

**THE APPLICATION OF THE EXODUS DIVINE-PRESENCE NARRATIVES AS A
BIBLICAL SOCIO-ETHICAL PARADIGM FOR THE CONTEMPORARY
REDEEMED.**

by

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DECLARATION.

I declare that “The Application of the Exodus Divine-Presence Narratives as a Biblical Socio-Ethical Paradigm for the Contemporary Redeemed” is my own work and that all the sources I have used and quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete referencing.

Signature: (Dr. G. C. Pereira).

Date.

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Supervisor: _____

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May the Lord richly bless each one,

“Piff” G. C. Pereira.

DEDICATION.

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my dear friends and former employers:

To **Maria** and **Piero Lombardi**, whose memory I will appreciate and value for the rest of my life.

SUMMARY.

God is ontologically *omni-present*, yet he is spoken of as being present or even being absent. The presence and the absence of God are relational concepts. His presence generally shows his favor and is for the benefit of his people; and his absence indicates his disfavor. But sometimes his presence was for judgment too. The people of God are his people precisely because he is favorably present with them. God's presence with his people bestows upon them a special position in relation to him, and a blessed future for them.

God is Spirit, and his presence is not limited to visible forms. Many times God's presence is simply indicated by divine speech. We have seen that God chose at times to reveal himself through theophanies, and these appearances related to humans in different ways. God's presence in Exodus comes in various ways, and his presence has particular significance. Finally, God revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. For the Christian, Christ dwells with us and within us by his Spirit and through him we have access to the Father (Eph.1:18).

The presence of God is redemptive. Israel was redeemed by the present God, Yahweh; and the Christian has been redeemed by the present God, the Lord Jesus Christ. As Evangelicals we believe that they are one and the same person, and the method of redemption is metaphorically equated in the New Testament. The Christian is empowered by the Holy Spirit and a new creation; two inseparable concepts that give us our identity. While Israel was redeemed as a nation, we are a redeemed people who are individually united in the Church of Jesus Christ; and in our local assemblies we are to maintain and reflect our unity by being a community. As Israel was a nation *for* the nations, so the Church is a community of witnesses to God's righteousness and rule for the nations.

Humans are to relate to God as Creator and as Redeemer, because they are accountable to him according to his creation and redemption (or re-creation)

principles. Accountability is meaningful only in an ethical context. Man relates to God by acts of obedience to his creation and redemption principles. The chief duty of the Church is to make known the available person, purpose and power of God.

God's loving expression is his availability for a relationship with man. His self-revelation and gifts are for our benefit. His creation and creative intentions are for our benefit. His redemption and redemptive intentions are for our benefit. More so, we are accountable for the imperative to perpetuate God's creation and redemption intentions. If they are expressions of love and intended to benefit, then they are ethical in nature. Our response to God and to creation at large must therefore also be ethical in nature.

Our concern in this dissertation is to realize the socio-ethical significance of the Presence in redemption for the people of God, and in particular for the Evangelical Church. Having explored the Exodus texts from a *synchronic* approach, we have used the final canonical Exodus-narrative of Presence through socio-rhetorical exegesis and theological reflection to derive socio-ethical principles for our contemporary application. These principles are applied for specific contemporary contexts and questions in order to posit ethical social proposals, social responsibility, and social action.

We are able to see how our Exodus pericopes were employed in the biblical Old and New Testaments. Their use in the Psalms, the Prophets and the New Testament reflected an authoritative theological interpretation of these Exodus texts for Evangelicals, merely because they are in the Bible. These Scriptural theological interpretations were a warrant for us to seek a theological interpretation of the canonical texts as the platform for socio-ethical interaction. Because we are so far removed temporarily, socio-ethical transfer from then to now was by no means cut-and-dried. Only through theological reflection are we able to derive socio-ethical principles for contemporary application, at least within an Evangelical Ecclesiology.

Presence is applied theologically under the categories *revelation*, *redemption* and *relationship*. We are able to show how the principles of revelation, redemption and relationship related God and his people in ways that gave them a special identity as a community that must respond in a special and particular way to God and within itself. The people had to be monotheistic. Their response had monotheistic, ethical implications and social implications.

Presence is also applied socially under the categories derived naturally from the Exodus narrative:

1. Israel's Self-Consciousness as a Community.
2. Yahweh's Presence and the Community's Redemption.
3. Yahweh's Agent in the Redemption of the Community.
4. Counter Forces to the Creation of the Redeemed Community.
5. Covenant and Redemption Undergirds Social Identity.
6. The Socio-ethical Response of the Redeemed Community.
7. Redemption as Social Dialogue.
8. Covenant as Societal Establishment.
9. Covenant and Societal Conflict.
10. Covenant and Societal Self-consciousness.

Each of these categories is discussed under the same sub-categories, namely, *revelation*, *redemption* and *relationship*. We are able to derive socio-ethical principles in this way; principles which could be applied in an Evangelical ecclesiology.

Indeed, the Church is the best social context in which these principles are to be applied, and within that context we are able to derive socio-ethical proposals. The Church is posited as a multiplicity of microcosmic communities, all related to God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We are able to make social proposals for the kind of social responsibilities and actions required within the church community.

These socio-ethical proposals must emanate from the social vision of the Church, which is theological and eschatological in nature.

The Church, as an eschatological community, must serve as an example and vision for society at large, recognizing that society at large also has a different and more complex make-up, and that socio-ethical transfer of Christian principles is not simplistically cut-and-dried. We have to find creative ways to translate the biblical imperative in a contemporary social context. This, we will conclude is only possible because we are able to apply it from and in a narratological context. We can however not simply use the same categories of revelation, redemption and relationship in a socio-ethical application.

Ethics in general and social ethics in particular needs to be considered according to categories that were naturally conducive to ethical discourse. But these categories are also to be integrated with the theological categories in such a way that does not strain the ethical discourse. Surprisingly, the ethical categories of *God* (theological), *man* (social/political) and *land* (economic) easily lends itself to be discussed with the sub-categories of revelation, redemption and relationship. In fact, while it is fairly easy to do so under the *theological* and *social/political* categories, it is not so easy to distinguish the sub-categories for discussion under *economy*. We are forced to blur the lines between revelation and redemption on the one hand, and between redemption and relationship on the other.

We can obviously not make proposals dealing with every socio-ethical issue. This is not our intention. We are, however, able to provide a socio-ethical vision for the Church, and thus, to a limited extent, for society at large. Because of our socio-ethical vision, it has become necessary for us to sketch the Church as an eschatological people which is a blessing to the world by its functioning in particular roles; as example (salt and light), evangelist, prophetic voice, teacher, agent, facilitator, negotiator, and partner.

As *example* the Church is meant to be a pattern for society. The Church, which finds its indicative and imperative values upon the biblical text, can be a blessed pattern to society. As *evangelist*, the Church alone has the message of redemption, and it needs to share it with society. The best way for society to change is through regeneration. Our first priority is to extend the Kingdom of God in this world through the message of Jesus Christ and then through our godly influence. As *prophetic voice*, the Church must make known God's will and ways. It is mainly a voice that speaks to issues of social justice, social responsibility and social reconstruction. Aspects of oppression, exploitation and other injustices must be condemned, and proposals for redress and reconstruction must be made. The Church must entrench democratic values and be the voice that calls for integrity and accountability. As *teacher*, the Church's first place of teaching must be on a theological plane. Theological awareness encourages moral and ethical awareness. In short, they can teach on a whole range of issues that encourages good relationship, both vertically and horizontally. The Church can train leaders of integrity. As *agent*, the Church can act in society on behalf of Government, business and other organizations who have projects that aim at Christian-likeminded outcomes. Conversely, they can also act as agent for the people and community interests. The Church must be the redemptive agent in society. As *facilitators*, the Church facilitates important co-operations; with Government, business and other organizations. The Church can facilitate socio-ethical debates, forums, workshops, economic pro-active and ecological and environmental projects. As *negotiators* and *partners*, the Church can act on behalf of the poor and the marginalized. The rich and the poor are to act according to the tenets of love and justice. The Church can help inculcate these tenets, and to teach tenets of good work-ethic. The Church must be a redeemed people with redemptive aims; all for the glory of their redeeming God.

The ten key terms:

1. Canonical Approach

2. Theological Reflection
3. Socio-rhetorical exegesis
4. Divine Presence
5. Exodus Redemptive Presence Narratives
6. Exodus Theology – Revelation
7. Exodus Theology – Redemption
8. Exodus Theology – Relationship
9. Exodus Ethics and Society
10. Exodus and the Church - Evangelicalism – Socio-ethical Application



TOPIC TITLE:

The Application of the Exodus Divine-Presence Narratives as a Biblical Socio-Ethical Paradigm for the Contemporary Redeemed.

PREFACE.

Israel, as the covenant people of God, have experienced their God in many different ways. He called them to be his people by means of promise. The whole process began with one man who was called from paganism, and who believed God. The promise made to Abram opened up possibilities of this people's manifold experiences of God; notably a people who experienced their God's presence.

Our concern in this dissertation is to consider this presence of God with his people in the book of Exodus. How did that presence come about? How did that presence express itself? How did they as a people relate to the presence? How did that presence influence their conditions and their identity? One thing is certain in a summary answer to these important questions, is that their indicative situation became the basis for their imperative response.

Our interest does not end with the Israelite experiences and responses of and to the presence of God. The Scriptures can only fulfill their role if it is translatable to our lives. For present-day believers there is an imperative to apply the principles of the Scriptures so that our relationship with the same God may be enhanced. This is by no means a new approach to the use of the Scriptures. New Testament believers so applied the Old Testament to their beliefs and actions. We too have to find ways to apply the Scriptures to our beliefs and practices. This present dissertation seeks to do this to some extent as will be seen from the title of the work.

1. Understanding the Title of the Work.

The substance of our study revolves around the matter of the divine presence in relation to God's people. God's people are identified as such by the fact that God has redeemed them. The redeemed are otherwise called believers. How does the

divine presence affect believers today? How do we translate the experiences of God's people in biblical history to God's people in the present? What effects did the divine presence then have on them; and what effects can we expect to have in these days? How are we to identify, both ourselves and our roles, with current society in the light of our claim to the divine presence?

The divine presence in relation to Israel as the ancient people of God is in this instance gleaned from the Exodus narratives. It is from this story of redemption that we seek to formulate a theology of presence. Because their theology of presence brought to them a particular response within their relationship with God, we are contending that our response, as people redeemed through Jesus Christ, to the divine presence must be ethical so that we may be "salt and light" in our present society.

The imperatives of the theology of presence are only expected from the people of God as it must always be dependant upon the fact of redemption and covenant (here we shall only consider the aspects of redemption). Presence and redemption are inextricably bound together. Both are acts of divine grace. God's grace through redemption is that which brings about the beginning of a new existence. This new existence is the essential indicative for the people of God. What we do must emanate from who we are. Who we are comes first. We are the redeemed of God.

Presence and holiness are also inextricably bound together. As the Israelites were, so we are a royal priesthood and a holy nation by virtue of the divine presence and our redemption (1Pt.2:9 *cf.* Ex.19:6). As the people of God we must always seek to propose the theology of divine presence as the motivation of beneficial change to secular society. The best way to do so is for us to be seen as an alternative and desirable community. This summarizes the essential imperative of God's people. Our relevance must be felt in the context of our geographical location and our cultural setting; how do we affect South African society?

To summarize: the divine presence must be the basis for a biblical socio-ethical theology of evangelical believers wherever they are; and for us, particularly as Evangelicals.

2. The Problem (Question).

Following the meaning of the topic title, the problem or question we are trying to solve is stated as follows:

What role does the divine presence in the Exodus narratives play in redeemed Israel's identity, and how may evangelical believers apply a biblical socio-ethical understanding within our contemporary context from them?

We must thus establish *an understanding of redeemed Israel's identity* as it relates to the divine presence. We know that that presence affected their redemption and their response to redemption, confirmed their covenantal relationship, and concretized their self-understanding as the people of God. How this was done is to be gleaned from specific Exodus presence-narratives.

An exegesis from each of these passages will help us develop *a theology of presence* from the Book of Exodus, but mainly from the first eighteen (redemption) chapters. Israel's theology of presence made them respond to God in a specific way. We need to see what *the socio-ethical response* of the Israelites was. This response was defined from a reaction to that presence as well as from specific imperatives that were given to them by the present God.

As *Christian* believers, we too must formulate a theology of presence from the Book of Exodus, and from that theology, a particular *biblical socio-ethical understanding*. How is this understanding to influence our interaction within *contemporary society*? The crux-question must therefore be: How may we apply the Exodus divine presence redemption narratives in a current church, and

particularly Evangelical context? The present writer speaks particularly from an Evangelical mindset, and more particularly as a Baptist. The Baptist understanding of church is thus the general view here posited.

Since the problem (question) gives our research the direction it needs, we may define our research objectives as follows:

What do we wish to research?

- Some of the narratological occurrences of God's Presence in Exodus
- How God's presence functions in these narratives with reference to Israel's self-understanding as God's people.
- How is the identity of Israel as a nation expressed with particular emphasis on their socio-ethical understanding?

What are the objectives of the research?

- To explore the primary narratological occurrences of divine presence in the redeeming texts (from chapters 1 – 19) in Exodus.
- To establish the human response to that Presence, both within the narrative and within Israel's faith reflected in the Psalms and Latter Prophets, and later the Church's faith reflected in the New Testament.
- To establish how this links with the biblical understanding of relationship and ethical imperative through a Theology of Presence.
- To derive an understanding of divine Presence from Exodus as it impacts upon Israelite social ethics.
- To see how the socio-ethical principles of the biblical text are to be applied to our contemporary Evangelical context.

3. **Purpose of the Title of the Work.**

Our current context is largely influenced by our current needs. The believing community needs to make a greater impact on secular society. The only

authoritative stance that can be made by the believing community is that the Scriptures are relevant and applicable to them. They must be seen as the community of God who takes seriously the theology of the Bible. Theology is the description of the main ideas of the theological content of Exodus. Certain theological truths are timeless and therefore ought to be applied practically.

Theology on the other hand is meaningless without the Presence of the authoritative and living God and is derived from the understanding of the present God. Authority must be vested in the person of God. How is this God present? The theology of Presence will validate (or invalidate) any so-called biblical socio-ethical framework. We therefore want to validate our socio-ethical framework with a theology of the divine presence.

Lastly, we seek to encourage the community of Christian believers to be the example of true community as they “practice the Presence” of God. A community with a constant sense of God’s presence will function as the “ideal” society. This is what the world must see in us; especially a morally deteriorating world. A morally deteriorating society must find their example in a community who lives in the presence of God, and in communion with the present God.

We would be remiss if we do not define what we mean by the presence of God. Firstly, from a dogmatic perspective, we understand that God is omnipresent. This we take as a presupposition, and will not set out to try and prove. Secondly, for the Israelite community that came out of Egypt, the Presence meant the manifestations initiated by God himself, which were acts of him revealing himself to them. These we seek to demonstrate from the Book of Exodus. Thirdly, for Evangelical Christian believers the presence of God is the presence of the Trinitarian God in the person of the Holy Spirit within the individual believer and corporately among them. This too we will demonstrate briefly from the New Testament from a more-or-less dogmatic approach, and for the purpose of creating “equivalence” between the redeemed of Israel and the redeemed of Jesus Christ. Finally, for the rest of

humanity, the presence of God is not direct, but mediated through the works of God in creation and through the redeemed people of God. They are able to see the invisible qualities of God by the things he created, so that all are without excuse (Rom. 1:19-20). This, too, we take as a matter of fact, without having to substantiate it further from the Scriptures.

We believe that this research will make the following contributions:

- It will present Old Testament Theology with a Socio-Ethical framework for Israel on the basis of their National Identity derived from the redeeming Exodus Divine Presence narratives, and
- It will propose a Socio-Ethical framework, derived from the Exodus Presence narratives, for a contemporary Evangelical setting.

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INTRODUCTION.

This introduction will also describe our particular *theoretical framework*. In this regard it is perhaps important to state at the outset that we consider ourselves theologically “conservative”. We hold that the Bible (Old and New Testament) is the Word of God, and that for us the whole concept of divine revelation is unavoidable when it comes to the Bible. We also believe in the possibility of “miracles” which are brought about by the living God through whatever agent he wills. The reason why we put the word in inverted commas is because we recognize that “miracle” is an inappropriate word to use with Hebraic thought, for no word in the Mesoretic text properly translates as “miracle” but rather as “signs” and “wonders” (Eakin 1977:475). That means that miracles have significance beyond themselves.

The claim for the inspiration and authority of Scripture is the claim for the uniqueness of the canonical context of the Church through which the Holy Spirit works. Klingbeil (2003:403) correctly observes, that, if the biblical text is only a collection of diverse ancient texts, as historical criticism posits, then it cannot claim an authority in terms of its content. However, if the biblical text began with revelation from a being outside our own system, then the issue of authority needs to be addressed from a different angle. We say that that angle is from a canonical context. The Scriptures of the Church function as the vehicle for God’s special communicating of himself to his church and the world. If the decision on canon were only historically conditioned, why should we be limited to them in our contemporary theological work? Canonization was chiefly an expression of faith in the whole process. (Childs 1970:104). We further believe that it exists in its final state as our Scriptures by the providence of God. Henry (1999:2:316) reminds us that it came about by faith and providence. He continues to say: Historical observation can neither demonstratively prove nor disprove the operative providence of God in history. Nor can it demonstratively certify that Jesus did or did not rise from the dead. Nor, for that matter, can the historical method indubitably establish that Jesus was crucified by Roman soldiers, or even that Caesar crossed

the Rubicon on some past momentous day, however “probable” it may be that he crossed the Rubicon routinely, if indeed he crossed it at all. Historical research is equally limited in investigating both biblical and secular claims about the past. Whether conducted by Cornelius Van Til or by Arnold Toynbee, historical investigation provides only provisional and not certain knowledge of the past.

Many believe that the exegetical task must chiefly be a “scientific” task. We recognize the need for uncovering the historical information, and agree with Le Roux (2007a:5) that more and more scholars experience an elusion of the true meaning and a feeling of disillusionment with the method that excludes historical information. While we deal with some historical-critical issues, we disagree with its basic presupposition that views history as a closed continuum, an unbroken series of causes and effects in which there is no room for transcendence (Ebeling 1963:79-97). In this instance we value Hasel’s (1991:198) observation. He believes that the method that prides itself on its scientific nature and objectivity turns out to be in the grip of its own dogmatic presuppositions and philosophical premises about the nature of history. Another dissenting voice is Miscall (1992:39) when he says about historical criticism “... the atomistic strategies that divided and subdivided the biblical texts into sources and their diverse parts and from the assumption that meaning lies in reference to an extra-textual historical reality.” No, we must therefore accept with Gorman (2009:12) that exegesis is both a science and an art, not forgetting its supernatural character too.

We, further, align ourselves also with Childs (1970:141) when he says that the historical critical method is an inadequate method for studying the Bible as the Scriptures of the Church because it does not work from the needed context. It is not to say for a moment that the critical method is incompatible with Christian faith, but when operating from its own chosen context, it is incapable of either raising or answering the full range of questions which the Church is constrained to direct to its Scriptures. The critical method proves to be inadequate because it sets up an iron curtain between the past and the present. Klingbeil (2003:403) concurs with

the conclusion that historical criticism tends to imprison the biblical text in the past without providing “objective” tools to uncover that past. Childs goes on to say that the historical critical method is seen to be inadequate for the theological task of exegesis from the evidence in the modern concept of biblical commentary. Exegesis as a theological discipline has been lost (1970:142). We will therefore attend to the text primarily as a theological text, being aware of the challenges of applying the appropriate theological task of biblical interpretation (Gorman 2007:117). Henry (1999:2:315) demonstrates the point: ‘The impossibility of establishing theological doctrines by historical method is not here disputed. No amount of historical inquiry can prove that Jesus is the Christ, or that the Hebrews rightly believed that Yahweh rescued them from Egypt. “It is hard to overemphasize the impossibility of obtaining *historical* evidence for the view that certain events are ‘the mighty acts of God’,” writes John Marsh (*The Fulness of Time*, p. 7)”’.

It must be emphatically stressed that there is a divine dimension in biblical history which the historical-critical method is unable to deal with. For this reason Old Testament scholarship is changing from a purely historical-critical methodology to one that focuses on bigger text-portions. Le Roux advises: “Een so ‘n moontlikheid (vir die studie van die Pentateug) is om voorlopig literêre-kritiese analiese te vermy en eerder op die groot vorm (Enneateug) en teksblokke (soos die aartsvaders en die uittoeg) te fokus. In die proses kan die pastorale waarde van die Pentateugkritiek ook beklemtoon word” (2005:27). More important than the historical-critical *method*, which is waning, is a historical understanding of the reality of the text (Le Roux 1994:201).

Our historical consideration is therefore mainly the history of the *narrative time*. We will try to weave into the history of the Israelite story the considerations of “the climate, the geography, the vegetation” etc. that Le Roux (2007b:992) mentions with respect to Renan. We agree that this kind of historical information endows the story with life and energy. This history, however, is **not** necessarily the history of

the time of narration (Groenewald 2007:120-121). We are concerned with the history in the narrative.

The canonical context allows the different layers the interaction that provides a holistic theological interpretation. The environment of this interpretation is the Protestant tradition (Jolley 1987:2). Childs illustrates that, though historically Old Testament law was often of a different age and was transmitted from much of the narrative tradition, the canonical approach is able to exploit it in theological interaction (1985:13). The canonical shape of a given text has a theological purpose and had a theological effect (Jolley 1987:36).

From a canonical context the question of *geschichte* or *historie* is settled, because the canonical approach views history from the perspective of Israel's faith-construal, so siding with *geschichte*. *Kerygmatic* and *salvation (heils-)* history also place themselves in the *geschichte* camp, but are often accused of having a too narrow view of history. Childs goes on to advise that although different dimensions of history are freely recognized, by focusing on Israel's historical role as the bearer of the traditions of faith, these two aspects of history (*geschichte* and *historie*) are held together in a subtle balance within the shape of the canon, and should not be threatened by some overarching theory of history (1985:16). Elsewhere Childs (1964:432-449) objects to a purely historical and descriptive approach; on account of its limiting nature.

When we speak about the stabilization of the Hebrew text, it must be understood that the stabilized Hebrew text of the Jewish community was only a consonantal text. When the Hebrew text of the Jewish community reached the point of stabilization in the first century AD, the term canonical text could be applied to it. That became the normative and authoritative form of Israel's sacred scripture. (Childs 1979:98-101).

It follows that the usual text critical method, which results in each successive generation of critics offering fresh suggestions regarding the form of the original text, is highly individualistic and it seems to be unaware of the enduring role of the canonical text and its authoritative function for ongoing faith communities. Childs reminds us that the effect of taking the canon seriously is to establish the level of the biblical literature in accordance with its historical stabilization by the Jewish community, and to seek to understand this received text in the light of its historical development (1979:106). Historian, Kevin Roy admits that whether or not Jamnia was that point, does not really matter because Judaism had already formulated a consensus canon, which Jamnia would only have “rubberstamped” (Roy 2010:n.p.).

In this regard, we have to admit that the Masoretic text, though not identical with the canonical text, was indeed the vehicle for its recovery. The actual task of recovering a text close to the first century proto-Masoretic text type is supported by the Qumran manuscripts. The present Masoretic text is developed from an earlier proto-Masoretic text which extended back into the pre-stabilization period (Childs 1979:100-103). The selection of the MT as the dominant tradition by rabbinic Judaism in the first century AD did not arise from an arbitrary, academic decision, as once postulated, but was rather the culmination of a long recessional history. Its choice as the canonical text was determined often by sociological factors and internal religious conflicts, and not by scholarly textual judgments.

According to Childs (1985:23ff), canonization¹ changed profane literature into sacred by rendering it qualitatively different from its origins because it was to address future generations with the reality of God. Even though we believe that it was sacred from its origins, the point is taken that the canon cannot be divorced from the idea of revelation, and that the term “revelation” reflects the concern to be open to the theological dimensions of the biblical canon. Revelation, through

¹ Childs (1979:52) sees the first step in the process as Josiah’s reform of 621 BC, reported in 2Kg.22, and the final stage as assigned to the decisions at the Council of Jamnia (c. AD.90).

creation, wisdom, history and verbally, is seen as the means of a self-disclosing God. God is not limited to any means of revelation, and the purpose of his revelation is to make himself known and to provide salvation or redemption for his creation (taking the “Kingdom of God” as the equivalent of salvation). God revealed himself in the real events of human life; therefore revelation and history go together (Childs 1970:42). Faith is the means of apprehending revelation. Canonization was chiefly an expression of faith in the whole process. Therefore the role of theological reflection is to derive a contemporary relevance.

It is the Old Testament’s faith in God that also opens the possibility of Christian interpretation, and thus relevance to ensuing ages in Christianity who accept the canon as their own. The theological process is the only means by which the will of God may be known; it cannot come through historical or literary solutions (Childs 1985:58f). From a canonical perspective, what the text meant and what it means are inseparably linked and both belong to the task of the interpretation of the Bible as Scripture. The canonical approach takes the unity of the Bible, and the relationship between the Old Testament and the New as more than just a theoretical concern (Childs 1970:26). The New Testament itself shows an unbroken sense of continuity between the God of Israel and the God worshipped by Christians. The Old Testament is used by the Apostles with no tension to develop their Christology.

We therefore *mainly* view our texts synchronically using its canonical underpinnings. Noth (1959:18) agrees with the thinking that theology is best explicated from the “final form”. Only the canonical form of the biblical text is normative for any Biblical Theology. Synchronic biblical analysis, according to Vervenne (1994:80-98), is not very common among German biblical scholars. Their purely diachronic methodology has at times lost the given text of Scripture in its analysis (*c.f.* Otto 2007:24). The purely historical referential reading is theologically inadequate as it reorders the text diachronically and in so doing misses the Old Testament’s unique message (Childs 1985:153). Canonical study

concerns itself with doing justice to the integrity of the text itself apart from diachronistic reconstruction (Childs 1970:74). Scripture must therefore be seen as a unity, which extends to the unity of Old and New Testament; but the Old Testament comes first.

We agree with Van Zyl *et al* (1979:72) that Exodus, as with the rest of the Old Testament, is kerygmatic history, i.e. history with a message, and is therefore also theological in nature. The ancient authors sought to influence rather than purely describe life of their time (Hopkins 1994:214). Even though it is kerygmatic or preaching history, it nevertheless remains history of events that actually took place. The harmony among the Pentateuchal writings will reflect the general sequence of events as they have happened in Israel's early history. The events are not imposed in order to merely serve as encouragements for later conditions of Israel. They were, for the most, real events that happened.

Though we are influenced constantly by our Christian mindset, we will attempt to draw and present our themes, motifs and concepts from the Old Testament itself. Old Testament theology must not, however, be Christianized (Childs 1985:9). The Old Testament is a literary work in its own right and should be interpreted as such (Vervenne 1994:92). For our present purpose, we will, however, always move from the Old Testament text where Christian beliefs are evident. The lines between the Old and New Testaments will be more blurred in the areas of interpretation and application. Old Testament theology is more than the "theology of the Hebrew Bible". The theology of the Old Testament implies the larger context of the Bible of which the New Testament is the other part. For the Christian there is and always must be a relationship between the two testaments.

Because we are using a thematic approach, we are unavoidably selective to some extent. The divine presence is however a primary motif in the Old Testament and in the Bible, and here we have found Terrien very helpful in formulating our theology of presence. Since our focus is on the Book of Exodus, Terrien's so-called

“aesthetic” aspect is given up in favor of the “ethical” aspect of his dialectical dynamic presented in the historical-covenantal materials of his book. We are considering only the ethical aspects, which fall in line with our present purpose anyway. Besides, the divine presence must be seen as a dynamic principle of coherence (Terrien 1978:5).

Our ethical interest must finally be applied to society, and we believe that there is, and must be, a mutual “flow” between religion and society. God’s people are his agents in this process. We agree with Le Roux (1998:304) when he says: “Godsdiens vorm ‘n integrale deel van die samelewing. Van die antieke gemeenskap was dit besonder waar. Godsdiens was alles-bepalend...Godsdiens kan nie los van gemeenskapkragte ... gesien word nie”. In addition to Le Roux’s normal process of historical development and possibility, we accept also that divine intervention, through spiritual revival, can make speedy societal change possible. God often uses the believing community to this end. We must forever hold on to the faith that the Present God can use what he has given us to affect our current society.

We recognize that there are some debates on the date of the exodus (between 1447 and 1225 B.C) and the issue of authorship. We do not need to make a decision on these debates, as using the canonical approach means that it does not influence our conclusions in our present discussion. It suffices to say that the exodus took place during the New Kingdom period in Egypt (Pfeiffer 1992:67), and that there is evidence of redaction in the Pentateuch.

The Development of the Topic.

We will consider selected pericopes from Exodus; four under the heading of *Presence and Redemption*. Each pericope will be developed according to a standardized format, namely, Text, Translation, Exegesis, and Theological

Reflection (also reflecting on the Old and New Testaments use of the pericope). We will, therefore, first translate the text under consideration, providing translation footnotes.

Exegesis includes the tasks of identifying the *genres* or literary types; describing some relevant *structural considerations*. Structural Considerations will include discussion on the pericope limit, a text outline, and linguistic, grammatical and rhetorical characteristics. The text outline will also be the outline for our commentary. The linguistic, grammatical and rhetorical characteristics will also be used in the commentary.

The *commentary*, giving linguistic, rhetorical, geographic and narrative historical information will explain the text. It is this rhetorical, geographic and historical information that will make the text “come alive” to us. This commentary will be the fields from which our theological reflections will be harvested.

The *theological reflection* will not consider the history of exegesis because, for us, only the biblical text is authoritative. Theological reflection is our recognition that exegesis is certainly not merely a historical and literary exercise. It needs to include a hermeneutical aspect. The characteristic Evangelical hermeneutic is one which understands that the Word of God spoken to his people many years ago may still be heard by his people today (Hays 1997:219). This hermeneutic of consent (Gorman 2009:143f) gives the Bible the benefit of the doubt as a sacred text. Even though this perspective is directly at odds with the historical-critical view that theological convictions should not guide biblical interpretation, it does not just take the Bible as a historical and/or literary document but also as a source of divine revelation, witnessing to God’s creative and salvific activity and thinking about God and about the world and humanity in the light of God. The principles of divine self-revelation and the universality of the church is the basis of our theological reflection (Gorman 2009:147).

The Scripture is part of God's self-revelation to his people. Theology therefore spans the gap in time, understanding that Scripture, though it was not written *to* us, was written *for* us. Theology is the framework from which to find the link between the distant (past) biblical historical context and our present day context. A theological reflection within a canonical context and reliance upon the Holy Spirit appropriates the Bible's message as a guide also for contemporary belief and behavior within the community of faith. Theological reflection enables the people of God to recognize the *missio Dei*, or mission of God, and to become partners with God in his agenda for this world.

After having developed the section under consideration (Redemption context of Exodus), we will attempt a *Theology of the Redemptive Presence*. The Theology of the Redemptive Presence will be a summary, in a more-or-less systematic way, of all the Theological Reflections of each of the four pericopes. The reflection will have social and ethical interests too. Theology is the basis of finding the link between the distant biblical historical context and the present context.

A *Socio-ethical Understanding* for application in the contemporary Evangelical context will be derived from the Theology of the Redemptive Presence. This chapter is concerned with the application of the Exodus redemptive texts in our contemporary context. This contemporary context will not be the general context, but the context of present day Evangelicalism.

The descriptive questions of the ethical evaluation of Old Testament texts must be based upon the historical, cultural and social realities of ancient Israel. The narrative must therefore be seen as that which informs us of these realities and from which we must derive the relevant portions for our contemporary ethical application. We are helped in our selection by seeing the selection applied by the rest of the Old Testament and by the New Testament as we have witnessed in the Theological Reflections of the Exodus texts. The very selection also provides us with the synchronic and canonical dimensions in our ethical application. The

normative questions must be asked in order to bring out the contemporary significance, allowing the Exodus texts to say what it says ‘warts and all’ (Wright 2004:445), and us refraining from mere spiritualized moralizing of the text.

We must acknowledge that we cannot be expected to construct a comprehensive ethical response for contemporary Christian life from the Redemptive Exodus Presence narratives. It seems therefore reasonable to propose a response specifically suited for an Evangelical context, since evangelicalism characteristically emphasizes the Christian message of redemption that leads to personal faith in God as a basis for moral and ethical living. Henry (1999:4:591) reminds us that “Evangelical commitment to the new birth involves also commitment to the new society—to preservation of human justice and order, and to fuller humanization of man’s fallen life through divine renewal and reorientation”. Holy character emanates from a personal relationship with the God of the Old Testament through Jesus Christ, who instituted the New Testament. The Old and New Testaments are, for us, accepted as both authoritative and normative for ethical prescription because of the reality of God and the reality of the story of his activity for his people.

Finally, even though we dedicate much space to exegesis, our interest is mainly Old Testament Theology, seeing this theology as a historical theological discipline (Hasel 1991:195). The canonical approach best allows such a discipline. We seek to discover and describe what the text meant in its historical context, as well as what it means in our current context. The biblical text is nevertheless that upon which we base our concepts. We will try to bridge the temporal gap as well as the gap between the historical investigation and the theological one through *life-related and existential* (Le Roux 1995:185-186) categories. The biblical writers were not merely historical witnesses, but perhaps more so, theological witnesses. Our general exegetical method is summarized below, which is a summary of Robbins (1996).



Exegesis, The Principles

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