' corresponds to 'kingdom'. As we have said, it is common for גוי to be used in co-ordinate with ממלכה.[101] Whilst not synonymous (parallels rarely are), we have seen how 'nation' can be understood to develop the notion of relatedness to a sovereign which is expressed by 'kingdom': not merely of Israel as subject to Royalty but as creation to Creator and dependent to Sustainer.

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[100] Cf. Num.16:3-5; Jer.2:3.
[101] See n.85 above.

In this case, a similar relationship between 'priestly' and 'holy' may be assumed. The use of קדוש, therefore, indicates not only a sense of belonging to YHWH but also a quality of relationship with him that denotes a religious dimension, in the manner of priests (although we have yet to establish a theological understanding of 'priest').

As the climax of the whole speech, therefore, I conclude that the term קדוש expresses the goal of Israel's calling. It encompasses the variety of dimensions of relating and belonging to God: according to sheer necessity (in utter dependence), as in v.4; legally and morally (obeying and keeping laws), as in v.5a; personally and emotionally (as a treasured possession), as in v.5b; and religiously and loyally (as priestly royal subjects), as in v.6a. Furthermore, the text makes clear that the depth and breadth of this special relationship in no way precludes God's or Israel's relating to other peoples of the earth. Indeed, we may surmise that this is necessary. How the notion of holiness unfolds in the succeeding chapters and books of Scripture will reveal these aspects in more depth.

1.7 Summary: The call to holiness

This analysis of the speech which inaugurates and summarises the event of Israel's election at Sinai has identified a climax in the words 'holy nation.' This title expresses Israel's uniqueness, in the eyes of YHWH, among all other peoples of the earth. It describes an identity which is to become both a reality when the covenant is made, and a priority, according to which Israel is required to live. This rather ambivalent state, whereby Israel is *declared* holy yet equally called *to be* holy, I describe as 'the call to holiness'. 'Holy' describes a status and a standard and a function.

The distinctiveness of Israel in regard to other nations, which is expressed by the terminology of קדש, may be understood to include the dimensions set out below. 'Holy' carries a richness and depth of meaning which, I suggest, cannot be conveyed by any single word in English.

(a) Israel is unique.

Although it is one nation among others, it is marked out in a special way. YHWH stresses those to whom he is talking: 'you' is emphatic in v.4 and repeated twice, and also emphatic ('you yourselves') in v.6a. The implication is that YHWH does not speak like this to others

also. Above all other descriptors, Israel is unique because it is a *holy* nation; Israel is associated with God. God's presence resides with and is invested in Israel.

(b) Israel belongs to God.

The term סגלה (v.5b) denotes possession, and the terms ממלכת ('kingdom') and גוי ('nation') in v.6a implies belonging, the belonging of a subject to a King. Thus the relationship is not one of equals, but of dependence. Because a royal sovereign has founded them as a group of people, he will protect and sustain them as his; so they are to live in utter dependence on the one who is Creator and Sustainer of all (v.5c).

(c) Israel must live for God.

Israel as a people has a common purpose in its relationship with YHWH. Thus it is united in its priorities to obey God fully and to keep his covenant (v.5a). The relationship demands submission and obedience in order that association with the presence of God brings alignment with the will of God. This alignment has moral, ethical dimensions and religious 'priestly' ones (v.6a).

(d) Israel must relate to others.

YHWH's special relationship with Israel does not preclude his relating with other peoples. Similarly, it does not preclude Israel's relations with other nations. Being 'holy' does not infer a separation in terms of isolation; rather it allows for a broadness and a generosity of outlook. Indeed, we may suggest it even *demands* a relationship with others, for if Israel is invested with God's presence, then it may represent it and mediate it to others.

Chapter 2
'You shall be holy as I am holy': The context of the Torah

2.1 Introduction

The next four chapters of this thesis explore the development of the substance of Ex.19:6 in the succeeding portions of the Old Testament. On the basis of the analysis of this verse in chapter 1, the exploration pursues the significance of two key categories in particular. These are 'priestliness' and holiness, the categories through which Israel is given to understand its special identity as an elect people, the people of YHWH. Clearly, these two themes are not unrelated. I shall, however, examine them separately as far as their terminology is found separately within the Scriptures, before seeking to understand their combined implications for Israel. I consider the theme of holiness before that of priestliness since, as we shall see, priestliness (in the form of the priesthood) is one particular expression of the character of holiness. Holiness is the more fundamental category for Israelite religion.[1]

This chapter is devoted to an examination of holiness in the Pentateuch.[2] The succeeding chapter looks at 'priestliness' in the Pentateuch, and this is followed by a study of holiness in two prophetic books, Isaiah (chapter 4) and Ezekiel (chapter 5). My overall study thus focuses primarily on holiness in the first portion of the Hebrew canon, classically known as the Torah, and on two books in the second, the Prophets. I do not discuss, to any significant degree, the third portion of the Hebrew scriptures, the Writings. The reason for my choice relates to the degree of concern for holiness in these books, measured in terms of the corresponding frequency of the particular term קדש, and their foundational importance within the Hebrew canon as a whole.

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[1] For many theologies of the Old Testament, holiness is a central concern. Consider, for example, Vriezen (1958: 151): 'The holiness of God is ... the central idea of the Old Testament faith in God'. See also Sellin (1936: 19) and deVries (1983: 45).

[2] I exclude the patriarchal narratives from the present chapter, however. These are dealt with separately in chapter 6.

The major exposition of holiness in the Old Testament, then, is found from Exodus to Deuteronomy. The very fact that tradition has given the word *Torah* to this material is suggestive of the special role which it plays amongst the Scriptures as a whole. Both its laws and its stories are given not just an historical character but also a certain imperative character. Both genres serve to instruct, to provide guidance, to impel towards a particular kind of conduct in life. This is Yahwism, to which we now turn.

2.2 The Development of Ex.19:6 in the Pentateuch

2.2.1 The Sinai narratives

In *1.3.2* I discussed the role of Ex.19:1-8 in introducing, and also summarising, the whole of the Sinai narrative, from Ex.19 through to the point at which the people set out again from the mountain, recorded in Num.10:11. Having examined these verses in detail, I now return to the larger picture and trace their development throughout the remainder of Exodus, Leviticus and the first portion of the book of Numbers.

Ex.19:1-8 introduces a theophany in which YHWH is present on the mountain and has words to speak to Israel. At the outset, YHWH makes an offer to Israel: he invites them to participate in a covenant relationship with him. He sets out, in brief, the requirement of this covenant ('if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant', v.5a) and the outworking ('you will be to me a treasured possession... a priestly kingdom and a holy nation', v.5b-6a). Israel makes an initial acceptance of this covenant (v.8). Thus the theophany continues and God's voice reveals further, through Moses, what it is that Israel must obey - and, by implication, how it is that Israel will be priestly and holy.

The remainder of the book of Exodus falls into a pattern of alternate sections of narrative followed by law, as follows:[3]

19:1-25 Narrative	20:1-17 Law (Decalogue)	20:18-21 Narrative	20:22-23:33 Law (Covenant Code)	24:1-18 Narrative	25:1-31:18 Law (Tabernacle, Priesthood)	32:1-34:35 Narrative	35:1-40:38 Law (Tabernacle)

This pattern whereby law and narrative are integrated together continues throughout the Sinai account in Leviticus and Numbers. This literary structure itself is significant for its

[3] Fretheim (1991: 202).

interpretation.[4] Law, detailing how life *should* be lived, emerges from within the matrix of narrative, i.e. of stories which tell of how life *is* lived. The story gives to the law a personal character and a 'groundedness' in reality; the laws are made integral to the lively relationship maintained between God and the people revealed in the narrative.

The law provides a means of response of Israel to God and to what he has done. This elicited response points to the fact that God has chosen not to do everything in this world by himself. However much the story keeps God at the centre as the agent of Israel's redemption, the law insists that there are important human initiatives and responsibilities to be undertaken. These are understood to be the implications of Israel's new identity as a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. They include not only worshipping God in an appropriate manner (as specified in the regulations for sacrifice in Lev.1-7), but also furthering the cause of justice within and outside of Israel (as, for example, spelt out in the book of the covenant, Ex.21-23); and more generally conforming the world to God's will. This is not accomplished fully by God's salvific acts. Israel, too, is given a role in promoting and enhancing the purposes of God for creation, in building upon the foundations that God has established. Israel, in turn, becomes a part of these foundations from which God achieves his purposes for the whole earth.

Throughout the details of both the legal and the narrative material, the larger picture given by the text concerns how Israel should live in response to their covenant God. The Scriptures are more silent, at this stage, about Israel's role *on behalf* of YHWH. Even though there are few direct references to Ex.19:3b-6b, the notion of holiness introduced at 19:6 to describe the people forms the priority of the life which is lived in response to YHWH and his covenant.[5] The Hebrew root קדש occurs frequently, especially in Leviticus.

How Israel should live is, firstly, a response to the character of God. The first portion of legal material, the decalogue, begins with a statement of who God is and what he has done[6] ('I am YHWH your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage', Ex.20:2) and from this statement there follows the consequences for Israel:

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[4] Damrosch (1987: 262ff.); Mann (1988: 113-117); Fretheim (1991:201ff.)

[5] Consider, for example, Ex.22:30 [ET 31], 'You are to be my holy people: therefore do not eat any flesh that is torn by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.'

[6] Recall that YHWH's speech to Israel in Ex.19: 3b-6b also began with a statement of what he had done for Israel.

'you shall have no other gods... you shall make no graven image... you shall not take the name of YHWH your God in vain', vv.3ff). The legislation concerning sabbath (vv.8-11) is especially explicit in urging behaviour based on the activity of YHWH at creation. It is the association of this time with God's activity (or more accurately, inactivity) which brings about the blessing and *hallowing* (יקדשהו, v.11) of that day. Like the priesthood,[7] the sabbath is a *symbol* of holiness in Exodus; the keeping of the sabbath is repeatedly described as a reminder 'that you may know that I, YHWH, sanctify you' (Ex.31:13; cf. 16:23; 20:8, 11; 31:14-17; 35:2). A symbol (אות) in some way bears properties that makes it appropriate for the content which it signifies (cf. the rainbow of Gen.9:12, 17: rainbows appear at the end of a storm, thus acting as appropriate symbols of God's promise not to flood the world).[8]

All of the legal material is interspersed with reminders of the character and activity of God in this way. This is true of the covenant code (Ex.21-23),[9] the pattern for the tabernacle (Ex.25-27, 35-40),[10] directions for the priesthood (Ex.28-29; Lev.8-10),[11] instructions for sacrifice (Lev.1-7),[12] the descriptions of clean and unclean things (Lev.11-15),[13] the Day of Atonement (Lev.16),[14] the Holiness Code (Lev.17-26),[15] and the various regulations regarding the camp (Num.1-9).[16] It follows that Israel's life, lived in response to their covenant identity, is to be modelled on the identity of their God. The God of Israel, revealed by the name of YHWH, is first and foremost understood as holy. It is YHWH who consecrates ('makes holy') the mountain,[17] the tabernacle,[18] the priests,[19] the sabbath[20] and

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[7] Cf. ch.3.
[8] Cf. Keller (1946) and de Saussure (1966).
[9] See, for example, 'Do not wrong a stranger... for I will surely hear their cry and my wrath will burn...' (Ex.22:21-24).
[10] For example, '...let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst' (Ex.25:8).
[11] For example, '... Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate, to serve me as priests. And I will dwell among the people of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am YHWH their God...' (Ex.29:44-46).
[12] For example, '... it is an offering by fire, a pleasing odour to YHWH' (Lev.1:13, 17; 3:5; cf. 2:10, 11, 16; 4:35; 5.12). Note that this phrase is formulaic, and not by YHWH in the first person, as are the other examples.
[13] See, for example, 'For I am YHWH your God; consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy' (Lev.11:44; cf. 11:45).
[14] See, for example, '... for on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before YHWH' (Lev.16:30).
[15] See, for example, 'You shall be holy; for I YHWH your God am holy' (Lev.19:2; cf. 20:7, 26).
[16] See, for example, 'The Levites shall be mine, for all the first-born are mine...' (Num.3:12; cf. 8:17).
[17] By implication, Ex.3:5.

the people.[21] The Pentateuch makes abundantly clear that YHWH is the source of all holiness.

Secondly, how Israel should live is a response to the character of Israel as God's chosen people. In other words, the essence of the command to Israel is to 'be what you are.'[22] Because of the covenant, Israel has become a treasured possession to YHWH, a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.[23] Therefore, Israel must recognise itself as treasured, as belonging to God, as a priestly community and as a nation which bears the marks of holiness, and must live up to its identity. The priesthood, which God institutes in the community, is the focal point for these characteristics. The priest[24] is a model of 'nearness' to God (Ex.24:2; cf. 28:43; 30:20), of service (Ex.29:44; Num.8:15-6), of belonging (Num.3:12b-13; 8:14), of blessing (Num.6:22-7); in a word, of holiness (Ex.28:36). What is more, the priest is put in a position so as to have influence in the rest of the community, 'to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean; and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes which YHWH has spoken to them by Moses' (Lev.10:10-11). Priests are given responsibility for the people's faithfulness to YHWH, i.e. for maintaining the holiness of the community. By implication priests are models of 'holy people' to others, and it is hoped that the rest of the people may become like them in this way.[25]

To conclude, although the main body of the Sinai narratives do not make any explicit connection with Ex.19:6, there is good reason for the claim that this verse acts as a summary for all that follows. The main concern in these texts is that Israel understand how it should live in relation to its covenant God. A key word underlying and uniting all the stories and laws which prescribe the covenant life is 'holiness'. It is no coincidence that this is also the

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[18] Ex.29:44.
[19] Although the directions instruct *Moses* to consecrate them (e.g. Ex.29:1), it is clearly done on behalf of YHWH (cf. Ex.29:44).
[20] Ex.20:11.
[21] Ex.31:13.
[22] 'Be' is to be understood dynamically, not statically i.e. 'Become what you are'.
[23] As discussed in chapter 2, the text suggests that this description for Israel comes into effect from the time at which Israel accepts the covenant (cf. Ex.19:8; 24:3-8). It is not a description that Israel is *aiming* to achieve, by virtue of its keeping the covenant.
[24] Some of these texts include also the Levite. On the relation of priests and Levites, see ch.3 below.
[25] I.e. priests are *symbols* of holiness, bearing properties which make them appropriate for the content which they signify (as also with the sabbath day). Furthermore, they are *effective* i.e. they can bring about that which they signify. The priestly role is discussed further in the next chapter.

word which comes to be used to describe most succinctly the revealed character of their God. Israel's holiness is a gift of and a response to the holiness of YHWH. Thus the chorus which comes to echo through the book of Leviticus is 'Be holy as I am holy' (Lev.11:44; 19:2; 20:7, 26).

'Priestliness' is also an important theme in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. This is tied up with the institution of the priesthood within the tribe of Levi. I have argued that priests represent a particular illustration of holiness in Israel: they are consecrated (i.e. 'made holy') and as such they are seen to belong to YHWH in a special way. In consequence priests are set aside to serve him and to take special responsibility for holiness, both protecting the people from it and encouraging them to it. The priests are those who 'draw near' to YHWH and thus mediate his presence to others, whilst also bringing the people to YHWH in worship and teaching them the Torah.

The Sinai narratives end at the point at which Israel leaves Mount Sinai. YHWH's revelation through Moses - his covenant prescriptions to Israel - are complete. The remainder of the book of Numbers tells of the community of faith journeying through the wilderness, on their way to the promised land. Within the stories which speak of Israel's experiences is one particular interlude of 'supplementary' laws given through Moses which ends with a bidding for all Israel to wear tassels, a symbol of their 'priestliness' and holiness.[26] This is followed by a summary of the purpose of the Torah, recalling the introduction to the Sinai records with which we began:

> So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. I am YHWH your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am YHWH your God (Num.15:40-41).[27]

2.2.2 Deuteronomy

The material in the book of Deuteronomy commends itself to the reader as a systematic exposition of the Sinaitic narratives: in essence, a repeat of what has gone before, but in such

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[26] See *3.2.8.*

[27] An incident which follows immediately after confirms this understanding of the essence of the Sinai narratives. Moses and Aaron are accused: 'You have gone too far! For all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and YHWH is among them; why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of YHWH?' (Num.16:3). In ch.3 we examine how priests serve to *confirm* the holiness of the nation, not undermine it.

as way that what has been past event is now re-created as living tradition.[28] The exposition presents 'timeless'[29] reflections on Israel's covenant status under God and draws out the implications for the life of the community. In essence, this may be summed up by Moses' need 'to explain the law' (1:5). The book is stressing how YHWH's covenant commands apply not just at Sinai and in the wilderness but for all those descendants who will live in the promised land also,[30] and the tone seeks to urge them to obedience. The 'maturity' and thus implicit authority of the material is further implied by the detail in the concluding chapters suggesting it is Moses' farewell speech, for he himself does not enter the land.[31] Read in the light of the larger narrative, this brings the whole book to function canonically as his last will and testimony.[32]

It is natural to expect in the book of Deuteronomy a reapplication of the Sinai material for a new situation and, in particular, a development of the key themes which were identified in the Sinai narratives (above, *2.2.1*) and previously in the introduction and summary of Sinai in Ex.19 (chapter 1). Indeed, not only is there a reformulation of the covenant; there are several 'reformulations' of Ex.19:6 also. The way in which these are presented will be central to our understanding of Israel's Yahwistic identity as a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. Deuteronomy represents the expression of Mosaic Yahwism *par excellence.*

I take my lead concerning references to Ex.19:6 from the occurrence of the expression עם קדוש ('a holy people'). This is found in many places in the book of Deuteronomy: in the introduction to the principal call of faithfulness to YHWH (7:6); in the legal section at the beginning of the food laws, (14:2, 21); at the transition between the law and section of blessings and curses (26:19) and finally in the blessings (28:9). The distribution of this phrase throughout each of the main parts of the book is impressive, and indicative of its centrality

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[28] A knowledge of the events of Sinai is assumed (e.g. Dt.1:3) and parts of the history are subsequently repeated in more detail in Dt.4:9ff. and 5:22ff. The concern for 'actualising' the past in the present extends throughout chs.1-5.

[29] Von Rad (1929: 60) described the book as having 'an atmosphere of the timeless' (quoted by Childs [1979: 221]). This is true in the sense that the importance of chronological time is relativised; there is a 'sermonising' quality by which each law is presented as an ideal of faith to which it is imperative that every generation after Sinai aspires. However, the idealising tendency is limited; it does not go so far as to undermine the historical specificity of the tradition.

[30] The geographical setting is the plains of Moab on the edge of the promised land, Dt.1:5; cf. also 1:3; 4:1, 25; 18:9; 19:1ff.

[31] Dt.31:14, 16; 33:1; 34:4ff.

[32] Childs (1979: 211).

for the faith of Mosaic Yahwism. Moreover, its formulation is remarkably similar to that of Ex.19:6 (even though the vocabulary is not identical), such as to suggest that it recalls YHWH's words in Exodus.

Firstly, in all the Deuteronomy references, it is carefully spelt out that Israel will be a holy people *to YHWH* (ליהוה, 'to/for YHWH', in 7:6; 14:2, 21 and 26:19; and לו, 'to/for him' in 28:9). In Ex.19:6, the people were called to be a holy people לי, 'to/for me'. The terminology, and thus the sense, is the same in both cases: the attribute of holiness is directional. The description relates to the particular relationship between Israel and their God.

The contexts within which Israel is described as a holy nation or holy people are also comparable in Exodus and Deuteronomy. In the case of Ex.19:6, I discussed the description as a declaration - a promise - which is *not* conditional upon Israel's faithfulness to the covenant, even though the declaration is premised by this demand[33] and the two are clearly related. Rather, the promise is unconditional; it is the outcome of God's election of a people and it is effective from the point at which they accept YHWH's covenant.

The descriptions in Deuteronomy are also unconditional; in fact, they are a statement of fact, a reminder of Israel's status in relation to God. As in Exodus 19, each is accompanied by the demand of faithfulness to the covenant law. In Dt.7:6 this reminder is the justification for חרם ('holy war', 7:1-5), whereby other peoples in the land are to be destroyed out of faithfulness to YHWH. The statement of Dt.7:6 underlines Israel's status as elect, leading to an exhortation to keep the Torah (7:11). It is because it is already a holy people that Israel must respect the commandments. Torah is a consequence of election, not vice versa. The statements in Dt.14:2, 21 occur at the beginning and end of the list of food laws, as if the reminder of Israel's holiness will explain the need for discernment and obedience in dietary matters. Dt.26:19 is prefaced by the concern, repeated three times, that Israel keep God's commandments (26:16, 17, 18). In Dt.28:9 this demand is further stressed. What at first appears to be a conditional statement ('YHWH will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of YHWH your God, and walk in his ways') is, in the context of the preceding material, to be read as

an expression of logical consequence. The structure is the same as Ex.19:5-6, which was interpreted in similar fashion, but with the order of the cause and the effect reversed.

Whilst the title 'priestly kingdom' which accompanies 'holy nation' in Ex.19:6 does not appear in Deuteronomy, the terminology of סגלה ('treasured possession') in the context of a reference to other peoples is carried over from Ex.19:5-6 in Dt.7:6; 14:2; and 26:18-19.[34] This confirms the association established in Exodus between holiness, special possession and other peoples. That Israel is God's treasured possession is part of the nation's identity as elect and holy, and a feature which is exclusive to Israel. The precise nature of the relation between Israel and other peoples is explored further in Deuteronomy than in Exodus; and it is not necessarily found to be positive. So special is Israel 'out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth' (Dt.7:6), that this provides the rationale for destroying other peoples in the land (Dt.7:1-5). The reference in 26:18-19 describes a relationship of superiority, '...he will set you high above all nations that he has made, in praise and in fame and in honour'.

This observation points to the development which is found between the references to Israel's holiness in Exodus and Deuteronomy. We have established the similarities, showing that Deuteronomy makes frequent and apparently conscious reference to Ex.19:6; yet it is the differences that reveal most for understanding the development of Israel's covenant identity in the canonical presentation.

Firstly, Deuteronomy uses the term עם ('people') where Exodus used the term גוי ('nation'). Secondly, Ex.19:6 addresses all of Israel in the plural, whereas each of the references in Deuteronomy use the singular address, even though the context might lead one to expect a plural at least in 7:6 and 14:2, 21. Thirdly, 'holy nation' accompanies the expression 'priestly kingdom' in Ex.19:6, an expression which does not appear in Deuteronomy.

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[33] The 'if' clause was discussed at *1.5.2*; it is not a condition but a definition of the conceptual content of key terms, involving cause and effect.

[34] Of the other two references to 'holy people', Dt.28:9-10 refers to other peoples but does not employ the particular term סגלה, while 14:21 merely echoes a portion of 14:2, as if the six words in the Hebrew phrase, 'For you are a people holy to YHWH your God', acts as a chorus in this portion of the book (cf. Dt.7:6 also).

These differences bear certain consequences. The use of עם points to a more personal, subjective approach in the Deuteronomic language.[35] עם denotes a discrete group of persons (as opposed to a collective body), which may have close family ties and in which each individual bears significance. The use of this term for describing the holiness of Israel is not incidental but rather intentional, for גוי is a common term in Deuteronomy (used of Israel as well as of other nations) and therefore would seem quite natural.[36]

I suggest the use of עם here is suggestive of Israel's circumstances in Deuteronomy, relative to Exodus. By the time that Israel has journeyed for forty years and reached the plains of Moab, it is not only a united body of people, but it also forms a nation with all those features which go to make up a national life. Consider Clements' description:[37]

> It lives upon a land which, Deuteronomy insists, has been given to it by God.[38] It may have a king to rule over it, like all the nations round about.[39] It may wage war against other nations,[40] and it may administer its own courts of law.[41] It even has regulations determining the conditions upon which people of certain other races may participate in the religious life of Israel.[42] In a great number of ways the book of Deuteronomy pronounces its rulings and delivers its exhortations to an audience which it can define as a nation, and which formed one very small nation among a host of others in the world of the ancient Near East. In the political sense Israel is regarded by Deuteronomy as possessed of full rights of self-government, with a legitimate national interest to defend.

In contrast to the situation of Sinai in Ex.19, Israel does not need telling that it is going to be a nation. By this stage, it already has a clear national identity. The message of 'holy people' in Deuteronomy is much more concerned with the implications of being in covenant relationship with God for the individual. Given the uniqueness of corporate Israel, how then should its members live? This reason for the careful use of עם in Deuteronomy is connected to the second difference from Ex.19:6 noted above: the address to Israel in the second person singular.

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[35] Speiser (1960: 157-63). This analysis was discussed above, under *1.6.4*.
[36] The term occurs over forty times in the book. For examples of how it is used of Israel as of other nations, see Dt.4:6, 7, 8, 34.
[37] Clements (1968: 31-2).
[38] Dt.4:38, 40; 6:18f., 23; etc.
[39] Dt.17:14ff.
[40] Dt.23:9ff.
[41] Dt.25:1ff.
[42] Dt.23:1ff.

It is well-known that the book of Deuteronomy as a whole alternates between the singular and plural forms of address; this has formed the subject of much debate concerning authorship in Deuteronomy.[43] Whatever the history, this operates in the current text as a literary device. From a stylistic perspective, Lohfink sees every change of number as a new form of address, a new assault on the listener (or reader).[44] The singular form of address self-evidently challenges listeners as individuals: the community is no longer addressed collectively for each person is a responsible actor within the whole. Combined with the use of the term 'people' rather than 'nation', the effect is to stress the significance of 'holy' for every individual within Israel as a whole. This is not to deny a solidarity which is accorded to the whole nation as holy,[45] but rather to develop the significance of the collective title in a way to which people may respond individually. The tenor of the book of Deuteronomy as a whole is to seek a response in the lives of Israelites to YHWH, their covenant God.

The absence of the parallel title for Israel from Ex.19:6, 'priestly kingdom' is, perhaps, a more surprising difference. I return to this matter in due course, relating it to the greater prominence given to the term ברית, 'covenant'. For now, I will note simply how its absence serves to underline the understanding of YHWH's speech established in the preceding chapter. According to the structure of this speech (Ex.19:3-6), we are given to understand its main thrust as contained in the final expression, 'holy nation.' The previous titles serve to build up to this climax; whilst they may carry an independent meaning, I suggest that this meaning is taken up and intensified by the final words, 'holy nation.'

The subject of holiness in the book of Deuteronomy will be considered more generally below. At this stage, I wish to draw attention to the way in which the words of Ex.19:6 are taken up into the core of this 'final' message of Moses to Israel. As stated above, this is a message extended to all generations of Israel, from those who came out of Egypt and witnessed the events of Sinai, to those who will enter the land of Canaan, and to their descendants throughout history. It is therefore a message which is important in Israel's sacred Scriptures. If the book of Deuteronomy provides the hermeneutical key for

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[43] For discussion, see Minette de Tillesse (1962: 29-87), Lohfink (1963: 239ff.), Mayes (1979: 35ff.), and Noth (1981: 16).
[44] Lohfink (1963: 30f., 239ff.).

understanding the whole of the Pentateuch,[46] then the message carries great canonical importance.[47]

As in Ex.19:6, the book of Deuteronomy employs the term 'holy' to distinguish Israel from 'all the peoples on the face of the earth' (Dt.7:6; cf. Dt.14:2; 26:18). As previously, this indicates fundamentally that what makes the people of Israel different from any other people is the fact that they are in a special relationship to YHWH, they are his סגלה ('treasured possession'; Dt.7:6; 14:2; 26:18). It is recognised in Deuteronomy as in Exodus that the holiness of Israel is an established fact, as well as a spiritual ambition. By its very existence, Israel is holy: by virtue of the covenant, made at Sinai, by which it is bound to YHWH. The existence of Israel as a holy people is a basic presupposition of everything in the book of Deuteronomy.

Thus the particular laws outlined in Deuteronomy are given to Israel as an indication of the way, as a nation, it was to express this holiness. Israel is commanded to keep the law because it is a holy people; not because it hoped to become one. The detailed regulations are the outworking of this primary identity; they are given as guidelines to enable individual Israelites to live up to their privileged position. They point out the way by which Israel can become, in practical expression, what it already is in theological affirmation. Ex.19:5-6 asserted this fact also; what is new in Deuteronomy is the attempt to set out in detail what this holiness means when applied to the mixture of social, political and religious problems of everyday life. We shall examine the outworking of holiness in Deuteronomy further below.

2.2.3 Israel's election

On the basis of the above synopsis I conclude that Ex.19:6 is not alone in the Pentateuch in linking the theme of election with the quality of holiness. The content of this verse is reflected in the Sinai material which follows it, and it is carefully highlighted in the more mature material of Deuteronomy, with which the Torah concludes.

That the Sinai experience bears defining significance for Israel is attested by the occasions on which it is echoed in the memory and tradition of the people. In the retelling of

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[45] Deuteronomy nowhere exhorts Israel to unity, because it presupposes this unity as a fact; consider, for example, the opening address of Moses to 'all Israel' (Dt.1:1). This title occurs frequently throughout the whole of the Deuteronomic History.

[46] Childs (1979: 224); cf. Mann (1988: 143).

[47] See Clements (1968: 89ff.), Childs (1979: 211ff.), Christensen (1991: *li*).

the story of the events of Sinai in the book of Deuteronomy, the language of election (בחר) comes into its own[48] and, as we have seen, this is firmly associated with the matter of holiness.[49]

Drawing together the material we have examined relating to Ex.19:6 in the Pentateuch, the implications of Israel's status as a 'holy nation' (or 'holy people') may be set out as follows:

(a) The declaration of the people's holiness is, fundamentally, a statement of their relation to God. The statement of Israel as a 'holy nation' or 'holy people' is always accompanied by the preposition ל- ('to' or 'for'), associating them with YHWH.[50] He is the source of their holiness; the name YHWH comes to be synonymous with holiness.

(b) In every instance of the description of Israel as holy, it is accompanied by a concern for obedience to God's covenantal laws. Because they have been declared holy, so they must live in a particular way, by the careful keeping of the Torah. Holiness affects the lifestyle of every individual in Israel; and the Torah touches on every aspect of life. Holiness is demonstrated most especially in those who are made holy as priests.

(c) The declaration of *Israel's* holiness is made, on every occasion, in the context of an awareness of other nations. Israel is marked out from other nations by this special status; it belongs to YHWH in a special way, making it exclusive and demanding absolute loyalty. This is clearly not grounds for ignoring other nations, however. God's concern for Israel in no way suggests his unconcern for other peoples, given that they are frequently mentioned in the context of Israel's status as holy. Yet the relationship is clearly complex and it is presented in various ways, both positively and negatively (cf. Dt.28:10 with 7:1-6).

On the basis of the frequency of the references alone, it is clear that holiness is central to Israel's religious self-understanding. But the foregoing three aspects suggest that holiness is absolutely fundamental for Israel's identity. The notion of holiness determines, firstly, the nature of Israel's relation to God (not to mention the nature of God himself); secondly, the lifestyle of its individuals; and thirdly, its relationship to outsiders. This list is a

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[48] There is a total of just seven instances of the verb בחר (to choose) in the first four books of the Bible (Gen.6:2; 13:11; Ex.17:9; 18:25; Num.16:5, 7; 17:20 [ET17:5]). This compares to 31 instances in the book of Deuteronomy, 30 of which have YHWH as their subject.

[49] Dt.7:6, 14:2, 21; 26:19; 28:9.

[50] This occurs as לי in Ex.19:6; לירוה in Dt.7:6; 14:2, 21; and 26:19; and לו in Dt.28:9.

comprehensive one; holiness touches on every aspect of Israel's identity and life. The particular presentation of these aspects in the canon will now be further examined, relative to the more conventional analysis of holiness which has been established by Pentateuchal source-criticism.

2.3 Holiness in the Pentateuch

I have set out on a canonical study of holiness, a study which contrasts sharply with those who have understood holiness with particular reference to the projected sources in the Pentateuch. Although the 'whole' may be made up of a variety of different parts - Exodus, in particular, is thought to illustrate a tight (yet distinct) interweaving of the projected sources in the Pentateuch - I am keen to elucidate how an understanding of holiness unfolds to the reader of the Hebrew text as it stands. Thus we examine the whole according to those 'parts' observed by the canon, the individual books.

2.3.1 Exodus

I have already argued that there is an inextricable link between Mosaic Yahwism and the notion of holiness. Both emerge simultaneously in the biblical canon; in the Exodus narratives it becomes increasingly clear that קדש is tied up with the name of God as YHWH.[51] Holiness is the central concern of the accounts of the revelation to Moses in Ex.3 and 19. As Muilenburg describes it:[52]

> [In Ex.3] we have personal encounter between Moses and YHWH. Moses may not approach the bush because the land about it is קדש, but the voice which speaks from the bush is YHWH's. The scene depicts a concrete historical experience with a personal holy God. Similarly, in the revelation to Israel at Sinai the holy God speaks to the people out of the midst of the fire, engaging them in particular relationship and calling them to decision. The decalogue (Exod.20:1-17) and the later Torah belong to the same context of holiness. The whole of Exod.19 is a living narrative in which everything is holy, and YHWH's promise that Israel will be a holy nation (גוי קדוש; vs.6) is thus given its appropriate setting, as are the extensive תורות which follow (20:1-23:33; cf. Exod.24, another holy engagement also followed by תורות). Exod.15 is later than the Mosaic age, but it preserves an authentic memory in its remarkable stress upon holiness and its major relationships and activities (vss.11, 13, 16).
>
> YHWH's entrance into a holy compact with a people at Sinai is the *fons et origo* of the life of the holy people (עם קדוש) and the beginning of that movement which continued,

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[51] On the subject of holiness in the book of Exodus prior to chapter 19, see *1.2.1*.
[52] Muilenburg (1962: 620).

> albeit in often confused and broken ways, through the holy wars of the Conquest and the proclamation of the prophets into the NT, where it was remembered, deepened, and granted fresh perspectives.

The material in Ex.19 which follows YHWH's declaration of intention is concerned with preparing the people for an encounter with YHWH:

> And YHWH said to Moses, 'Lo, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you for ever.'
>
> Then Moses told the words of the people to YHWH. And YHWH said to Moses, 'Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments, and be ready by the third day; ... (Ex.19:9-11).

The demand for the people to be *consecrated* (קדשתם)[53] is clearly related to YHWH's imminent visit to Mount Sinai. The need for elaborate preparation had not been anticipated up to now in the narrative, except for a hint with the removal of Moses' shoes (3:5). The terminology creates the connection, between the promise of becoming a 'holy nation' (קדוש) and the demand to 'purify oneself' (קדשתם). In the process of preparation, the more profound connection between the people and the God who has laid claim upon them begins to emerge. Moses receives careful instructions and the people are warned to heed these on the severest of punishments (v.13). Their death is necessary to prevent the people becoming infected by one person's misdeed. An encounter with YHWH, the God who is holy, is not a casual affair.

The whole of chapter 19 acts as preparation for the main event: YHWH's delivery of the law. In 19:5-8 the people expressed themselves ready, only to learn that more was required. Preparations of the whole people of God were executed over a period of two days (vv.10-15), followed by further instructions and preparation on the third day, chiefly regarding the priests (vv.20-25). Those who draw nearer to the presence of YHWH must prepare more.

The point of this preparation emerges from the repetition of phrases. 'Warn... lest they break through' (vv.21, 24), and 'lest YHWH break out upon them' (vv.22, 24). It introduces the dimensions of fear and danger involved with the presence of the holy God:

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[53] There is a difficulty in establishing the intended meaning of this Piel form of the verb. From the context it is clear that Moses did not 'consecrate' the people, but had them prepare themselves. One would expect, then, the Hithpael, as at 19:22.

> The issue at stake is not whether God is a stuffy monarch, who does not think enough honor has been shown to him. This picture is a total misunderstanding. Rather, the warning is given for the sake of the people, who have no experience as yet of the dimensions of divine holiness, and lest warned destroy themselves.[54]

The law which is given at Sinai and the narrative interspersed between the sections of law reveal more about the presence of YHWH among Israel and thus of the meaning of holiness. The vast majority of the laws in Exodus are concerned with the tabernacle, the particular place where God is understood to dwell and travel with Israel after it leaves the mountain. Because it is the holy place where God is present, its furnishings, ministers and offerings must all be protected, restricted and made holy - in the same way as with God's presence on Mount Sinai. The tabernacle represents a smaller, portable version of Mount Sinai - the archetypal meeting place with God, the place where YHWH sanctifies his people.[55] By means of the tabernacle, Israel may hope to recall and rehearse the theophanies of Sinai after they have departed.[56] The parallels between the restrictions and preparations required at Sinai, and those described for the tabernacle, are clear. In this sense, Ex.25-31 and 35-40 represent a development of the instructions given to Moses for encounter with YHWH in Ex.19.[57]

There is a third theophany at Sinai recorded in the book of Exodus (Ex.33:12-33). Just as the second developed aspects of the divine name and the associated notion of holiness from the first (see *1.3.1*), so the third continues in the same vein. It has been called the theologoumenon of the glory[58]. There is no explicit use of קדש in this text; but because there is an encounter with YHWH who is holy, so there is the need for preparation for the event,[59] an element of fear in the face of God's transcendent power and the need for protection;[60] as well as a further revelation of the meaning of YHWH's holiness.

The context of this theophany is instructive for our understanding of holiness. The people have agreed to a covenant with their God (Ex.19:1-8; 24:3-8) and have been given

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[54] Childs (1974: 370).
[55] Cf. Ex.19:3, 6 and Ex.29:43.
[56] Terrien (1978: 14ff.) describes the cult as the place where the memories of past appearances of God are kept alive. The locus of the cult may therefore be understood to represent the locus of the theophanies: Mount Sinai.
[57] This understanding behind the structure of the narrative helps to explain the 'advance' references to priests (before they are formally instituted in Ex.28f.) in Ex.19. See ch.3.
[58] Terrien (1978: ch.3).
[59] Ex.33:5-6, 8, 10; 34:3; 33-4.

instructions by which to live in a manner appropriate to their status. In Ex.32, however, in Moses' absence, they clearly and consciously turn aside from the way YHWH commanded them (32:8) by making their own god, a golden calf, and worshipping it as if it were YHWH (vv.1-6).[61] God's anger 'burns hot against them' (ויחר־אפי בהם) and he tells Moses (who is up on the mountain) that he plans to destroy (ואכלם) them (32:10). When Moses descends, his 'anger burned hot' (ויחר־אף); his reaction is similar to that of YHWH, as if in conscious imitation. Aaron receives blame and is held responsible for 'letting them break loose (פרע), to their shame among their enemies' (32:25). Those who turn back to YHWH - the Levites - are declared fit for the service of YHWH and are blessed, whilst those who do not are put to death.[62]

The telling of this story of Israel's failing before YHWH recalls several aspects of the theophany described in Ex.19. Whether the problem is spatial (trespassing onto holy ground, Ex.19) or legal (transgressing one of the commandments, Ex.32), Israel is in a dangerous position. In both cases, the consequence of not heeding YHWH's instructions is death (19:13; cf. 32:10, 27). In the first, the problem is described as the people 'breaking through' (יהרסו, 19:21) and in the second, the people 'breaking loose' (פרע, 32:25). Both situations are presented as the people crossing the boundaries of holiness. In the first, it is YHWH's holiness; in the second, it is their own holiness ('they have corrupted themselves', 32:7). God's holiness and Israel's holiness are inextricably bound together; thus 'breaking' either results in the same offence, and deserves death. The people are given an opportunity to respond to YHWH again by declaring they are on 'his side' (32:26), and as a result are re-committed to his service and blessed (32:29). The implication is that they are 're-consecrated' to YHWH. If being holy denotes belonging to YHWH, then it necessarily involves a commitment to being on his side. The alternative involves 'their shame among their enemies' (32:25), and thus shame to YHWH.

In Ex.33 these implications are developed further. As a result of their sin, God threatens to withdraw his presence from them, 'lest I consume you, for you are a stiff-

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[60] Ex.33:3-4, 10, 20; 34:10, 30.

[61] This is the implication of Israel's chorus: 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt'.

[62] This text is examined in more detail in *3.2.5* below.

necked people' (33:3). YHWH's holiness demands that Israel be holy; otherwise, they are in danger. There is no compromise. If YHWH withdraws his presence, then holiness is no longer required of the people. Rather than feeling the safety of this alternative, the people are prepared to do anything to maintain his presence among them (33:4-6). So the succeeding narrative responds to the pressing question of this crisis: what kind of relationship can there be, now it has been strained almost to breaking point?

The third theophany reveals YHWH as a God of great mercy, even in the face of his anger. In direct response to Moses' pleading, his priestly intervention in making atonement on their behalf (32:30), and his personal intercession, YHWH proclaims before Moses his name 'YHWH' (33:19; cf. Ex.3:13ff.). Thus we have the 'theologoumenon of the glory' (cf. 33:18) in which God's holiness is made manifest.[63] The circumstances of the event are suggestive of the human potential to find favour before God, i.e. of the potential for a person to demonstrate holiness. Moses is a supreme example.[64] Following the legislation detailing the institution of priests, we are given an illustration here of the archetype. It is Moses who negotiates the restoration of the special relationship between God and Israel in a situation in which it was threatened with destruction.

The words of the self-revelation of YHWH provide the fullest statement about the name and character of God in the whole of the canon. Given the canonical placement of chs.32-34, itself lacking קדש terminology, between 25-31 and 35-40 with extensive קדש terminology, this may be taken as exposition of YHWH's holiness (34:6-7). According to Jewish tradition, there are thirteen attributes revealed here, on the lips of God himself.[65] Associated with the *name* of God, YHWH - and encompassed by his glory and holiness - is the full range of Hebrew vocabulary for mercy and forgiveness, in the midst of an awareness (and experience) of the gravity of sin. The revelation continues with an explanation of YHWH's jealousy (34:13-4), and its corresponding demand for separation and loyalty among those in whom his name dwells. Further laws are spelt out to illustrate the ethical and ritual means by which the people are to live in response to God's holy name. Some of these

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[63] Vriezen (1962: 150) describes glory as 'the radiant power of His Being, as it were the external glorious manifestation of His mysterious holiness'. See also Gammie (1989: 195, cf. 86-7): 'For glory... is but holiness made manifest'. Cf. Snaith (1944: 48-9); Muilenburg (1962: 622); Proksch (1964: I: 88-97); Kaiser (1972: 79) and Wildberger (1991: 266).

[64] The only other person who is said to have found favour in the sight of God is Noah (Gen.6:8).

repeat laws which have already been given;[66] others emphasise the need for Israel's ways to be completely removed from those of other nations (34:11-16). The separation is understood both morally and physically.

This narrative section of Exodus is completed with a description of Moses' descent from the mountain, after forty days and nights:

> And when Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him (34:30).

The description of the people's response to Moses bears resemblance to their response in encounter with YHWH. They are afraid, and they keep their distance. The implication is clear: God's glory is reflected through a human face, through the person who is loyal to 'YHWH's side'; in a word, through the person who is holy. God's purpose in making a covenant with Israel is that the whole nation become holy (Ex.19:6) and reflect the presence and character of YHWH in the way that their leader does.

The book of Exodus continues with further legislation concerning the tabernacle. Whereas Israel should tear down the altars and break the pillars of foreign peoples in their land, 'lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither you go' (34:11-16), so because of their covenant with YHWH, they are to build pillars and altars according to his careful directions (35-39). Israel's worship is to be entirely separate and distinct from that of other peoples. This is followed by narrative describing the completion of the tabernacle (39:32-43; 40:16-33), the consecration of the space and articles within in varying grades of holiness (40:1-11) and the anointing of the priests (40:12-15). The book ends with a description of the glory of YHWH descending visibly in a cloud and filling the tent of meeting and the tabernacle, in the sight of all Israel. The presence of God travels with Israel, and his holiness is evident to and understood by all.

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[65] Cf. Jacob (1992: 984f.).
[66] No molten gods (34:17; cf. 20:3-6); the Sabbath (34:21; cf. 20:8-11).

2.3.2 Leviticus

Leviticus presents itself as a self-conscious and specialised commentary on the sacred.[67] Like Exodus, it contains both narrative and law. Whilst it is the latter which dominates,[68] the legislation is represented as the revelation of YHWH to Moses at Sinai,[69] i.e. the significance of the material derives from its narrative context.[70] The book forms the defining document for Israel's cult, setting out the rules by which YHWH may be appropriately worshipped and through which the significance of the past encounters may be maintained in the on-going experience of the people. Essentially, this is presented in terms of maintaining the sacred order and relating Israel to it.[71] On the basis of the book of Exodus the sacred order may be understood to include the mountain of God at Sinai, the portable sanctuary and tabernacle, the priestly ministers of God who have been ordained, and the holy encounters with YHWH requiring careful preparation. All of them stem directly from God's holiness.[72] In Leviticus, however, it is the sanctuary, mediated to the people by the priests, which receives emphasis as the locus of blessing above all.[73]

The book of Leviticus continues the narrative sequence that began with YHWH's command in Ex.25:8, 'Let them build me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst'. This command was partially fulfilled at the end of Exodus when the 'glory of YHWH filled the tabernacle' (40:34). But while the sacred space of worship was thereby legitimated, the time was not. In other words, the activities that take place in the sanctuary, and the people who perform them, were yet to be consecrated. The institution of priests is outlined in Ex.28-9 but does not take place until Lev.8-9. Proper sacrificial procedures are spelled out in Lev.1-7 and the first sacrifices take place in Lev.8-9. Thus chapters 8-9 constitute the climactic moment at which the entire liturgical structure and activity of the people is consummated. Once again the 'glory of YHWH' appears, and now fire comes from YHWH and consumes the first sacrifice (9:23-4). Just as the descent of the divine presence consecrated the

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[67] Those scholars who have attempted a systematic theology of the cult have found holiness to be the central organising concept. Cf. Douglas (1966), Jenson (1992), Houston (1993).
[68] Only Lev.8-10 (and 24:10-23) contain any action that qualifies as narrative in the ordinary sense.
[69] Cf. Lev.1:1 and 27:34.
[70] Mann (1988: 116) points out that cultic regulations from other Near Eastern sources do not appear in a narrative context, nor are they represented as divine commands; cf. *ANET*: 325-6, 331-53.
[71] Childs (1962: 68).
[72] Cf. Lev.11:44. 'Be holy, for I am holy' is an oft-repeated phrase: see Lev.11:45; 19:2; 20:7, 26.
[73] Mann (1988: 123) describes the sanctuary and priesthood as 'the sacerdotal view of the "holy nation" in Leviticus'.

tabernacle, now it consecrates the ritual of sacrifice and those who perform it. This answers the problem of the golden calf episode (Ex.32-4) in which sinful people, including Aaron the priest, offered unauthorised sacrifice. The tension whereby the holy God can dwell in the midst of a sinful people is resolved through the securing of atonement.[74] There is a way by which the *un*holy may be remedied.

The juxtaposition of chs.9 and 10 make clear the ambivalent character of the divine presence, however. Atonement provides no security, even for priests, against false practice or presumption on God's holiness, as seen in the experience of Nadab and Abihu (10:1-2). There follows a key statement:

> "This is what YHWH has said, 'I will show myself holy among those who are near me, and before all the people I will be glorified'" (Lev.10:3).

Medieval exegetes understood by this that those who serve God more endanger themselves more.[75] There is a clear implication that YHWH will indeed show his holiness; he does so through the devouring of Nadab and Abihu by fire; and he will do so, by a display of glory.[76] This recalls the relationship of holiness to glory . YHWH's holiness is to be feared; it is a matter not to be taken lightly. This is a vivid illustration of the importance of the foregoing cultic legislation in Lev.1-9 which provides a detailed system of protection from the associated dangers.[77]

The presence of the holy God in their midst means that any departure from the people's consecrated state will endanger their continued existence, because the holiness of God cannot coexist with what is unholy, what is impure or "unclean". A further key text develops this aspect:

> ...it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations. You are to distinguish between the holy (הקדש) and the common (החל), and between the unclean (הטמא) and the clean (הטהור); and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes which YHWH has spoken to them by Moses (Lev.10:9b-11).

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[74] Cf. Mann (1988: 114f.).

[75] Attributed to Abravanel and quoted by Milgrom (1991: 603).

[76] The relationship between holiness and glory, discussed above, is reinforced here. 'It has been well said that God's "holiness is his hidden, concealed glory... But his glory is his holiness revealed" (Herntrich [and Otto 1972: 79], quoted by Wenham [1979: 156].

[77] Note how aspects of holiness established from Exodus (see *2.3.1* above) are confirmed by this episode: firstly, the relationship of glory to the manifestation of holiness; secondly the intention of holiness for all the people; and thirdly, the need for protection (cf. Ex.19:21-4).

Here the notion of systematised separation is articulated, according to which the Priestly view of holiness is popularly characterised.[78] This process of separation is the task of the priest, and the way in which it is to be carried out is specified in the legislation which follows, Lev.11-16. Holiness demands that all things be classified. The system of classification can be analysed into the temporal, spatial, personal and ritual dimensions, within which everything is graded according to a level of holiness, from extreme sanctity to extreme uncleanness.[79] We noted elements of this grading in Exodus also but they are more marked and, indeed, fixed in Leviticus.[80]

This 'holiness spectrum' brings about an understanding of holiness in material, physical terms. As Douglas says of the dietary laws, they are

> like signs which at every turn inspired meditation on the oneness, purity and completeness of God. By rules of avoidance holiness was given a physical expression in every encounter with the animal kingdom and at every meal.[81]

This physical expression is no denial of the requirement of holiness for a moral separation as specified in parts of Exodus; this is not the focus of interest here. The primary contribution of Leviticus 1-16 lies in a visible, realised, literal separation, so that those 'things' (people, places, times and activities) which belong to God may conform to his character, and thus be guarded, protected and esteemed. There is no interest here in other people, those outside the sphere of YHWH's holy activity with Israel. The greatest concern is to protect YHWH's dwelling place; the greatest threat of all is that impurity will penetrate the sanctuary and incur the wrath of YHWH, and his abandonment.

The implication of this separation is the same as we have noted elsewhere: those things declared 'holy' are understood to belong to the sphere of God's being or activity; and this

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[78] According to Jenson (1992: 43-44), this involves a binary pairing between 'holy' and 'common', though these do not form a structural opposition, as with 'unclean' and 'clean'. Rather, קדש has a linguistic and theological stress which it shares with טמא ('unclean'); it is between these two words, which exist in the strongest contrast, that the 'holiness spectrum' may be extrapolated. Jenson represents this spectrum:

קדש קדשם	קדש	טהר	טמא	טמא
very holy	holy	clean	unclean	very unclean

[79] See especially Jenson (1992: 37); also Douglas (1966: 53); Wenham (1979: 177).

[80] The 'fixed' nature of the states on the graded spectrum has led Terrien (1982: 99-108) to call this holiness 'static' (as compared to the prophetic tradition where he describes holiness as dynamic and temporally defined).

[81] 1966: 57.

sphere is solely cultic. The term corresponds to a claim of ownership, a statement of close relationship or of proximity to God's cultic presence. Near the end of the chapter on dietary restrictions, YHWH asserts the motivation for obedience in terms of the exodus story, "For I am YHWH, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy" (11:45).

In Lev.17-26 the phrase 'Be holy, as I am holy' is taken up repeatedly, like a refrain.[82] These chapters display a linguistic and stylistic uniqueness, with a particular emphasis on the holiness of God, such that they are commonly known as the 'Holiness Code'.[83] Here the emphasis on the realm of ritual earlier in Leviticus is broadened to include issues of social organisation and agricultural life. Thus laws concerning the temple and sacrifice are combined with social rules and agricultural practices, such that the essence of holiness comes to be seen as the perfection attained through the fulfilment of God's commandments in all walks of life.

Lev.19 is central for presenting this 'inclusive holiness'.[84] It opens with the address to the entire community of Israel, 'You shall be holy; for I, YHWH your God am holy'. This verse serves as the category that includes a large variety of detailed ordinances, covering human activity in the social realm as well as in the cultic. It is clear that there is an intimate connection between justice and morality and the activity of priests in the temple. Israel is called to observe the entire range of the commandments, and so to draw near to God and attain holiness. This connection undermines the over-simple contrast which is sometimes set up between holiness in priestly and prophetic traditions, between cultic and moral/ethical demands, whereby the priestly notion of holiness focuses on God's transcendence while only the prophetic is relational.[85] As Milgrom states, '[T]he emulation of God's holiness demands following the ethics associated with his nature.'[86]

The understanding of holiness which we have established through Leviticus so far, of the nation of Israel as a community called to express holiness through their cultic and social life by means of separation, finds clear expression in the laws concerning relations between

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[82] 19:2; 20:7, 26; see also 21:8; 22:32-3.
[83] After Klostermann (1893: 368-418). They are usually taken to form an early collection edited by the Priestly school, though Knohl (1995:1ff.) suggests the reverse relationship.
[84] Knohl (1995:180f.)
[85] Cf. Buber (1960: 129); Eichrodt (1961: I: 278).
[86] 1963: 293.

Israel and the nations. Israel is demanded to separate itself from the surrounding nations and their ways: 'You shall not walk in the customs of the nation which I am casting out before you.... You shall be holy to me; for I, YHWH am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine' (Lev.20:23a, 26). Prohibitions against the customs of the nations and their cult are juxtaposed and directly related to Israel's call to be holy (20:7);[87] for these acts defile the individuals, the entire people, the land and the sanctuary.[88] The essential distinction between the Israelite sphere of holiness and the idolatrous sphere of impurity of other nations is not a racial one, for the admonitions also emphasise the subjection of the stranger to the same commands (18:26; 20:2) and the granting of the alien equal cultic and judicial status with natives of Israel (19:34).[89] Nor is the distinction from other nations geographical, since the separation from the ways of others includes particularly reference to the present inhabitants of the land of Canaan (20:22-6; cf. ch.18). Rather, the requirement is for absolute loyalty to YHWH, which demands a literal separation *to* him.

During the course of the book of Leviticus, the concept of holiness becomes ever more closely tied up with the name of YHWH. He is holiness. Thus compare the commonly recurring phrase 'You shall be holy, for I, YHWH your God, am holy' (Lev.19:2; 20:26) with 20:7 where it is enough to say 'Be holy; for I am YHWH your God'. 'I am YHWH' becomes tantamount to saying 'I am holy'. In the process by which transitions take place within the holiness spectrum, by which things move (progressively) between grades to realise the full sacred order, it is always God who ultimately consecrates or sanctifies (Piel or Hiphil of קדש), even though the transition may be prescribed through ritual means.

A final aspect concerning the development of holiness in Leviticus relates to the land. Although the expression 'holy land' does not occur in Leviticus, the theology of holiness imbues its entire understanding of land. In the descriptions of the land of Canaan, land is personified: it may be defiled and 'vomit out' its inhabitants. This is developed further in chs.25-6. As with the people, the sanctity of the land is not intrinsic, but derives from the

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[87] Thus Weinfeld (1961: 1-8) is misplaced in identifying a distinction between 'the holiness of D, which expresses mainly national separateness and which demands isolation from the nations and their customs... (Dt.7:6) and the holiness of the Priestly Book, which extends only to the ritual sphere (Lev.11:43; 20:26) and is indifferent to the prohibitions against foreign worship and customs of the nations (Lev.26:1; 18:1-5).'

[88] Lev.18:24-30; 19:31; 20:3.

[89] This treatment of the aliens as members of the household corresponds with the Covenant Code in Exodus, with its concern to protect them from oppression (cf. Ex.20:10; 22:21).

relationship rendered by this narrative. Just as the people represent God's new community on earth conforming to the order of nature and the pattern of rest established by the creator,[90] so must the land be allowed its sabbath to conform to this pattern as well. 'For the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me' (25:23).

The contingency of the people's relationship to the land becomes a part of the contingency of all things in terms of blessing and curse in ch.26. We have already seen indications that the sacerdotal view of the 'holy nation' in Leviticus understands the sanctuary as the locus of blessing, mediated to the people by the priests. Thus at the climactic consecration of the sacrificial altar and the priests (9:22-4), the blessing pronounced on the people by Aaron and Moses has a prominent role. However, seen in the larger context of the whole book, the sanctuary and the priests are not an automatic or unconditional source of divine blessing; rather, that blessing - or its opposite, the curse - is determined by obedience or disobedience within the covenant relationship between YHWH and his people.

Holiness, despite being ordered and 'organised' in the book of Leviticus, is not domesticated. Just as in Exodus, the concern behind the ordering is to protect holy things, in order to protect Israel from danger. For holiness is associated with God's absolute power and his radiant glory, making it at once attractive and repellent.

By implication, given that holiness is an attribute - the attribute - of the Godhead, the concern for the protection of holiness in Leviticus is also a concern to protect YHWH. Not that Israel may spoil God, but that Israel has been invested by YHWH with his reputation; they have been made responsible for his name. This is an aspect which receives further development later in the canon.[91] In the meantime, the message of Leviticus is both cultic and ethical, urging faithfulness on the principle of *imitatio dei*:

> You shall be holy to me; for I, YHWH, am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine (Lev.20:26)

We may summarise the principles of holiness according to the presentation of Leviticus as follows:

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[90] Ex.20:8-11; 31:12-17; 35:1-3; see *2.3.1* above.
[91] See below ch.4 on Isaiah and especially ch.5 on Ezekiel.

(a) The holiness of YHWH is most intimately associated with the worshipping community; thus the sanctuary is central for the life of the holy people.
(b) Holiness is seen primarily in material physical terms. All things, therefore, are *ordered* according to their grade of holiness for the sacred community. This includes the ordering of persons within the people: priests have a special sanctity for Israel (21:7).[92]
(c) Leviticus offers not only a way in which holiness may be followed but also a way by which 'unholiness' may be remedied. It holds before Israel the command, 'You must be holy', but also the promise, 'atonement shall be made for you' (16:30). The new way of holiness now includes a way out of sin.[93] A corollary of this feature is that there is no one-time act in which God endows Israel with permanent holiness.[94]

At the same time asdeveloping a particular perspective, the book of Leviticus assumes many of the features of holiness which we identified in the book of Exodus:
(a) An issue from Ex.19:12-3 is made central to the book of Leviticus (cf. Lev.10:1-7): the ultimate danger inherent in the presence of holiness - the presence of YHWH - among the people. Holiness cannot bear what is unholy, either by defilement, or by unauthorised encroachment on the divine sphere. In such a confrontation, either the holy one must withdraw, or the *un*holy must die. This concern is developed further in Num.16-18.[95]
(b) Israel's holiness is dependent on YHWH's holiness; they live out their holiness on the principle of *imitatio dei*, 'be holy as I am holy'. This is the foundation, according to which the unique close covenant relationship, and faithfulness to it, is a prerequisite.
(c) Although holiness may be graded, and certain things (and people) are ordered on a holiness spectrum to a lesser or greater extent, God's holiness is intended for all. There is no justification of an élite, even in the 'priestly' narratives.

2.3.3 Numbers

The distinct focus of the book of Numbers is evident in the opening verses. As in Leviticus, YHWH speaks to Moses from the tent of meeting, but the concern is not with cultic offerings. YHWH's order is for a draft registration of 'all in Israel who are able to go forth

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[92] See further below, *3.2.7*.
[93] Note also the synchronic movement of human repentance and divine forgiveness in 26:40-45 and its significance for the whole of Leviticus.
[94] Cf. Knohl (1995: 183).
[95] See *2.3.4* below.

to war' (1:3; cf. 1:20, 22, etc.). Whereas Exodus and Leviticus focused on Israel as a congregation governed by the sanctifying presence of YHWH, Numbers focuses on Israel as a military force marching behind YHWH as vanguard. The primary purpose of Num.1-9 is the mobilisation of this force for the departure from Sinai in Num.10. The precise description of this departure in 10:11-13 marks a turning point in the narrative, around which other more disparate material is gathered.

Numbers does, however, bear many connections with Exodus and Leviticus. It shares similar cultic regulations and concerns; it presents stories of controversy following the departure from Sinai which echo those found in Exodus prior to arrival at Sinai, thus framing the Sinai narrative in between (Ex.19-Num.10),[96] and it develops the relation of blessing and curse introduced in Lev.26.

Both the camp and the march of the army bear the dimension of holiness, reflecting the centrality of the divine presence in the tabernacle and the ordering of the people around it. The divine presence also provides military escort and command:

> So it was continually; the cloud covered [the tabernacle] by day, and the appearance of fire by night. And whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tent, after that the people of Israel set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the people of Israel encamped (9:16-17).

If there had been any question that YHWH belonged only to 'the mountain of God', it is now negated. YHWH will be with his people as protector and guide. The 'holy nation' is now the army of YHWH, hundreds of thousands strong, marching through the wilderness. It is a community completely ordered by the divine will and responsive to its human leadership, for it begins its march 'at the command of YHWH by Moses' (10:13).

The role of Moses becomes crucial. Immediately after setting out, 'the people complained in the hearing of YHWH about their misfortune' (11:1). There follows divine judgement. But Moses intervenes, and through his intercessory prayer he prevents YHWH's fiery wrath from enveloping the entire camp, just as at Sinai (Ex.32-4). This brief account functions as a paradigm for the stories that follow: Israel complains, Moses intervenes, YHWH's care is elicited, or his righteous indignation curtailed. Ch.11 and the following

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[96] Manna and quail, administrative assistants (Ex.16; 18; Num.11); water from a rock (Ex.17:1-7; Num.20:1-13).

chapters go on to develop further the questions surrounding divine presence and human leadership.

In Num.13 there is another incident which recalls the golden calf of Ex.32: again, the seriousness of Israel's disobedience leads to the threat of total destruction. The people doubt YHWH, his identity and his saving presence among them. The punishment in Num.14 is more severe than in Ex.32, representing a crescendo of repeated rebellions and an attempt to reverse completely YHWH's earlier act of liberation. When the people are informed of their fate, they suddenly decide that a confession of sin will turn them into conquerors (14:40). Moses warns them that precisely what they unjustifiably *feared* was the case before, *is* the case now, 'YHWH is not among you... YHWH will not be with you' (14:42-3). Nevertheless they set out, without the ark (representing the divine presence) or Moses (their legitimate human leader). The result is defeat.

Num.15 follows with legislation on sacrifice for life in the land (15:2, 18), as if to restore perspective. Here, concluding the reminders of the offer of atonement for those who sin, is the reminder of Israel's calling and of God's identity:

> So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. I am YHWH your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am YHWH your God (Num.15:40-1).

To remind them of God's commandments and their holiness, the people are to wear tassels with a cord of blue on the corners of their garments (15:38-9), a symbol that 'all of Israel is enjoined to become a nation of priests'.[97] Reinforced by the succeeding narrative which accuses Moses, 'You have gone too far! For all the congregation are holy...' (16:3), this passages underlines how the holy life is the task and mission of the entire community; so all Israel must wear this holy sign at all times.

Num.16-20 contain a variety of complex and diverse material which form a thematic homogeneity shaped around the recurrent catchwords קרב ('to draw near'),[98] קדש ('holy' or 'sanctify'),[99] בחר ('to choose')[100] and מות ('to die/put to death').[101] The central themes of the unit have been identified as holiness and death.[102]

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[97] Milgrom (1990: 414). See further *3.2.8*.
[98] 16:5, 9, 10, 40; 17:13; 18:3, 4, 7, 22.
[99] 16:3, 5, 7, 37, 38; 18:9, 10, 32; 20:12, 13.
[100] 16:5, 7; 17:5.

In Num.16, general complaints about Moses' leadership are subsumed under the more specific topic of Moses' (and Aaron's) relationship to the priesthood, and eventually, their relationship to the holy God of Israel (see *3.2.8* below). The narrative develops an issue which was central to Leviticus, that of the dangers of holiness. There is an intrinsic connection between holiness and death, for in a confrontation of holiness with what is unholy, either the holy one must withdraw or the unholy must die. In Num.16-8, it is the latter alternative that is taken (16:31-5; cf. 17:12-3; 18:3, 7, 32).

The position of Num.19 reinforces this connection. Since the priests emerge in Num.16-8 as the 'inner circle' who prevent the congregation from encroaching on the realm of the holy and thus from inviting death, then it is appropriate to find legislation in which the priests are the manufacturers of a substance that counteracts the effects of contact with the dead.[103] This is particularly the case if, as some suggest, death is to be understood as the ultimate form of defilement and thus the extreme opposite of holiness.[104]

The final incident within this pericope, Num.20:1-13, ends the unit with a bitter irony. Here Moses and Aaron are at fault because they disobey YHWH's order to *speak* to the rock for water, not *strike* it. Moses, entrusted with the unique responsibility of mediating the divine will directly, fails to execute YHWH's command to the letter and thus meets with punishment, the verdict of death outside the land of promise. The initial challenge of the rebels to Moses and Aaron in 16:3 ('...all the congregation are holy... why then do you exalt yourselves?') leads to their own humiliation and death because the holy ones (16:5, 7) failed to sanctify *the* Holy One (20:12-3).

There follow in the book of Numbers narratives which continue the Pentateuchal theme of blessing and curse, 20:14-25:18. This is posed sharply in the person of Balaam, a Mesopotamian brought by the enemy, Moab, of whom Balak says 'he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed' (22:6), for this forms a challenge to the blessing that the reader knows to reside with Israel. But, as it turns out, the pagan sorcerer Balaam comes to act as a prophet for YHWH. Thus the question posed by the text is no longer, 'Will Israel be blessed or cursed?' but, 'What is the nature of the blessing that is Israel's, and

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[101] 16:13, 29, 41, 48; 17:10, 13; 18:3, 7, 22, 32; 19:11, 13, 14, 16, 18; 20:1, 3, 4.
[102] Cf. Mann (1987: 181-90).
[103] Mann (1987: 185).
[104] Cf. Mann (1987: 185 n.30)

what is to happen to Israel's enemy, Moab?' The story clearly illustrates and confirms the blessing originally promised to Abraham and his offspring (Gen.12:3). Given that Edom (Num.20:14-21) and Moab (Num.22-24) have both proved to be inimical to Israel, the people blessed by YHWH, they have brought upon themselves the curse. They have refused to seek their own blessing through the blessing placed on Abraham, in ironic contrast to Balaam who echoes the ancestral blessing and wishes it upon himself (Num.23:10; cf. Gen.13:16; 28:14).

This story also illustrates once again the nature of God's blessing to Israel - a gift which is completely unmerited - for Israel, in the plains of Moab, is unaware of what has happened; they are blessed without even knowing the danger of the curse. Here is another irony, turning on the contrast between this blessing YHWH has pronounced on Israel, and the curse the people bring down upon themselves when they confront the Moabites in Num.25. When YHWH was confronted with the Moabites, he turned their curse into a blessing on the victim and a curse on the culprit. When the Israelites are confronted with the Moabites, they turn their own blessing into a curse:

> When Israel dwelt in Shittim the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods... So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor (Num.25:1-3a)

Thus the explicit warnings of the covenant and cultic laws regarding relations with other peoples (Ex.34:12, 15-16; Lev.18:3; 20:24, 26) have been disregarded and the holy nation has become defiled by participation in foreign 'abominations' (cf. Lev.18). So 'the anger of YHWH was kindled against Israel' (Num.25:3) and the result is death by plague. Unknowingly redeemed from the curse of the Moabites that would have brought defeat and death, Israel mixes with the Moabites and brings on the curse of the covenant. The greatest threat to Israel is not the armies of the peoples but their religion and culture; for Israel's call to be a holy nation is above all a call to be faithful to divine holiness, not to national success.

The primary concern of Num.26-36 involves the danger Israel's past behaviour - canonically construed, from the incident of the golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai, to the incident of Baal Peor at the door to the promised land - poses for the possession of the land by the next generation. The covenant people have continually breached the covenant, to the point where they have invoked YHWH's curse. It is for this reason that the rest of the

Pentateuchal narrative - from Num.26 to the end of Deuteronomy - portrays the people as if frozen in space and time, encamped 'in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho' (36:13). It is this Israel of the broken covenant who must now be reassessed, recommissioned for the task of entering the land and, above all, instructed in how to go into the land which YHWH swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That way is not simply geographical; as Deuteronomy stresses, it is theological: the way of the Torah.

We have followed the book of Numbers as it develops the concerns of holiness in piecemeal, narrative fashion. Both ethical and cultic concerns are brought to bear on the way Israel proceeds in the camp and on the march, the way the divine presence interacts with human leadership, and the responsibilities of all the community for holiness. The consequence of unholy behaviour is serious, whether for those who challenge the separation of priests to God or those who transgress the separation of Israel from other nations. An understanding of the dangers of holiness is developed through the theme of blessing and curse. Israel has the opportunity to choose from these alternatives, an opportunity which is presented very directly in the succeeding narrative.

2.3.4 Deuteronomy

Dt.1-4 provides a context and an introduction for what follows in the book of Deuteronomy. YHWH gives to Moses a speech in the plains of Moab, in order that Moses might explain the law to Israel (1:5). Moses begins with an historical review, so that in the light of their experience of both judgement and mercy, Israel might learn from the lessons of the past so as better to obey the commandments of God and take full possession of the land and its blessing. That these stories are *re*told speaks of their importance for Israel's identity and of the self-consciousness with which the authors worked as interpreters of the Sinai traditions. (It is this *re*-interpretation of the Sinai accounts on which we will focus.) Thus Deuteronomy provides both a conclusion to and a commentary on the Pentateuchal narrative, in the guise of Moses' recitation of events and laws, as if he is giving a farewell address.[105] It contrasts, therefore, with Leviticus, a soliloquy in which YHWH is the speaker throughout.[106]

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[105] McBride (1973: 288).

[106] The phrase 'YHWH said to Moses' occurs repeatedly throughout Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. Except at the end of the book (Dt.31:16-21, 32:48-52; 34:4), YHWH never speaks directly in Deuteronomy.

In between the story of Kadesh and the story of Horeb, Moses recounts Israel's passage through the peoples (Dt.2-3; cf. Num.20:14-25:18; 32). Close comparison with the accounts in Numbers reveals some striking differences; yet the underlying themes, of blessing and curse, are the same. In Deuteronomy the material has been subjected to a systematic interpretation, upholding YHWH's beneficent attitude and promises to those descendants of Abraham outside the covenant - the Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites. They too possess a specific geographical territory as a divine gift (2:5, 9, 19). There are now, in effect, four promised lands, each a fulfilment of the promise to Abram of blessing. Even though Israel may be the only covenant people of God, the 'kingdom of YHWH' is not geographically limited to Israel's land. All humanity and all the earth belong to YHWH (cf. Dt.32:8-9; Ex.19:5), thus it is YHWH who ultimately establishes the boundaries. At the same time, there are those, such as Sihon and Og (2:24-3:11), who unknowingly seek a curse because of their hostility to the chosen people.

Dt.5-11 present an extended homiletical address which again reviews the Sinai stories, each time focusing on an appeal for new commitment to the covenant. Events are told in such as way as to give them a particular interpretation and significance. Firstly, it is stressed that since the people saw no form in YHWH's self-revelation, they should make no form or physical representation; the only way to re-present the reality of YHWH is to recite his words and obey them (4:12; cf. 4:23; 5:8-10). Secondly, at the height of the theophany, there is amplification of the appointment of Moses as mediator (5:27-31), accentuating his authority and authenticating the 'commandments, statutes, and ordinances' (5:31) which follow in the rest of the book (Dt.6-26). Thirdly, emphasis is placed on the term ברית, 'covenant'.[107] This is used as an 'umbrella' term, referring to the whole of the Sinai account in Ex.19-20. God, for his part, has made Israel 'a people of his own possession' (4:20); Israel's part is to perform the commandments (4:13; 5:1; 7:11). The only response to YHWH, the God who is a devouring fire, a jealous God, a great and terrible God (4:24; 7:21; cf. 6:15; Ex.34:14) is that of undivided loyalty. This is the heart of the covenant, the bedrock of Israel's responsibility to YHWH:

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[107] Cf. 4:13, 23, 31; 5:2, 3; 7:2, 9, 12; 8:18;... The term is rare in Exodus and Leviticus, where it is often thought to be a product of Deuteronomic editing.

> 'Hear, O Israel:... you shall love YHWH your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might' (6:4-5).

With climactic progression, the Shema emphasises that the total person (and the total community) must pledge its allegiance to YHWH and no other. This exclusive demand is so important that the words must be communicated constantly day and night, bound on each forehead and written on every doorpost and city gate (6:6-9). It is a call to love which is founded on God's love. Moses explains that YHWH's loyalty to Israel is not because they are more in number (7:7) or more righteous... (9:4f.) than other peoples. He has chosen them out of love (7:8).

The nature of absolute allegiance to YHWH is explored in Dt.7-9 in three different situations. Firstly, absolute loyalty is expressed through absolute separation. Restrictions regarding relations with other peoples and with their religious practices are emphasised.[108] Intermarriage is prohibited because it leads to unfaithfulness (7:3). Deuteronomy develops this further than Exodus and Leviticus, through the language of חרם, ('holy war', 7:2). The context suggests this term in not to be interpreted literally, as the destruction of other peoples (the command not to intermarry would hardly be necessary!), but metaphorically. The destruction refers not to the people but to their religious objects (7:5). The principle of חרם is to be taken here as a metaphor for undivided loyalty and obedience.[109]

Secondly, loyalty is developed in Dt.8 as Israel is warned against the presumption of self-sufficiency, as if the land and all its rich blessings were a result of human achievement alone. Israel should live in dependence on God, just as when hungry in the wilderness. In the third case, the Israelites are warned against the assumption that their imminent victory over the Canaanites will be a sign of their relative 'righteousness' (9:4), by a reminder of their unrighteousness and near-destruction in the story of the golden calf. Whereas it was Moses' intervention which rescued them then, the context clearly implies it will be through Moses'

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[108] Note that Deuteronomy responds to the גר ('resident alien') quite differently to Leviticus and Numbers The latter texts imposed the same regulations as on Israelites; in Deuteronomy the laws of Torah apply only to members of the Israelite nation by blood and race. The resident alien has no such obligations. Weinfeld (1972:229-30) argues that this is because it is the *people* who are designated holy in Deuteronomy, not the land.

[109] Cf. the article by Moberly, 'Towards an interpretation of the Shema' in the forthcoming Festschrift for B.S.Childs.

testament (i.e. following the law) that they can be rescued in the future. The injunction to 'remember' is an important one throughout Deuteronomy.[110]

Dt.12-26 focus on this expression of loyalty once Israel enters the land (12:1; 18:9; 19:1ff.). It is clear that these central chapters, the Book of the Covenant, have a complex literary development - Dt.17, for example, reflects later institutions - yet they are here carefully ordered and set within the context of the Sinai call to holiness and covenant faithfulness.[111] Relative to previous legal material in the Pentateuch, recognition is made of the new historical framework (e.g. 12:8); some laws are adjusted appropriately[112] and others are added to regulate future occurrences.[113] The concern for the purity of Israel's worship becomes a concern for the unity of Israel's worship at a central sanctuary, which becomes a major force within the book.[114] The effect is to 'legitimate the principle of change within the law - God's will is not a lifeless statute - but at the same time to subordinate all the various forces at work in the historical development to one theological category.'[115] It is with this theological category, reminiscent of an exposition of Ex.19:5-6, that the laws and the covenant agreement are completed:

> You have declared this day concerning YHWH that he is your God, and that you will walk in his ways, and keep his statutes and his commandments and his ordinances, and will obey his voice; and YHWH has declared this day concerning you that you are a people for his own possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments, that he will set you high above all nations that he has made, in praise and in fame and in honour, and that you shall be a people holy to YHWH your God, as he has spoken (Dt.26:17-19).

The blessing-curse sequence, reminiscent of Lev.26, recurs in Dt.26 and 28, culminating in Moses' setting forth obedience to the divine law in terms of life and death, blessing and curse (30:15-20). In 29:10ff. Moses re-establishes the covenant with Israel in Moab; not just with the current ('second') generation, but with all future generations as well (29:14). By making every generation analogous to the generation at Sinai, the historical

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[110] E.g., 'Remember that you were a slave in Egypt' (5:15; 15:15; 24:18, 22; cf. 10:19).
[111] Cf. 14:2, 21; 17:2; 26:17-19.
[112] For example, the tithe law (14:24ff.) and the slaughtering laws (12:20ff).
[113] E.g., 13:1; 17:18.
[114] Cf. Childs (1979: 218f.).
[115] Childs (1979: 218).

qualities of the people of God recede before an ideal of faith. God has chosen (בחר) his people; so Moses urges the people to *choose* (בחר) life.[116]

The final chapters of Deuteronomy, 31-34, represent a more miscellaneous collection of material which shifts from Moses' sermon to his arrangements for the succeeding generation, even for future disobedience (31) and reassurance (32). The final note in Moses' formal blessing of the tribes in Dt.33 is that of God's ultimate purpose, which overrides Israel's behaviour and subordinates the Mosaic legislation to the final realisation of God's will. In Dt.34 the person of Moses dies; but his deeds live on, recorded in his law.

In the book of Deuteronomy as a whole we have seen, how Israel's election, holiness, reputation and distinctiveness among the nations are bound up for each and every person with the keeping of the commandments. The final book of the Pentateuch develops each of these aspects from the material which has gone before, reinterpreting the 'original' accounts of the Sinai events for a different generation and context. As seen most clearly in Dt.26:16-19, the call to holiness, in response to God's covenant with Israel, is the abiding perspective from which this reinterpretation takes place.

It is noteworthy, however, that Deuteronomy does not directly describe this call in terms of the principle of *imitatio dei*. Whereas Leviticus urged Israel 'to be holy as I am holy', in the book of Deuteronomy (where it is Moses speaking) he does not call the divine or the divine name 'holy'. Moses does urge Israel to imitate God - for example, Israel is to love the widow, the orphan and the sojourner because God loves them (10:18-19) - but he does not express this with regard to the term קדש. It is for this reason that we may concur with Gammie, who declares that '...the authors of this book evolved one of the most complex and impressive theologies of holiness to be found in the Old Testament.' [117]

Rather, in Deuteronomy Moses declares Israel to be 'a people holy to YHWH your God' (14:2, 21). God sanctified Israel and chose them from among the nations to be his, to be the place for his name to dwell. It is on the basis of this declaration that they are expected, and urged continually, to keep the commandments, that they may be 'set high

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[116] The term בחר occurs thirty times in Deuteronomy. YHWH is the subject on every occasion except here, at 30:19.

[117] '...This theology is at once prophetic, priestly and, to an extent, sapiential' (Gammie [1989: 106-7]).

above the nations that he has made, in praise and in fame and in honour' (26:19). This is a part of God's blessing which is described more fully in Dt.28:1-10:

> "And if you obey the voice of YHWH your God, being careful to do all his commandments which I command you this day, YHWH your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you... YHWH will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of YHWH your God, and walk in his ways. And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of YHWH, and they shall be afraid of you.

2.4 Concluding remarks

2.4.1 Making sense of the whole

Through an exploration of holiness and, where appropriate, its associated themes of election, priesthood, blessing, glory, belonging, and other nations, we have found a certain narrative integrity in the Pentateuch, according to which the covenant which is instituted at Ex.19:1-8 is developed in the succeeding narratives and laws, and brought to a conclusion with the death of Moses in Deuteronomy. The particular canonical shape of this material has been significant for discovering the process by which Israel's defining moment, when declared a priestly kingdom and a holy nation, is understood in relation to the holiness of YHWH, and what this declaration means for the life of the people.

We have noted certain variations in the way the concerns are perceived and presented. In chapter 1 we discussed the relationship between the two clauses of Ex.19:5-6 and the nature of the 'If' with which it begins. If one were ever tempted to understand it in terms of simple cause and effect ('If you keep... then you will be...'),[118] then the 'Priestly' material might be seen to endorse this view. But one would find it refuted by Deuteronomy; here the relationship is reversed. Some scholars have insisted on seeing a sharp distinction between the position of 'D', in which the holiness of Israel is viewed as an unconditional inherent quality deriving from divine election, and the position of 'P' (particularly in the Holiness Code) which supposedly views the holiness of the community not as a given condition but as a conditional goal dependent on the observance of the commandments.[119]

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[118] Cf. *1.5.2* above.

[119] E.g., Weinfeld, 'Holiness in the Priestly view is a conditon that can be secured only be constant physical purification and sanctification, whereas in Deuteronomy it is the effect of a unique act of God - the divine election of Israel - and thus devolves automatically upon every Israelite, who consequently must not profane it by defilement' (1972: 226-7; cf. 1961: 8).

It seems to me that the positions of these two 'schools' are, as a whole, quite close: according to both of them, God sanctified Israel and chose them from among the nations to be his (Dt.7:6; 14:2; 26:18-19) or separated them from the nations to be his (Lev.20:24-26). Both 'schools' present very similar admonitions which derive from this holiness.[120] Both demand that Israel observe the commandments in order that they continue in holiness (Lev.22:31-2; Dt.28:9).

If there is a difference between the approaches, then it is that Deuteronomy makes the holiness of Israel the basis and the reason for obedience (Dt.7:2-6; 14:1-2, 20) whereas in Leviticus, the commandments are a means to holiness. Leviticus does not state outright that Israel is holy (the tone is one of exhortation to *be* holy) whereas Deuteronomy employs the present tense, 'For you are a people holy to YHWH...' (Dt.7:6; 14:2). One explanation for this difference is that the primary concern in Leviticus is with the particular holiness of priests and their consequent function.[121] In contrast, Deuteronomy does not mention holiness in this regard and is not interested in distinctions between priests and people.

There is a sense of having come full circle as we stand back and view the Pentateuchal narratives from Ex.19 as a whole. To the extent that there is diversity in the presentation, this serves to enrich our understanding of Ex.19:5-6, where we began. This diversity is limited; it is no more than could be expected (and hoped for) in an extended exposition of YHWH's special relationship to Israel, given through a narrative setting. In Exodus the people are declared to be priestly and holy, and in connection with this identity they are given the commandments and priests are designated. In Leviticus the priestly role is explored, given the dangers associated with holiness, its lack of permanence, and the need for atonement when reparation is necessary. Nevertheless the tone is of exhortation; Israel is urged to *be* holy because - most fundamentally - YHWH is holy. The book of Numbers endorses the gravity with which the principles given should be observed, even in a new context, through narrative description of particular problems which arose. Deuteronomy concludes by re-stating, twice, that 'you are a people holy to YHWH your God; YHWH has chosen you to be a people for his own possession out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth' (7:6; 14:2). It re-states the commandments and the importance of observing

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[120] Cf. Knohl (1995: 183 n.43).
[121] See further below, *3.2.6* and *3.2.7*.

them; it places the role of priests relative to the holiness of Israel as a whole; and it expresses the promise of blessing - of prosperity - so long as Israel continues to remember YHWH and to live in loyal dependence on him.

2.4.2 Summary

Within the particular emphases of different parts of the Pentateuch, we have identified certain abiding features in the presentation of holiness. First and foremost, holiness represents the essential characteristic of God, as revealed by the name YHWH. The term קדש is associated with YHWH alone, though it is first used in the Hebrew scriptures of certain things in close relation to him,[122] rather than directly of YHWH himself. Holiness expresses the awefulness of God; it is associated with fear and trembling.[123] Holiness encompasses the transcendence of God, his absolute otherness.[124] Whereas God's holiness may be hidden, it is revealed by his glory, i.e. the burning splendour of the presence of YHWH.[125]

On the basis that קדש refers in the first place to YHWH, it is a simple step to use the term to refer to those things which belong to YHWH uniquely, even though this is not necessarily a permanent state. Holiness expresses their distinction from other peoples (cf. Ex.33:16). Israel is declared holy at the point where it makes a covenant with YHWH (Ex.19:6); but this holiness is related to the nation living faithfully for him within the unique relationship of covenant. The alternative is shame to themselves and to YHWH (Ex.32:25), because holiness marks Israel out as YHWH's in the face of all other people. The Sabbath is קדש because it belongs to YHWH (Ex.16:23); similarly, the first-born (Ex.13:2) and the first-fruits (Dt.26:5-11). The use of קדש and its derivatives is extended to all places, things and persons, in so far as they belong, or have come to belong, *to* YHWH. Thus their holiness is relational and directional. Generally, everything that has a place in the sanctuary or is used in worship is קדש. The priest also is קדש, not merely because he is connected

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[122] 'Ground' (Ex.3:5); 'assembly' (Ex.12:16); 'abode' (Ex.15:13); 'sabbath' (16:23); 'nation' (Ex.19:6).
[123] Consider the word pair in Ps.111:9 'Holy and terrible (lit. 'feared') is Thy name'; cf also Ps.99:3.
[124] Note that transcendence does not imply remoteness (cf. Hos.11:9); nor does it assume passivity.
[125] קדש is found paired with כבד (cf. Ex.15:11; Ex.29:43; Lev.10:3; cf. also Is.6:3; Ps.26:8; 13:4; 8:2 [ET 1]). The word כבד is used as an indication of the presence of the Lord seventeen times in the book of

with the holy place, but because he belongs to YHWH. A priest is usually connected with a shrine, but he himself has to become קדש before he can be connected with a place that is קדש.[126] It is to this unique expression of human holiness to which we now turn.

Ezekiel (1:28; 3:23...). Consider also 1Sam.4:21f. where the loss of the ark of Shiloh to the Philistines is described in the terms of 'the glory is departed from Israel'.

[126] This is clear from such passages as Ex.29:44 (cf. also Jg.17:5, 12). Whatever their function, they all belonged to YHWH: priest (Lev.21:6-7); Levites (2Chr.35:3); and prophet (2Ki.4:9).

Chapter 3
'Holy to YHWH':
Priesthood according to the Torah

This chapter investigates the dynamics of priesthood as it is presented in the Pentateuch. A theological understanding of the role of priests within the life of Israel, according to Israel's normative texts, is important for understanding the significance of the priestly identity of the people of Israel as portrayed in Ex.19:6.

The subject of priesthood in the Old Testament is notoriously complicated. The Hebrew Scriptures amply testify to the fact that priests were powerful historical, political and religious figures in the life of Israel. Yet they seem to provide little by way of a systematic theological explanation for their role - whether before God, before Israel, or before other priests and peoples - which is the focus of this chapter. Apart from the narratives pertaining to the original institution of Aaron and sons as priests, the place of priests is simply taken for granted. Perhaps in an ancient context there was no need for it to be 'set forth'.

There has emerged a fairly clear picture of the history of priesthood in Israel. Without seeking to overlook this explanation for the varying accounts within the canonical presentation, during the course of this chapter I shall hope to re-read the texts in a more integrative way, with sensitivity to the particular concerns and shape which they present.

3.1 Preliminary considerations: Historical and theological issues

3.1.1 The historical picture

The consensus among scholarship of this century[1] leads to the supposition that the institution of priesthood developed in different and conflicting ways during the various periods of Israel's history. The controversy is thought to have centred on rival claims to the

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[1] See, for example, Kaufmann (1960), de Vaux (1961), Gunneweg (1965), Cody (1969), Haran (1978), Nelson (1993) and Miller (1994). Wellhausen's interpretation of the relation of Levites to the priesthood (1885: 121-51) is, according to Kaufmann (1960: 193), the one pillar of his reconstruction of Israel's history which remains unshaken by later criticism.

priestly line: among the descendants of Levi, of Aaron and of Zadok. The priesthood thus became victim as well as instrument of political change.

Fundamental aspects of the biblical writings reflect these differences and conflicts. According to a variety of texts in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, priests in the line of Aaron are ordained to perform the essential cultic rites,[2] while Levites in a subordinate role are responsible for the maintenance of the tabernacle.[3] No distinction is made between priests and Levites in Deuteronomy, however; the terms are virtually interchangeable.[4] In Judges and 1Samuel, all signs of Aaronides disappear altogether: Eli, the chief priest, is an Ephraimite and Levites again seem rather insignificant.[5] The portrayal of Israel's cult is different again in 2Samuel/Kings: King David is given a form of cultic role[6] and, following Josiah's reforms, non-Jerusalemite priests are removed.[7] Zadok attains the predominant priestly role in these books.[8] These are followed in the Christian canon by the (historically) later books of Chronicles, which resemble Deuteronomy in minimising the distinctions between Levite and priest. All priests are Levites, even if not all Levites are priests.[9]

The biblical text does not seem to offer any explanation for the variety of genealogical lines which lay claim to the priesthood, even where they appear within a single book.[10] We are forced to the conclusion that the relationship between the historical development of the priesthood and its biblical portrayal is loose. Whether or not any of the historical reconstructions of the priesthood are found acceptable, it follows that there will be little in a detailed analysis of political upheaval and priestly rivalry from which to construct a theological understanding of the role of priest on the basis of the Hebrew Scriptures.

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[2] Ex.28-29.; Lev.8-10; Num.25:6-13.
[3] Ex.38:21f.; Num.1:47-54; 3:5ff.; 8; 31:30, 47.
[4] Dt.18:1-8; also 17:9, 18; 33:8-11. The common term is הלוים לכהנים (the Levitical priests). See McConville (1984: 125ff.) for discussion.
[5] Jg.17-18; 1Sam.1-4; 6:15; 2Sam.15:24; 2Ki.23:9.
[6] 2Sam.6:17-18; 24:25. Other kings succeeding David are also recorded as offering sacrifice, with no adverse consequences (1Ki.3:4; 8:62-64; 9:25; 12:33; and 2Ki.16:12-13).
[7] 1Sam.2:27-36; 2Ki.23:1-20.
[8] 2Sam.15:24-9; 1Ki.1:32-40; 2:35; 4:4.
[9] It is sometimes claimed that there is no distinction between priest and Levite in Chronicles. Priests and Levites are frequently referred to together; e.g. 1Chr.13:2; 15:14; 23:2; 24:6, 31; 28:13, 21; 2Chr.5:5; 8:15; 11:13; 23:6; etc., but their distinctions are not completely ignored, cf. 1Chr.23:13, 24-32.
[10] Consider, for example, the traditions about Zadok and his status: compare 2Sam.8:17 with 1Sam.22:20 and 1Ki.2:26f; also 1Chr.5:27ff. (ET 6:1ff.) with 1Chr.24:3.

3.1.2 Canonical concerns

Certain historical observations are useful, however, for highlighting the theological significance of the canonical presentation. Firstly, many scholars have made the point that priesthood became increasingly routinized and centralised during its development: thus 'institutionalisation' applies in the area of religious leadership (priests) just as to matters of political leadership (kings).[11] Such an evolutionary account would surely not be surprising. In texts which are thought to be historically earlier than the 'official' Priestly account, such as Jg.17-8, it seems that the head of the household performs sacrifices for his family, whereas in later texts, sacrifice becomes the exclusive prerogative of the priests and takes on a more public significance. For de Vaux this explains the early title of 'father' for a priest (Jg.17:10; 18:19): it reflects a memory that priests had taken over the cultic role of the head of the family from the patriarchs.[12]

If this is the case, then the point highlights how different is the story which now dominates the Old Testament canon: the priesthood is instituted by Moses, according to the legislation received directly from God during Israel's founding events on Mount Sinai. The developmental history thus has little bearing on the canonical picture and, therefore, little relevance for a *theology* of priesthood. In fact, it appears that such matters have been carefully distanced from the final form of the text.

Secondly, historical reconstructions have pointed to the likelihood of rivalry between several priestly lines to explain the apparent tensions within the Hebrew canon. Miller's hypothesis - that the Levite priesthood found in the books from Deuteronomy to Kings competed with (and was demoted by) two rival houses depicted in the 'Tetrateuch', the Zadokites (Aaronides) of Jerusalem and a northern priesthood found at the calf shrines - seems highly feasible.[13] But the feasibility of this theory should not allow us to ignore the fact that the canon makes scarce direct reference to this rivalry.[14] Moreover, the distinction between Levite and priest is never made especially explicit.[15] Rather, on the face of it, the

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[11] Cf. Weber (1963: 77-79), who describes 'the systematization of charisma'.
[12] de Vaux (1961: 348).
[13] Miller (1994: 31-48).
[14] Num.16 and 1Sam.2:27-36 are suggestive of rivalry, but Num.16:8-10 is the only direct reference to tension.
[15] In the texts that specifically concern Levites, in distinction to priests, the subject matter relates to a similar (and often collaborative) ministry, focused on the tabernacle and performed on behalf of others; e.g. Num.3:5ff. An exception is Ezek.44:9ff., which marks a distinction on the basis of faithfulness.

concerns lie with the origins and responsibilities of the position of priest and the faithful service of its incumbents. The rival claims and political realities are not important for the theological picture.

3.1.3 Conclusion

The canonical presentation suggests the conclusion that the actual history of priesthood bears little relation to its theological understanding. The 'official' account of the origin and development of the priesthood, the story given in Scripture, has been distanced from the historical reality in Israelite religion. We do not have a coherent historical picture.

The historical picture which is commonly reconstructed on the basis of the Hebrew texts is helpful for recognising the character of the canonical account. Although there are certain 'clues' pointing to a more complicated story, what we are given is an idealised form of the institution of priesthood and some subsequent stories of failure and challenge. The canonical presentation evolves around relatively few key texts, most of which are found in the Pentateuch. By virtue of their position in the *Torah*, we may conclude that they are fundamental to Israel's identity and purpose; they are given pre-eminence over all other Old Testament texts. Indeed, the Sinai texts are assumed by some of the (chronologically *and* canonically) subsequent material.[16]

The presentation appears straightforward. The book of Exodus describes Moses inaugurating the offices of Aaronide priest and Levite in the period before Israel entered the land. It is this picture - perhaps far removed from the historical origins - with which the Old Testament is most concerned, and to which this discussion now turns. We shall examine the relevant texts in the approximate order in which they unfold to the reader.

3.2 Priesthood in the Pentateuch

The Pentateuch is decisive in its identification of the Israelite priesthood with the events of Sinai. The references to priests occur in earnest from Ex.19. Their subsequent portrayal may be varied and even confusing in some aspects, but concerning their appointment at Sinai and their role before the holy God YHWH and his chosen people Israel, the picture given is much clearer.

3.2.1 Distinctive to the nation of Israel

There are few, if any, texts which carry theological import for the institution of the priesthood in Israel prior to the events at Sinai. When Moses and the people reach the mountain of God, when Israel is called to a distinctive identity and lifestyle, here the references to priests begin in earnest. The Israelite office of priest is firmly associated with the covenant made at Mount Sinai and the Torah revealed there.

This is not to say that there are no references to priests in the Genesis and Exodus narrative prior to the Sinai event, or that priests are unheard of outside Israel. The term always used to describe a priest of YHWH is כהן; and this same term is used to describe priests of foreign gods also.[17] But I shall argue for a distinctive theological understanding of this role within Mosaic Yahwism.. The references to priests which are canonically prior to the story of Israel's foundation at Sinai tend to confirm this conclusion.

The first relates to the figure of Melchizedek, king of Salem and 'priest of El Elyon' ("God Most High") who gives Abram a blessing and to whom Abram gives a tenth of his goods (Gen.14:18-21). The interpretation of this episode is complex given the mature Israelite perspective from which all the patriarchal narratives are presented. Melchizedek stands outside the chosen line of Abram. Yet, read in the light of other Old Testament texts, 'Salem' has an undoubted allusion to Jerusalem (cf. Ps.76:3 [ET 2])[18] and as king of Salem, Melchizedek is made to represent some prototype of a priest-king figure who personifies the ideal of righteousness, i.e. the Davidic kings (cf. Ps.110:4).[19] The wording of Melchizedek's blessing makes it clear that he blesses by YHWH: Elyon is an epithet of YHWH in Israel's worship in Jerusalem (e.g., Ps.46:5 [ET 4]; 47:3 [ET 2]), and the formula beginning ברוך ('blessed be...') is only ever used of YHWH in the Old Testament when referring to deity. Abram's response to the king of Sodom confirms this: 'I have sworn to YHWH El Elyon, maker of heaven and earth...' (Gen.14:22). These aspects suggest the episode is deliberately retold from the perspective of the Yahwistic storytellers, which would explain the unusual

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[16] Consider, for example, 1Chr.23:13; 2Chr.26:18; and Neh.10:38.

[17] E.g. Gen.41:45; 47:22; 1Sam.5:5; 6:2; 2Ki.10:19; 11:18; Jer.48:7; 49:3). Note that the etymology of the term is uncertain and does not appear to be relevant for an understanding of the role. Cf. Cody (1969: 26).

[18] E.g. von Rad (1972: 180-1).

[19] Melchizedek may not be a proper name but an appellative, such as from the epithet מלך צדק, 'righteous (or rightful) king'.

portrayal of Melchizedek, a foreign priest here depicted as ministering in the name of YHWH.[20]

In the Joseph narratives there are some incidental references to Egyptian priests: to Potiphar, the priest of On, who was father of Asenath, Joseph's wife (Gen.41:45, 50; 46:20); and to other priests under Pharaoh, those whose land Joseph did not buy for Pharaoh (Gen.47:22, 26). Since the detail concerning these foreign priests is incidental to the story and bears no theological implications for priesthood in Israel, they may be dismissed without further discussion.

The figure of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses and priest from Midian, is more significant for Israel, and thus references to him are worthy of brief consideration (Ex.2:16; 3:1; 18:1). An explicitly priestly overtone concerning Jethro's role is given at the point where he advises Moses to delegate some of his leadership responsibilities and appoint elders over the people (Ex.18). Jethro offers sacrifices to God in which Aaron and all the elders of Israel participate (Ex.18:12). Just as with Melchizedek, it seems that it is not inconceivable that a foreign priest might be able to minister to God's chosen people.[21] Note in both cases that this is accompanied by some recognition of YHWH's incomparability (Gen.14:19 cf. 22; Ex.18:11). Although they are not 'Israelite priests' (in the sense defined subsequently), nevertheless they acknowledge the God of Israel, YHWH, and appear to act in his name. Neither of these priests bear any reference to Israel's cultic institutions, however, within which the distinctive Israelite priesthood is cast.

The origin of priesthood in Israel is understood to be completely separate from that of these foreign priests; the roles are not interchangeable. In the patriarchal narratives, the tribe of Levi is not a priestly tribe;[22] the priesthood of God's people was not yet instituted.

3.2.2 Covenant identity of God's people

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[20] Moberly (1992: 72).

[21] There is no suggestion that Jethro was a proselyte. On the contrary, the Kenite hypothesis (Rowley 1950a:149ff.) attempted to explain the mystery of a foreign priest sacrificing to the God of Israel by suggesting that he initiated Israel into his cult, i.e. that Israel depended on its kinship with the Kenites for the foundations and early history of its religion. But this theory goes far beyond the available evidence.

[22] Gen.34; 49:5-7; cf. de Vaux (1961: 367-71); Cody (1969: 29). Note that it is not adequate to assimilate these Genesis references to those, for example, in Judges 17-19 where the priestly status of the Levites is also doubtful. We will return to this issue for the book of Judges. In Genesis, the observation fits the patriarchal context well.

The first mention of priesthood which specifically concerns *Israel*, therefore, is that of God speaking to the people through Moses at Mount Sinai. This does not so much concern priesthood *in* Israel, but the priesthood *of* Israel. At the outset of the whole Sinai revelation, God declares his intention that the whole nation be (in some way) priestly:

> If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex.19:5-6).

As noted in chapter 2, the phrase rendered 'kingdom of priests' is hard to interpret. It is not only the terminology of ממלכת כהנים which is problematic here, however. The very concepts are strange also on a canonical reading of the Pentateuch, for the notions of kingly, priestly and holy are all new, when used in the context of God's people. In essence, we are given to understand this promise of God to inaugurate a new era for Israel, an era which will be characterised by the priestly, kingly and holy features of its people.

But only by studying the subsequent development of these features may we understand their theological import for Israel. There is no explanation of the terms here, despite the fact that their apparent importance, not to mention their strangeness, might warrant it. At this point in the unfolding revelation of the text, they are abstract descriptors with little meaningful content; but they are firmly associated with God's election of his people at Sinai, the making of a unique and binding relationship. This is the fundamental association which underlies the Israelite understanding of priesthood.

3.2.3 Drawing near to God, like Moses

A study of the subsequent activity of priests in Israel may therefore shed light on the meaning and significance of Israel as a priestly nation. In particular, the concern for priests in the remaining portion of chapter 19 provides some immediate content for the phrase in 19:6. In distinction to the rest of the people, priests are those 'who come near (הנגשים) to YHWH' in verse 22, even though in verse 24 they are summoned not to come near but to remain with the people at the foot of the mountain, while Moses and Aaron go up to YHWH. There is a gradation in the extent to which people may approach YHWH; even the priesthood is subordinate to Moses in approaching the special presence of God.

The apparent confusion between these verses is generally explained by a tradition-historical complexity underlying the final form. This results in some lack of imaginative consistency in the portrayal of Ex.19.[23] In addition, whilst the existence of priests - who are distinguished from the people (v.24) - may provide some context for understanding the reference to the 'priestliness' of Israel in 19:6, it is surprising placed within the wider context of the Sinai theophany. For the account of the institution of the priesthood comes later in the Sinai narrative, in chapter 28.[24]

Recognising here a technical anachronism,[25] however, does not preclude the value of the final form and the possibility of ascribing positive and intelligible significance to it. Given the role of ch.19 within the larger Sinai narrative,[26] the particular concerns here may be seen to summarise and foreshadow those which are expounded at greater length in the legislation of chs.25-31 and 35-40. In particular, if one is to understand the tabernacle legislation in terms of setting forth the conditions for re-creating the theophany of Sinai,[27] then it is no surprise to find in Ex.19 all the concerns of the legislation played out in this archetypal incident of theophany: preparation and consecration of the people, maintenance of holy space, and encounter with the holy presence. This, of course, includes the special designation of particular people as priests, and their particular task and place. Only later, in the legislation, does this position need to be explained in more detail. For now, we are given the essence of the role: to draw near to God on behalf of the people, and to maintain the boundaries of holy space so as to protect the people from its dangers.

The final observation from the chapter stems from the special privilege accorded to Moses and Aaron above all other people and priests.[28] This detail suggests a gradation among those who are priests, from those whose place is to stay with the people, to those who come to share in the special status of Moses, the ultimate mediator between God and

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[23] See, for example, Haelvoet (1953: 374ff.).
[24] Consistent with this context is the instruction that 'young men' offer sacrifice in Ex.24:5.
[25] Cf. McNeile (1908: lxvi); Childs (1974: 375). The common historical view (e.g. Beyerlin 1965: 8) declares vv.20-25 as a 'later gloss' (on the J and E material of Ex.19), designed to deal with questions raised in Priestly circles about the approach to YHWH.
[26] See above, **1.3**.
[27] E.g. Terrien (1978: 14ff.).
[28] Ex.19:24; cf. 24:2.

the people.[29] The nearer a person draws, the more preparation is required (v.22). By implication, therefore, Moses is the most 'priestly' of all.[30] This status is measured by the extent of the access priests are given in 'drawing near' to YHWH and thus the responsibility they take in the role of mediating between YHWH and his people.[31] The need for a priesthood (as for preparation) may be seen as a necessary consequence of the effects of YHWH's holiness.

The access allowed to the different parts of the mountain for the people and priests corresponds, as is frequently noted, to the subsequent three-fold division of holy space in the tabernacle and temple.[32] A canonical reading of the texts brings us to understand the direction of this connection as follows: that the tabernacle and temple are designed around the understanding of God's holy presence obtained from Israel's foundational encounter with YHWH at Sinai. It comes as no surprise to find the material which specifically addresses the subject of priesthood set within the legislation for the tabernacle, the holy meeting place of God with Israel. The essence of the role of priest is to draw near to YHWH. Thus Moses is depicted as the ultimate priest. In the chapters which follow on the subject of the tabernacle and priesthood, Moses' prophetic role becomes absorbed into his new priestly function.[33]

3.2.4 'Holy to YHWH'

In Ex.28-9 God specifically directs Moses concerning the institution of priests. As stated above, these instructions are set within a wider concern for the establishment of the tabernacle (Exodus 25-31), the means by which God's presence will 'go forth' with Israel after they leave the holy mountain.

God commands Moses to 'bring near (הקרב) to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests' (Ex.28:1). This is followed by details of the holy garments which they should wear (28:2-43) and of the

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[29] This is suggestive of a factor to consider in the perennial debate on the relationship between Levites and priests.

[30] Cf. Ex.24:1-2, where Aaron is explicitly excluded from accompanying Moses.

[31] Note that whilst the priests are given a special status in being allowed to be *nearer* to the mountain (and implicitly, to YHWH) it is only Moses who is actually said to *draw near* (נגש) to YHWH (Ex.24:2) until after their official institution.

[32] For example, Milgrom (1970: 44-6): 'The blazing summit, the cloud-covered slopes and visible bottom rim correspond to Tabernacle divisions'.

sacrifices and other activities which Moses should perform for their ordination (29:1-37). Throughout, the concern is for Aaron and his sons, and the altar at which they serve, to be made holy (29:21, 33, 37). Priests and tabernacle serve the same end: that of Israel's holiness and YHWH's indwelling among them.[34] Ex.28-9 culminate in one of the key theological passages of the 'Priestly' material:

> (At the door of the tent of meeting) there I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified (קדשׁ) by my glory; I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests. And I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am YHWH their God, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell (שׁכן) among them; I am YHWH their God (29:43-46).

Aaron and sons are those who are consecrated (קדשׁ, Piel) to be priestly (כהן) to YHWH (28:3, 41; 29:1, 44; 30:30). The frequent word pair implies that their consecration has this particular purpose. This consecration carries implications for their belonging to God: priests are those who are לי ('to me', i.e. 'mine') in an especially focused, whole-hearted way, just as the consecration 'to me' (לי) of the first-born, whether human or animal, indicates their belonging to God (Ex.13:2), and the consecration of the seventh day makes it a sabbath '*to* YHWH' (ליהוה, Ex.20:10). As such, the priests wear sacred garments (28:3-4), eat sacred food (29:33) and perform sacred acts which are not of their own design or making; they are specified in every detail by God and they will pass down to their descendants (28:43; 29:29, 42). It is, quite literally, as if Aaron and sons are no longer 'their own people' with any individual identity; they belong to God. The gold plate which the priest is to wear on his head underlines this: 'Holy to YHWH' (28:36).

Inextricably linked with the notion of the consecration of priests (and of the tent of meeting and the altar), is the idea of God's meeting and dwelling with his people; this is the wider concern of chapters 25-31, as stated very clearly at their outset ('Then have them make a sanctuary (מקדשׁ) for me, that I may dwell (שׁכן) in their midst', 25:8) and echoed in 29:43-6. God's dwelling amongst his people is the reality that calls forth a response: 'And they shall know that I am YHWH their God...' Priests are those who, by virtue of their

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[33] Childs (1974:536).
[34] Cf. Plaut (1981: 631).

identity as belonging to God, enable YHWH to be fully present to his people, so enabling the people to recognise him fully as YHWH their God, and thus themselves as his people, with the same understanding of belonging. The holiness of the priesthood is connected to the special status of the entire nation.

YHWH's promise to be present is referred to four times in 29:42-44, and the place of Israel's meeting with this presence, the entrance of the tabernacle, is referred to three times in 29:42-43. Just as this location is made sacred, by YHWH's glory, so are the whole of the tabernacle, the altar and the priests serving in it also made holy: to the end that God may be present throughout all Israel, and make them holy also. God's meeting with priests at the tabernacle is representative of his meeting with all Israel. The priests act on behalf of all.

This promise of presence is not new. It is no unique consequence of the foundation of the tabernacle or the institution of the priesthood, but a constant theme throughout the book of Exodus. There has, however, been a change. In the chapters leading up to YHWH's appearance on Mount Sinai (1-18) the presence is revealed by what *YHWH* does. Subsequent to ch.19, YHWH is present by what *Israel* does: first of all in the way they are to live, and second, in the places, symbols and acts of worship.[35]

In large part, therefore, his presence depends on what *priests* do: for they act on behalf of Israel, representing how Israel, as a people, may be holy before God and providing a model to which others aspire. It is this subject which is addressed supremely in Ex.32-34, the account of Israel's failure to worship YHWH appropriately and of God's withdrawal of his presence. It is simultaneously an account of Aaron's failure and Moses' success in acting on behalf of God's people.

3.2.5 Acting on behalf of Israel

Within the setting of Ex.25-31, chapter 32 is 'a sudden sharp blast of cold air'.[36] The juxtaposition of this story of the failure of a priest, and in particular of Aaron the father of all priests, following so soon after the story of his institution, is no accident. Rather, the narrative fills out the picture of priesthood given in the earlier legislation; it reinforces in particular the identity and role of the priest on behalf of the entire nation.

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[35] Durham (1987: 397).
[36] Fretheim (1991: 279).

The story of the golden calf begins by noting the absence of Moses. Thus it is Aaron, his substitute (24:14), who is in charge and who receives the unrest and the demands of the impatient people. In the ensuing details concerning their making of the calf, Aaron's participation - as well as his naïvété - regarding their plan is highlighted.[37] This is shown to conflict with Aaron's own account of the episode (32:22-24), where he depicts himself in a more *laissez-faire* capacity.

Aaron's attitude and activity stands in stark contrast to the role of Moses. When God tells Moses what is happening at the foot of the mountain (32:7-10), Moses responds by immediately taking responsibility for the people and interceding on their behalf (32:11-14). His concerns are so tied up with God and God's people that his anger burns when he reaches the camp (32:19) - a reaction identical with that of God (32:10). He holds Aaron directly responsible for the events and demands an explanation: 'What did this people do to you that you have brought a great sin upon them?' (32:21).[38]

In his defence Aaron dwells on the people's activity and minimises his own. He relates *verbatim* the entire dialogue of 32:1 along with its demand for other gods and the abusive reference to Moses, yet when it comes to his own involvement the account diverges from the original and is abbreviated significantly. In short, he condemns the people as evil by nature, while he disavows any responsibility for himself.[39] 'I threw the gold into the fire and there came out this calf' (32:24).

Childs describes well the contrast in the portrayal of Moses and Aaron:[40]

> Aaron saw the people 'bent on evil'; Moses defended them before God's hot anger (v.11). Aaron exonerated himself from all active involvement; Moses put his own life on the line for Israel's sake. Aaron was too weak to restrain the people; Moses was strong enough to restrain even God.

The point concerning Aaron's failure in his priestly role of responsibility for all the people is stressed again in 32:25, where the cause for the people having broken loose is placed unequivocally at Aaron's feet ('because Aaron had let them'). This is a clear transgression of

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[37] Childs (1974: 565).
[38] Cf. Fretheim (1991: 288).
[39] Moberly (1983: 54) draws attention to the parallel of this response with that of Adam in Gen.3. 'As in Gen.3, the attempt to excuse does not mitigate but increases guilt; and as in Gen.3 the story moves on from Adam's excuse to the woman who incited him, so here the story moves from Aaron's excuse to the people who incited him.'
[40] Childs (1974: 570).

the specifications given by God regarding holy space at the outset of the Sinai events (19:12f., 21, 23), rules which Moses and the priests were responsible to enforce. The effect is that of shame among Israel's enemies.[41]

The punishment depicted in 32:25-9 is (probably redactionally) represented as Moses' response to Aaron's failure. He calls for a life-or-death faithfulness to YHWH (32:26-29; cf. Dt.13). The contrast is drawn between the faithless Aaron and the faithful Levites: 'there is a real sense in which the judgement wrought by the Levites serves as a commentary on the role of Aaron in the story even though the commentary probably reflects a later period'.[42] Implicitly, the text condemns Aaron for his failure to separate rigorously between the faith of YHWH and its rivals. At the same time, it commends the Levites for their costly faithfulness (32:29).

Moses' declaration to the Levites (32:29), that 'Today you have ordained yourselves for the service of YHWH, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, that he may bestow a blessing upon you this day', emphasises the nature of true priesthood. It is likely that something of the tumultuous history of the priesthood is reflected here. But if this is so, it is remarkable that there is no record of Aaron being removed from the priesthood bestowed on him earlier.[43] Rather, the Levites are lifted up to share in it, on the basis of their faithfulness.[44] The general tenor of this is unambiguous.

Considering Ex.32 as a commentary on the priesthood, we must note that the chapter closes with a record of Moses making atonement for the sin of the golden god they had made. This provides a supreme picture of a priest as one who acts on behalf of the whole people, an emphasis which is developed even further in the succeeding chapter. Childs writes:

> ...all [the themes of this chapter] circle about the role of the faithful mediator, Moses, who wrestles with God for the sake of Israel.[45]

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[41] I have already noted the association between holiness and the concern for reputation; see chapter two. Here, Israel has undermined God's holiness as well as its own status as a 'great nation' (cf. Gen.12:2-3; Ex.19:5-6; also Ps.22:6-8).
[42] Childs (1974: 570).
[43] There is a threat to Aaron's priesthood recorded in Num.16 (cf. *3.2.8* below), but the canon separates these two narratives completely.
[44] Although it is not specified in 32:29 that this is ordination *to the priesthood*, the expression is used elsewhere in connection with ordination to the priesthood (e.g. Ex.28:41; Num.3:3; Jg.17:5, 12).
[45] 1974: 599.

Moses asks for God's forgiveness for a crime in which he had absolutely no involvement, and goes so far as to offer his own life for the sake of God's mercy on the people. The essence of Aaron's mistake lies in his concern for himself rather than for the people before whom he is appointed as priest.

3.2.6 To serve the cult, as YHWH commanded

We have already considered the repetition of Moses' institution of the Aaronide priesthood in Lev.8-9 which corresponds closely to Ex.28-9;[46] clearly, this original institution is regarded as an important event. In keeping with the tenor of the whole of Leviticus, this rite of installation of priests is narrated as a 'founding ritual,' i.e. relating how an oft-repeated ceremony was first performed. Through this classic rite of passage, Aaron and his sons represent all later priests who would undergo this rite and, as such, be authorised by Moses.

There are some distinctive features of the Leviticus account and I will return to these below. First, however, it is valuable to note how the re-narration of events underlines four of the theological aspects of priesthood which we have discussed on the basis of the Exodus account above. Firstly, priests are those who are 'holy to YHWH' (cf. *3.2.4*). Lev.8 makes this point in its description of two distinct, yet related, ceremonies: first of all, the consecration of the altar, the tabernacle and Aaron (vv.6-13) and then the ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests over a period of seven days (vv.14-36). Secondly, as in the book of Exodus (see *3.2.3*), the institution of the priesthood in Leviticus is presented as one part of the measures taken to carry forward the experience of God's presence and its implications experienced at Mount Sinai. The rites performed in Lev.9 which follow the ordination underline how priests are channels for God's indwelling of his people: they celebrate the entry of God's presence (כבד) into the newly consecrated tabernacle. The dedication is not complete until God's presence rests upon it (v.23, cf. Ex.29:43). The tabernacle is the primary concern in both the Exodus and the Leviticus texts; priests are those who serve the tabernacle. All other functions are secondary to this more fundamental priority. Note, thirdly, that these rites of ordination are clearly performed in front of and for the sake of the whole people (cf. *3.2.5*).[47]

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[46] If not a repetition, then the actualising in Lev.8-9 of what was prescribed in Ex.28-9; see *2.3.2* above.
[47] Lev.8:3, 5; 9:3, 5, 7, 18, 22-24.

Fourthly, it is clear on the basis of the Leviticus account that priests are those who take after Moses (cf. *3.2.3*). It is Moses who performs the consecration and ordination: he anoints with oil (8:10, 12, 30), he provides the animals (8:14, 18, 22), he makes a sin offering (8:14) and a burnt offering (8:18), he sprinkles the blood (8:15, 19, 23f., 30), and he blesses the congregation (9:23). It is as if Aaron and his sons are watching Moses at the outset of the ceremony to learn from his example. After seven days they are equipped to do likewise: they bring out the animals (9:5), they make a sin offering (9:8, 15) and a burnt offering (9:12), they sprinkle blood (9:9, 12, 18) and Aaron blesses the people (9:22, 23). Their activity suggests that Aaron and his sons take their priestly lead from Moses; and rather than supplant Moses, the joint blessing of Moses and Aaron at the end of the ordination suggests that their roles are in no way incompatible (9:23). They continue to work in tandem (e.g., Lev.11:1; cf. Num.16:18).

The most significant contribution of this Leviticus text to the picture of priesthood which is emerging from the Pentateuch lies in the particular context within which the institution of Aaron is given: that of a lengthy and ordered exposition on the subject of the cult, given by God to Moses at Sinai. The seven preceding chapters are almost entirely devoted to descriptions of and directions for sacrifice and atonement. These include directions for the priest (in Lev.6-7) and they culminate in the ordination of priests. The concern throughout lies with the proper worship of YHWH and the ordering of life into the spheres of the clean and the unclean, the holy and the profane. This is the focus of the cult. A priest is to serve this end: to conduct the rites by which sin and impurity may be dealt with.

The book of Leviticus as a whole consists of legislation; the material on the cult (in spite of its historical variety) functions to create a collection of divine imperatives. All the details of the ceremonies and rituals are commanded by God. In Lev.8-9 this aspect is especially emphasised by the repeated phrase 'as YHWH commanded'.[48] The priesthood is an institution which exists by virtue of its obedience to God's instructions, to operate within the cult which YHWH has commanded.

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[48] See 8:4, 9, 13, 17, 21, 29, 36; 9:6, 10, 21; 10:15. According to Childs (1985: 158), 'the material in Leviticus has not been merely organised in a roughly topical fashion, but it has been characteristically rendered by the repetition of key phrases... within a discrete literary unit.' Levine (1989: 48) suggests that the

3.2.7 Revealing YHWH's holiness

Following the institution, Lev.10 speaks of the importance of priestly conduct: Nadab and Abihu, two of Aaron's sons, come to grief for offering unholy fire. Eleazar and Ithamar come close to a similar fate for casual misconduct with the sin offering. Both incidents, recited in the same paragraph, underline the gravity of the priestly tasks and the degree of precision with which YHWH has prescribed them. The commentary of Ex.32-4 had the same effect, following the institution described in Ex.28-9.

In response to this situation, we are given the most explicit description of the role and purpose of priests. Moses clarifies the need for exceptionally holy behaviour among priests, on the grounds that 'YHWH has said, "I will show myself holy (קדשׁ) among those who are near (קרב) me, and before all the people I will be glorified (כבד)"' (Lev.10:3). This, surely, is the logical consequence of being 'holy to YHWH' and acting on behalf of all people.

The implication is that priests live in an especially close relationship to God (they are those who drew near (קרב) to God at their ordination e.g. Lev.9:7-8); and that God's character of holiness is to be reflected through them in a special way to the people (Lev.21:8). As we have already noted, God's 'holiness is his hidden, concealed glory.... But his glory is his holiness revealed'.[49] So the priests are not just holy for their own sake, or for God's; since they are priests on behalf of Israel, they have a responsibility to embody God's holiness to the people. Lev.21:8 addresses the community of Israel, 'You shall consecrate him... he shall be holy *to you* (לך); for I YHWH, who sanctify you, am holy.' The priest is holy *to* the people just as the entire community is holy *to* YHWH. So the priest operates for the sake of God *and* for the sake of the people. By such means, God will be glorified before them all; his holiness will be revealed and made public. If it is not - as in the case of Nadab and Abihu - then they will suffer the consequences, the same consequences as for trespassing across holy boundaries at Mount Sinai (cf. Ex.19:21-2).

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effect here 'is to portray Moses, Aaron and his sons, and the Israelites as obedient to God's command and to attribute Israelite modes of worship to divine command, not to custom and convention'.

[49] Herntrich, quoted by Kaiser (1972: 79).

Furthermore, God speaks directly to Aaron of his and his sons' need for exercising discernment. 'You are to distinguish (בדל) between the holy (קדש) and the profane (הל), and between the unclean (טמא) and the clean (טהר), and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes which YHWH has spoken to them by Moses' (Lev.10:10-11; cf. Ez.44:23). This is the essence of the priest's job. To make a mistake in these matters provokes God's judgement and could lead to death. This role of 'modelling' YHWH is not merely a passive exercise, bringing people to an awareness of him and his holiness; more actively, it involves bringing the people to respond to him in lives of obedience and faithfulness. This response is not dissimilar to the obedience and faithfulness demanded of priests. Thus, just as priests are called to imitate YHWH, so Israel is to imitate its priests.

As discussed previously, the role of priest includes reiterating the work of Moses. Here, this involves reminding people of the law which God gave to Moses at Sinai, and applying it to the matters of life. It involves discernment between what is holy or clean and what is not.

Lev.11-15 provide a basis for this process of discernment: God makes clear to Moses and Aaron, on behalf of the people of Israel (Lev.11:1-2), those animals, people and foods that are clean and those that are unclean. Lev.17-26 (the 'Holiness Code') develop also the ethical implications of holiness. Underlying the stipulations throughout is the principle to be holy because YHWH is holy (19:2; 20:7, 26) and the corollary, 'I YHWH, who sanctifies you, am holy' (21:8, 15, 23; 22:9, 16, 32). It is because of his holiness that YHWH has 'separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine' (20:26; cf. 20:24). YHWH's holiness is the starting point for Israel's identity. Here again, the priest has a role not only in exercising discernment concerning what is holy (cf. Num.5; Hag.2:11-13), but in demonstrating holiness through special obedience to the law. Although there are parallels between the laws of holiness addressed to the Israelite community and those applying to the priests alone,[50] those which address priests are usually more severe.[51] The greater sanctity of

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[50] Compare Lev.19:26-28 with 21:5.

[51] For example, the eating of carcasses and animals that died of natural causes is permitted to the Israelite community, who are merely adjured to purify themselves from the resulting impurity (Lev.17:15), but it is completely forbidden to priests (22:8-9). Similarly, priests may not render themselves impure through contact with the dead, except in the case of close relatives (Lev.21:1-3). They are also forbidden to marry prostitutes, defiled women, or divorcees (Lev.21:7) - prohibitions that do not apply to Israelites at large.

priests is explained by reference to their duties, the offering of the bread of God (21:6, 8). This sanctity of the priesthood is applied to the entire nation:

> You shall consecrate him, for he offers the bread of your God; he shall be holy to you; for I YHWH, who sanctify you, am holy (21:8).

A priest is separated from the people, to be the focus for God's holiness, and God's presence, in Israel. God sanctifies Israel through dwelling among the people, and his presence is made concrete through the establishment of the sacred priesthood in their midst.[52]

3.2.8 Levels of holiness

The references to priests in the book of Numbers are associated with the designation of Levites in particular. In character the Levites are described in similar terms to priests: they are those who are 'brought near' (קרב, Num.3:6; cf. 18:2, 4; cf. Ex.28:1); they act on behalf of the people (3:7-8; 8:19; cf. 18:23); they belong to YHWH (3:12-13; 8:14; cf. 18:6). They are assigned particular tasks in serving the Aaronide priests at the tabernacle (3:6; 8:19; cf. 18:2-3), according to their particular Levitical family (Num.4). They are designated for this role by an act of consecration reminiscent of Aaron's ordination, which is detailed in YHWH's legislation given to Moses (Num.8:5-26). This is the last of the legislation in the Sinai narrative which began at Ex.19; after the appointment of the Levites, and 'on the day that the tabernacle was set up... when the cloud covered it... after that the people of Israel set out' (Num.9:15-17) .

It seems that the priestly identity of the Levites is not an issue - they have a similar and parallel, but distinct, role to priests - until the book of Numbers turns to the rebellion against Moses and Aaron of Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Num.16). Although this chapter is widely thought to be an amalgam of two distinct stories - a Levite rebellion aimed at usurping the Aaronide sacerdotal function, attributed to P, and a non-cultic political rebellion (of Dathan and Abiram) which sought political domination, belonging to J[53] - the themes of religious and civil disobedience have been combined to offer a narrative on the

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[52] The same words, אני יהוה מקדשכם, also serve as the reason for observing the Sabbath, which is another institution which sanctifies Israel through observance of it (cf. Ex.31:13). This is part of a standard formula in Leviticus, particularly in the 'Holiness Code' (see, e.g., Lev.20:8, 22-26).
[53] See the commentaries: for example, de Vaulx (1972: 189ff.); Budd (1984: 181ff.).

more general theme of archetypal rebellion against divine authority.[54] This is focused on the persons of Moses and Aaron.

The canonical placing of the pericope, however, suggests its importance for understanding the relationship between the holiness of priests and of people.[55] As the text stands, Korah's bid for the priesthood is related to the preceding law of Moses in 15:37ff. directing every Israelite to wear tassels to remind them that they were called to be holy (cf. Ex.19:6).[56] These tassels also indicate a call to be priestly. Just as in the priest's headpiece, the gold frontlet (ציץ) tied with a cord of blue designates the anointed priest as 'holy toYHWH' (Ex.28:36-37), so too the fringes (ציצית), which also contain a blue cord, testify to Israel's mission to be consecrated to their God.[57]

Korah affirms this truth to the exclusion of the truth of the divine appointment of Aaron and Moses: 'All the congregation are holy, every one of them... why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of YHWH?' (16:3). The outcome of his rebellion (16:1-35) and the subsequent rebellion of the people (17:1-15 [ET 16:36-50]) is such a frightening demonstration of the dangers inherent in being called to be holy that the survivors cry out for a priestly ministry that will act as mediator between them and God (17:27-8 [ET 12-3]; cf. 18:5, 22). Thus priests are to be seen as a *necessary* means for Israel to achieve its calling to holiness.[58] Furthermore, the difference between the holiness of the priesthood and the holiness of the community of Israel is seen to be qualitative as well as quantitative. The priests serve a *unique* function. Whereas all Israel, including priests, have a call to lead holy lives, the priesthood has a special sanctity which exists in the ritual-ceremonial sphere.

It is through the narrative of the rebellion of the chieftains and the editorial stratum of the Levite revolt that we can understand a model for the holiness of priests and people.

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[54] Alter's (1981: 136) observations concerning the careful aesthetic and thematic structuring in the story are sufficient to endorse a theological coherence between (what may have been) separate events.
[55] Cf. Knohl (1995: 191f.).
[56] Wenham (1981: 134).
[57] Cassuto (1967: 383).
[58] The role of priest as mediator is depicted especially graphically in these narratives. Frequently Moses speaks to the people on behalf of YHWH (16:5, 8, 24, 26, 28ff.; 17:1ff. [ET 16:37ff.]); and Moses and Aaron 'fall on their faces', interceding to YHWH on behalf of the people (16:4, 15, 22; 17:10 [ET 16:45]). They represent God in the sense that to reject Moses and Aaron is, implicitly, to reject YHWH, on whose authority they are priests (16:28, 30).

The censer and staff tests proved that only Aaron and his sons were chosen to serve before God (Num.16:5, 7; 17:20 [ET5]); the verses on the test of the censers further emphasise that God's choice will reveal who his holy ones are. In his response to the complaint of the Levites, appended to the complaint of the chieftains, Moses says, 'Is it too small a thing for you that the God of Israel has separated you (הבדיל) from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself...?' (16:9). Moses' words here give verbal expression to the difference between priests and Levites, as between two levels of holiness.[59]

Thus, we might propose three levels of holiness within the Israelite nation. All Israel is separated from the nations, and consecrated by obedience to the commandments.[60] The Levites are separated from other people and dedicated to the service of the tabernacle, in order to prevent others from entering the place of worship and to atone for them.[61] The priests, Aaron and his sons, were elected to serve before the Lord and the altar and to offer the bread of God. This election endows them with the highest grade of holiness, that emanating from the cult in which other Israelites and Levites may not participate.[62]

As if to pre-empt an over-interpretation of the differences between Aaronide priest and Levite, Num.18 sets out their roles in parallel fashion: both shall bear iniquity (cf. 18:2 and 18:23); both shall serve the sanctuary (cf. 18:4-5); both are a gift of YHWH (cf. 18:6 and 18:7); and both shall not receive any inheritance (cf. 18:20 and 18:23-4) but are to live off Israel's offerings (cf. 18:8 and 18:21). These parallels do not ignore distinctions drawn between the Aaronide priests and the Levites, chief of which is that Levites are given to serve the Aaronides at the altar (18:3-4, 6). Yet a defence of the priesthood as reserved sits uncomfortably within the wider Pentateuchal context.[63] Compared to the similarities of the roles and the associations between the two groups, even

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[59] Knohl (1995:192) points out that the verb קדש never appears in the context of the Levites; its stresses the special sanctity of the priesthood. Furthermore, whilst the verb בחר ('elect') is used of the sons of Aaron, with respect to the Levites only the term הבדיל ('separated', 'set apart') is used, as of other Israelites.

[60] Lev.11:44-5; 19:2; 20:7-8, 24-26; Num.15:40.

[61] Num.8:14-19; 16:9-10; 18:2-4, 6.

[62] Ex.29:44; Lev.21:6, 8; Num.16:5-11; 17:20-23 [ET5-8]; 18:1, 5, 7.

[63] Consider especially Ex.32. It seems highly likely that Ex.32 and Num.16-17 stem from different traditions. Yet it is important to read them in parallel as they represent internal pentateuchal reflection.

in the book of Numbers,[64] the tensions are relatively minor for the overall theological picture of priesthood.

Yet these tensions are also evident in the careful specification of Eleazar's succession on the death of Aaron (Num.20:22-9) and the details of God's covenant of a perpetual priesthood with Phinehas (25:6-13). Each suggests a concern to stress the authority and uniqueness of the Aaronide line, as if it were threatened. But these stories add little to the picture of priesthood already developed, even if they do reflect the merging of traditions. Already we have learnt that the priesthood follows the line of Aaron, thus that his sons will take over from him (Ex.29:29f.); and already we have been given to believe that this line will continue indefinitely (Ex.29:9). Thus these accounts in Numbers may be read chiefly to stress Israel's faithful adherence to the Sinai legislation. There is no inherent or necessary reason to read in them a Priestly polemic designed to underline the distinction between Levites and priests which was previously unknown, even though many have seen this to follow from Num.16.[65]

In summary, the book of Numbers confirms much of the preceding canonical material on the subject of Israel's priesthood, whilst also distinguishing between the status and role of Levites and Aaronide priests. The focus of reflection concerning the difference between them lies in Num.16. This is an important story; however, it need not be viewed so much as problematic as instructive for recognising the levels of holiness in Israel,[66] and how the holiness of priests relates to the holiness of all. The overall presentation assumes, to a large extent, a similarity of role between the Aaronides and Levites, and only draws the distinction between them in an exceptional circumstance. Fundamentally, both are essential mediators between God and Israel. To ignore this need for mediation is fatal; to reject them is to reject YHWH who appointed them.

3.2.9 Priests and people

The book of Deuteronomy does not recognise any division between Levites and priests. The institution of the tribe of Levi is recounted as if it were a response to the death of Aaron

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[64] Notice, for example, how the Aaronides are numbered among the Levites in the census of Num.26:57ff.

[65] This is Wellhausen's view which has dominated most subsequent historical reconstruction. See, for example, Nielsen (1955: 280ff.), Gunneweg (1965: 28ff., 71ff.) and Cody (1969: 33ff., 55ff.).

[66] Note that there is also reference made in Numbers to a high priest or chief priest (הכהן הגדל; 35:25, 28, 32).

(10:6-10), with the specific brief of carrying the ark of the covenant. In the legislation pertaining to their role, they are referred to as priests (18:1-8).[67] The book is not simply silent on any differences: it actually uses the terms 'priest' and 'Levite' interchangeably (cf. Dt.27:9-14 and 31:9, 25),[68] or more usually 'the Levitical priests' (lit. 'the priests, the Levites', הכהנים הלוים, 17:9) or 'priests, sons of Levi' (הכהנים בני לוי, 21:5; 31:9).[69] The family of Aaron and the family of Levi are one and the same.[70] Given the preceding material in Numbers, the book of Deuteronomy may thus be seen to unite the two levels of cultic officials. At the least, it can be concluded that Deuteronomy is not interested in enunciating these details. Going further, McConville has found evidence that the distinctions within the tribe of Levi found in Numbers were familiar to the author of Deuteronomy, yet were not clearly enunciated.[71] This suggests an intentional blurring of those distinctions which have been identified earlier.[72]

This 'blurring of distinctions' between priests is not, I suggest, the main concern, however. Rather, the focus in Deuteronomy centres upon the holiness of the whole people of God. The priesthood is only mentioned where it is relevant to a proper understanding of the whole people of God before YHWH. In this context, any differences between Aaronides and Levites are insignificant; what matters is that all people, Aaronides and Levites included, assume fully their relationship to YHWH and worship him together.

The governing factor in the presentation of the Levi tribe as a whole in Deuteronomy is the matter of the tithe, for Levites have 'no inheritance' (cf. 10:9; 12:12; 14:27ff. and 18:1-8). Unlike the book of Leviticus where priestly concerns are commonly addressed from a priestly perspective, this matter in Deuteronomy is presented as a commendation of the Levite to Israel's care, and it has a strong imperative force.[73]

The practical implication, as expounded elsewhere in the Old Testament (cf. Num.35:1-8; Josh.21:1-40), is that the Levites should be supported by dues required of the

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[67] The term בחר ('elect') is also used of them in 18:5; cf. n.59 above.
[68] Emerton (1962: 133).
[69] Grabbe (1995: 42).
[70] The detail in Dt.10:6f. which notes the death of Aaron and the continuation of the priesthood through his son Eleazar would make little sense in the context of the rest of the book (not least 10:8f.) if this were not so.
[71] McConville (1984: 139).
[72] Deuteronomy's usage of cultic terminology in general is described as 'loose' (cf. McConville [1984: 140]); this is especially the case in comparison to the more technical precision of P.
[73] McConville (1984: 74).

people, but in Deuteronomy it is particularly stressed that this need affects each member of the tribe equally, regardless of status within it. As McConville suggests, 'the function of 18:1-8 is to express the relation of the whole tribe of Levi to the inheritance of Israel'. The verses show that all the tribe of Levi have a right to share in the proceeds of offerings made at the altar.[74] The instruction constitutes provision for the continuing application of a fundamental principle: the livelihood of the whole Levitical tribe.

Deuteronomy takes for granted many of the other details concerning priests and their functions set out in preceding Pentateuchal texts.[75] These include cultic duties (10:8-9; 18:6-8; 33:10), charge of the covenant in the ark (31:9-13, 24-26); teachers of the law (33:10), judging of civil matters (17:8-13; 19:17) and discerning of the divine will (33:8). The real focus of interest in Deuteronomy lies with the priestly tribe as a whole and their inheritance in Israel. In places where one might expect a reference to the place of the priest, such as in passages which deal with the bringing of sacrifices and other cultic celebrations (12; 14:22ff.; 15:19ff.; 16), these details are noticeably absent.[76]

It has been suggested that the priest's function has actually been deliberately and consistently suppressed in passages relating to the cult, so as to depict the people of Israel themselves standing directly before God.[77] Whether or not such a conspiracy theory underlies the formation of the text, a canonical reading must observe how the distinctions between the clergy and the people, and within the clergy, have been subsumed under what is, in the end, a far more significant theological emphasis in the book of Deuteronomy. The absence of the priests in important cultic contexts suggests that in Deuteronomy the cult belongs to the people as a whole. This emphasis is congruent with that of the presentation of holiness and of the people in Deuteronomy. Holiness is not the sole preserve of the priests; rather, it is the gift and responsibility of the whole people of God. Language which we observed used solely of priests in P - בחר ('elect') - is used frequently of the people as a

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[74] Emerton (1962: 138); McConville (1984:142); though there are objections to this view (e.g., Abba [1977: 264-6]). Versions and commentators have differed about the translation of 18:6-8, chiefly on the question of where the protasis of the conditional sentence ends and where the apodosis begins. This affects whether the sentence concerns the Levite's entitlement to serve (and the centralisation of the cult), or that he may share the perquisites with those who serve beside him (i.e. legislation for a continuing situation). On the basis of McConville's historical investigation and of Driver's (1895: 217) analysis of the phrasing, the latter seems most likely.

[75] Welch (1912: 198); von Rad (1929: 30f); Grabbe (1995: 43).

[76] Dt.26 is an exception: here the priest's function in the offering of the first-fruits of the land is described.

whole in Deuteronomy.[78] Furthermore, legislation which pertained particularly to priests in Leviticus (Lev.22:8) - the prohibition to eat נבלה ('corpse', of a creature which dies by itself) - is applied to all Israelites in Deuteronomy on the grounds that they are holy (14:21).[79] Whereas Leviticus, and Numbers,[80] depict the priest as part of the sanctuary and possessing a greater degree of holiness, Deuteronomy stresses the holiness and 'priestliness' of all the people, not so much by reason of their physical proximity to the tangible sanctity of God but by virtue of their election.

Clearly the emphasis on the wholeness of the people of Israel is a factor in determining Deuteronomy's attitude to the cultic officials. This would be no surprise, given that it has influenced laws on other subjects. The laws of debt and slave-release (15:1-18) and the law of clean and unclean food (14:1-20), for example, require the Israelite to behave rather differently towards 'insiders' than towards 'outsiders'.[81] Levites are the 'insiders' in Israel *par excellence*.

The concern of Deuteronomy *vis-à-vis* the Levitical priesthood, therefore, is not the matter of who has the rights to this role, nor exactly how they should function with respect to the cult. Rather, I suggest, they fulfil a representative role. Just as Israel is to be careful not to forsake the stranger from outside its land, so they are not to forsake the Levite (or the fatherless, or the widow) within its walls (10:19; 14:29; 23:7-8; 24:14, 17, 19). And just as Israel is to be careful not to forsake the Levite, so they are not to forget YHWH himself (12:19; 14:27; cf. 8:11).

The relation of the Levite to Israel in Deuteronomy is such as to be an ideal representation of how the whole people should stand both to YHWH and to the land. This representation is enhanced by the stress in Deuteronomy on the Levite/priest as a full

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[77] Hulst (1938:55f.); cf. McConville (1984: 147-9).
[78] Dt.7:6, 7; 10:15; 14:2; etc. Cf. n.59 above.
[79] Weinfeld (1972: 227).
[80] Cf. especially Korah's rebellion in Num.16, a 'Priestly' text.
[81] McConville (1984: 81 & 93).

member of the people[82] and on his full entitlement to the blessings of the land, through the 'inheritance' of the cultic offerings they receive from the rest of the people.[83]

Gunneweg described the Levite in Deuteronomy as being made a "key-figure" *(Schlüsselfigur)* of the ideal people of God,[84] describing this idealness as consisting in the Levite's poverty. Although the Levite is not presented as poor anywhere in Deuteronomy - he has, as McConville has argued, a fundamental share in the inheritance of Israel - he does not have his own economic basis. It is his attitude which is idealised: for his is an obedient spirit which recognises its dependence on YHWH. As established in the previous chapter (*2.3.4*), this is one of the key themes for Deuteronomy: the source of prosperity lies in obedience to YHWH.[85] The Levite's wealth is realised in the service of YHWH. There is a partial spiritualisation of נחלה ('inheritance') and חלק ('portion') in Deuteronomy.[86]

In this way the position of the Levite is representative and model for all Israel. As in the legislation of the tithe, blessing is related to obedience. The Levite has a conspicuous dependence on God, because his prosperity is less evident than that of the people who have been given land. Thus the Levite is a constant reminder to all Israel of the nature of true prosperity. Israel's enjoyment of the land - Israel's blessing - depends upon its obedience to YHWH.

3.2.10 Conclusions from the Torah

The canonical setting of the account of the institution of the priesthood by Moses at Sinai, in Exodus and in Leviticus, functions largely as an overarching theological construct in which one moment has become the medium to measure all others in the story of the priesthood.

This moment is constituted by the 'cutting' of a covenant between YHWH and his people. This marks the beginning of a relationship which binds Israel to its God, by its

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[82] They are described as 'brothers' (אחים) in 10:9; 18:2; and when they are mentioned with 'sojourners' or 'strangers' (גר), widows and orphans from among the Israelites are also mentioned (e.g., 14:29).

[83] McConville (1984: 150) suggests that this point is emphasised by the unusual use of נחלתו (the inheritance of the Levite) in 18:1 in parallel with אשי יהוה (the offerings of the Lord). This use of נחלה is different from the use of the word elsewhere in Deuteronomy, where the inheritance is either the land, or YHWH himself (e.g. 10:9). 'The unique use of נחלתו in 18:1 seems deliberately to make the point that in receiving their perquisites the Levites have their due share in the inheritance of Israel.'

[84] Gunneweg (1965: 128); cf. McConville (1984: 150).

[85] The spirit of utter dependence on YHWH was also identified as a feature of the holy nation according to Ex.19:4; see *1.6.4*.

[86] Cf. Lam.3:24; Ps.73:26 where the spiritualisation is complete.

understanding of its own identity, its role and its purpose, summarised by the description 'kingly, priestly and holy'.

The consecration of particular people to be priests designates them in a special way as 'Holy to YHWH' (Ex.28:36). The priest personifies God's holiness in human form. He demonstrates what it means to be holy, to belong to God. The special identity involves special responsibilities which are expounded in the Priestly material: to protect God's special presence in the sanctuary, to apply and teach the laws by which God's people are to live, and more generally to negotiate the special relationship between YHWH and the people. Thus he is the focus of YHWH's holy presence with Israel and of Israel's identity before God. Moses is the ultimate priest,[87] the channel for encounter with YHWH.

The book of Deuteronomy is the climax of Moses' ministry and the climax of the Torah. It relativises what has gone before, in particular the Priestly material, by relating the priest's identity to that of the whole people of God. The priest is, for the people, a way of understanding their own special relationship with God. *All* are 'holy to YHWH'. *All* have special responsibilities for protecting God's presence with his people, for applying the law and for bearing his name before all peoples. This is their privilege and their calling, according to which the priest is seen as the *ideal* Israelite. Each is called to live like the Levite, in conscious dependence on and with absolute loyalty to the One who is the source of all blessing. Then will those who are called by the name of the Lord be set 'high above all nations', leaving open the possibility that they - like priests - be a channel for encounter with YHWH.

3.3 Epilogue: Priesthood elsewhere in the Hebrew canon

The historical picture of the priesthood in Israel is built on many texts outside the Pentateuch which have not been relevant to this study. However, below I consider a highly selected few of these, in order to examine what they add, if anything, to what the priesthood means. They are, of course, considered in relation to the Pentateuch as norm.

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[87] Cf. Hauret (1959: 519), who describes him as '*Primus inter pares*'.

3.3.1 The situation of Eli (1Sam.2)

According to the record presented in 1Sam.2:27ff., God chose the house of *Eli* to be his priest out of all the tribes of Israel, while they were still in *Egypt*. The succeeding verses speak of YHWH's decision to cut off Eli's house, with the death of his sons Hophni and Phinehas, in order 'to raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind' (2:35).

The passage portrays a different picture of the origin of the priesthood from that given in Exodus-Leviticus, and has given rise to much of the historical criticism which brought about the re-construction of the history of the priesthood discussed in *3.1.1*. Yet the interest here lies not so much with the history as the theology of the priesthood.

It is remarkable just how consistent is the theological portrayal of the faithful priest here in comparison with the pentateuchal account. The priest is chosen (בחר) by YHWH, 'to go up to my altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me' (2:28). Eli and his sons have failed because (by implication) they have despised God instead of honouring him (2:30), and they have taken their prosperity for granted (2:29, 32).[88] Thus YHWH intends to re-establish the priestly line, with those who 'shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind...' (2:35). The faithful priest is the one who is close to YHWH in character and will: an appropriate working definition of the phrase 'holy to YHWH'.

The conflicting historical accounts serve to highlight the stability of the theological understanding with respect to the function and purpose of the priesthood which we have outlined.

3.3.2 The role of the Levites (Jg.17-18; 1Chron.23)

In Jg.17-18 the priestly status of the tribe of Levi is doubtful.[89] The account is given of a Levite sojourner who is invited by Micah of Ephraim, 'Stay with me, and be to me a father and a priest, and I will give you ten pieces of silver a year, and a suit of apparel, and your living' (17:10). For Micah, installing a Levite as priest is seen as a source of prosperity and a sign of God's blessing.

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[88] This is just the opposite of the ideal portrayal of the Levite in Deuteronomy, cf. *3.2.9*.

[89] The same is true of the patriarchal narratives (often assimilated with e.g., Jg.17-19), though from a canonical perspective this is not surprising; cf. Gen.34; 49:5-7.

Judges is not really addressing the history (or theology) of priesthood; yet the fact that a 'history' book does not seem to know the law raises questions which are hard to answer. Certainly the text is to be interpreted with a level of irony.

In complete contrast, the role of the Levites is spelt out with a thoroughness that reads like a 'job description' in 1Chron.23. Whereas they were responsible for carrying the tabernacle (23:26), this is no longer necessary in the temple. 'Their duty shall be to assist the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of YHWH, having the care of the courts and the chambers, the cleansing of all that is holy, and any work for the service of the house of God...' (23:28). Chronicles is undoubtedly a late book, which appears to re-apply the Levitical status and role to a new context in Israel. This is consistent with their theological status and role already established.

3.3.3 Prophets and priests

The prophetic critique of the cult is legendary. Hosea suggests that God's 'controversy' with the people of Israel begins with a controversy with a priest, since he is the one who has 'rejected knowledge' and has failed to teach the law, at the same time gaining food from the offerings made for the sin of others (Hos.4:4-8). In general, the Prophets make various charges against priests: infidelity in regard to the Torah (Jer.2:8; Ezek.22:26; Hos.4:4-10; Zeph.3:4; Mal.2:7-8); mercenary motives (Jer.6:13; Mic.3:11); drunken confusion (Is.28:7-8); and stifling or misguiding the prophetic word (Jer.26:11; Amos7:16).

That the Prophets make these charges against the priests is indicative of the responsibility priests carry as the guardians of orthodoxy and morality in Israel. That priests are not found to be exempt from the moral problem involved by virtue of the representation of God in their humanity, underlines their role as mediators and 'imitators' of God. The importance of their role is recognised most notably (and most positively) in Ezekiel.[90] Priests are described as those who 'shall come near to me to minister' (44:15), who are marked out as holy in special ways (44:17-22) and who 'will teach my people the difference between the holy and the common, and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean' (44:23). There are some clear theological parallels here with the account in Leviticus, even though historically it is once again confusing, since (as an act of fidelity, to protect the

[90] Ezekiel the priest is portrayed as a sole faithful person in Israel. He is not only exemplary; he is given the role of re-calling Israel to faithfulness. See further chapter 5 below.

holiness of the temple) Ezekiel restricts the priesthood to the Zadokites.[91] Both Leviticus and Ezekiel are thought to be 'Priestly' works, yet the Hebrew canon has placed Ezekiel 40-48 in a prophetic text.[92] Although priests may be known to fail, thus creating confusion concerning exactly who the faithful priests are, this failure does not alter the theological picture of the priestly ideal which, as described in the Pentateuch, God has set forth for Israel.

Zechariah intersects with the final chapters of Ezekiel in its concern for a pure and faithful priesthood to accompany the return of YHWH's glory to Jerusalem. It begins, again, with YHWH's initiative (Zech.8:15): his gracious act of electing and forgiving the high priest Joshua. As in Exodus, the priesthood is seen as a prerequisite for the community's relationship with YHWH, for their own identity as a people, and for the future realisation of YHWH's plans.[93]

3.4 Summary and conclusions

3.4.1 Summary

In terms of both canon and content, I have maintained that what the Pentateuch says about priesthood is paradigmatic for understanding its meaning in theological terms. Other texts may provide older or later views concerning priests in Israel's history, but they do not necessarily contribute much to the theological picture. This is given in Exodus-Deuteronomy, as we have explored.

The main features of this theological picture are summarised below:

(a) Moses the archetype

The narratives of the institution of the priesthood in Exodus 28-29 and Leviticus 8-9 present Moses as the 'priest-maker'. According to these priestly accounts, Moses ordains the first priests, instructs them in their duties and later, when Aaron dies, transfers the chief office from Aaron to his son Eleazar (Num.20:22-29). Although the Pentateuch never describes

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[91] 40:46; cf. 44:10-15; 48:11. The likelihood of priestly conflict and rivalry underlying such a restriction is underlined by Ezek.8, which tells of the guilt and infidelity of the Jerusalem Zadokite priesthood also.
[92] On Ezekiel, see further chapter 5 below.
[93] Cf. Nelson (1993: 122-25).

Moses as a priest,[94] he is clearly presented fulfilling many of the functions of a priest; indeed he 'fills in' when Aaron fails (Ex.32-4). He is the ultimate mediator between YHWH and Israel, sealing God's covenant relationship, receiving the covenant laws and restoring it when it is endangered.[95]

(b) Guardians of YHWH's holiness

The presence of YHWH with his people bears consequences for Israel which include privilege and responsibility. The institution of priests is clearly related to this responsibility, whereby God's presence must be guarded and protected, by individuals specifically designated and consecrated and qualified to 'draw near'. This marks priests out; they are 'separated' and 'set aside' from other people for this role and they carry out this responsibility on behalf of all.

(c) Example to a holy people

Whereas in the priestly writings the difference between the holiness of the priesthood and the holiness of the community of Israel is described qualitatively (the special sanctity of the priesthood exists in the ritual-ceremonial sphere), the book of Deuteronomy relativises what has gone before such as to portray the Levite more in terms of quantitative difference. Here the priest represents the ideal, an example of the calling to all Israel to lead holy lives.[96] Priestliness is a particular demonstration of holiness.

3.4.2 The canonical perspective

In a canonical rendering of Scripture, YHWH's appointment of the priesthood is set within the context of the call of 'priestliness' to the whole people of God. Both of these bear directly on the notion of holiness. The directions for the institution of (individual) priests continually refer to a consecration (קדש, literally 'to make holy', Ex.28:3, 41; 29:1, 21, 33, 44) and focus on those aspects by which they will be marked out and designated for this role: by their descent from a particular family, by the clothes they will wear, by the actions of sacrifice they will perform, by the special laws they will keep and by the place they will serve. The implication is clear: the priesthood is not for 'anybody', it is not to be regarded

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[94] Only once throughout biblical literature is Moses called כהן, 'priest' (Ps.99:6). It is contentious whether the term is used here in a technical sense; cf. Levine (1989: 49); for a different view, cf. Gray (1971: 179-270).

[95] Cf. Hauret (1959: 509-521).

[96] Cf. Knohl (1995: 191).

casually. It is for those who are chosen (בחר). Every detail of who, how, what and where is carefully specified by YHWH. The role is important, the task exacting and the person exact.

Given the context of Ex.28-29 in the Sinai narrative - the foundation account of God's covenant with the people of Israel - the Aaronide priesthood bears clear implications for the call to priestliness of the whole people of God. The identity and role of the priestly individual provides a focus for the identity and role of the priestly nation. Just as the priest is he 'who comes near (נגשׁ) to YHWH' (Ex.19:22) and provides the focus for God's meeting with them all (29:43ff.), so all Israel are those who are called to come near to YHWH, to dwell fully with him as 'YHWH, their God'. Deuteronomy in particular expresses that all the people have been chosen (בחר).

If the Aaronide priesthood represents, in some way, the priestliness of Israel then this will involve, fundamentally, a consecration which marks Israel out as 'belonging to God'. If this is the case, then their becoming a 'priestly kingdom' could be viewed as the outward sign of their being 'a holy nation' (19:6). It is unclear how far this parallel may be extended. Might the process of 'making holy' bring about a change of identity for the people of Israel expressed in equivalent terms to that of priests: by descent, by appearance, by behaviour and by location? Are they set aside, as guardians of YHWH's holiness and as examples of holy people to others? Furthermore, could it be that their 'being holy' consists in a calling, like the priest, to be mediators between God and others? Certainly the concern for other nations recurs in statements of the holy calling of God's people. They are guardians for his reputation.

Undoubtedly, the existence of priests is essential to the maintenance of God's holy people; 'priestliness' is a mark of identity of God's elect. The climax of the pentateuchal presentation lies with an exhortation to God's chosen people that they live lives, like the Levite, of loyal, obedient, single-minded dependence on YHWH, for he is the source of their holiness and their blessing.

Chapter 4
'The Holy One of Israel': The context of Isaiah

According to the Hebrew ordering of the canon, the Torah is followed by the Prophets. In the manner of Moses, the prophets mediate the covenant between YHWH and his people and speak on God's behalf to Israel.[1] Foremost among the prophets is Isaiah.[2]

Isaiah has been called 'the prophet of holiness'.[3] Especially in the light of the preceding canonical material, the book of Isaiah presents a highly distinctive picture of God, marked by a strong association with the קדש word-group. In this chapter we examine Isaiah: first of all with an eye to the language and themes that unite the book and secondly, with a view to the particular presentation of holiness and its development through the book's different sections.

In Isaiah the mystery of God's holiness is disclosed, primarily in terms of moral and relational categories. It is revealed first to Isaiah himself; through Isaiah to Israel; and in turn, through Israel to the world. The concerns of holiness are made explicit for the identity and vocation of the people who are chosen by the holy God.

4.1 Shape and theme in the book of Isaiah

There is wide agreement among scholars that the book of Isaiah stems from the work of at least two and possibly three different 'Isaiahs' from different centuries and circumstances, even though there is far less consensus over the finer details of 'secondary' material and

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[1] Dt.18:15ff., cf. Ex.20:18f.. On the relationship of Torah and the Prophets, see Blenkinsopp (1977); Clements (1978: 120ff.) and Rendtorff (1993: 57-65).

[2] Traditionally the book of Isaiah is understood to head the 'latter prophets' (e.g. Ackroyd 1978: 23) and on historical grounds he is dubbed 'the prophet par excellence' (Fohrer 1970: 375). In literary terms this conclusion might be drawn simply on the basis of the size of the prophetic collection linked to his name.

[3] Motyer (1993: 17); cf. Buber (1960: 129); Vriezen (1962: 133); Terrien (1978: 246); Rendtorff (1993: 162), Barton (1995: 110).

redaction.[4] These conclusions are a useful starting point for this study, given that the final form of the book - though a single unit - maintains certain literary divisions between chs.1-39, 40-55 and 56-66.[5] Different historical settings are preserved, for example, and there are some clear differences of language, style and concept between these sections. They are widely understood to be linked by 'bridging' passages, such as chs.1, 35, 36-9, 40:1-8 and 65-66, which help to synthesise the varied material which surrounds them.[6]

Given that the present literary sequence maintains some disjunctions between these 'layers', we may recognise within this movement of the book an ongoing redefinition of the tradition. More so than with some other Old Testament writings, the force of the book cannot be contained within any one 'original' historical setting. The canonical process within the book of Isaiah might thus provide some useful insights into the larger canonical process,[7] and the way in which prophecy might be understood to redefine the Pentateuchal traditions within the Hebrew canon.[8]

There has been a recent return in scholarly circles to reading the book of Isaiah as a whole.[9] It no longer remains a serious question whether one can describe the theology of the book of Isaiah as a whole. Several themes have been identified which are (to varying degrees) common to each of the sections of the book - such as divine kingship,[10] the notion of holiness,[11] God's devotion to the city of Jerusalem and Zion,[12] God's plan[13] for the

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[4] Duhm's (1892) commentary paved the way for the 'three Isaiah' thesis; among the variety of more recent refinements, see works by Westermann (1969), Kaiser (1972, 1974), Clements (1980; 1985: 95-113), Wildberger (1991, 1978, 1982) and Williamson (1994).

[5] Following convention I will refer to these sections respectively as First, Second and Third Isaiah; it is not intended that these headings infer any conclusions concerning authorship.

[6] Cf. Melugin (1976: 176ff.); Ackroyd (1982: 3-21); Clements (1982a: 120-121); Steck (1985); Rendtorff (1993: 147-55); Carr (1993: 61-80); Harrelson (1994: 247-260). Ch.1 and ch.66 are discussed briefly below (see *4.2.1* and *4.2.3*); cf. Steck (1985); Carr (1993: 61-80); Rendtorff (1993: 172-3); Harrelson (1994: 247-260).

[7] In this respect Isaiah is similar to the books of the Pentateuch; Pentateuchal criticism and Isaiah criticism have usually followed similar lines in modern study.

[8] The choice of Isaiah to illustrate growth and reinterpretation of tradition is not original. Cf. von Rad (1965: 147ff.); Meade (1986: 26ff.).

[9] In addition to particular citations identified below, see also: Ackroyd (1978: 16-48); Clements (1982a: 117-129); Roberts (1982: 130-143); Brueggemann (1984: 89-107); Dumbrell (1985: 111ff.); Evans (1988: 129-147); Seitz (1988: 105-126; 1991); Conrad (1991); Rendtorff (1993); Miscall (1993). For a critique, see Carr (1993: 61-80).

[10] Dumbrell (1985: 111-128).

[11] Ackroyd (1978: 38); Rendtorff (1993: 160-162); Barton (1995: 112); cf. Roberts (1982: 131-133).

[12] Dumbrell (1985: 111-128); Rendtorff (1993: 156-160); cf. von Rad (1965: 155ff.).

[13] Jenson (1986: 443-451); cf. Roberts (1982: 137ff.).

nations,[14] the concept of righteousness[15] - and there is a characteristic style throughout which carries a high ethical tone.[16] Thus it is possible to recognise a certain inner consistency: a stream of ideas which forms a core, despite the different accents at different stages. These themes are themselves interrelated, and highly relevant for an understanding of holiness.

4.1.1 Jerusalem/Zion

If there is any single theological theme which is dominant in all three parts of Isaiah, it is that of Zion. It is by means of this overall theme that the relationship between the different sections and between other themes - holiness, God's plan, the nations - is best understood. Rendtorff has written,

> The theme of Zion... has its clear function in each of the three parts, and in some way forms the strongest link binding the three together... it is precisely the "Zion" theme which makes it plain that it is not sufficient merely to pay attention to the total composition of the book.[17]

The theme is prominent not only in all three sections of Isaiah, but also in those sections we have identified as 'bridging passages'. The whole book begins and ends with an emphasis on Jerusalem. The introduction and the conclusion illustrate well the tension-laden antithesis between indictment and salvation which is focused on this place.

Is.1 presents a picture of a decadent Jerusalem whose sacrifices and prayers can no longer be accepted. Jerusalem is heading for final destruction (1:8-9), unless it becomes again what it once was, the 'fortress of righteousness' and 'the faithful city' (1:21-26). Is.2:1-5 alludes to the end-time vision of Jerusalem, the focus of a pilgrimage of the nations from where YHWH's torah goes out to all nations, which is developed more fully at the conclusion of the book. The new Jerusalem functions as God's holy mountain, to which the world will go up in a pilgrimage of worship (66:20-24). This stands in stark contrast to the description of the city with which the book began.

The alternate motifs of threat and promise which characterise chs.1-12[18] are focused on Jerusalem: Jerusalem is vulnerable to judgement[19] even as the Zion ideal is proclaimed.[20]

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[14] Davies (1989: 93, 105ff.); Carr (1993: 73).
[15] Rendtorff (1993: 162-164).
[16] Dumbrell (1985: 111).
[17] Rendtorff (1993: 167); see also Dumbrell (1985: 112).
[18] Cf. Ackroyd (1978: 16-48).
[19] 1:21; 3:1, 8, 16ff.; 10:10f., 32.

In connection with this ambivalent attitude to Jerusalem, the conception of the remnant develops, especially in chs.7-9. The house of David (and Ahaz) is rejected, while the future lies with the faithful remnant who will survive the coming disaster. In the remainder of the main part of First Isaiah (chs.13-35), where the emphasis is mainly on judgement, Jerusalem is commonly assumed to be the arena for these events: there YHWH is present,[21] there he fights against enemies,[22] there he punishes[23] and there also there is hope.[24] There is a general monotheistic thrust, concerning the avoidance of foreign alliances and the certainty of the defence which YHWH himself will provide.[25] Just as ch.12 ends with promise (12:6, 'Shout and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion! For great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel!'), so does ch.35, with a verbatim quotation from 51:11,

> And the ransomed of YHWH shall return,
> and come to Zion with singing;
> with everlasting joy upon their heads;
> they shall obtain joy and gladness,
> and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

In Second Isaiah the focus on Jerusalem is far more explicit, and far less ambiguous: the city of God will be renewed. The prologue (40:1-11) directly and personally addresses Jerusalem (v.2) and Zion (v.9), assuring 'her' of divine help. The proclamations of salvation for Jerusalem and the announcements of its rebuilding are proof of YHWH's sole power; they are named side by side with his acts in creation.[26] At the outset, covenant language is introduced (e.g. 'my people'/'your God', 40:1), often absent in First Isaiah.[27] Indeed ch.54 combines Abrahamic (vv.1-3), Sinaitic (vv.4-8) and Noachian (vv.9-10) covenant imagery to depict the restoration. From the eschatological Jerusalem[28] waters of life flow (55:1-2), while all the people of Jerusalem are now sharers in the promises of the Davidic covenant and are therefore kings and priests (55:3-5).[29]

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[20] 4:2-6; 10:12, 24, 28-34; 12:6.
[21] 18:7; 24:23; cf. 31:9.
[22] 31:4; 34:8; cf. 29:8.
[23] 27:7-11; 28:7-22; 29:1ff.
[24] 14:32; 27:13; 28:16; 30:19; 33:5, 20; 34-5.
[25] Cf. Dumbrell (1985: 119-121).
[26] 41:27; 44:26, 28; 46:13; 51:16; cf. Rendtorff (1993: 158).
[27] Note, however, 1:2-3.
[28] Cf. Ezek.47:1-12.
[29] Dumbrell (1985: 126).

Third Isaiah continues Second Isaiah's themes of Zion/Jerusalem, concentrated in chs.60-62 and 65-66. In fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises (60:21-22), the wealth of nations and peoples, led by their rulers, will stream into the renewed Jerusalem, 'the city of YHWH, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel' (60:14). Priest kings will populate Zion (61:6). As the world offers her homage as a bride (61:10), so all nature will be transformed (61:11).[30] The covenant imagery of marriage continues in 62:4-5. Zion is secure (62:6-9); the people of God are called to enter Jerusalem as a sanctified people and to occupy that holy space (62:10-12). These people, 'my people', are contrasted with those who 'forget my holy mountain' in 65:10-11. Those who enjoy the blessings of the new age are the elect people of God (65:17-25), those 'who rejoice in Jerusalem' (66:10); whereas, there is judgement for his enemies (66:14-16). Beyond this judgement the end is heralded by the nations bringing the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the Diaspora as offerings to Zion (66:20; cf. 60:4). The book concludes with a picture of uninterrupted temple worship, which is the consummation of history.

4.1.2 YHWH's holiness and Israel

Another concept which is central to the whole book is the vision of YHWH as the Holy One of Israel. Isaiah's inaugural vision of YHWH's awesome majesty and the seraphs' thundering three-fold proclamation of his holiness (Is.6) underlie this conception of God throughout the book, though Second and Third Isaiah elaborate on the conception in First Isaiah with new themes. Barton writes:

> It is hard to avoid the conclusion that, whether deliberately or not, the book of Isaiah has been drawn together into a unity through the controlling theme of God's holiness.[31]

The language of holiness is used in reference to YHWH with impressive regularity. The adjective קדוש ('holy') is used of God more frequently in Isaiah than in all of the rest of the Old Testament literature taken together.[32] In First Isaiah the adjective is used of YHWH seventeen times[33] and there are several other references to his holiness by means of related

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[30] The rebuilding of Jerusalem is actually termed a new creation (ברא) in 65:18f.

[31] Barton (1995: 112); cf. Ackroyd (1978: 38).

[32] It is used of God 34 times in Isaiah, compared with 26 occasions in the rest of the OT.

[33] 1:4; 5:16, 19, 24; 6:3; 10:17, 20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19, 23; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23.

verbs and nouns.[34] Second Isaiah uses the adjective of God fourteen times[35] and the noun three times.[36] Even Third Isaiah presents a basically similar portrayal. Though the adjective is used of God only three times (57:15; 60:9, 14), the first of these is an almost definitional passage: '... the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy' (see *4.2.3*). In Third Isaiah the noun describes those things that have a close relationship to God.[37]

Throughout, the notion is allied to God's essential nature: his very *name* is holy (57:15). This nature is conceived as an absolute power, manifesting itself variously as a consuming zeal whereby everything that damages it will be destroyed (Is.10:17; cf. 30:12ff.), a moral purity revealed in justice and righteousness (Is.5:16),[38] and most fully as an unparalleled, everlasting glory filling the whole earth (6:3) and to be revealed to all nations (66:18). In view of God's holiness the response is, appropriately, fear (יראה, cf. Is.8:13), trust (אמונה, cf. 7:9; 28:16; בטח, cf. 30:15; 31:1; throughout ch.36) and worship (6:3; cf. 66:18-19, 23). Buber writes:

> ...that YHVH is present to Israel even with His most sublime and essential characteristic, His holiness, and that Israel is thereby able to receive His influence to follow His footsteps, and to place human activity at the disposal of His activity, in other words, the hallowing of Israel by the whole YHVH (cf. Ex.31:13), this is the root idea of the divine attribute so dear to Isaiah.[39]

God's holiness is never described in abstract terms; it is nearly always given a particular referent, most commonly קדוש ישראל, 'Holy One of Israel'.[40] Whereas this

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[34] The niphal (5:16), hiphil (8:13) and hithpael (29:23) of the קדש verb are used with God as either the subject or the object of the action. YHWH himself is called a sanctuary (מקדש, 8:14); his abode is characterised as a mountain of 'holiness' (קדש, 11:9) and the route for returning to him the way of 'holiness' (35:8).

[35] 40:25; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14, 15; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7 (twice); 54:5; 55:5.

[36] The noun 'holiness' (קדש) is used once to characterise YHWH's arm (52:10) and twice to characterise YHWH's city (48:2; 52:1).

[37] Apart from two references to God's spirit (63:10-11), the noun קדש is used to describe God's mountain, city, courts, house, place, people, temple or special day: 56:7; 57:13, 15; 58:13 (twice); 60:13; 62:9, 12; 63:15, 18; 64:9, 10 [ET10, 11]; 65:11, 25; 66:20.

[38] This is the distinctive Isaianic emphasis; see *4.2.1*.

[39] Buber (1960: 129).

[40] In all occurrences of 'Holy One' in Isaiah, God is firmly identified with Israel. In 10:17 and 49:7, Israel is clearly the antecedent of the pronominal suffix. In 29:23, 'the Holy One of Jacob' functions just as 'the Holy One of Israel'. In 43:15, 'your (masc. pl.) Holy One' must refer to Israelites and hence can be taken as concrete. Is.40:25 is the only place that קדש appears as an abstraction, but given that this lacks the article, and Israel is addressed by name two verses later, it is likely to be an abbreviated from of קדוש ישראל (cf. Schmitt 1983: 28). There are only two other occurrences elsewhere in the OT: Hos.11:9; Hab.3:3.

title is rare elsewhere in the Old Testament,[41] it occurs frequently and with relative evenness throughout the Isaianic literature: twelve times in First Isaiah,[42] eleven times in Second Isaiah[43] and twice in Third Isaiah.[44] The narrative itself suggests that this title for God is peculiarly Isaianic, stemming from Isaiah's own vision of God (see *4.2.2*). Throughout it underlines the *relational* aspect of God's holiness, also peculiarly Isaianic.

'Israel', in Isaiah, is most commonly a religious term, used in parallel with 'my people' (cf. 1:3) and invested with all the theological implications of the elect; it is only loosely used as a geographical referent.[45] Belonging to 'Israel' does not denote a political identity so much as a familial identity with respect to God (cf. 1:2) and thus a responsibility to bear 'good grapes' - of justice and righteousness - in his vineyard (cf. 5:1-7). The Holy One of Israel demands a just people of Israel; this is the outworking of holiness (cf. 5:16). Thus 'Israel' denotes the vocation as well as the identity of the people of God.

The early chapters speak contemptuously of the people of God. Israel is judged and exiled for their rebellion against YHWH; i.e. their identity is in jeopardy because their vocation has wasted. But increasingly through Isaiah, 'Israel' comes to represent the idealised people of God. This is not so much tied to the events with Moses at Sinai, as to a new exodus (27:12; 52:11-12), where God's law will be declared not only for Israel but for all nations from Jerusalem (2:3). In the 'Apocalypse' of chs.24-27 there is allusion to a covenant which is broken being restored, and this has cosmic proportions (24:5).[46] The ideal vocation has similar dimensions: 'I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations' (42:6), whereby 'Israel' has the potential of spreading throughout the world. 'In days to come Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots, and fill the whole world with fruit' (27:6; cf. 54:1-3; 55:5).

The changing depiction of 'Israel' through Isaiah has a correspondence with the way in which the title 'Holy One of Israel' is used. Although it may be said that the name is firmly

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[41] There are seven references outside the book of Isaiah, and in each case dependence on Isaiah is considered likely: 2Ki.19:22; Ps.71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Jer.50:29; 51:5; Ez.39:7. Cf. also Is.29:23. For critical appraisal of the title, cf. Procksch (1964: 93); Ackroyd (1978: 22); Roberts (1982: 131ff.); Wildberger (1991: 24f.).
[42] Is.1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23.
[43] Is.41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5.
[44] Is.60:9 (cf. 55:5); 60:14.
[45] The northern kingdom is usually called Ephraim, cf. 7:2, 8-9; 9:9, 21; 11:12-3; 17:3; 28:1, 3. In 8:14 'Israel' is used of both kingdoms.
[46] Murray (1992: 14-26).

anchored to a context of the announcement of a plan for salvation throughout the book,[47] this is only true of First Isaiah if one recognises that God's activity of salvation does not preclude judgement also.[48] In First Isaiah, he is the comfort for the remnant which survives (10:20), the God in whom the redeemed rejoice, the one on whom people can rely in the day of judgement (17:7), and the one in whom the suffering and poorest among humanity can rejoice (29:19). Yet he is also the one who is rejected (1:4), and mocked (5:19; cf. 30:11; 37:23), despised (5:24) and disregarded (31:1). All these references to the title in First Isaiah have to do with how people respond to him:[49] whether in dependence and worship, or in disregard and rejection. People thus affect God's activity of salvation and judgement on them.

In Second and Third Isaiah, the use of the title is quite different.[50] In Second Isaiah the title is a description specifically for *YHWH*, frequently by YHWH himself, and is always used in speeches touching on and promising redemption and salvation.[51] In Third Isaiah, the first reference recalls the use in Second Isaiah (60:9; cf. 55:5). The other reference combines the title with the Zion theme to describe the eschatological age: 'they shall call you the City of YHWH, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel' (60:14). God is called the Holy One of Israel at the very point where redemption and salvation radiate out to shine on Israel and the nations.

4.1.3 YHWH's plan

It is a function of God's sovereignty and of his particular relationship with Israel that God has plans. The terminology of יעץ/עצה receives particular emphasis in Isaiah;[52] it occurs

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[47] Wildberger (1991: 26).

[48] See *4.2.1.* N.B. For an analysis of the differing theological intent behind the various names for God in Is.6:1-9:6, see Auret (1992: 272-91).

[49] Rendtorff (1993: 160).

[50] There is one example in First Isaiah, however, which resembles this different usage (12:6). Rendtorff (1993: 164ff.) argues that this chapter functions as a thematic bridging passage in the structure of Isaiah.

[51] The self-description is found following an introductory "I am YHWH" (43:3, 15) and "Thus says YHWH, your redeemer" (43:14; cf. 48:17; 49:7; 41:14; 47:4; 54:5). Cf. Rendtorff (1993: 161).

[52] Cf. Is.1:26; 3:3; 5:19; 7:5; 8:10; 11:2; 14:24, 26 (twice), 27; 16:3, 19:3, 11 (twice), 12, 17 (twice); 23:8, 9; 25:1; 28:29; 29:15; 30:1; 32:7, 8; 36:5; 40:13, 14; 41:28; 44:26; 45:21; 46:10, 11; 47:13. Note how the terminology is weighted towards First Isaiah, and that there are no references in Third Isaiah. Those who have dealt explicitly with God's 'plan' in Isaiah insist on the historical originality of its use by Isaiah of Jerusalem, yet equally its importance for the redactional material as well; cf. Fichtner (1951: 16-33); Wildberger (1962: 83-117; 1991: 203); von Rad (1965: 162); Meade (1986: 29); Jenson (1986: 443-455); also Achtemeier (1988: 32-34).

here more frequently than in any other Old Testament book.[53] The focus is highly theocentric: of those references that speak of 'YHWH's plan' or 'God's plan', more than half are in the book of Isaiah and in all of these Isaianic references, God is referred to as YHWH, the special name by which he is known to Israel.[54] Throughout the occurrences in Isaiah, it is common to find YHWH's plan contrasted with that of others: human plans are, at best, useless,[55] whereas YHWH's counsels are incomparable[56] and utterly reliable.[57] Though wicked people refuse to believe it, YHWH has his sovereign plan, and this is therefore related to his holiness, '... let the purpose (עצה) of the Holy One of Israel draw near...' (5:19).

We may understand the whole message of the book of Isaiah as a revelation of God's plan for Israel, and through Israel for the nations, presented in the form of oracles delivered to Isaiah. The plan develops differently in each section of the book; yet the juxtaposition of judgement and salvation in First and Second Isaiah demonstrates they are two sides of one and the same plan.[58] In First Isaiah the terminology of יעץ/עצה relates almost exclusively to the activity of judgement: first (and in most detail), of Judah (chs.2-11), then of certain other nations (ch.13-23). In fact, God summons a distant nation (Assyria) in order to execute his judgement in Israel (5:26).

First Isaiah also has suggestions of the positive side of God's plan which follows.[59] While Second Isaiah's use of the terminology bears similarities with First Isaiah - in its certainty[60] and its incomparability[61] - there is also a transition. There is no judgement; the

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[53] According to Stählı (1971: 749), 20% of all occurrences are found in the book of Isaiah, 35 out of a total of 175. In the Hebrew canon, the term is particularly associated with the prophets (Ruppert 1990: 174).

[54] According to Ruppert (1990: 174), there are in total 27 references to God's (or YHWH's) plan, of which 15 are found in Isaiah (verb: 14:24, 26, 27; 19:12, 17; 23:8, 9; noun: 5:19; 14:26; 19:17; 25:1; 28:29; 44:26; 46:10, 11).

[55] Cf. Is.7:5; 8:10; 16:3; 19:11; 29:15; 30:1; 41:28f.; 45:21; 47:13.

[56] Cf. Is.25:1; 40:13.

[57] In Is.14:24-27 there is a particular emphasis on the certainty and irresistible nature of YHWH's plan: from the opening oath (v.24a), through the assertion that what YHWH has purposed shall be accomplished (v.24b), to the statement and rhetorical question near the end, 'YHWH of hosts has purposed and who will annul it?' (v.27). See also 7:7; 8:10; 46:10; cf. 55:10-11.

[58] Fichtner (1951: 32).

[59] Cf. Is.6:13; 14:32; 25:6-8.

[60] Compare עצתי תקום (Is.46:10) with the terminology of 7:7; 8:10 and 14:24, 27. Jenson (1986: 451 n.35) suggests that the 'firmness' in 46:10 is further enhanced by the parallel of עצתי with חפצי in v.10b and the repetition of the idea in v.11b, especially through the use of יצר.

[61] Cf. 40:13.

plan is for the restoration of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah (44:26-28), especially of Zion (46:13). Furthermore, this restoration has implications for other nations too: 'YHWH has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God' (Is.52:10; cf. 49:7, 22; 55:5). Although Third Isaiah has no explicit references to God's plan, aspects of this universal plan of Second Isaiah are further expounded, that 'all flesh shall come to worship before me' (Is.66:23). The new Jerusalem is presented as the centripetal focus, the place to which all people will gather and from which God's salvation will be spread to all.[62] This is the fulfilment.

Given the emphasis on the relational aspect of YHWH's holiness in Isaiah, it is not surprising to find a relational aspect to YHWH's plans also. God is the Holy One of *Israel*; so God's people are involved in the fulfilment of his plans. Despite their incomparability, the plans are conditional and open to revision, insofar as they are carried out with reference to the human response. This condition, according to Isaiah, is faith.[63] This is understood as the most appropriate response to a God who is himself completely trustworthy but who must not be presumed upon. Repentence and trust in a holy God will result in deliverance (1:16-19). The alternative to faith - contempt[64] or pride[65] - is central to an understanding of sin for Isaiah.[66] This 'trust', or 'steadfast loyalty', אמונה, is congruous with respect for those in authority,[67] with acts of righteousness and generosity to those in need,[68] with shunning reliance on the self or human allies for defence[69] and, instead, enduring patiently a time of need in the hope of eventual deliverance.[70] Gammie writes,

> Isaiah's doctrine of the primacy of faith (see Isa.7:9; 28:16) is thus closely related to the doctrine of holiness: strength comes from trust in the Holy One of Israel (Isa.30:15), from relying on his counsel rather than from trusting in alliances with the militarily strong (Isa.31:1).[71]

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[62] Is.56:6-8; 60:3-6, 10-11, 14; 61:5; 62:2, 11; 66:18-21; cf. 2:2-3; 19:24-5.
[63] Is.7:9; 26:2; 28:16; cf. 11:5. Cf. Vriezen (1962: 134); Achtemeier (1988: 34-37); Barton (1995: 117-121). This motif is reminiscent of Abraham (Terrien 1978: 252).
[64] Is.1:28; 3:8f.; 5:12, 24; 8:6; 28:12; 29:15f., 20; 30:9-13, 15. (Cf. Num.14:11, which describes scorning (נאץ) as the exact opposite of faith (האמין) in YHWH).
[65] Is.2:7-19.; 3:16ff.; 9:8ff.; 10:5ff.; 22:15ff.; 23:9; 28:1ff., 14ff.; 59:1-8.
[66] E.g. Eichrodt (1960: 56); Vriezen (1962: 134); Barton (1995: 49).
[67] Is.5:15f.; 32:2; cf. 3:1-15.
[68] Is.1:17, 27; cf. 5:8.
[69] Cf. Is.1:20; 7:9; 8:12-13; 28:16; 31:1-3.
[70] Is.26:3-4; 30:15-18; 33:2.
[71] Gammie (1989: 82).

This is also the point of the narrative concerning Hezekiah and the siege of Jerusalem (chs.36-7), the only narrative in Isaiah. (Although האמין is not used here, בטח is used repeatedly in ch.36).

If Second Isaiah stresses the overwhelming power of YHWH to accomplish his divine purpose or plan of salvation (44:26, 28; 46:10, 11), then it is to create faith, just as First Isaiah's stress on YHWH's plan of judgement was meant to create faith through repentance, not despair (1:19, 20). There is no place for resignation to the divine inevitability. The most significant passage in this regard is Is.55:6-9. Coming as a preface to the unqualified concluding assurance that YHWH's purpose or plan would not fail to be accomplished (55:10-11), it paradoxically issues a conditional call to 'seek the Lord while he may be found' (55:6). Most important is how this search is expressed: by repentance ('let the wicked forsake his way') and loyalty ('let him return to the Lord', 55:7). The time of salvation will be characterised by אמונה; persons of trust will form the cornerstone of the new Zion.[72]

The human side of the partnership according to which the divine plan is fulfilled thus undergoes development. In First Isaiah YHWH's plans for judgement and disaster defeat all human plans; where there is allusion to his plans for salvation, these can be 'crossed' by human actions.[73] Israel must have regard to 'the deeds of the Lord' (5:12); there is a demand for obedience and for faith (7:9b; 28:16). But the plan of YHWH for salvation in Second Isaiah may be *fulfilled* by a human instrument, and the surprise comes with the choice of partner. The איש עצתו ('man of my plan') who is charged with bringing salvation to the people of God, who is described in the manner of a Davidic king (45:1, 3-6), is the foreign ruler Cyrus.[74] Is.28-9 spell out the mysterious and paradoxical nature of YHWH's עצה (28:29; cf. 29:9-16) and this resonates with 45:9ff. Each time YHWH uses foreigners.

The development in the use of the 'plan' terminology in First and Second Isaiah, and its absence in Third Isaiah, is such as to suggest that Third Isaiah focuses on the end of God's plan - the gathering of people, from all nations, to worship at Zion (see *4.1.4* below) -

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[72] Is.11:5; 28:16; cf. 26:2; 32:15-18; 43:10; 53:1.
[73] Cf. Ruppert (1990: 175).

rather than on the means by which this will be fulfilled. Given that this goal is evident throughout Isaiah, God's 'plan' may best be depicted by the English term 'project', according to which the end is continually in view, but concerning the actual means of fulfilment there is no blueprint. The plan is 'flexible' and subject to revision - revisions which are evident even within Isaiah (see *4.3.1* below). This is necessarily so, given that YHWH's sovereign activity operates in association with the human response. This response begins with *Israel's* response; though God's project is advanced by those outside Israel in circumstances when Israel's response is lacking.

4.1.4 The nations

The 'nations' theme is sharply highlighted in structurally significant passages at both the beginning and the end of the book of Isaiah (2:2-4; 66:18-24). Mount Zion will be exalted and all nations will gather - to hear YHWH's torah and establish peace (2:3-4), or to receive a sign and serve as messengers of YHWH's glory (66:19). This theme in no way eclipses the centrality of the people Israel, for it is often in the very context of YHWH's dealings with Israel, in judgement or salvation, that the nations appear. Rather, as noted above, YHWH's plan encompasses both Israel and the nations. It is the latter which is distinctive of Isaiah.

All three divisions of the book of Isaiah are concerned with the destiny of the nations,[75] though it is most prominent in Second Isaiah.[76] This theme in general provides another unifying factor in understanding Isaiah as a whole. The book of Isaiah contains several different kinds of references to foreign nations, however, as summarised by Davies:[77]

> Misplaced trust in alliances with foreign powers is a theme of the prophet's indictments of Israel,[78] and the judgement on Israel which he announces sometimes takes the form of an attack by a foreign nation.[79] But Yahweh as the ruler of the world[80] also challenges the nations[81] and threatens defeat and devastation both for individual peoples[82] and for the whole

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[74] Is.46:11; cf. 44:28. Cf. Ruppert (1990: 177f.).
[75] See the detailed analysis in Davies (1989: 95-105).
[76] גוים and close synonyms occur 22 times in chs.40-55; cf. van Winkle (1985: 446-458).
[77] 1989: 104f..
[78] 28:15-16; 30:1-7, 15-17; 31:1-3; cf. 18:1-2; 19:6.
[79] 5:26-30; 28:1-13, 14-22; 29:1-4; 39:5-7.
[80] 40:6-7, 15, 17, 23-24; 54:5.
[81] 41:1, 21-24; 43:9; 44:7; 45:20-21; 46:8-11(?).
[82] 7:5-9, 16; 8:1-4; 17:1-3 (Syria); 10:7-19, 24-34; 14:24-27; 30:30-33; 31:8-9; 37:26-29 (Assyria); 13:1, 17-22; 14:3-23; 21:1-10; 43:14; 47:1-3, 5-15 (Babylon); 14:28-31 (Philistia); 15-16; 25:10-12 (Moab); 18:1-2, 7 (Ethiopia); 19:1-17; 20:1-5 (Egypt); 21:11-17 (Arabia); 23 (Tyre); 34:5-17 (Edom).

> world.[83] Israel's enemies are specifically picked out for doom.[84] The contrast between the doomed pagan city and the security of holy Zion is marked.[85] Idolators will be humiliated.[86] But the nations are not apparently annihilated: they must submit to the rule of the Davidic line,[87] later transferred to Cyrus,[88] or will hear of and give praise for Yahweh's redemption of his people.[89] They will also play their part in it by bringing in the diaspora,[90] by bringing their tribute to Jerusalem[91] and by performing menial tasks.[92] Moreover a number of passages indicate the participation of the nations in the worship of Yahweh and the enjoyment with Israel of his blessing and salvation.[93]

Thus the destiny of the nations is by no means represented in a consistent way; indeed there are harsh differences. The text demonstrates a diversity regarding the position of the nations throughout each of its three sections.[94] There is a tension between universalism (e.g. Is.51:4-6, envisaging the salvation of the nations) and nationalism (e.g Is.49:22-3, expecting their submission to Israel). Van Winkle suggests this may only be resolved by recognising that the salvation of the nations does not preclude their submission to Israel:

> The prophet [Deutero-Isaiah] does not envisage the co-equality of Jews and gentiles. He expects that Israel will be exalted, and that she will become Yahweh's agent who will rule the nations in such a way that justice is established and mercy is shown. This rule is both that for which the nations wait expectantly and that to which they must submit.[95]

This is consistent with his interpretation of Is.42:5-9, commissioning Israel to become an agent of salvation for the nations.

Despite the different notes within Isaiah, the final shape of the book affords priority to a time when the nations as well as the exiles of Israel will one day congregate at the temple on the mountain of YHWH, where righteousness and justice will dwell, where they will hear YHWH's words and behold his glory (1:2-2:4; 65-66).

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[83] 2:6-22; 8:9-10; 9:4-5; 11:14-15; 13:2-16; 14:26; 17:12-14; 18:3-6; 24:1-13, 17-23; 26:21; 27:1(?); 30:27-28; 33:10-12; 34:1-4; 35:4; 52:4; 60:12; 63:1-16, 18; 64:1.
[84] 27:4-5, 7, (10?); 29:5-8; 33:1-2; 41:11-13; 49:26; 51:8, 12, 23; 54:15.
[85] In ch.24-27 and related passages elsewhere.
[86] 42:17; 44:11; 45:16, 24.
[87] 9:6-7; 11:4(?), 10, 14-15.
[88] 41:2-6; 42:1-4(?); 44:28; 45:1-7; 46:11; 48:14-15.
[89] 12:4-6; 25:3; 40:5; 41:20; 42:10-12; 45:6; 49:7, 26; 52:10, 15; 62:2; 66:18-19.
[90] 11:12; 49:22-23; 60:8-9; 66:20.
[91] 14:1-2; 18:7; 23:15-18; 45:14 MT; 60:5-7, 11, 13, 16; 61:6; 66:12.
[92] 60:10, 14; 61:5.
[93] 2:1-4; 19:18-25; 25:6-9(10a); 42:1-4, (6-7?); 45:22-25; 49:6; 51:4-6; (53?); (55:1-2?); 55:3-5; 56:3-7, 8; 66:18-24.
[94] Scholars have demonstrated the extremes of interpretation: within Second Isaiah, some have argued for a salvation of the nations as of Israel (e.g. Torrey 1928:118; Westermann 1969:100f.); others have argued there is no expectation of salvation on behalf of the gentiles (e.g. Snaith 1950: 191; Schoors 1973:302). Others have sought to explain the variations in the treatment of the nations; cf. van Winkle (1985: 446f.).

There is no doubt in this vision of the centrality of Zion/Jerusalem; yet features of the cult, as prescribed in the Pentateuch, are reinterpreted. The temple is regarded more as a place for YHWH's word than for sacrifice, emphasis is attached more to moral than cultic purity, and the focus is broadened to include more explicitly the role of non-Israelites.[96]

The four features which we have shown above to characterise the final form of Isaiah are clearly related to each other. YHWH who is over all and above all is - by his very nature as the Holy One of Israel - committed to a particular people, Israel, just as he has revealed his holiness in a particular place, Jerusalem. Just as 'Israel' is a theological title denoting a special status and vocation, so Jerusalem/Zion also is given paradigmatic significance as 'the city of righteousness, the faithful city' (1:26). The Holy One of Israel has a plan for the judgement and salvation of all. This plan focuses on Israel and it involves Israel; thus it demands their obedience and faith, a response of loyalty and dependence.

The plan is fulfilled at the point where the pilgrimage of the nations and the appearance on Zion of the divine glory converge.[97] All nations will gather in Jerusalem, at the temple, where they will hear God's word, where peace and justice will be established, where 'the glory of YHWH shall be revealed and all flesh together shall see it' (40:5; cf. 2:2-5; 6:3; 35:2; 59:19; 60:1-2). The elements of this plan may be seen to be fresh depictions of elements developed from the foundational texts of the Torah.

4.2 Examination and development of key texts

We have discussed the Isaianic picture of God as 'the Holy One of Israel' which is dominant throughout Isaiah, and we have identified other related motifs which are characteristic of the book. We now turn to three particular texts in the book, texts which serve as windows for illuminating the distinctive casting of holiness in Isaiah.

4.2.1 Justice and righteousness (Is.5:16)

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[95] Van Winkle (1985: 457).
[96] Although there are 'Priestly' texts which demonstrate an openness to admit foreigners to temple worship (e.g. Lev.22:18; cf. Is.56:6-7), the idea that foreigners might becomes priests and Levites (66:21) is wholly alien to the Priestly system.
[97] Rendtorff (1993: 152).

Ch.1 is often regarded as an overview of Isaiah.[98] Using the title 'Holy One of Israel' from the outset - recalling the fundamental character of Israel's God as holy and as committed to Israel - a critical problem is highlighted. God's people are sinful (חטא) and guilty (עון כבד, 1:4a):

> They have forsaken YHWH,
> they have despised the Holy One of Israel,
> they are utterly estranged (1:4b).

The two verbs עזב ('abandon, forsake') and נאץ ('scorn, despise') resonate with the covenant narratives where they concern the breaking of the covenant (cf. Dt.31:16, 20).[99] This accusation might be expected to bring on the corresponding threat, that YHWH might abandon the people (cf. Dt.32:19; Jer.14:21); but the outcome, rather, is estrangement.

This is depicted in quite literal terms: נזרו אחור, 'they have be-stranged themselves backwards', i.e. turned themselves back into strangers. Though Israel stood in a loyal relationship with YHWH, the *niph'al* of זור depicts the point at which God's people have cut themselves loose from their place of belonging, 'from [the] intimate circle in which trust is characteristic'.[100] The participle (זר) is normally used of an alien or foreigner (cf. 1:7). The clear implication is that 'God's chosen people have reverted to alien status'.[101] So the notion of exile in Isaiah is used metaphorically to describe the relationship between the people and God[102] as well as literally for the experience in Babylon.[103]

Ch.5 echoes this predicament and develops it in a particular way. Israel, God's 'beloved' (5:1, 7), 'will be exiled for want of knowledge (ידע)' (5:13). This 'knowledge' relates to 5:12b (cf. v.19), 'they do not pay attention to the activity of YHWH, and they do

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[98] Is.1 is widely viewed as a 'carefully wrought, later redactional piece to serve canonical purposes' (Brueggemann 1984: 90).
[99] There is, however, a general silence concerning the Mosaic traditions
[100] Wildberger (1991: 26).
[101] Motyer (1993: 44). Clearly this metaphor cannot be pressed too far: YHWH's election of Israel is not said to cease.
[102] Cf. Is.5:13; 6:12.
[103] Other language demonstrates this imagery; e.g. the word שוב (6:13) carries a double meaning: both 'repent' (of sin) and 'return' (of the exiles to Palestine).

not observe the work of his hands'. This activity of YHWH is described most precisely and uniquely[104] in 5:16,

> But YHWH of hosts is exalted in justice,
> and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.[105]

It is very common in Ezekiel for YHWH to be described as the one who 'shows himself as holy (נקדש)', where YHWH demonstrates his holiness by acting mercifully toward (ב נקדש) his people: he shows himself to be holy 'toward' his people'.[106] But this Priestly usage must be differentiated from that in Is.5:16, where ב is used to identify the *means* which YHWH uses to manifest his glory. Here is a virtual definition of God's holiness in moral, relational categories. It demands that we examine more carefully what specific meaning is attached to משפט ('justice') and צדקה ('righteousness') in the present context. The terms form a common word-pair, especially in First Isaiah.[107]

In 5:7, they describe the orderly, caring manner of life in relation to one's fellow citizens (cf. also 1:21; 28:17; 56:1), which is precisely what is missing. The word-play suggests that משפט contrasts with משפח ('bloodshed'), and צדקה with צעקה ('a cry'). Instead of righting wrongs, Israel is inflicting them; and instead of right relationships in Israel there are wrong relationships, for the oppressed cry with anguish.

In 9:6 'justice and righteousness' describe the activity of the future king who will establish peace and salvation.[108] In all these examples, a righteousness is implicit which brings with it and guarantees שלם (peace) and ברכה (blessing).[109] Whereas in First Isaiah especially, the terms describe human behaviour (either the preserving of justice and

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[104] Cf. Wildberger (1991: 205).

[105] This moral understanding of knowledge of YHWH resonates closely with Jer.22:16: '..."He judged the cause of the poor and needy, then it was well. Is not this to know me?" says YHWH.'

[106] Ezek.20:41; 28:22, 25; 36:23; 38:16; 39:27; see also Lev.10:3; 22:32; Num.20:13. See further ch.5 below.

[107] They are sometimes linked directly by way of ו ('and', 9:6 [ET7]; 33:5), but more often in a parallelism (1:21, 27; 5:7, 16; 16:5; 26:9; 28:17; 32:1, 16). Cf. also 56:1; 58:2; 59:9, 14. On this particular word-pair, cf. Weinfeld (1992: 228-246).

[108] Cf. also 11:5; 16:5; 32:1, 16f..

[109] Cf. 56:1f.; 61:8f. also. This does not necessarily imply that צדק and צדקה are never used to refer to a punishing action but only to actions which bring benefit (cf. Koch 1983: 77; von Rad 1962: 377). 'Wherever the saving order, which is what is meant by צדק, is damaged, then Yahweh must step in; then, the punishment of the wicked person would also be part of Yahweh's acting in a righteous way. If that would not take place, then the holy God would not be preserving his holiness' (Wildberger 1991: 206f.).

righteousness, or the neglect), in Second Isaiah 'righteousness' generally describes God's acts or behaviour in salvation (ישע).[110] Given that that both 'justice' and 'righteousness' proceed from God, then it follows that (especially in Third Isaiah) they describe the divine gifts which will be installed at Zion in the eschatological time of salvation (33:5; cf. 1:27; 30:18; 56:1; 59:8-11, 14).

It is human pride, above all, which violates YHWH's holiness, manifested in צדקה, and brings about his judgement (5:15; cf. 2:10-18; 3:16). The crux of Israel's problem is not with the cult (though their sacrifices have become meaningless given the injustice and hypocrisy, 1:11-17), but that Israel has spurned (rather than exalted) YHWH and turned their backs on him (1:4). This is precisely the situation about which Deuteronomy warns, urging life to be lived in conscious dependence on God.[111]

So Israel continues to live with guilt (עון) and sin (חטאה, v.18; cf. 1:4; 6:7; 40:2). Though both terms mean 'go astray', the first root can carry both juridical implications (in the case of someone failing to live according to standards of justice), and religious implications (in the case of someone violating cultic regulations). The second root implies a wrong intention i.e. an intention not in accord with God's will and undermining of faith in him (cf. Num.14:11). Used together, these terms build a broad, all-encompassing picture of the failure to live rightly, most particularly in moral and relational terms.[112]

The result is looming disaster. Yet this does not follow an automatic course. The Holy One of Israel has a plan (עצה., 5:19) by which Israel's estrangement will be reversed. The vision of restoration spelt out in 2:2-3 describes God's presence 'at the mountain of YHWH' as the focus for righteousness, where his people - indeed, where many peoples - will eagerly gather and fully respond in knowledge and obedience. He has not lost control of history,[113] and nor has Israel lost the ability for self-determination within the plan. But Israel must understand afresh the implications of God's holiness.

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[110] 41:10; 42:21; 46:13; 51:5, 6; cf. Rendtorff (1993: 162).
[111] Cf. *3.2.9* above. The influence of covenant theology on Isaiah is generally denied, but Roberts (1982: 135; cf. Ginsberg 1972: 50) notes the dependence of the analysis in Is.1 on Dt.32.
[112] Cf. Wildberger (1991: 22, 207). See Eichrodt (1961: 277-80) for a general (and typical) discussion of 'moral' vs. 'religious' holiness.
[113] This corresponds with Wildberger's (1991: 207) interpretation of YHWH's 'plan'.

4.2.2 Holy, holy, holy (Is.6)

In Is.6, Israel's predicament, cited and summarised in chs.1-5, is confronted by the Holy One of Israel. The narrative is commonly described as 'the call' of Isaiah even though it does not open the book of prophecy named after him, as with Jeremiah and Ezekiel. This distinctive 'retraction of the prophetic persona' allows the subject of the story - God - to overshadow the prophetic mediator or the narrative voice.[114] 'The whole scene may be seen as an explication of what the seraphs meant when they proclaimed Yahweh as holy'.[115] And the rest of Isaiah may be seen as an explication of what the scene means for the whole of Israel.

As a 'commissioning', it is above all a presentation of God's holiness and a demonstration of its impact on a mortal. The narrative form - of a call-vision by the person Isaiah - makes this confrontation especially vivid and explicit. We shall examine, firstly, the picture of God it presents, and secondly the effect of this experience on Isaiah and on the message in the rest of the book that flows out it. According to the canonical presentation, the whole message of Isaiah is 'unfolded as a transformation of inherited traditions in the light of that central vision'.[116] In reference to the vision of ch.6, we shall consider in particular Is.1 and Is.40.

It is revealed to the prophet that the glory of the Holy God fills the whole earth (6:3). He is awesome in majesty, enthroned on high and surrounded by seraphim (6:1-2). They are worshipping God with the words:

> Holy, holy, holy is YHWH of hosts;
> the whole earth is full of his glory (6:3).

This represents the most emphatic statement concerning God's holiness found anywhere in the Old Testament.[117] Indeed, the threefold repetition of קדש represents the strongest expression of any adjective possible in the Hebrew language.[118] The expression is an overwhelming 'super-superlative' which dominates the whole conception of holiness in the

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[114] Seitz (1988: 121).
[115] Roberts (1982: 132).
[116] Roberts (1982: 131); cf. Sweeney (1996: 136). On the significance of ch.6 in the context of the book as a whole, see Melugin (1976: 82-86); cf. Seitz (1990: 229:47).
[117] The same phrase is also the most emphatic expression in the New Testament; cf. Rev.4:8.
[118] A twofold repetition is used to express totality or the superlative (e.g., Gen.14:10; 2Ki.25:15). The only other threefold repetitions are found in Ezek.21:32[ET27] and Jer.22:29.

rest of the book. This is shown by the strong preference for the simple adjective rather than the adjectival noun.[119]

Throughout, the portrayal continually stresses the sole sovereignty of YHWH: he is a God of incommensurable power, a king who rules over all nations and whose glory cannot be contained. At his voice, buildings tremble and people fear. The response of the worshipping seraphim underscore this sovereignty:

> The terrifying six-winged seraphs, at whose voice the very foundations of the temple shake, show a striking deference toward Yahweh. These creatures, who are to be identified with a supercharged variety of the winged uraeus or cobra well known in Egyptian art, behave differently from their Egyptian models. In Egyptian iconography the winged cobra occupies the same position vis-à-vis the deity as Isaiah's seraphs, but he stretches his wings out over the deity in a protective gesture. Isaiah's seraphs, on the contrary, cover their own faces and pudenda from the presence of Yahweh. Yahweh needs no protection. Instead, even so awesome a creature as a six-winged seraph must hide his face from the fearsome glory of Yahweh. Even the seraphs cannot look upon God and live. One could hardly express any more vividly the sole lordship and matchless majesty of Yahweh. Yahweh alone is Lord. He brooks no rival.[120]

In terms of its effects, this vision of God's holiness brings to Isaiah a fearful consciousness of God's purity, and a simultaneous exposing of the ugliness of all that is defiled and profane. He is struck by his own and his people's unworthiness in relation to God (6:5), and he pleads in humble contrition. A seraph responds with a burning coal from the holy fire, declaring to Isaiah that his guilt (עונך) and sin (חטאתך) are forgiven (6:7). At this moment, Isaiah hears the call to speak to his people on the Lord's behalf: to harden their hearts and to warn of the coming devastation (6:8-13).

Some commentators are keen to note the distinctive moral or ethical perspective on sin and purity in this text,[121] but this must not obscure the cultic overtones which are implicit within the vision of holiness. Isaiah's vision of God takes place in the temple, where God's presence with his people is traditionally focused,[122] even though his glory is not confined to the sanctuary (cf. Ex.40:35) but fills the whole earth. The temple is filled with smoke, suggestive of priestly sacrifices at the altar, and by means of the rites of purification and

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[119] Motyer (1993: 18).
[120] Roberts (1982: 132).
[121] E.g., Roberts (1982: 132); Wildberger (1991: 268); Motyer (1993: 77); cf. Ps.24.
[122] Cf. Ex.25:8; 29:43; 1Ki.8:13.

atonement, performed by a seraph, Isaiah is made acceptable.[123] Although the prophet's vision transcends the sacerdotal system,[124] this is the starting point for understanding the vision; the categories of holiness laid down in the Torah are here taken for granted.[125] Furthermore, there is no apparent conflict between the priestly categories and the so-called prophetic emphases.[126] Rather, it is as if the vision demonstrates how the familiar conventions of the former extend out and encompass the whole of the earth and the whole of life, just as the present canonical texts of the Pentateuch suggest.[127]

The language of Isaiah's repentance and restoration recalls in particular the moral overtones of Israel's predicament presented in the earlier chapters[128] and the nature of YHWH's holiness in terms of צדק, righteousness (5:16). 6:5 presupposes that what characterises Isaiah characterises Israel also; and it demonstrates the proper response to YHWH's holiness, that of worship which exalts his power and majesty.

> At once Isaiah realises that it was the failure of himself and Judah generally to reflect the sovereignty of God, Yahweh's kingship at the centre of Israel's covenant life, the cult, which would account for the tremendous movement from prosperity to desolation... which Isaiah 6 projects.[129]

Thus can Isaiah's response be understood as exemplary: he is humbled (cf. the haughty, 5:15) and he draws near to understand the purpose of the Holy One (cf. those who are estranged/exiled for want of knowledge, 1:4; 5:13; also 5:19). He responds in faithful obedience, to act on God's behalf. These textual links allow for the suggestion that this personal response of Isaiah models that which is expected of Israel as a whole (cf. 8:18).

This suggestion is underlined by the description of the divine commission to 'make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes' (6:10). This imagery, and in particular the paired words שמע/ראה ('hear/see') and the corresponding בין/ידע

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[123] The use of כפר (6: 7) makes a direct reference to the cultic rite; cf. Lev.19:22.
[124] Cf. Terrien (1978: 249), 'The prophet's vision transcends the sacerdotal system, for it is God who initiates and fulfils the institutional deed.'
[125] Gammie (1989: 81 n.27) writes: 'Terrien's assessment may be correct, but rather underplays the extent to which the vision is bounded on all sides by a sacerdotal locus (temple), deeds (maintenance of fire and offering of incense) and thought-world (purging of sin).'
[126] As distinct from other prophets such as Amos (cf. Am.5:21-23), Isaiah links the language of 'cleanness' with 'justice', cf. Is.1:16-17 (even though, like Amos, he utters dismay at the sacrificial cultus, e.g. 1:13).
[127] See my chapters 2 and 3.
[128] Cf. Is.1:4; 5:18. See *4.2.1* above.
[129] Dumbrell (1985: 116) cf. 1984: 1-8.

('understand/know'; 6:9b; 10b), recall the introductory verses of ch.1.[130] There Israel's behaviour is placed in a double antithesis: the heavens hear, the ox and ass know, but Israel neither knows nor understands (1:2-3). The context makes it plain that this has something to do with Israel's sin (1:4); devastation of the land and exile is the consequence (1:7f.; 5:13; cf. 6:11).

Isaiah, by contrast, has seen ('In the year that King Uzziah died I saw (ראה) the Lord...', 6:1) and he has heard ('and I heard (שמע) the voice of the Lord saying...', 6:8), and so - following atonement from sin - it is made clear that he understands and knows. Isaiah's message, therefore, underlines the current state of Israel's sin and thus the corresponding lack of understanding. Throughout the book, the devastation of the land - both that connected with the Assyrian threat and that which relates to the Babylonian exile - is rooted in the plan of YHWH in Is.6, to inaugurate a period of blindness and deafness and hardening of hearts. And it is according to this plan - for the sake of seeing and knowing - that it is later announced how God will transform the desert into fruitful land in order to make the way back possible:

> That men may see (ראה) and know (ידע),
> may consider and understand together
> that the hand of YHWH has done this,
> the Holy One of Israel has created it (Is.41:20).

At other points in the book of Isaiah the metaphorical talk about seeing and hearing is taken up again.[131] The climax carries overtones of the way Isaiah saw it in the temple, envisaging a situation where all nations will be able to see and know YHWH and his activity by virtue of his glorious presence with Israel at Zion.[132]

It is sometimes said that the pericope 40:1-11 takes the literary form of a prophetic call narrative.[133] It depicts the heavenly council in a fashion remarkably similar to that of Is.6, especially in its emphasis on the heavenly voice (40:3, 8 cf. 6:4, 8) and YHWH's glory (40:5),[134] and the third section refers to a human messenger, though the text here is

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[130] Rendtorff (1993: 174).
[131] 42:16, 18-20; 43:8; 44:18f.; 56:10; cf. 59:1-3. Cf. Mauser (1982: 179-180); Clements (1985: 101-4).
[132] 40:5; 41:20; 42:6-7; 45:6, 14, 22-25; 49:26; 60:1ff.; cf. 61:9; 62:2; 66:18-19.
[133] Cf. Habel (1965: 314-316); Meade (1986: 35).
[134] Cf. Cross (1953: 274-77); also Rendtorff (1993: 177-8).

ambiguous as to whom this refers.[135] The connection is better made by tracing the corresponding themes of the two narratives, 6:1-10 and 40:1-11, however. Both texts mark a fundamental watershed: the climax of the announcement of judgement, which is inescapable (6:8ff.), and the beginning of the announcement of salvation, now that sin has been cancelled (40:2). It is obvious that without the preceding judgement the announcement of salvation has little function: all that begins and follows from ch.40 may be seen as dependent on ch.6.[136]

To summarise, the vision of Isaiah represents an overwhelming picture of the all-encompassing sovereignty and purity of God, set in the context of the temple where his relationship with his chosen people Israel is focused. This experience has the effect of bringing Isaiah to a knowledge of his own and his people's moral unworthiness before God. His own response of humble contrition brings about forgiveness and a charge to make known and participate in executing God's plan for all. First and foremost this plan involves judgement on Israel, for their lack of understanding.

4.2.3 The high and holy place (Is.57:15)

The aspects of YHWH's holiness which are affirmed in this principal vision - his incomparability, his moral purity and his particular commitment to Israel - represent an elaboration on those emphases identified in the early chapters of Isaiah (expressed most essentially in 5:16). The subsequent material in Isaiah is rooted in these same concerns, even in Second Isaiah where the plan of YHWH moves from judgement to salvation and the tenor of the text moves from pain to joy.

The goal of God's plan receives particular elaboration in Third Isaiah. The central section (chs.60-62) contains the core of the eschatological vision, an expanded and extended version of Isaiah's own vision (Is.6). Things that are said about YHWH in Second Isaiah are transferred to Israel or Zion in the form of eschatological promises.[137] The glory of YHWH will be exalted, shining on high as a bright light which contrasts with the darkness of all the earth (60:1-2), drawing all peoples together - bearing gifts - at the temple in Jerusalem in worship (60:3-7), where 'they shall call you the City of YHWH, the Zion of the Holy One of

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[135] The MT, Syriac and Targum read 'he said', whereas the LXX, Vulgate and 1QIsa read, 'I said'.
[136] Others point out that ch.6 is not a text that can be isolated either in the book of Isaiah; the relationship is mutual (cf. Steck 1972: 203; Rendtorff 1993: 179), but in my view this is less clear.

Israel' (60:14). Here 'your people shall all be righteous' (60:21); there will be no more affliction or imprisonment or mourning, but everlasting joy (61:1-7) and righteousness (61:11, cf. 8). So Israel's estrangement will be ended, 'you shall no more be termed Forsaken' (62:4).

God's people will be glorified (60:9) and the nations will see their vindication and their glory. They will be clothed in royal and priestly garments (62:3), symbols of their holiness;[138] indeed 'you shall be called the priests of YHWH, men shall speak of you as the ministers of our God' (61:6). Through Israel, God's glory will extend to those nations who respond to YHWH, who come and seek him at Zion.[139] This glory is expressed in terms of shoots in a garden, in which 'the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations' (61:11). Righteousness - the distinctive Isaianic expression of God's holiness (cf. 5:17) - is made a central feature of his salvation (60:17; 61:10; cf. 58:8) also. It will break forth like light, accompanied by a demonstration of God's glory (כבוד; 58:8; 62:1) and be evident to all (62:1; cf. 61:11).

This eschatological vision can be summarised as a revelation of God's holiness to Israel, and through Israel to all people, an expression of holiness which is consistent with the understanding of holiness established in Exodus and throughout the Pentateuch (see *4.3.2*). One major development, however, is the particular emphasis on righteousness which is consistently associated with holiness in Isaiah. Indeed, Third Isaiah opens with this emphasis, found in the familiar Isaianic word-pair:

> Thus says YHWH:
> "Keep justice (משפט), and do righteousness (צדקה),
> for soon my salvation (ישועה) will come,
> and my deliverance (צדקה, 'righteousness') be revealed (56:1).

This verse links the human requirement to act with justice and righteousness, introduced in First Isaiah, with the emphasis in Second Isaiah on God's righteousness as a component of the gift of salvation. It is suggestive of the reciprocal nature between the human and the divine, focused on צדקה.[140]

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[137] Rendtorff (1993: 164).
[138] Cf. also how the Davidic promises belonging to the king are extended to all Israel in 55:1-5.
[139] Note how the fate of the nations is determined by their response to YHWH (cf. 60:12; cf. 61:8).
[140] Rendtorff (1993: 163).

Concern about the 'doing' or 'not-doing' of righteousness retains its importance through Third Isaiah (57:1, 12; 59:8f., 14; 64:5f.). Even though righteousness is a gift of YHWH, related to salvation, the moral requirement of righteousness for God's people remains. This requirement is stressed most poignantly in 57:15, and connected very directly with YHWH's holiness. Depicted as a name, the verse thus underlines the quality of holiness as YHWH's most essential nature. In a parallel designed to contrast with the highway imagery in the prologue of Second Isaiah,[141] Third Isaiah stresses the need for preparing the way in a moral rather than a literal sense. Third Isaiah thus develops the moral note found in the final chapter of Second Isaiah (55:6f.):

> And it shall be said,
> "Build up, build up, prepare the way,
> remove every obstruction from my people's way."
> For thus says the high and lofty One
> who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
> "I dwell in the high and holy place,
> 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 (57:14-15).

The attributes of God described here, 'the high and lofty One', 'whose name is Holy', 'who inhabits eternity' are reminiscent of Is.6.[142] This similarity only adds to the distinctiveness of the 'paradox' which is depicted here: that YHWH 'dwells' (in the sense of being enthroned) beside the contrite and humble. The high and holy place is with the lowly. It is the contrary position, of pride, haughtiness, self-deception and lack of knowledge which remain the chief obstructions (cf. 5:15).[143]

There is a parallel in 66:1-2. This deals explicitly with the place of YHWH's presence: though heaven is his throne and the earth his footstool, the place of his 'rest' is with the one who is humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at his word. The sentiment suggests that 'of course' God is present in the usual places - in his house, for example - but that is irrelevant compared to the value of his presence with those to whom he looks, those who are humble enough to be worthy.

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[141] Cf. Whybray (1975: 208).
[142] Westermann (1969: 328).
[143] The term for 'obstruction', מכשול (57:15), is commonly used in Ezekiel of sin and guilt (7:19; 14:3, 4, 7; 18:30; 44:12). The sins which are described as impediments to full restoration include both cultic and moral

The path of justice and righteousness remains the means of preparation for the coming age, the means of participating in God's plan. When and how the coming age will happen is not expounded (cf. 60:21) - only that it is God's incomparable work, and it can be relied upon. Israel is called only to live in faithful dependence on God (cf. *4.1.3*) according to the principle of righteousness. This is a requirement to wait not with resignation, but with a stance of vigorous commitment and participation. It is a call to live in the light of the coming age. Although God's righteousness is a gift, characteristic of the new age, it is somehow also a necessary precondition for it.

Despite the positive picture of Is.60-62, the surrounding chapters of Third Isaiah are much more mixed concerning the picture of the restoration.[144] Even though the final chapter (66:20-23) depicts the climax of the eschatological gathering at Jerusalem in which 'all flesh shall come to worship before me, says YHWH', echoing Is.2, the final verse nevertheless implies some rather dark things about Zion and what needs to be done to transform it. The path of justice and righteousness, in loyalty to the one whose name is Holy, is clearly essential.

4.3 Isaiah in canonical perspective

4.3.1 Development within Isaiah

It is a function of the complex structure of the final form of Isaiah that this text is peculiarly fascinating and significant from a literary, canonical perspective. Precisely *because* there is no simple unitary, uniform presentation to the prophecies of doom or the plan of salvation, Isaiah witnesses to the possibility and the authority of on-going re-interpretation and elaboration of tradition within a single book. This is seen especially clearly between the three sections of Isaiah, though there are even examples within a particular section.[145]

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categories (56:9-12; 58:1-5; 65:1-7). But in Third Isaiah, as in First Isaiah, ritual is no substitute for moral obedience, cf. 1:10-17. Once more, judgement is promised to those who do not 'seek' YHWH (65:1, 8-16).

[144] Third Isaiah in particular lacks cohesiveness; it is this factor that brings the majority of critical scholars to describe it as a collection of separate oracles from many authors; cf. Meade (1986: 37).

[145] The Assyrian God planned to destroy on the mountains of Israel (14:24-27) is later offered salvation in 19:23-25.

That there is a conscious revision of what has gone before is confirmed by the use of the language of 'the old' and 'the new', found especially in Second Isaiah.[146] According to the theological context, the 'former things' are the prophecies of Is.1-39, mainly of judgement, which are confirmed by the force of the imagery which follows in chs.40-66.[147] So, as Childs notes, the proclamation of the forgiveness of God is set against the background of his former anger;[148] the theme of Jerusalem as the forsaken city is contrasted with the new city of joy,[149] false worship is replaced with true worship (58:6ff.); the seeing of a new heaven and earth is made the fulfilment of an earlier promise (11:6, 9) and God's 'stirring up' of Cyrus from the north picks up on his stirring of the Medes.[150] 'The canonical shape testifies to the continuity of God's plan with Israel which was first announced in chs.1-39 and confirmed in chs.40ff.'.[151] Though reference is made to YHWH's redeeming acts in the past, the brunt of Second Isaiah's argument is that even the current exile is part of YHWH's overarching plan, a plan or 'former thing' which was declared 'of old' and is now brought to pass (48:1-11).[152] Despite the people's rebellion and punishment, YHWH did not make a full end, for the sake of his *glory* (v.11).

This is the principle throughout Isaiah on which YHWH acts and according to which his plan may be revised. Thus there is a certain consistency to God's 'project', defined by his holiness. This is evident through all of the themes (cf. **4.1**) which unify Isaiah, even though they occur in different ways in different parts of Isaiah. These themes come together in the eschatological goal of God's history: the exaltation of his holiness before all people, that all may experience his glory and worship him in the holy city, just as Isaiah himself experienced it (2:2-4; 66:18-21). The means to achieving that goal involves his chosen

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[146] The phrase the 'former and latter things' occurs about ten times in chs.40-55 in slightly varying form: 41:21-29; 42:6-9; 43:8-13; 16-19; 44:6-8, 24ff.; 45:9-13; 45:20-21; 46:8-11; 48:3-8, 14-16. Meade (1986: 35) has called this awareness of authoritative tradition a 'canon-consciousness'. Third Isaiah also identifies with what has gone before, cf. 65:17.

[147] This observation follows Childs (1979: 328-330), Clements (1982a: 117-129); Meade (1986: 35-36) and Williamson (1994: 70-72) who examine the *use* to which this concept is put in the present context. This distinguishes them from the critical consensus (e.g. Bentzen 1948: 183-7; North 1950: 111-126; Anderson 1962: 177-95; 1976: 339-60; von Rad 1965: 246-247) which argues that the rubric old/new refers to Exodus/New Exodus.

[148] 40:1; cf. 1:5ff.; 3:1ff.; 42:25; 57:16.

[149] 62:4; cf. 1:7ff.

[150] 41:25; cf. 13:17.

[151] Childs (1979: 329).

[152] Second Isaiah employs the argument from prophecy to demonstrate YHWH's sovereignty even in the midst of the defeat of exile; cf. 42:23-25; 43:26-28; 50:1.

people Israel; it is this factor that brings about the on-going need for flexibility and revision in the plan. Holiness is no static concept, but a relating, moving force. Because YHWH is sovereign, he acts for the sake of his holiness, even if this may *seem* to undermine his plans. Thus the plan of salvation begins with judgement, and the plan for a gathering at the holy city begins with exile from it. If God's people do not cooperate, then he makes other people and nations instrumental for his plans. Seitz summarises the principle of YHWH's different actions as follows:

> When Israel chooses to become like the nations, and is finally indistinguishable from them, the fury of Yahweh that was to protect Zion is turned against his own people. But the positive side of Zion theology is that God has an ultimate stake in Israel and will defend his presence among them, if only for his own sake (37:35). This theological position is rarely stated in such a blunt manner...[153]

4.3.2 Isaiah and the Pentateuch

Just as the book of Isaiah testifies to the re-definition of tradition internally, so it also does this externally, within the Hebrew canon as a whole.

Although there is much in Isaiah which resonates with the understanding of holiness established from the Pentateuch, there are a variety of concerns which are developed with a distinctive emphasis. These are summarised below.

(a) Cultic aspects of holiness are taken for granted in Isaiah. The stress is placed, rather, on moral concerns, particularly justice and righteousness, as if these basic priorities had been overlooked in the concern for cultic exactitude (1:12-17).[154] Vriezen describes it:

> In Isaiah the holiness of Yahweh emerges, as it were, out of the cultic sphere of the sanctuary where it had been confined and appears in the world, filling the whole earth with its glory. Thus Yahweh as the Holy One goes out to rule the world and its history.[155]

(b) Whereas Exodus and Leviticus designate particular people as priests, with responsibility for holiness in Israel, in Isaiah the whole nation is held responsible for its situation. Those who are left following judgement - the remnant - are called 'the holy ones' (4:3; cf. 6:13)

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[153] 1993: 58-9.

[154] It is an exaggeration to describe 'prophetic holiness' as purely 'moral' on the basis of Isaiah; equally it is mistaken to confine the concerns of 'Priestly holiness' to the cultic sphere. Knohl (1995: 212ff.) considers the similarities between Isaiah and the 'Holiness Code' of Leviticus.

[155] 1962: 132.

and form the basis of the new vision of holiness to all at Zion (e.g., 60:9). In the end-vision, the cult is democratised even further. All Israel shall be called 'priests of YHWH' (61:6), and foreigners and eunuchs are given access (56:3-8).[156]

(c) Although Israel's call to be a holy nation alludes to God's interest in all nations (Ex.19:6), it is only in Isaiah that the nations are given a prominent place. Occasionally this involves a role for other people and nations in helping bring about God's plan, but more frequently it is simply that the nations are included in the scope of God's future salvation at Zion. The book of Isaiah thus imposes a wider perspective on Israel's election by YHWH, and an understanding of their special role, under YHWH, in bringing salvation to all (49:6; 55:5; 66:19).

(d) Isaiah often refers to God as 'the Holy One of Israel'. This expression exemplifies the connection between the holy God YHWH and his people, Israel. Although God is incomparable in power and glory, he remains accessible to his people even though they do not cease to be reluctant and rebellious throughout (cf. 65:11), and he also remains committed to revealing his glory through them (cf. 60:21). God is relational in his holiness, and thus his plan of holiness operates in collaboration with them. It is because of this relational element in the plan - of Israel's continuing failure to respond, coupled with YHWH's sovereignty - that the plan is continually revised.

(e) YHWH's holiness consists of a dynamic force; it contains a movement towards the eschatological end of all things. This is the point at which God's holiness will be exalted and his glory evident to all. This will be accompanied by justice and righteousness and joy; and all flesh will worship him. The call to be holy, to live justly and rightly, is a call to live life in the light of this end.

These 'alterations' to the torah tradition do not require the negation of that which went before. Rather, as changes of emphasis (rather than total re-definition) they assume and depend on what has gone before, just as in Isaiah, the 'latter things' depend on the former things. Furthermore, we found that Israel's call to be a holy nation in Ex.19:6 (see ch.1 above) requires an openness of interpretation which certainly caters for Isaiah's developments.

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[156] This contrasts with, e.g., Lev. 21:16f.; 22:10; Ezek.44:9.

The re-interpretation which takes place in Isaiah is best understood as the borrowing and adaptation of traditional motifs for a new circumstance, in order that the end - which does not change - may be achieved. Thus, for example, the motif of the pilgrimage of the nations, familiar from the old Zion tradition, is combined with the exodus tradition.[157] The preparation of a banquet on Mount Zion (25:6; cf. 24:23) resonates with the covenant meal of YHWH with the elders on Mount Sinai (Ex.24:9-11). The portrayal of the new exodus represents a rich interweaving of creation and the patriarchal, exodus and Zion traditions (51:1-11; 63:8-19), all to the end of expressing YHWH's special blessing for Israel, as well as the place for foreigners, in the coming age of salvation.

No tradition is borrowed in an unqualified way, it seems, even between the different layers of Isaiah. Not only are there elements of difference between Isaiah and other Israelite traditions, but there exists also a re-reading of the literary tradition between the 'layers' of the book of Isaiah alone. This adds considerable force to the conclusion that the persistence of the book of Isaiah within the canon witnesses to the possibility of revision and transition within Mosaic Yahwism. In other words, it witnesses to the fact that there is room for transformation even within a single dispensation.

To pose the situation in this way begs the question of the traditions, or the parts of a tradition, which are being re-read. The terminology of God's plan in Isaiah suggests that, at the least, we may suppose that a divine plan is revealed here. This may supersede a previous divine plan or it may simply supply details which Israel had not previously known. Either way, the book of the prophet Isaiah provides the revelation of the 'new' plan in the context of a new revelation of God's holiness, in such a way as to forestall any compromise to God's sovereignty.

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[157] Cf. 49:1-7, 22; 51:3; 54:11-17.

Chapter 5
'For the sake of my holy name': The context of Ezekiel

This chapter considers another of the major prophetic books, Ezekiel, in view of its key contribution to the understanding of holiness in the Hebrew canon, both that of YHWH and of his chosen people. Ezekiel builds upon Israel's central covenant tradition far more candidly than does Isaiah, at the same time as developing one of Isaiah's distinctive concerns, that of the place of the nations in the coming age. The nations form part of both the cause and the intended outcome of YHWH's call of holiness to Israel.

5.1 Visions of glory

It is common to divide the book of Ezekiel into four sections on the basis of their subject matter: 1-24 (oracles of judgement against Judah and Jerusalem); 25-32 (oracles against foreign nations); 33-39 (oracles of hope for those in exile); and 40-48 (vision of the renewed temple and regulations for the cult).[1] Far more significant for the structure of the book and the presentation of its message, however, is the treatment of the recurrent motif of the glory of YHWH. This occurs most vividly in the accounts of three visions in which the prophet directly experiences the glory of God.

These visions are set within a carefully specified chronological frame, between the fifth (1:2) and twenty-fifth (40:1) year of Israel's exile in Babylon.[2] This frame has the effect of tying the whole work more closely than is usual to a particular sequence of events in Israel's history. It specifically addresses the cause of Israel's exile and the hope of restoration. The accounts of the visions of glory are told in such a way as to indicate that it

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[1] E.g. McKeating (1993: 15); Biggs (1996: xiv); both of these examples, however, note the significance of the visions (pp.102 and xvi respectively).

[2] In contrast to most other prophetic books, in which oracles are vaguely dated or not dated at all, Ezekiel records many specific dates (see, for example, 1:1-3; 3:16; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1, 17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1, 17 and 33:21); cf. Wilson (1984: 119). Note that the latest dated prophecy dates from the twenty-seventh year

is the presence or absence of God's glory - the manifestation of his holiness[3] - which is determinate for Israel's fortune.

5.1.1 God's glory summons the prophet (1:1-3:13)

The book of Ezekiel begins with a record of the prophet's call, a narrative which sets the tone for the whole of the rest of the book. This form is conventional among the prophets, and normally serves to undergird their authority. But the call narrative of Ezekiel is shaped to address other purposes also. A vision experienced in Babylon that traditionally belongs to the Jerusalem temple (1:4-28), and the reference to Ezekiel's priesthood (1:3), are not normally associated with the prophetic office.

The vision describes God's triumphant presence in the temple. Although the קדשׁ root is completely absent, God's holiness is depicted in every detail. The imagery of fire and cloud (1:4) echoes Moses' experience of the divine presence at the burning bush (Ex.3:2) and Israel's experience of the divine presence with the tabernacle in the wilderness (Ex.40:38). Amidst the drama of four winged creatures flashing with wheels below a sapphire throne (1:5-28), a graduated, spatial understanding of God's presence is presented. This follows the priestly conception of holiness found in Exodus and Leviticus, associated initially with the tabernacle and more permanently with the temple.

The vision culminates in the prophet's attempt at describing YHWH himself. Far from a direct description, a 'triple' construct is used to describe YHWH, in terms of his glory (כבד), stressing the difference and distance between God and humanity by four degrees of removal in the Hebrew:

> Such was the *appearance* of the *likeness* of the *glory* of YHWH (1:28; italics mine).

If glory is "holiness uncovered",[4] then here is the progressive uncovering of YHWH's glory. It is overpowering: it brings Ezekiel to fall on his face. As with Isaiah's vision, it is at this point that he hears YHWH speaking and sending him 'to the people of Israel, a nation of rebels, who have rebelled against me' (2:1ff.).

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of exile (29:17) suggesting that the material *within* the chronological frame is ordered according to a theological principle, rather than a historical one. Cf. Childs (1979: 361).

[3] We have already discussed how the terminology of holiness and glory are closely related in Scripture: if not completely synonymous, the latter is employed for a manifestation of the former so that it is visible and acessible to the senses. Cf. Snaith (1944: 48f.); Muilenburg (1962: 622); and Gammie (1989: 195).

Literally, therefore, the knowledge of YHWH, in his holiness, is seen to be the spring from which flows the prophet's message.[5] Both God's holiness, and the concern for the knowledge of YHWH, become increasingly explicit through the book. It seems that this vision, presented in the genre of a prophetic call narrative, is a reminder not so much of Ezekiel's identity, but of YHWH's. The vision of this holiness and otherness sets the note from which all of his historical activity, of both judgement and blessing, is to be understood. It is the starting point for the affirmation in Ezekiel that the God of Israel will not be limited by geography or compromised by disobedience.[6] For, above all, God acts 'for the sake of my holy name'.

5.1.2 God's glory withdraws from the temple (8-11)

The 'troublesomeness' of God's glory is expounded in chs.8-11, diverse material which is carefully organised into a single visionary experience.[7] A burning figure leads Ezekiel to Jerusalem again, to the temple precinct. Ezekiel again encounters the divine glory - 'like the vision that I saw in the plain' (8:4) - but simultaneously he sees 'the great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here' (8:6), countless examples of idolatry among his compatriots (8:7-18). This is punished by agents of God, men who go through Jerusalem slaughtering the unfaithful citizens and burning the city (9:1-10:7). The final end for Israel is represented by a vision of God's glory leaving the temple (10:18-22; 11:22-25). This takes place gradually - as if bespeaking a patient hope that the disaster might be avoided[8] - interspersed with further scenes of the people's wrongdoing (11:1ff.). Certainly, it is at this point of 'rock bottom' despair for Israel that seeds of hope are sown (11:19f. cf. 36:26-8).

Israel's wrongdoing is conceived in both cultic and ethical terms, though the former is the most prominent:

> The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of blood, and the city full of injustice; for they say, "YHWH has forsaken the land..." (9:9).

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[4] Jacob (1958: 80).

[5] Greenberg (1983: 80) argues that this event of theophany demonstrates for Ezekiel - whatever the opposition - evidence and assurance of divine favour and support. If this is, indeed, the prime purpose, then the second theophany demonstrates strikingly the reverse case for Israel.

[6] Note that neither of these aspects are particular to Ezekiel. Although the notion that God's ability to work where he wishes - not bound to the holy land - has been described as 'revolutionary' in Ezekiel (e.g. Stalker 1968: 49) YHWH is nowhere anything less than a god with universal dominion, even though the manifestation of his holiness, and thus where he is worshipped, have previously been limited to the land of Israel. See further *5.4.2*.

[7] Greenberg suggests that the complexity of the material indicates a considerable literary effort (1980: 150).

[8] Cf. Greenberg (1980: 159).

Indeed, YHWH forsakes Israel since Israel has forsaken YHWH. Abandonment by God is the final tragedy - the last straw, the ultimate punishment - in the depiction of Israel's profanations and abominations, and this is pictured in terms of the absence of holiness. If Israel cannot hope for YHWH's presence and holy indwelling, then it is no different from any other nation.

5.1.3 God's glory returns to the temple (40:1-43:12)

Although at first sight the last nine chapters of Ezekiel look quite different from the rest of the book, they are, in form, a vision of Jerusalem and its temple, in which the prophet is said to have been transported from Babylon to his homeland. Thus they balance the earlier complex of 8-11, not least because central to chs.40-48 and the restoration of temple and cult is the re-entry of the glory of God (43:1-5).

The concerns, concepts and terminology of the reconstructed temple and cult correspond closely with the Sinai legislation of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, even though '[Ezekiel's] requirements are generally more stringent than those of the Pentateuch'.[9] The arrangement of the programme of restoration in Ezekiel follows the same order: first a description of the sanctuary,[10] then regulations for its ritual and personnel[11] and finally placement of the tribes in the surrounding land. There are differences, however:

> The major omissions in Ezekiel, when compared with the priestly legislation, are the whole system of purity and impurity, ethics and morality (e.g. sexual conduct), idolatry, and private life (e.g. vows) - in sum, all the prescriptions of lay conduct making Israel a holy nation![12]

Such omissions do not imply annulment. Rather, as we shall see below, they presuppose the demands of the Torah upon each and every citizen of Israel.[13] After the first 39 chapters of the book, only regulations concerning the public realm of worship, 'keeping charge of my holy things and over the sanctuary' (cf. 44:8) are left, so as to ensure his continuing presence

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[9] Greenberg (1984: 203).
[10] Exodus focuses on the materials and furnishings, whereas Ezekiel gives measurements of the structure.
[11] Exodus deals with details concerning the priestly vestments (28) and the ritual for consecration (29). Leviticus repeats some of these concerns and discusses also their functions (Lev.9-10). Ezekiel is very much briefer, but also discusses the priests clothing (44:15-9), plus their functions (44:23-4) and some rules for keeping themselves holy.
[12] Greenberg (1984: 203).
[13] As Zimmerli (1965: 523) points out, holiness in Ezekiel is not only defined in priestly terms; it also has moral and ethical elements. The Israelites' transgression, for example, is understood with reference to the decalogue.

in Israel and the maintenance of the renewed relationship. The return of God's holy presence to Israel's most holy place (and thus the resumption of the cult) is the culmination of Israel's return to YHWH and his holy calling on their lives.

5.2 The 'radical theocentricity' of Ezekiel

There is a 'radical theocentricity'[14] throughout the book of Ezekiel. This is evident in many aspects: in the perspective from which historical events are narrated and explained;[15] in the role of Ezekiel as proclaimer of the word of God; in the theological profile of the addressee; and in a range of recurrent phrases and formulae. This *theo*centricity may be defined more specifically as a *YHWH*-centricity: at all times the references to God are to YHWH, the God of Israel, the God who made a covenant with Moses at Sinai, the God who has simultaneously bestowed favour and made demands upon his chosen people. This emphasis comes across most distinctly in the frequent reminder that 'I am YHWH',[16] expressed particularly in the repeated concern 'that you (or they) may know that I am YHWH'.[17] Other common formulae which give expression to the God-centred emphasis include 'for the sake of my name' and 'I will vindicate my holiness'.

Knowledge of God as YHWH is the purpose to which all of God's activities in history point. Such is the accentuation on the name of God as YHWH that there is much in Ezekiel from which to construct a theology of the 'name' (שֵׁם).[18] In other words, the book of Ezekiel expounds further the meaning and significance of God's self-revelation as YHWH to Moses in Ex.3 and Ex.6.[19] This feature is emphasised by the parallels to Moses to be found in the presentation of the person of Ezekiel (see further 5.*3.1*). He is a priest, and he is a prophet in Moses' line; and he has been given a vision of the glory of God which impels his

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[14] This term is borrowed from Joyce (1989: 89). Cf. Childs (1978: 51; 1979: 360).

[15] The emphasis on YHWH marks not only the threats of judgement but also the hopes of restoration.

[16] The words אני יהוה ('I, YHWH') occur 84 times in the book of Ezekiel. The NRSV understands this as 'I am YHWH' in approximately 57 places, which represents over one third of the total occurrences (155) in the Old Testament. For references and further analysis, see 5.*2.3* below.

[17] 54 of the occurrences of 'I am YHWH' occur as part of this longer clause, and there are over twenty further instances containing minor variations. For further discussion, see *5.2.4* below.

[18] In total there are 14 references to the divine name (שֵׁם) in Ezekiel (20:9, 14, 22, 39, 44; 36:20, 21, 22, 23; 39:7 [x2], 25; 43:7, 8). Ten of these are closely associated with קדש.

[19] Zimmerli (1982:8) identifies a 'historical recapitulation' of Ex.6:6-8 in the account of the election of Israel in the wilderness in Ezek.20:5-7. This is, in fact, the only occurrence of the 'pure' self-introductory formula.

subsequent ministry. This is revealed in the focus on God's holiness throughout the rest of the book.

5.2.1 The language of holiness

There are, in total, ninety-nine occurrences of the root קדשׁ in the book of Ezekiel,[20] nearly two-thirds of which appear in the final portion (chs.40-48), the vision of restoration.[21] Of the rest, there is a particular concentration of קדשׁ-derivations in chapters 20 (six references),[22] 36 (six references)[23] and 39 (five references).[24] Of the verbal forms of קדשׁ, the Niphal (six occurrences)[25] and Piel (seven occurrences)[26] are the most common forms; there are no Qal or Hiphil forms at all.

Clearly, holiness is a far more appropriate category for describing a future restored Israel than the present Israel of exile. As is evident especially from Isaiah, holiness (from Israel's point of view) is a goal. In the early chapters of Ezekiel, nearly all the appearances of the קדשׁ root occur as מקדשׁ ('holy place, sanctuary'), referring to the temple in Jerusalem which has been profaned.[27] The remaining appearances are largely more direct references to God: to his holiness (including his mountain and those things that are his)[28] or to his activity which develops out of his holiness.[29] Note that all of these references occur in chapters 20, 22 and 28; chapter 20 is particularly important for the concerns of this study.

Chapter 20 serves to summarise Israel's predicament before YHWH. It is allied with the situation of exodus and wilderness wanderings. There is a repeated pattern: the people have been chosen (v.5), rescued (v.6, 9, 17) and shown how to live (v.7, 11f., 19f.); but each

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[20] These ninety-nine references consist of: two adjectives (קדוֹשׁ), fifteen verbs, fifty-two occurrences of the noun קדשׁ ('holy thing') and thirty occurrences of the noun מקדשׁ ('sanctuary').

[21] With reference to the other sections of the book, there are eighteen references in chapters 1-24 (concerning mainly oracles of judgement against Judah and Jerusalem) , five in chapters 24-32 (the collection of oracles against foreign nations) and a further sixteen references in chapters 33-39 (oracles of hope for those in exile).

[22] 20:12, 20, 39, 40 (x2), 41 (x2).

[23] 36:20, 21, 22, 23 (x2), 38.

[24] 39:7 (x3), 25, 27.

[25] 20:41; 28:22, 25; 36:23; 38:16; 39:27.

[26] 20:12, 20; 36:23; 37:28; 44:19, 24; 46:20.

[27] 5:11; 7:24; 8:6; 9:6; 21:7 [ET 2]; 23:38, 39; 24:21; 25:3; 28:18. The only exception is 11:16, where the reference is not to a *physical* holy place but to God himself being a sanctuary to his scattered people.

[28] 20:39, 40a; 22:8, 26a; 28:14. There are two references to 'the holy' which do not explicitly relate to God's holiness (20:40b; 22:26b). In both verses there is a preceding reference to God's holiness. The second is a quotation of Lev.10:10 and refers to the task of priests to distinguish between the holy and the common.

[29] 20:12, 20, 41; 28:22, 25.

time they have rebelled (v.8, 13, 21). Just as the Exodus and Sinai revelation led to the sin with the golden calf, so the conquest and settlement led to the taking over of Canaanite worship practices. So God acted 'for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations' (v.9, 14, 22). The link between the name of YHWH and his holiness is made explicit. YHWH is holy and Israel is called not only to know him and his holiness (v.26), but to demonstrate his holiness. In this they have repeatedly failed: they have failed to walk in God's statutes and ordinances, they have profaned God's sabbaths (v.12, 21), and they have not respected God's holy place (vv.28-31). This denies YHWH's kingship over them (v.33).

Thus God will bring them out from the peoples (v.34) and enter into judgement with them (v.35f.) - so that they will know that he is YHWH (v.39). The second half of the chapter describes the new exodus, in language which strongly echoes the old.[30] There follows a promise of restoration; this consists of a return to faithful service on the holy mountain in the land of Israel (v.40). Then they will know that God is YHWH (v.42) and, what is more, his holiness will be manifest among them 'in the sight of the nations' (v.41).

Chapter 20 makes clear God's primary concerns in choosing Israel: that his holy name, YHWH, should be made known, not just in Israel but in the sight of all nations. This includes his being king over them and thus their being obedient and faithful. The text underlines God's commitment, through the history of Israel and in their future, to see this purpose fulfilled. As Muilenburg puts it,[31]

> holiness [in Ezekiel] is not confined solely to the sphere of the cult, but extends itself to the peoples of the world and to world history.

That God acts for the sake of his name, his holiness, is conveyed most poignantly in the coining of key phrases which recur in Ezekiel. These are considered below.

5.2.2 'For the sake of my name'

The whole of the book of Ezekiel underlines the notion of holiness as the fundamental and ultimate aspect of God's being. Not only is the focus of the book consistently on YHWH

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[30] For example, God will do it 'with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm' (20:34). Cf. also the wilderness confrontation (20:35-6), the selection of the faithful (20:38) and faithful worship 'on my holy mountain' (20:40ff.). This parallel between exodus and return is developed at length in Second Isaiah, though there is no notion of a wilderness 'confrontation' whereby the faithful are sorted out from the unfaithful.

[31] Muilenburg (1962: 622).

himself and his presence; it is more particularly on his holiness. This is not simply a quality he possesses; it is not just one aspect of his character. Rather, as this phrase shows especially clearly, he *is* it.

Of the fourteen references to his name, nine of them appear in the fuller form 'my holy name' (שֵׁם קָדְשִׁי)[32] and in a tenth case, (36:23), YHWH is spoken of as 'sanctifying' (Piel) his 'great name'. It would seem, then, that there is a firm association between the name (שֵׁם) and words of the root קדשׁ.[33] God's very name is holiness: in other words, he is holiness, and everything connected with him derives holiness from him. Thus we find he is the subject of all קדשׁ verbs, and these generally carry a reflexive sense such as: 'I will vindicate my holiness' or 'I will sanctify myself'.[34] God's holiness is compromised by the people with whom he has identified his name, the people who are called holy. Therefore God's activity of punishment and restoration in respect of these people is solely 'for the sake of my name': for the purpose of restoring his holiness. God's holiness cannot be abstracted from the people with whom he has associated his name. By logical necessity the restoration of God's name involves the restoration of the holy nation.

5.2.3 'I am YHWH' (אני יהוה)

Zimmerli has argued that this formula constitutes a central and distinctive feature of Ezekiel. The frequency of the formula is sufficient to secure it an important place within the style and theology of the book, even though the words occur in many different parts of the Old Testament canon.[35] They recall one particular context in particular:

> It is not fundamentally a statement of objective description, but is rather YHWH's self-statement in which he reveals himself in his most personal mystery, his name, to [Moses]... The most significant passages in which this previously unknown One reveals his name are

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[32] 20:39; 36:20, 21, 22; 39:7 [twice]; 39:25; 43:7, 8.

[33] In addition, the verb with which the divine 'name' most frequently occurs is חלל ('to profane'), which carries further associations with holiness. This occurs on nine (out of fourteen) occasions: 20:9, 14, 22, 39; 36:20, 21, 22, 23; 39:7. Also, in 43:7 and 8 the 'name' is spoken of as 'defiled' (טמא).

[34] Procksch (1964: I.90) expresses this sense as follows: 'What is indicated is not so much entry into a state of holiness as the expression of the essence of divine holiness'. The Niphal form occurs six times: 20:41; 28:22, 25; 36:23b; 38:16; 39:27. In addition, there is one Hithpael form employed at 38:23 which carries the same sense, and a Piel in 36:23a which is also reflexive in meaning: 'I will vindicate the holiness of my great name'.

[35] For example, Ex.6:2; 20:2; Lev.19:2; Dt.5:6; Ps.81:11(ET10); Is.45:5; Jer.9:23(ET24); 24:7. On these grounds Fohrer (1970: 409) considers the formula merely 'an interpretative formula that has been appended to other literary types'.

> Exodus 3 E and Exodus 6 P. They show that Yahweh's revelation of his name in the Old Testament does not simply remain a self-contained mystery that has no external effect... [36]

Just as with the occurrences of this formula in Exodus and Leviticus, so also in Ezekiel, the name of God implies certain demands of Israel. These demands are commensurate with the events originally associated with the formula: in a nutshell, Israel's election. This is made clear in chapter 20, where the only 'pure' occurrence of the formula appears in conjunction with the sole use in Ezekiel of בחר (to choose):

> Thus says the Lord God: On the day when I chose Israel, I swore to the seed of the house of Jacob, making myself known to them in the land of Egypt, I swore to them, saying, I am YHWH your God... (Ezek.20:5).

Indeed, YHWH's self-introduction in Ezek.20:5 is emphasised by repetition and it is qualified by an oath. In other words, God's name itself is Israel's promise of loyalty. The mystery behind God's name becomes the dynamic behind the story which follows. This is made explicit in 20:44, 'And you shall know that I am YHWH, when I deal with you for my name's sake.'

Zimmerli says of 20:5,

> ... the formulation shows us a daring "modernization" in the slurring of the traditions in a way we encounter nowhere outside the book of Ezekiel. Within an important sequence the giving of the Law is woven totally into the departure period of the Exodus story. What in the older tradition followed by P is separated into two event sequences - the leading out of Egypt (with the preceding call of Moses and attendant revelation of the name of Yahweh) and the events at the mountain of God - is in Ezekiel 20 concentrated and tautly integrated by the prophet into the initial introductory encounter of Yahweh with his people... The result is that here, too, the phrase "I am Yahweh" carries all the weight and becomes the denominator upon which all else rests. Our interpretation may then assert that everything Yahweh has to announce to his people appears as an amplification of the fundamental statement "I am Yahweh". [37]

If the name of God as YHWH 'encloses the unassailable mystery of his singularity and uniqueness'[38] then its use in Ezekiel as a statement of recognition will carry numerous connotations.[39] The succeeding portion of the chapter expresses three main assertions. First

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[36] Zimmerli (1982a: 81). He argues (1982: 7-13, 22-28) that the *Sitz im Leben* of the formula occurs in theophanic speech. Subsequently it becomes a legal maxim in liturgical proceedings. These historical conclusions coincide with the canonical presentation of the origins of the formula: it inaugurates Mosaic Yahwism.

[37] Zimmerli (1982: 8-9).

[38] Zimmerli (1982a: 82).

[39] Cf. Blank (1940: 14ff.), who argues that the primary purpose of the (later) use of the phrase 'I am YHWH' was to assert a doctrine of monotheism.

and most importantly, God is concerned for the sanctity of his name. Israel has profaned it (20:9, 14, 22, 39); it is for this reason that he acts (20:9, 14, 22). Secondly, there is an explicit statement that YHWH's kingship over Israel is what matters (20:33). Thirdly, there is a longing that the whole of the house of Israel should serve YHWH. All of these concerns relate to the purpose that 'I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations' (20:41).

The effect of Ezekiel's use of the phrase 'I am YHWH' is multifold. It brings the people of Israel to look both backwards and forwards, to live in a way which is faithful both to their tradition and their calling. This involves recalling that 'I am YHWH' in Babylon as in Jerusalem, thus singing the old song in a new land. YHWH's demands of his chosen people - of service, obedience, priestliness and holiness - have not changed. The name YHWH summons them to remember the covenant and live by it. This does not alter, whatever the circumstances.

All of these demands are corollaries of an even more basic end. This is revealed in the frequently extended version of the formula, always a response to an act of punishment or salvation of YHWH, 'and you/they shall know that I am YHWH'. Elsewhere, as we have seen, YHWH acts 'for the sake of my name', 'to prove myself holy'. As Uffenheimer puts it, 'the sole object of the redemption of Israel is the sanctification of the Lord's name, so that all shall know and recognise him.'[40]

5.2.4 'That you/they may know that I am YHWH'

This basic formula occurs fifty-four times in Ezekiel and over twenty more times with minor variations. It is invariably associated with the account of an action of YHWH. The object of the action may be Israel or the nations, and generally this corresponds to the group for whom knowledge of YHWH is anticipated. God's action may be of punishment or of deliverance.[41]

In the majority of cases, forty-eight in total (including variations), it is an action of punishment. Twenty-two of these relate to the nations knowing 'I am YHWH' when

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[40] Uffenheimer (1992: 225).
[41] This analysis is that of Joyce (1989: 91).

YHWH punishes the nations,[42] and twenty-four to Israel knowing 'I am YHWH' when he punishes Israel.[43] The remaining two describe Israel knowing 'I am YHWH' when *the nations* are punished.[44] There are no clear cases of the nations coming to know 'I am YHWH' when Israel is punished.[45] Only nineteen times (including variations) does the formula correspond to an act of deliverance. Most of these (fourteen) relate to Israel knowing 'I am YHWH' when YHWH delivers Israel.[46] It is significant that there are no cases depicting the deliverance of the nations.[47] The other five cases of deliverance describe the nations knowing 'I am YHWH' when YHWH delivers *Israel*.[48]

The most important feature concerning this formula in Ezekiel is that it is used to summarise the overall purpose behind YHWH's activity. The formula normally begins with a waw-consecutive construction and occasionally there is addition of an explicit clause of purpose beginning with the particle למען as in 20:26. Clearly this recognition is not, therefore, some incidental secondary product of YHWH's actions; it is *the* goal which YHWH intends. His central concern is for the knowledge that 'I am YHWH' - among the nations as in Israel. As Zimmerli puts it:

> ... knowledge of Yahweh is not some incidental occurrence on the fringe of the other statements about Yahweh's acts. It is rather the actual goal of those actions. Yahweh's deeds, whether among Pharaoh and the Egyptians or the Israelites, attain their goal wherever they bring about knowledge of Yahweh.[49]

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[42] 25:5, 7, 11, 14, 17; 26:6; 28:22, 23; 29:6, 9, 16; 30:8, 19, 25, 26; 32:15; 35:4, 9, 12, 15; 38:23; 39:6. Note that all of these references fall within the sections of the book devoted to the theme of judgement on the nations.

[43] 5:13; 6:7, 10, 13, 14; 7:4, 9, 27; 11:10, 12; 12:15, 16, 20; 13:9, 21, 23; 14:8; 17:21; 20:26; 22:16; 23:49; 24:24, 27; 39:28a. This use of the formula occurs almost exclusively within chs.1-24, the section of the book devoted to the theme of judgement in Israel.

[44] 28:26b; 39:22.

[45] Joyce (1989: 153 n.5) discusses the possibility of understanding 12:16 in this way, that the nations will come to know 'I am YHWH' when the exiled Israelites confess their abominations but it is more likely that it is a reference to Israel coming to know 'I am YHWH' when it is punished. In 21:4 (ET 20:48) and 21:10 (ET 21:5) there is reference to 'all flesh' coming to know that I, YHWH, [act to punish Israel]...', but the formula is not identical and the reference to the nations not specific.

[46] 16:62; 20:20, 42, 44; 28:24, 26a; 29:21; 34:27, 30; 36:11, 38; 37:6, 13; 39:28b. Note that most of these references occur in the more hopeful section of the book which follows the announcement of the fall of Jerusalem in chapter 33. Those that are found earlier are closely related.

[47] Because, as Joyce (1989: 154 n.7) considers it, the restoration of Egypt which is envisaged in 29:13-16 amounts in fact to a humiliation, so he understands 29:16 as punishment not deliverance.

[48] 17:24; 36:23, 36; 37:28; 39:7.

[49] Zimmerli (1982a: 47).

In addition these activities of YHWH, whether of punishment or deliverance,[50] are cited as evidence for the truth that 'I am YHWH'.[51] The rather awkward phrasing of the formula is invariable; nowhere is it paraphrased 'and they will all know me', for example. They must know the formula of God's self-introduction, associated with Exodus. Ezekiel never changes this fundamental statement - because it carries a fundamental allusion. It recalls Israel's inaugural events. In addition, reference to the 'I am YHWH' formula in Ezekiel always follows mention of some decisive action of YHWH which gives further insight into his nature as *YHWH*. The implication is that the name and the deeds of YHWH are inseparable; together, they seek to address Israel and the nations, and call forth a response - as, supremely, at Sinai.

It is another feature of the formula that it is applied to both the nations and Israel. In both cases and in like manner, Ezekiel presents YHWH's central concern as for the knowledge that 'I am YHWH'. 'A peculiar solidarity exists here both between friends and enemies of YHWH'.[52] YHWH always acts to fulfil his overriding purpose, whether amongst Israelites or other nations.[53] The purpose appears to be the same for everyone, even though the nature of such 'knowing' may vary, especially in its consequences.

Certainly, there are subtle differences in the use of the formula between Israel and the nations. Both groups receive punishment for the purpose of recognising God as YHWH, but only Israel ever receives deliverance. Although God's purpose is the same for the nations as for Israel, he does not deal with both in the same way. Just as the Sinai narratives depict YHWH as saving Israel and choosing it from among others, all of whom are his (cf. Ex.19:5), so YHWH delivers Israel (and not others) in Ezekiel also. As Ex.19:5b states it, the nations belong to him just as Israel does, but Israel is a *special* possession (סגלה).

In response to the fact that the nations belong to YHWH, so YHWH works so that the nations may know him too. But his work is different among the nations than in Israel. Though Israel knows him through punishment as well as deliverance, the nations may only

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[50] Note that in the book of Isaiah, judgement is a part of God's work of salvation.
[51] In view of the concern with evidence, Zimmerli (1957: 154) dubbed the formula 'das Erweiswort' ('the proof-saying').
[52] Zimmerli (1982a: 47).
[53] The notion of purpose is prominent, even though the formula normally begins with a waw-consecutive construction (either וידעתם or וידעו), not an explicit clause of purpose as in 20:26: ידעו אשר אני יהוה למען אשר.

know him through their punishment or *Israel's* deliverance. It would seem to follow that, if YHWH is known through history, then knowledge of YHWH is a different matter for Israel than for the nations, at least according to Ezekiel. We know how Israel has come to know 'I am YHWH'. What of the nations?

Insight is to be gained from a comparison between Ezekiel's presentation and the use of the same expression elsewhere in the Old Testament. There are two portions where a similar formula occurs. The first is the book of Exodus, where there are several incidences of the expression in the account of the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh.[54] The second place is in the books of Kings.[55] In both cases, the formula is mostly used in oracles against the nations, to speak of the nations coming to know 'I am YHWH' when YHWH punishes them. Since the paradoxical inversion of an established form is not unusual in prophetic literature,[56] it is not a great surprise to find a shift of the referent in this formula in Ezekiel so that Israel is described as coming to know 'I am YHWH' in their deliverance.

The tension between the previous visions and Ezekiel's interpretation is greatest in the five cases of the formula which describe the nations coming to know 'I am YHWH' when YHWH delivers Israel.[57] Here Ezekiel makes relevant the context of exile for Israel: to provide for the possibility of the nations coming to know YHWH through seeing YHWH redeem Israel. Israel is charged to be a holy people - to vindicate YHWH's holiness - in the sight of all peoples (20:41; cf. 36:23; 37:28). Might not their being holy be understood as living before God publicly, 'in the sight of the nations', so that the nations may come to know that 'I am YHWH'?

This begs the question of what it means to *know* that 'I am YHWH'. The concern throughout Ezekiel is, that on the basis of God's activity, Israel acknowledge the truth of his nature. This acknowledgement of YHWH and his special relationship to Israel is expressed through obedience and faithfulness to the covenant (e.g. 11:20; cf. Ex.19:4-5). To know

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[54] Ex.7:17; 8:6, 18 (ET 10, 22); 9:29; 11:7; Fohrer (1961: 310 and 1970: 104) argues that these texts provide the (historical) background for the formula. The references among 'P' material in Exodus are numerous. They include: 6:7, 7:5; 14:4, 18; 16:6, 12; and 29:46.

[55] 1Ki.17:24; 20:13, 28; 2Ki.5:8, 15; 19:19. On the basis of these texts, Zimmerli (1957a: 154ff.) suggested that the formula had its origin in the oracles of institutional prophets against foreign nations. Cf. Carley (1975: 38-9) also, who finds many links between Ezekiel and pre-classical prophecy.

[56] Cf. Amos 1-2, where oracles against foreign nations are followed by a similar oracle directed against Israel herself (Amos 2.6ff.), and Jer.21:5-6, where the Holy War tradition is overturned in the portrayal of YHWH himself as fighting against Jerusalem.

God is to live by the Torah. It is not clear from Ezekiel, however, that this is also the meaning for the nations to know that 'I am YHWH'.

The used of the verb ידע followed by כי is especially characteristic of Ezekiel but it also occurs in many other important Old Testament passages.[58] Among those which relate directly to *knowing God* outside Ezekiel, all follow from the experience of divine blessing or curse. Twenty occurrences relate to Israelites knowing God[59] and eight to non-Israelites knowing God.[60] Of these twenty-eight, seventeen are presented on the lips of YHWH,[61] three on the lips of Moses,[62] three of the Psalmist,[63] two of Solomon (1Ki.8:43, 60), one of Manasseh (2Chr.33:13), one of Jethro (Ex.18:11) and one of Naaman (2Ki.5:15).

The occurrence of this phrase is commonly associated with a setting of confrontation between Israel and other nations: when the Israelites are leaving Egypt (Exodus), when Israel is in exile (Isaiah, Ezekiel) and when a foreigner has some association with Israel. In the latter context, the phrase is even found on the lips of non-Israelites, Jethro and Naaman. These are the two instances we shall consider more closely, in order to understand better what it means for a non-Israelite to know 'I am YHWH'.

Jethro is a Midianite, who comes to the mountain of God where Israel is camped having 'heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel his people, how YHWH had brought Israel out of Egypt' (Ex.18:1). Jethro rejoices at YHWH's blessing to Israel; he 'blesses' YHWH and offers sacrifices, declaring

> Now I know that YHWH is greater than all gods, because he delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians (Ex.18:11).

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[57] 36:23; 39:7; cf. 17:24; 36:36; 37:28.

[58] 59 out of a total of 165 occurrences of ידע כי are found in Ezekiel. Most references outside Ezekiel express a concern for proof or the acknowledgement of certainty about the truth of something, after which action can be taken; e.g. Gen.8:11, Noah *knew* that the water had receded (after the dove returned with an olive leaf), so he removed the covering from the ark. Cf. Gen.3:7; 12:11; 15:8, 13; etc.

[59] Of these, approximately fifteen relate to Israelites knowing God as the outcome of God's blessing to Israel (Ex.16:6, 12; 29:46; Dt.7:9; 29:5 [ET6]; 1Ki.20:13, 28; 2Chr.33:13; Ps.46:11 [ET10]; 56:10 [ET9]; 100:3; Is.49:23; 60:16; Jer.16:21; Joel 4 [ET3]:17) and approximately five as the outcome of God's action of curse or punishment to outsiders (Ex.6:7; 7:17; 8:6 [ET10], 18 [ET22]; 10:2).

[60] Three of these relate to God's punishing or cursing foreigners (Ex.14:4, 18; Ps.59:14 [ET13]), two to God's blessing of Israel (Ex.18:11; 1Ki.8:60), and three to God's blessing of foreigners (1Ki.8:43, 2Ki.5:15; Is.45:3).

[61] Ex.6:7; 7:17; 8:18 [ET22]; 10:2; 14:4, 18; 16:12; 29:46; Dt.29:5 [ET6]; 1Ki.20:13, 28; Ps.46:11 [ET10]; Is.49:23; 45:3; 60:16; Jer.16:21; Joel 4 [ET 3]:17.

[62] Ex.8:6 [ET10]; 16:6; Dt.7:9.

[63] Ps.56:10 [ET9]; 59:14 [ET13]; 100:3.

5.2.5 'In the sight of the nations'

This is another characteristic formula in Ezekiel (לעיני הגוים, or לעינידם 'in their sight'), which Reventlow has considered in close connection with the extended 'I am YHWH' formula discussed above.[65] The formula is found throughout the book except in the final section concerning restoration,[66] and there are other related expressions: 'among the nations' (בגוים)[67] and 'among them' (בתוכם).[68] Reventlow determined that this particular phrase is based on language used of witnesses in legal cases.[69] The witnesses in such cases are those who observe and see justice done. He argues that in ancient Israel, these would not merely have been detached bystanders. Rather, witnesses would be fully implicated and compelled to consider their own position in the light of the events they witnessed.[70]

This view is congruent with our understanding of the place of the nations established above, though it does little to put this role of the nations in the wider perspective of Ezekiel. These references to the nations are very bare; the interest does not chiefly lie with any attention the nations may give to YHWH or Israel[71] but with YHWH's concern to be witnessed and known. Consider, for example, 36:23:

> I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations (בגוים), and which you have profaned among them (בתוכם); and the nations will know that I am YHWH, says the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes (לעינידם).

Although it may be an outcome of the vindication of his holiness before the eyes of the nations that the nations are brought to consider their own position and give their assent to YHWH, this is not the main concern.[72] It is not for the nations' sake, nor even for Israel's

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[64] Cf. Joyce (1989: 91).
[65] Reventlow (1959: 33-43).
[66] 5:8; 20:9, 14, 22, 41; 22:16; 28:25; 38:23; 39:27.
[67] 5:14; 36:21, 22, 23; 39:21. Cf. also 5:15.
[68] 36:23.
[69] See Jer.32:12; cf. Gen.23:18. For Reventlow this is grounds for finding a close affinity between Ezekiel and the Holiness Code (1962: 50ff.). It should be noted that Reventlow seems to ignore the many non-legal texts in which the particle לעיני may also be found, such as Gen.42:24; 47:19; Ex.4:30.
[70] Cf. Tucker (1966: 42ff.).
[71] Although the phrase is occasionally employed with reference to Israel (5:8, 14, 15), even here one could argue that it is YHWH's actions which are in view.
[72] Although Reventlow's observations concerning the witness of the nations has some value, he overstates their importance in Ezekiel (e.g. 1959: 35-6); cf. Cooke (1936: xxxi); Robinson (1948: 124); Kaufmann (1960: 446); Joyce (1989: 97).

sake that God acts in this way, but 'for the sake of my holy name' (36:22). God's concern is that he should be known as he is, by the name which communicates his holiness, as 'I am YHWH'. This name has been invested uniquely in Israel; so it is through Israel that it is both profaned[73] and vindicated in the sight of the nations.[74] So, God continues,

> I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land... And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances... and you shall be my people, and I will be your God (36:24-28).

This recollection of God's covenant stipulations recalls closely Ex.19:5-6 and our primary understanding of Israel's call to be a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. The call is the consequence of their special belonging to God and of God's special commitment to them. Because he has invested his reputation, his character, fully in them, so he requires of them the 'privilege' of expressing his character in the sight of all.

The place of the nations in Ezekiel may not be centre-stage - YHWH is centre-stage - yet they form an important backdrop for understanding YHWH's holiness, his call upon Israel and his plan for all people. Certainly 'the concern is not with the nations knowing or witnessing Yahweh so much as with Yahweh being known and witnessed'.[75] Yet the nations do matter - they have a place - they are involved in the 'project' God is advancing through covenant with Israel. They are more than a mere 'rhetorical expression'.[76] Their profile in Ezekiel confirms and develops that which was intimated in Ex.19:5-6.

5.3 Ezekiel as a parallel typology

5.3.1 Ezekiel in the path of Moses

The person of Ezekiel is more prominent than that of many other prophets whose books bear their name. There is more detail given at the outset concerning Ezekiel (1:3) than may be gleaned concerning Isaiah throughout the book of Isaiah, for example. Most of the

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[73] 20:9, 14, 22; 22:16; 36:21, 22, 23.
[74] 20:41; 28:25; 36:23; 38:23; 39:21, 27.
[75] Joyce (1989: 97).
[76] Joyce (1989: 97).

information about Ezekiel comes through enacted prophecy;[77] his persona is constantly implicated in his message.[78]

Ezekiel's profile is, I suggest, such as to associate him closely with the role of Moses.[79] He is both prophet and priest. As such he stands in the line of those called to speak to Israel for YHWH,[80] and those called to be 'holy to YHWH', to focus God's character and presence among the people.[81] Although Moses is nowhere officially titled 'priest' or 'prophet', he is clearly depicted as the prototype for both, speaking and acting on God's behalf. Ezekiel is the only other biblical figure who is both prophet and priest.

Like Moses, Ezekiel is held up in an exemplary manner as the faithful person of God, even when all around have deserted him.[82] It is Ezekiel who carries the privilege and the responsibility of delivering God's words to Israel (3:17, 22), words which reiterate the covenant made through Moses. It is through the ministry of Ezekiel, and a second exodus (20:33ff.), that Israel's restoration is announced and enabled.

5.3.2 The context of theophany

The three 'visions of glory' in Ezekiel point to a parallel with the presentation of Moses in the Torah. Firstly, Moses encounters God at Horeb in the burning bush where he is overwhelmed by God's holiness. Secondly, God is encountered in a series of revelations at Sinai, after Moses has led the people there. And thirdly, there is a final mountain experience on Nebo when Moses views the promised land and God speaks to him again (Dt.34).

Both initial visions, of Moses and of Ezekiel, constitute a calling. The description of Ezekiel's vision is allied to that of Moses particularly in the association of YHWH with fire. God reveals himself in the midst of fire, evocative of the burning bush. It is a burning figure which leads Ezekiel to Jerusalem again in his second vision of the glory, where he discovers the gross idolatry of his compatriots and sees the unfaithful being slaughtered (Ezek.8-9).

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[77] See, for example, Ex.4-5.

[78] This begins with God's command that he eat the scroll (3:1). Ezekiel's personal involvement in his message throughout is understood in terms of the watchman motif, whereby he is held personally responsible for the house of Israel (3:16ff.; 33:1ff.).

[79] See especially McKeating (1994: 97-109) on this subject.

[80] Dt.5:22-27 gives an account of the role of the prophet in hearing the word of YHWH and speaking out to Israel on behalf of God. There is the clear suggestion that Moses was the prototype; he was the first mortal elected to do this. YHWH's commitment to continuing to speak through prophets is recorded in Dt.18:15-17.

[81] See chapter 3 above.

[82] Cf. Ex.32-34.

This recalls Moses' experience of discovering the sin of the golden calf at Sinai, following which the Levites are instructed to go through the camp slaughtering unfaithful Israelites (Ex.32:25-9).

The third and final vision of Ezekiel occurs at a mountain top, evocative of the variety of encounters between God and Moses (at Sinai and at Nebo). Just as at Sinai, the prophet is given a description for the construction of the temple,[83] regulations concerning temple worship[84] and the priesthood.[85] Just as at Nebo, the prophet surveys the land.[86] According to Levenson, 'in both the legislation and the vision, Ezekiel's mountain is typologically identical to Sinai.'[87]

5.3.3 Ezekiel and the Torah

Apart from the parallels between the roles of Ezekiel and Moses, and the visions they experienced, other analogies may be drawn between the pentateuchal narratives and those of Ezekiel. Greenberg writes:

> The position of the Babylonian exiles is made analogous to that of the 'exiled' (alien and homeless) Israelites in Egypt and in the wilderness. Impotent, Israel's only hope was its God whose will (so the prophet declared) was to demonstrate his power in the sight of all mankind by redeeming Israel and settling it in its land. On its part Israel was called to devotion to its God. Thus the first redemption, the Exodus, was accompanied by the stipulations of the covenant that described the righteous behaviour required from Israel in order to be a holy nation, worthy of having God as its covenant partner. Centuries later those requirements stood unchanged. Israel's flouting of them had led to a catastrophe, but it could be remedied if Israel obeyed them in the future... [though] The lesson of the failed experiment must be put into effect by revision of these sacred institutions. As Moses spelled out the meaning of "a holy nation" to an unformed people just liberated from Egypt, so Ezekiel specified the needful changes in the vessels and symbols of God's presence in the future commonwealth of those near redemption from the Babylonian exile. Analogy of situation produced similar prophetic roles.[88]

Ezek.16 makes the analogy explicit in the description of YHWH finding Israel in the wilderness.[89] Yet the story in Ezekiel is about Jerusalem, the holy city, the city in which God has promised to dwell. Here lies one message of the parallel; there has been an inversion of the tradition and history of Israel. The book of Ezekiel presents the exilic state of affairs as,

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[83] Ezek.40:5-42:20; cf. Ex.25-7, 35-9.
[84] Ezek.45:13-46:15; cf. Lev.1-7, 16.
[85] Ezek.44:15-31; cf. Ex.28-9 and Lev.8-10.
[86] Ezek.47:13-48:29; cf. Dt.34; (Num.34).
[87] Levenson (1976: 41).
[88] Greenberg (1984: 183).
[89] Cf. Dt.32:10; (Hos.9:10).

in some sense, a reversal of Israel's entry into the promised land, while yet defending the continuing faithfulness of God in their midst. What matters for the people of God is not the city of Jerusalem *per se*; what matters is God's presence with them, wherever that may be. 'Jerusalem', as the place where God dwells, is to be understood spiritually and metaphorically, not simply geographically and literally.

As representative of Moses, then, it is not surprising to find Ezekiel reminding the people of God of the demands of their election by YHWH, the holy one. Thus he rebukes, exhorts and legislates, in order that 'you shall be to me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation' (Ex.19:6). Ezekiel borrows language from Leviticus for this: he dooms Israel in the language of the covenant curses (Lev.26) and describes their future happiness using the idiom of the blessings found there.[90] Indeed, the key phrase in Ezekiel, 'I am YHWH', stems from the Mosaic narratives: in the preamble to the decalogue of Ex.20:2, in a similar preamble before the legal stipulations of Lev.18, and elsewhere in the Holiness Code where it is expanded in several ways.[91] The preamble, 'that you/they may know...' is most familiar from the exodus narratives.[92]

In Ezekiel it is far more than 'analogy of situation that produced similar prophetic roles'. All prophets are reminders of Moses, but Ezekiel is more than this. The process of literary development has carefully allied the figure of Ezekiel to Moses. Their principal concerns and priorities are the same. At the centre stands the revelation of the name 'I am YHWH';[93] surrounding this lies the implication of this for Yahwistic faith, to be his holy nation. Ezekiel is re-calling Israel to the era which began with this revelation, addressing a people in the wilderness who have lost direction. Whilst this is very clearly a reiteration of the era that began with Moses (not the inauguration of a new one), it necessarily constitutes a re-vision and re-direction within that era.

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[90] Greenberg (1984: 182).
[91] The expansions relate YHWH to the exodus (Lev.19:36; 22:33), the giving of the land of Canaan (Lev.25:38), liberation from slavery (Lev.26:13), separation from other peoples in Canaan (Lev.20:24) and the sanctifying of his people and priests (Lev.20:8; 21:15, 23; 22:9, 16, 32).
[92] See *5.2.4* above.
[93] Zimmerli (1982: 11).

Thus, Ezekiel sits within the paradigm that began with the revolution of Mosaic Yahwism at Sinai, but he repeats the work of Moses in a new setting. So Ezekiel is given special status in Scripture.[94] As Greenberg writes,

> Biblical tradition regards Moses as the mediator of Israel's divine constitution, the Torah; it recognizes no other legislator - excepting Ezekiel. [95]

Even Wellhausen - though for very different reasons - made a comparison between the roles of Moses and Ezekiel, 'the father of Judaism'. [96]

5.4 Ezekiel in canonical perspective

5.4.1 Holiness, the principle of YHWH's action

Muilenburg has written that 'Ezekiel's awareness of the divine holiness is more awesome, more sublime and majestic, more cosmic and "tremendous," that that of his prophetic predecessors'.[97] Certainly, the emphasis on holiness seems to be more explicit in the book of Ezekiel than in any of the other prophets. Ezekiel's understanding of holiness is not without parallels, however; it stands firmly within the wider canonical collection. As discussed above, there are close affinities with many parts of the pentateuchal narratives from Exodus to Deuteronomy.[98]

The persistent focus on YHWH and his holiness in the book of Ezekiel provides a deeper and broader understanding of the significance of this characteristic of the God of Israel, and the investment of himself in his people. The understanding is deepened by the continual stress in Ezekiel of God's ultimate purpose: to vindicate his holiness. And it is broadened by the constant expression of the implications of this purpose: that people may know that 'I am YHWH'. In essence, Ezekiel accentuates the *dynamic* of holiness: it is not simply the essence of God's character, but the principle of his actions.

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[94] McKeating (1994: 104) suggests that he repeats Moses' work with more success than Moses himself. From a canonical perspective, and according to subsequent Jewish tradition, the legislation in Ezek.40-48 is marginal (and problematic) relative to the Torah, however.
[95] Greenberg (1984: 183).
[96] Eichrodt (1970: 24); cf. Wellhausen (1885: 139f.; 379; 421).
[97] Muilenburg (1962: 622).
[98] As noted in *1.6.2* and **1.7**, even the concern for other nations may be regarded as implicit in Ex.19:5-6.

We may understand this as a development of the plan of holiness articulated in Isaiah.[99] Although Ezekiel never actually speaks of a plan (עצה), there are some clear parallels between Isaiah's picture of the fulfilment of God's plan and Ezekiel's concern for and vision of restoration. Above all, the emphasis on holiness is coupled with continual reference to other nations in the plan of YHWH.[100] Israel is called to be holy so as to vindicate God's power and glory in all the world. In Ezekiel we find the demands of holiness - and their outcome - articulated more emphatically than ever before. Israel is called to adopt YHWH's character so that others may come to know 'I am YHWH' through them. YHWH cannot be known apart from those people in whom he has invested his name.

In this linkage of God's holiness and his concern for other nations, the book of Ezekiel provides, for a nation in exile, a restatement of the basis on which YHWH acts in judgement and deliverance.[101] The implication is that Ezekiel's preaching provides a restatement of Israel's understanding of their election and the purpose behind their call to be holy.

In summary, this message of the book of Ezekiel may be expressed as follows:

(a) The overall purpose of everything YHWH does is that people should come to know that 'I am YHWH'. For Israel, this is synonymous with knowing his holiness; and to *know* his holiness is to *live* according to the Torah. For other nations, to know that 'I am YHWH' is to acknowledge Israel's God and his power over all nations.

(b) The end of all things within YHWH's purpose is the gathering of all people and nations at his holy mountain in worship (cf. 5:5). In the meantime, however, God is concerned for Israel, through whom he has chosen to work his purpose.

(c) YHWH's purpose in making Israel holy is, first, that they live faithfully and appropriately in response to their covenant relationship and, in consequence, that they reflect YHWH's reputation so others may come to know also that 'I am YHWH'.

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[99] Cf. Bettenzoli (1979: 35-50) for a study of First Isaiah's use of the קדש root in comparison with Ezekiel.

[100] Unlike Isaiah, however, there is no צדק ('righteousness') applied to YHWH in Ezekiel.

[101] This redefinition is particularly evident in Ezek.5:6-8, where the declaration that YHWH will judge Jerusalem 'in the sight of all nations' appears straight after the statement that Jerusalem is more wicked than the nations' round about. It could be argued that the motif is to be understood as hyperbole, indicating the magnitude of Israel's sin rather than as evidence of the conversion of the nations. Nevertheless, it raises questions about the nature of Israel's election and the relative standards by which they are to be judged.

5.4.2 Israel and the nations

It is a fairly typical pattern among the prophetic books to find oracles against Israel followed by oracles against the nations. But in Ezekiel reference to the nations goes further than this. YHWH expresses concern for his name among the nations.[102] From a canonical perspective, the juxtaposition in Ezekiel of an explanation for Israel's situation among the nations and of an expression of YHWH's concern for his name - not just in Israel but also among the nations - carries immense theological significance.[103]

Israel has failed to live faithfully and appropriately in relation to her covenant God; this lesson is brought home through the experience of exile. The people are removed from their land and their institutions and are placed among foreign peoples, to learn (once again) how to live as the covenant people. This involves maintaining an identity by which Israel is marked out absolutely from those foreign nations among whom they are living. What is essential is that

> they walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God (Ezek.11:20; cf. Ex.19:5-6).

It is by means of faithfulness to Torah that Israel retains its distinct identity from other peoples and fulfils its calling to be a holy nation. Such faithful behaviour shows that Israel knows that 'I am YHWH'. YHWH has invested his name in the people of Israel and it is by their action and reputation that YHWH is thus known to all.

Ezekiel makes clear that God's investment of his name has a purpose which reaches beyond the people of Israel. He is also concerned that 'the nations may know that 'I am YHWH''. We have seen, however, that knowing God for non-Israelites is a different matter from that of Israelites. Knowing God does not entail living by the covenant, but - on the basis of his actions - recognising and acknowledging Israel's God as the God of all. There are several examples in the Old Testament of this, where foreigners come to recognise YHWH through his people Israel; they receive blessing and worship him in response, after which they return to their own people. The strong indication, on the basis of Ezekiel, is that

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[102] Especially in Ezek.37-39; cf. 37:28; 38:16, 23; 39:7, 21, 23, 27.

[103] YHWH, Israel and the nations are often mentioned together (Reventlow 1959: 34). The phrase 'in the sight of the nations' (or similar) is almost always to be found where the קדש verb is used, and in every case with the 'I am YHWH' formula (Joyce 1989: 104).

by such means will YHWH vindicate his holiness in the sight of all; and all will worship him with Israel.

There is no indication that this 'inclusion' of the nations in the end of God's plan and in the goal of his holiness constitutes a call to the nations to 'be holy'. Throughout the Old Testament, this is the description that marks out Israel, according to which they are to live by the covenant. (Thus Israel is punished when they fail to fulfil this distinctive identity and they 'become like the nations'.) Faithfulness is Israel's priority, that they may show they know 'I am YHWH'. The place of the nations is not Israel's prime concern, even though they, too, may come to know 'I am YHWH' through Israel's exaltation of the name. Isaiah and Ezekiel make clear that the nations do have a place in the final vindication of God's holiness, but their place is different from that of Israel.

The vision of restoration in Ezekiel demonstrates further the primary focus on Israel. Worship of YHWH belongs in Jerusalem, at God's holy temple, 'set in the centre of the nations, with countries round about her' (5:5). Although there is a certain distancing of God's presence in the temple from a literal identification of this temple with the building in Jerusalem, it is with the restoration of the building and the resumption of cult activity - described in exaggerated physical detail - that the final chapters are concerned. If the nations are to join with Israel in the worship of YHWH, Ezekiel leaves no doubt as to how and on whose terms this gathering will take place.

Chapter 6
'Blessing to all the families of the earth': Abram as prototype of Israel

God first reveals himself to Moses as YHWH by means of reference to his relationship with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex.3:6, 15; cf. 6:3). The biblical witness to the faith of Israel founded at Sinai does not begin with the book of Exodus and Israel's calling. It begins with Genesis, with a primeval history of the world followed by narratives which concern Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is the literary context which is given in the Torah for understanding Israel's call to be a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.

This chapter addresses that context, focusing on God's call to Abram, with which the patriarchal narratives begin:

(1) Now YHWH said to Abram
"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house
to the land that I will show you.
(2) And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you,
and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.
(3) I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse;
and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves."
(4) So Abram went, as YHWH had told him; and Lot went with him (Gen.12:1-4a).

These verses carry great weight in biblical literature as a whole; they are usually seen as expressing the quintessence of the Yahwist's theology.[1] But they are particularly significant for a biblical theology. They stand at a crucial 'junction' in the canon, linking the primeval universal story with the particular Israelite story. They form the backdrop for all that follows concerning the people of Israel and its place among all peoples under God.

The 'great moment'[2] rests on the text as providing justification for God's choice of one people among all the peoples of the world. These verses not only describe the call to Abraham to leave his home and go elsewhere. They also describe a wider purpose to be

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[1] E.g. Wolff (1966: 131-158); Steck (1971: 525-524); Coats (1981: 31-41). Crüsemann (1981: 11-29) has pointed out, however, that the terminology of 12:1-3 is subtly different from that found in the J sections of Gen.1-11. He argues that 12:1-3 presupposes that J and P were already combined in Gen.1-11, and that it therefore represents a late redactional element in Genesis; cf. Alexander (1982).
[2] Cf. Noth (1948: 256 [1972: 236]).

achieved through him: the promise of blessing, not only to Abraham and his people but through them to all peoples of the earth.

This suggests that there is some link concerning God's blessing for Abraham/Israel and for the world. But who is the *primary* beneficiary of the promises of Gen.12:1-3? This question underlies our consideration of these verses in this chapter. We shall begin with the 'wider' view, which focuses on the promise of blessing to the nations. This represents the most common interpretation, and it commands an impressive consensus of opinion.[3]

6.1 Blessing to all

The opening words of the patriarchal narrative are deceptively simple. They consist of YHWH speaking to Abraham, in command (12:1) and promise (12:2-3), after which Abram obeys (12:4a). The text is a carefully formulated unit; there is no verb or clause which does not play a specific role in the intention and theology of the unit.[4] On the basis of the structure and syntax of the chain of promises, it is commonly deduced that v.3b forms the climactic declaration.

> Here the series of five imperfect-cohortative consecutive clauses is interrupted by a clause with a perfect consecutive. Thus, verse 3b is clearly set off as the sequel to the consequences (vss.2-3a) of the departure of Abraham (vs.1); it is the real result and it is, therefore, confirmed definitively by the perfect. The abrupt change in the final clause is further clarified by the fact that in verse 3b the subject is no longer Yahweh but "all the families of the earth." In so doing, it is set down conclusively whom Yahweh's action, already manifoldly described, ultimately concerns and what this action is to accomplish for them. Thus the syntactical gradient of the long period hastens quite clearly to this concluding clause. It is the terse, concise *conclusio* of the whole.[5]

We shall pursue an analysis of the language of Gen.12:1-4 later on (see 6.2). For now, therefore, we shall consider other factors which advance this interpretation of the passage.

6.1.1 The context of primeval history

Gen.12:1-4 is widely understood to hold a critical theological place in the book of Genesis and more particularly in the Yahwistic form of the patriarchal narratives. The promise to

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[3] Cf., for example, von Rad (1962: 161-165; 1966: 65-7; 1972: 159-61); Wolff (1966: 131-158); Wehmeier (1974: 1-13); Childs (1985: 103).
[4] Cf. Ruprecht (1979: 179); Miller (1984: 472); Wenham (1987: 270).
[5] Wolff (1966: 138); cf. Wehmeier (1974: 2f.); Yarchin (1980: 171-5); Miller (1984: 474).

Abraham is seen as the 'bridge-passage'[6] which links the primeval history to the patriarchal tradition.

Von Rad regards Gen.12:1-3 as the conclusion and explanation of the pre-patriarchal history, and it is this factor which is critical for his interpretation of its decisive emphasis on the nations:

> The opening words of the story of redemption provide the answer to the problem posed by the early history of the world, that of the relationship of God to the nations as a whole. The beginning of the story of redemption in *Gen.* XII.1-3, however, not only brings to an end the early history... but actually provides the key to it.[7]

Certainly the primeval history is set at the opening of the Hebrew scriptures as the window through which the story of the patriarchs and the story of Israel are subsequently presented. So this context brings the question of the relationship between the story of the world and the particular story of Israel to a canonical reading of Gen.12. In some sense the story of Abraham and those who descend from him addresses the universal picture of the origins and predicament of all people universally. A wide range of Jewish writers - arguably from the Genesis redactor to the late rabbis - see Abraham's task as to restore what Adam has done. 'I will make Adam first,' says Israel's god in the midrash on Genesis, 'and if he goes astray I will send Abraham to sort it all out.'[8]

Von Rad concurs. Indeed, he sees God's blessing of all nations through Abraham as the response to the problems of Gen.1-11, his provision for a faltering, cursed world. The state of blessing described the original, normal state of God's creation (1:22, 28; 2:3). After Gen.3 it represents the restoration of the creation which is fallen. Thus its essential feature is that it overcomes the curse (אָרַר) which has prevailed since Adam, a curse which infects each person's own life (Gen.2-3), familial social relations (Gen.4), all the nations of the world (Gen.10), their attitudes and interrelations (Gen.11).

Put another way, the primeval history explains *why* all the families of the earth need the blessing which is promised in 12:3b. Just as the call to Noah was God's provision given the wickedness of humankind (cf. Gen.6:5ff; 8:21f.), so it is with the call to Abram. Indeed,

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[6] Wolff (1966: 136f.) identifies several 'bridge-passages' (Gen.6:5-8; 8:21f.; 12:1-4a; 18:17-18, 22b-33), but 12:1-4a is the most prominent. He calls it 'the kerygma of the Yahwist'.
[7] Von Rad (1966: 65). He depends on Gunkel's (1910: 161, 163) analysis of the origin of this text, that it represents a free composition of J and not a saga which already existed.
[8] Genesis Rabbah 14:6.

Abram is introduced in the same way as Noah, by means of a genealogy linking him to the previous narratives (cf. 11:10-32 and 5:1-32).

This is *one* way of interpreting the text. There is a progression, reflecting a general movement from curse to blessing in the movement from primeval to patriarchal history,[9] and clearly this text is pivotal in that movement. But this movement does not *require* that the nations are the prime focus of the blessing here; indeed, this interpretation does not explain why the state of blessing is restored for Abram and his descendants (and explained in more detail), before there is brief reference to it reaching all the families of the earth. Furthermore, it too readily assumes that the blessing undoes the harm of the primeval curse.

6.1.2 The context of the New Testament

Gen.12:1-4 is not only a text of great moment within the book of Genesis or within the Hebrew canon. God's promises to Abraham are echoed in the New Testament also. Here relevance for the blessing of all people is assumed.

The oath to Abraham is directly recalled on two occasions, Acts 3 and Gal.3. In both references it is expressly declared that this promise - of blessing to all the families of the earth - is fulfilled in Christ. In Acts 3:25-26 it forms the basis for Peter to explain to the Jews in Jerusalem that they are inheritors of the covenant and the foremost recipients of God's blessing:

> You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God gave to your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your posterity shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness.

Secondly, and more significantly, Paul quotes Gen.12:3 in Galatians in order to justify how the Gentiles may be blessed like Abraham:

> And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith (3:8-9).
>
> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us - for it is written, "Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree" - that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham

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[9] The root ארר appears five times in Gen.1-11 (3:14, 17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25) and ברך six times (1:22, 28; 2:3; 5:2; 9:1, 26). In Gen.12-50, ארר appears only three times (12:3; 27:29; 49:7) whereas ברך comes sixty times.

> might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (3:13-14).

Here Paul explicitly states that Gen.12:3 proclaims in advance the justification of the Gentiles through faith. In other words, the interpretation of Gen.12:3, as a promise with universal intent, is uncontroversial for Paul. God's promise to Abraham is understood in the New Testament as the model from which God acts to restore blessing in human life to all. Paul understands this blessing of God in terms of justification by faith.[10]

6.1.3 The context of the patriarchal narratives

This is a very different understanding of blessing to that which develops from Gen.12:1-4 in the patriarchal narratives. The theme of blessing is a key for understanding all that follows in Genesis. As Goldingay describes it,

> every major element in the rest of the Abraham narratives relates to this theme ... [that] Yahweh has undertaken to bless Abram with descendants and land and to make him a blessing for other peoples.[11]

Although the patriarchs are used in the blessing of others, this theme is less prominent in Genesis than the other two aspects of blessing which relate to their own prosperity, descendants and land.[12] They recur continually throughout the story of Abraham (12:1-25:11), and they continue through his descendants, Isaac (25:19-35:29) and Jacob (37:2-55:22). The path to the fulfilment of the promise, however, is compounded with obstacles. These obstruct all of the various components of the blessing. In the narrative that immediately follows from 12:1-4, the land is occupied (12:6b), Sarah is barren (11:30), she and Abraham cause YHWH to bring affliction (rather than blessing) on Pharaoh and his house (12:10-20), and there is strife within the family (13:5-13). Yet YHWH reaffirms the promise of land and descendants (13:14-17). And in Gen.14, the theme of blessing comes to the fore through the person of Melchizedek, king of Salem, who blesses Abraham in the name of El Elyon, God Most High (14:18-20), amounting to a (preliminary) fulfilment of 12:2.

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[10] Cf. Westermann (1978a: 77).
[11] 1980: 13.
[12] Wolff (1966: 140) points out how the promise of land is made subordinate to the promise of descendants in the key text concerning the promise, Gen.12:1-4.

Many of the actual words of YHWH's promise to Abraham are recalled at key moments which link the stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: at Abraham's offering of Isaac (22:18; cf. 12:3b); at Isaac's blessing of Jacob (27:29 cf. 12:3a); in Jacob's dream of his blessing (28:14; cf. 12:3b) and as the elderly Jacob contemplates the journey to Egypt (46:3-4). Although the patriarchs make mistakes[13] and are involved in strife,[14] they prosper,[15] they are acknowledged by the nations[16] and they even bring blessing to others.[17] The promise of blessing is continually reaffirmed,[18] showing that YHWH undertakes to bless Abraham's son and grandson with descendants and land and to make each of them a means of blessing to others, just as he did with Abraham. Increasingly within the narrative, a distinctive motif emerges concerning this blessing: the promise that 'I will be with you'.[19] There are no signs of the wider perspective concerning 'all the families of the earth' which one might expect given that the promise to Abram follows the universal primeval history narratives. It is the promise of descendants and land which receive priority in the patriarchal interpretation of God's blessing.

This brief examination of the patriarchal interpretation of God's promise of blessing to Abram is very different from that of the Pauline interpretation in the New Testament. This difference is indicative of the different contexts within which Gen.12:1-4 may be understood in the Bible, and thus the different connotations it may carry. As we shall see, the presentation of Gen.12:1-4 as a patriarchal promise which is told from a subsequent Israelite perspective, suggests that its interpretation within a Yahwistic context is different again.

6.1.4 The context of Israelite faith

Gen.12:1-4 sets in motion not simply the story of the patriarchs but more importantly, from the perspective of the Hebrew canon as a whole, the story of the people God established by covenant with Moses at Sinai.[20] The Scriptures present Israel's existence as a nation in the

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[13] E.g. 12:10-20; 26:6-11.
[14] E.g. 13:5-13; 21:25-32; 26:15-22.
[15] Cf. 13:1-4; 26:12-14; 30:25-43.
[16] Cf. 14:19-20; 21:22-24; 26:26-33.
[17] Cf. 30:27; 39:5; 47:7-10.
[18] Cf. 28:1-4, 12-15; 32:26-30; 48:3-6.
[19] 26:3; cf. 21:22; 26:24, 28; 28:15, 20; 31:3, 5, 42; 35:3; also 39:2, 3, 21, 23.
[20] On the basis of a study of tradition history, Wolff (1966: 132) identifies this 'stupendous utterance' to underlie not only the patriarchal texts but the whole of the Yahwist's writing. He suggests this is 'the basic supporting stratum of the Pentateuch ... [which] has determined to a great extent the outline and theme of the

land of Canaan as a fulfilment of what had been promised to the patriarchs.[21] This is not to undermine what is inaugurated with Moses beginning from Ex.3.[22] Rather, it is that Gen.12-50 contain many pointers which suggest they were written from the hindsight of a mature Israelite perspective.

> Gen.12:1-3 gives the patriarchal narratives a frame of reference which looks beyond them - they cannot be understood adequately on their own terms but must be read in the light of Israel, toward whose existence and significance the stories point. Conversely, Israel as a nation in its land cannot understand itself simply on its own terms but must relate itself to God's dealings with the patriarchs.[23]

The point that God's people are the recipients of God's blessing in a way that will be determinative not only for themselves but for other nations too, is reiterated - indeed, augmented - in certain key places in the Hebrew canon, as we have seen in preceding chapters. Throughout, however, Israel's concern is not primarily on the place of *other* nations in God's plan, but on their *own* place in the plan, as recipients of the blessing. Thus von Rad's interpretation of God's call to Abram in Gen.12:1-3 does not sit well with Israel's interpretation of that call, as applied to themselves as descendants of Abraham. Given that it is from Israel's perspective that the call to Abraham is described, it is Israel's interpretation which we must call the primary interpretation of Gen.12:1-4.

The features of blessing presented in the patriarchal promises are reiterated and developed elsewhere in the Hebrew canon. The notion of blessing not only characterises the patriarchal narratives (cf. 24:1; 26:3; 35:9; 39:5) and links them with the primeval history (cf. 1:28; 5:2; 9:1),[24] but it also connects them with God's activity in Israel (cf. Dt.28:1-14).[25] This activity of blessing in Israel is understood in a similar way; it is manifest most directly in human prosperity and well-being, long life, wealth, good harvests, land and children (cf. Gen.24:35-6 with Lev.26:4-13; Dt.28:3-15). These material blessings are

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present-day Pentateuch'. (As we have already discussed, however, it is P which is determinative of the final structure and development of the Pentateuch.)

[21] Von Rad (1962: 170) calls the era of the patriarchs 'a time of promise... an elaborate preparatory arrangement for the creation of the people of God and for its life'.

[22] Cf. Otto (1928: 75); Childs (1974: 73). Noting the lack of reference to the patriarchal promises in Exodus, Rendtorff (1985: 139f.) argues for independent tradition-histories.

[23] Moberly (1992: 141).

[24] Note that the root ברך occurs more frequently in the book of Genesis than in any other part of the Old Testament: 88 times in Genesis as against 310 times elsewhere.

tangible expressions of divine benevolence. The highest blessing consists of God's own presence among his people.[26]

The promise of blessing to Abram came in the midst of an uncompromising summons to 'Go'. The importance of obedience is reiterated throughout the story of Israel. It is a condition of the covenant (Ex.19:5) and a prerequisite for blessing. Consider, for example, Dt.28:2, 9:

> All these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of YHWH your God... YHWH will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commands of YHWH your God, and walk in his ways.

Blessing is a relational notion.[27] Whilst people can bless each other (cf. Gen.12:3a; Num.6:23), it is essentially theocentric. Both in the patriarchal and Israelite narratives it insists that God alone is the source of all good fortune. Thus to bless Israel or to be blessed by Israel is to acknowledge God's presence and authority in Israel. This 'blessing' of others is best understood in terms of 'putting on the name of YHWH' (Num.6:27; cf. Gen.32:26-30; Ex.23:21; Dt.28:10; Ps.72:17).[28]

There is one aspect which might appear to distinguish Israelite faith from the promises to Abram. In Israel, the act of blessing is a priestly act. According to the cultic legislation it is reserved, by and large, for priests descended from Aaron (cf. Lev.9:22-4; Num.6:22). However, just as the people of Abram (at least corporately) are called to bless (or, at least, to 'be a blessing', Gen.12:2) so are the people of Israel called (corporately) to be priestly (Ex.19:6).[29]

We may see, therefore, the close relationship between Gen.12:1-4 and Israel's self-understanding as the people of Abraham. Thus, as we come to examine this text more closely, we shall take into consideration its meaning and implications for Israel in the process

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[25] Consider also how Moses reminds God of his promises to the patriarchs at the point where he threatens to destroy his people for their worship of the golden calf; this reminder brings about God's change of mind (Ex.32:13-14).

[26] This is a recurring motif of the Isaac narratives in particular (Gen.21:22; 26:3, 24, 28; 28:15, 20; 31:3, 5, 42; 35:3); cf. Lev.26:11-12; Zech.8:22-23.

[27] Cf. Wolff (1966: 142) describes blessing as 'the received catchword [which] becomes the key word for Israel's relation to the peoples of the earth and for their relation to Israel'.

[28] Cf also, in the New Testament, Rom.13:14. The habit of Christians 'crossing' themselves can also be understood this way.

[29] Mann (1988: 99) considers the 'sacerdotal domain' described in Ex.19:6 as the fulfilment of a call in Gen.12 to act as priest for the world.

of interpretation. For this context provides the primary perspective from which God's promises to Abram are viewed within the Hebrew canon.

6.2 Exegesis of Genesis 12:1-4

6.2.1 The envelope (vv.1 and 4)

YHWH's speech begins with a command addressed to Abram 'to go' (לך לך, v.1) to a place YHWH will show him; this begins a movement of thought on the central theme of blessing best summarised by a sequence of verbs, detailing the consequences of this departure (vv.2-3). The speech is followed by a *waw*-consecutive imperfect of the original imperative verb (הלך). This signals the obedient response of Abram, connecting the call to the rest of the story. The word order of the phrase suggests that it also forms an inclusio around vv.2-3 of the divine speech, as follows:[30]

v.1 יהוה (YHWH) (ויאמר)

אל (to)

אברם (Abram)

לך־לך ("Go")

v.4 וילך (He went)

אברם (Abram)

אליו (to) (כאשר דבר)

יהוה (YHWH)

Contrary to the call narratives in subsequent parts of the Hebrew Scriptures, the summons to Abram in Gen.12 relates nothing of the circumstances under which the message from God comes to him. There is no real introduction.[31] Verse 1 begins with the simple command, 'Go!' The departure is emphasised by a three-fold description of the circles from which Abram is summoned ('from your land, your kindred and your father's house'), each term more specific than the previous. This stresses the departing more than the destination ('to the land which I will show you'), and the cost of obedience. This call into the strange

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[30] Auffret (1982: 243).

[31] The genealogy (11:10-32) which precedes it merely situates Abram within a particular family and in a particular place.

unknown bears resemblance to that of the exodus. 'Neither here nor in the reference to the as yet unnamed and unknown goal does J speak merely of Abraham'.[32]

Just as the divine speech began with a simple, yet very precise, command to Abram, so it ends in verse 4 with a simple but clear description of Abram's obedience, a detail which is emphasised by the phrase 'as YHWH had told him'.[33] The 'envelope' is neatly completed. This suggests that YHWH's promises are set in motion. This is not to assume that the initial imperative has any kind of conditional undertone, as if the promise of YHWH were dependent on the obedience of Abram. Rather, suggests Wolff, 'it sounds like a summons to receive the repeatedly promised gift. So then, according to verse 4a, Abram 'goes' without any 'ifs' or 'buts', apparently without even just a trace of effort.'[34] The completion of the envelope is not to suggest, either, that the fulfilment of these promises is complete from the moment that Abram steps out. Rather, their period of effect has begun.

This carefully-composed envelope serves to highlight vv.2-3, the key verses of the text. These contain other aspects of symmetry.[35] The divine speech has a poetic quality, with assonance of words ending in *-ka* (ךָ) and *-ah* (ָה).[36] The root ברך ('blessing') occurs a total of five times; this is the key word and the focus of interest.[37]

Vv.2-3 as a whole respond to the command to Abram in v.1: they detail the rewards for his obedience, expressing the significance of this seminal instruction to Abram for all of his descendants and even for all people on earth, summarised by the single word 'blessing'.

There are different understandings of how the theme of blessing develops within the verses. According to Wolff, the theme develops progressively: it begins with the blessing to Abram (v.2); in v.3a it goes beyond Abram to those with whom he comes into contact; and

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[32] Westermann (1985: 148). A comparison of this text with the call narratives of, for example, prophets is instructive here. The conventional call narratives (e.g. of prophets) depict a particular individual and a particular task. Here the call is more open-ended, and the figure of Abram is less particular and more representative.

[33] Cf. Gen.6:22; 7:5; 17:23; 24:51.

[34] Wolff (1966: 138).

[35] Cf. Auffret (1982: 243-8) and Ruprecht (1979: 179-184).

[36] Westermann (1985: 146) describes the language as 'virtually rhythmic'. The NIV sets out vv.2-3 according to their poetic symmetry.

[37] Wolff (1966: 139f.) stresses this; Ruprecht (1979: 184 n.30), Auffret (1982: 245) and most commentaries seem to concur. Wenham (1987: 270, 276) even suggests that the very name 'Abram' (אברם) plays on the term, though this seems doubtful.

in v.3b it climaxes, affecting all people. Despite differences of emphasis, most scholars agree that v.3b depicts the final outcome of God's promises: blessing to all families on earth.[38]

Others have questioned this analysis of the structure of these verses, with good reason. The distinct caesura between vv.2-3 and the change of subject within v.3 diminishes the likelihood of any simple, linear continuity between the verbal clauses. Other relationships between the clauses are feasible and make for different readings of God's promises, readings which are more fitting for their interpretation within the Hebrew context. Thus we now turn to consider these important verses and their resonance for Israelite faith.

6.2.2 Verse 2

All four clauses of v.2 are addressed to Abram alone. The first three are promises: YHWH will make him a great nation (ואעשׂך לגוי גדול), and he will bless him (ואברכך), and he will make great his name (ואגדלה שׁמך). To these cohortatives in the first person is added an imperative in the second person singular, 'so that you will be a blessing' (וה ־ ה בּרכה).[39] All of these modal consecutive clauses express the mood of intention.[40] The final imperative, following a cohortative, can express a consequence which is to be expected with certainty.[41] Thus, despite the change of subject in the fourth clause, all four verbs express promises, after which there is a caesura.

Wolff argues that the real significance of the first three promises is expressed in the last clause of the verse.[42] This is like a preliminary announcement of the goal of YHWH's promised deeds: God wants to make Abram into a great people, he wants to bless him, and to give him a great name - all so that Abram himself might be a blessing. YHWH's blessing for Abram should have the effect that he himself effects blessing. How and for whom is not

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[38] Wolff (1966: 138); Ruprecht (1979: 183-4); Auffret (1982: 248); Westermann (1985: 146ff.).

[39] Note a proposal that the imperative (literally, 'and be!') be repointed to form the ordinary third person perfect; cf. BHS and some commentators: Gunkel (1902: 145); Skinner (1930: 244); Speiser (1964: 86). In this case, the verb would refer to the name: 'it (the name) is to be a blessing', i.e. a name to bless by, which would conform with the notion of a blessing formula (see the interpretation below). The MT is probably better, however, because it expresses so much more closely the *effects* of the blessing: on Abram himself and through him on others.

[40] After an imperative, a consecutive clause in the first person is formed with a cohortative, and a consecutive clause in the second person, after a cohortative, is formed with the indirect imperative. Cf. Joüon (1991: #116); Gibson (1994: #68, #87).

[41] Cf. Kautzsch (1910: #110i).

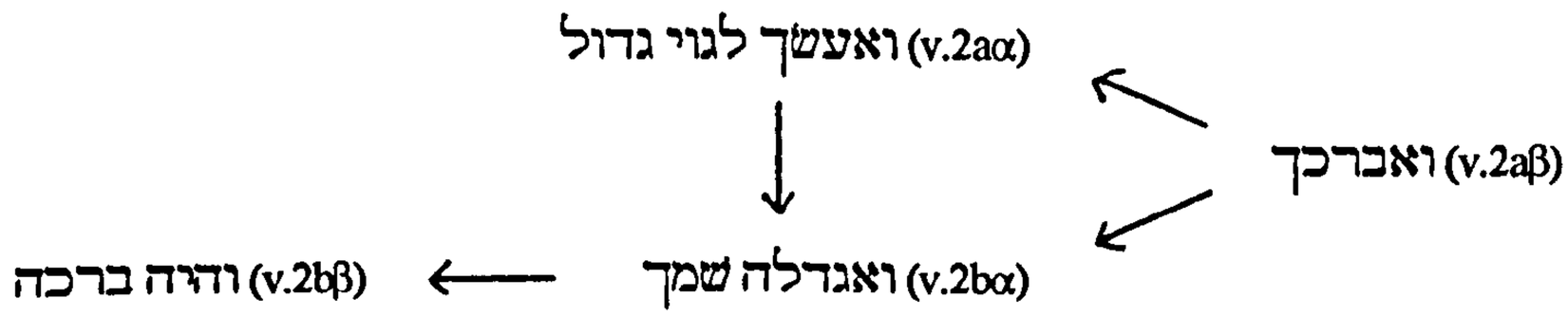
[42] Wolff (1966: 138-9)

yet said, but Wolff assumes that the individual clauses relate to each other in a linear manner, and continue (with a further imperative-cohortative clause in v.3a) to build up to the final purpose in v.3b. Wolff sees each verb building successively on the one before it and adding something. Not only will YHWH make Abram into a great nation, he will also bless him; furthermore, he will make his name great and so he will be a blessing.

This interpretation appears to analyse the structure on the basis of a prior assumption about the climactic outcome of the promises: blessing to all nations. Whilst such an understanding is certainly feasible, it is not necessary. So Auffret, for example, understands the whole speech according to a more complex scheme of concentric parallels between v.1 and v.2aα, within v.2a, and in the section vv.2b-3b.[43] He focuses primarily on the change of subject between YHWH and Abram for the matter of blessing.

Given the picture of blessing which grows out of Gen.12:1-3 in the patriarchal narratives which follow (see *6.1.3*), we may suggest a third possibility for understanding the structure of v.2. The gift of descendants (and land) is seen as a sign of God's blessing.[44] In other words, the promise that 'I will make of you a great nation' (v.2aα) is the outcome of God's promise that 'I will bless you' (v.2aβ). V.2a is the first step in the divine speech, and this is distinct from the second.[45] Within this step, the second clause explains the first; put another way, the first promise is an effect of the second. The second step follows from the first: 'I will make your name great' (v.2bα) is another effect of God's blessing to Abram (v.2aβ).[46] The final clause follows from this effect of Abram's blessing. Abram can only *be a blessing* because he has *been blessed*, in the fact that his name has been made great.

This scheme corresponds approximately to the suggestion of Ruprecht, who represents v.2 diagrammatically as follows:[47]



[43] Auffret (1982: 244ff.).
[44] Note that blessing, understood as material prosperity, recurs elsewhere in the Torah; cf. esp. Dt.7:13ff.
[45] Wehmeier (1974: 3).
[46] Cf. Westermann (1985: 149f.).
[47] Ruprecht (1979: 184).

If this analysis is correct, it raises the question of why God's promise to bless Abram (v.2aβ) does not stand at the beginning of the promises. Westermann suggests that this is probably due to the overarching function of 12:1-3. The promise that Abram will become a great nation is placed at the outset so that the promises of blessing may be clearly understood to relate to the 'great nation' as well as to Abram personally. In other words, the narrative is shaped so that promises made to Abram may also address the context of Israel.

> The reason why the sentence, 'I will bless you,' does not stand at the beginning is probably due to the overarching function of 12:1-3. The promise is directed to Israel; it is the basis of the people's greatness; and this is to be stated at the beginning.[48]

This interpretation is confirmed by the third clause, 'I will make your name great'. This can be understood to refer to the name of the nation - that the great people which has grown out of the blessing given to Abram will also be a people of renown - and not simply (or only) taken to mean that Abram personally will be renowned at some later time. The use of the singular pronominal suffix throughout the verse and the singular form of the imperative in v.2b leaves the question of the referent open: the promises could, in theory, be taken to address Abram individually or the nation collectively. This allows the text to be understood on different levels, within the different frames of reference provided by the canon.

Given the subsequent story of Israel which begins in Exodus and finds its prehistory in the figure of Abraham, the reader is invited to understand Gen.12:2 as a promise to Abram which finds its application in the people of Israel. YHWH promises, through his words to Abram, to bless Israel: that is, to make the nation and their name great. This implication is made all the more apt given the use of the term גוי ('nation') and not עם ('people') in v.2a, designating a political concept rather than a consanguineous group of people drawn together by kinship ties.[49] The implications of this term, therefore, might include a common land, and a king in government.[50] So we may infer that the promise to be a great nation implies a greatness in significance as well as in number.[51] Furthermore, the

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[48] Westermann (1985: 149).
[49] Speiser (1960: 157-63); Clements (1975: 426-33); cf. *1.6.4.*
[50] Historians (cf. Westermann 1985: 150) have traditionally understood this promise to find fulfilment in the period of the monarchy. Despite a contemporary trend to date the J material in the exile, it is nevertheless most likely that the Yahwist was writing during the David-Solomon era.
[51] Cf. Gen.18:18; 46:3; Dt.4:6-8; 26:5; cf. Sarna (1989: 89).

phrase 'great name' is attributed to the king elsewhere in the Old Testament;[52] arguably, this title could be given to him in his capacity as representative of the whole people. Apart from these references, only the name of God is described as 'great'.[53]

The literary (as well as the historical) connections between the promise to Abram and the identity of Israel in this text are increasingly clear.

> The two effects of the blessing, 'I will make you into a great people and I will make your name great,' are one of the clearest links between the story of the patriarchs and the history of Israel in Gen.12-50.[54]

These links are discussed further below.

The conjunction between the understanding of blessing and the gift of a 'great name' is found elsewhere in the Hebrew scriptures. For example, it is a mark of the vision of post-exilic restoration that Israel's prosperity in Zion will be visible to all (cf. Is.60:1-3; Ezek.20:41). Because Israel's name is a function of God's investment of his name in his people, so when Israel is in danger of becoming indistinguishable from the nations, i.e. losing its reputation, God takes action 'for the sake of my holy name'.[55]

The promises of v.2 are all clearly depicted as the outcome of YHWH's activity and investment in Abraham/Israel. He is the subject of the promises, the root of the blessing. He is also the focus of it, as will become evident. The passage is thoroughly centred on YHWH. How he will achieve these promises is not yet specified, except that his activity appears to follow from Abram's obedience (v.1).

The outcome of the threefold promise is that 'you shall be a blessing'. The construction of this fourth clause is unusual. The imperative is striking. והיה ברכה occurs also in Is.19:24 and Zech.8:13, where its interpretation is also uncertain. Some have taken it to be virtually equivalent to the passive participle, 'you shall be blessed'.[56] But this makes little sense of the three preceding clauses.[57] Thus a more active sense seems far more likely,

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[52] Cf. 2Sam.7:9; cf. 2Sam.8:13; 1Ki.1:47. Ruprecht (1979: 445-64) has detected echoes of royal ideology throughout the fourfold promise of v.2. He suggests that what Abram is promised here was the hope of many an oriental monarch.
[53] Josh.7:9; 1Sam.12:22; Ps.76:2 [ET 1]; Mal.1:11.
[54] Westermann (1985: 150).
[55] See ch.5 above.
[56] Schmidt (1975: 135-51); cf. Dillman (1892: 208f.); Procksch (1924: 96f.).
[57] Cf. Wehmeier (1974: 3 n.5).

implying that because Abram has been blessed, so he will be a blessing.[58] This is the interpretation suggested by Zech.8:13, 'As you have been a byword of cursing among the nations... so will I save you and you shall be a blessing'.[59] Here the noun ברכה is taken to mean 'example in formulae of blessing' (i.e. Abraham will be invoked as a blessing, his name will be a byword for blessing) though ברכה could also mean 'source of blessing'.[60] The former meaning, that Abraham 'will serve as the standard by which a blessing is invoked', fits the Israelite context best.[61] Consider, for example, Gen.48:20 where Jacob blesses 'by' Ephraim and Manasseh i.e. by pointing to their good fortune and wishing it on oneself. There are other cases where the names of famous people are employed in formulae of blessing (cf. Ruth 4:11).

The next verse carries forward the notion of these effects: the blessing promised to Abram will also have an effect on the people with whom he (and his nation) comes into contact. The implication is that because Abram has been blessed, so this will have the result that others are blessed also. How this will occur, and who will be blessed is not yet specified, though we may presume this effect is related to the greatness (v.2aα) and the name (v.2bα, i.e. renown) of Abram's nation.[62]

6.2.3 Verse 3a

At the end of verse two there is a distinct caesura. Verse 3a begins with two imperfect clauses in parallel, which form a poetic couplet, depicting the activity of YHWH: 'I will bless (ואברכה) those blessing you and I will curse (אאר) the one despising you'. This confirms the idea (in v.2b) that YHWH's dealings with Abram and his people are destined to affect others. Abram and his descendants are not exclusive in the sense that they are the only people who may receive YHWH's blessing. YHWH will bless other people, provided those people bless Abram's people. On the other hand, if anyone despises Abram, God will curse that person. In other words, the nations may incur blessing or curse, depending on their attitude to the people of Abram. God reacts to them according to the way they react to

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[58] Cf. Wolff (1966: 137, 139).
[59] Zech.8:13 continues, 'Fear not, but let your hands be strong'. This context of *reassurance* is appropriate also to the context of Abram setting out.
[60] Cf. Is.19:24 and Ezek.34:26, though the interpretation of ברכה in these passages is debatable.
[61] Sarna (1989: 89); so also other Jewish commentators: cf. Rashi in Lowe (1928: 149); Plaut (1974: 116).
[62] Westermann (1985: 150).

The third feature which distinguishes this blessing/cursing formula from parallels also concerns symmetry. Whereas elsewhere a balance is preserved between the evildoers and their reward - the cursers are cursed just as the blessers are blessed[68] - here those opposed to Abraham are not described by ארר ('curse') but the milder term קלל ('disdain'). This term is generally used for illegitimate verbal assaults on God or one's superiors[69] (its antonym is כבד, 'to honour'), in contrast to ארר which implies a judicial curse, pronounced on evildoers.[70] It seems here in 12:3 that those who merely 'disdain' Abram will be cursed by God, thus that the punishment is heightened.[71]

There are several possible explanations for this language. Firstly, it may be that other people do not have the ontological/divine authority to *curse* those who are related to Abram, God's people. This seems unlikely given that they seem to have the moral authority to bless (v.3aα). A second option might seek to explain the imbalance between the crime and the punishment: that God will not tolerate any form of opposition to Abram, even anyone *speaking* against him or his people. Such is God's concern to protect Abram's people, that the person concerned will be punished disproportionately to their act. But this seems unlikely given the narratives in the Hebrew scriptures which follow. Thirdly, it is possible that a balance between the crime and the punishment *is* maintained in this clause. Thus the crime of 'disdaining' God's people must be taken with the utmost seriousness. This crime can be understood as undermining those aspects which have just been expressed as effects of the blessing on them: their nationhood and the greatness of their name (v.2). Given that these are the direct result of the activity of YHWH, it is not difficult to understand that to undermine the greatness of God's people is to undermine the greatness of God's name, for they are great only by virtue of their association with YHWH. Another expression for 'disdaining' God's name is blasphemy, an offence which is taken very seriously in the law (cf. Ex.20:7; Dt.5:11), and demanding of a serious punishment. Furthermore, it is interesting that ארר is never used with God as its object (cf. Ex.22:27 [ET 28]).[72] The change from ארר to the Piel of קלל here could be seen to confirm the fact that it is God who is

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[68] Cf. 'an eye for an eye' (Ex.21:24; Lev.24:20): the punishment fits the crime.
[69] Cf. Ex.21:17; Lev.24:11; 2Sam.16:5-13.
[70] Cf. Gen.3:14, 17; 9:25; Dt.27:15-26.
[71] Wenham (1987: 277).

encountered in Israel. Thus to despise Israel is to despise God, which is to be inflicted with the curse of God.[73]

V.3a makes absolutely clear that YHWH's promise to Abram entails a close relationship with him and his people. This is seen not only in his blessing of them - in their becoming a great nation and having a great name (v.2) - but in his protection of them *vis-à-vis* outsiders (v.3a). It seems feasible to see this as not simply concerning their physical security, as is often noted on the basis of v.3a,[74] but concerning the protection of their reputation also. If the greatness of Israel's name rests on the sanctity of YHWH's name, then it is not surprising to find the assurance that - whatever happens - God is on Israel's side.

6.2.4 Verse 3b

V.3b ends the divine speech with a clause which is marked off from those which precede it by a change of subject, from YHWH to 'all the families of the earth', and by a change of verb, to a perfect consecutive. This has been called the 'confirming perfect', denoting a real and definitive result.[75] The divine speech culminates with this verb.

The interpretation of this form, ונברכו, is difficult. The problem centres on whether to interpret this as passive ('they will be blessed')[76] or reflexive ('they will bless themselves').[77] The Niphal of ברך is a rare form, which occurs on only two other occasions in the Old Testament, both in direct reference to Gen.12:3.[78] The Hithpael is more common, occurring seven times,[79] and seems to have the same meaning as the Niphal in Gen.22:18 and 26:4 where the same construction occurs. In Genesis, therefore, the two

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[72] Scharbert (1958: 7, cf. 16).
[73] Cf. Wolff (1966: 144 n.44). This interpretation fits well with Rendtorff's (1961: 72) conclusion that the Piel of קלל primarily means 'to designate (and treat) someone as cursed by God', cf. 2Sam.16:7ff.
[74] E.g. Westermann (1985: 150).
[75] Wolff (1966: 138).
[76] The LXX and Vulgate follow this sense, as do the references in Sir.44:21; Acts 3:25; Gal.3:8 and more recently König, von Rad, Muilenburg, Scharbert, Vriezen, Jacob, Cassuto and Gispen. The KJV translates it this way.
[77] So Rashi, Speiser, Delitzsch, Dillman, Skinner, Gunkel, Westermann, RSV, NEB.
[78] Gen.18:18; 28:14. All three are attributed to J.
[79] Gen.22:18; 26:4; Dt.29:18 [ET19]; Is.65:16 (x2); Jer.4:2; Ps.72:17.

forms appear to be interchangeable.[80] Since the Hithpael is always reflexive and not passive,[81] this would favour understanding the Niphal here as a reflexive also.[82] Furthermore, the Pual or Qal passive participle is usually employed for the passive of ברך.

Because of the rarity of the usage of this verb in both forms, it is difficult to be precise about its meaning. Some commentators have favoured a middle form, 'find blessing', on the basis that this would best complement the previous clauses.[83] But the case would seem far stronger for the reflexive, and the context confirms this.

This interpretation of the promise, 'by you all families of the earth will bless themselves,' provides a suitable climax for a divine speech which focuses on Abraham/Israel. It is not that all nations *will participate* in the blessing. Rather, in the light of v.3a, it is that the nations will *wish to participate* in Israel's blessing, to be as Israel is.[84]

Furthermore, according to the understanding of blessing already established, the nations are involved in their own blessing. Abraham is the *model* (rather than the *source*) of blessing according to the wider context in the Hebrew Scriptures. For others to 'bless themselves', therefore, will involve their citing Abraham as the paradigm recipient of divine blessing, which they then invoke and aspire to for themselves. As in Gen.48:20 where Jacob suggests that future generations bless with 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh', and in Ruth 4:12 where the prayer for the family of Ruth and Boaz asks that 'they may be like that of Perez, son of Judah', so then here in Gen.12:3 we are given a picture of the families of the earth saying, 'May God make us like Abraham/Israel'.[85]

Other instances of the Hithpael of ברך elsewhere in the Hebrew canon confirm this understanding of blessing. There are four passages outside the promises to the patriarchs: Ps.72:17; Jer.4:2; Is.65:16 and Dt.29:18. Wehmeier shows that in each case, the Hithpael

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[80] There is no apparent difference between Gen.22:18 (Hithpael) and Gen.18:18 (Niphal). Cf. Delitzsch (1889: 46, 90); Westermann (1985: 151). But this is not to equate the two conjugations *a priori*, cf. Gunkel (1917: 165); Speiser (1964: 86). I consider other occurrences of the Hithpael below.

[81] Most obviously, Dt.29:18 [ET 19] and Is.65:16.

[82] Note that many Hebrew grammars see the Niphal as primarily reflexive; cf. Kautzsch (1910: #51c); Joüon (1991: #51).

[83] See, for example, Wenham (1987: 277-8). So also: Procksch, Keller, Schreiner, Wolff, Schmidt, Wehmeier, Miller, and NAB. Equally, others have argued that the universal salvific meaning of v.3 demands the passive (von Rad).

[84] Contra Wehmeier (1974: 6f.).

[85] A similar, but negative, example is found in Jer.29:22.

may be understood to express a formula of blessing on oneself, using the name of a particular person (or God himself, Is.65:16) as an example.[86]

Finally, the terminology of 'all the families of the earth' is worth noting in this verse. 'Family' (משפחה) suggests a grouping intermediate between a tribe and a father's house, a 'clan'. 'Earth' here is אדמה (cf. Gen.28:14), whereas elsewhere the phrase is 'all the nations (גוי) of the world (ארץ)' (18:18; 22:18; 26:4). Wenham takes this to mean that 'not every individual is promised blessing in Abram but every major group in the world will be blessed'.[87]

6.3 Gen.12:1-4 in a canonical context

Westermann describes the controversy between the different interpretations of ונברכו (v.3b) as 'otiose'.[88] I disagree with this judgement. Rather, as Vriezen suggests, '...the plurality of meaning in v.3b ought to recognised'.[89] It is worthwhile to distinguish the different interpretations of Gen.12:3, on the basis of the frame of reference within scripture from which they are made. Both reflexive and passive translations of the verb in v.3b have relevance and importance in different parts of scripture. The preferred translation will therefore depend on the frame of reference within which the text is understood as a key. Different frames of reference within scripture need clear depiction when interpretation is made.

The different interpretations have much in common: above all, that God has blessed Abraham in a particular way such that he is made the paradigm of blessing. This blessing is destined for all the families of the earth, so long as they recognise the blessing of Abraham. Where they differ concerns, primarily, the means by which they will receive this blessing.

The interpretation of the reflexive in v.3b here is based on the role of Gen.12:3 within the Hebrew canon. This is the way in which God's promises to Abraham are understood from the perspective of Yahwistic faith. This is seen when subsequent reference is made to Abraham and the promises, and it is seen in Israel's understanding of its calling

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[86] Wehmeier (1974: 7-10).
[87] Wenham (1987: 278).
[88] Westermann (1985: 152).

with respect to other nations. Although there is a recurring awareness that Israel's call is made with reference to God's sovereignty over all people (cf. especially Ex.19:5; Dt.7:6f.), this does not denote a significant responsibility regarding the fortune of other people, rather a primary commitment to live faithfully within the covenant. Even in the book of Isaiah, which is sometimes described as the high point in Israelite missionary theology, the nations are depicted as sharing this blessing only in so far as they come to Jerusalem/Zion and acknowledge God's blessing of Israel (cf. Gen.12:3a). The acknowledgement is best understood in terms of a recognition of YHWH's presence in Israel, as developed in Ezekiel with the phrase 'then they will know that 'I am YHWH'. Furthermore, this is never a sharing of Israel's call, even if it is a sharing of Israel's blessing. Israel's covenant calling is exclusive throughout the Hebrew canon.

In relation to the Christian canon, however, the Israelite understanding of Abraham's call and of God's blessing seem rather restrained. Gen.12:1-3 is re-appropriated for a new and wider context. This text no longer only stands simply as preface to the story of Israel. The promises of blessing now stand as a preface to a larger story of salvation which reaches beyond Israel (yet through Israel) to the gentiles. So they represent a reassertion of God's original intentions for humanity, and a justification of his choice of Abraham to initiate the salvation history which reaches beyond him and his people to all.

In this new context, the verses are reinterpreted according to the passive understanding of ונברכו ('be blessed', v.3b), following the Septuagint (ἐνευλογηθήσονται). This change alters the way in which the entire divine speech may be understood, placing particular emphasis on God's intention since calling Abraham that through him all people will receive blessing (v.3b). This blessing to others is not so much the response to their recognition of another's blessing (i.e. the outcome of *their* initiative) as a gift to be received (in a more passive sense) owing to another's initiative.

Although the Old Testament and New Testament interpretations of Gen.12:1-4 are developed in very different ways in the course of their particular canonical frame, it is possible to recognise the validity of both understandings within the form and phrasing of the original verses in Genesis. Whilst we may describe the reflexive interpretation as the primary interpretation, given that the patriarchal narratives as a whole are told from an Israelite

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[89] Vriezen (1973: 380-92).

perspective, we may also note that the language and context allows for the possibility of a re-focusing. The Pauline appropriation of the verses underlies a shift of meaning. This is a shift which is left open in the original language of the verses.

Indeed, we may observe how the style of the verses makes them especially suitable for re-appropriation. Unlike many other divine addresses in Genesis, they lack a specific location or occasion. Even Abraham is pictured as a model of the person of faith: obedient with regard to God's commands, and trusting with regard to the future, especially given that he had no children and no land. Thus the promises may readily be applied beyond their immediate patriarchal context and beyond the Israelite context also, to be related to YHWH's purposes for the whole of the world.

Our study of Gen.12:1-4 is useful not only for understanding the background to God's covenant with Israel, in God's covenant with Abraham. The way in which this text is used and understood in different parts of scripture is also instructive as a model by which to investigate the re-use of Ex.19:5-6 in other parts of scripture. As with God's promises to Abraham, God's promises to Israel are also repeated and re-appropriated in the New Testament. The next chapter examines the presentation of holiness in this new context, and the interpretation of Ex.19:5-6 in the First Letter of Peter in particular.

Chapter 7
'Belonging to God':
1Peter and the New Testament Context

I have chosen to focus on the First Letter of Peter for a Christian understanding of the dynamics of holiness. The subject of holiness is commonly described as a prominent theme in this letter,[1] and the perspective is particularly concerned with its relation to the Old Testament.[2] 1Peter is, therefore, quite self-conscious in offering a biblical theology of holiness, and it is the key New Testament text for our purposes.

The text at the basis of this chapter is 1Pet.2:4-10. This consists of a series of Old Testament references and allusions focusing on the theme of election, made in the light of Christ.[3] Perhaps it is not surprising that they climax with an echo of God's promise at Sinai, 'you will be to me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation' (1Pet.2:9). Given this reference to Ex.19:5-6, I shall take 1Pet.2:9-10 as my focus for exploring the way (or, at least, *a* way) in which the Old Testament understanding of holiness is appropriated in the New Testament.

> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy (1Pet.2:9-10).

These verses represent a conjunction of a variety of Old Testament texts:

> ... you shall be my own possession
> among all peoples;
> for all the earth is mine,
> and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex.19:5-6)
>
> ... for I give water in the wilderness,
> rivers in the desert,
> to give drink to my chosen people,

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[1] Cf. Kelly (1969: 1); Grudem (1988: 43); Davids (1990: 17); Marshall (1991: 27); Perkins (1995: 21).
[2] Snodgrass (1978: 97) maintains that 'few NT books are more relevant for a study of the use of the OT in the NT.' According to Best (1969: 273), 'The only Pauline epistle which has more [O.T. quotations] is Romans... The other books which have more are the synoptic Gospels Acts, Hebrews and Revelation. In proportion to length Revelation is the only book to exceed 1Peter in its frequency of use of the O.T.; Hebrews has about the same proportion of 1Peter'.
[3] 'This cento of passages [in 1Pet.2:6-10] is one of the largest in the entire NT literature!' (Elliott 1966: 17).

the people whom I formed for myself
that they might declare my praise (Is.43:20-1)

And YHWH said to him, "Call her name Not pitied, for I will no more have pity on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all..." (Hos.1:6)

And YHWH said, "Call his name Not my people, for you are not my people and I am not your God." (Hos.1:9)

Say to your brother, "My people," and to your sister, "She has obtained pity." (Hos.2:1 [MT 3])

And I will have pity on Not pitied,
and I will say to Not my people, 'You are my people';
and he shall say, 'Thou art my God' (Hos.2:23 [MT 25])

The chapter will conclude with some reflections on the treatment of holiness elsewhere in the New Testament, and the canonical implications of the differing dynamics of holiness in the Christian canon.

7.1 The First Letter of Peter

7.1.1 Use of the Old Testament

There has been much recent discussion concerning the way Old Testament texts are used in 1Peter: whether the relationship of OT to NT is typological or allegorical,[4] whether the reference is a direct citation or merely an allusion,[5] whether the borrowing is intentional or unconscious and how it is used to advance an argument.[6] Many of these issues are not directly relevant for our current interest: it is sufficient to recognise that the Old Testament material plays an important structural role in 1Peter and that its use is far from superficial.

What matters for us is the *theological* role this material plays: in the particular conjunction of Old Testament passages and themes which are drawn together for the purpose of presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ in the light of the Hebrew scriptures.[7] As the letter itself suggests in 1:10-12, the issue for the first Christians was not what to do with the Old Testament in the light of the gospel (which was Luther's problem), but rather the reverse.[8]

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[4] See, for example, Goppelt (1982: 152-8), who argues strongly for the typological use.
[5] e.g. Osborne (1981: 64-77). Like Hebrews, 1Peter quotes frequently from a variety of parts of the OT, and like Revelation its thought is frequently framed with OT expressions.
[6] e.g. Best (1969: 270-93).
[7] von Campenhausen (1972: 64-6); cf. Childs (1984: 31).
[8] See Osborne (1981: 74f.)

The writing draws on texts from various parts of the Hebrew canon. This variety affirms the strategic significance of particular portions yet also recognises the value of the whole witness.[9] It is clear that the Hebrew scriptures are invested with authority: they are acknowledged to be the true oracles of God. So those writings which are normative for the community of faith must underpin and elucidate what is now revealed within that faith. Thus we find them re-read from a new perspective, and scoured for their themes of promise, election, and covenant which are found to come together and make sense in the person of Jesus Christ. Separate texts are combined to this end. [10] 1Peter therefore represents an early canonical reading; it offers a biblical theology of holiness (however partial) in itself.

7.1.2 Style and function

Although historical critical questions concerning 1Peter abound, there is considerable consensus among scholars regarding the theology of the epistle. Although it retains the formal features of a letter - it does not purport to be a baptismal liturgy[11] - its function is altered and its dynamic is more like that of a homily addressed to churches at large to which is attributed apostolic authority (1:1).

By the constant appeal to Old Testament passages, by the use of repetition and by much direct exhortation, the message urges believers to make real their faith. There is emphasis on the theological identity of the recipients of the letter[12] - as 'new-born' (1:3), 'elect' (1:2), 'inheritors' (1:4, 12), 'sanctified' (1:2), 'exiles' (1:1; 2:11) and 'aliens' (2:11) - and it is this identity and calling which they are to realise, to live out, to fulfil. So the letter assumes the great doctrines of the faith - there is little apologetic argument - and in a practical way exhorts the elect people to faithful conduct in the world.

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[9] Of the 31 citations and allusions in 1Peter examined by Osborne (1981: 65), most are taken from Isaiah (14 references, from chs. 8, 28, 40, 43, 52 & 53), the Psalms (7 references, especially from Ps.34) and from Proverbs (5). Two come from other prophets (Jeremiah, Hosea) and three from the Pentateuch (Ex.19, Lev.19, Dt.21). There are also references to the primeval and patriarchal narratives (1Pet.3:20f; 3:5f.).
[10] Consider, for example, Is.28:16 and Ps.118:22 in 1Pet.2:4; Is.53:4 or 12 or 5 and Dt.21:23 in 1Pet.2:24a; Is.43:20-21 and Ex.19:6 in 1Pet.2:9 (Osborne 1981: 74).
[11] Contra Preisker (1951: 156-162) and Cross (1954: 28-35).
[12] There is relatively little detail regarding their race or circumstance.

7.1.3 Structure

The exhortation proceeds according to a fairly consistent pattern of imperatives.[13] As a general rule, the imperatives are preceded by an assumption (expressed either by a conditional sentence[14] or a participle[15]) and followed by a supportive indicative.[16] These imperatives give to the letter a structure by which the overall theme and purpose cohere.

The letter falls into three main sections. The first is the introduction, 1:1-12, in which God's people are addressed and described. They are recipients of election (1:2), hope (1:3-9), history (1:10-12) and revelation (1:13). They are distinguished from their Israelite predecessors by the death and resurrection of Christ (1:3, 7-8, 10-12).

The second section consists largely of a series of exhortations, 1:13-2:10. As God's chosen people, they are to hope (1:13), to obey (1:14), to be holy (1:15), to love (1:22), to put away evil (2:1), to grow up to salvation (2:2), to come to Christ (2:4), to be built together and to offer spiritual sacrifices (2:5). Interspersed between these imperatives are corroborating indicatives which all relate to some aspect of the believers' relationship to Jesus.[17] Thus statements explaining what believers are to do alternate with statements explaining who they are, that is, what has been done for them in Jesus. This alternation builds up and culminates in a final indicative section from 2:4-10. The final declaration, 2:9-10, forms a climax of which Elliott writes, 'here the fundamental indicative for the entire epistle has been spoken.'[18]

This central verse opens up the remaining portion of the letter, which is an extended paraenetic section, far more specific and practical in its directives. The imperatives of 2:11-5:14 all relate to living out a holy life in the face of an alien, unbelieving and often hostile environment: to the end that God may be glorified (2:12) and others discover the hope he offers (3:15).

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[13] These proceed from 1:13 and extend to the end of the epistle, as follows: 1:13 (x3), 14, 15, 17, 22; 2:1, 2, 4, 5, 12, 13, (14,) 17 (x4), 18; 3:1, 3, 6, 7 (x2), 8, 9, 10, 11, 14 (x2), 15, 16; 4:1, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16; 5:2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 (x2), 9, 14. As in other NT documents, the participle can function also as an imperative, though this can be ambiguous, cf. Thurén (1990: 4ff.).

[14] e.g. 1:17.

[15] e.g. 1:22.

[16] See further Lohse (1954: 86); Schelkle (1961: 5); and Snodgrass (1978: 97).

[17] 1:18-21, 23; 2:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

[18] 1966: 217.

7.1.4 Theme

On the basis of the above structural analysis, the task of identifying the overall themes of 1Peter is quite straightforward. There are two related themes. The first is concerned with the theological identity of God's elect people. Beginning with this 'controlling concept'[19] in 1:1f., the indicative statements of the first two sections of the letter build up a picture of their status and character as elect, culminating in the series of indicatives of 2:4-10 which climax at vv.9-10. The reality of the believers' electedness and accordant holiness provides the prerequisite for the paraenesis which follows. This is the second concern: that the people of God should live up to their calling, that 'they become what they are' in the host of particular details which make up their lives. These are described in the series of imperatives, which come especially in the final section of the letter. They are the consequence of their new-found identity in Christ.

7.2 Election: 1Peter 2:4-10

According to the preceding analysis, we have identified 1Pet.2:9-10 as forming the central pivot within 1Peter. The first half of the letter builds up to this declaration; the second half grows out of it. These verses do not stand alone; there is a clearly-defined context immediately preceding them which is important for understanding their message and significance.

The declaration forms the culmination of a section, 2:4-10, in which the mood is indicative throughout. This section is linked to the preceding paraenetic material by the introductory participles πρὸς ὃν προσερχόμενοι ('to whom you are approaching', 2:4a) and ὀικοδομεῖσθε ('being built up', 2:5a),[20] but the unit is self-contained, consisting mainly of Old Testament material. This is organised into two clusters, a λίθος complex (2:6-8) quoting Is.28:16, Ps.117(ET118):22 and Is.8:14, and a λαός complex (2:9-10) quoting Is.43:20f., Ex.19:6 and Hos.1:6, 9; 2:3 [ET1], 25 [ET23].[21] Verses 4-5 are dependent on these two complexes, condensing and modifying the material of verses 6-8 and 9-10, uniting

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[19] Schrenk (1967: 190). He calls attention to the fact that '1 Pt. is the only NT work in which ἐκλεκτός has from the very outset thematic significance.'

[20] These may be understood as indicatives or imperatives. Elliott (1966: 16-17) argues for the former but the references he cites build a stronger case for the latter. No doubt, either way, exhortation is expressed.

[21] Cerfaux (1939:22f.).

their different themes and thus offering some interpretation of the Old Testament passages therein.[22] Throughout the pericope of 2:4-10, material which is not directly part of the scriptural quotations may be taken to serve an interpretative function, to explain, apply or expand in the manner of midrashic commentary.

We shall see that the motif of election is central throughout the passage. Elliott argues that all the material in 2:6-10 is selected and organised to emphasise this theme.[23] At the outset we may note that the adjective ἐκλεκτός modifies each of the clusters, λίθος in 2:6b and γένος in 2:9a. Neither usage is fortuitous: each betrays the designing hand of the author, in order that emphasis is laid upon the link between the λίθος (Christ) and the γένος ἐκλεκτόν.

> The supremely important point here is that basic OT promises and predicates, which originally applied to the people of Israel, are now transferred to the universal Christian community. Christianity knows that it is the elect Israel... the transfer is wholly grounded upon, and executed by, Christ.[24]

7.2.1 The Living Stone

In the λίθος complex of 2:6-8 it is not merely the verbal congruence of λίθος which is responsible for bringing together these verses, given the differing motifs - exalting, building, stumbling - with which the stone is associated.[25] On the basis of the primary position which is given to Is.28:16, and the particular emphasis which the ἐκλεκτόν ἔντιμον receives in its direct repetition in 2:4b, we can deduce that what is highlighted here is that this stone is the *elect* stone. It is chosen and precious. The messianic and eschatological implication is clear: in all other New Testament passages containing reference to these 'stone' texts,[26] the image is applied (though not always limited) to Jesus as Messiah.[27]

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[22] Elliott (1966: 16-23).
[23] Elliott (1966: 141-5).
[24] Schrenk (1967: 190).
[25] As Elliott (1966: 26) points out, 'a common theme is difficult to find. While Is.8:14 is negative in tone, Is.28:16 and Ps.118(117):22 offer a positive hope to those who believe. Whereas Is.8:14 and 28:16 fall within contexts of admonition and warning, Ps.118(117):22 is part of a joyous processional liturgy. While according to Is.28:16 God is setting a stone in Zion, Ps.118(117):22 seems to identify this stone directly with Israel (or her temple). In Is.8:14, however, it is God Himself who is the λίθος.'
[26] Mk.12:10f. (par. Mt.21:42ff., Lk.20:17); Act.4:11; Rom.9:32f.; Eph.2:20.
[27] Note that there is evidence from Qumranic and Rabbinic sources of a common tradition of interpretation which applied the 'stone' texts to the Messiah and the coming eschatological Messianic age (see Elliott 1966: 26-8).

Verse 4 begins 'To whom you are approaching...' The relative pronoun ὃν refers the ascriptions which follow to the last word of the previous sentence, ὁ κύριος (2:3b),[28] stressing again the nature of Christ as elect. 1Peter limits the title 'Lord' almost exclusively to Christ.[29] The identification of election with Christ is emphasised still further. In 2:4 ζῶντα describes the stone as the *living* stone: the crucified Jesus is designated as resurrected, with all the connotations of God's election and favour in resurrection. The divine choice is brought into sharper focus by the antithesis which follows, 'rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious'.[30] God's sovereign will is the overwhelming counter to human rejection: and it is shown in Jesus Christ, the living stone, the resurrected Messiah. 1Peter concentrates all the language of election onto Christ to make the point loudly and clearly.

7.2.2 The living stones

Verse 5 begins the connection which is made between Jesus and the believers, by a transition uniting the description of Jesus as the stone with a description of the believers as the people of God. Although the underlying theme of the metaphor is christological, it is channelled into a soteriological statement; it has been cited to provide the basis for a description of the believing community.[31] As in 2:4, in 2:5 also the motif of election is paramount. Just as 2:4 stresses the one element of the λίθος complex pertaining to the electedness of the stone, so 2:5 selects from among the Old Testament passages contained later in 2:9-10 the election passage *par excellence*, Ex.19:6, as the basis of its interpretation.

As Jesus is the 'living stone', so those who believe in him (2:6c) are designated as the 'living stones'.[32] As Jesus is the stone who has been given life, so too those who confess

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[28] This is borrowed from Ps.34:9 [ET8]. ὁ κύριος in the LXX is a translation of יהוה (YHWH) in the MT, but 1Peter refers it to a discussion of Christ as λίθος. Similarly in 1Pet.3:14-15, Is.8:12-3 with its reference to κύριος (MT יהוה) is quoted and interpreted of Christ. It is, therefore, straightforward to identify the stone of stumbling in 1Pet.2:8, quoted from the succeeding verses in Is.8, with Christ.

[29] Note that elsewhere, in citations where κύριος refers to YHWH, the author writes ὁ θεὸς (e.g. 1Pet.5:5; cf. Prov.3:34 [LXX]); and in another where κύριος refers no longer to YHWH but to Jesus, the author adds τὸν χριστὸν (Osborne 1981: 74).

[30] The negative-positive antithesis is a characteristic formulation of 1Peter cf. 1:8a, 8b, 14-15, 18-19, 23; 2:9, 10a, 10b, 16b, 18b, 20, 23, 25b; 3:3-4, 9, 14-15, 21b; 4:2, 12-13, 16b; 5:2b, 2c, 2d. The positive clause always follows the negative clause, thereby receiving the emphasis.

[31] Snodgrass (1978: 105) points out that wherever the stone testimonia appear in the NT and Qumran the concept of the people of God is usually present in the immediate context.

[32] The particle ὡς ('as' or 'like') does not introduce a mere comparison (in the sense of *similar* [but not quite equal] to Jesus) but rather implies a fact. 1Peter regularly uses it to identify the readers from a certain point of view: 'as new born babes' (2:2), 'as aliens and exiles' (2:11).

him as Lord have been reborn from death to life (cf. 1:3, 23; 2:2). Verse 5 thus leads from a description of Jesus as the stone and the complex from which this image derived to a description of the addressed believers and the Old Testament allusions concerned with the people of God (2:9f.). On the basis of Christ's election, so are the people of God to understand their election.

The qualification by which people are related to the stone is explained as either belief or unbelief (2:7ab). The description 'believers' is applied to the letter's readers (2:7a) and unbelievers to the disobedient (2:7b, 8b).[33] The preciousness, ἡ τιμή (2:7), which is derived from the epithet ἔντιμον belonging to the living stone, Christ, in 2:4 (and 2:6), is explicitly ascribed to 'you who believe' in 2:7a denoting, in the case of belief, the transfer of Christ's status to the people. On the other hand, those who disbelieve have rejected the stone (2:7b).[34] This is equivalent to disobeying the word (2:8b), and so the stone becomes a stumbling stone. This stumbling is the will of God for those who choose not to believe and obey (2:8b): it is *their* election.

7.3 Implications: 1Pet.2:5

Having made the connection with Christ as living stone, 2:5 expounds further the theological significance of this description of the people of God as living stones. Although the actual term ἐκλεκτός is not used of the people until 2:9, the electedness of the people which is implied through their association with the elect Christ is explored through the cultic imagery of temple, priesthood and sacrifice. '... like living stones, be yourselves built into a spiritual house (οἶκος), to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (2:5).

7.3.1 A spiritual house

It seems likely that the terminology of 'spiritual house' refers to the temple.[35] This is the reason why the church is called the house of God (οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ) in 1Pet.4:17.[36] The

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[33] Note the equivalent use of belief and obedience; cf. Jn.3:36; Heb.3:18f. We shall return to this later in considering holiness in the New Testament more generally (7.5).

[34] Note how οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες ('the builders') of Ps.118:22 is broadened in 2:4 to include all unbelieving humanity. There is no explicit anti-Jewish polemic here, though it might be considered implicit.

[35] Some scholars argue that here οἶκος means 'house' as household or family, not as building or temple (e.g. Elliott 1966: 159). This is a highly reasonable understanding of the NT people of God and it is compatible

house is founded on Christ, 'the living stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him' (2:4).[37] All three citations of the λίθος complex develop this metaphor on the basis of the Old Testament sanctuary; the terminology of priesthood and sacrifice which follows in 2:5-6 underlines this association.[38] It is founded in Zion; it is built by God; it is *sacred* space. In contrast to the old, however, this temple is πνευματικός. The thought of the people as a temple is used here not primarily in the sense of a building, in the physical sense, but rather as a collective designation under the point of view of holiness.[39] The particular description of this οἶκος as spiritual implies that which is caused by and filled with the Holy Spirit.[40] It is the Holy Spirit who effects election and holiness (1:2), and who effects the dwelling of God among his people.[41]

The church of the crucified and resurrected one is now the place where God is present,[42] and this is where he is worshipped and revered through true sacrifice (2:5b). This description fulfils the notion of the ideal temple that God was expected to establish at the end time, the eschatological dwelling place of God's presence among human beings. Although the details may be taken metaphorically, the typological parallel with the Old Testament sanctuary is also portrayed as a fulfilment of Old Testament promise. And this is how the people of God, founded on Christ - 'you', the readers of 1Peter - are to understand themselves in the present.

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with descriptions elsewhere. Nevertheless, this understanding does not preclude the association with the OT temple also. Cf. Eph.2:19-22.

[36] The wording of this passage, 'It is time for judgement to begin at the house of God,' is obviously based on Ezek.9:6 (cf. Jer.25:29). In Ezekiel those who are to bring judgement on Jerusalem are charged, 'Begin at my sanctuary,' i.e., the temple.

[37] Cf. Mk.12:10f. (par.).

[38] According to Elliott (1966: 161), most commentators find a (problematic) 'abrupt change of metaphor' in 2:5, between the architectonic metaphor of a house and the living functioning entity of a body of priests. But from a cultic perspective it is hard to see any disjunction in the metaphors.

[39] Vielhauer (1940: 138). The Qumran community used the image of an edifice erected by God ('house' [CD 7:11ff.; 20:10, 13]; 'temple' [1QS 5:6]) as a means of expressing holiness; cf. 1QS 8:5, 'a house of holiness for Israel, an assembly of supreme holiness for Aaron.'

[40] Note that the use of πνευματικός does not imply something immaterial in contrast to material or figurative in contrast to literal. Rather it is generally agreed that in the NT it designates something belonging to the Holy Spirit of God. Cf. Schlatter (1937: 94); Congar (1962: 153); Elliott (1966: 153-6).

[41] Cf. 4:14. It is an overstatement to identify a full trinitarian concept of God in 1Peter (cf. Michaels 1988: lxxiv; Davids 1990: 22f.), yet frequently the Spirit is depicted as indicating the power of God: the power by which Christians are set apart (1:2), the power by which the prophets were inspired to speak of Christ (1:11), the power by which the proclamation of the Christian message takes place (1:12) and the power to raise the dead (3:18; 4:6).

[42] Cf. 1Cor.14:25.

7.3.2 A holy priesthood

The church is then characterised as εἰς ἱεράτευμα ἅγιον, 'for/to be a holy priesthood' which points in the same direction as the previous expression.[43] The people who are built on Christ into a spiritual temple are a holy priesthood.[44] This is not a literal[45] conveyance to every believer[46] of priestly rights and functions, but a corporate designation of a status and a charge before God. The people of God are empowered (and obliged) to do what is otherwise reserved for priests: to come near to God and serve him. As the Old Testament regulations concerning priests emphasise, this is possible only for the 'holy one' who is pure and belongs to God.[47] Just as 'the mark of the genuine priesthood is holiness,'[48] so is priestliness the symbol of human holiness.

At the same time as suggesting this typological interpretation of the Old Testament notion of priesthood, the particular choice of the term ἱεράτευμα here suggests also a fulfilment of the promise which is given to Israel by God at Sinai, Ex.19:6. The adjective ἅγιον which modifies it distinguishes *this* priesthood from all others as alone having that relation to God which constitutes holiness.[49] This holiness is the work of the Spirit (cf. 1:1-2), a correlate of election by God. As we shall see from what follows, there is also emphasis upon the active aspect of holiness on the part of those who are elected.[50]

It can hardly be said that 1Peter develops the theme of priesthood, as some scholars have supposed.[51] Selwyn has suggested that the Christian community as ἱεράτευμα

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[43] εἰς should be taken with οἰκοδομεῖσθε, not, in analogy to 2:9c (εἰς περιποίησιν) with οἶκος (pace Elliott [1966: 160 n.2]; Goppelt [1993: 141]). The 'spiritual house is not set aside for a 'holy priesthood,' but is identical with it. Hence some manuscripts leave out εἰς in order to let the two terms appear in apposition.

[44] ἱεράτευμα, derived from Ex.19:6, is an LXX construction not found in other Greek documents; it occurs only here in the NT. It is widely agreed that it designates the priesthood as a body (i.e. 'body of priests'), not as a function (cf. Cerfaux (1939); Best (1960: 273-99); Schrenk (1965: 249f.); Elliott (1966: 159-98). Note Elliott (1966: 233), 'ἱεράτευμα means 'body of priests'. It does not mean 'priesthood' which is rather the equivalent of ἱερατεία, a more static and abstract term.'

[45] Any more than the depiction of the believers as stones or temple is to be taken literally.

[46] The Reformation imposed on this passage an understanding of the priesthood of all believers, but nowhere in the NT is this the understanding.

[47] Ex.29:44ff.; Lev.8.

[48] Goppelt (1982: 154).

[49] Cf. Beare (1958: 96), who points out that ἅγιον is not to be taken as a 'permanent epithet' with ἱεράτευμα.

[50] Note Asting's (1930: 133f.) three aspects of 'holy': a passive aspect (the act of being elected by God), an active aspect (the obedience or behaviour forthcoming from an elected community) and an apocalyptic aspect (those participating in the Messianic kingdom). Cf. Elliott (1966: 177).

[51] Cf. Selwyn (1946: 291ff.); Torrance (1955: 61, 82ff.).

'represents the nations of mankind in the same way as the Levitical priesthood represented Israel'[52] but there is little ground for making this connection, yet.

7.3.3 Offering spiritual sacrifices

The phrase which follows ἱεράτευμα makes clear that there is a functional character to the priestliness which 1Peter has in mind. Just as the spiritual house has a purpose (εἰς), to be an active body of priests, so this body has a function: ἀνενέγκαι πνευματικὰς θυσίας εὐπροσδέκτους θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, 'to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'.[53] The verb ἀνενέγκαι is the technical term used in the LXX for bringing up (to the altar) a sacrifice,[54] but it can also be used of hymns of praise.[55] Within the context of 1Peter, how are these 'spiritual sacrifices' to be understood?

The reference here is to offerings in a transferred sense, i.e. of a person, object or deed dedicated to God, prompted and enabled by the Holy Spirit. There is a connection between πνευματικαὶ θυσίαι and οἶκος πνευματικός: just as the divine Spirit dwells in the house, so he controls the sacrifices making them acceptable to God.[56] These non-material offerings are not so much an expression of anti-Jewish polemic;[57] the concern is rather a whole-hearted emphasis on surrender and dedication of the self to the holy will of the holy God, through Christ. Such exhortation is familiar especially from the Old Testament prophets.[58]

There are a variety of interpretations regarding these offerings.[59] The context of 1Peter suggests this commitment to God encompasses the totality of Christian activity,

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[52] 1946: 291ff.

[53] On 'spiritual sacrifice', see Best (1960: 273-99); Elliott (1966: 174-9); Feuillet (1974: 704-28); Hill (1982: 45-63).

[54] Cf. Lev.14:20, 16:15, 17:5f.; 1Esdr.5:49; Is.57:6; 2Mcc.1:18, 2:9.

[55] E.g. 2Chr.29:31; 2Mcc.10:7. In the NT the verb occurs in both a non-cultic and cultic sense.

[56] It is instructive to note that 1Pet.2:5 is the only NT instance where πνευματικός modifies either οἶκος or θυσία.

[57] So, for example, Selwyn (1946: 161). There are references to non-material offerings in the OT (Ps.40:9ff.; 50:14; 51:16-9; 69:31f. [ET30f.]; 107:22; 141:2 [Hos.6:6; Am.5:24f. {ET21f.}; Mic.6:6ff.]), in the Qumran literature (according to 1QS 9:3-5, prayer and a just manner of life are fitting sacrifices; see also 1QS 10:6; 4qflor.1:6f.) and elsewhere in the NT (Heb.13:15f. [cf. Rev.8:3f.; Phil.4:18; Eph.5:2]; Rom.15:16; 2Tim.4:6.). It is possible, however, that there is opposition to *Judaism* (i.e. a religious system whose self-definition lacks any reference to Christ).

[58] Cf., e.g., Hos.6:6; Amos 5:24f. [ET21f.]; Mic.6:6ff.; Is.1:16f.; Ps.40:7-9, 50:8-14, 51:18f. 141:2. This conception of holiness and sacrifice is continued through post-exilic Jewish writings also; see Elliott (1966: 178 n.1) for references.

[59] Goppelt (1993: 142) describes the offerings as 'praise of God, sharing with one's neighbor, the winning of persons through mission, and the ministry and martyrdom of the apostle.' But this interpretation bears only

Through the election of Christ, so are believers elect also. With this election come the identity markers of holiness: the people of God are a temple (they embody his presence) and a priesthood (they model his holiness) and their task is to offer sacrifice (to live well, under God, before others). The final two verses of the section further develop our understanding of this election and holiness.

7.4 Holiness: 1Pet.2:9-10

The typological connection between the church and the people that was formed at Sinai under the old covenant is made even more explicit in 2:9. Here 1Peter chooses terms from the key passages describing Israel's position and purpose and transfers them to the church. These expressions are not simply employed figuratively: in 2:10 it is stated categorically that now a new people of God has been adopted, as had been promised for the new age. As we have seen, the eschatological present and the ascription of the titles of election are determined by Jesus Christ and acknowledged through faith.

Continuing the series of Old Testament allusions which began at 2:6a with the formula, 'for it stands in Scripture,' 2:9-10 consist entirely of a collation of epithets pertaining to Israel as the λαὸς of God. [66] In their Old Testament contexts, they focus on Israel's election and purpose; so here they are used to the same effect of the new people of God.

The opening words ὑμεῖς δὲ ('but you') together with βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα (royal priesthood) and ἔθνος ἅγιον ('holy nation') derive from the LXX version of Ex.19:6. This is the original proclamation of God's formation of Israel as the elect and holy nation of God, which follows the events of the exodus and liberation from Egyptian captivity. The allusions from Isaiah (Is.43:20f.; cf 42:6-9), γένος ἐκλεκτόν ('a chosen race'), λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν ('a people for his own possession') and ὅπως τὰς ἀρετὰς ἐξαγγειλείτε τοῦ ἐκ σκότους ὑμᾶς καλέσαντος εἰς τὸ θαυμαστὸν αὐτοῦ φῶς ('that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light') are taken from YHWH's promise of a second exodus. This is understood

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[66] In the language of the LXX, λαὸς is the terminus technicus *par excellence* for the people of God, serving as an ethnic designation for Israel and implying, theologically, its election and covenant status. Cf. Strathmann & Meyer (1967: 29-57).

in terms of liberation from Babylonian captivity; it recalls YHWH as 'the Holy One'[67] and those he saves as 'chosen'[68]. The Hosean texts represented in 2:10 (Hos.1:6, 9; 2:3 [ET1], 25 [ET23]) stem from the birth and naming of Hosea's children, an incident which serves as symbol for God's dealings with his people Israel, to which 1Peter contrasts the former time (ποτε) with the present (νῦν).

These verses speak for themselves in crowning the preceding section. All the terms and associations of Israel's election, which were initially attributed to Christ, are now applied to the body of believers according to their relationship to Christ. So we find expressed here the themes of holiness - the special status, the special character, the special purpose - focused upon the people of God in Christ. We will explore in more detail their particular nuances and emphases according to the presentation of 1Peter.

7.4.1 Estranged

2:9 begins ὑμεῖς δὲ ('But you'), drawing a contrast between those who come to the living stone (cf. 2:4) and those for whom the stone brings stumbling, who disobey the word (2:8). The contrast is stark; on the basis of belief, the people of God - as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own possession - are sharply distinguished from others.

It is likely that this pronoun and conjunction are borrowed from Ex.19:6 (LXX).[69] In Exodus this adversative particle identifies you, Israel, 'among all people' (Ex.19:5b) by means of the epithets which follow, 'priestly kingdom' and 'holy nation'. In 1Pet.2:9 other epithets are interpolated and added, γένος ἐκλεκτόν ('chosen race') and λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν ('a people for God's own possession'), from Is.43:20f. Together, we may therefore take these titles to distinguish the church from the rest of society. As in the Old Testament, it is the language of election and holiness which marks out God's people.

Some implications of this separation of being elect and holy are given by the terms 'exiles' and 'aliens'.[70] In 1Pet.1:1, Christians are described as ἐκλεκτοὶ παρεπίδημοι, 'elect strangers' and in 2:11 they are πάροικοι καὶ ἐπίδημοι ('aliens and exiles'). On the basis of

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[67] Is. 43:3, 14, 15.
[68] Is.42:1, 6; 43:10, 20.
[69] In both Ex.19:6 (LXX) and 1Pet.2:9, δὲ carries adversative implication, even though it also functions as a resumptive or transitional particle elsewhere in 1Peter.
[70] Feldmeier (1992: 22) has argued that these are the key metaphors employed in 1Peter to express the Christian relationship to culture, which imply a 'clear distance in relation to society, a distance from its values and ideals, from its institutions and politics'.

these descriptions, an appeal is made to Christians that they be distinguished by their behaviour: 'Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles so ... they may see your good deeds...' (2:12). Here is a practical description of the meaning of holiness, a holiness which expresses itself in 'offerings' (2:5) of the right behaviour towards the neighbour. The sentiment of this is very much in keeping with Israelite tradition: to make the way free for the gospel towards the disobedient (2:12; 3:1, 10-12).

This Christian way of life creates an estrangement from the social environment,[71] and this separation is not geographical or racial, but religious and temporal. It comes about because 'we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead' (1:3). The distance is two-fold.

Firstly, the new birth distances Christians from the old life inherited from their ancestors (1:18) - a way of life characterised by ignorance of God and misguided desires (1:14) - through the blood of the lamb (1:19). In 2:10 the negative-positive antitheses, taken from Hosea, are sharp: 'once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.' The formulation ποτε ... νῦν commonly designates the 'eschatological now', the occurrence of the Messianic Age of salvation, light and belonging (2:9) in contrast to the former age of sin, darkness and alienation from God.[72]

Secondly, the new birth of Christians is a birth into a living hope. This is a distance from the transitoriness of the present world, in which all human efforts ultimately end in death, a distance which takes place through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1:3). Thus Christians are given a new time frame: in the midst of the world in which they live, their new birth opens up a new home which has an endless future in God. Their essential difference is eschatological, because they recognise the Messianic Age in which they are living. 'What permeates the epistle is not a fixation on distance from the world, but enthusiasm about the eschatological future.'[73]

Thus it follows that Christians will live differently - abstaining from destructive passions (1:14; 2:11), enjoying freedom (2:16), sharing sympathy, love, tenderness and

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[71] It is not so much the socially-marginalised that become Christians (Elliott 1981: 21-58, 129-132) but that through conversion Christians become alienated from their social environment (Volf 1994: 17f.).
[72] Cf. the related expressions in Rom.3:21; 6:21; 7:6; 11:30-31; 16:26; 1Cor.15:20; 2Cor.6:2; Gal.2:20; 4:8-9; Eph.2:13; 5:8; 2Tim.1:10.

humility (3:8) - even if they are misunderstood and opposed. This behaviour is not distinctive because it is defined negatively in contrast to the world: there are no direct injunctions 'do not be as your neighbours are'. Insofar as it is negatively defined then its force is 'do not be as you were'.[74] Rather, the behaviour is distinctive because it follows from the positive example of a holy God (1:15f.) and of the suffering Christ (2:21ff.).[75] Christians are estranged not because they live differently. They are estranged because they have a different intrinsic vision of reality. And because of this vision, they live differently.

7.4.2 Belonging to God

As we have already stated, the critical issue for our study is the fresh conjunction of separate Old Testament passages. Given the importance of Ex.19:6 for an understanding of election and holiness, perhaps we should not find its reference here surprising.[76] What is of particular interest is the new arrangement which is given to this reference, with an interpolation and addition from Is.43:20f.[77] This collation, and the changes which 1Peter makes to the LXX texts, are most instructive for understanding this particular New Testament presentation of election and holiness.

The first of these changes is the interpolation of γένος ἐκλεκτόν ('a chosen race'). This title is quoted in condensed anarthrous form, from τὸ γένος μου τὸ ἐκλεκτόν in Is.43:20 (LXX). Its place as the first among the titles emphasises the central theme of election[78] and it begins the four-part series of designations for Israel which are composed with rhetorical effect.[79] There is clearly a progression of momentum and theme.

The two subsequent titles are direct quotations from Ex.19:6 (LXX), βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα ('royal priesthood')[80] and ἔθνος ἅγιον ('holy nation'). Their appearance here

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[73] Volf (1994: 21).
[74] Cf. Goppelt (1993: 109).
[75] Nor is the eschatological note in 1Peter made the threatening excuse for radical demands. There is no urgent plea to 'live holy lives because the end is near'. Rather the new time frame is an incentive for positive exhortation.
[76] Elliott calls this the Covenant Formula which had 'a special sound' to a Jew. Cf. Elliott (1966: 50-128) for an excellent study tracing the history of its transmission and interpretation.
[77] I take Ex.19:6 to be the primary text in 1Pet.2:9, given that the verse begins with ὑμεῖς δέ belonging to the original formulation of Ex.19:6 (LXX). This is overlooked by most commentators, but cf. Selwyn (1946: 279); Elliott (1966: 142).
[78] Cf. Elliott (1966: 141f.).
[79] Note that each of the titles consists of a noun and a modifier.
[80] Although this follows the LXX exactly, it differs in meaning from the MT. Like the Hebrew, the Greek is a complex construction grammatically and thus not straightforward to translate. See Cerfaux (1939: 34); Scott

confirms the typological continuity which has been continually drawn between Israel and the church. In comparison to its Hebrew equivalent, the first expression stresses further the *priestly* character of the New Testament people (this is more significant here than the connotations of royalty), thus developing the themes of 2:5. The reference here does not dwell on the cultic imagery, however; something larger is in focus. Rather, as we shall see, it is the nature of a priest as 'belonging to God' which is in view. As in Ex.19:6 and Is.43, this description does not mark out particular members within the body of Christ, but their corporate identity *vis-à-vis* non-members. Thus the impact of the priestly sacrifices in 2:5: though they may be directed towards God, they also effect service and witness to the outside world.

The second title from Ex.19:6, which I have previously argued to form a doublet with the first,[81] is likewise swept into the continuing progression of ascriptions for the church. The naming here of Israel's most fundamental statement of its identity and self-understanding heightens the momentum which 2:9 gathers, but it is not in itself the climax of the verse.[82] As we shall see, it is as if the order and progression of verses 5 and 6 from Ex.19 have been exchanged so that greater emphasis is placed on the elect as God's 'treasured possession among all nations'.

So it is the next title which completes and crowns the list of titles: λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν. This is the second interjection from Isaiah, an abbreviation of λαὸν μου, ὃ περιεποιησάμην ('my people whom I have acquired/made my special possession'; Is.43:21) which is doubtless also inspired by Ex.19:5 (and Ex.23:22 LXX), λαὸς περιούσιος.[83] The reformulation with εἰς may give the phrase a very different nuance, however.[84] Although the use of εἰς can have a static sense (like ἐν followed by a dative),[85] Halas has shown how in this context it is far more likely that it carries a dynamic, directional

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(1950: 113-119); Elliott (1966: 149-54); Sandevoir (1980: 219-229); Chryssavgis (1987: 179-194). There is a growing consensus in understanding βασίλειον as an adjective (rather than as a noun) which virtually reverses the relationship implied by the Hebrew, 'a kingdom of priests' (cf. Calvin 1855: 75).

[81] Cf. *1.4.5.*

[82] Cf. Steuernagel (1986: 13).

[83] Cf. Ex.19:5 with Mal.3:17, where the LXX translates סגלה by εἰς περιποίησιν.

[84] Note that this is also a possible rendering of the implications of the OT text, both MT and LXX.

[85] Cf. Zerwick (1963: 33-7); Moulton (1963: 245).

thrust.[86] Thus the implication here is 'a people which finds the end of its existence in its possession by God'.[87]

This understanding reinforces the Old Testament view that the covenant people belong to God in a special way. It recalls the promise and purpose entailed in Israel's election at Sinai: to be YHWH's סגלה, his 'treasured possession' (Ex.19:5). But it also says something more: this special belonging is made their goal, it is their highest purpose. Not only have they become a people by the action of God in making them his own: they are brought into being in order that they may be his, i.e. a community destined to be distinguished from all others by its unique relation to him. This destination is achieved through the new understanding of their election. Election calls forth a response of faith, a living out of their identity as belonging to God, a declaration of their call by God in word (2:9e) and deed (2:12).

It is in the light of this fundamental belonging that the social and racial circumstances of the believers referred to in 1Peter are almost overlooked. What matters is their theological race, and it is this that determines their social circumstances. Not only are Christians given the title λαὸς, which previously served as the ethnic (as well as theological) designation for Jewish Israel; they are also termed (far more specifically) a γένος, despite the fact that they are drawn from many nations. This makes the point even more emphatically: that ethnic boundaries are superseded. Prerequisites for belonging to the eschatological λαὸς are no longer historical or genetic but purely religious: belief in Jesus as the Christ.

7.4.3 A missionary concern?

As in 2:5, the attributions for the elect of God of 2:9 end with a final clause detailing the corresponding task. This follows an adaptation of the clause in Is.43:21b ('that they might declare my praise') and makes reference to its previous context, Is.42:6-9, in the words: ὅπως τὰς ἀρετὰς ἐξαγγείλητε τοῦ ἐκ σκότους ὑμᾶς καλέσαντος εἰς τὸ θαυμαστὸν αὐτοῦ φῶς.

ἐξαγγείλητε has been substituted for the original infinitive διηγεῖσθαι. The terms are closely synonymous but the former is more emphatic and carries a wider connotation.

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[86] Halas (1984: 255-6).

The object of this proclamation is God's ἀρετὰς, literally 'his excellences'.[88] In the LXX this term translates both God's תהלה ('praises')[89] and his הוד ('glory').[90] But the context of Is.43:1ff. (cf. Is.63:7-9) directs the term to the event of the exodus, echoed in the liberation from Babylonian captivity, i.e. to God's primary act of deliverance wherein lie the roots for Israel's election, through which God is renowned. In its use here in 1Peter it refers both to the exodus in eschatological form - to God's great deeds in the death and resurrection of Jesus (cf. 1:21; Acts 2:11) - and to God's excellences or virtues. There is no need to argue for one over the other;[91] as we have seen, the preceding context suggests that his acts are inseparable from his nature. This point is fundamental to the presentation of holiness, both human and divine, in 1Peter. It is relevant to note also that, according to the context of 1Pet.1:5 and 1Pet.2:9, the aspect of God's fame or renown makes particular reference to the non-Christian world.[92]

The people are able to make this proclamation on the basis that they have encountered these ἀρετὰς themselves, for they have been 'called out of darkness into his marvellous light'. Here, in essence, is the new vision by which they are 'estranged' from others; clearly it is the corollary of their divine election, given the aorist participle of καλεῖν[93] which elsewhere in 1Peter implies a call to final salvation (cf. 5:10) and to a certain pattern of behaviour (cf. 1:15).[94] The imagery of darkness to light is common for representing conversion to faith in Old Testament,[95] Jewish[96] and Christian[97] writings. As we have already seen, it is this conversion - the new birth into a living hope - that brings about the Church's estrangement from the world. And this hope in God, the Creator and

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[87] Cf. Beare (1947: 105); Halas (1984: 256).
[88] Apart from 2Pet.1:3, this expression has no analogy (where it is used of God) in the NT. According to Bauernfeind (1964: 457), the term had so many meanings in Greek culture at the time of the NT - eminence, manliness, merit, virtue, self-declaration, fame - that it gave rise to misunderstandings.
[89] Cf. Is.43:21.
[90] Cf. Hab.3:3; Zech.6:13.
[91] Contra e.g. Beare (1947: 105); Elliott (1966: 42); Michaels (1988: 110).
[92] Bauernfeind (1964: 461).
[93] Cf. 1:15; 5:10. The other form of this verb in 1Peter is the indicative aorist passive (2:21; 3:9). Elliott (1966: 44) suggests that the word is a *terminus technicus* for the process of election and salvation, especially given its absolute use in the NT and its passive form.
[94] Compare this to the characteristic NT use of the aorist, not the present, of ἀγαπάω (e.g. Rom.8:37; Gal.2:20, 1Jn.4:10), where the love (and call) of God is focused on the specific figure of Christ in his death and resurrection.
[95] E.g. Ps.18:29 [ET28]; 36:10 [ET9]; 43:3; cf. Is.2:5; 9:2.
[96] E.g. Joseph & Aseneth 15:12 (OT Pseudep. II, 227.); 1QS 3:13ff; 1QH 4:5, 6, 23.

Saviour of the whole world, knows no boundaries. So instead of leading to isolation, this distance is a presupposition of mission.[98]

How is this proclamation of the church to happen?[99] Some argue it involves public preaching,[100] others, worship[101] and others, that it happens simply through the church's very existence and conduct.[102] It is most usual for the verb ἐξαγγείλητε to be associated with worship, whether the proclamation is directed to God or to the worshipping community (the actual line between praise and testimony is often difficult to draw anyway),[103] but the context here undoubtedly demands that it be associated also with missionary activity. Perhaps the very discussion supposes too strong a divide between the activity of worship and the activity of mission.[104]

Verses 9-10 are followed by an exhortation to abstain from fleshly desires which war against the soul and to maintain such good behaviour that Gentiles may be won over to God. There is no reference to 'proclamation' here - except that of exemplary conduct - but the implication is clearly public and missionary in intent. The character of the people of God - their nature which overflows in their actions - is a public concern and a matter for God's greater glory. The Christian mission is the outworking of Christians living out their difference.

This missionary thrust in 1Peter is too easily misrepresented. Christians are given a clear call to live according to their election - to *be* holy given that they *are* holy - and to do this as aliens in the face of the world, even when it is hostile. It is not that they are challenged to cross the divide between private devotion and public witness; it is that there is no divide. Holiness is not a matter of personal faithfulness; it is a community identity which necessarily involves standing out and being different, because it *is* their difference. At root, this difference is that Christians belong to God, and so they must act as such.

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[97] E.g. Acts 26:18; Rom.2:19; Eph.5:8; 1Th.5:4f.
[98] 'To make a difference, one must be different' (Volf 1994: 24).
[99] Whereas διηγεῖσμαι occurs 8 times in the NT, ἐξαγγελλειν occurs only here and in the *conclusio brevior* of Mk.16, a text whose origin and significance is a matter of debate.
[100] See Elliott (1966: 42); Goppelt (1993: 151).
[101] See esp. Balch (1981: 133): 'in contexts where ἐξαγγέλλω refers to 'proclaiming' the praises, deeds, righteousness or works of God, the proclaiming is always *to God* in worship.'
[102] See Perkins (1995: 44).
[103] Cf. Michaels (1988: 110).

The goal of these public actions is not the creation of a 'Christian' world.[105] The aim of the church is not to make converts. Rather, it is to glorify God. By fulfilling this vertical purpose - in worship and in behaviour - God's glory will be extended because it will inevitably carry horizontal influence.

7.4.4 Preliminary conclusions

We have seen how the presentation of election and holiness in 1Peter borrows heavily from its Old Testament counterparts. It is as if these notions can only be fully expressed and understood through their Old Testament terms and associations. The Old Testament texts frequently relate to parallel situations of the people of God and their contexts provide some parallel implications;[106] the summons to holiness is not essentially new. At the same time, it is by means of these same Old Testament texts that Christians are differentiated from the Israelites.

Clear signs of continuity with the Old Testament are seen at the most fundamental level. Titles which are originally ascribed to Israel are transferred to the church, and as before these infer some responsibility for other people. The call to be holy remains centred on the relationship with the holy God and it involves imitating his ways and so reflecting and extending his glory. Holiness is the corollary of election: so the unique status of the people of God is inseparable from their special function or activity, and the terms קדש and ἅγιος relate to both. In 1Peter as in Old Testament texts, the language of holiness encompasses both 'cultic' and 'prophetic' concerns.[107] Although these concerns may differ, they belong together.

We have also recognised in 1Peter some reordering and reinterpretation of Old Testament emphases made in the light of a christological focus. The people of God are elect through their relationship to Christ, God's elect, no longer simply through a biological

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[104] Cf. the association of worship with apologetic in 3:15, '... but in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence...'

[105] Cf. Goppelt (1993: 149).

[106] Green (1990: 281ff.) Of particular interest are two parallels: the *imitatio* principle 'Be holy as I am holy' relating to the separation of the people of God from the surrounding milieu in both Lev. and 1Peter, and the description of God's people as 'holy ones' and 'aliens' in both Ps.33 and 1Peter.

[107] Selwyn (1946: 3) writes, 'The priestly and the prophetic [elements] are mortised so closely together as to form a compact unity, and to point to a similar unity in the mind of the author who handled them. There is no turning from one to the other, as though they were independent. The fusion is complete.'

relationship to God's elect people at Sinai. Through conversion they are distinguished from their former nature and from non-Christians by means of a different temporal perspective. It is this new vision that underpins (and explains) their distinctive conduct in the world, by means of which others may come to share in Christ's work. Thus holiness includes, by necessity, a missionary concern, to 'spread' God's glory.[108] The *imitatio* principle is developed with reference to the imitation of the activity of Christ[109] and the connection between God's holiness and that of his people is expressed through references to the Spirit.

The presentation of holiness according to 1Peter does not stand alone; rather, it plays a particular function within the New Testament canon as a whole. It is a characteristic of canon to establish an intertextuality between the parts as a context for its theological appropriation.[110] So we now turn to examine the subject of holiness elsewhere in the New Testament.

7.5 The New Testament context

The simplest way to approach the question of holiness according to a Christian perspective might seem to be to go though the gospel narratives, observing what they have to say about holiness and its associated categories.[111] But there is a notable absence of the language of holiness in the gospels. In particular, although the term is occasionally used of him, Jesus does not use the conventional language of holiness. Nor does he operate according to its requirements: to the contrary, in some key aspects he deliberately contravenes them in the

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[108] Note that Elliott (1966: 183 n.1) considers this to be a reversal of the Israelite concept: whereas Israelites could 'catch' impurity through contact with Gentiles, an unbeliever may 'become' holy through a Christian spouse (cf. 3:1f.). But this surely oversimplifies a difficult matter (for example, should then Christians marry non-Christians?). Each emphasis has its strengths and dangers.

[109] Cf. 2:21ff.; 3:18 may reflect the *imitatio* idea as well.

[110] Cf. Childs (1984: 46).

[111] Note that the semantic fields of the Hebrew and Greek terminology of holiness are remarkably close. On the basis of the use of ἅγιος in the LXX, we may assume equivalence: out of 613 occurrences of ἅγιος, 592 stem from a קדש root in the vorlage (cf. Hatch & Redpath 1892: 12-15). There are other Greek terms used to express the idea of holiness: ἱερος (cf. 2Tim.3:15), ὅσιος (cf. Acts 2:27; 13:34, quoted from Is.55:3; Heb.7:26), σέμνος (cf. 1Tim.3:8; Tit.2:2), ἁγνός (cf. 2Cor.6:6; 7:11; 1Tim.5:22) and all of these occur more frequently than ἅγιος in non-biblical ancient Greek usage. As Muilenburg (1962: 623) suggests, it therefore seems likely that 'the Septuagintal translators sought to do justice to the Old Testament usage of קדש and its cognates, to the historico-ethical meanings which were attached to it, and to the personal nature of the holy as

name of faithfulness to God. Outside the gospels, however, the terminology of holiness gradually re-emerges: increasingly in Acts, in the Pauline corpus, in Hebrews and the Catholic epistles, and in Revelation.

For a subject which so characterises the form and content of the Old Testament, the virtual absence of the language of holiness in the gospels and its relative scarcity in general, especially in the first parts of the New Testament, seems surprising. Another significant feature of the presentation is, that in those New Testament books where the language of holiness is most apparent, we find quoted also many of the Hebrew texts which are central for an understanding of the Old Testament presentation of holiness.[112] The reinterpretation of holiness is the New Testament is commonly made through reference to the Old. It is from the context of these true oracles of God that one may understand the new revelation in Jesus Christ.

7.5.1 The Gospels and holiness

The gospels are virtually silent in applying the term ἅγιος to God. On the two occasions where it is found to occur, it is Jesus who uses it, in the context of worship.[113] Where it is used directly of Jesus, it occurs also in the language of ascription ('you are ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ, 'the Holy One of God'), made by a demon (Mk.1:24) and Peter (Jn.6:69).[114]

The paucity of the language might suggest that the concerns of holiness are not relevant or central to Jesus' ministry, yet this is far from the case. The many narratives describing Jesus' vehement engagement with the Pharisees on matters pertaining to holiness indicate, rather, that it is an extremely important aspect of his ministry. Whether or not these conflict stories stem from the situation of the early Church, they are now made a fundamental part of the presentation of Jesus' earthly ministry.[115] In drawing a contrast with

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was expressed, e.g., in its connection with compassion, love, and mercy. They employed the word ἅγιος, but gave to it a latitude and depth for which the Greeks possessed nothing remotely similar'.

[112] This is particularly true of Hebrews, 1Peter and Revelation; see below. The occurrence of ἅγιος is most common of all in Acts, but on 41 out of 53 occasions it describes the Holy Spirit.

[113] There is one such reference in the synoptics, in the opening petition of the Lord's prayer (Mt.6:9; Lk.11:2) and one occurrence in Jesus' high priestly prayer in the fourth gospel (Jn.17:11). The former is usually explained as corresponding to contemporary Jewish usage (in phraseology and in the association with prayer for the coming of the kingdom), yet Jesus' use implies some continuity.

[114] There are text-critical problems with this text, however.

[115] This is not to question the recent conclusions of many NT scholars for whom historical understanding has pointed out the misrepresentation of Judaism in the gospels, e.g. Rivkin (1978); Sanders (1992). In fact their observations serve to highlight the particular NT presentation of the Pharisees with which Jesus (or the early

the attitude towards holiness presented by his Jewish contemporaries, they function to offer insight into Jesus' own position.

Jesus recognises the symbols of Israel's holiness - the Temple, the priesthood, the Sabbath and the Torah - and, on one reading, he acknowledges their requirements.[116] His observance is not uncritical, however. The gospels equally portray Jesus deliberately abandoning or contravening the conventional practices of holiness in public, in order to challenge his contemporaries' understanding. Continually he is found to fail in the habits of table fellowship[117] and the ritual washing of hands.[118] He criticises and mocks the Pharisees for their fastidiousness in matters of tithing,[119] fasting[120] and prayer,[121] while not necessarily holding to these traditional patterns of piety himself.[122] And he intentionally transgresses the Sabbath laws, healing when there was no immediate danger to life[123] and picking wheat when there seemed no overwhelming need to do so.[124] Jesus offends against a host of other purity regulations also: for example, he welcomes the touch of a woman who is bleeding,[125] he converses with a Samaritan[126] and he declines to condemn an adulterer.[127]

In the narratives where Jesus confronts the Pharisees directly, he criticises their 'quest for holiness' on three broad counts.[128] First, the inflexible concern for legal rectitude must not obstruct the exercise of mercy, which is also important for fulfilling the will of God.[129] Second, he warns that external conformity and propriety is no substitute for internal obedience; rather, it may mask an internal wickedness and therefore have deleterious

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church) differed. For a defence of the broad historicity of the controversy stories in the light of these critiques, see Wright (1996: 372-383).

[116] The fourth gospel, for example, presents Jesus as regularly marking the Jewish festivals, usually with a specific visit to Jerusalem, cf. 2:13; 5:1; 7:10; 10:22; 11:55ff..

[117] Jesus chooses to share a table with those whose presence could 'defile' the meal, cf. Mt.9:10-13; 11:19; Mk.2:15-17; Lk.5:29-32; 7:34; 15:1-2; 19:7.

[118] Watched by the Pharisees, Jesus avoids observing the ceremonial washing of hands, and defends his disciples for the same, cf. Mt.15:1-20; Mk.7:1-23; Lk.11:37-8.

[119] Cf. Mt.23:23; Lk.11:42; 18:12.

[120] Cf. Mt.5:16-18; Lk.18:12.

[121] Cf. Mt.6:5; 23:5-6; Lk.11:43.

[122] Cf. Mt.9:14-15; Mk.2:18-20; Lk.5:33-35.

[123] Mt.12:9-14 (par. Mk.3:1-6; Lk.6:6-11); Lk.13:10-17; Jn.9:16.

[124] Mt.12:1-8 (par. Mk.2:23-28; Lk.6:1-5).

[125] Mt.9:20-22; Mk.5:25-34; Lk.8:43-48.

[126] Jn.4:7ff.

[127] Jn.8:1-11.

[128] Borg (1984: 56ff., 123ff.). Whether or not such a gospel reconstruction of the Pharisees' 'quest for holiness' provides a fair representation of their actual position (which seems unlikely historically), it is nevertheless useful for defining - in negative terms - Jesus' approach.

influence, producing alienation from God.[130] Third, he challenges the concern for survival which underlies this quest for holiness. To act solely for the preservation of Israel, or Torah, is, rather, irresponsible stewardship and it is dysfunctional for God's larger purposes.[131]

Wright describes this understanding of the controversy-stories most clearly. They are not about religion or morality, the meaning which has beens traditionally assigned to them. Rather, they are about *eschatology* and *politics*. In Christ, Israel's hope is being realised, but it is happening in Jesus' way and at Jesus' inititiative. 'The kingdom Jesus was announcing was undermining, rather than underwriting, the revolutionary anti-pagan zeal that was the target of much of Jesus' polemic, the cause... of Israel's imminent ruin, and the focal point of much... Pharisaic teaching and aspiration.'[132]

Jesus' alternative paradigm thus approaches the notion of holiness rather differently from the Pharisees. For him, 'holiness' does not provide the grounds for defending or protecting a special status, it is no 'fence around the garden'.[133] To the contrary, it is a dynamic, transforming power[134] which is the result of ongoing encounter with the living God. Therefore it is not so much something to be maintained defensively as lived openly, and thus expressed as much through acts of mercy to those excluded from 'Israel'[135] as through faithful obedience to Torah. This brings together the internal and the external, the (so-called) 'prophetic' and the 'priestly' aspects of holiness. It is intrinsically inclusive, it traverses conventional boundaries; all can be children of Abraham.[136] Contrary to the Pharisees' view that uncleanness is contagious and may jeopardise their holiness, Jesus demonstrates how *holiness* may be contagious by touching - and so healing - those deemed unclean.[137] So to bear influence, those who are 'holy' must have contact with those in need of transformation: indeed, this is itself a part of the restorative healing process.[138]

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[129] Cf. Lk.10:29-37; 18:10-14a; Mt.21:28-31.
[130] Cf. Mt.23, Lk.11.
[131] Cf. Mt.25:14-30 (par.Lk.19:12-27); Mt.5:13-15; Lk.13:6-9; etc.
[132] Wright (1996: 372).
[133] Rowley (1939: 76).
[134] Consider, for example, the terminology about untying Satan's bondage in Lk.13:15f.
[135] E.g. the Samaritan, the tax-collector, the 'sinner', the Gentile.
[136] Cf. Lk.19:7-10. Lk.1:55 & 73 describe Jesus' work in terms of fulfilling the promise to Abraham. Note also, however, Jesus' commitment to the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel', Mt.10:5-6 (also Lk.19:7-10).
[137] E.g. Mk.1:40-45; Mt.9:20-22; (Mk.5:25-34; Lk.8:43-48). Cf. 1Cor.7:14.
[138] Mk.2:15-17.

In a word, it is the policy of *separation* which Jesus opposes. Purity, in Jesus' terms, is not created or sustained simply by 'external' physical means; rather it is constituted by 'internal' obedience and it overflows in outward generosity. On occasion, this entails subordinating the ritual requirements of holiness for an expression of mercy. This is not to say that there is any external/internal polarity, however. That would too easily encourage a pietist/quietist position which is far removed from that of Jesus. Rather, it is that Jesus challenges the motivation lying behind all activity, especially those actions which *seem* to denote holiness. His concern is for a rigorous integrity, and this begins with what is less visible, dedication to the will of God.

As before, the guiding paradigm is the *imitatio dei*, according to which the refrain of the Holiness Code, 'You shall be holy, for I YHWH your God am holy' is paraphrased in Lk.6:36, 'Be merciful (οἰκτίρμονες), even as your Father is merciful (οἰκτίρμων)'.[139] Essentially, Jesus 'reminds' his hearers of the purpose of Israel's holy calling, for which the Torah regulations were laid down: restoration for all children of Abraham. To this end, overly-meticulous attempts to observe its regulations might be counterproductive.

Thus, although the gospels scarcely depict Jesus using the language of holiness, they present him addressing the matter of holiness in direct and fundamental terms. One could suggest that his redefinition of the subject might be seen as a central priority of his mission and ministry. Whereas on many issues it is others who initiate discussion and question Jesus,[140] on matters viewed as central to holiness - tithing, purity, the Sabbath - it is Jesus who seizes the initiative and, by his actions, questions their practice so as to demonstrate their true nature and purpose. He does not oppose these practices in principle; rather, he queries the manner of the practices and the motive which underlies them.

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[139] Note that the parallel text in Mt. 5:48 uses the adjective τέλειός ('perfect') instead, and there are redactional difficulties with this text. Elsewhere, however, the same principle is found. In the parable of the unmerciful servant (Mt.18:23-35) Jesus makes explicit the requirement of mercy as the fitting response of those who live under the mercy of God. God's gift of mercy to his people is to translate into their own gift of mercy to others; cf. Mt.6:14f.. On the basis of both the terminology and the content, Borg (1984: 127) describes a portion of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt.5:38-48; Lk.6:27-36) as the 'Mercy Code'.

[140] Consider, for example, the subjects of resurrection and divorce.

7.5.2 The shape of the rest of the New Testament

The reserve of the gospels on the language of holiness does not extend throughout the New Testament;[141] here, many of the features which we have identified in the gospel narratives receive development.

In the book of Acts there are more occurrences of ἅγιος than in all four gospels put together, and the vast majority of these describe the Holy Spirit.[142] It is this predication of holiness to the Spirit of God which distinguishes the terminology of the New Testament from the Old more than anything else.[143] In the gospels this Spirit is primarily linked with Christ, beginning a new epoch with the dove-like form at his baptism.[144] Following the resurrection, the Spirit is imparted more widely, to the twelve (or eleven) disciples and to the whole Church, at Pentecost.[145]

More widely, the book of Acts tells of the Holy Spirit at work expressing God's holiness, through his people, to the world. This is quite evidently a dynamic power of holiness, as seen in the work of Jesus in the gospels. So we find it explicitly associated with boldness (4:31), generosity (5:3), obedience (5:32), good repute (6:3), hope of glory (7:55), power (8:18f., 10:38), healing (9:17), comfort (9:31), discernment and guidance (10:19f.; 13:2, 9; 15:28; 16:6; 20:23; 21:11), doing good (10:38), faith (11:24), joy (13:52), tongues and prophecy (19:6). Though the link is not explicit, it is in association with this dynamic power, received at Pentecost, that the disciples are termed ἁγίοι, 'saints' and that they bring many to faith.[146] And as this community of faith grows, so in due time the gift of the Holy Spirit is found to be 'poured out even on the Gentiles' (10:45; cf. 11:17f.; 15:8f.). Thus the book of Acts depicts in highly graphic terms the dynamic power of holiness crossing Israel's boundaries, just as the gospels imply.

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[141] Whereas there are 42 incidences of ἅγιος in the four gospels, there are 191 in the remaining NT texts. These occur with particular frequency in Acts (53), Romans (20), Ephesians (15), Hebrews (19) and Revelation (25).

[142] 41 occurrences out of 53.

[143] The OT employs the expression 'Spirit of your/his holiness' only three times (Ps.51:13 [ET11]; Is.63:10-11) whereas the NT has it as often as the total of all other occurrences of the word 'holy', about 90 times.

[144] Mt.3:13-17; Mk.1:9-11; Lk.3:21-22; Jn.1:32-34. This parallels the new epoch beginning with the dove of Noah after the flood (Gen.8:8ff.; cf. 1Pet.3:19ff.).

[145] Cf. Jn.20:22; Acts.2:1f.; 4:31. John and Luke tell different stories but these are usually seen as two accounts of one event.

[146] Cf. Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; etc. This is coupled with another outcome (implicitly, at least): opposition. Cf. 1Peter.

Some of Paul's experience of holiness recounted in Acts is developed more theologically in his epistles which follow. At the same time, in the Pauline corpus we find some of the Old Testament language and associations of holiness beginning to re-emerge. The cultic character of holiness is spiritualized: by means of the indwelling Spirit, available to all who believe (Eph.1:13), Christian people are described as the holy temple (1Cor.6:19; Eph.2:21-22), they are able to offer themselves as spiritual sacrifices (Rom.12:1) and to be ministers in priestly service of the gospel (Rom.15:16).

The aim of God's holiness is reiterated: so as 'to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of God's name among all the nations, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ' (Rom.1:6). The possibility of God's mercy to those outside the Israelite covenant - inferred though not explicitly stated in Jesus' ministry,[147] and recounted but not explained in Acts - is explicitly addressed in the Pauline writings.[148] It is Paul who continually stresses that Gentiles are included among the ἁγίοι, 'saints',[149] for 'if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise' (Gal.3:29). In chapter 3 of Galatians Paul describes the 'foresight of scripture' in Genesis. He interprets Christ's death and resurrection as fulfilling the promise of blessing to Abraham in all people of faith: 'that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith' (Gal.3:14).

Of the remaining New Testament material, it is the epistle to the Hebrews and the book of Revelation which particularly address aspects of holiness and complete the contours of our study. The focus of Hebrews is the holiness of Christ and his sanctifying office, both as high priest and as sacrificial offering. He is the sacrifice that purifies the conscience from dead works and so he is mediator of a new covenant.[150] He goes for us up to heaven, the antitype of the holy of holies.[151] So 'we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.'[152] Only he who is himself holy (ἅγιος), whether it be God, priest or victim, can sanctify (ἁγίαζω).

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147 Although the gospels do make this explicit (cf. Mt.28:16-20; ?Jn.11:52), Jesus in his ministry (as recorded in the gospels) does not.
148 Cf. e.g. Rom.2:9-11; 9-11; Gal.3.
149 Rom.1:7; 1Cor.1:2; cf. Gal.3:28; Eph.2:19.
150 Heb.9:13-15.
151 Heb.9:25.
152 Heb.10:10; cf. 2:11; 9:13; 10:1, 14, 29; 13:12-13.

If Hebrews focuses on the holiness of Christ, and thus our holiness which we receive in relation to him, then the book of Revelation completes the picture by reincorporating the priestly kingdom and the holy nation in Christ (cf. Rev.1:6; 5:10; 20:6) with the holiness of God. Though we have stated that the holiness of God is everywhere presumed in the New Testament, it is stated directly on only three occasions, and two of these are in Revelation.[153] Just as with 1Pet.1:15-16, each of these borrows from Old Testament texts: Rev.4:8 quotes Is.6:3, and Rev.6:10 borrows from Zech.1:12 and Ps.79:5, 10 (cf. Dt.32:43).

We may describe these as the 'ultimate' expressions of holiness. Just as we noted that the only occasions in the gospels where God is explicitly named as holy occur in the context of prayer (the Lord's prayer and the high-priestly prayer), so the ascriptions in the book of Revelation are found to take the form of adoration also. Holiness receives this ultimate expression through the language of the Old Testament in the New Testament, and in both testaments this occurs in the context of the worship of God.

Rev.4:6b-10 combines the words of Is.6:3 with the vision of the four living creatures around the throne in Ezek.1. They 'give glory and honour and thanks to him who is seated on the throne'. In another canticle of praise, 'the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb' (Rev.15:3-4), in which all nations come to worship, there is a whole series of awesome ascriptions related to holiness[154] culminating in 'For thou only art holy'.[155] Here, in a climactic vision, is the fulfilment of God's gift of holiness to his people. Here God's people are depicted fully realising their vision of a new reality, fully belonging to God in worship and fully sharing his glory with all peoples.

7.6 Summary

7.6.1 Contours within the New Testament witness

In a fundamental sense the New Testament canon establishes a context for reinterpreting the subject of holiness. This is established on the basis of the canonical shape of the New Testament, not the historical development of terminology. That this is a *reinterpretation* is

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[153] The third is the case of 1Pet.1:15-16, which has already been discussed above.
[154] E.g. 'great', 'wonderful', 'almighty', 'just', 'true', 'King of the ages', 'fear', etc.
[155] Cf. Rev.16:4-7 with Ps.99.

made clear from the extent to which Old Testament material relating to God's holiness and that of his people is borrowed and reworked.

The subject receives increasing attention through the New Testament canon; only in the latter books of Hebrews, 1Peter and Revelation is a connection made fully with its Old Testament counterpart and the language freely appropriated. The gospels do not employ the terminology of holiness, and Jesus does not operate according to its categories. Given his critique of the practice of others, we may suggest that the category is too problematic for the people Jesus tries to reach. There are many implications that a new understanding of holiness is called for - as a dynamic, contagious power of God, bringing about wholeness and hope, recognising no barrier but that of belief - but these are demonstrated, 'for those with eyes to see', rather than explained.

The term 'holy' reappears in the book of Acts, understood to describe the Spirit of God which is at work in and through those who believe. So, through the power of the Spirit, the narratives tell of a lively, joyful intimacy in the relationship between God and his people, which overflows into a bold witness of the gospel to others, both Jews and Gentiles. The death and resurrection of Christ has opened up to all nations the call of God to be holy.

In the Pauline writings the status of God's people as holy, and their corresponding purpose and their priorities, are established more systematically. Here some of the Old Testament categories of holiness are re-employed in the light of a new understanding of the blessing promised to Abraham, now available to all who come to faith. Accompanying this, there is a reconception of the marks of identity of God's people.

As Hebrews makes clear, it is by means of the holiness of Christ - as priest and as sacrifice - that the people of God are made holy. Thus are they pictured, in the final book of the New Testament, 'at home' in worship of the holy God, fully 'belonging' with him, in final fulfilment of the promise made through Moses at Sinai in Ex.19:5-6.

7.6.2 The place of 1Peter in the New Testament canon

Our study of 1Peter has illustrated the fresh interpretation of an existing tradition, and the necessity of this tradition for understanding what is new. More than any preceding text in the New Testament canon, 1Peter consists of a reinterpretation of texts with initially differing significance to establish more fully an understanding of the election and holiness of the people of God which comes through Christ. Thus the people of God understand themselves

as a holy nation, on the one hand belonging to God and on the other, estranged from non-believers. Theirs is a different vision of reality, a reality which is expressed most fully in worship. Having been made holy, and given the Holy Spirit, they are equipped as God's instruments for extending his glory in the world and drawing others to faith.

How far the 'original' (i.e.Pentateuchal) texts themselves are open to this reinterpretation is a matter which we will consider in the concluding remarks of this thesis.

Conclusion

i. Holiness re-examined

The preceding chapter examined the re-casting of the subject of holiness in the New Testament. This involved the re-casting of one of the central Old Testament texts, Ex.19:6, at a central point in a New Testament text, 1Pet.2:9. Below we shall look at the re-casting of this particular verse. First, we shall consider some of the distinctive nuances concerning the presentation of holiness within the different canons and even between the different books of one canon.

The concerns of holiness in the Torah emerge in association with the revelation of the name of God as YHWH. This occurs in Exodus at the point where God calls Israel out of Egypt and brings them to Sinai. At Sinai he initiates the covenant with them, calling them to obey his commandments and so to live according to the special relationship he is establishing. Among all people they will belong to him in a special way, and be a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.

The Torah, from Exodus to Deuteronomy, spells out in great detail the commandments they should follow, in both cultic and ethical terms, to live in a manner appropriate to their new status. These may be summarised by the urge to 'be holy, because I [YHWH] am holy'. They include the institution of priests, who are those 'holy to YHWH' in a particular way, required to be guardians of holiness in Israel and enabled to draw close to YHWH in a special way. As 'holy' individuals they focus the holiness of all Israel, belonging to God in a particular way, living faithfully according to particular commandments and, especially in Deuteronomy, modelling a close dependence on YHWH on behalf of all Israel.

Isaiah and Ezekiel assume this basic understanding of holiness while building on it in distinct ways. In Isaiah there is particular emphasis on the character of YHWH as holy. This is the overwhelming aspect of Isaiah's vision of him, and throughout the book he is termed 'the Holy One of Israel'. Associated with this character is a plan expressing the goal of holiness, that God's holiness be evident to all. This will occur through Israel's holiness -

expressed especially by righteousness - when God's presence will be most fully realised on Mount Zion, the place to which all people will gather. Isaiah explores the special role of Israel in this plan, yet the relevance of the place of the nations also.

Ezekiel builds on the plan articulated in Isaiah. On the one hand there is a focus on Israel, and how far God's people fall short of the identity and role to which they are called. So God intervenes to act 'for the sake of my holy name', to the end that both Israel and the nations may know that 'I am YHWH'. On the other hand there is a focus on the restored Zion, an eschatological picture of the temple and mountain of God standing at the centre of the earth, where YHWH in his holiness will be most fully revealed and glorified.

In the New Testament the notion of holiness is reformulated in response to the person of Christ, 'the Holy One of God', in whom God's character and choice is most fully invested. However, in 1Peter especially, this reformulation develops with reference to most of the associated themes of holiness from the Old Testament. Although the redefinition of holiness is substantial, this takes place with reference to the Hebrew framework. It still possesses the major features of the Old Testament portrayal.

Most fundamentally, the people's holiness remains a designation of their status as the elect people of God. This 'God' is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who reveals himself to Moses as YHWH and who claims uncompromised allegiance from those in covenant with him. As before, it is by means of holiness that the people of God are marked out from other people: they belong to God. This identity issues in a response, described again by the principle of *imitatio dei*. A life of obedience and faithfulness follows.

It is in the outworking of this covenant faithfulness that differences emerge and become most explicit between the testaments. Holiness is not lived according to the details of the Torah so much as according to the overarching principles of love and mercy, exemplified in the life and ministry of Jesus. The regular Hebrew symbols of holiness are largely absent. Indeed, the story of the people of God is told with little reference to the national, racial or geographical liberation of Israel.

Although the starting point, and the goal, of the story are the same - the story of the creator God fulfilling his purposes for Israel - the New Testament presents 'a new Act within the same story':

> Specifically, the new Act self-consciously sees itself as the time when the covenant purpose of the creator, which always envisaged the redemption of the whole world, moves beyond the

> narrow confines of a single race (for which national symbols were of course appropriate), and calls into being a trans-national and trans-cultural community... Their thorough re-working of symbol, praxis, and answers to questions was generated not by the *abandonment* of the classic Jewish story, but by the belief *that they were living in its long-awaited new phase.*[1]

In the light of this new phase of the story, it is not surprising that an outcome of the people's new designation as holy is a missionary intention. The definition of his people is now dependent upon creed, not race: the elect are now depicted as those who believe in Jesus Christ. God's holy people are God's chosen means of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. and thus extending God's holiness to all, a goal which has been expressed (in various forms) throughout scripture. God's people incarnate his presence and his glory in the world. Thus an outcome of their holiness will be the drawing in of others to God's holy presence, and thus the extension of God's blessing in the world. This works towards the final, eschatological moment when God's kingdom is fully realised. This picture resembles that of Isaiah and Ezekiel, though its universality is spelt out more explicitly: all nations and tribes and tongues will gather, at the holy city, around the throne, in continuing worship and praise of the Holy One.

Through both the Old and New Testaments we have identified holiness as a dynamic quality, belonging to God, invested in his people, expressing a project with universal consequences. From the perspective of the people of God, there is an abiding paradox to their holiness.[2] On the one hand they *are* holy. This represents a *status* given to Israel/the church by virtue of their special relationship with the holy God, on the basis of their understanding of his character. On the other hand, they are called to *be* holy. This represents a *standard* to which they should strive to live, commensurate with their identity as God's elect people, which marks them out from others and according to which others may recognise the presence of God with them.

This paradox may be expressed most simply in terms of the 'journey towards holiness'.[3] Though the people of God are holy, an understanding of which is best grasped in worship, this holiness is only wholly realised at the final end of all things, the goal of God's

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[1] Wright (1996: 219).
[2] This paradox is expounded pointedly through a variety of New Testament texts in Craig (1952: 147).
[3] This is the title of the excellent popular-level book by Kreider (1987).

plan, when all will understand God most fully (and thus cry 'holy, holy, holy'), and understand themselves most fully in relation to him, as belonging to God.

ii. Ex.19:6 re-used

This notion of 'belonging to God' is brought to the fore by the way in which Ex.19:6 is re-used in 1Peter.

We have understood Ex.19:6 to be central for understanding the 'journey towards holiness' of Israelite faith, and we have seen that its re-use in the New Testament is made central for this understanding within the new framework of Christian faith.

The re-use of Ex.19:6 in 1Peter involves a shift in its interpretation. Whereas in the context of torah we understood the titles 'priestly kingdom' and 'holy nation' to develop the understanding of Israel as a special possession of God, here in the 1Peter context the priority is reversed. 'Royal priesthood' and 'holy nation' build up towards understanding more fully the church as 'God's own people'. The priority is to understand themselves in terms of belonging. This is the goal of holiness, as presented in 1Peter: that the people should comprehend the way in which they are marked out from other people, in terms of belonging. They are absolutely distinct from others because they are God's. Once they fully realise this belonging, then they will live accordingly. This, in turn, serves another priority: that of demonstrating God's deeds of salvation publicly. Others will identify their holiness through their worship and lifestyle, then it will follow that others will be drawn in to God's holiness themselves.

The re-use of Gen.12:3 in the New Testament demonstrates the way in which a key element from an earlier 'Act' in the story of God's dealings with his people may be carried over into a subsequent 'Act' of the story, with new implications. In a new context, God's promise to Abram represents a new interpretation, stressing the promise of God's blessing to all. Yet this interpretation is made in such a way that its new meaning is faithful to - yet different from - its meaning in an earlier context. Thus the relation of the new to the old is not simply one of the latter superseding the former; nor is it a simple typological relation of 'just as then... so now...' There are elements of both of these relations involved here. But more importantly, the new meaning is evident within the old meaning. The earlier text allows

for the shift in meaning which is found in a subsequent context. In other words, there is an openness within the language and imagery which allows for the re-reading. Furthermore, this re-reading is valuable for understanding the depth and riches within the first reading.

In a manner which corresponds to the re-use of Gen.12:3 in the New Testament, I suggest that within the language and context of Ex.19:5-6 we may identify an openness which allows for the possibility of this re-focusing in a different context. Although the use of Ex.19:6 in 1Pet.9 underlines a shift in meaning - reversing the priority of the terms and describing an initiative for missionary activity - this is a shift which the language of Ex.19:6 itself leaves open.

First and foremost, we noted that the descriptions given to the nation of Israel when the covenant is first established are made with a reference to all the nations of the world. Israel's election, like Abraham's election, is made in the context of an awareness of all people - as if to stress the pointedness of God's particular choice. He has not chosen any other people or nation, though he could have; among all of them, he has chosen '*you*'. The reference to other peoples receives no further attention in torah, except negatively. The concern is, rather, for Israel's uniqueness: because of their election, they must not be like other peoples.

Although we have seen that some moves are found in subsequent parts of the Hebrew canon regarding a positive place for the nations within the plan of YHWH - in Isaiah and Ezekiel - it is a distinctive feature of the New Testament presentation that their profile is raised. Just as the focus of Abraham's blessing is shifted in the direction of 'all the families of the earth', so is the focus of the plan of holiness shifted in the direction of the gentiles. First and foremost, those who are included in God's people are no longer defined by race, but belief. Secondly, God's people are to be seen to live such holy lives that the gentiles may notice and come to glorify God for themselves (1Pet.2:12).

Our interpretation of Ex.19:6 developed as we considered the understanding of 'priesthood' and 'holiness' in subsequent parts of the torah. According to the Old Testament context, we found that being 'priestly' involves primarily a mode of being before God. But the fact that the priest does act *on behalf of God* leaves the whole concept open for a shift in meaning from the Hebrew context to the Christian context. There is a richness and openness to the imagery of the priest looking both ways - to God and to people - which allows for the

shift in the people's direction we find in the New Testament. The priestly role of the New Testament people of God involves their mediating God's blessings in the world.

Although I have not been able to discuss Jesus and the difference he makes in the kind of way that ideally is necessary to show how one gets from Ex.19 to 1Pet.2, the manner in which a key Old Testament text is re-used in the New Testament has been instructive for understanding the continuity and discontinuity within the canon. According to 1Peter we understand that through Christ, the people of God fulfils God's promise to Abraham and his covenant with Moses, even though the promise and the covenant should be understood differently in the different context. Thus the presentation of holiness in 1Peter may be seen to make a statement about the unity of purpose throughout the Bible. This unity is understood most fully through the diversity of the different voices which address the subject. As these voices are brought together to form an appropriate pattern of harmony, the tone of each may be heard differently as it is deepened and enriched by that of others.

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