

‘Our God and Saviour’: A Recurring Biblical Pattern

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I

When the New Delhi Assembly of the World Council of Churches, meeting towards the end of 1961, adopted an amplified basis of membership beginning with the words, ‘The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of Churches which Confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures...’, it made the most recent documentary contribution to the concept of the Saviour God within the Hebrew and Christian tradition.

The designation of Christ as ‘God and Saviour’ belongs to the later New Testament books. In Titus 2:13 Christians are taught to wait for ‘the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ’; in 2 Pet. mention is made of ‘the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ’. Some versions, indeed, detach ‘God’ from ‘Saviour’ in these two passages, rendering the former ‘...the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ’ and the latter ‘the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ’ (or ‘the righteousness of our God, and the Saviour Jesus Christ’);¹ but the fact that in the Greek text of both passages the two substantives ‘God’ and ‘Saviour’ come under the regimen of a single definite article² strongly suggests that one and the same person is denoted as being both God and Saviour,³ the Saviour God. In four other passages in 2 Peter reference is made to ‘our Lord and Saviour

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Jesus Christ’ (1:11; 2:20; 3:2, 18). A characteristic expression of the Pastoral Epistles is ‘God our Saviour’ (I Tim. 1:1; 2:3; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4), where however God the Father is more probably intended (over against ‘our Saviour Christ Jesus’ in 2 Tim. 1:10; ‘Christ Jesus our Saviour’ in Titus 1:4, and ‘Jesus Christ our Saviour’ in Titus 3:6). It is indeed noteworthy that the designation ‘Saviour’, applied either to God or to Christ, occurs fifteen times in the Pastoral Epistles and 2 Peter as against nine times in the remaining books of the New Testament. The distribution of the derivative σωτηρία (‘salvation’) is quite different; but we naturally ask why the personal substantive σωτήρ should appear with such relative frequency in the later books of the New Testament.

One suggestion of recent times is that these documents reflect a body of teaching, called ‘the knowledge of the truth’, of Essene affinity, in which the idea of Saviourhood played a central part.⁴ More probable is the view that we can trace here a Christian reaction to the pagan

¹ So AV and ASV.

² τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Tit. 2:13); τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (2 Pet. 1:1).

³ So RV, RSV, NEB.

⁴ Cf. H. Kosmala, *Hebräer-Essener-Christen* (Leiden, 1959), pp. 135 ff.

F.F. Bruce, “‘Our God and Saviour’: A Recurring Biblical Pattern,” S.G.F. Brandon, ed., *The Saviour God. Comparative Studies in the Concept of Salvation Presented to Professor Edwin Oliver James Professor Emeritus in the University of London by Colleagues and Friends*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1963. Hbk. pp.51-66.

Claims which were being made on behalf of other θεοί σωτῆρες,⁵ not least (especially from the second half of the first Century onwards) on behalf of the Roman emperor himself.⁶ But if contemporary conditions stimulated the increased application of the title ‘Saviour’ to the God and Redeemer of the Christians, this application of the title was in itself no innovation. The Canticles of Luke’s nativity narrative, which belong to the most archaic strata of the New Testament, exult in ‘God my Saviour’ (Luke 1:47) and proclaim the birth of ‘a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord’⁷ (Luke 2:11). Such language is derived unmistakably from earlier Old Testament usage, in which the designation ‘Saviour’ is given alike to the God of Israel and to the king of Israel.

II

The Old Testament portrayal of the Saviour God is sometimes couched in pictorial terms which survive into New Testament times and even into Christian hymnody, and which remind us vividly of the environment in which Israel’s faith came to birth and grew up.

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In one of his lesser-known hymns on the nativity, Charles Wesley acclaims the infant Christ in these words:

Gaze on that helpless
Object of endless adoration!
Those infant hands shall burst our bonds
And work out our salvation;
Strangle the crooked serpent,
Destroy his works for ever,
And open set the heavenly gate
To every true believer.

We know what Wesley means: he is expressing in poetical language the New Testament teaching that ‘the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil’ (1 John 3:8); that the purpose of his incarnation was ‘that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all these who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage’ (Heb. 2:14 f.). But where does he go for his imagery?

One of his sources, quite plainly, is Greek mythology: the picture of ‘infant hands’ strangling the serpent recalls the story of the infant Heracles⁸ strangling with his hands the two serpents which Hera sent to kill him in his cradle.⁹ But it is not only the familiar mythology of Greece that underlies Wesley’s language.

⁵ The expression θεοί σωτῆρες was applied in a formal sense to Roman rulers at an earlier date; thus as early as 166 B.C. Prusias II of Bithynia addressed the Roman senate as θεοί σωτῆρες; (Polybius, *Hist.* xxx. 16); but this is a far cry from a claim to the honours appropriate to a divine saviour.

⁶ Cf. E. Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars* (London, 1955), pp. 138 ff.; C.D. Morrison, *The Powers that Be* (London, 1960), pp. 90 ff., 134f.; C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* (London, 1962), pp. 110 f.

⁷ χριστός κύριος, as in Ps. Sol. 17:36.

⁸ Cf. W. L. Knox, ‘The “Divine Hero” Christology in the New Testament’, *HTR* 41 (1948), 229.

⁹ Pindar, *Nem.* i. 35 ff.; Theocritus, *Id.* xxiv. 26 ff., etc.

The picture of a deity or hero procuring deliverance by fighting and conquering a serpent or dragon is widespread in the ancient Near East, and farther afield as well. The dragon may be the dragon of chaos or of drought, or (and this is specially marked in Old Testament literature) he may symbolize some historical figure. In the Old Testament it is uniformly Yahweh who destroys the dragon, no matter what malign power may be denoted by the dragon from one place to another. The functions which in the Canaanite pantheon are shared out among a wide variety of deities are for the Israelites concentrated in Yahweh; in the Ugaritic texts Asherah walks on the sea and Baal rides on

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the clouds, but in the Old Testament it is Yahweh who does both:¹⁰

He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.¹¹

So too it is Yahweh who curbs the forces of chaos and brings the ordered world into being; it is Yahweh who delivers his people from the threat of drought and famine and gives them ‘the grain, the wine and the oil’ (Hos. 2:8); it is Yahweh who goes forth to war against their human enemies and wins salvation for them.

III

So far as the curbing of the forces of chaos is concerned, it is not to the creation narratives of Genesis that we look for the pictorial representation of this conflict; there is the barest verbal reminiscence of it in Gen. 1:2, ‘darkness was upon the face of the deep’; for *t^ehôm* (‘deep’) is probably cognate with Tiamat, the monster destroyed by Marduk in the Babylonian creation myth. But when the creative might of God is described by Job, the ancient conflict imagery comes to clear expression:

By his power he stilled the sea;
by his understanding he smote Rahab.
By his wind the heavens were made fair;
his hand pierced the fleeing serpent (Job 26: 12 f.).

‘Rahab’ is the monster of chaos,¹² and the ‘fleeing serpent’ (*nāḥās bārîah*¹³) is her dragon associate Leviathan. The smiting of the chaos monster is closely associated here and elsewhere with the curbing of the unruly sea, whose constant threat to overflow the cultivated land and spread havoc and disorder made it a ready symbol of chaos. In the Ugaritic texts Yam (‘Sea’) is personified as a rival power to the Canaanite pantheon; when he demands the

¹⁰ Cf. Job 9:8; Ps. 77:19; Isa. 19:1; Deut. 33:26.

¹¹ W. Cowper.

¹² Cf. Job 9:13, ‘God will not turn back his anger; beneath him bowed the helpers of Rahab.’

¹³ Here *bārîah* is translated ‘crooked’ in AV, as is “*qallâtôn* in Isa. 27:1 (see n. 18 below); hence the ‘crooked serpent’ of Wesley’s hymn quoted above.

surrender of Baal, Baal attacks him with two clubs, vanquishes him and succeeds to the sovereignty. Baal’s victory thus delivers the ordered land from the menace of the sea.¹⁴

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In another passage in Job Yahweh’s action against the sea in the course of his creative work is described without mention of the chaos monster:

Or who shut in the sea with doors,
when it burst forth from the womb;
when I made clouds its garment,
and thick darkness its swaddling band,
and prescribed bounds for it,
and set bars and doors,
and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther,
and here shall your proud waves be stayed?’ (Job 38: 8-11).

But whether personification is prominent or not, the God who restrains the raging of the sea is the Saviour God—not only because one and the same Hebrew term (*yeša’* or *yēšū’āh*) does duty for victory and salvation, but also because Yahweh’s victory over the sea is the salvation of those who inhabit dry land.

IV

Israel’s conception of Yahweh as the Saviour God was mainly dependent, however, not so much on his activity in creation as on his intervention in their interest at the time of the Exodus. ‘Yahweh is my strength and my song,’ they sang in commemoration of this deliverance, ‘and he has become my salvation’ (Exod. 15:2).¹⁵ It was their deliverance because it was Yahweh’s victory—not only over Pharaoh and his chariotry but over all the gods of Egypt he had ‘triumphed gloriously’ (Exod. 12:12, I 5:i). Moreover, this victory and deliverance became the pattern for all their future experiences of Yahweh’s saving power.

But the Exodus itself was portrayed time and again in terms of Yahweh’s earlier victory against the forces of chaos. The use of these terms to portray the Exodus was made the easier because in the Exodus, as at the creation, Yahweh manifested his mastery over the sea. If he curbed it at the creation, he divided it at the Exodus. Thus one of the later psalmists, praying for national deliverance in a time of great distress, recalls how Yahweh

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wrought deliverance for his people at the Exodus, but does so in these words:

Yet God my King is from of old,
working salvation in the midst of the earth.
Thou didst divide the sea by thy might;
thou didst break the heads of the dragons on the waters.

¹⁴ Texts 137; 133; 68.

¹⁵ Cf. F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, ‘The Song of Miriam’, *JNES* 14 (1955), 237 ff.

Thou didst crush the heads of Leviathan,
thou didst give him as food for the creatures of the wilderness
(Ps. 74: 12-14).

The language shows plainly that it is drawn from the story of the creation conflict, and there are explicit creation motifs in the context; but it is not the creation that is uppermost in the psalmist’s mind.

Another psalmist, at a time when the royal house of David has fallen on evil days, calls upon Yahweh to remember not only his covenanted promises to David but also the display of his power at the Exodus, and describes that display of power in terms of the creation conflict:

O Yahweh God of hosts,
who is mighty as thou art, O Yahweh,
with thy faithfulness round about thee?
Thou dost rule the raging of the sea;
when its waves rise, thou stillest them.
Thou didst crush Rahab like a carcass,
thou didst scatter thy enemies with thy mighty arm (Ps. 89:8-10).

Here the old conflict terminology is transferred to Yahweh’s contest on his people’s behalf against the power of Egypt. Rahab, the ancient name of the chaos monster, now becomes a name for Egypt; and in fact it appears elsewhere in the Old Testament as a poetic synonym for Egypt, quite apart from this kind of context. Thus in Isa. 30:7 Yahweh exposes the hollowness of promises of aid from Egypt:

For Egypt’s help is worthless and empty,
therefore I have called her
‘Rahab who sits still.’

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And in a psalm which brings foreign nations within the range of his mercy Yahweh says: ‘Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon’ (Ps. 87:4). Similarly Rahab’s dragon associate becomes a figure of the Egyptian king, as in Ezek. 29:3 ff., where Pharaoh Hophra, described as ‘the great dragon that lies in the midst of his streams’, is told that, Leviathan as he is, he will be dragged out of his river with a hook¹⁶ and thrown into the wilderness to be devoured by beasts and birds of prey—a close parallel to the fate of Leviathan in Ps. 74:14.

When another prophet¹⁷ speaks of Yahweh’s end-time victory and the final deliverance of his people, the same imagery is used: ‘In that day Yahweh with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea’ (Isa. 27:1). The dragon in the sea is probably the power of Egypt, while Leviathan may well be Assyria or Babylon. It is noteworthy, however, that the

¹⁶ Job 41:1.

¹⁷ In one of the most recent commentaries on Isaiah—*Isaiah 1-39* (London, 1962)—J. Mauchline includes Isa. 27:1 among passages in the ‘Isaiah Apocalypse’ (Isa. 24-7) which ‘may be genuine Isaianic material’ (p. 196).

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double description of Leviathan as ‘the fleeing serpent, ... the twisting serpent’ is paralleled exactly in the Ugaritic text where Môt tells Baal that he will overcome him,

Though thou didst smite Lotan the fleeing serpent,
Didst destroy the twisting serpent,
The accursed one of seven heads.¹⁸

The Old Testament records establish the many-headed nature of Leviathan, but do not give the exact number of his heads; this the Ugaritic text does, and incidentally supplies a background for the seven-headed dragon of the New Testament Apocalypse.¹⁹

V

The autumnal equinox was the occasion for the greatest festival of the agricultural year of Israel, the harvest thanksgiving at which they acknowledged the goodness of Yahweh in providing the fruits of the earth during the preceding season and prayed for a continuation of his mercy in this regard throughout the ensuing year. This festival may well have been the setting for the ‘prayer of Habakkuk the prophet’ which appears in our traditional text as

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an epilogue to his oracle.²⁰ The oracle is concerned with deliverance from oppression by human enemies, while the prayer is concerned more with deliverance from pestilence, drought and famine; but in either case the deliverance comes from one and the same God, ‘the God of my salvation’, as the prophet calls him (Hab. 3:18). The potency of the ancient imagery of Yahweh’s victory over the unruly sea appears in the prophet’s use of it here to celebrate Yahweh’s deliverance of his people from natural calamities; this may indeed reflect the part played by this imagery in the liturgy for the Feast of Tabernacles:

Was thy wrath against the rivers, Yahweh?
Was thy anger against the rivers,
or thy indignation against the sea,
when thou didst ride upon thy horses,
upon thy chariot of victory?²¹ ...

The mountains saw thee, and writhed;
the raging waters swept on;
the deep gave forth its voice,
it lifted its hands on high.²² ...

Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people,

¹⁸ Text 67:1:1-3. The Hebrew adjectives applied to Leviathan in Isa. 27:1 are *bārîah* (as in Job 26:13) and *qallâtôn* (not elsewhere in OT); the Ugaritic equivalents in the passage quoted are *brḥ* and *qltn*.

¹⁹ Rev. 12:3.

²⁰ CE J. H. Eaton, *Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (London, 1961), pp. 108 ff.; W. F. Albright, ‘The Psalm of Habakkuk’, *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy presented to T. H. Robinson* (ed. H. H. Rowley, Edinburgh, 1950), pp. 2 ff.

²¹ Heb. *yešū’âh*, ‘salvation’.

²² Perhaps the most striking personification of the deep (*ṯhôm*) in the Old Testament.

for the salvation of thy anointed.
Thou didst crush the head of the wicked,
laying him bare from thigh to neck....
Thou didst trample the sea with thy horses,
the surging of mighty waters.

The memory of Yahweh's past victories, especially at the Exodus, to which the worshippers were very much alive at the Feast of Tabernacles, encourages the prophet to expect his intervention afresh for his people's salvation, whether it be by bringing trouble upon the foreign invaders (Hab. 3:16) or by restoring the fertility of the land:

Though the fig tree do not blossom,
nor fruit be on the vines,
the produce of the olive fail
and the fields yield no food,

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the flock be cut off from the fold
and there be no herd in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in Yahweh,
I will joy in the God of my salvation (Hab. 3:17 f.).

The salvation which Yahweh's victory had procured in the beginning was a salvation continually renewed—in the order of nature as in the history of Israel—and ultimately to be consummated on the day of Yahweh. This bringing together of past, present and future is celebrated at the end of Ps. 29, perhaps another composition for the Tabernacles liturgy:

Yahweh sits enthroned over the flood;
Yahweh sits enthroned as king for ever.
May Yahweh give strength to his people!
May Yahweh bless his people with peace!²³

VI

Even in the celebration of personal deliverances the Exodus deliverance is almost bound to be introduced in the Israelite tradition. In Ps. 66, for example, a private worshipper gathers his friends about him as he enters the temple to give thanks to God for some signal deliverance and fulfil the vows which he had undertaken when he was in distress:

Come and hear, all you who fear God,
and I will tell what he has done for me.
I cried aloud to him,
and he was extolled with my tongue (vv. 16 f.).

²³ Cf. A. R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff, 1955), pp. 54 ff.

But before this—before he comes to recount his personal experience of deliverance—he recalls the doings of Yahweh in the past, with special reference to his mighty works at the Exodus:

Come and see what God has done:
he is terrible in his deeds among men.
He turned the sea into dry land;
men passed through the river on foot (vv. 5 f.).

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Yahweh’s character, the psalmist implies, is consistent from age to age; the private salvation which he himself has experienced is all of a piece with the national salvation which his people have experienced at Yahweh’s hands from the Exodus onwards.

If a private worshipper can express his praise in terms like these, much more can the king of Israel, the embodiment of his people’s welfare, do so. In Ps. 18 the royal worshipper celebrates a great deliverance which he himself has experienced, when Yahweh flew to his relief, riding on a cherub, soaring on the wings of the wind, thundering and lightening as he came:

Then the channels of the sea were seen,
and the foundations of the world were laid bare,
at thy rebuke, O Yahweh,
at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.
He reached from on high, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.
He delivered me from my strong enemy,
and from those who hated me;
for they were too mighty for me (vv. 15-17).

The theophany here described has elements which recall the creation conflict and others which recall the dividing of the Red Sea and the manifestation of divine power on Mount Sinai. Whether an actual deliverance from foreign foes is being celebrated here (as the general wording of the psalm strongly suggests) or the reference is to the king’s ritual combat with the forces of chaos which threatened to overwhelm him and his nation,²⁴ the intervention of the Saviour God is portrayed in language hallowed by ancestral use. Yahweh is the God who ‘makes great the deliverances of his king and performs covenant-loyalty to his anointed’ (Ps. 18:50); he is preeminently the Saviour God.

As such Yahweh’s name is extolled in the national liturgy; his saving victory in the past, reproduced repeatedly in the present, will have its climax on a day yet future:

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it,
the world and those who dwell in it!
Let the floods clap their hands;

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²⁴ The latter view is maintained by A. R. Johnson (*op. cit.*, pp. 207 ff.).

let the hills sing for joy together
before Yahweh, for he comes
to rule the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity (Ps. 98: 7-9).

VII

A day dawned when the language of the national liturgy seemed to have come true in history on a scale unexampled since the Exodus, when Israel’s God, by bringing his people back from Babylonian captivity, vindicated his reputation as a Saviour God in a manner that gave the lie to all those who assured them mockingly that he was either unable or unwilling to deliver them:

O sing to Yahweh a new song,
for he has done marvellous things!
His right hand and his holy arm
have gotten him victory.
Yahweh has made known his victory,
he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.
He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness
to the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen
the victory of our God (Ps. 98: 1-3).

This celebration of Yahweh’s *ṣedāqāh* and *yešū’āh* finds a clear echo in the context of the return from exile, in the oracles of Isa. 40-55. In lyric modes drawn from the ancient liturgy²⁵ the prophet cries:

Sing to Yahweh a new song,
his praise from the end of the earth!
Let the sea roar and all that fills it,
the coastlands and their inhabitants.
Let the desert and its cities lift up their voice,
the villages that Kedar inhabits;
let the inhabitants of Sela sing for joy,
let them shout from the top of the mountains.

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Let them give glory to Yahweh,
and declare his praise in the coastlands.
Yahweh goes forth like a mighty man,
like a man of war²⁶ he stirs up his fury;

²⁵ It must be pointed out that some scholars think it was the language of Isa. 40-55 that influenced the liturgy, and not *vice versa*; so notably N. H. Snaitch, according to whom, even if a pre-exilic New Year festival existed in Israel, Pss. 93 and 95-9 ‘could never have belonged to it, for they are demonstrably dependent upon Second-Isaiah’ (*The Psalms: A Short Introduction* [London, 1945], p. 29; cf. his *The Jewish New Year Festival* [London, 1947], pp. 195 ff.).

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he cries out, he shouts aloud,
he shows himself mighty against his foes (Isa. 42:10-13).

If at the Exodus Yahweh saved his people by making ‘a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters,’ now he is to save them by making ‘a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert’ (Isa. 43:16, 19). Even the ancient conflict imagery is invoked once again, to link this new deliverance with those which Yahweh wrought in ages past. So, in Isa. 51:9 f., Yahweh’s power is apostrophized:

Awake, awake, put on strength,
O arm of Yahweh;
awake, as in days of old,
the generations of long ago.
Was it not thou that didst cut Rahab in pieces,
that didst pierce the dragon?
Was it not thou that didst dry up the sea,
the waters of the great deep;
that didst make the depths of the sea a way
for the redeemed to pass over?

This appeal is followed immediately by the assurance:

And the ransomed of Yahweh shall return
and come with singing to Zion.

As then, so now; as Yahweh once brought his people out of Egypt, so (prays the prophet) let him now bring them out of their captivity in Babylonia.

It is in Isa. 40-55 more than anywhere else in the Old Testament that Yahweh’s essential character as the Saviour God is emphasized. He is repeatedly called his people’s *gō’ēl*, their kinsman-redeemer;²⁷ he brings near his righteousness²⁸ which is at once his own victorious vindication and the deliverance of his

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people; he alone is Yahweh, ‘and besides me’, he says, ‘there is no saviour’ (Isa. 43:11)—

a righteous God and a Saviour;
there is none besides me (Isa. 45:21).

‘A righteous God and a Saviour’—*ṣaddîq* and *môšîa’*. Practically the same two epithets are given by a later prophet to the future king whom he describes as coming for the deliverance of Jerusalem from other overlords than the Babylonians:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!

²⁶ Heb. *’iš milḥāmāh*, as in Exod. 25:3.

²⁷ E.g., in Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:5, 8.

²⁸ His *ṣēdāqāh*, with which his *tešū’ āh* stands in synonymous parallelism (Isa. 46:13).

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Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Lo, your king comes to you;
triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on an ass,
on a colt the foal of an ass (Zech. 9:9).

‘Triumphant and victorious is he’—*šaddîq wenosa’ hu’*²⁹—the description is almost identical with that of Yahweh in Isa. 45:21, although the ordinary reader of the RSV (from which most of the biblical quotations in this article are taken) might not suspect it. The original affinity between the two passages is preserved better in the older translations, from the Septuagint (δικαίους καὶ σωτήρ in Isa. 45:21; δίκαιους καὶ σώζων in Zech. 9:9) to the RV (a just God and a saviour’... just, and having salvation’). Zion’s king Comes in Yahweh’s name to accomplish Yahweh’s work.

VIII

So, in the Gospel record, Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem in fulfilment of Zech. 9:9 presents him as the king who comes in the name of the Lord to fulfil his work of *šedâqâh* and *yešû’ âh* for his peoples³⁰—or, in a striking Lukan expression, to accomplish his Exodus at Jerusalem.³¹ In him, according to the consensus of New Testament witness, the God of Israel reveals himself supremely as the Saviour God, (δικαίους καὶ δικαιοῶν, as Paul puts it (Rom. 3:26). The presentation of the redemptive work of Christ in terms of the

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Exodus motif in so many strands of New Testament teaching³² shows how primitive was the Christian use of this motif—going back, quite probably, to the period of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus’ contemporaries freely identified him as a second Moses—the expectation of a second Moses played an important part in popular eschatology at the time³³—and with the expectation of a second Moses went very naturally the expectation of a second Exodus. One might have thought, in view of the identity of name, that Jesus would have been more readily thought of as a second Joshua (Yahweh is salvation’). The second Joshua concept does indeed appear here and there in the New Testament³⁴—and the saving significance of the name is made explicit in Matt. 1:21 (you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins’)—but the second Moses concept is much more prominent. The coincidence of Jesus’ death with the Passover season no doubt helped the interpretation of his work as a new Exodus, in which the God of Israel had once more ‘visited and redeemed his people’.

Traces are not lacking, either, even in the New Testament, of the conflict imagery which was repeatedly used in Old Testament times to set forth the saving act of God. In the teaching of

²⁹ Literally ‘righteous and delivered’ (i.e. ‘blessed with victory’).

³⁰ Cf. F. F. Bruce, ‘The Book of Zechariah and the Passion Narrative’, *BJRL* 43 (1960-I), 336 ff.

³¹ Luke 9:31.

³² Cf. 2 Cor. 5:7 f.; 20:2 1f.; Heb. 3:7 ff.; Jude 5.

³³ In terms of Deut. 28:15 ff. (cf. John 6:14; 7:40; Acts 3:22 f.; 7:37). Cf. F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (London, 1960), pp. 46 ff. [http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/qumran-exegesis_bruce.pdf]

³⁴ Cf. Heb. 4:8. The leader into the earthly rest of Canaan bears the same name as the leader into the ‘rest that remains for the people of God’.

F.F. Bruce, “‘Our God and Saviour’: A Recurring Biblical Pattern,” S.G.F. Brandon, ed., *The Saviour God. Comparative Studies in the Concept of Salvation Presented to Professor Edwin Oliver James Professor Emeritus in the University of London by Colleagues and Friends*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1963. Hbk. pp.51-66.

Jesus it finds expression in the parable of the invasion of the strong man’s fastness and the plundering of his goods by a stronger than himself.³⁵ In the Pauline writings we have the picture of the crucified Christ disarming the hostile ‘principalities and powers’ and driving them in triumph before him.³⁶

But above all it is in the Apocalypse, that ‘rebirth of images’, as Dr Austin Farrer has called it, that the primeval motif of conflict comes into its own again, this time to depict the Christian salvation. The seven-headed dragon, the age-old antagonist of righteousness, is identified with the old serpent of Eden and with the malevolent accuser of God’s elect.³⁷ But the victory over him and his minions is won in a new fashion. The conqueror-in-chief is the Davidic Messiah, ‘the lion of the tribe of Judah’, who appears however as the sacrificed Lamb restored to life after winning his victory by submission to death,³⁸ his followers share his victory by similar submission. When the dragon assaults them, ‘they have

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conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death’ (Rev. 12:11). This victory is hailed as the final manifestation and vindication of the Saviour God;³⁹ it is greeted by a loud voice proclaiming in heaven: ‘Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come’ (Rev. 12:10).

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<http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/>

³⁵ Mark 3:27 and parallels.

³⁶ Col. 2:15.

³⁷ Rev. 22:9. The dragon’s ten horns are derived from Dan. 7:7. The fact that the imperial beast of Rev. 23:2; 27:3 also has seven heads and ten horns indicates that he is an agent of the great dragon.

³⁸ Rev. 5:5 ff.

³⁹ It is followed, strikingly enough, by a ἱερός γάμος—but that is another story.