
The Exodus Propaedeutic for Spiritual Formation

Eugene H. Peterson

Spiritual formation, if it is to get off the ground, requires readiness. But not so much a readiness acquired by instruction in orienting information as in readiness of spirit—quiet receptivity and an uncluttered imagination. One of the unique and compelling aspects of the spiritual formation school of “godly play” as developed and practiced by Professor Sonja Stewart and her colleagues is the careful attention given to providing just such readiness of spirit for the children in our churches as they enter classrooms of spiritual formation.

I have long admired this care given in “godly play” for preparing readiness of spirit in our children, preparing them for all that is involved in spiritual formation in Christ. Somewhere along the line, my admiration set me up to notice the major role of a similar propaedeutic in preparing the Hebrews for salvation, which is the centerpiece of all spiritual formation.

The story is told in Exodus. This is our paradigmatic Old Testament story of salvation. The transition from Egyptian slavery to salvation freedom did not take place overnight. The people weren’t ready. They had lived in Egypt too long (430 years!) to have retained any concept of or imagination for salvation. They had Egypt in their genes. They required readiness. And it took awhile.

The story of the salvation event itself, which formed the Hebrews as the saved people of God, is told in the space of three and a half chapters (12:33 - 15:21). But the story of getting the people ready to embrace and participate in that event takes over twelve chapters (1:1 - 12:32). It is these first twelve Exodus chapters that I want to reflect on as I consider their continuing significance as a propaedeutic for spiritual formation.

In reading Exodus we get a detailed sense of the way spiritual formation works in history at large but also in our history. It is “. . . the basic revelation of the pattern of divine salvific activity in all ages”¹ If we are to get it right, it is essential that we rid our imaginations of understandings inappropriate to the reality of the salvation story revealed in our biblical witness. It is far too common among us to turn “spiritual formation” into abstractions or principles that we then fill out with our fantasies or ideas. Salvation is the most focused and comprehensive term we have for the field in which we do our work in spiritual formation. Salvation, as understood by Israel and Jesus, keeps spiritual formation storied and participatory. What salvation definitely is not is a last-ditch effort to salvage a few planks and timbers from a wrecked ship. “Salvation” comes to us, not as isolated words or phrase fragments, but embedded in a large story that has

plot and characters centuries in the development and telling. The energies of salvation send out tentacles into every nook and cranny of history. Salvation is an immense ecological system, rivaling creation in complexity, in which everything affects and is affected by everything else.

Exodus opens by establishing continuity with Genesis, particularly with the family of Jacob (“seventy souls”) that had emigrated from Canaan to Egypt to escape a Canaanite famine. They escaped the famine but ended up as cruelly used slaves.

So the Exodus salvation story begins with the people of God deeply mired in history at its worst: they have been slaves in Egypt for 430 years, “their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick” (1:14 and 12:40). Donald Gowan, in his penetrating study of Exodus, writes that “. . . if we read the story as it is told and compare it with other low points in Israel’s history as the Old Testament tells it, we may conclude that this has been depicted as the darkest moment of all.”² This is a significant discernment. It means that our classic story of salvation does not build on anything that we have done or can do either as individuals or societies. It is initiated in conditions of human impossibility, all odds stacked against it. We are blocked from going into a huddle, calculating our chances, and working out a plan. At this historical dead end our imaginations, unencumbered with social, political, and therapeutic strategies, are free to pay attention to God.

Historians conventionally assemble the achievements of nations and civilizations in order to establish the nature and meaning of their influence in the course of human affairs. Kings and generals are prominent. Buildings and monuments are given respectful attention. Language is studied and literary remains carefully assessed. Trade routes with their economic implications are traced. Battles and treaties, floods and famines all leave their mark.

Egypt is a showcase for such attention by historians. For more than two hundred years now, ancient Egypt has come under the delighted and avid scrutiny of archaeologists and philologists. Napoleon Bonaparte kicked off the rediscovery in 1798 by sailing from France and challenging the power of England in Egypt. His military campaign soon failed, but there was an unexpected benefit: he had brought scholars and artists with him, and they gathered a rich harvest of ancient documents. One particularly dramatic prize was the Rosetta Stone, a slab of black basalt with an inscription in three languages, one of which was Egyptian written in impenetrable hieroglyphs. A young French scholar, Jean Francois Champollion, after many years of hard labor, succeeded in deciphering the hieroglyphics. The year was 1822. Men and women have been searching ever since through the gigantic tombs and temples of Egypt, reading the written texts, and reconstructing the history of this magnificently impressive world-dominating civilization. We know so much! The Giza pyramids and sphinx, the Karnak Temple, the military triumphs and defeats, the storied and carved gods and goddesses. The American scholar James Henry Breasted (1865-1935) set himself to translating and putting all the

evidence together. He has been followed by a succession of great scholars with an unending gaggle of tourists traipsing along behind with cameras and camels, oohing and aahing in the presence of such magnificence. The evidence of power and beauty imposed on that desert landscape three and four and five thousand years ago never fails to stagger our imaginations.

But the biblical writers ignore all that. They have little interest in the spectacular achievements of men and women. They are not interested in arrogant displays of ego. They are interested in God and know better than to look for signs of his presence and activity in the big, the multitudinous, the in-your-face assertive. They come at history more in the spirit and manner of poet William Meredith:

I speak of the unremarked
Forces that split the heart
And make the pavement toss—
Forces concealed in quiet
People and plants³

The Exodus account of getting the people ready to be formed into a life of salvation features two interrelated stories, the story of the Bush and the story of the Ten Plagues. What we are getting set up for is a God story, not a “me” story. Spiritual formation is endlessly bedeviled by the self pushing itself into center stage, the ego strutting its stuff as the star of the show. But even though everything in spiritual formation necessarily involves us, the essential and primary focus is God. The salvation story is a God story. It is God doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves. It is also God doing this in his own way and not to our dictates or preferences. He does not consult us regarding matters of timing or method.

This requires constant iteration. We humans, with our deep-seated pretensions to being gods, are endlessly preoccupied with worrying and tinkering with matters of salvation as if we were in charge of it. But we are not. God carries out the work of salvation, not, to be sure, without our participation. But it is God’s work done in God’s way.

The Burning Bush

God became present to Moses as he was tending a flock in the Midian wilderness. A burning bush that didn’t burn up caught Moses’ attention, and he approached it to see what was going on. God spoke Moses’ name from the flames of the bush and Moses answered. Conversation between God and Moses developed. God announced his intention to deliver his people from Egyptian slavery and told Moses that he wanted him to lead them out to “a good and broad land.” Moses was reluctant but after considerable back-and-forthness agreed, received his instructions, and the action was launched (Exodus 3-4).

I AM THAT I AM is God's answer when Moses asks him for an identifying name. The sentence is seismic. I AM THAT I AM—God's name for himself—tells Moses that God is alive and present to him and ready to enact salvation. This God-revealing Name, and the understandings that developed as it was used in prayer and obedience by the Hebrew people, marks the deconstruction of every kind and sort of impersonal, magical, manipulative coercive way of understanding God. Listening to and answering I AM THAT I AM places the Hebrew people as participating witnesses in the grand historical drama of salvation that challenges and brings about the eventual dissolution of every counter way of life, the world principalities and powers against which Paul would later issue a call to arms (Eph. 6:10-20); "all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor" that Jesus refused to bargain for with the devil (Matt. 4:8-10). Worshiping I AM THAT I AM developed into a way of life in Israel in which love defined relationships, all of them, no exceptions—God, neighbor, stranger, enemy, family. Serving and obeying I AM THAT I AM became an exploration in all the dimensions of freedom, freedom from sin and oppression and damnation.

I AM THAT I AM, this verb-dominated, life-emphatic sentence by which God willed to be understood, was shortened to a name of four letters YHWH, probably pronounced Yahweh (and usually translated as "Lord" in English). It became the primary term among the Hebrews for address and reference to the self-revealing God of Israel, used 6,700 times in the Old Testament as compared to the 2,500 occurrences of the generic Semitic term for divinity, *Elohim* (translated into English simply as "God").

The Name spoken from the burning bush marked the definitive revelation of God as present to us and personal with us—God here among us, a living God in relation with us. No more gods of sticks and stones. No more gods to be appeased or bribed or courted. No more gods decked out in abstractions for philosophical speculation.

The name, I AM THAT I AM, has been studied, examined, probed, and meditated by an endless succession of scholars and saints in many languages, in attempts to pin it down, define it, say what it means. The most conspicuous result of this mountainous effort stretching now for well over two thousand years is how inconclusive it is. There is no "result."

God cannot be defined. "Yahweh" is not a definition.⁴ God cannot be reduced to an "object" even of our inquiry or search. The earlier God names among the people of God are nouns: the generic God (*Elohim*), God of the Fathers (*Elohey Avoth*), God Almighty (*El Shaddai*), God the Most High (*El Elyon*), God of Hosts (*Elohey Tsvaoth*). They continue to be useful but they all now must be understood under the primacy of the Verb that cannot be pinned down, cannot be put under the scrutiny of an examination, but can only be received or responded to. God is actively present to us, and our only option is to be actively present in our turn. Or not. In this regard Th. C. Vriezen emphasizes

the actuality of God: “‘I am who I am’ means, ‘I am there, wherever it may be . . . I am really there!’”⁵ The parallel in Exodus 33:19 confirms this.

Is the Name purposely enigmatic? Revelational but not telling everything? Disclosing intimacy, personal presence, but preserving mystery, forbidding possession and control? A verbal icon for all God-initiated relationships in faith and friendship and marriage?

I think so.

The Bush and the Name are in contrast to everything that was going on in Egypt at the time. Egypt represented the ultimate in control, controlling a large slave population, controlling the afterlife, controlling a world empire, controlling a huge stable of gods and goddesses, as if by reducing them to stone, gigantic and magnificent as the stones were, through their elaborate priestly machinations they could control history. But that is not the way history works; that is the death of history. History is a field for salvation. Dealing with people as objects is a violation of the primary work of history, which is salvation. And reducing God to an object (or idea or definition) so that we can control God is an outrageous absurdity no matter how solemnly carried out (and the Egyptians were nothing if not solemn). In the revelation of the Name at the Bush, by withholding a definition God preserves his freedom so that we can have our freedom. Gerhard von Rad puts it this way: “What is of greatest importance is that this name could not properly be objectified and disposed of—its secret could not in any way be reduced to a theological interpretation of its meaning, not even the one in Exodus 3:14. Yahweh had bound it up with the free manifestation in history of his self-revelation in history.”⁶

The Ten Plagues

A major difficulty in embracing our local history as the field for spiritual formation, particularly when spiritual formation is understood under the lens of a biblically comprehensive salvation, is the sheer mass of relentless and assertive counter evidence. Some find this insurmountable. The loudest and most conspicuous players on the field of history are playing quite a different game than Christ is. Most people—and certainly those who get their names in the history books—are playing other games by different rules: war games, self games, money games, sex games, board games, baseball games, hunting and fishing games, church games, games ranging from lethal to trivial. Sin and death games.

Many if not all of these games are associated with outright claims or implicit assumptions that the games will lift the lives of those who play them out of the ordinary into something more interesting, more exciting, more meaningful. Banish boredom. Invite excellence. Offer company with the elite. Establish power. It is not difficult to detect at least a hint of transcendence in all this, to pick up muted god-voices and god-claims advertising their wares, pretending to help, save, entertain, improve, empower. Even if the word is not used, and it

seldom is, some variation or other on salvation is suggested—we will be rescued from a condition in which we feel stuck, anything ranging from boredom to misery, and have a better life. But in the long run, they don't amount to much, and certainly nothing that would qualify as salvation.

Christian spirituality makes bold to claim that there is only one game on the field of history and that is salvation. Everything that happens, everything that men and women do, happens on this playing field on and over which God is sovereign.

But it takes some doing for us to see that. It took some doing for Israel to see that, but see it they did, and here is how it came about.

In approximately 1250 B.C., the people of Israel were living in Egypt as slaves and had been for over four centuries. Egypt at this time was a world power and had been for a long time. Egypt had developed and perfected one of the most impressive god-games of all, dominating the landscape, dominating the imaginations of people far and near, a totalitarian society ruled by a dictator whom everyone believed was also a god. The splendor surrounding the dictator-god made it believable: breathtaking architecture, dazzling art, everything magnificent in gold. But the splendor was all external; inside, the place was crawling with maggots—abuse, cruelty, superstition, degradation. The Hebrews were right there in the middle of it but obviously and hopelessly on the losing side. They didn't know that there was another reality already in existence. As far as they were concerned, Egypt was the only game in town. After 430 years in Egypt the memory of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph would have been well-nigh obliterated.

With all this going on, it is difficult to apprehend what God is doing in history, or even if he is doing anything at all. In order for the people of God to be able to recognize and respond to God's revelation and work as I AM THAT I AM, they are going to have to see this Pharaonic morass of lies and oppression, this pervasive and outrageous violation of human life, for what it is, as evil, an evil which is *not* ultimate, *not* the last word. They require a massive renovation in their understanding of Egyptian reality. Typically, people who suffer long and much come to see their oppressors as powerful, *world*-powerful and therefore at the top of the hierarchy of human achievement. The Hebrews had suffered long and much, an oppression underwritten by a most impressive religion—all those temples and statues and priests! Everywhere they looked they could see that not only were the Egyptians against them, the *gods* were against them. However much they protested their place as oppressed slaves in the system, the system was the only reality they knew. It was impossible to imagine anything else. If by some miracle they became free of their slave condition, they would almost certainly take their place higher up in the chain of oppression and function as oppressors themselves. This kind of thing happens all the time—in families, businesses, revolutionary governments, bureaucracies, and churches.

So how was Moses to rip off the veneer of all this power and majesty and beauty and success and expose it as evil, so that when he led his people out of

Egypt they would not carry their Egyptian experience with them for the rest of their lives as the approved reality, the only reality, and then simply reproduce it when they arrived in the country of their salvation? If Moses led them out of Egypt with their imaginations still controlled by Egypt, it wouldn't be long before they would be repeating the "way of Egyptian success" themselves. As far as they knew, this is what worked, and had worked for at least a thousand years. If their imaginations were not thoroughly cleansed from the evil that they were immersed in, they would end up doing the same thing as soon as they were in power themselves, oppressing the weak and trampling on the helpless, bullying those under them with Might and Size in the name of whatever gods there were.

This is where the Ten Plagues come in. The Ten Plagues were employed to expose the emptiness of evil, purge the Hebrew minds of all envious admiration of evil, and systematically demolish every god-illusion or god-pretension that evil uses to exercise power over men and women. William Blake wrote of the necessity of cleansing the "doors of perception"⁷ if we want to see what is really going on in life, salvation in this case, not just what is reported in the newspapers. Each of the Ten Plagues was an ammonia-laced scrub bucket of suds for just such a cleansing.

When our minds and spirits succumb to the *rule* of evil, not just its physical effects, we come under the sway of the demonic. Pharaoh was the embodiment of such rule in Egypt. The Ten Plagues are an elaborate exorcism, a casting out of the demons, that freed the imaginations of the Hebrews from domination by evil so that they are free to hear and follow their Savior and worship God "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). When Moses began his work with his Hebrew brothers and sisters, their spirits were "broken" (6:9) and the only "truth" they had access to was this huge Egyptian lie. But Egypt and Pharaoh are not the "real world." They are the real world defaced, desecrated, demonized. The Ten Plagues will deconstruct this magnificent fraud item by item and piece by piece until there is nothing left of it to hold the imagination of the people of God. The exorcising drama of the Ten Plagues will free the Hebrews from this Egyptian way of understanding reality, clearing the mind to accept God's revelation reality, energizing their spirits to live in the world of salvation. The intent is that by the time they leave Egypt, they will not only be physically free of the evil oppression but mentally free of the evil imagination that had crushed the life out of them for so long. The Ten Plagues will cleanse the "doors of perception" so that Israel will see life in a totally different way—the unreality of Egypt exposed; the untruth of Egypt laid bare—and set them free to live a different life when they get out of Egypt, free to live the freedom of salvation. For over four hundred years they have lived in a world that fused political power and religious myth to form a demonic culture of arrogance and privilege for a few and slavery and degradation for many. This way of experiencing the world had penetrated deep into their genes by this time. It is going to require radical surgery to get it out. The Ten Plagues are that surgery.

What is primarily at issue in the Ten Plagues is sovereignty. Each of the Ten Plagues was a staging ground for a test of sovereignty. Who is in charge here? Who is running this show? The god Re represented by the Pharaoh? Or Yahweh represented by Moses? Each plague in turn deals with that question, another round in the World-Cup Sovereignty Match. Pharaoh embodies the person and presence of the great Egyptian god Re; Moses is the prophet of the God who revealed himself to Israel as I AM THAT I AM.

Pharaoh and Moses confront one another, round after round, the whole country an arena packed with spectators. Egyptians and Hebrews alike watch every move. The stakes are high. Interest is intense. Two ways of life are at stake. Ten times they go at each other. Each time Moses wins.

The overall significance of the plagues is that each plague has to do with some aspect or another of creation or the workings of creation, a part of the way things worked in the natural, ordinary course of everyday life, with which everyone was familiar. None of the plagues is supernatural as such; each is part of the natural order. And everyone, of course, knew that Pharaoh was in charge of them all, in charge of keeping the cosmic order—that's what a Pharaoh did, that was his job description.

But as Pharaoh and Moses repeatedly go head to head, one after another of the life forms and forces over which everyone had always assumed that Pharaoh was sovereign turn out to be at Moses' back and call, not Pharaoh's. Everyone in the arena—it's a full house, the entire population packed in—sees that Pharaoh is completely out of control. Each successive plague displays his humiliating impotence on a larger screen. Moses, prophet of Yahweh, launches and then banishes each plague. Pharaoh's vaunted sovereignty is systematically dismantled. The huge, elaborately maintained fraud, that Pharaoh controls the behind-the-scenes workings of the world, is exposed as a lie. Moses makes a monkey of Pharaoh (10:2).

Or, to change the image, the plagues are like a dramatic production in ten scenes, with the nation assembled in a playhouse. In each scene a huge, steel wrecking ball is swung from a great height and smashes another piece of the Egyptian way of life, each strike a demolition, reducing item by item the intricately fashioned myth of Egyptian invulnerability, of Pharaonic sovereignty. The massive Egyptian world, sanctioned by thousands of years of precedence, staggered the imagination, especially the slave imagination. Egypt's gigantic statues of gods, its elaborate temples, and then, the biggest lie of all, those immense pyramid tombs rising out of the desert with their bold claim to be preserving a mummified king corpse for transport into everlasting life, were totally intimidating. If you live in a country like that, there is not much room to imagine anything other than that. There is a bullying quality to Might and Size.

Each plague, relentless, inexorable, crashed into the pretensions of Egyptian sovereignty, blow by blow by blow. The Ten Plagues drama gets off to something of a slow start. The first two Plagues that Moses brings on stage, Blood and Frogs, were matched by Pharaoh's magicians—a standoff. By the

third, the Mosquito Plague, the magicians were clearly out of their depth, no longer able to match Moses blow for blow. After the sixth, the Boils Plague, the magicians were not only bested, they were incapacitated, put out of action by the boils. We hear no more of them. The four final Plagues, anchored by the Death Plague, settle the sovereignty issue decisively. Pharaoh is skunked.

For the people in the theater, there may even have been a slapstick, cartoon-like quality to the succession of plagues as the steel wrecking ball did its work:

Blood (Pow!)
Frogs (Pow!)
Mosquitoes (Pow!)
Flies (Pow!)
Pestilence (Pow!)
Boils (Pow!)
Hail (Pow!)
Locusts (Pow!)
Darkness (Pow!)
Death (Pow!)

Each blow further loosened the hold of that immense, world-dominating Egyptian/pharaonic lie on the people, until there was nothing left but a pile of rubble, garbage, and corpses. The Demolition Drama, in ten scenes, played to a packed house for a little over eight months.

It has long been conventional to interpret the Ten Plagues as acts of judgment on Egypt. But that is not the way the story is told. For one thing, the word judgment is only used three times (6:6, 7:4, 12:12), and even these uses have more to do with God's power and righteousness than Egyptian sin. And the word "sin" is only used once and that comes from Pharaoh's lips about himself (9:27).

No, the Ten Plagues are used to discredit the Pharaoh's claim to sovereignty and establish the sovereignty of Yahweh in its place. Just that.

However, they also serve an important function in calling attention to a major concern in spiritual formation, namely, the critical passage involved in the transition from one sovereignty to another. I have used several images to convey the effect of the Ten Plagues on those who experienced them: exorcism, surgery, an athletic contest, a demolition drama. Of these, exorcism is most useful in capturing the heart of the matter, for exorcism conveys the radical inwardness of what has to be done, freeing us from the grip of the demonic that is defiant of God's rule and oppresses our imagination.

The Ten Plagues exorcise the demonic assumptions and understandings that prevent a full embrace, body and soul, of God's salvation. In the Exodus story the Israelites are being prepared for salvation; in order to continue in the salvation life they require a disciplined and chastened imagination, free of the dirt and stink and abuse in which they had lived for so long, free to hear the word

of grace and forgiveness, to recognize the world of providence and blessing, to live a life of free obedience and joyful worship.

This assessment of the spiritual effect of the Ten Plagues is supported by the careful exegesis of Donald Gowan. Gowan points out that “know” runs through the entire plague section (6-14) “like a thread that holds it all together” (6:7; 7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 29; 10:2, 11:7; 14:4, 18).⁸ That observation sends us back to the first meeting of Moses and Aaron as they ask Pharaoh for permission to take the Hebrews into the wilderness to sacrifice. Pharaoh is sarcastic: “Who is Yahweh, that I should heed his voice and let Israel go? *I do not know Yahweh*, and moreover I will not let Israel go” (5:2, emphasis added). We who know what is coming think, “Well, he certainly will get to know very soon.” He is about to be sent to school to repair his ignorance and the Ten Plagues will be the curriculum. But it is not just the Pharaoh who will be in that classroom—the whole country will be there, with the Israelites in the front rows. Gowan again: “Knowledge is the expressed aim of the plagues.”

They (and we!) have so much to learn. The Ten Plagues, by exorcising the sovereignty of evil from their imaginations, go a long way towards ridding Israel of its ingrained Egyptian view of history so that they are free to conceive the immense country of salvation under the sovereignty of I AM THAT I AM, knowledge that provides a solid structure for their unfolding life.

Salvation

Spiritual formation is the attention we give and the work we do to take in and get in on the endless ramifications of salvation. It always exceeds our powers of understanding and imagining. We will never get our minds around it. We see well enough what is going on: God is at work in history; he heals and helps; he forgives and blesses; he takes a creation in ruins because of human willfulness and patiently begins to make a new creation of it; he takes a world corrupted by evil and begins the long, slow work of transforming it into a holy place. But we see all this in bits and pieces, moments and fragments. It is understandable that we often reduce salvation to a handful of these moments or fragments. It is understandable that we often reduce salvation to a handful of these moments or fragments. But we must not. We are dealing with God’s work in history on a scale of comprehensiveness that ever eludes us but at the same time with God at work in the local conditions to which we are so often inattentive. St. Paul, wrapping up his excursus on God’s salvation work in history in his Letter to the Romans, is appropriately in awe of what we will never grasp: “O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” (Rom. 11:33).

But if we can’t overstate the significance of salvation, we can certainly misconstrue it. We can read our own ideas into what we think salvation ought to be. We can spin escapist fantasies of salvation that project either our ignorance or our sin (usually both) onto a large screen of desire. When we do that we

incapacitate ourselves from entering into the actual salvation that God is working right now all around us. We also commonly end up with a lot of anger or frustration or bitterness when we find that God doesn't do all the things that we imagined he must do if he is any kind of God at all.

The Burning Bush and the Ten Plagues of Exodus are "gatekeepers" to prevent such misunderstandings of salvation. They prevent spiritual formation from becoming "our thing," a strategy or program for doing something that will make us and the world around us fit for heaven pretty much on our own terms. But salvation is never our thing. It is God's work in history in "ways past finding out" (Rom. 11:33 AV). Spiritual formation is our part in getting ready for it, preparing our imaginations and spirits for what God is doing "in the earth" (Psalms 74:12).

ENDNOTES

¹ George A. F. Knight, *Theology as Narration* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 20.

² Donald E. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 6.

³ "Chinese Banyan" from William Meredith, *The Open Sea* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1958).

⁴ Gowan, *Theology in Exodus*, 84: "God will do as Moses asks. He intends to reveal his name, but first he reserves his freedom not in any sense to be defined by name. Israel will be able to address him, but not possess him."

⁵ Quoted in Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 69.

⁶ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (New York: Harper, 1962), 1.185.

⁷ *Selected Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. Northrop Frye (New York: The Modern Library, 1953), 129.

⁸ Gowan, *Theology in Exodus*, 134.