

The Bible and Spirituality

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Exploratory Essays in Reading Scripture Spiritually

Edited by Andrew T. Lincoln
J. Gordon McConville
and Lloyd K. Pietersen



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THE BIBLE AND SPIRITUALITY

Exploratory Essays in Reading Scripture Spiritually

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by Sheona Beaumont

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
ACCS	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
ACNT	Augsburg Commentaries on the New Testament
AYB	Anchor Yale Bible
BCBC	Believers Church Bible Commentary
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZWN	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum: Series latina
CD	<i>Church Dogmatics</i>
DLNT	<i>Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments</i>
DOTPr	<i>Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets</i>
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HBT	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBQ	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
JES	<i>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</i>

Abbreviations

<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSNTSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSOTSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
<i>JSSCS</i>	<i>Journal of the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality</i>
<i>JTI</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Interpretation</i>
<i>LHBOTS</i>	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
<i>LNTS</i>	The Library of New Testament Studies
<i>NCCS</i>	New Covenant Commentary Series
<i>NewDocs</i>	<i>New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity</i>
<i>NIB</i>	<i>The New Interpreter's Bible</i>
<i>NIBCNT</i>	New International Biblical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NICNT</i>	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i>
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
<i>NIGTC</i>	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NTL</i>	New Testament Library
<i>OBS</i>	Oxford Bible Series
<i>OBT</i>	Overtures to Biblical Theology
<i>OTS</i>	Old Testament Studies
<i>PTMS</i>	Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>SBLDS</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
<i>SBLEJL</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and Its Literature
<i>SBLRBS</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SP</i>	Sacra pagina
<i>STAR</i>	Studies in Theology and Religion
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>THNTC</i>	Two Horizons New Testament Commentary Series
<i>TNTC</i>	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
<i>ThTo</i>	<i>Theology Today</i>
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
<i>USQR</i>	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
<i>VTSup</i>	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
<i>WBC</i>	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WUNT</i>	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>WW</i>	<i>Word and World</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

Introduction

A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS titled *The Bible and Spirituality* with a subtitle that speaks of “reading Scripture spiritually” is likely to produce a variety of expectations. It is important, then, at the outset, to be clear about what its contents are and what they are not. They do not constitute a study of how the Bible as a whole has functioned in the history of Christian spirituality or should function for contemporary Christians. Nor are they exercises in the kind of reading of Scripture that pays scant attention to critical study in order to be able to move immediately to application to one’s personal devotional life. Instead the essays attempt, from within the context of the academy, responsible readings of Scripture that have as a major focus the study of how particular texts might contribute to a spirituality in which individual and communal flourishing is a major feature.

The essays began as papers produced for an international symposium on the Bible and spirituality at the end of May 2012, hosted by the Centre for the Study of the Bible and Spirituality in the School of Humanities at the University of Gloucestershire, UK. An explanation of this context and occasion may help clarify the nature of the essays. The Centre itself, by bringing together biblical scholars and colleagues from other subject areas within the University who share an interest in spirituality, aims to foster and develop biblical scholarship in relation to spirituality, to facilitate cross-disciplinary scholarship, and to engage in critical and constructive dialogue with contemporary perspectives on spirituality about what is necessary for human flourishing. The Centre was awarded a research grant from Bible Society for a project that pursues these aims and that runs from 2011 to 2014.

At the time the Centre was launched we were aware not only of the general widespread interest in spirituality, where in some parts of Western culture it is seen as replacing institutional religion, but also that the subject had become both an academic discipline in its own right with professional societies, conferences, and journals and a subdiscipline in a variety

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of other scholarly fields.¹ In regard to biblical studies, we were also aware that, although the Christian tradition has always nurtured an emphasis on spirituality rooted in the Bible and its interpretation, few biblical scholars pursued their work by making connections with either this religious tradition or present-day interest in the broader phenomenon of spirituality. This situation has begun to change and one can now find more works in biblical studies that have the term *spirituality* in their titles. This has been due in no small part to the influence of the pioneering work of Professor Sandra Schneiders, who has advocated readings of Scripture that respect contemporary criteria of interpretation and yet at the same time reflect Scripture's role in mediating the experience of faith.²

There is not the space here to document and provide an assessment of how far work in biblical spirituality has progressed and how it relates to another approach that has seen a recent resurgence, namely, theological interpretation of Scripture. It will have to suffice to assert that academic work in biblical spirituality is still in its relatively early stages and that, while there are considerable overlaps between theological and spiritual interpretation, what makes the latter distinctive is its focus on the wisdom of lived experience and practice. Instead, what may be just as helpful for understanding the approach in this volume is a brief further clarification of how thinking about biblical spirituality has developed in the early stages of our own research project. From the outset the writings of three major figures and their definitions of spirituality have been most influential on the shape of the project. Naturally we drew on the work of Sandra Schneiders, who states that "spirituality as lived experience can be defined as conscious involvement in the project of life integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives." She then moves from the general to the particular by making clear that "when the horizon of ultimate value is the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ and communicated through his Holy Spirit, and the project of self-transcendence is the living of the paschal mystery within the context of the church community, the spirituality is specifically Christian and involves the person with God, others and all reality according to the understanding of these realities that is characteristic of Christian faith."³ We also soon discovered just how much there was to learn about spirituality as lived experience in the magisterial work by Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*, with its

1. K. Waaijman, "Spirituality—A Multi-faceted Phenomenon," surveyed work on spirituality in twelve different disciplines.

2. Cf. e.g., Schneiders, "*Written That You May Believe*"; "Biblical Spirituality."

3. Schneiders, "Christian Spirituality," 1.

complementary emphasis on transformation as the characteristic feature of this lived experience. For Waaijman the study of spirituality is a multidisciplinary enterprise that has as its object “the divine-human relational process as transformation.”⁴ Such transformation is operative on five levels, according to Waaijman: in creation, from non-being to being; in re-creation, from being mal-formed to being re-formed; in conformity to a particular model of transformation, say, Torah or Christ; in love and its intimacy; and in glory, a final, completely reciprocal and unhindered transformative relationship.⁵

While Waaijman claims that his use of the term *divine* need not be taken in an exclusively religious or theological sense,⁶ in thinking about contemporary dialogue with those who have an interest in a spirituality that does not necessarily include a transcendent source of reality, it was another magisterial work, that of the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, in his *Secular Age*, that proved particularly helpful. While ostensibly a tracing of the rise of the secular, his book is at the same time a rich description of what has happened to the spiritual over the last five hundred years of Western civilization, as it illuminates how both believers and unbelievers, preferably in dialogue, have to negotiate the common conditions of a secular age. For Taylor, what both have to negotiate, whether against a transcendent background or within an immanent framework, is the spiritual in the sense of the aspiration for a flourishing existence, which he depicts in terms of “fullness”: “Somewhere, in some activity, or condition, lies a fullness, a richness; that is, in that place (activity or condition), life is fuller, richer, deeper, more worthwhile, more admirable, more what it should be.”⁷ This generic notion of spirituality again has its more specific version within a Christian transcendent framework, and it lends itself to honest discussion and discovery of which perspective and lived experience can respond most profoundly to the aspirations for and dilemmas of human flourishing. It should be noted that the influence of these three thinkers has also made its mark on this volume in that its contributors all work within the parameters of the definitions of spirituality they have supplied and some of the essays offer their own nuancing of one or more of the definitions.

Another early discovery made by the Centre was the existence of two other major groups on the international scene doing research on the Bible and spirituality—one in South Africa with its centre at the University of the

4. Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 6, 312, 424.

5. *Ibid.*, 425–82.

6. *Ibid.*, 427–30.

7. Taylor, *Secular Age*, 5. For further discussion of the relevance of Taylor’s work, see Lincoln, “Spirituality in a Secular Age,” 61–80.

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Free State, Bloemfontein, and the other in the Titus Brandsma Institute at the University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands. This resulted in our Centre, again with financial support from Bible Society, hosting a symposium with representatives from the other two groups at the beginning of May 2010 in order to explore common interests. This was extremely worthwhile, as discussion of papers allowed both overlaps and divergences in our approaches to emerge and we were fortunate to have Kees Waaijman himself as one of the participants and to be able to engage with his encyclopaedic knowledge and profound wisdom. The papers given were revised for publication as a supplement to the journal *Acta Theologica*.⁸

When it came to organizing an international symposium as part of the present research project, we were keen to secure the participation of a broader group of mainstream practitioners of biblical exegesis, interpretation and theology, whose work included the goal of showing how the Bible can be transformative for living, even though some of them might not have explicitly labelled what they do as “spiritual reading.” This time we were extremely fortunate to obtain the participation of one of the other major influences on our work, Sandra Schneiders, and to engage with her about some of her more recent thinking. The papers for the symposium, which was held over three days, were distributed in advance to allow maximum time for discussion of each and for reflection on the occasion as a whole. There was a strong sense that we were all pursuing biblical spirituality at at least one of the levels that Schneiders outlines in her essay in this volume—the spirituality that produces the text, the spirituality in the text, and the spirituality that the text produces. At the same time there was enough diversity in approaches to ensure we were not short of convivial and rigorous questioning and debate. Some of the essays show the fruit of that stimulation in their revised forms. Schneiders’ essay also reminds us of the crucial role of the imagination and of aesthetics in spirituality, and at the symposium further stimulation was provided by the artwork by which we were surrounded. This was produced by Sheona Beaumont, a professional artist⁹ and a PhD student on the Centre’s research project, who on the first evening of the symposium also talked about her work on display. Her dissertation will be on biblical imagery in contemporary photographic art, and one of her pieces features on the cover for this volume.

The arrangement of the essays in their revised form here follows a rough canonical ordering of their texts or themes. This means that they begin, somewhat disturbingly, with Stephen Chapman’s reflections on

8. *The Spirit that Inspires: Perspectives on Biblical Spirituality*, edited by P. G. R. de Villiers and L. K. Pieterse, *Acta Theologica Supplementum* 15 (Bloemfontein, South Africa: University of the Free State Press, 2011).

9. See <http://www.shospace.co.uk>.

the Amalekite texts. Yet any spirituality that has its roots in the Bible will sooner or later need to confront questions about the nature of the God who is revealed there and with whom it claims to be in relationship. How do we read textual portrayals of God's violent side that sanctions Israel's eradication of its enemies? Chapman carefully lays out the evidence and presents some of the interpretative options for handling these texts in the context of how to respond to the presence of radical evil in our world. There follow two essays on Job, whose juxtaposition raises issues about the complex nature of spirituality. Walter Moberly looks at the initial presentation of Job's spirituality (his piety and flourishing), the suspicion raised about whether this is a spirituality that is only using fear of God for its own self-seeking ends, and how it fares when it is put to the test and no longer results in personal well-being. He goes on to argue that the later wisdom poem of Job 28 shows that the same fear of God that was operative when matters went well for Job is precisely what is needed when his life falls apart. Spiritual wisdom in the midst of incomprehensible tragedies consists in maintaining integrity and trust toward God. If Moberly focuses on the narrative presentation of Job and his patience, Susannah Ticciati complements this approach by her examination of the dialogue and Job's expressions of anger in his arguments with God. By focusing on Job's use of first- and second-person pronouns in comparison with the language of his friends, Ticciati proposes that Job eschews generalizations about suffering, refusing to give up on his irreducible identity in his particular inexplicable suffering, and that without his first-person angry complaint to God he would not have received the particular divine response that brings about his transformation. This proposal leads to reflections on the relation between traditional and irreducibly personal language about God within the dynamics of a genuinely transformative relationship. Gordon McConville also draws attention to first-person language, this time in relation to the Psalms where the "I" of the speaker draws the reader into imagining the life of the self before God. In reflecting on how the Psalms understand human flourishing, McConville examines their presentation of the person, that person's consciousness and its transformation. At the same time he indicates how the language of the Psalms has the capacity to transcend particular settings and to engage readers in their own unfinished project of formation, including for Christian readers conformity to the image of Christ.

Taking off from the injunction of one particular psalm to pray for the peace or well-being of Jerusalem (Ps 122), Ellen Davis offers reflections on the spiritual attraction and status of the city and its role both in Christian spirituality and interfaith engagement. Surveying Psalms, Prophets, and Luke-Acts, Davis finds a recurrent theme of lament over, compassion for,

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and commitment to Jerusalem and then makes the distinctive proposal, via discussion of Ephesians and four psalms, that a renewed Christian practice of singing about Zion with an awareness of global political realities can be a vehicle that enables Christians, alongside Jews and Muslims, to pray for the peace of the city. Barbara Green sees a spiritual reading as aiming to make visible characteristics of God and God's interaction with humans that believers need to ponder and practice. To this end she explores the quality of compassion in the book of Jeremiah in the context of whether and how the hearts of its various characters are changed. In particular, she asks how the prophet's ostensible failure to persuade Zedekiah of his option for survival might be seen as undergirded and overcome by divine and human compassion and as serving to catalyze compassion in readers. One reader of Jeremiah is the biblical character Daniel, and this enables Richard Briggs to pursue his study of the virtuous reader in terms of the sort of reader best placed to achieve spiritual insight and with specific reference to the portrayal of Daniel as a spiritual student of Scripture. After drawing out the nuances in the book of Daniel's characterization of its exemplar of wisdom, Briggs provides a close reading of Dan 9:1–4a, in which Daniel reads a prophecy from Jeremiah, perceives its significance, and is led to repentance and prayer. In the light of this he offers some important reflections about spiritual reading of Scripture.

Sandra Schneiders not only has pioneered work in the study of the Bible and spirituality but also has continually rethought its parameters in an attempt to move research forward. In her essay here she both provides the fruits of her reflections on what biblical spirituality entails and probes further how the encounter between readers and texts can be transformative within a Christian spirituality rooted in the resurrection of Christ. This takes her into a discussion of perception, the spiritual senses, believers' "sense of the faith," imagination, and corporeality that leads finally into reflections on the resurrection narratives as texts and their mediation of the experience of the risen Christ. Schneiders proposes that such texts are to be seen as "theopoetic" in the way that they imaginatively shape readers' experience of God and draw them into a transformative relationship with the Christ who is alive and present.

Spirituality in the popular mind is often thought to have a primarily otherworldly orientation. Michael Gorman tackles this perception head-on as he shows that the narration of even the most intense experiences of transcendence in the New Testament is related to a spirituality of life and mission within this world. He provides four worked examples—a brief analysis of the transfiguration accounts in the Synoptic Gospels, followed by more detailed readings of Paul's experience of the third heaven in 2 Cor

12, the exhortations to seek and set the mind on things above in Col 3, and the seer's vision of the heavenly throne room in Rev 4–5. Gorman indicates how in each case the text or its co-text highlights the implications of an encounter with the glorified Christ for this-worldly existence and summarizes the symbolic universe of New Testament spirituality as involving a pattern of glory/cruciformity/glory.

Stephen Barton's essay draws our attention to the role of the emotions in spirituality and in particular to the centrality of joy in the experience of the early Christian movement. After surveying some of the main features of joy and rejoicing in the Jewish Scriptures that were part of early Christians' inheritance, Barton turns to Luke-Acts and Paul's Letter to the Philippians for his exploration of what might be distinctive about articulations of joy in the New Testament. In the former, joy can be seen as the embodied delight resulting from discernment of and participation in the eschatological transformations of time, space, value, and persons consequent upon the coming of Christ and the Spirit. In the latter, Paul can be seen as offering a pedagogy in joy, where joy reflects an experience of spiritual and material partnership in the advance of the gospel that enables a distinct perspective on one's inhospitable social environment and is set against the vivid felt horizon of participation in the life of heaven. If spirituality is determined by one's ultimate value, Barton concludes by counting the ways in which joy expresses a sharing in the experience of that value understood as eschatological reality christologically defined and pneumatologically received.

By all accounts, not only joy but also love is essential to Christian spirituality. Pieter de Villiers investigates this spiritual quality in what at first sight does not appear to be among the more loving of Paul's communications—the Letter to the Galatians. While questioning whether, from our perspective, Paul always practises what he preaches, de Villiers traces how for the apostle love has its origin in the divine self-giving that brings about a personal participative response, in which Christ becomes a transforming and abiding presence in Paul's life. Christian existence is also shown to be a life of faith working through love, where love as the chief fruit of the Spirit paradoxically enables freedom to be both the fulfilment of the law and voluntary slavery to others and where it restores harmony in the midst of divisions.

With an eye on one of the research project's goals—dialogue between biblical perspectives on spirituality and those of contemporary culture—Andrew Lincoln attempts to see the spiritual wisdom of Colossians in its context in the ancient world as part of a broader discussion of spirituality as represented by the philosophical schools. Lincoln explores three common topics—cosmic spirituality, where alignment with the reality of the cosmos and its fullness is seen as essential for human well-being; the need to learn

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to die ahead of time if this present life is to be lived to the full; and the ascent to the world above in order to achieve perspective on the realities of earthly life. He proposes that Colossians engages some of the major aspirations for human flourishing of its day as it radically reconfigures and redirects them in the light of its own elaboration of the Pauline gospel of the crucified and risen Christ.

The volume began by relating spirituality to questions of violence and it ends similarly—this time with how spirituality might incorporate the violence that Christians may face as a result of their devotion to Christ. Lloyd Pietersen examines the spirituality of the Pastoral Epistles, particularly the way 2 Tim 3 gives expression to and has been received in a spirituality of persecution. After investigating the relationship of persecution to martyrdom, what can be known about persecution of Christians in the first century, and the invocation of the righteous sufferer of the Psalms, Pietersen turns to how 2 Tim 3:12 is handled in a variety of commentaries from the early centuries to more recent days. He finds a frequent softening of the notion of persecution to the general trials and afflictions Christians undergo and a lack of reflection on the type of spirituality required in the face of actual persecution. A striking exception, which, together with the first-century evidence, raises questions for present-day Christian spirituality, is the literature about the martyrdom of sixteenth-century Anabaptists in which references to 2 Tim 3 are particularly prominent in the narrations of lived experience and persecution is seen as a hallmark of discipleship.

While the essays found here are wide-ranging, they, of course, leave many areas and aspects of the Bible and spirituality to be probed further. These would include—to name but a few—different canonical texts, the relation between Old Testament and New Testament spiritualities, allegorizing in spiritual readings and the relation between contemporary and premodern spiritual readings, the role of gender in spiritual readings, the similarities and differences between theological interpretation and spiritual reading, and readings that contain more explicit interaction with the history of Christian spirituality and with contemporary perspectives on spirituality. Nevertheless, despite the exploratory and highly selective nature of these essays, it is hoped that collectively they demonstrate the importance and fruitfulness of spiritual interpretation for biblical studies and will provide stimulus for other scholars in their own explorations in this area.

Andrew Lincoln, Gordon McConville, and Lloyd Pietersen

1

Perpetual War *The Case of Amalek*

Stephen B. Chapman
Duke University

IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING September 11, 2001, no one in the United States (and perhaps the world) has been left untouched by the events of that day. Questions still remain—not only about what took place then and why, but also how America has chosen to respond. Because of America’s subsequent actions, the horror of that day has lengthened into a decade plus of war, a weakening of democratic decision-making at home, and an erosion of moral authority abroad. Whether Americans are safer continues to be debated.¹ A much asked question is therefore when or if the so-called “war on terror” *can* end—or whether this war has in fact become “perpetual,”² a necessary implicature of an insatiable need for fuels and raw materials at the expense of other nations, who have just as much need but more modest military budgets.³

The notion of perpetual war has a peculiar resonance within the Old Testament. Jewish tradition knows only two cases of what is called

1. For an official appraisal after the passage of a decade, see the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s report, “Implementing 9/11 Commission Recommendations.” The National Security Preparedness Group of the Bipartisan Policy Center simultaneously issued its own, more critical, “Tenth Anniversary Report Card.”

2. For descriptions and theories of “perpetual war,” see Aravamudan, “Introduction”; Robbins, *Perpetual War*. For explorations of increased militarization in contemporary American life, see Bacevich, *American Militarism*; Wellman, “Is War Normal?”

3. For penetrating reflections on the necessity of perpetual war for modern empires and how capitalism drives militarism, see Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*.

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“obligatory war” (*milḥemet miṣwâ*)—as opposed to “discretionary war” (*milḥemet rešût*) or war that may be prosecuted or not on the basis of reasoned deliberation and discerning God’s will.⁴ The two instances of obligatory war are: first, battle against the indigenous “seven nations” of Canaan, which is thought to remain theoretically in force but no longer be practicable;⁵ and, second, perpetual battle against “Amalek,” who continues to pose a genuine threat but is challenging to identify. It is this Amalekite tradition that I want to submit to renewed scrutiny in this essay. What are these Amalekite texts about? Is there any way to read them as Scripture in a manner that does not underwrite prejudice and promote genocide? How might these texts aid reflection about the reality of perpetual war in the contemporary world? There are four key texts: Exod 17:8–16; Num 14:39–45; Deut 25:17–19; and 1 Sam 15. I will briefly describe each of these texts in turn and then comment on their interpretation, both singly and in relationship with each other.⁶

In Exod 17 the people of Israel are moving through the wilderness, out of Egypt but not yet at the promised land. The first part of the chapter details internal quarreling within the community, the dissension arising from their lack of sufficient water. The people’s criticism ultimately targets Moses, who voices his concern to God: “What shall I do with this people? Before long they will be stoning me” (v. 4). The people also doubt God’s ability to care for them. But God arranges for Moses to locate water by striking a rock with his staff—the same staff with which he had parted the sea so that the Israelites could escape the Egyptian army (v. 5; cf. 14:16). In this way the motifs of staff and water recall the exodus even as they imply Israel’s need for a further deliverance.⁷

In the second half of Exod 17 the narrative describes another threat to Israel in the wilderness. This time the threat is external rather than internal: the Amalekites attack Israel at Rephidim. No reason for this attack is given or even implied by the text. But again Moses and his staff (v. 9) provide what is needed. Moses climbs a hill and raises his hands

4. Carmy, “Origin of Nations,” 64; Firestone, “Holy War,” 959–60.

5. Thus Maimonides; see Carmy, “Origin of Nations,” 65–66; Hunter, “(De)Nominating Amalek,” 103.

6. For significant studies, see Allister, “Amalekite Genocide”; Cohen, “Remembrance of Amalek”; Feldman, “Remember Amalek”; Langner, “Remembering Amalek”; Levenson, “Is There a Counterpart?”; Lipton, “Remembering Amalek”; Noort, “Josua und Amalek”; Robinson, “Israel and Amalek”; Rooze, *Amalek*; Rudavsky, “Defense of Tradition”; Schmitt, “Geschichte vom Sieg”; Schuil, *Amalek*; Severin-Kaiser, “Gedenken dessen”; Stump, “Problem of Evil”; Tamir, “Remember Amalek”; Tanner, *Amalek*.

7. Coats, *Exodus*, 142.

(v. 11), apparently holding the staff. As long as he is able to do so, the men of Israel, led by Joshua down below, gain the advantage in the battle. Moses' arms tire, however, and so Aaron and Hur, who have accompanied him up the mountainside, sit him down and support his hands on either side, enabling an Israelite victory. Once more, then, the chapter illustrates how God employs Moses for the purpose of protecting the Israelites. The mention of Moses' staff and arm recall when he used them before, during the crossing of the sea (Exod 14:16, 21, 26–27).⁸ This time Moses has needed the assistance of Joshua, Aaron, and Hur, but—just as in the previous story in this chapter—Moses and his staff represent and channel God's power. Only because of Moses' gestures on the hillside is Joshua eventually able to overcome the Amalekites. Even so, it is interesting that the Hebrew text describes Joshua's victory as “weakening” (*vhlš*) the Amalekites (Exod 17:13), not “defeating” them (as the NRSV has it). This “weakening” is still military in nature and apparently devastating, as the final phrase “by the sword” indicates (cf. Isa 14:12). But Israel's victory is oddly muted.

The major ethical difficulty comes at the conclusion of this battle account. God then tells Moses: “Write this as a remembrance [*zikkārôn*] in a book and make sure Joshua hears it: I will utterly erase the memory of Amalek from under heaven” (Exod 17:14). And so Moses builds an altar in response to what has transpired; he names the altar and explains it as meaning “the LORD will be at war with Amalek from generation to generation” (Exod 17:16). This is the verse in the Old Testament that immediately comes to mind in any discussion of perpetual war. What does it mean that God has apparently singled out one particular people for destruction? And why does God determine that this war will endure forever? Does this text really speak of divine genocide?

Numbers 14 is all the more important because it is frequently overlooked. Despite a divine warning not to approach the promised land through the territory belonging to the Amalekites and Canaanites (Num 14:25), and an additional Mosaic plea not to proceed (Num 14:41–43), the people make an ill-advised attempt to do so. They are cut down *ād-haḥōrmâ*, and while this expression most likely contains a place name,⁹ it is also possible that *ḥōrmâ* functions as some kind of modifier (= “to completion?”). The Hebrew root, at any rate, is the same as that of *ḥērem* or “the ban,” the ancient military practice entailing the killing of non-combatants. It is also unclear how Num 14 is to be read in relation to Exod 17. Perhaps at one time Num 14 represented a parallel tradition regarding an Israelite–Amalekite battle.

8. Fretheim, *Exodus*, 192.

9. Deut 1:44; Judg 1:17.

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However, its present placement in the pentateuchal narrative suggests that it depicts an inappropriate action by Israel—not only by attempting to enter the land prematurely but also in carrying out the divine enmity against Amalek set forth in Exod 17.

Deuteronomy 25 arguably makes the ethical challenge both better and worse. Deuteronomy emphasizes that responsibility for carrying out the divine judgment against Amalek belongs to every Israelite: “when the LORD your God gives you [sg.] rest from all your enemies around you in the land that LORD your God is giving you as a hereditary portion to possess, you [sg.] shall erase the memory of Amalek from under heaven; don’t forget!” (v. 19).¹⁰ The judgment against Amalek now becomes a commandment given to Israel, and not merely a description of enduring divine antagonism.

The Deuteronomy passage also offers information not included in Exodus. Amalek “did not fear God” (Deut 25:18). Amalek is said to have “happened upon” Israel (*√qrh*), a verb that underscores the unexpected nature of the attack. Moreover, Deuteronomy specifies that the attack occurred when Israel was “hungry and tired,” and that Amalek “cut off” (*√znb* Piel; cf. Josh 10:19) the rear of the Israelite line. The use of the root *√hšl* (Niphal) in this passage, apparently for something like “stragglers,” is a *hapax legomenon* and recalls the use of the similar root *√hlš* for Joshua’s “weakening” of Amalek in Exod 17:13.¹¹ Yet there is no “perpetual war” in Deuteronomy; its version of the command to “erase the memory” of Amalek is tied to Israel’s entry into the land. Curiously, however, the command is described as coming into force not during the process of Israel’s battle for the land but afterwards, when Israel has been given “rest” from its enemies all around. Deuteronomy makes it seem as if Israel is fully justified in despising the Amalekite attack, and simultaneously that the divine command is one of observance rather than vengeance: viz., when you are finally at peace, do not forget to recall just how great the threat was and how God brought you to safety. One important point to stress is that neither Exod 17 nor Deut 25 uses the term *hērem* to describe how God or Israel is to respond to the Amalekites.

1 Sam 15 plays an important role in the discussion precisely because it does depict a response of *hērem* to an Amalekite threat. At the outset

10. The book of Deuteronomy switches frequently between singular and plural, so that one cannot lay too much stress on the difference in number. Still, I think there is a nuance to the use of the singular in this passage—similar to that within the Ten Commandments (Deut 5), in which the singular is used even though a group is being addressed.

11. Some interpreters (e.g., Cassuto) have suggested the possibility here of intentional wordplay between the two passages; in Deut 25 the term *hannehēšālīm* seems somewhat parallel to the phrase *‘āyēp wēyāgēa’* or “faint and weary.” For discussion, see Houtman, *Exodus*, 2:384–85; Novick, “Amaleq’s Victims,” 611–15.

of this chapter (15:2–3) the prophet Samuel reports God’s intention to punish the Amalekites:

Thus says the LORD of hosts, “I will punish the Amalekites for what they did in opposing the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt. Now go and attack Amalek, and proscribe [NJPS, \sqrt{hrm} Hiphil; NRSV: “utterly destroy”] all that they have; do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.

Saul engages the Amalekites victoriously, but he does not do what he has been told. He spares Agag, the Amalekite king, as well as the best of the livestock and “all that was valuable” (15:9). Instead, Saul and the people only destroy what is “despised and worthless.”¹² When challenged by Samuel, Saul makes excuses. Although the sincerity of these excuses is much debated exegetically,¹³ Saul’s patent disobedience is the last straw for Samuel and God, resulting in their rejection of his kingship.

Two points bear further mention: first, Samuel apparently rectifies Saul’s omission by butchering Agag before the altar of the LORD. It must be acknowledged that the particular verb at issue in this action, often translated “hew” ($\sqrt{šsp}$, Piel; NRSV: “Samuel hewed Agag in pieces . . .”; NJPS: “cut down”) is difficult and otherwise unknown.¹⁴ But Samuel’s preceding comment makes Agag’s death likely: “As your sword has made women childless, so your mother shall be childless among women” (15:33). Second, the beginning of the chapter makes an explicit reference to the Amalekite attack upon Israel at the time of the exodus and enjoins *hērem* as the appropriate response. Forms of the root \sqrt{hrm} are used eight times throughout 1 Sam 15. Thus 1 Sam 15 appears to depict the very action warranted and commanded in Exod 17 and Deut 25. The commentary literature consistently construes the relationship between the three texts in this fashion. According to this commonly held perspective, both Exod 17 and Deut 25 command genocide, and 1 Sam 15 enacts it.

The moral problem emerging from this line of interpretation has been particularly acute within Judaism, since the stipulations of Deut 25 have secured a place within the 613 traditional religious laws (or *mitzvot*) of the Pentateuch, and since all of these passages form a regular part of the

12. Also in 1 Sam 15:9, the phrase is syntactically difficult; this translation is based on the Greek text of Vaticanus. See McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 262.

13. For a reading sympathetic to Saul, see Gunn, *King Saul*, 70–75.

14. However, the root $\sqrt{šs p}$ does find attestation in post-biblical Hebrew, with the meaning “sever” or “dismember.”

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synagogue lectionary.¹⁵ In fact the synagogue lectionary already moves in an interpretive and apologetic direction, assigning Deut 25 and 1 Sam 15 for the Sabbath before Purim. Purim remembers the story told in Esther, and the villain of Esther is “Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite” (Esth 3:1). “Agagite” appears to refer to Agag, the Amalekite king whom Saul neglects to kill. So by a kind of transitive property of exegesis, one gains hermeneutical guidance for 1 Samuel from the book of Esther: viz., this is why it is in fact necessary for there to be perpetual war against Amalek, and in turn why Saul was wrong to relax the stricture, because Esther shows us only too well what these people are like when they get the chance.

Yet the really striking thing about traditional Jewish interpretation of the Amalekite texts is how seriously they are perceived to contravene Judaism’s core humanitarian values.¹⁶ Jewish tradition attempts to meet the challenge of these texts largely by moving in two directions: one realistic and one symbolic.¹⁷ The realistic move searches for some reason or combination of reasons to fault the Amalekites and defend God’s judgment against them. The symbolic reading extends the divine antagonism of these passages to other people, nations, or political forces that set themselves up against God, especially those that intend the destruction of the Jewish people. In this way the label “Amalek” is still used today as a characterization of antisemites and a justification for religiously based war, both spiritual and physical. At the same time, the prominence of these texts in the Jewish lectionary has stimulated searching moral reflection and generated many attempts to meet the ethical challenge of these texts while also retaining them as authoritative Scripture.

I find myself wondering whether the absence of the Amalekite texts from the Christian lectionary has by contrast contributed to a lack of resources within the church to engage the issue of perpetual war.¹⁸ There was a time when these texts were very well known in Christianity; the story of Moses raising his arms is already treated in the Letter of Barnabas (12:2–3, 8) as a typological prefiguration of Jesus on the cross. Subsequent early church theologians ring the changes on the various features of the story in

15. Garber, “Amalek,” 147, 152.

16. For further wrestling with Judaism’s tradition of humanitarianism more broadly, particularly in light of contemporary political events in the Middle East, see Carmy, “Origin of Nations”; Eisen, *Peace and Violence*; Garber and Zuckerman, *Double Takes*; Leibowitz, *Judaism*; Schiffmann and Wolowelsky, *War and Peace*; Sprinzak, *Israel’s Radical Right*.

17. Sagi, “Punishment of Amalek.”

18. On the selectivity of the Revised Common Lectionary when it comes to biblical accounts of violence and warfare, see Jenkins, *Laying Down*, 201–8. As he notes, the Amalek texts do not appear at all.

figural terms, noting especially the similarity between the name of Joshua and that of Jesus (they are in fact identical in Greek):

When the people waged war with Amalek, and the son of Nave, Jesus by name, led the fight, Moses himself prayed to God, stretching out both hands, and Aaron supported them the whole day. . . . For if he gave up any part of this sign, which was an imitation of the Cross, the people were beaten, but if he remained in this form Amalek was defeated, and he who prevailed, prevailed by the Cross. For it was not because Moses so prayed that the people were strong, but because while one who bore the name of Jesus was in the forefront of the battle, he himself made the sign of the Cross.¹⁹

As is already evident, sometimes this typology moved in an overtly supersessionistic direction, in which Joshua, as a type of Christ, is viewed as accomplishing what Moses was unable to do. For example, Irenaeus describes how “those who believed in him were put in possession of the heritage not by Moses, but by Jesus, who delivered us from Amalek and brings us to the Kingdom of the Father.”²⁰ But the typology could also be employed without this same supersessionistic move. Justin, for example, treats the Amalek episode in Exodus as descriptive of

the two advents of Christ . . . symbolically announced and told beforehand by what Moses and Joshua did. For the one of them, stretching out his hands, remained till evening on the hill, his hands being supported, and this reveals a type of nothing else than the Cross: the other, whose name was altered to Jesus, led the fight, and Israel conquered. Now this took place in both these holy men and prophets of God, that you may perceive how one of them could not bear up both the mysteries: I mean the type of the Cross and the type of the Name. For this is, was, and shall be, the strength of him alone, whose name every power dreads.²¹

In this instance Jesus still completes what neither Moses nor Joshua could fully accomplish, but both Moses and Joshua nevertheless partake in the reality of Christ and Christ’s work in the world.

Further reflecting in this vein, Origen develops his own interpretation of Exod 17 as an illustration of Phil 2:9–11:

19. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 90.4–5. For convenience I cite this patristic passage and those following from the illuminating treatment found in Daniélou, *Shadows*, beginning at 233.

20. Irenaeus, *Demonstration*, 40, as cited in Daniélou, *Shadows*, 237.

21. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 111.2, as cited in Daniélou, *Shadows*, 235.

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God has given to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ a name which is above every name. That is why, at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth. . . . We meet the name of Jesus for the first time when we see him as head of the army. From this first acquaintance with the name of Jesus I learn the mystery of its symbolism: Jesus is the leader of the army.²²

What all of these Christian interpretations share, in addition to their basic typological impulse, is a symbolic understanding of Amalek as a representation of evil, and as such they possess common ground with the symbolic stream of Jewish interpretation.

With the advent of modernity this figural dimension of Christian interpretation was of course largely lost, which intensified efforts to find more realistic solutions—to the extent that the Amalekite texts were remembered at all. For example, some historical-critical scholars have postulated that Israel had likely already tangled with Amalek in the wilderness (e.g., Fritz) and that disputes over pastures and springs would have been common occurrences (e.g., Fensham).²³ But for all the apologetic speculation along these lines, other interpreters have countered with readings exacerbating Israel's own culpability. Already in the eighteenth century Reimarus treated Amalek as the victim of the story: the Amalekites were only trying to defend their territory against “the kind of thieving people who did not observe human rights and sought for themselves a dwelling place by force.”²⁴ More recently Alastair Hunter has also fingered Israel as the guilty party: “even in the Bible's own terms the story is of a vast army of people making incursions into a territory which is not theirs and no doubt making huge demands on the economic resources of a region not famous for agricultural surpluses. The Amalekites' *defence* of their *home territory* is hardly surprising . . .”²⁵

No wonder, then, that several recent publications have taken up the moral dilemmas presented by the Old Testament with renewed vigor, particularly with regard to the question of genocide. Paul Anderson compares genocide to the teaching of Jesus (some comparison!) and unsurprisingly finds Jesus preferable, leading Anderson to conclude that one

22. Origen, *Homilies on Exodus*, 1.1, 3, as cited in Daniélou, *Shadows*, 239. As Daniélou observes, Origen is noticing that the name Joshua first appears in the Bible at Exod 17:9.

23. For these and other examples, see Houtman, *Exodus*, 2:377.

24. German original: “ein solch räubrisches Volk das kein Völkerrecht achtete, und sich durch Gewalt einen Wohnsitz suchte,” as reproduced in Houtman, *Exodus*, 2:377 n. 20.

25. Hunter, “(De)Nominating,” 99. Hunter's emphasis.

must “recognize the anthropomorphic projections involved in the narrative traditions” of both testaments.²⁶ Eric Seibert goes even further, arguing for a thoroughgoing distinction between the “textual God” and the “real God.”²⁷ And Thom Stark draws the logical conclusion to this line of thinking:

[M]y contention is that God never did command the Israelites to slaughter entire peoples wholesale. These accounts reflect a standard imperialistic ideology that Israel shared with many of its ancient neighbors, and I read them as products of ancient culture, not as products of pure divine revelation. Therefore, my claim is not that I know better than God, but that, by God’s design, we all know better than those who wrongly killed women and children in God’s name.²⁸

Here is accordingly the apparent shape of the interpretive dilemma at present: either affirming that the Bible commands genocide or dismissing certain portions of the Old Testament as inaccurate representations of God’s character and will. Are there really no other options? Let us turn to the texts again.

With regard to Exod 17, some of its literary features already suggest a move in the direction of the symbolic interpretation well represented in Judaism and Christianity, particularly in premodern interpretation. For example, I have earlier called attention to the presence of Moses’ staff, which not only links the Amalek story with the story of Massa and Meribah, but also relates back to Israel’s crossing of the sea during the exodus. To my mind this detail alone provides strong evidence in favor of understanding Amalek as “Pharaoh redivivus,” as Cornelis Houtman has argued.²⁹

As Benno Jacob has also perceptively noted, “Amalek” is almost always called “Amalek” in these texts, and not “the children of Amalek” or “the Amalekites.”³⁰ That rhetorical focus on the eponymous founder of the people group moves in the direction of a symbolic understanding, too. Furthermore, it is important to recall that human warfare is not actually commanded in Exod 17. Instead, Moses says that *God* will be at war with Amalek from generation to generation. This theocentric focus additionally

26. Anderson, “Genocide,” 51.

27. Seibert, *Divine Behavior*, 169–81.

28. Stark, *Human Faces*, 150. Cf. Morrision, “Ethical Criticism,” 133.

29. Houtman, *Exodus*, 2:377: “[I]t would seem that according to the writer it was not Amalek’s fear of competition or violation of its territory that provoked the attack. He saw Amalek as the antagonist of the fulfillment of the promises to the patriarchs. Amalek is Pharaoh redivivus, even more, he is *the enemy*.” (Houtman’s emphasis.)

30. Jacob, *Exodus*, 505–6.

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reinforces a symbolic reading.³¹ Then one notes the description of the battle itself, which pays more attention to Moses' gestures than to the physical fighting. Indeed, the point of the story would seem to be that his gestures, however they are understood (magic? prayer? visual encouragement to the troops?), are more important than the size of his army or his tactics. In other words, the story actually turns on the superiority of piety over power, of gestures over weapons, of arms over armaments.

The divine judgment against Amalek is also highly metaphorical. God does *not* say that he will “kill” Amalekites. In Exodus God says: “I will utterly erase the memory of Amalek from under heaven” (Exod 17:14). In Deuteronomy the Israelites are similarly told “you shall erase the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven” (Deut 25:19). Both these texts use the verb $\sqrt{m\dot{h}h}$, which means to rinse off, wipe off, erase.³² But what do these texts mean by “erasing a memory”?³³ To be sure, in Exodus the concluding statement of chapter 17 mentions “war” (*milḥamâ*), and an account of an actual battle with the Amalekites precedes this divine judgment. So the verb in this context probably does mean something like “obliterate,” but still only indirectly and figuratively.³⁴

31. As does the LXX rendering of Exod 17:16: “The war of the Lord shall be with Amalek from generation to generation with a secret power.” The phrase “with a secret power” is not found in the MT.

32. The NRSV and the NJPS translations obscure the metaphor by translating “blot out,” an English verb that they also sometimes use to translate verbs of killing; e.g., in Exod 23:23 for $\sqrt{k\dot{h}d}$ Hiphil, “annihilate.”

33. Stern, *Hērem*, 177–78, argues that the biblical writers have substituted “memory” for “name,” given the established idiom “erase the name” (Akkadian: *šuma pašātu*) within the ancient Near East. According to Stern, this substitution occurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, and thus ought to be reflected in modern translations: “the translation ‘memory’ misrepresents the idiom and obscures its background and true meaning.” For Stern a command “not to forget to erase the memory” simply makes no sense. Stern understands the command instead to enjoin literal destruction and death. It should be noted, however, that Stern argues this point on the basis of an originalist hermeneutic: “The writers of Deut 25:19 and Exod 17:14 were not interested in memory but in Amalek’s existence as a fighting force.” By contrast I have no interest in guessing at an ancient writer’s intention, particularly when such an intention is framed in opposition to the biblical texts we now have. I prefer in this instance to view the texts as making a more sophisticated theological point. The relationship between “memory” and existence is obviously a close one anyway; not to be remembered is sometimes clearly equivalent to destruction (e.g., Ezek 21:37; 25:10 [both references regarding the Ammonites]). “Memory” and “name” function as synonyms in Exod 3:15; Isa 26:8; Hos 12:6 [5]; Pss 102:13 [12]; 135:13; Prov 10:7; Job 18:17.

34. To the extent that some historical-critical scholars have viewed Exod 17:14–16 as a secondary addition to the narrative in 17:8–13, then the secondary addition would also appear to push in the direction of a more symbolic understanding; see Houtman, *Exodus*, 2:373–78. MacDonald, “Anticipations,” 16, points out that $\sqrt{m\dot{h}h}$ and *sēper*

The Amalekite verses in Deuteronomy come immediately after Deut 25:16, which concludes a discussion of dishonest weights by stating how “all who do such things, all who act dishonestly, are abhorrent to the LORD.”³⁵ Within the context of this chapter, Amalek then seems to provide yet another example of abhorrent behavior. Some kind of comparison internal to the chapter is also suggested by the use of $\sqrt{m\dot{h}h}$ in the discussion of levirate marriage in verses 5–10.³⁶ In these verses $\sqrt{m\dot{h}h}$ describes the erasure of a man’s name should he die without a son. Similarly, the appeal in verses 17–19 is primarily to memory rather than killing: “remember,” the passage begins; “don’t forget,” it concludes.³⁷

The same Hebrew verb $\sqrt{m\dot{h}h}$ is used three times in the Flood account of Genesis (6:7; 7:4, 23), a context that clearly implies killing. But in these instances the verb is used without reference to *zēker*, “memory.” The primary use of the verb $\sqrt{m\dot{h}h}$ in the Old Testament is actually with reference to writing, not battle or killing. The two conceptions “writing down” and “wiping off” are related to each other as antonyms, both used in relation to texts (Num 5:23). What is being commanded in Exod 17 and Deut 25 is therefore suggestive of *textual* obliteration, but such erasure properly requires a written text. In order for Amalek to be erased, it first needs to be written down. There is thus a neat little irony at the center of this divine judgment on Amalek: Amalek must be remembered in order to be forgotten—or is it to be forgotten in order to be remembered? Either way, the implication is that such evil cannot finally be eliminated but only repeatedly renounced, and that such renunciation properly occurs literarily.

This viewpoint is not some overly clever, modern scholarly construal but in fact a living aspect of Jewish religious practice. At the beginning of his daily work, a Jewish scribe even today will write the name Amalek on a scrap-piece of paper and then draw several lines through the word, eliminating it.³⁸ Preserved in this action is not only the paradox of “remembering to forget,” but also the close relationship between the Amalek story and text production. The book of Esther and the festival of Purim might be taken as another combined example of how forgetting ironically requires remembering, although

appear together in Exod 32:31 as well.

35. Abarbanel, *Commentary on the Torah*, on Deut 25:17.

36. So, too, Abarbanel, *Commentary*, on Deut 25:17; cf. Lipton, “Remembering,” 150–51.

37. Robinson, “Israel,” 18, offers the cogent point that this emphasis on memory may also stem from the absence of living Amalekites at the time the texts were put into their present form. 1 Chr 4:43 suggests that the Amalekites may have disappeared as a distinct people group during the reign of Hezekiah.

38. Lipton, “Remembering,” 153.

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an example focused more on textual use than textual production. Hamaan, descendant of Amalek, is remembered by name during Purim celebrations for the purpose of being denounced, that is, actively “forgotten.”³⁹

All of these features thus lend strength to a symbolic reading of the pentateuchal Amalekite texts. However, there is another feature that may provide help if one reads the story more realistically, something already mentioned: namely, that the texts provide no explicit explanation for Amalek’s attack. Countless interpreters, Jewish and Christian, have attempted to fill in that silence in the text, but it seems to me that the silence is crucially important in its own right. In other words, the Amalekite attack may have been perceived as particularly egregious precisely because there was no cause for it. The Israelites were apparently not in fact seeking to enter Amalekite territory, nor were the Amalekites defending it.⁴⁰ Moreover, as Isaac Abarbanel already pointed out in the fifteenth century, Israel did not possess any land of its own yet, so the Amalekites could not have been motivated by territorial expansion.⁴¹ They simply attacked to attack, without cause and without warning. The abruptness of this story’s introduction into the Exodus narrative thus mirrors the abruptness of the Amalekite incursion, a feature which is then emphasized by Deut 25’s use of *√qrh*. In the end this aspect of the tradition may well be the main reason why Amalek was considered deserving of especially harsh punishment.⁴²

Of course, the entirely reasonable response to this suggestion, or to any suggestion that the Amalekites may have had it coming, is that no act, however despicable, justifies the slaughter of “man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey” (1 Sam 15:3). But this is where the relationship between 1 Sam 15 and the Amalekite texts also needs to be questioned rather than assumed. Because 1 Sam 15 explicitly characterizes God’s command to Saul as punishment for the Amalekite attack on Israel during the exodus, interpreters have almost always used 1 Sam 15 in order to explain the meaning of Exod 17 and/or Deut 25, both of which, as we have seen, are actually somewhat vague. In a way, the move to read these passages together functions as a kind of “intertextual” or “canonical” interpretive

39. As Tanner, *Amalek*, 102–3, has suggested, there are considerable resources here for reflecting on post-traumatic stress disorder, particularly in treating soldiers returning from war. Traumatic memories cannot simply be blocked or ignored; healing involves handling memories productively, not ignoring or suppressing them. Cf. Siegel, “Zakhor.”

40. Jacob, *Exodus*, 501–2. Numbers 14 is the exception, and in that case Israel is unsuccessful.

41. Abarbanel, *Commentary*, on Deut 25:17. Cf. Sagi, “Punishment,” 325.

42. MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone*, 94–95, relates Amalek’s violation to Deuteronomy’s broader emphasis on hospitality toward Israel.