Exile, Diaspora, and Old Testament Theology

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INTRODUCTION

A virtual, online exhibit (mounted in reality during 2002) provides stimulating resources for thinking about the nature of 'exile'.[1] When were people first thrust from their homes, and forced to live in a foreign land? One biblical answer would give us the story of Adam and Eve. The exhibit explores three different moments of Jewish diaspora set alongside the African-American diaspora, and demonstrates how those living deported lives attempt to map 'home' onto their new place of abode. What begins as alien and feared is in some measure domesticated. But it is also noteworthy that while the exhibit's primary focus is on *diaspora*, the exhibit bears the title 'Exodus and Exile', with the term 'diaspora' relegated to the subheading. This neatly introduces the issue addressed in this essay: the need to coax 'diaspora' out of the shadow of 'exile'.

The long reach of exile in the literature of the OT can be seen in many ways.[2] The threat of 'exile' appears in anticipation while Israel and Judah have a national life, indeed at the very zenith of that life—in the Judaean context, at any rate: if they should sin, one outcome is that God would be angry, 'and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy' (1 Kgs 8:46). Even further back, before Israel arrives in the land, the covenant curses culminate in the ultimate disaster of being removed from the land they do not yet possess (Lev. 26:33; Deut. 28:64). Pushing forward, the importance of exile looms even larger.[3] Since

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1 Osher Map Library, 'Exodus and Exile: The Spaces of Diaspora', University of Southern Maine. http://bit.ly/Osher10 (accessed 9 May 2010).

2 Broadly on this point see J. G. McConville, 'Faces of Exile in Old Testament Historiography', in *After the Exile: Essays in Honour of Rex Mason*, ed. by John Barton and David J. Reimer (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), pp. 27-44.

3 On the historical aspects of the exile, see (from many possibilities) R. Albertz, 'Die Exilszeit als Ernstfall für eine historische Rekonstruktion ohne biblische Texte: die neubabylonishen Königsinschriften als "Primärquelle"', in *Leading Captivity Captive:'The Exile' as History and Ideology*, ed. by Lester L. Grabbe (JSOTSup, 278; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1998), pp. 22-39, Hans M. Barstad, 'After the Myth of the "Empty Land": Major Challenges in the Study of Neo-Babylonian Judah', in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian*

the pioneering work of Martin Noth, biblical scholars have identified the exilic age and beyond as the locus for much (most?) of the literary activity that produced the Hebrew Bible as we have it today.

The net effect is to see vast swathes of the HB/OT reverberating with 'exile', whether Babylonian or not. No wonder, then, that theological reflection on these texts as scripture gives a prominent place to 'exile', and its symbolic value looms large in the Christian tradition.[4] Scripture itself gives warrant for such prominence—indeed, it requires it. Northrop Frye, for instance, eloquently described the way in which exile participates in the great 'narrative myth', a pattern of apostasy and restoration running throughout the Bible. In Frye's selective elucidation of this pattern, the Babylonian exile is the third 'apostasy', the first being the fall of Adam and Eve, the second the period of servitude in Egypt, and so on: 'a sequence of *mythoi*, only indirectly of historical events'.[5] This use of exile, aligned with exodus, has become a powerful literary symbol, and has been used as such almost continuously throughout the past two thousand years of Western literature.

This predominantly symbolic appreciation has its drawbacks. Commonly the term 'Babylonian exile' is used with only the slightest connection to the historical event, and sometimes less than that. Symbol has definitively displaced historical prototype. Beyond that, as Daniel Smith-Christopher argues, theological reflection on exile can only proceed from a full appreciation of the experience itself—not easy, then, for non-participants.[6]

Period, ed. by O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), pp. 3-20. See also the literature cited in n. 21, below.

4 On the symbolic use of exile in the Christian tradition, see David J. Reimer, 'Exile', in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, ed. by A. Hastings, A. Mason, and H. Pyper (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 226-7. These motifs have different contours in the Jewish tradition.

5 Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (Toronto: Academic Press, 1982), pp. 170-1; for Frye, these storied 'metaphorical' resonances held greater significance than their simple recording of history. The pattern discerned by Frye has resonances with much earlier schemas: cf. the rhythms of history outlined by Hugh of St. Victor in the account given by Richard Southern, *History and Historians: Selected Papers*, ed. by R. J. Bartlett (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 36-7.

6 Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, 'Reassessing the Historical and Sociological Impact of the Babylonian Exile (597/587-539 BCE)', in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions*, ed. by James M. Scott (JSS Supplement, 56; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), p. 36.

This essay elaborates an observation and a claim. The observation is that this widespread use of 'exile' has displaced a more nuanced reading of related concepts within the Hebrew Bible. The claim is that a renewed appreciation for the Bible's language offers something valuable to the Christian project of Old Testament theology. A closer look at the language used in relation to 'exile' suggests a different profile for the event and experience in the lives of 'biblical people', one that generates different theological trajectories as well. My claim in a nutshell is that *diaspora* language deserves a greater claim to our attention than it is usually given, having been too quickly passed by because of the powerful magnetic attraction of the symbolic language of 'exile'. The essay proceeds in three phases. First, the perceived dominance of the theme of exile requires some discussion. I will then examine the cluster of terms relating to exile and diaspora in the Hebrew Bible, briefly attending to their Greek counterparts. This leads finally to a pointed comparison/contrast of the exile and diaspora motifs, before some suggestions are offered in conclusion for different trajectories traced by these terms for reflection in biblical theology.

EXILE IN RECENT DISCUSSION

Daniel Smith-Christopher's several important studies of 'exile' provide a convenient starting point. His fullest treatment of this theme is found in his 2002 monograph, *A Biblical Theology of Exile*.[7] This valuable work contains much of interest, but for my purpose here I attend only to a couple of curiosities. First, he makes the claim that 'any Christian theology of exile will necessarily begin by reviewing nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century internal debates in European Jewish contexts'.[8] Despite the visceral appeal of such an assertion, my own sense is that there is, in fact, a different way into this subject. A 'Christian theology' will certainly grapple with the lived experience of faith communities; but a 'starting point' may well be found in the Scriptures that frame and illuminate all human experience. A second curiosity, and more pervasive in his study, is the mixing of the language exile and diaspora. The former is privileged and embedded in the book's title, even though the latter seems to be the more fundamental concept, as he writes of 'a normative diasporic Christian theology'.[9] This tension between a dominant term—'exile'—and the biblical language which informs it—'diaspora'—requires exploration and resolution.

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7 Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002).

8 Smith-Christopher, *Biblical Theology*, pp. 7-8.

9 Smith-Christopher, *Biblical Theology*, p. 8.

In Anglophone scholarship, two scholars in particular have attended closely to 'exile' and challenged cherished beliefs about it, albeit in quite different ways. In much of his prolific output, Walter Brueggemann provides a privileged place for exile as a guiding metaphor for doing biblical theology, especially in his context in the United States. The late Robert Carroll, on the other hand, was troubled both by the Hebrew Bible's account of the exile, and by its subsequent handling on the part of many biblical scholars. Comparing and contrasting their differing approaches sets up the analysis of biblical language which follows.

Walter Brueggemann. While the motif of exile is pervasive in Brueggemann's writings, three works in particular give it pride of place: a 1995 article, and two books from 1997, one a brief paperback for preachers, the other his *magnum opus*, *Theology of the Old Testament*.[10] A consistent picture emerges of a real historical experience which shaped the social and theological outlook of the people who survived it, and decisively shaped the literature born out of it. Each of these three elements is already present in his 'Shattered Transcendence' article, and it was part of the business of that essay to explore the realities of these claims not only for sixth century Judaeans, but for their God as well.[11] The provocative question Brueggemann poses is whether the 'discontinuity' experienced by people was felt, too, by God: is 'the character of God decisively changed by the crisis of exile' as was that of God's people?[12] Brueggemann answers in the affirmative, demonstrating out of three texts (Deut. 4:23-31; Isa. 54:7-10; Jer. 31:35-37) the shifts that occurred. Deuteronomy shows God moving from jealousy to compassion; Isaiah sees a move from abandonment to *ḥesed 'ôlām*; while Jeremiah gives evidence of a shift from conditions ('if') to certitude. Thus exile shapes not only the community, but its God as well.

Cadences of Home explores the notion that the displacement brought about by exile was not only geographic, but also social. It entails the '(1) loss of a structured, reliable "world" where (2) treasured symbols of meaning are mocked and dismissed'. This allows Brueggemann to make a metaphorical link between the biblical horizon and modern situations ('a pertinent point of contact'), so that 'exilic circumstances' take on the

[10] W. Brueggemann, 'A Shattered Transcendence: Exile and Restoration', in *Biblical Theology: Problems and perspectives*, ed. by S.J. Kraftchick, C.J. Myers, Jr. and B.C. Ollenburger (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1995), pp. 169-182; *idem*, *Cadences of home: Preaching among Exiles* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997); *idem*, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997).

[11] 'Shattered Transcendence', p. 169.

[12] 'Shattered Transcendence', p. 172.

quality of metaphorical shorthand.[13] Some effort is then expended in aligning scriptural resources with modern concerns, since one feature of exilic life is the desire to maintain faith in a context where pressures run counter to it.

At various points in his major work, Brueggemann asserts (or assumes) the centrality of exile,[14] whether in the production of biblical literature (pp. 74-5), or in giving rise to a voice of protest (pp. 321-2). The section 'Israel Recalcitrant and Scattered' (pp. 434-40) is most suggestive in its recognition of 'scattering' as an expression of a 'historical mode of nullification' (including the nice Brueggemannian claim that 'in exile Israel is a people celebrating and practicing presence in absence' (p. 438). Later, however, Brueggemann equates 'scattering' with exile. Citing the shepherd imagery of Jer. 23:1-2, he comments: 'It is the kings who have "scattered", that is, caused exile.' He goes on with the related passage in Ezekiel 34, observing that 'the indictment against the monarchy is severe, with the repeated sounding of the word "scatter"', although the overarching concern in this section is with kingship and exile (p. 615).

By privileging exile in this way, Brueggemann by implication points us toward a monolithic experience for displaced peoples, which curiously, even ironically for one writing so richly as Brueggemann, has the effect of flattening the Bible's witness to the displacement of God's people. By implication, it also points towards homecoming as the terminus of the experience.[15]

Robert Carroll. The problematic aspects of exile engaged Carroll in what proved to be the final years of his life, although hardly claiming the whole of his attention. His work was typically suggestive—even provocative. His 1992 *Semeia* article, 'The Myth of the Empty Land', spawned a small monograph with the same title by Hans Barstad, as well as (at least!) a

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[13] W. Brueggemann, *Cadences of home: Preaching among Exiles* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997), quotes from pp. 2-3.

[14] W. Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997); page numbers in this paragraph refer to this work. The CD-ROM edition bears out the observations that follow: beside 350 references to 'exile', there is only a single in-text reference to 'diaspora'. As seen below, when various 'scattering' terms are invoked, they are defined not in terms of 'diaspora', but of 'exile'.

[15] Cf. his treatment of Isaiah 40-55 as 'Homecoming to a New Home' in *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), pp. 90-108.

couple of colloquia.[16] Already in 1992 Carroll was reluctant to use the language of 'exile' to describe this experience, given the attendant 'ideological presuppositions and historical assumptions' which impede proper analytical work.[17] In any case, in that piece he sits lightly towards historical questions, the focus of his argument attending rather to the overtly political purposes that this symbolic language served in Second Temple Jerusalem.

History looms larger in the 1998 article, in which Carroll is keen to resuscitate the views of C. C. Torrey that there was a catastrophic scattering of Israel [*sic*] after 586, but that it is 'this catastrophe, not the exile, which constituted the dividing line between the two eras'; any compounds with language of 'exile' 'ought to be banished forever... for they are merely misleading, and correspond to nothing that is real in Hebrew literature and life'.[18] Torrey's views have never won a wide following, and Ackroyd's forcible rejection of them in his classic study, *Exile and Restoration*, seemed to lay them to rest.[19] I expect that Carroll's attempt at reviving Torrey's views will suffer the same fate.[20] Recent work on the material life of sixth century Judah renders it as certain as any inquiry into ancient history can be that there was a catastrophe, there was an exile, even if experience of it in Judah was more regionally variegated and yet more demographically

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16 Robert P. Carroll, 'The Myth of the Empty Land', *Semeia* 59 (1992), 79-93; Hans M. Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah during the 'Exilic' Period* (Symbolae Osloenses Supplement, 28; Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996), which I refer to in its updated form as chapter 6 of *History and the Hebrew Bible* (FAT, 61; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), pp. 90-134; J. Blenkinsopp, 'The Bible, Archaeology and Politics; or the Empty Land Revisited', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 27 (2002), 169-187, further explores this concept.

17 Carroll, 'Myth', p. 87.

18 C.C. Torrey, *Ezra Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1910), p. 289, as cited by Robert P. Carroll, 'Exile! What exile? Deportation and the Discourses of Diaspora', in *Leading Captivity Captive: 'The Exile' as History and Ideology*, ed. by Lester L. Grabbe (JSOTSS, 278; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 62-79 (quote from p. 77).

19 Peter Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C.* (Old Testament Library; London: SCM Press, 1968), pp. 21-2.

20 Carroll adopts equally bold rhetoric: 'bold capitals', 'emblazon[ing]', of 'ideological contamination' (all from 'Exile!', p. 77), and so on; cf. the assessment of Torrey's legacy in Barstad, *History*, pp. 96-7, 110, 114, and Smith-Christopher, *Biblical Theology*, pp. 30-3.

differentiated than might previously have been thought.[21] That aspect, at any rate, of Carroll's argument has been definitively countered.

There remains the other aspect, that of his clear mistrust of language of 'exile' as a 'determinative or regulative principle for the reading of the Hebrew Bible',[22] as he notes five scholarly works which feature 'exile' prominently in their titles dating from the 1950s to the 70s. Although Brueggemann does not register on Carroll's radar here, given the observations above he merits inclusion in a larger list coming up to the time of Carroll's writing. By contrast, Carroll prefers to speak rather about 'deportations'. As was his wont, Carroll poses many penetrating questions and they are suggestive. Does not the use of the terminology of 'exile' force us to collaborate in ideological complicity with the late shapers and framers of the biblical tradition? What about Egyptian Jews? Or homelanders? Did they, too, see themselves as 'exiles'? Rather, Carroll asserts, 'life in the diaspora may not have been seen as exilic at all. ... In the diaspora people may regard themselves as living in a diaspora or they may regard it as home (*Heimat*)'.[23]

I wonder if it is always 'bad faith' to read *with* the grain of the text, as if reading *against* it, as Carroll urges us to do, is any less politicizing, any less constructed, achieving greater merit or accuracy.[24] At the same time, the baby of the Torrey/Carroll observations concerning deportation and diaspora should not be thrown out with the bathwater of their arguments relating to 'exile'. In a somewhat obscure (to me, anyway) passage, Carroll claims that 'we should not expect to read in the Bible a properly relativ-

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21 'Only the most nihilistic relativist would claim that no deportations took place at all', asserts Barstad (*History*, p. 106). Cf. also O. Lipschits, 'Demographic Changes in Judah between the Seventh and Fifth Centuries B.C.E.', in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, ed. by O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), pp. 323-76. The evidence gathered by William Schniedewind is applied not only to Torrey, but also the discussion revolving around the 'empty land' issue in recent scholarship; it speaks forcefully of the nature of the disruption of this event: *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 141-7.

22 'Exile!', p. 66.

23 'Exile!', p. 67.

24 Barstad offers some valuable thoughts on this theme in 'The Strange Fear of the Bible: Some Reflections on the "Bibliophobia" in Recent Ancient Israelite Historiography', in *Leading Captivity Captive: 'The Exile' as History and Ideology*, ed. by Lester L. Grabbe (JSOTSS, 278; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 120-7.

ized account of the matter'.[25] I wonder. Coming at the question from quite a different direction, I think it is possible to show language of 'exile' has been given undue prominence, and that greater attention should be given to the deportee, the fugitive, the diaspora resident. I turn next to my evidence for this suggestion.

BIBLICAL LANGUAGE FOR 'DEPORTATION' AND 'EXILE'

Hebrew. Although the discussion of the pertinent biblical language below remains broad-brush, it nonetheless bears out the contention that language of 'exile' has exerted inappropriate dominance over 'diaspora' in Old Testament theology.[26] Our starting point for thinking our way into this language is Jeremiah 29:14 (here cited from the ESV):

> I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes[27] and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven [vb. *ndḥ*] you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back [vb. *šwb*] to the place from which I sent you into exile [vb. *glh*].

This text of restoration brings together two notions: (1) a *gathering* from all the nations and places (plural) to which they have been *driven*; and (2) a *return* from the place,[28] by implication, to which they have been *exiled*. The first points us towards the experience of diaspora, the second clearly towards exile. I think we read these two concepts together quite naturally, as naturally as we do, say, Kings and Chronicles. And yet, like those biblical books, these two concepts found in a single verse of Jeremiah are different and, from certain vantage points, even held together in tension. At least we must concede that there is *both* a dispersion to many places, *and* an exile to a single place.[29] In fact, this verse is almost unique in the Old

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[25] 'Exile!', p. 68.

[26] Naturally, this discussion will require attention to the Hebrew and Greek terms. Here I cite their lexical forms only so as to avoid unnecessary complexity for those whose biblical languages might be rusty.

[27] On this problematic phrase and its intractable *Ketiv/Qere* problem, see John M. Bracke ('*šûb šebût*: A Reappraisal', *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 97 (1985), 233-244) who resists an etymological explanation, understands it to be a fixed technical term, and glosses it in the manner of E. L. Dietrich as 'render a restoration'.

[28] The Hebrew syntax is awkward at this point; although the singular 'place' is a reference to homecoming, the Hebrew formulation implies there has been a single place of exile as well.

[29] Note that only the first clause of the verse is represented in the LXX.

Testament in joining these two concepts together,[30] and thus attention to it alerts us to the fact that intersection between 'diaspora' and 'exilic' language in the OT is remarkably slight. Their seemingly natural co-incidence is not so straightforward as first appears.

In teasing apart the two sets of language, what distinctive contours come into view? I begin with the 'diaspora' or scattering group. It includes predominantly the *hiphil* of *ndḥ* ('drive out, banish', 26×), the *hiphil* of *pwṣ* ('scatter', 36×), and various forms of the verb *zrh* ('scatter, sift', 39×).[31] These terms are themselves widely scattered throughout the Hebrew Bible, and naturally not all occurrences are relevant to this study. It is immediately striking, however, that there is a pronounced bulge in the prophets of the period around the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.[32] Between them they account for almost half of the 'scattering' language in the Hebrew Bible (47.5%).

That 'scattering' should be a bad thing is especially apparent in the story of Babylon (better known as the 'Tower of Babel') in Genesis 11:1-9, where the desire to live together in security is confounded when the people of 'Babylon' (= Heb. *bābel*) are 'scattered' (*pwṣ*, 11:8-9). Likewise, as mentioned in the introductory observations to this essay, scattering appears as the climax of the treaty curses in Leviticus 26:33*ff.* (*zrh*) and Deuteronomy 28:64 (*pwṣ*). The 'scatter' terms relate predominantly to direct action as punishment; that is, they tend not to be used so much for reporting outcomes as for threatening intended action in response to some behaviour. This takes the form of divine action, as for example in Jeremiah 9:16 (Heb. v. 15): 'I will scatter (*pwṣ*) them among the nations whom neither they nor their fathers have known, and I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them' (cf. also esp. Ezek. 5:2, 10; 12:15 = 30:26, etc.). But human action can bring about scattering as well, through the negligence of the nation's leaders, e.g., Jeremiah 23:2: 'thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: "You have scattered (*pwṣ*) my flock, and have driven them away (*ndḥ*), and you have not attended to them..."'

It is striking, too, that dispersion seems to be the central concern of the prophet par excellence of the 'golah' (see below on this term) commu-

[30] Deuteronomy 30:3 may be another such; cf. also Jer. 30:10-11 // 46:27-29; and Ezek. 6:8-9; perhaps also Ezek. 12:3, 14-15.

[31] One might also include *grš* here, but it tends not to intersect with this cluster, and is used rather of driving *other* people out; but cf. Hos. 9:15.

[32] Respectively for Jeremiah + Ezekiel, 13+1 out of 26 for *ndḥ*; 6+9 out of 36 for *pwṣ*; 6+13 out of 39 for *zrh*. The distinctive preferences of the two are clear, *ndḥ* predominating in Jeremiah, the latter two in Ezekiel. No other book has more than four occurrences of any given term.

nity, Ezekiel. In this example from one of the central theological passages in the book (Ezek. 36:19, 21; cf. 6:8-9), the 'exile' is completely ignored, or at best is simply subsumed under the greater concern for the scattered people:

> I scattered them (*pwṣ*) among the nations, and they were dispersed (*zrh*) through the countries; in accordance with their conduct and their deeds I judged them. ... But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel caused to be profaned among the nations to which they came.

The picture changes as we look now at the 'exile' terms. The main set of terms derive from *glh*. The *hiphil* verbal form is commonly used to *report* forcible deportation (e.g., 2 Kgs 15:29; 25:21), not only of Israel and Judah, but also in 'theological' settings where Yahweh is responsible for the deportation of further nations (e.g. the displaced former inhabitants of the land of promise in 2 Kings 17:11). The nominal forms, *golah* (41×) and *galut* (15×) overlap both in meaning and use. Of the more common term, *golah*, half the occurrences are split almost evenly between Jeremiah and Ezekiel; a further dozen occurrences are found in Ezra (although only one in Nehemiah; Neh. 7:6), always as a means of identifying the group returned from Babylon to Yehud.[33] Naturally, in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the language works in the opposite direction, referring to those Judaeans who have been carried off to Babylon (e.g., Jer. 29:1; Ezek. 1:1). The distribution of the less frequent *galut* is similar, again with half to Jeremiah/Ezekiel but without the Persian period occurrences. It is difficult to see much semantic difference from *golah*, unless it is to emphasize somewhat the action of being exiled, rather than simply the state of being exiled (although even this does not always hold true).

The role of the language of 'captivity' associated with *šbh* is more difficult to place. It might seem most readily associated with *golah*. Yet at those points where captivity becomes the focus of attention, it seems to be glossed, interpreted, or defined in terms of the broader context of scattering. Sorrow over captive (*šbh*) Jerusalem in Jeremiah 13:17 is followed by the observation of Judah's exile (*glh*), both events explained in 13:24 in terms of scattering (*pwṣ*). Similarly, the captivity (*šᵉbiy*) of Jeremiah 15:2 is simply one of a catalogue of calamities, and not the universal experience of those coming under judgment. There are points at which captivity lan-

[33] 'Yehud', the designation of the province Judah in this period. On the shape of this rhetoric as reinforcing diaspora-homeland relations, see Peter R. Bedford, 'Diaspora: Homeland Relations in Ezra-Nehemiah', *Vetus Testamentum* 52 (2002), 147-165.

guage can be used interchangeably with *golah*,[34] but at times it aligns with scattering terms too (cf. Jer. 30:10-11 // 46:27-28; Ezek. 6:8-9 as mentioned above). Attention here remains fixed, then, on *glh*. Thus the picture for *šbh* remains somewhat mixed.

What I find most striking here is what *glh*, 'exile', does *not* do: rarely, if ever, is it used in threat. It is clear that it is often seen as the response or outcome to some negative behaviour, but not a threat in prospect. This job belongs almost entirely to the 'scattering' group.

In sum, I note again the lack of intersection between these two trajectories that we might have guessed would be more frequently connected. They express different modes of 'egress', but much more than that. The disjunction begins to suggest that behind the fear of 'exile'—bad enough in any case—is the yet more deep-seated anxiety concerning scattering, concerning *diaspora*.

Greek. A brief glance at the Greek counterparts to our Hebrew terms informs, indeed is required by, a 'biblical theology' interest. Louis Feldman's study of Josephus's remarkably ambiguous handling of 'exilic' language and episodes provides a helpful starting point. It is a rich study, with much to digest. The claim of greatest interest for my concerns is this: 'When the LXX deals with exile (גולה [*golah*]), it uses the language of emigration and colonization'.[35] Usually this takes the forms of *apoikia* or *apoikizein* (migration/colony). When Ezra 2:1 refers to the returnees from Babylon 'from the captivity of the exiles' (*mišše bi haggolah*), the LXX gives us 'prisoners who were removed'.[36] As Feldman makes clear, the Greek for banishment-as-punishment is *phugē*. The picture emerges in the Hellenistic Jewish literature of emigration and colonization: forced, to be sure, but not given the same profile as 'exile'.

Feldman has little interest here in the NT writings, but already these observations are helpful. The word for banishment-as-punishment noted above (i.e. 'exile'), *phugē*, is used in Matthew 24:20 (of eschatological flight). References to the Babylonian exile in Matthew 1:11, 12, and 17 use *metoikesia*, which Feldman regards as a synonym for *apoikia*: 'mere-

[34] E.g., 'the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush', Isa. 20:4 (Tanak translation).

[35] Louis H. Feldman, 'The Concept of Exile in Josephus', in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian conceptions*, ed. by James M. Scott (JSS Supplement, 56; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), pp. 145-72 (quote on p. 145).

[36] 1 Esdras 5:7; this is Brenton's rendering. Perhaps 'captives who were settled...'? Greek: *apo tēs aichmalōsias tēs apoikias*. R. Glenn Wooden offers 'out of the captivity in exile' in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), *ad loc*.

ly a change of abode or a migration'.[37] However, Feldman does not cite the transformation of the 'exile' of Amos 5:27 (using *glh*), into the LXX's 'removal' (*kai metoikiō*) which figures in Stephen's speech in Acts 7:43. Nor does he attend to the NT's language of 'diaspora' in 1 Peter 1:2; 2:11 (cf. 5:13), and James 1:1, where life-in/as-diaspora people helps to shape Christian identity and lifestyle[38]—a positive usage, then, but inclined differently than that discussed by Feldman in the Jewish literature.

To sum up: in the Hebrew Bible, the language of exile and diaspora intersect surprisingly seldom: deportation is feared, unified exile occurs, but scattering is the threat. In Greek dress, these ideas take on a more positive connotation, that of a more settled existence. Having, I hope, begun to drive a wedge between 'diaspora' and 'exile', it is time to contrast the concepts of 'exile' and 'diaspora' to see what might be at work here.

'DIASPORA' ... AND 'EXILE' — TRAJECTORIES

In post-biblical Jewish usage, the sharp outlines of the linguistic landscape sketched above began to blur. The *galut* was pre-eminently the Babylonian community. But the term could incorporate those scattered to other locales as well, so that Jastrow's dictionary can gloss the term as 'the exiled community, diaspora'.[39] Even the shifting terms, however, show 'diaspora' to be the more pervasive concept.

All of this requires at least a deliberate nuance of the dominance of the 'exilic' period, and 'exile' as theological symbol. While rejecting Torrey's historical views as well as their restatement by Carroll, there is merit in the view they espouse that importance of exile (both as history and symbol) has been overplayed, and that of diaspora undervalued. My reasons for thinking so are different from theirs, and I do not share their historical scepticism, but there is a pointer here to a more careful assessment of 'exile' and 'diaspora' in biblical thought. Following this trajectory, then, I offer three signposts from the discussion above:

1. Biblical language anticipating negative aspects of deportation more consistently aligns with 'scattering' than with a unified 'exile' or *golah*. Naturally, 'scattering' language moves us towards the concept of 'diaspora'.

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[37] Feldman, 'Concept', p. 146.

[38] Cf. on this point M. Volf, 'Soft Difference: Theological Reflections on the Relation between Church and Culture in 1 Peter', *Ex Auditu* 10 (1994), 15-30.

[39] M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: Pardes, 1950), vol. 1, p. 247.

2. This brings with it as a corollary the corresponding language of restoration: that is the restorative remedy of *gathering* presupposes *scattering* as prior experience.[40]

3. The Greek terms—whether 'exile' or 'scattering' lies behind them in Hebrew—look towards a continuing reality of diaspora life: settled life away from the homeland, but not punishment, and not forced, i.e. not 'exile', as strictly understood.

4. Although seemingly counter-intuitive, 'diaspora' language frames *both* the threat *and* the promise of life-under-God.

They are two different kinds of displacement: whereas exile implies loss of home, diaspora suggests a home-away-from-home. But there is more to these concepts than simply displacement—as traumatic and fundamental as that is. Exile is immediate, brings with it rupture and removal, is forced, and consequently tends to reinforce boundary markers. Diaspora, on the other hand, may be all of those things—*and* it may be chosen, may be inherited. Diaspora might involve being flung from a homeland, but might equally be a state of equilibrium and settled life. It might involve loss of identity, but it might simply imply a 'different' identity from a dominant, host culture.[41]

Biblical Theology (especially the OT variety as exemplified by Brueggemann above) has tended privilege 'exile'. This analysis suggests on the contrary that 'exile' is a sub-set of 'diaspora', not the other way around. Such a reversal of perception brings a number of implications in its train. Most immediately, it is clear that 'diaspora' is an expression both of judgment and of grace.[42] At first blush, there appears to be some

[40] Cf. J. Lust and P.-M. Bogaert, '"Gathering and return" in Jeremiah and Ezekiel', in *Le livre de Jérémie: Le prophète et son milieu, les oracles et leur transmission*, ed. by P.-M. Bogaert (BETL, 54; Leuven: University Press, 1981), pp. 119-142.

[41] An additional nuance is found in distinguishing the related terms of 'alien' and 'sojourner' which often occur in this sort of discussion (e.g., Stanley Hauerwas, Jim Wallis). In particular, the notion of 'sojourn' seems to provide an anticipatory counterpart to 'diaspora': a kind of qualified belonging, a 'home away from home', or of 'being in the world, but not of the world'. See further the suggestive work of Elisabeth Robertson Kennedy, 'Seeking a Homeland: Sojourn and Ethnic Identity in the Ancestral Narratives of Genesis' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2010).

[42] Or, as John Hobbins put it: 'The one who brings judgment is the one who saves from judgment' ('The Truth about Noah's Ark (2)', Ancient Hebrew Poetry blog, posted 8 May 2010; http://bit.ly/NoahTruth2). Hobbins's observation is

sleight of hand about a reading which sees in 'scattering' both the prime (even primal) threat and fear, and yet from another perspective, a situation to be embraced and in which life can flourish. Similarly, one can see a tension between the fundamental provision of 'land', that rootedness of place where God's people are intended to be, and the extended dislocation which would appear to risk diminishing or relativizing that gift. However, the roots of grace-in-judgment go down deep in the biblical witness, and should not surprise us when we encounter this phenomenon again here. For this reason Brueggemann's account of the changing character of God can be seen to have missed the point: God's character does not 'change' when purposeful grace results from a judgment delivered.[43]

If exile represents the imposition of punishment which those exiled wish to reverse as quickly as possible, diaspora on the other hand suggests a situation which can be embraced. John Howard Yoder described the scenario with typical power finding his stimulus in the 'poem-drama', *Jeremiah*, by Stefan Zweig: 'dispersion is mission', was Yoder's pithy formulation.[44] Unlike those in exile seeking escape from captivity, 'return' for the diaspora community is not 'something the people in Babylon or elsewhere should be bringing about by their own strength, or waiting around to see happen, or planning for... It is functional as a metaphor for God's renewing the life of faith anywhere.'[45] In his extrapolation of this theme, Yoder returns to the story of 'Babel' in which a community sought security apart from God (Genesis 11:4). The dispersal that came in judgment on Babel re-asserted the divine intention of diversity, against the autonomous, absolutizing tendency of the human creatures. From this perspective, 'diaspora' is a sign of grace. The resonances between this first dispersal *from* 'Babylon' (= Heb. 'Babel') and a later dispersal *to* Babylon shed further light on how it is that in *galut*/diaspora in Babylon, God's people find a vocation to the wider world (Jeremiah 29:7).[46]

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of a piece with the dynamic often observed of Genesis 1-11, where the judgments imposed each contain within them provision for renewal.

43 See above, note 12.

44 J. H. Yoder, "See How They Go with Their Faces to the Sun", ch. 3 in *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 51-78 (quote on p. 52).

45 Yoder, *For the Nations*, p. 57. Cf. the eschatological hopes which came to be expressed concerning the end of diaspora as dependent on the renewal of God's reign over the nations in a new world order, described by Michael Knibb, 'The Exile in the Literature of the Intertestamental Period', *Heythrop Journal* 17 (1976), 253-72.

46 Yoder, *For the Nations*, pp. 61-5.

In these ways, and others, bringing the theme of 'diaspora' out of the shadow of 'exile' provides a more accessible and even faithful model for those attempting to live in the world, but not be of the world (cf. John 17). It is not simply a matter of being an alien, cut off from 'home', but a resident with potential for engagement. This results in a very different way of thinking about what it means to go home, or whether there even is a 'home' that is 'somewhere else'. One of the things that troubled Carroll was the difficulty in knowing when exile is over. If you *can* go home, are you still in exile? What constitutes a 'homecoming' for a settled people? Diaspora implies a different and more complex relationship between where-I-live, and where-I-belong. Security, as the people of Genesis 11 found, is not to be found in a place, but in the presence of God. Thus, the model of 'diaspora' which recognizes only a qualified belonging and articulates no sharp impulse to 'return' seems to me a better metaphor for Christian biblical theology than that of 'exile' in which the desire for a 'return home' remains urgent.[47] In sum, 'diaspora deflects desire to God'.[48]

[47] Cf. the description of the prolongation of diaspora in Leviticus 26:40-45 in which Yahweh asserts that 'in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them'.

[48] David J. Reimer, 'Exile and Diaspora: Leaving and Living', *Guidelines* 23/2 (May-August 2007), 107-123 (quote on p. 122).