

inerrancy is now so vague a reality that it could include pretty well anything? On the contrary, it is now a far more precise reality, because we have defined exactly what can and what cannot be demanded of it. When the third century tried to analyse Christ's humanity, and specified that it involved a fully human intellect and a fully human will, it did not make Christ's divinity more vague; it defined it more exactly. If this process of defining inerrancy has resulted in inerrancy being given less prominence than it once had, that is a good thing. For it is not the only effect of inspiration, let alone its purpose. God did not inspire Scripture in order that we should have a list of divine truths to be learnt, defended and quoted as proof-texts, like a vast *Denzinger*. God inspired Scripture in order that we might have His word dwelling amongst us, to draw us to Himself and fashion us after His Own image. If that word, in coming amongst us, has come to us (even in its pre-incarnate form) in a more thoroughly human fashion than we should have thought possible, we should not be scandalised, but overwhelmed at the extent to which God will go to appeal to His wayward children.

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THE UNKNOWN PROPHET OF THE
EXILE—II¹

The Cosmogonic Battle

We can begin by quoting what we may call the first stanza of a magnificent poem on the hope of a speedy return to Jerusalem. It is not entirely consecutive, given the present state of the text, but can be identified on the basis of stylistic analysis, especially the initial repetitions. It seems to be composed of three and possibly four stanzas: Is. 51:9-11; 51:17-23; 52:1-2; 52:11-12 (?). It could be that the well-known text 52:7-10 forms part of this poem too. We give a close translation of 51:9-11:

Awake ! awake ! put on strength
O arm of Yahweh,
Awake as in days of yore,
Generations long past.

Are you not he that dismembered Rahab
That pierced Tannin ?
Are you not he that dried up the Sea

¹ cf. *Scripture* 1962, pp. 81-90

The waters of the great Abyss,
 Made the depths of the Sea a path
 For the redeemed to cross ?

The ransomed of Yahweh will return
 They will come to Sion with gladness
 Eternal joy on their heads,
 Rejoicing and gladness they shall reach
 And sorrow and sighing shall flee.

This appeal to God to act here and now in the present refers back to the primordial combat before creation, which is, essentially, an act of faith in the victorious presence of divine power in the world. It was already quite familiar to the Hebrews long before the Exile, and a number of biblical texts would induce us to believe that it was even the most familiar because the most accessible way there was of thinking of creation as the act of a victorious deity. What, however, is entirely typical of the Prophet of the Exile and of Old Testament faith in general, and entirely different from any other group we know of is that these primordial and strictly mythical events are linked with real historical salvific events. Thus, in the poem, Rahab and Tannin the dragon are in parallelism. But these monsters of the primeval abyss are linked, in the Old Testament texts, with the real enemies of Yahweh ; thus Egypt, the oppressor *par excellence*, is called both Rahab and Leviathan, the Lotan of syro-phoenician mythology, in both the hymnic and prophetic literature.¹ In an even more striking way is this the case with the next pair mentioned. The Sea is given a capital letter because it is Yam the god who, with Prince River (*nahar*) opposes the kingship of the young Ba'al in the ugaritic religious texts, just as Tiamat the Abyss opposes the kingship of Enlil—Marduk in the Babylonian Creation epic. But in the oracles of Deutero-Isaiah the sea and the river are also the Sea of Reeds and the Jordan which had to be dried up and cloven respectively before Yahweh could achieve his purpose.

It has been suggested that these numerous references to a cosmogonic battle with a victorious outcome can be explained satisfactorily only on the supposition that such an account, modelled on a Canaanite prototype which itself owed much to the immemorial New Year festival of the Fertile Crescent, once stood at the head of the now vestigial popular creation story of Gen. 2:4ff.² This would have been removed at a later stage and the present Gen. 1 substituted as more in keeping with monotheism and the doctrine of God's omnipotence.

¹ Is. 30:7 ; Ez. 29:3 ; 32:3 ; Ps. 89:11 etc.

² P. Humbert, 'La rélation de Gen. I et du Ps. CIV avec la liturgie du nouvel an israélite,' in *R.H.Ph.R.* xv, 1935, pp. 1-27

Thus the present creation account would be a kind of second edition. It has further been suggested that Gen. I was originally the Jewish counterpart of *Enuma Elish*, that is, a liturgical recitation for an occasion similar in outline and structure to that described above. This, it is submitted, would explain the opening *bereshith* 'In the beginning,' a term used technically for the beginning of a reign (e.g. Jer. 26:1) and similar to the title of the New Year Feast, *rosh hashanah*, in Babylon *resh shatti*. It would also explain the seven-day division, the blessings, the marked liturgical colour of the chapter, among other things. This interesting suggestion involves some serious difficulties and problems which we cannot follow up here but which we shall refer to later on.

The Victory

The movement of thought of this seminal myth of divine kingship envisages, then, the god threatened by enemies and engaged in a great combat the outcome of which will concern the whole world but especially the city over which the god rules. The enemies, we have seen, are chaos, disorder, the sum of those blind demonic forces of destruction which always threaten the *equilibrium instabile* of the existing world-order. The outcome is victory, but this victory from which creation, that is the present world-order results, can be corroded by time; disorder has been for the moment dispelled but never fully exorcised. Thus the object of the ritual is to transfer to the present the mighty act wrought in a past beyond time. Let us consider how the prophet sees this primordial victory.

First of all, in accordance with his faith, he sees creation not as a triumph over gods, but a demonstration of their non-existence. Consequently Yahweh alone is universal king, king of the world :

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand
And marked off the heavens with a span
Enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure
And weighed the mountains in scales? . . .
All the nations are as nothing before Him,
They are accounted by Him as less than nothing and emptiness. (40:12, 17)

Kingship is intimately associated with creation and world supremacy. Yahweh is the king of Jacob (41:21) : the epicentre of His reign is Israel—

I am Yahweh, your Holy One,
The Creator of Israel, your king ! (43:15)

It extends out from this centre to cover the whole universe. Here we have an interesting case of the development of doctrine in the Old Testament. The kingship of Yahweh was in itself no new thing for the Israelite. He is acclaimed as king in the triumphal ode of Ex. 15

which, incidentally, gives us a good example of how the idea of the kingship of Yahweh came to be expressed almost inevitably in the *pattern* which we are describing. The victory over the Pharaoh at the Sea of Reeds is described as a demonstration of Yahweh's supremacy over the gods: 'Who is like Thee among the gods?' (15:11), but there is no polemic against the *existence* of other gods. The victory is completed by the triumphal progress of the people, led by their God to the land of promise, to the holy city, to the temple. This progress is a procession culminating in the acclamation of eternal kingship: 'Yahweh will reign for ever and ever!' (15:18). The ode is itself very early but almost certainly worked over into psalm form, as happened with the Song of Deborah (Jg. 5), under the influence of liturgical ideas. Here again kingship is not expressed as an ideology, in abstract terms, but in concrete, non-conceptual language. The central symbol seems to have been the Ark represented as a portable shrine which included a throne.¹ In Num. 10:35 we have the acclamations used by the Israelites in their campaigns before and after action. In 1 Samuel the Ark is certainly the centre of worship at Shiloh and the God of the Ark is 'He who is seated upon the cherubim,' that is, upon the throne adorned with arm-rests designed as cherubim, familiar now from excavations in Syria, at Samaria and elsewhere. After many vicissitudes the Ark is taken solemnly in procession to Jerusalem the new capital (2 Sam. 6) where, in the time of Solomon, it is placed in the Inner Sanctuary of the newly-built temple (1 Kg. 6-8). It was here that Isaiah had his inaugural vision of 'the King, Yahweh of the hosts,' the decor of which is the throne and that which surrounds it (Is. 6). This shows us that even earlier than the first millenium the kingship of Yahweh was connected with His overlordship of His people as a primary datum.

It is on this foundation that the Prophet of the Exile builds, and it was providential that the particular circumstances of history and the current theological representations forced him to extend his vision of Yahweh's field of action to the whole world, which he does by presenting Him as creator. This can be seen at once by the number of times the verb peculiar to the divine creative action *bara'* occurs in these chapters and moreover, with one or two unimportant exceptions, for the first time in the Old Testament. It is later used in the sacerdotal creation account which owes much to the exilic prophet. Here again God's victory in creation is paradigmatic—it points to an inherent here and now possibility of God's victorious intervention on behalf of the

¹ This is somewhat obscured by the fact that there is a semantic development in a different direction starting from the idea of *'aron* as box or container which held the tablets of the Law.

believer. This is brought out in a fine passage familiar from the *Rorate coeli* of the Advent liturgy :

I form light and create darkness,
I make weal and create woe,
It is I, Yahweh, who does all these things.
Shower, O heavens, from above,
And let the skies rain down *righteousness* ;
Let the earth open, that *salvation* may sprout forth,
And let it cause *righteousness* to spring up also ;
I, Yahweh, have created it. (45:7-8)

The word *righteousness* here refers to a concrete world-order set up by Yahweh as a result of His victory, and the *salvation* which is wished for is to be the fruit of victory—much in the same way that Zachary, in the passage quoted in the Gospel account of the Messianic entry (9:9), describes the king as ‘justified by God and victorious.’¹ We can detect here the intuition of the unity of the divine action reading along a line of saving interventions, of inroads into time and space : creation of the world—creation of Israel (Exodus and the Covenant)—creation of *salvation* through the Messianic figure of the future ; this can already be seen in the repeated use by Yahweh of His ‘arm’ (40:10 ; 52:10 ; 53:1, etc.) and His ‘right hand’ (41:10 etc.) reminiscent of the formula of the Passover haggada : ‘With a strong hand and outstretched arm,’ by the constant use of the title ‘Redeemer’ and the redemption of Israel with reference again to the act of God in taking the Israelites out of Egypt, soon to be repeated in the exodus from Babylon.

The Triumphal Procession

The procession to the *akitu* or temple was the most important element in the New Year festival, so that the idea of feast and of procession were practically interchangeable.² Indeed, processions played a part in ancient religions even greater than they do in some parts of the Catholic Church today, and processional ways had to be laid out and maintained with particular care ; some of them, such as the *via sacra* in the Roman forum leading to the temple of Jupiter, must have been a splendid sight when in use. But a processional way is only important because it leads to a temple—the culmination of the whole liturgical act is what takes place when the participants arrive at the temple. In the case of the Festival at the time of the Prophet of the Exile, as far as we can see from the only good text at our disposal helped out by

¹ The Vulgate has *iustus et salvator* which is too literal.

² In the light of this it is interesting that the Hebrew verb *hgg* means both to keep a feast and to make a pilgrimage and that *the* feast is that of Tents (1 Kg. 8:2).

analogy, the processional way was also a royal way ; Marduk would have been borne on his litter or possibly drawn in his chariot on a predetermined route down to the river, thence to return in triumph to the temple. Psalms would be sung by the chanters during this procession, an official would carry the footstool used in the solemn enthroning of the god, there would be the formal request made to the priests of the shrine to open the door. Purification rites would have already been carried out or would perhaps be carried out then on the spot (we read of these on the second day of the feast), and there would be the solemn blessing of the temple. We have also an interesting text from the time of Hammurapi in which there is an explicit injunction not to touch the statues of the goddesses during the procession. No-one familiar with the scene of the procession of the Ark to Jerusalem and the other, under Solomon, of its being installed in the temple with the dedication and blessing, taken with the processional psalms, can fail to be struck by the basic similarity of groundplan and motifs.

We find the same ground-plan in Is. 40-55. The annual procession of Marduk is, in fact, referred to and must have been a familiar sight to the exiles, even supposing that many of them did not take part in it.

They have no knowledge
Who carry about their wooden idols
And keep on praying to a god
That cannot save (45:20)

Right at the beginning of the prophet's oracles there is the call to prepare the processional *via sacra* :

A voice cries :
In the wilderness prepare the way of Yahweh,
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be lifted up
And every mountain and hill be made low ;
The uneven ground shall become level,
And the rough places a plain.
And the glory of Yahweh shall be revealed. (40:3-5)

Here again we see the same thing : the motif is taken out of the timeless world of the myth and given its place in salvific history. The processional route here is, in fact, the way home for the captives set free by the decree of Cyrus ; the *Glory of Yahweh* which, according to Ezekiel, had left the temple before it was destroyed by the Babylonian army would now return with the people, and be with them as in the journey from Sinai in the days of Moses. This idea of a new Exodus is basic to these chapters and was, when we come to think of it, inevitable. Both are seen as turning-points in the history of salvation and are conceived alike since it is the same God acting in both moments

of history. Thus the same miracles of mercy are promised (Is. 41: 17-20) and the same victorious outcome, for He who promises has already

made a way in the sea
A path in the mighty waters. (43:16)

His very presence in the world signifies that evil has been already overcome. In a passage already quoted (51:9-10) it is stated that the God of creation is also the God of the new creation of the Exodus from Egypt—for He that dried up the Sea and the Great Abyss

Made the depths of the Sea a path
For the redeemed to cross

and His plan is not yet fulfilled. In the last resort it is the present that the prophet has in mind, not the past :

Remember not the former things,
Nor consider the things of old.
Behold, I am doing a new thing ;
Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it ?
I will make a way in the wilderness
And rivers in the desert (43:18-19)

A new thing, yes, but it is the same God who acts. This principle of recapitulation in sacred history is of the utmost importance, and here we are at the best vantage-point for studying it. Thus the exodus from Egypt, the exodus from Babylon and the exodus which is the redemptive death of Christ (cf. Lk. 9:31) can be represented as concentric circles drawn round the centre-point of God's crowning action in Christ, and it is no accident that this latter is formulated time and time again by New Testament writers with reference to the former, and that the good news begins with the cry to prepare the way (40:3-5 ; Mk. 1:3).

The procession ends in the inner sanctuary or throne-room of the temple where Marduk's eternal kingship is proclaimed. Every Babylonian temple was, at least ideally, a ziggurat which represented the primitive mountain of creation, the first to rise above the flood waters of Chaos. Indeed, the procession to the temple on New Year's Day (for the Babylonians of the exile period the spring month of Nisan) contained in itself the idea of a *palingenesis*, a renewal of nature by a ritual return to origins. This seems to have been the idea behind the sprinkling with water and, in a different way, the water libation which also appears in the Jewish Feast of Booths (cf. Jn. 7:37-9) and helps to explain the constantly repeated theme of creation in Deutero-Isaiah. We have already seen that the procession of the people with Yahweh

at their head from the Sea of Reeds and Sinai is taken right down to the temple in the song of Moses and Miriam (Ex. 15:17). An interesting parallel can be studied in the enigmatic Ps. 68. It certainly describes a triumphal procession beginning with the taking up of the Ark and the acclamations that accompany it (Num. 10:35). The route takes it through the desert starting from Sinai, and there is mention of the messengers waiting to proclaim the good news of victory (v. 12). There is the army and the chariots, so that this is, in fact, a royal *parousia*, an entry into the holy city which ends in the sanctuary (v. 18) :

Thy solemn processions are seen, O God,
The processions of my God, my King, into the sanctuary (v. 24)

Though this psalm has certainly been touched up and influenced¹ by the processional psalms of the divine kingship in use after the exile, it is based on genuine pre-exilic experience, and we can easily understand, after reading it, the position of the prophet of the Exile faced with the celebration of the royal triumph of Marduk. Cyrus' edict concerning the restoration of local cults and rebuilding of shrines held out new hope, for there could be no procession to the temple until the temple was built, at least in dramatic anticipation. In saying of Jerusalem 'she shall be built' and of the temple 'Your foundations shall be laid' (44:28) Cyrus was fulfilling the first stage of the divine decree. This is also the reason why the theme of blessing and purification of the temple only come at a later stage (Mal. 3-4). The whole pattern of *parousia* procession, entry into the city and into the temple and purification is, however, recapitulated in the scene in the Gospels which opens the last week in the life of Christ (Mk. 11).

Accession

The preparation of the processional route and the procession itself have for their climax accession to the throne and declaration of Marduk's eternal—no longer provisional—kingship. This is plain from the prototypal *enuma elish*. In Assyria the crowning of the king as representative of the high god Ashur was the climax, and in Babylonia at the time of the Exile the king received back his royal insignia after his humiliation, thus recognising that he held kingship from the god. The accession to the throne is proclaimed by the herald as the dawn of a new phase, the royal year, the king is clothed in the garments of royalty and hymns are sung in his honour. The royal decrees fix the course of the future year thus determining the favourable destiny of the realm, the fertility of the crops and herds and in general the good fortune of the population. In fact the throne-room is called the

Sanctuary of Destiny corresponding to the seventh stage of the Ziggurat in the ideal celebration of the festival.

Here we come to the heart of the question—the *fact* of divine kingship. The Good News begins with the announcement of the proximity or imminence of *the* Kingdom of God (Mk. 1:15). This means a reality already recognisable in principle. But the nominal phrase ‘the Kingdom (or, better, kingship) of God’ is really a substitute, due to the exaggerated theological scruples of later Judaism, for the verbal phrase ‘God reigns’ which, in the living context in which the Prophet of the Exile is writing, is the cry of the herald :

How beautiful upon the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good tidings,
Who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good,
Who publishes salvation,
Who says to Sion : YOUR GOD REIGNS (52:7)

This is a genuine proclamation of the sovereign rule of God in the whole universe by the herald who goes ahead with the news that the ceremony is completed and the king has ascended his throne.¹ Indeed, the messenger of the good news of the divine accession to the throne plays a leading role throughout. This is true of the messenger ‘that brings good tidings to Sion’ (40:9ff.) heralding the divine *parousia*, the coming of God as king or shepherd (v. 11). In a later oracle, unfortunately difficult to read (42:19), there is mention of *mal’aki*, my messenger, which we think may have proved a starting-off point for the anonymous prophetic book written not long after the Exile which comes to us under the title Malachi. Here, in an important passage (3:1), we have the same idea of the messenger who goes ahead to prepare the way for the coming to the temple :

Behold I send my messenger (*mal’aki*) to prepare the way before me, and Yahweh whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple.

It is this passage which seems to have been in St Luke’s mind in describing the presentation of Jesus in the temple and must be recalled when we read of the cleansing of the temple as a prophetic sign ; it has also of course provided the means for the New Testament authors of expressing the role of the Baptist as the precursor. Much more important, though, the little Isaian poem quoted above (52:7), read with similar passages from these chapters in the LXX translation, gives

¹ We must repeat that we are here not directly interested in the debate over the existence or non-existence of an Israelite New Year Feast, the arguments for or against which really start with the so-called Psalms of Royal Kingship. Whether or not there was such a *liturgy*, it seems certain that these psalms reflect the *theology* of kingship contained in Deutero-Isaiah.

us the basic meaning of the *evangelion* or good news which is, in effect, 'Your God reigns!' and it is no coincidence but a deep inner consistency that the earliest extant evangelist opens the *evangelion* with a combined quotation from Malachi and Deutero-Isaiah.

Other elements in this powerful metaphor of kingship can be studied with reference to the so-called psalms of enthronement which, *pace* Mowinckel, are best read as embodying the insights gained by the dynamic *apologia* of the Exile Prophet. Thus we have the 'new song' or enthronement hymn (Ps. 96:1; Is. 42:10) and the investiture with the royal garments, so close to the *akitu* ceremony, which survives in the metaphors of 'putting on majesty' (Ps. 93:1) or 'putting on strength' (Is. 51:9). There is also the fixing of the decree or destiny of Israel as part of this royal protocol and the giving of abundance and fertility during the new age that is inaugurated—motifs in the prophetic literature that occur so frequently.

What we have seen is only part of the achievement of this very great poet and man of God. For through him there is not only made available for the future a magnificent theological frame of reference within which alone the content and the purpose of the New Testament *evangelion* can be grasped, but it is he too, or at least another closely inspired by him, who fills in the master lines of the saving plan, of which not the glorious Cyrus but the suffering Servant is to be the central figure. Finally, where better can we find an example of a living theological idiom vitalised through contact with ritual with which myth, in the widest sense referred to above, is associated; a myth which epitomises all others in its unformulated plea for redemption? To that plea of natural man, uttered 'with sighs too deep for words' (Rom. 8:26), Christ in his church was to provide the answer.

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THE EMMANUEL PROPHECY AND ITS CONTEXT

The Emmanuel prophecy¹ of Is. 7:14 is reckoned among the most difficult passages of the Old Testament. This in fact seems to be the

¹ J. Coppens gives a comprehensive bibliography as far as 1951 in 'La prophétie de la 'Almah,' *ETL* xxviii (1952), pp. 648-53, n. 2 and again in *L'Attente du Messie*, Bruges 1954, pp. 39-50.

Rafael Criado, s.J. brings this as far as 1959 in n. 1 to his article 'El valor de *laken* (Vg. "propter") en Is. 7:14,' *Estudios Ecclesiasticos*, nos. 134-5, i.e. *Miscelanea Biblica Andres Fernandez*, vol. xxxiv (1960), pp. 741-51. To the works listed in these two