

THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB

The trajectory of a soteriological paradigm in biblical times *

Klaus Nürnberger
University of Natal

Abstract

This article wants to demonstrate that soteriological paradigms found in the Bible emerged and continued to evolve in response to changing situations of need. It traces the historical trajectory of the oldest of these soteriological paradigms, the promises to the Patriarch up to New Testament times. Though superseded by more powerful paradigms, such as Exodus and Conquest, the Sinaitic Covenant and the Davidic Kingship, new applications continued to occur in changing contexts. This is why it can serve well as a test case. The article also suggests a possibility of extrapolating the message of the paradigms to modern soteriological concerns.

Introduction

This essay is part of a project which tries to substantiate the thesis that soteriological paradigms found in the biblical scriptures emerged in situations of need and evolved in response to the challenges emanating from ever new constellations of need. If proved correct, a particular hermeneutic would follow from this thesis which could be called the hermeneutic of soteriological trajectories and which would be based on the following assumptions:

Because theology articulates the redemptive response of God to human need, the root of all authentic theology is soteriology.

The redemptive intention of the biblical God is the comprehensive wellbeing of all human beings, in all aspects of their individual and communal existence, and in the context of the wellbeing of the whole of their social and natural environments. By implication the target of God's specific redemptive

* The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development towards this research is hereby gratefully acknowledged. Opinions expressed, and conclusions arrived at in this essay are those of the author and should not be attributed to the Centre for Science Development.

concern is a particular deficiency in comprehensive wellbeing, that is, a concrete need.

Such needs can occur in any dimension of creaturely existence: ecological, physical, psychological, intellectual, cultural, communal, social, economic, political and religious. Religious needs constitute the transcendent dimension of all other needs. We can summarise them in terms of three categories: meaning, right of existence and authority. This approach bridges the gulf between the Evangelical commitment to a spiritual concept of salvation and the commitment of Liberation Theology to a concept of salvation which is inclusive of socio-political reconstruction.

The experience of an event which can be interpreted as the redemptive response of God, the Source of reality, to a particular need is the root of a soteriological memory which becomes a soteriological paradigm and forms the core of an evolving soteriological tradition. The image of 'revolution' does not necessarily suggest progress because certain species can also be ousted from dominant positions, or forced to adapt in order to survive. Examples of such traditions are: the promise to the patriarchs; exodus and conquest; the king as plenipotentiary of God; covenant and law; creation and eschatological transformation; priesthood and sacrifice.

The dynamic of the evolution of the tradition is a process in which new constellations of need and alternative interpretations of these needs from the religious environment of the biblical faith challenge existing soteriological paradigms and force them to adapt and expand to cover these new needs.

According to this approach the canonicity of the Canon is constituted by the dynamic and direction underlying the evolutionary process of the tradition rather than by particular texts (which only represent particular stages in the evolutionary process) or by the complex end result of the entire process, namely the Bible as we have it. In simple terms the significance of the closure of the Canon was to demarcate a primal and prototypical period of evolutionary history, which could act as a criterion for the acceptability of subsequent developments. This approach would be able to bridge the gulf between commitment to the biblical Canon as criterion of truth and its inevitable relativisation by modern historical-critical and ideology-critical research.

The hermeneutical cycle should not focus, therefore, on the translation of a particular text into a particular situation, but on extrapolating the dynamic and direction of the evolutionary process of a soteriological paradigm or tradition into present constellations of need. Only this method is able to do justice to the historical character of human life in general and of the biblical faith in particular.

There is reason to believe that the patriarchal paradigm is historically the oldest soteriological paradigm found in the biblical Canon. It is later superseded by the kingship paradigm which absorbs its main functions. However, appeal to the patriarchs of Israel reappears time and again in new contexts and new

applications right down to the documents of the New Testament. This is why it can serve well as a test case. We shall attempt to trace its history from its earliest tangible beginnings to its last applications in the biblical Canon.

Part I: The Old Testament

1.1 Historical origins

The historical origin of the soteriological paradigm indicated by the phrase 'the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' or similar formulations is that certain Hebrew tribes, probably belonging to the 'Aramean' penetration of the fertile crescent towards the end of the second millenium BC (Herrmann 1981:45; Anderson 1986:40ff), derived their existence and their inner cohesion from legendary prime ancestors to whom, they believed, their Deity had granted a special relationship of mutual faithfulness. This core experience of a divine self-disclosure combined with the promise of divine blessing for the clan head and his progeny was, in time, surrounded by a multitude of legends, but we are concerned only with their soteriological core (von Rad 1962:167f).

Possibly under the pressure of constant attacks by their neighbours some of these tribes constituted a loose federation and merged their ancestral traditions into a genealogical order for the sake of ideological cohesion. The traditions of a separate group of Hebrews who traced their origin to an escape from Egyptian slavery, and another which traced its origin to a mountain theophany, possibly merged with the former more or less at the same time.

These traditions merged into a cohesive narrative which formed the salvation historical foundations of Israel (Wolff 1982:43f). It makes sense to believe that the motivation for this merger was the need for national cohesion occasioned by the ascendancy of the davidic-solomonic empire with its cultural and political upswing, but Old Testament research is deeply divided on this issue, some scholars dating it much later, for instance in the time of Josiah or even in post-exilic times. It cannot be our task to enter into the complicated debate among OT scholars concerning these historical developments. It is clear that its final form consisted of the following elements: creation and pre-history, the patriarchs, the exodus-desert-conquest complex, the theophany-covenant-law complex, the judges complex and the establishment of the davidic dynasty.

1.2 The need-response structure of the legends themselves

In assessing the significance of the patriarchal story we have to deal with it first on its own terms. The Deity makes himself available as Abraham's clan God and that essentially means protection and blessing. There are no strings attached: no law, no 'holiness' to be respected, no cult. But, as the continuation of the story reveals, the expectation is that Abraham responds to the De-

ity's self-giving act with an equally committed faithfulness to the Deity. That is the core experience; the legends have gradually attached themselves to this core.

How does this core relate to the constellation of needs? The nomadic situation, in which the biblical narrative originated, generates the following constellation of needs and corresponding divine responses some of which can be gleaned from the patriarchal legends:

In the case of Abraham and Sarah basic needs (time, space and energy) are constituted by the limits of one's reproductive capacity (Sarah is barren), one's reproductive age (Abraham and Sarah are aged), one's life time (there is no hope of resurrection), secondarily the insufficiency of one's progeny to fill a given geographical space (the promised land cannot be occupied), etc.

Personal needs are generally not mentioned but presupposed, especially in the legends: water, food, sexuality, etc. It is taken for granted, for instance, that travellers such as the three visitors need food and rest.

Environmental needs appear in the form of pasture and water, which again presuppose land and rain, rivers or springs (Lot chooses the fertile plain), peace within the clan (the agreement between Abraham and Lot; the solution of the tension between Sarah and Hagar), military power of the clan to protect itself and impose justice on its neighbours (Abraham is depicted as a formidable military commander), status and role (Sarah's relational humiliation by Hagar, Hagar's loss of primary group protection), historical continuity of the male lineage as the backbone of the clan (Abraham has no son by his principle wife), environmental needs appear in the form of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (here perceived to be the punishment of God).

Transcending needs (meaning, right of existence and empowerment) form the depth dimension of personal and environmental needs. Abraham's most pressing need is male progeny. Without a son his lineage would die out and that would be the end of the clan. If the Deity, who is the power in control of Abraham's life world, allows his lineage to die out (lack of empowerment), this is a sign of divine indifference, possibly even hostility against Abraham (withdrawal of right of existence). Alternatively, this God is not really in charge of Abraham's circumstances (collapse of meaning).

The transcendent need can only be met if its biological and social mainspring is addressed, yet it must be distinguished from the latter. Significantly, the clan Deity responds to Abraham's need in two stages: first by a promise which Abraham has to accept without proof, thus establishing trust in the power and the faithfulness of the Deity. The absence of trust would endanger the relationship and thus any hope of a restoration of the comprehensive well-being of the clan. Abraham responds to the promise with trust and this is 'counted as righteousness'. Now the Deity takes the second step of fulfilling the promise with the gift of a son. So Abraham's right of existence is affirmed in the promise, then established by the birth of the son.

According to one account it is questioned once again by the demand that the son be sacrificed to the Deity (von Rad 1971). This threat is more severe because it is directly linked to the will of the Deity himself. Abraham responds in a way which is commensurate with his commitment to the Deity (*zedaqah*): he sets out to sacrifice his heir. Having passed the test, his right of existence is no longer in doubt: he has proved to be *zadiq*, righteous and becomes the father of faith'. This 'hiddenness' of God's true intentions is a prominent feature of the patriarchal memories. It is meant to console and reassure their offspring in times of affliction (von Rad 1962:170f).

We could go through the other legends in a similar fashion. Jacob's most pressing need, for instance, is the enmity of his brother whom he cheated out of his birth right. If his life, extended family and livestock are threatened, his right of existence is at stake. The legend of the battle with the Deity at the Jabbok shows how he regains the assurance of the blessing of the latter and is able to face his brother.

So the core of the Abraham story signifies the primeval structure of the biblical faith: the Deity grants a special salutary relationship to which the human being responds in trust and obedience. The son belongs to the detail of the particular mediation of the relationship in the case of Abraham. In the case of Jacob or Joseph for that matter, it was something else that was lacking. The bare essentials given in Gen 15:1 seem to be the most ancient formulation of the self-disclosure of the Deity to Abraham, followed by 15:2-6 which mentions the son but not yet the land. (Here I differ from von Rad 1962:168 and others who believes vv 7ff, which promise the land, to belong to the original stock. Wolff in Brueggemann 1982:49 supports this view.)

1.3 The need-response structure of the nomadic descendants

The socio-religious functions of the memory of the prime ancestor in a tribal context can be summarised as follows:

The ancestor is the first significant link in the male genealogical chain. This chain forms the backbone of the self-perpetuating social unit of the clan: it determines group identity, warrants intra-group structure (statuses and roles), and functions as the ultimate source of the internalised values and norms of the clan. Although previous ancestors are known, 'Abram' (later called Abraham) is the significant ancestor because the Deity has established a salutary relationship with him. (From a much later perspective, Jos 24:2 expressly says that 'Your fathers dwelt beyond the great river long ago, including Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.') Normally there would only be one prime ancestor. In the Israelite case there are three because three originally independent prime ancestors have been placed into a genealogical sequence to bring about the unity of the Israelite tribes.

That it is this particular ancestor who is ascribed fundamental significance, is due to the fact that he is believed to have been visited, chosen and promised a continuing salutary relationship with the Deity to whom the clan owes allegiance.

The memory of this event is the anchor of clan history in time and space. In doing so it establishes the coordinates of a system of meaning, the conditions for belonging (right of existence), and the empowerment to act within these limits. There is no access to the Deity except through the historical channel of the original divine self-disclosure. This is evidenced by the fact that the Deity's name - signifying both identity of, and access to the Deity - is connected with the ancestor and cannot be detached from it. The Deity is called 'the God of ...' (cf Schmidt 1983:12f). In contrast to Canaanite divine names, the emphasis lies on the person to whom the divine self-disclosure is granted. The fact that the place of the self-disclosure was remembered by a land mark, monument or place name may belong to the later stage of settlement (see par 17 below). But nomads also pay visits to places deemed holy on their wanderings (Albertz 1992:63).

For future generations to be a son or daughter of Abraham means to fall under the life giving, life protecting and life ordering umbrella of descendency from the prime ancestor. It is to him that the Deity has granted the privileged relationship between himself and the clan. There is no access to the Deity which bypasses the point in time and space marked by the patriarchal experience. This remains the core meaning of the ancestral tradition throughout Israelite-Jewish history. It was superseded by the Christ event because faith in Christ was not restricted to a particular group.

Of course, the patriarchal experience is not the only instance of divine self-disclosure in the history of Israel; it was soon superseded by historically more powerful ones, the exodus, the Sinai covenant and the kingship.

1.4 The historical ancestor in contrast to ancestor veneration

The extent to which the ancient Hebrew nomads practiced actual ancestor veneration can no longer be established. Some scholars believe that the 'family idols' (teraphim) were meant to symbolise the continuity of the clan or even deified ancestors, but this is not certain (Albertz 1992:63ff). Whatever the role of ancestors in pre-Yahwistic Israel, however, its memory was virtually blotted out during the later Yahwistic period which tolerated nothing of the kind. According to 1 Sm 28, making contact with the dead was a crime which carried the death sentence. Paradoxically the episode also seems to indicate that the practice was still common during the time of the kings, but not necessarily connected with one's ancestors. However that may be, there is a theological reason for this Yahwistic intolerance which is rooted in the character of the divine self-disclosure to the patriarchs itself. This comes out clearly when we contrast the significance of the prime ancestor for ancient

Hebrew faith with the ancestor veneration practised, for instance, in traditional African society (Nürnberg 1975).

In Africa the 'Supreme Being' seems to be remote, a *Deus otiosus*. But that is a misleading impression. The power of the Supreme Being constitutes the very fabric of life and is closer than one's skin. The impression of a remote God is created by the fact that, while often personified, he/she/it is existentially not experienced as a person. He does not speak; he does not demand; he cannot be approached by means of prayers or sacrifice. He is the conceptualisation of the impersonal forces which determine one's fate but which are beyond one's control.

The source of identity, meaning, right of existence and empowerment is, therefore, not the Supreme Being but the ancestors. Whether they are considered to be mediaries between the divine and the human spheres or whether they are divine beings themselves - it is they who matter, not the Supreme Being as such. It is they who bless; they demand; they want to be remembered; they are the constant personal counterparts of the living. Usually it is the oldest member of the family which the child still came to know when alive (usually the grandfather) who after his/her death becomes the most important ancestor; the further back you go, the more they fade from memory. Prime ancestors are known, but only in mythological or legendary, not in existential terms. As such they define clan identity, they do not signify the emergence of a relationship of the clan with the Supreme Being.

In contrast, the existential source of identity, meaning, right of existence and empowerment for the Hebrews is Yahweh, the Deity itself. It is he who elects, grants a relationship, blesses and expects the response of *zedaqah* from the believer. It is he who 'knows' his people and who is 'remembered' by his people. The prime ancestor only signifies the point in time when this relationship was established and the historical continuity of the relationship of Yahweh with his offspring. His sole function is to define Yahweh's ongoing commitment to his people in terms of the coordinates of time and space. He is a historical-geographical referent, not a mystical or magical mediary of divine presence or divine power in his own right.

In contrast to the African tradition, the Hebrews seem to have had no relation at all to their most proximate deceased at all. The only ancestors referred to are the three prime ancestors, representing three traditions of divine self-disclosure. Such a prime ancestor is believed to have been taken out of action long ago and to be devoid of all power. He has been 'assembled to his fathers'; his bones can be carried from country to country because of their symbolic significance, but his spirit is not active. In consequence he is never addressed or given sacrifices. He can do nothing for his progeny and they expect nothing from him. He is dead in the most literal sense of the word: he has dropped out of the present, in which life is lived, into past history. He no longer exists; only Yahweh's promise concerning his progeny continues. At

best, the dead leave behind a name; if not, it would be as if they had never existed (Sirach 44:8f).

Of course, other aspects of the patriarchal-tribal order have survived in ancient Israel. Thus a slave who left her social context, as Hagar did in Gn 16, was literally lost. To save her, God had to bring her back to her mistress! More important, the clan's survival depended on the continuation of the lineage through male progeny. Therefore Abraham's prime need was a son. The very benevolence of the Deity, thus the integrity of the relationship (*zedaqah*), would have been in question had he allowed the clan to die out.

1.5 The need-response structure during the formation of the tribal confederation

The promises of the land and countless progeny to fill it is secondary in the sense that it reflects the situation of Israel as a nation in relation to its territory in a situation of competition with other contenders. The extension of the original idea adds the time dimension of ongoing validity, the collective dimension of a people (in contrast to a lineage) and the space dimension of a country to the once established right of existence. By conceptualising the promise of land and countless progeny as having preceded the initial offspring dilemma, a comprehensive context of meaning is formed for the latter, thus a response to the need for overall meaning. The tracing of a pre-history to the very act of creation by J completes the comprehensiveness of the system of meaning.

But all this must be seen in its own historical context. The settlement of the tribes who derived their existence from the three classical patriarchs, can still be gleaned from the texts: Abraham is located at Mamre near Hebron (Caleb/Judah), Isaac at Beersheba (Simeon or Joseph) and Jacob at Penuel, Shechem and Bethel (Reuben, Ephraim and Manasseh - Schmidt 1983:15f). The settlement of the Hebrew tribes in the agricultural regions of Palestine had many effects, one of them being continuous conflict, often military, over land. As a group appropriates a given territory, the Deity of its patriarch dislocates an earlier local deity and takes over its cultic institutions, even its name (El). The appropriation of the land is legitimated by the special favour of the Deity (Wolff 1982:49; Herrmann 1981:47ff; Schmidt 17). This seems to be the root of the land promises found in the patriarchal paradigm. The extent of the promised land gradually grew in the perception of the believers until it covered the region of the davidic empire in its largest extension (Gn 15:18).

The Book of Judges gives the impression that at first these battles were fought by single tribes (Herrmann 1981:112ff). Two or three of them might form temporary alliances. It is probable that there came a time when these groups faced a formidable common enemy - for instance the Ammonites and Philistines - and more effective and stable alliance were forged. To stabilise the alliance the ancestral traditions were merged into a single genealogy.

'Semitic thought tended to understand historical periods and relationships in terms of genealogies' (Herrmann 1981:41). Eventually the patriarchal Deities were assimilated into Yahweh as the tribes were assimilated into 'Israel'. This seems to have been caused by the persuasiveness of the exodus tradition which was powerful enough to determine the name of the God of Israel as 'Yahweh who brought us out of Egypt, the land of slavery' (Ex 20:2). Some scholars believe that this happened at a given time, namely in the covenant at Shechem described in Jos 24, where seemingly El-followers formally merged with Yahweh-followers (Anderson 1986:142ff). Other possibilities are the Davidic-solomonic empire, which I consider the most likely, or even the time of Josiah.

The emergence of the exodus tradition is a topic of its own. What concerns us here is the continuing significance of the patriarchal traditions after their amalgamation with the Yahweh-story. On its own, the exodus narrative depicts only the escape of an enslaved group. The story continues with tiresome and trying nomadic wanderings on the fringes of the desert. It probably depicts the experiences of the group which had come from Egypt and of other recent arrivals from nomadic existence. Of course, sacrosanct stories cannot simply be replaced or ignored, but the patriarchal narratives also assumed an important function: they established the connection between the exodus and the promise of the land. The goal of Yahweh's rescue operation in Egypt was no longer perceived to be freedom as such, but settlement in Palestine. (To remove the contradiction between the original settlement of the fathers in the land and the conquest of Canaan by Israel, P declares the occupation of the land by the patriarchs to be temporary 'sojourning' - Ex 6:4, Herrmann 1981:56).

Now the Israelite creed had two constitutive elements, exodus and conquest. The corresponding theophanies - those granted to the fathers and those granted to Moses - were harmonised. The desert experience which could evoke memories both of the patriarchal settlement and the exodus-desert experience became wedged between the two. Reference to the patriarchal narratives was positioned in the exodus story in such a way that the God of the exodus was identified as the God of the patriarchs. The implication is that the exodus served as Yahweh's means to fulfil the land promises given to the latter (Ex 3:16ff). With that the two traditions were forged into one story. In the Yahwist's redaction the patriarchal legends in Gn 12ff form an elaborate introduction to the exodus story - again preceded by Gn 1-11 which traces the story back to the very act of creation.

Once this perception had gained ground the patriarchal traditions lost some of their importance. The story of Israel could just as well have begun with Moses. The Elohist expresses this clearly by not using the name of 'Yahweh' - thus his self-disclosure - before the theophany to Moses. The Priest gives an explicit account of the revelation of the name (Ex 6:2f). The 'small historical creed' proposed by von Rad (Dt 26:5ff) degrades the patriarchal figure to a

'wandering Aramean', contrasted with the mighty people who occupied the land later. During the time of settlement and national consolidation the exodus-conquest narrative was simply more powerful as a soteriological paradigm than the patriarchal legends. Indeed many scholars - particularly representatives of the liberation school - believe even today that the exodus is the constitutive narrative of the biblical faith (Schmidt 1983:34; Croatto 1975). However it may be, collective memories cannot simply be erased. The result was, in this case, that the God of Israel now had two definitions: 'The God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' and 'Yahweh who delivered us from Egypt'. The two formulas are almost never used together but function parallel to each other.

It is important to note that in the exodus story it is the liberating intervention of Yahweh itself which relativised the patriarchal tradition, not the accompanying theophany. The theophany of the burning bush had supplied its own definition of the Deity (Ex 3:13-14), but, apart from the name Yahweh which it tries to explain, it plays no further role in the entire Canon. Clumsily combining the two traditions the redactor of a much later time quite obviously meant the burning bush definition to be superseded by the patriarchal definition:

God *also* said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites, Yahweh, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations. (Ex 3:15 - NRSV)

There was a third important tradition which was merged into the common creed: the epiphany-covenant-law tradition. Again this is a topic of its own. Here it suffices to mention that the Sinai narrative was linked to the patriarchal tradition in much the same way as the exodus-conquest tradition: Ex 3:6, 15; 33:1. The patriarchal core story is also a theophany which establishes a relationship between the Deity and the believers. The difference is that originally the patriarchal narratives are promise traditions, not covenant or law traditions. (The divine promise turned into an oath when the promise of the land became one of the constitutive elements of the patriarchal theophany. The deuteronomic school then combines oath with covenant and formulates 'Yahweh swore the covenant'.) In Gn 15:7-21 the covenant tradition was projected backward into the patriarchal tradition together with its cultic institutionalisation. The described ritual may be ancient (Anderson 1986:44), the application is probably not).

1.6 The time of the kings

The empire established by David and consolidated by Solomon included large non-Israelite population groups. As in all empires the conquered population groups resent being oppressed and have to be subdued constantly. The spin-off is that implicitly the right of existence of the dominant group is questioned and a dire need for legitimation is generated, especially among the ruling

elites. If it is true that the Yahwist (J) compiled his large work during this time, which to me seems likely (Wolff in Brueggemann 1982:43f), the programmatic statement of J in Gn 12:1-4a, which underlies the theology of J (Wolff in Brueggemann 1982:41ff), appears to be a powerful justification for the existence of the empire. Significantly, in these early times of the kingship its justification is built on the older tradition, the patriarchal paradigm.

The 'blessing' of Abraham found in this tradition is now applied in a new, very distinct direction (Wolff 1982:42ff): through Abraham Yahweh himself chose Israel and multiplied its numbers to occupy and rule over Palestine; Isaac is largely enriched on the lands of the Philistines, Israel's arch-enemies, much to their envy (Gen 26:12ff); Jacob's descendants will spread out in all directions and through them all nations will be blessed (Gn 28:14); Laban (the Aramean) is blessed by the presence of Jacob - in spite of the latter's cunning to diminish Laban's flock (Gn 30:27); Potiphar's household is blessed the moment Joseph is placed in charge of it (Gn 39:5); later the whole of Egypt is thus blessed by the rule of this Hebrew sage, and through the vast resources accumulated by Joseph not only the people themselves but far away foreign nations are saved in the event of a famine (Gn 41:57).

The claim is, quite clearly, that Israelite rule is not only indicative of the fact that Yahweh blesses Israel but Israel itself is a blessing for the pagan peoples which it dominates. Those who bless Israel will be blessed, those who curse Israel will be cursed. The latter comes out in the narrative of the exodus: Pharaoh's resistance to Israel's demand to serve Yahweh in freedom costs him and the Egyptian population dearly; he is forced to ask Moses to plead for him (Ex 8:8), to concede that Yahweh is in the right against him and the Egyptians (9:27f), to plead for the blessing of Moses (Ex 12:31f). All this is uncannily reminiscent of Psalm 2, only that in the latter the referent is the king, not the patriarch or Israel as a whole. Against this background the Yahwist pre-history in Gn 2-11 reveals its true intentions: humankind without Yahweh's benign authority - operative through Israelite dominance and the king's rule - is under a curse and characterised by chaos and perdition.

One has to concede, of course, that this rather crude legitimisation, which is repeated in the promise given to Jacob in Gn 28:13-15, also contains an implicit exhortation: Israel and its king should live up to its divine calling and really become a blessing to others! The task is not fulfilled; pride is out of place. J supplies a vivid examples of what it means to be a blessing in some of the patriarchal legends. When Yahweh appears to be the great Judge who is about to destroy Sodom, Abraham acts as the great intercessor. Abraham selflessly yields the best land to Lot. He is prepared to stake even the bearer of the promise, Isaac, when it comes to obey Yahweh's will. Isaac brings peace into the troubled relationship with the Philistines by means of a covenant (Gn 26:26ff). The same happens between Laban and Jacob (Gn 31:44ff). Peace is restored through forgiveness and institutionalised justice. The picture of Abraham, especially, is one of particular righteousness and is

without doubt meant to serve as an example. But other patriarchs, notably Joseph, are also depicted as having a beneficial effect on their surroundings (Wolff in Brueggemann 1982:57ff).

In later history J's interpretation of Yahweh's promise that Israel would become a blessing for others consoled her; the implication of her calling to become a blessing haunted her, especially when she was again the victim of the oppression of great pagan powers (Wolff 1982:63ff). The motif is taken up in a P addition to the E narrative of the sacrifice of Isaac (Gn 22:15-18). It is found in the prophets and even in the New Testament (Is 19:23-25; Jr 4:1-2; Zch 8:13,23; Ac 3:25; Rm 4:9; Gl 3:8f,14).

It seems as if the patriarchal paradigm played no significant role during the early time of the divided kingdoms. With two exceptions (Hs 12 to expose sin and Jr 33:26 to reassure) the pre-exilic prophets did not use it either. Two reasons could be advanced for this phenomenon:

The prime function of the ancestor memory, namely the historical link with the self-disclosure of the Deity had been taken over by more powerful paradigms:

the exodus-conquest tradition to which we already referred,

the Sinaitic covenant-law tradition, in which the figure of Moses increasingly fulfilled the function previously fulfilled by the patriarch, and which was institutionalised at the sanctuaries in Bethel and Dan,

the davidic tradition: here it is the king, with whose dynasty Yahweh had concluded a covenant, who represents the historical link of the people with Yahweh. Referring to successors of David on the throne the typical formula reads: 'David my/your/his father'. The Deuteronomist and Chronicles formulate: 'he did right in the sight of Yahweh, like David his father' (e.g. 2 Ki 16:2) - or the corresponding negative,

the Zion-temple tradition which was institutionalised in Jerusalem.

Once the Israelite kingdoms had shrunk again to their Israelite core the number of descendants and the possession of the land were not the dominant issues for some time. When the Assyrian threat emerged the above traditions were still dominant and adequate for the purposes of legitimation.

Obviously the picture changes if one assumes that the merger of the tradition belongs in the time of Josiah. If not, the promise of the land to the fathers was revived by the deuteronomic-deuteronomistic tradition (Dt 1:8, 6:10, 9:5, 9:27, 29:13f, 34:4; Jos 24:3ff, 1 Ki 18:36, 2 Ki 13:23 - Schmidt 1983:22) and combined with the exodus-motif. It is likely that the threatening possibility, then the reality, of losing the land had led to this revival. In earlier times the patriarchal tradition had been added to the exodus tradition quite artificially, e.g. in Ex 32:11-13. In deuteronomic times, in contrast, it was fully integrated into the salvation history of Israel: Dt 6:10-12; 9:5-7; 26-27; Neh 9:7-9. In Deuteronomy this integration is done in such a way that the promise

to the fathers represents the legitimation of the (ostensibly outstanding) conquest of the land, the actual rationale being, however, that Israel is entitled to the land by divine decree:

See, I have set the land before you; go in and take possession of the land that I swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them and to their descendants after them. Dt 1:8 (NRSV).

The homiletical thrust is twofold:

There is an element of reassurance. It has two facets: (i) Israel has a right to the land over against other claimants, and (ii) Yahweh will be true to his side of the covenant.

But there is also the typical prophetic-deuteronomistic element of threat: this right is conditional upon Israel's fulfilment of the covenant, that is, allegiance to Yahweh alone and obedience to his law:

When the Yahweh your God has brought you into the land that he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you - a land with fine, large cities that you did not build, houses filled with all sorts of goods that you did not fill ... and when you have eaten your fill, take care that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. Dt 6:10ff (NRSV).

The full formula now reads:

... the land which (Yahweh) swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

But often the abbreviation '... your fathers' occurs (Dt 1:35; 4:1, 7:8, 8:1, 11:1, 11:21 etc.). The latter is, of course, a formulation which is open to many interpretations. In later times the abbreviated form was often applied not to the three patriarchs but to the generation of the exodus, or of the conquest (in the latter case with the word 'gave', rather than 'swore' - Jos 24:6, 1 Sm 12:6ff, Jr 3:18, 7:7 etc.). As far as the designation of the God of Israel was concerned it was eventually sufficient to say 'Yahweh, the God of your fathers' without further specification (different Schmidt 1983:12f). But the short form was also applied negatively, especially by the prophets, to the more immediate ancestors of Israel and Judah who had deserted Yahweh (e.g. Is 65:7, Jr 16:11ff, Ezk 20:18 - cf Mt 23:29ff). This latter motif could again be combined with the sins of the desert generation, or even with the pre-abrahamic ancestors (Jos 24:2).

We have said that the pre-exilic prophets do not seem to utilise the original patriarchal tradition. It is taken up only once in the book of Jeremiah. This reference is of particular interest because it is found here in combination with the (essentially Southern) creation and Davidic traditions, but not the (essentially Northern) exodus-desert-conquest tradition. If this is not a

deuteronomistic interpolation, it seems that the situation in Jerusalem was desperate enough to summon all available reassurances:

Only if I had not established my covenant with day and night and the ordinances of heaven and earth, would I reject the offspring of Jacob and of my servant David and not choose any of his descendants as rulers over the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes, and will have mercy upon them. Jr 33:25f (NRSV)

1.7 Exilic and post-exilic usage

The patriarchal tradition is utilised again in a consoling context in Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah, positive in the former, negative in the latter. Both the positive and negative forms try to re-establish assurance of Yahweh's faithfulness. The negative formulation is of particular theological interest because it contrasts the Deity with the receivers of the constitutive divine self-disclosure. This presupposes that the latter had been relativised and superseded by sufficient subsequent manifestations of the benevolence of Yahweh to lose its foundational importance:

But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend ... I have chosen you and not cast you off. Is 41:8f (NRSV)

Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many. Is 51:2 (NRSV)

For you are our father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our father; our Redeemer from of old is your name. Is 63:16 (NRSV)

The consolation which the reference to the fathers seems to have offered to the down-trodden 'remnant' in Judea was smashed by Ezekiel, who again emphasised that the validity of the promise depended on Israel's fulfilment of its part of the covenant:

... the inhabitants of these waste places in the land of Israel keep saying, 'Abraham was only one man, yet he got possession of the land; but we are many; the land is surely given us to possess.' ... You eat flesh with the blood, and lift up your eyes to the idols, and shed blood; shall you then possess the land? Ezk 33:24ff (NRSV)

In exilic and early post-exilic literature the motif was not used much. In Kings, Chronicles and Ezra the term 'remnant' became prominent as a description of what was left of Israel after the national catastrophes, often with consoling and reassuring connotations, but it refers to the remnant of the people, not to the descendants of the fathers. In 2 Chr 30:6 the patriarchal name of Yahweh is used but not connected with the remnant. There are references in Psalm 47:9 (God of Abraham) and Psalm 105:6-9,42, the latter in the con-

text of the combined fathers-exodus-desert-land narrative covering Ps 105-106. Of course, by now the fathers have simply become part of the salvation history and are quoted as such, e.g. in Sirach 44, or IV Esra 3:13ff.

Without having checked this, I assume that in later Judaism descendency from Abraham again began to play an important role. If this can be affirmed, it is not difficult to find the reasons: the proclamation of the prophets, which had said that Israel had broken the covenant and had to face the consequences, removed much of the security offered previously by the sinaitic, davidic and zionist covenants. To regain certainty one had to fall back on a prior and unqualified commitment of Yahweh to Israel which was not conditioned by the newer covenants and Israel's failures to live up to them. Another motif is the particular identity of the Jews as descendents of Abraham over against all other nations. Moreover, the legends show that Yahweh's ways with his elect is circuitous and that the wisdom of his secret designs often appears only long after the event (von Rad 1962:170f). Yahweh's unwavering commitment to the patriarchs, who are not always depicted only as moral or religious giants by the legends, may also have offered some consolation.

Part II: The New Testament

2.1 The Synoptics and Acts

The New Testament presupposes and partially reflects the situation of Judaism during Roman times. In the Synoptics the motif appears in the genealogies of Jesus. Matthew traces the genealogy of Jesus back first to David and then to Abraham (1:1), utilising both traditions as well as the exile for a periodisation of salvation history (1:17).

In contrast, the genealogy which Luke utilises, races past David and Abraham without interruption to Adam, the 'son of God' (3:23-38). This is highly significant because it not only posits creation as the point of departure for salvation history but also links the title 'son of God' to humanity rather than to the kingship. This matches the statement of P that humans were created in the 'image of God' which was another royal title alongside the 'son of God'. Both the patriarch and the king have been replaced with the first ancestor as the historic medium of divine self-disclosure. God is available to everybody! However, the introductory chapters of Luke's Gospel do include references to the promises given to the fathers in the songs of Mary (1:55) and Zechariah (1:73).

Theologically more significant, Luke's 'gospel of the poor' applies the patriarchal promise to the victims of demon possession, poverty and repentant sinners, while the keepers of the law and the rich are put to shame:

And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day? Luke 13:16.

Lk 19:9 (NRSV)

The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side ... Luke 16:22ff (NRSV)

Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. Luke 19:9 (NRSV).

In Q the false security of the appeal to descendency from Abraham is attacked by the Baptist and Jesus reminiscent of Deuteronomy and Ezekiel :

Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Mt 3:9 (NRSV) (cf Lk 3:8).

I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness ...Mt 8:11 (NRSV) (cf Lk 13:28).

More ominously the 'fathers' are charged with the murder of the prophets (Mt 23:29ff; Luke 11:47) and the present generation of Jewish leaders with complicity. But this refers to the time of the kingship, not to the three patriarchs.

In the Markian source (12:26f), taken up by Matthew (22:32) and Luke (20:37 - here connected with the burning bush theophany), a reference to the patriarchal name of God is used as proof for the resurrection of the dead:

And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the story about the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is God not of the dead, but of the living ... Mk 12:26 (NRSV)

In Acts reference to the patriarchs serves the following functions:

a) to establish the identity of the God of the fathers with the God of Jesus of Nazareth:

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate ...Acts 3:13 (NRSV)

b) to prepare the later statement of the legitimacy of the gospel preached to the gentiles:

You are the descendants of the prophets and of the covenant that God gave to your ancestors, saying to Abraham, 'And in your descendants all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you ...Acts 3:25f (NRSV)

c) to establish the continuity of the Jesus event with the entire salvation history (7:2,8,16,32).

2.2 Paul

In my view, the letter to the Romans is Paul's final theological endowment to his congregations in Asia minor and Macedonia before embarking on his journey to Spain. This document he sent with an introduction (1:1-15) and a postscript (15:14ff) to Rome to make himself and his theology known to his future hosts. That is why in this treatise he takes up important themes of earlier letters and systematises his theological insight. The motif of the patriarchs found in Gl 3 is taken up in Rm 4. Paul uses the tradition to offer Scriptural proof for his contention that neither circumcision nor the works of the law, but faith in the promise of God is the basis of righteousness before God. Abraham fulfilled no law but, before he was circumcised, he believed in God who was able to fulfil his promises, and that was 'reckoned to him as righteousness' (3). Note

a) Paul appeals to the original unqualified self-disclosure of Abraham's Deity in the Genesis account, and concludes that the self-giving act of God is unconditional. All that was needed from the side of the believer was the self-trusting acceptance of the gift of God.

b) In Genesis the expected response of Abraham to God's promise (*zedaqah*) is demonstrated by the sacrifice of Isaac. In Paul it is the death of the flesh and the new life in the Spirit (chapter 6).

c) In Genesis the 'works of the law' do not figure. In Romans this is the main issue. To build on achievements (works) would destroy this basic structure of the relationship (14f).

d) In Genesis sin is not an issue. In vv 6-7 Paul identifies God's reckoning of faith as righteousness with God's non-reckoning of sin (forgiveness).

e) The promise of descendants in Genesis is applied in Romans not to biological descendancy or ritual attachment but to the descendancy of faith. This reflects Paul's conflict with the Jews over the admissibility of uncircumcised Hellenists into the community of believers:

The purpose was to make him the ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, {12} and likewise the ancestor of the circumcised who are not only circumcised but who also follow the example of the faith that our ancestor Abraham had before he was circumcised. Rm 4:11bf (NRSV)

For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham - for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations.' Rm 4:16f (NRSV) (cf Gl 3:7ff).

- f) The promise of the land had long ceased to be an issue. It had been secondary even in the original development of the paradigm (see above).
- g) Biological descendants were prerequisites of life, thus the medium of 'salvation' in Genesis. By the time Paul wrote his letter this was no longer the case. Instead, the fact that God could call into existence what does not exist, namely a son to a barren couple, is applied to the resurrection of the dead (17-19). Obviously the creation motif also plays into the argument.
- h) In Genesis Isaac is the singular descendant but from him countless others are derived. In Gl 3:16f Paul reduces the descendency to the singular: Christ is the descendant. The implication is that 'in Christ' (Paul's favourite formulation) we are all heirs to the promise, irrespective of biological descent. Paul underlines this statement in claiming, yet rejecting his own privilege of being a biological descendant of Abraham: Rm 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22 (cf Phlp 3:5). In Romans he takes the theme of being in Christ up in chapters 5 and 6.

2.3 Hebrews

The author of the letter to the Hebrews (Heb) contrasts not Jews with Hellenists - which is not his problem - but angels with the descendants of Abraham. So the latter could be taken to stand for humanity as a whole (Heb 2:16). This is, of course, highly significant for New Testament theology.

Like Paul, but quite different in argumentation, Heb places considerable emphasis on faith as 'assurance of things hoped for' (11:1), which is not far removed from trusting in a promise. In a passage which links the exhortation to be 'imitators of those who through and patience inherit the promise' (a theme taken up in ch 11) to the oncoming theme of the status of Christ, Heb briefly mentions God's promise and oath to Abraham who, after suffering, obtained the promised good (6:13-15). In chapter 11 he goes through the salvation history of Israel up to the conquest quoting examples of faith. And it is here that the patriarchs again figure prominently (vv 8-22).

Most interesting, however, is the utilisation of the patriarchal paradigm to establish the status of Jesus. Paul had declared Jesus to be not a descendant but the descendant of Abraham in Gal 3:16. The implication of this statement is the superiority of Abraham over Jesus - a statement with which NT theologians could not live for long in the heated debate with the Jews at the time. The problem of the priority of Christ reappears in Jn 8 - see below - and also in connection with the sonship of David in Rm 1:3 and Mt 22:41-45.

Heb utilises not the centre of the patriarchal paradigm, the divine self-disclosure, but a historically interesting yet theologically peripheral legend: Abraham's deference to Melchizedek, king of Salem to establish the priority of Christ over Abraham. Or is the story indeed peripheral? Its original refers to Jerusalem, the capital of David, and the great predecessor of David on the Jebusite throne - thus marking the beginning of one of the most influential tra-

ditions in the biblical Canon. And Jesus is, of course, taken to be the legitimate heir of David by New Testament believers.

But let us look at the narrative in Heb. The status of Jesus is here described as 'according to the order of Melchizedek' (6:20). Melchizedek is not taken to be a historical but a typological figure, 'the king of righteousness' (*zedeq*) and 'the king of peace' (*shalom*), 'without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever' (7:2-3). The point is that Abraham gave him a tenth of the spoil and was blessed by him. This proves that Melchizedek, thus David, thus Christ, is superior to Abraham (7:7f) - and by implication also to the Levitic sacrificial order. The latter, the argument continues, is temporal, Melchizedek's priesthood is eternal ... etc.

2.4 John

Chapter 8 of John's Gospel contains a long discussion on the motif of Abraham-descendency which contributes two theologically important statements:

a) The Jews cannot claim to be descendants of Abraham if they want to get rid of Jesus, because Jesus reveals God - the God of Abraham (37-40).

b) Jesus is superior to Abraham:

Truly truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am. Jn 8:58

2.5 James

James uses the patriarchal paradigm to prove his contention that 'faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead' (2:17 - NRSV). Paul rejects works as condition of justification, but certainly expects the justified to live 'in the spirit, not in the flesh' (Gl 5:16ff; Rm 5). James does not follow the Pauline logic of a sequence between constituent and consequence but argues that it is the consequence which reveals the reality of the constituent. His statement that 'our ancestor Abraham (was) justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar' (2:21) overstretches the point; what he wants to say is 'that a person is (shown to be unmistakably) justified by (faith producing) works and not by faith alone' (2:24). Without doubt this represents the original understanding in Genesis though in comparison with Paul and the Deutero-Pauline formula (Eph 2:5-10) James' formulations are clumsy.

2.6 Peter

1 Peter 3:6 must also be mentioned because it again shows how all sorts of elements of a paradigmatic story can be exploited and not always with very profound theological intentions: 'Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. You have become her daughters as long as you do what is good and never let fears alarm you.' (NRSV) Here a patriarchal order is legitimated by

means of the 'holy story' without asking any theological questions at all about the matter. Feminists will not be too eager to buy into this sexism.

Part III: Discussion

We have traced the following stages in the historical evolution of the patriarchal paradigm. During the nomadic period it provided identity and reassurance to a given clan or tribe. With the settlement of the tribes in Palestine it provided legitimation for the occupation of agricultural land in competition with other claimants. During the time of national consolidation the paradigm played a catalytic role in forging the exodus and conquest traditions together.

In time it lost much of its importance to more powerful paradigms (Yahwe's intervention in Egypt, the conquest, the Sinai covenant and the establishment of the Davidic dynasty), all of which were based on theophanies of their own. The issues of progeny and land possession receded into the background during the early time of the kingdoms. During the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, however, land possession, security, prosperity and population numbers were threatened once again. The paradigm was revived, particularly in the deuteronomic exhortations.

But the prophets and deuteronomic theology changed its texture. Apparently the unqualified promise of God to the patriarchs was coveted in a time when the population became aware of its failure to live up to the requirements of the Sinaitic covenant. In response to this opportunism deuteronomic and prophetic circles emphasised the conditionality of both patriarchal and covenantal promises. This in turn provided the basis for the historico-theological theory of the Deuteronomist.

In the long run the patriarchs, like all other soteriological paradigms, found their fixed place in Jewish salvation history. By the time the New Testament documents were written, Jewish piety, without being oblivious to political and economic issues, had assumed individualistic and eschatological dimensions. The questions of land and progeny were superseded by the concern for one's survival on the day of judgment. Hellenistic influences had added mystical and speculative interests. The apocalyptic expectations of the coming kingdom of God kept latent political ferment awake.

The NT presupposes this general constellation. But the problems of the Christian community gravitated towards the conflict with the Jewish religious leadership over (a) the status of Jesus, (b) the fulfilment of the Torah and (c) the acceptability of Gentile believers. In response, the theophany of the patriarchal paradigm as historical access to the self-disclosure of God was quite consciously replaced with the Christ-event, but its core statement was utilised to clarify the relation between faith and works. The particularist thrust of the paradigm was also sufficiently powerful in the Jewish community to necessitate a new Christian interpretation which justified the acceptance of uncircumcised gentiles into the community of believers.

This concise summary highlights the incredible versatility of a biblical paradigm such as the patriarchal promises. While there is visible continuity, there are also enormous contrasts in its utilisation due to changing constellations of needs and their transcending dimensions. Certainly the paradigm lost its central soteriological place fairly early in Israelite history, but it also showed historical resilience and adaptability. Thus our hypothesis seems to have been vindicated in this case.

The most important finding is that the patriarchal paradigm, after having been relativised and superseded by other paradigms in the early history of Israel, was once again relativised, superseded and redefined by the Christ-event in the New Testament. This seems to be a recurring pattern in all soteriological paradigms. Jesus as the Christ appropriated and redefined the kingship paradigm which in Old Testament times had already largely replaced the patriarchal tradition as primary access to God's historic self-disclosure. Christ was deliberately ranked above the patriarchs. And the apostles began to occupy the position of the 12 tribal ancestors: Mt 19:28, Lk 22:30 (cf 1 Cor 6:2f). All this shows that there is no legitimate place for the Jewish patriarchs as mediators of divine grace and blessing in the Christian faith - let alone for any other ancestral figures.

How can we then extrapolate the biblical dynamic into our own situation? To me it seems that this particular paradigm lays its finger on a frequently overlooked but crucial problem of our times: the modernisation of collective mental structures and processes. Our epoch is characterised by the emergence of a highly dynamic mentality for which not stability but accelerating process, not the past but the future, not the proven but the possible are the guiding principles. Life is not fed by the sap coming from traditional roots buried deep in the mythological past, but sucked into the future by the lure of a utopian dream.

This accelerating process has long emancipated itself not only from its religious roots but also from its utopian dream. It became institutionalised as a secular and pragmatic end in itself. Its revolutionary power reaches into all corners of the globe and dissolves all traditional cultures, accepted patterns of behaviour, beliefs, values and norms. Meaning, right of existence and empowerment are derived not from being embedded in a traditional social fabric and conformity to its norms but from participation in the accelerating historical dynamic. All over the Third World the social fabric comes apart and frequently extreme anomie is the result. Evidently most 'modern' people also struggle to adjust to, and keep pace with, the scientific-technological-commercial juggernaut. Moreover, Western society seems to disintegrate into a mass of isolated individuals like rocks turned into beach sand - temporarily swept to heaps by the tide of events but soon washed away into new directions.

In such a situation the insight that the biblical faith has rejected ancestral authority in favour of the 'living God' seems to express a crucial insight. Already in Old Testament times the ancestor as a source of meaning, right of

existence and empowerment had been abandoned in favour of Yahweh, the God who was believed to be in charge of history as a whole and who was increasingly perceived to be 'the power of the future'. In New Testament times Christ, the true human being, was proclaimed to be the 'first, and the last, and the living.' The identity, normativeness and empowerment that could be derived from the ancestors, who are as mortal and sinful as their descendants, are infinitely transcended and superseded by participation in the new life of the risen Christ. It is faith in such a God, I believe, that can deliver traditionalists from the prison of the past without abandoning them to the abysses of an exponential acceleration into nowhere which haunts the technological civilisation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Albertz, Rainer 1992: *Religionsgeschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit. Part 1*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Anderson, Bernhard W 1986 (1957). *Understanding the Old Testament*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 4th ed.
- Bright, John 1981. *A history of Israel*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 3rd ed.
- Coats, George W 1983. *Genesis, Vol I, The forms of the OT literature*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Croatto, J Severino 1987 (1984). *Biblical hermeneutics: Toward a theory of reading as the production of meaning*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis (tr. Robert R. Barr).
- De Vaux 1978. *The early history of Israel*. Philadelphia: Westminster.
- Gese, Hartmut 1970: Erwägungen zur Einheit der biblischen Theologie. *ZThK* 67/1970, 417-437.
- Gottwald, Norman 1979: *The tribes of Yahweh: A sociology of the religion of liberated Israel, 1250-1050 BCE*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- Hals, R M 1980. *Grace and faith in the Old Testament*. Minneapolis: Augsburg.
- Hayes, John H & Prussner, Frederick 1985. *Old Testament Theology : Its history and development*. Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox, and London: SCM.
- Herrmann, Siegfried 1981 (1973). *A history of Israel in Old Testament times*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 2nd ed.
- Humphreys, W L 1979. *Crisis and story: Introduction to the OT*. Mayfield Publ Co.
- Kittel G (ed) 1985. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids Mich: Eerdmans. Vol VII 965-1024 (R 225 KIT (abridged)).

Knight, Douglas 1975. *Tradition and theology in the Old Testament*. Missoula: Scholars Press.

Koch, Klaus 1969. *The growth of the biblical tradition*. New York: Scribner.

Noth, Martin 1957. *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*. München: Kaiser, 2nd ed.

Noth, Martin 1960. *The history of Israel*. London: Adam and Charles Black, 2nd ed.

Noth, Martin 1981 (1948). *A history of Pentateuchal traditions*. Chico CA: Scholars Press.

Nürnberg, K 1975. The Sotho notion of the Supreme Being and the impact of the Christian proclamation. *Journal for Religion in Africa* VII/1975 174-200.

Ramsey, George W 1981. *The quest for the historical Israel*. Atlanta: John Know Press. [update of present research]

Rast, Walter E 1972. *Tradition history and the Old Testament*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

Richter, Wolfgang 1967. Beobachtungen zur theologischen Systembildung in der alttestamentlichen Literatur anhand des 'kleinen geschichtlichen Credo', in Leo Scheffczyk, *et al*, (eds) *Wahrheit und Verkündigung, vol I*. München: Ferdinand Schöningh, pp 175-212.

Rogerson John & Davies Philip 1989. *The Old Testament world*. Cambridge: Cambridge Un Press.

Sauer E 1964. *The dawn of world redemption: a survey of historical revelation in the Old Testament*. Exegeter: Paternoster (tr G H Lang).

Schmidt, Werner H 1983 (1968). *The faith of the Old Testament: A history*. Philadelphia: Westminster 4 th edition.

Von Rad, Gerhard von 1971. *Das Opfer des Abraham*. München: Kaiser.

Wilson, Robert R 1984. *Sociological approaches to the OT*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

Wolff, H W and Brueggemann, W 1982. *The vitality of Old Testament traditions*. Atlanta: John Knox, 2nd ed.

→