

**THE WORD OF/FROM G-D  
IN GENESIS 1:1-2:4a AND GENESIS 2:4b-25**

How does G-D (the Hebrew/Jewish deity)  
speak to G-D's *covenanted* people and to other humans  
through the Hebrew texts of Genesis 1 and 2?  
Word of G-D and Revelation  
according to the Tanakh/Old Testament

A presentation by  
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during the course "The Bible and the Quran"  
at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago  
Time: 6:00-7:30pm Room: 202

Instructors:  
Ghulam-Haider Aasi (Visiting Lecturer in Islamic Studies)  
Harold Vogelaar (Resident Scholar in Muslim-Christian Relations)

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THE CLASH OF "REVELATIONS"

What happens when the "Word of God" of one group meets the "Word of God" from another group? What happens when "revelation" meets "revelation"? What happens when religious groups believe that their vision of the divine world has superseded, surpassed (and, therefore, made invalid), the vision of another group? Human history has shown that, usually, such a clash led to murder and extermination of the "non-believer."

When an ideology/religion gains political and military power the consequences for those who do not agree with the prevailing "myth" (*mythos*) are horrendous.

I gave a lecture once (April 23, 1995) and Paul Galloway (religion writer) quoted one sentence of my presentation in his article, "In closing, a final word about the Word," *Chicago Tribune* (Friday, February 9, 1996, Section 2, p.11): "Any ... religion or ideology which claims that it supercedes, replaces and invalidates another condemns itself by that very statement, as invalid for consideration by even one human being."

"When Myth meets myth."  
the collision is very real."

Stanislaw J., *Unkempt Thoughts*. Translated from the Polish by Jacek Galazka, Introduction by Clifton Fadiman. Minerva Press, 1967, 41.

THE WORD OF G-D AND REVELATION ACCORDING TO THE HEBREW POETS

The quickest way to gain an overview is, of course, to read, e.g., the following articles in some of the dictionaries. By the way, I like to read literature according to the date of publication because it gives me an immediate handle on the history of development of thought on a particular topic. Ideally, first, you would read the following and then we can have a discussion. So, in this spirit, I will say very little about the topic because you can inform yourself very easily by reading the following articles.

What is more important, I think, is to show you what I, as a biblical scholar, can report to you about the teachings in Genesis 1 and 2 in this very brief time. It, usually, takes me about 12 hours to speak about the basic meaning of Genesis 1. (See the bibliography on Genesis)

- 1962 "Revelation," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Volume 4 R-Z (1962) 54-58 (C.F.D.Moule)  
1962 "Word, The," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Volume 4 R-Z (1962) 868-872 (J.N.Sanders)  
1972 "Word," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Volume 16 Ur-Z (1972) 634-635 (Israel Abrahams)  
1972 "Revelation," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Volume 14 Red-SI (1972) 117-126 (Edward Lipinski, Jacob Joshua Ross, Lawrence V. Berman, Walter S. Wurzbarger)  
1976 "Revelation in History," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Supplementary Volume* (1976) 746-749 (J. Barr).  
1992 "Word of God," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Volume. 6 Si- Z (1992) 961-968 (T.E.Fretheim)

#### IS IT POSSIBLE FOR THE WORD OF GOD / REVELATION OF ONE GROUP TO ALSO BE RELEVANT FOR ANOTHER GROUP?

I think, that this is possible. It takes, e.g., courage, humility, a willing heart and mind, and a sense of the common experience of human beings during their very brief time between birth and death.

I have been asked to illustrate this by a very brief look at the so-called creation stories in the first two chapters in the Hebrew Bible.

#### Materials:

- Michel, W. L., "Genesis 1:1-2:4a. Hebrew Text and Translation." (LSTC, Feb. 5, 1996)  
Michel, W. L., Genesis 1:26-28. Hebrew Text and Translation." (LSTC, November 4, 1995)  
Michel, W. L., "Brief Meditation on Genesis 1:1-24a."  
Excerpts from Mc Curley, F. R. and J. Reuman, *Word and Witness. Understanding the Bible I*. Philadelphia, 1977, pag 176f.  
Michel, W. L., "Genesis 2:18-24. Text, Transliteration & Translation." September 24, 2001 (1968).

#### A BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY ON GENESIS

I would not dare to even say one word about Gen 1-11 unless I would have read, at least, Cassuto, Sarna, Wenham, Westermann.

Cassuto, U.,

- 1961- *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961-1964 (2 vols.). - written by a famous conservative Jewish scholar; explains all the Hebrew phrases in plain English; the Hebrew words are transliterated. I learned not to speak about any of the stories in Gen 1-11 without the information provided by Cassuto. BS 1235.3.C3.v1

Davidson, R.,

- 1969 *Genesis 1-11*. The Cambridge Bible Commentary, NRB. Cambridge: At the University, 1969. - a very good, basic introduction. BS 1235.3.D3. 1973

Gunkel, Herman,

- 1901 *Genesis*. Translated by Mark E. Biddle. Foreword by Ernest W. Nicholson. Mercer Library of Biblical Studies. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997 (1901). Translated, by arrangement with the original publisher, from the ninth printing (=third edition) of *Genesis*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977). FINALLY - this very important book should have been available in English in 1902. Biblical scholars need to be fluent in, at least, German and English. Other important modern languages are, e.g., French, Italian, Spanish, Modern Hebrew, etc.

Sarna, Nahum M.,

1970 *Understanding Genesis*. New York: Schocken, 1970 (1966). - for educated and interested adults, excellent as a basic introduction. BS 1235.3.S3

Sarna, Nahum M.,

1989 *Genesis*. The Traditional Hebrew Text with the *NewJPS* Translation. The JPS Torah Commentary. Philadelphia/New York/Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 5749/1989. - excellent, but some of the information available in his 1970 (1966) book is not repeated. So, both books need to be read.

Wenham, G. J.,

1987 *Genesis 1-15*. Word Biblical Commentary. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987. - excellent, this book *must* be read together with the books by Westermann, Cassuto, Sarna, etc.

Westermann, C.,

1984 *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (transl. by J. J. Scullion, S.J.). Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984 (1974). - excellent, a standard.

Zlotowitz, M. and Scherman, N.,

1977 *Bereishis/Genesis: A New Translation with a commentary anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources*. Vol. I (Genesis 1-11) Brooklyn, N. Y.: Mesorah, 1980 (1977). - this is a Jewish orthodox way of looking at Gen 1-11. What a treasure and joy. None (practically none) of the concerns in historical-critical commentaries muddle (ha!) this commentary. Christians usually deprive themselves of the vast and important insights on biblical texts by Jewish scholars of the past and present. Why?

## BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

Recently (Nov. 18, 2001) I gave a presentation on this topic in a Christian congregation. I add the cover sheet from my HANDOUT at this presentation. I will leave a full set of the HANDOUT with your instructors and if you are interested you may make a copy of any materials which interest you.

## TERMINOLOGY FOR THE HEBREW BIBLE

Jewish:

TANAKH - is an acronym for תּוֹרָה *tôrāh*, Torah, = "Teaching;" נְבִיאִים *nəbî'im*, Nevi'im, = Prophets; כְּתוּבִים *kəṭūbîm*, Kethuvim, = "Writings")

Christian:

Old Testament, as a basis of the New Testament. Most Christians think of the "Old" Testament as something obsolete and replaced by the "Godd News" in the New Testament. The term "Old Testament" is, basically, and an anti-Jewish statement.

Secular:

Hebrew Bible is an attempt to speak about the same literature without religious connotations.