

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament · 2. Reihe 36

Markus N. A. Bockmuehl

Revelation and Mystery



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Begründet von Joachim Jeremias und Otto Michel
Herausgegeben von
Martin Hengel und Otfried Hofius

36

Revelation and Mystery

in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity

by

Markus N. A. Bockmuehl



J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) Tübingen

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For my mother Elisabeth
and in memory of my father Klaus
(May 6, 1931 – June 10, 1989)

אֲשֶׁר־יִזְכְּרוּ עוֹלָמוֹתָם בְּיָמֵי
עֲבָרֵי בְעֵמֶק הַבְּכָא מִעֵין יְשִׁיתָהוּ
גַם־בְּרִכּוֹת יַעֲטָה מוֹרָה יֵלְכוּ מִחֵיל אֱלֹהֵי
יִרְאַה אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהִים בְּצִיּוֹן:

Psalm 84:6–8 (5–7)

Preface

It was during an undergraduate course in classical studies and philosophy that I first developed an interest in the theory of knowledge, and in religious epistemology in particular. When I moved into the area of biblical studies during my subsequent work in theology, I became increasingly intrigued by the meaning and significance of the Bible's talk of divine disclosures and revelations. In particular, I wanted to discover how revelation "works" in the texts of Ancient Judaism and the New Testament, i. e., at a time when a significant body of sacred writings (whether formally "closed" or not) had already come to be generally accepted as authoritative Scripture. In order to channel this interest into a manageable critical investigation, I further decided to focus especially on the recurring motif of a revelation of divine secrets or "mysteries".

This research, then, first took shape in something like the present form as a 1987 Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Cambridge. Since then it has undergone a number of changes, chiefly consisting in the addition of Chapter 11 and the evaluation of such additional secondary literature as became available to me until the spring of 1989.

A comprehensive bibliography is almost by definition impossible in a work like this. Nevertheless, I feel compelled to mention two or three works which I should very much like to have seen before submitting the work to the publisher. Volume 2 of Peter Schäfer's *Konkordanz zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (TSAJ 13, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1988) as well as volume 1 of his *Übersetzung der Hekhalot-Literatur* (vol. 2 appeared in 1987 as TSAJ 17) have not been accessible to me. The former especially would have been a significant help in trading the use of pertinent words such as סוד, סתר, רז etc. in the Jewish mystical writings.

Two apparently important new works have only just come to my attention within the last few weeks; here I can do no more than to mention them. Peter Kuhn's *Offenbarungsstimmen im Antiken Judentum: Untersuchungen zur "bat qol" und verwandten Phänomenen*, TSAJ 20 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1989), promises to offer much additional insight especially into some of the material discussed in Chapter 7 below. For the further theological integration which the results of this research call for, I should have liked to evaluate E. J.

Lott, *Vision, Tradition, Interpretation, Religion and Reason* 35 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1988).

For the production of this book I am indebted to the help of many – even though its remaining flaws and shortcomings are of course solely my own responsibility. My special thanks, however, are due to several people without whose counsel and support the project could not have seen the light of day.

First of all I am deeply grateful to my Cambridge *Doktorvater*, Dr. W. Horbury, for his tireless generosity and friendship in guiding, challenging and correcting my course of research throughout. Cheerful and unassuming in his depth and comprehensiveness of learning, always committed to a balanced and sympathetic reading of the ancient sources, he has been to me a model of the scholar of Scripture who “makes glad both God and mankind” (m. Abot 6:1, ed. Herford). I also wish to thank Professor M. D. Hooker, whose perceptive supervision during my first term in Cambridge helped to set my research on course.

The Association of Commonwealth Universities provided generous financial support of my postgraduate research through a Commonwealth Scholarship. My thanks must go also to the Tyndale House Council for library privileges, and to the Tyndale House librarian, Mr. D. Deboys, for his frequent generous assistance.

I wish to thank Prof. M. Hengel for accepting this work for publication in the WUNT series. Mr. Ulrich Gaebler and his team at J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) have provided friendly and competent assistance in the production of the book. Mr. Paul Spilsbury kindly helped in checking the proofs, while Mr. Barry Nielsen compiled the Index of Passages and the Index of Modern Authors.

Finally, my deepest thanks go to my parents, who first taught me about revelation and the mystery of God in Christ. I have always been assured of their faithful and unwavering support, even when at times the relevance of my research may not have seemed apparent. And although it pleased God in His mercy and wisdom to call my father home before these words could appear in print, it would be sufficient tribute if these pages occasionally showed that his son *sequiturque patrem non passibus aequis*.

Vancouver, B. C.

June 15, 1989.

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List of Abbreviations

1. The system of abbreviations of Biblical books as well as of periodicals, reference works, and serial publications follows that of the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, with the following exceptions and additions (for fuller information see the Bibliography):

ADPB	<i>The Authorised Daily Prayer Book of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth of Nations</i>
BHM	Jellinek, <i>Bet ha-Midrash</i>
BibSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
CPJ	<i>Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum</i>
EWNT	<i>Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> . Edited by H. Balz und G. Schneider. 3 Vols. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1980-1983.
FJB	<i>Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge</i>
Jastrow	<i>Jastrow, Dictionary</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
KIP	<i>Der kleine Pauly: Lexikon der Antike</i> . Edited by K. Ziegler and W. Sontheimer. 5 Vols. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, © 1979.
M-L	Montefiore/Loewe, <i>A Rabbinic Anthology</i>
MHG	M. H. Segal, <i>A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew</i> (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972).
NHL	<i>The Nag Hammadi Library in English</i> . Edited by J. M. Robinson. Leiden: Brill, 1977.
NIGTC	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
NJB	The New Jerusalem Bible
SHR	Studies in the History of Religion
SHVL	Skrifter Utgivna av. Kungl. Humanistiska Vetenskapsamfundet i Lund
TEV	Today's English Version (Good News Bible)
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
α'	Aquila
σ'	Symmachus
ϑ'	Theodotion

2. Abbreviations of the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) are according to J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Major Publications and Tools for Study*, SBLSPS 8 (Missoula: Scholars Press, © 1977).

3. Abbreviations of Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Rabbinic and Patristic literature are according to J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha [=OTP]*, 2 Vols. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), with the following exceptions and additions:

Abot	Pirque Abot	Mek	Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael
<i>Apol</i> 1–2	Justin, <i>Apology</i> 1–2	MidrPsa	Midrash Tehillim
Asclsa	Ascension of Isaiah	<i>MM</i>	<i>Memar Marqah</i>
BM	Baba Mešia	MQ	Mo'ed Qatan
BQ	Baba Qamma	ParJer	<i>Paraleipomena Jeremiou</i>
Cant R	Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah	Taan	Ta'anit
<i>Dial</i>	Justin, <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>	Tg	Targum
<i>Diogn</i>	<i>Epistle to Diognetus</i>	TJ	Targum Jonathan to the Prophets
<i>EpApost</i>	<i>Epistula Apostolorum</i>	TJac	Testament of Jacob
EpBarn	Epistle of Barnabas	TN	Targum Neofiti I to the Pentateuch
FT	Fragment-Targums to the Pentateuch	TNgl	Marginal Glosses to Targum Neofiti I
Git	Gittin	TO	Targum Onkelos to the Pentateuch
HermVis/	Shepherd of Hermas: Visions/	TPsJ	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (Yerushalmi) to the Pentateuch
HermSim	Similitudes	TR	Teacher of Righteousness
IgnEph/	Ignatius: Ephesians/	VitAd	Life of Adam and Eve
IgnMagn/	Magnesians/	VitProph	Lives of the Prophets
IgnPhld/	Philadelphians/		
IgnPol/	Polycarp/		
IgnRom/	Romans/		
IgnSmyr/	Smyrnaeans/		
IgnTrall	Trallians		
MartPol	Martyrdom of Polycarp		

4. Works of Josephus are referred to as follows:

<i>Ant</i>	<i>Biblical Antiquities</i>	<i>BJ</i>	<i>The Jewish War</i>
<i>Ap</i>	<i>Against Apion</i>	<i>Vita</i>	<i>Life of Josephus</i>

5. Abbreviations for Philo's treatises follow the Loeb Classical Library edition (e.g. vol. 10, p. xxxv), omitting all punctuation and with the following exceptions:

<i>Cont</i>	<i>De Vita Contemplativa</i>	<i>Prob</i>	<i>Quod Omnis Probus Liber sit</i>
<i>Her</i>	<i>Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres Sit</i>	QE 1–4	<i>Quaestiones et Solutiones in Exodum</i> 1–4
<i>Immut</i>	<i>Quod Deus Immutabilis sit</i>	QG 1–2	<i>Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesim</i> 1–2
LA 1–3	<i>Legum Allegoriae</i> 1–3	Spec 1–4	<i>De Specialibus Legibus</i> 1–4
LG	<i>De Legatione ad Gaium</i>		
Opif	<i>De Opificio Mundi</i>		

6. Other abbreviations follow established usage.

Citation Procedure for Secondary Literature

All secondary sources are cited by the author's name and a convenient short (or in some cases abbreviated) title. In ambiguous cases this short title will be identified under the author's name in the bibliography.

Foreign language works are cited according to the original where this has been easily accessible; otherwise available translations have been used.

The dating procedure for ancient Rabbis is explained in n. 1 of Chapter 7. The sigla used are e. g. T3 = third generation Tanna, A2 = second generation Amora, etc.

In Chapter 9–11 the pertinent commentaries are cited by author and page number only (e. g. Cranfield 1:137).

Introduction

Problem Definition and Method

גל – עיני ואביטה נפלאות מתורתך.

Psalm 119:18.

Mysteria sunt doctrinae coelestes, quae citra
DEI revelationem ignorantur ab hominibus.

J. A. Bengel, *Gnomon*, 618 (*ad* 1 Cor 4:1).

1. Thesis Statement

Faced with the theological problems of delayed deliverance and historical theodicy, Jewish religious thought in the Hellenistic period necessarily became engaged in a close reassessment of the received tradition and of the channels of revelation. Drawing on this re-reading of their Biblical heritage, and somewhat stimulated by the increasing secrecy of the surrounding popular pagan religions, many Jews found in the notion of revealed divine mysteries the key to a renewed understanding of God's sovereignty in history and the cosmos, being offered as it were an "insider's look" at God's dealings in heaven. It is significant in this respect that the theme of revealed heavenly mysteries is continued in early Christianity with its unique affirmation of God's decisive historical intervention in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah: the later correspondence e.g. of the apostle Paul repeatedly develops the theme of Christ as the mystery "hidden for ages and generations, but now made manifest" (cf. Col 1:26).

This book, then, offers a theological study of ancient Jewish and Pauline views of the revelation of heavenly mysteries. Exegetical surveys of the respective notions of revelation will be complemented by a broadly based literary documentation of the "mystery" motif in the Old Testament and early Jewish

writings, without thereby losing sight of the influence of the Hellenistic religious milieu.¹

The particular and, it is hoped, original contribution of this study will be to locate the Jewish and Pauline understanding of such divine secrets firmly within the wider framework of corresponding views of *revelation* both “old” and “new”.

2. Definition of Terms

“A mystery”, wrote E. M. Forster, “is only a high-sounding term for a muddle.”² Modern society seems to use the word “mystery” for any sublime and nebulous truth which is marvelled at but not fully understood. Similarly, the word “revelation” today is often commandeered to describe any experience of cognitive realization (“the penny has dropped”).³

However, in irresponsible scholarship such looseness of terminology is quite unhelpful. Before proceeding any further, therefore, I would like to offer the following as my *working definitions* for the purposes of this inquiry.

1. “Revelation” designates a) any divine disclosure communicated by visionary or prophetic means, or b) the manifestation of heavenly realities in a historical context.

2. By “Mystery” is meant any reality of divine or heavenly origin specifically characterized as hidden, secret, or otherwise inaccessible to human knowledge.

Lest I incur the charge of contrived results, I hasten to add that those who sailed in quest of a golden fleece must have had from the outset some notion of what they were after: but as in that expedition, the working definitions here may justly be expected to receive considerable clarification in the course of interaction with the sources.⁴

¹ Since the chosen field of inquiry is limited to “Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity”, unfortunately no separate study of the mystery religions can here be offered. However, the most significant points of contact are noted where apposite; see especially Chapter Four below.

² *A Passage to India*, Ch. 7.

³ Cf. Tillich, “Offenbarung”, 406.

⁴ In any theme study a working definition is unavoidable; this applies particularly to the subject of revelation (cf. Guillet, “Révélation”, 601). The *broadly* outlined definition here suggested seems more suitable than pre- understandings of revelation as “proposition”, as “history”, as “experience”, “dialectical Word”, etc. (Cf. in detail Dulles, *Models*, 19–128.)

The quest for God’s *self-revelation*, once fashionable (esp. in German theology), would be another inappropriate limitation on the study of revelation. For a vigorous criticism of the idea see Downing, “Revelation”, esp. 185. However, Downing’s thesis (*Has Christianity a Revelation?*) that Biblical faith is altogether without revelation does violence to a body of texts which do appeal for their statements about God to past divine

3. Problem Definition in Relation to Previous Research

There have been a number of relevant studies on the New Testament understanding of revelation. Representative of these are the works of E. F. Scott, R. Bultmann, A. Oepke, H. Schulte, U. Wilckens, and D. Lührmann. Similarly, among the various surveys of ancient Jewish views of revelation mention may be made of O. Betz, J. Blenkinsopp, A. Chester, J. J. Petuchowski, and G. Scholem. Studies on the term “mystery” in the New Testament and its environment have been offered by many, from the excursus in J. A. Robinson’s commentary on Ephesians and G. Bornkamm’s seminal article in *TWNT* to the writings of K. Prümm, R. E. Brown, C. C. Caragounis, R. Penna, and A. E. Harvey.⁵ These works and others have been taken into account in the appropriate chapters below; my agreements and differences with several of the most important will be outlined in the Conclusion.

But although the intimate link between divine “revelation” and divine “mysteries” has sometimes been noted, rarely if ever have these two concepts been analysed *together*, in light of each other, and in their larger theological context. It is here that I would like to see my contribution: viz., in a study of the Jewish notion of heavenly mysteries as an aspect of the view of revelation.

4. Method

In approaching this project I have attempted to include significant information from a wide range of Jewish literature, the delimitation of which will be explained below. But since the primary interest of this work is in the examination of an idea (rather than a precise word study of the terms “revelation” or “mystery”), my approach to the texts has had at times to be fairly inductive. I have taken into account various Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic words denoting “disclosure” and “hiddenness”, while trying at the same time to keep an eye open for passages where the theme in question may be expressed in different terms, or where in fact it occurs only implicitly. In order to limit the scope of the investigation, the subjects of miracles, of epiphanies, and of “natural” revelation have for the most part been excluded (cf. the definition of “revelation” above). Further, my interest has not been in heavenly secrets *as such* but in “revealed secrets”, i. e. *mysteria revelata* or *revelanda*. The theme of a disclosure of *human* secrets, which occurs in our texts with perhaps surprising regularity, will be addressed only incidentally.

actions and disclosures as well as to future fulfilments of promises. For the Biblical writers, God can be loved and obeyed only because He has made His love and His will known. Cf. Dulles, *Models*, 11–13.

⁵ Full references given in the bibliography.

In the interest of methodological integrity, it is appropriate at this point to issue a caveat. This study intends to treat the ancient Jewish and Pauline literature independently, each on its own terms. There is no conscious concern to present Paul as the sum and culminating “fulfilment” of Judaism, or on the other hand to treat each in complete isolation. However, it is true that as a theologian and a historian of ideas I am trying to understand something of the religious context out of which Paul speaks; and hence it is perhaps inevitable that my investigation will be guided in part by “Pauline” questions and ideas. Nevertheless, I have endeavoured to bear this in mind, and to regard my task as one of critical perception and description rather than of systemic harmonization. My aim throughout has been to proceed from a broad textual base in the primary sources, and to note similarities as well as differences.

5. Order of Presentation

After a general introduction to the “Ancient Judaism” here in view, the structure of the argument in Part One will be to offer first a *précis* of what constitutes divine revelation in a given body of literature. This will address, where helpful, the respective view of the identity and theological place of the “original” revelation (*Uroffenbarung*: i. e. the giving of Torah, though this is sometimes expanded to include oral tradition).

The presentation will then proceed in a second step to highlight the problems and possibilities of on-going *contemporary* revelation as understood in the respective group of writings. Finally, this general overview will in each case serve as the backdrop for a more specific investigation of the nature and function of revealed heavenly mysteries for these same writers. Part One concludes with a brief attempt at a synthetic presentation of previous conclusions.

Part Two on the letters of Paul will be organized in analogous fashion. A separate introduction will be followed by a survey of the constituent elements of Paul’s view of revelation. Chapters Nine and Ten will then address the “revealed mysteries” theme in the letters to the Corinthians, Romans and Colossians, while the final Chapter surveys the remaining letters of the Pauline corpus and briefly assesses the continuing influence of the motif in the Apostolic Fathers.

Part One
Ancient Judaism

Introduction

1. Outline of an Old Testament Topology of Revelation

1.1. Religious Background

At the risk of over-simplification, the Ancient Near Eastern view of divine revelation could perhaps be summarized under three headings: the interlacing of the visible and the invisible, the world of man and the world of god; secondly, the sovereign, overruling involvement of the deity in the events, indeed *all* events, of nature and of history;¹ and finally, the disclosure of the divine character and intentions – through the threefold channels of nature, mantic technique, and the corpus of mythology and religious historiography. Mesopotamian gods frequently reveal things to man – not simply through their regular manifestations in the realm of nature, but also and more specifically by disclosing in *words* the truths about themselves and about human fate which they wish to communicate.²

Nevertheless, actual religious practice apparently never fully developed this doctrine for application in the realm of daily life. Thus, it seems that the lack of regular effectual revelation may have been compensated by means of mantic procedures.³ Notwithstanding the silence of the gods in daily life, they could still be induced to make known the answers to man's questions in other ways, such as signs and omens.⁴

¹ Cf. esp. Albrektson, *History and the Gods*.

² N. B. mythic heroes such as Gilgamesh are forever receiving special dispensations of "divine secrets": e.g. *Epic of Gilgamesh* 1:5; 11:9f., 186f., 266f. Similarly in *Poem of Adapa* 57f.; the *Etana Myth* 2:143ff.; and often. Compare Hesiod on Prometheus: *Works* 45f., 49–51. Cf. Labat, *Religions*, 39 n. 3: "La révélation des secrets des dieux est un ressort habituel du déroulement des mythes babyloniens." These mysteries tend to be concerned with secret divine knowledge about the past or about nature. Secrets of haruspicy are particularly common: Borger, "Geheimwissen", 191. On religious secrecy in Egypt see Assmann, *Re*, 23f., 195–199 and passim; Altenmüller, "Geheimnis", 510 (esp. mysteries of Hades).

³ Lutzmann, "דבר", 98, 100.

⁴ See esp. Gadd, "Methods", 25.

1.2. External Media of Revelation

Recognizable traces of such religious thought survive in the Old Testament.

1.2.1. Dreams. Basic Ancient Near Eastern dream types in the OT include (i) divine revelations; (ii) expressions of the dreamer's physical, spiritual, or mental state of health; and (iii) mantic (predictive) dreams.⁵ However, dreams as media of revelation seem relatively rare in the OT.⁶

1.2.2. Lots. Perhaps the only remaining *mechanical* medium of revelation (divination) was the sacred lot, "Urim and Thummim", which was cast "before Yahweh".⁷ Although the decision so obtained was regarded as Yahweh's final word on the matter,⁸ a conclusive answer was apparently not always available (e.g. 1 Sam 28:6; cf. 14:37). In later texts, the term גורל is often used metaphorically of an allotment or appointment, whether of land⁹ or of one's "lot" in life.¹⁰ Overall, the rare use of the lot represents a survival of "older and widespread ideas and practices which Israel shared with many other peoples."¹¹

1.2.3. Portents. Portentous events in nature or history demonstrate God's majesty, goodness, displeasure, etc.; as such they, too, are not peculiar to Israelite religion.¹²

1.2.4. Miscellaneous Signs and Symbols. Prophetic revelation could also be triggered by ordinary (but timely, hence ominous) "chance" experiences or encounters;¹³ examples include Amos's plumbline (Amos 7:7 ff.) and basket of

⁵ Thus Oppenheim, *Interpretation*, 184. Cf. Ehrlich, *Traum*, 135 on revelation dreams e.g. in Gen 20:3 ff., 31:24, 31:11 ff. See also, more recently, Gnuse, *Dream Theophany*.

⁶ According to Fohrer, *Grundstrukturen*, 39, dreams are limited to "E" (Genesis), early cultic prophecy, late prophecy and apocalyptic.

⁷ E.g. Num 27:21; cf. Lev 16:8–10. Note also the divinatory bronze altar of 2 Kgs 16:15 (Gray, *Kings*, 578 assumes haruspicy). Lindblom, *Gesichte*, 16 recognizes hydromancy in Gen 44:5.

⁸ Dommershausen, "גורל", 994; cf. e.g. Prov 16:33.

⁹ Cf. Josh, 1 Chr; and in the NT period see e.g. Luke 1:9; Acts 1:26; Josephus *BJ* 4:153 ff.

¹⁰ E.g. Isa 57:6; Dan 12:13; the meaning of גורל in such passages approaches that of חלק or נחלה. Even in this sense it can apply to the land of Israel (e.g. Psa 125:3). Cf. Sir 11:22 [Heb]; and e.g. 1 QS 11:7; 1 QSa 1:9, 20; 1 QM 1:5, 15:1, 17:7, etc. (see further below on Qumran).

¹¹ Rowley, *Faith*, 30 f. Lindblom, "Vorstellung", 279, suggests omens of divination in 2 Sam 5:22 ff. or Num 23:3 ff. (cf. 24:1); but the evidence is inconclusive.

¹² E.g. Exod 19:16 ff.; Psa 18:9 ff. (thunderstorm); 1 Kgs 19:12 ("gentle whisper" of the wind); 2 Sam 5:24 (sound of balsam trees); cf. possibly the pillar of cloud/fire (primarily a symbol of epiphany). On portentous signs in Egypt see e.g. Hornung, *Der Eine*, 122 ff. Cf. also Rowley, *Faith*, 25 f.

¹³ Fishbane (*Biblical Interpretation*, 449 ff.) sees this as an example of "mantological" interpretation, similar in kind to the reinterpretation of prophetic oracles e.g. in Daniel (and later the *peshet* at Qumran).

fruit (8:1 ff.), and Jeremiah's almond branch and boiling pot (Jer 1:11–14; cf. also 24:1 ff.), as well as his visit at the potter's workshop (18:1 ff.).¹⁴ On a somewhat different level, cultic objects such as the ark, tabernacle, sacrifice, temple, etc. serve not as media of revelation in themselves, but as pledges of Yahweh's presence; they may constitute *loci* of divine revelation.¹⁵

1.3. Prophecy and the Social and Cultic Locus of Revelation

Revelation in the Old Testament is not normally given to an individual for his private benefit. This of course is most obvious for the constitutive revelation of Torah. But elsewhere, too, individuals are chosen to *receive* revelation in order then to mediate it to the whole community: even revelations for patriarchs or kings (e.g. 2 Sam 7; 2 Kgs 20) pertain to God's intentions for His people and thus to the greater dimension of salvation history.¹⁶

The organized cult was a special focus of revelation. Prophets commonly received their visions in a cultic setting,¹⁷ and priests were the primary dispensers of תורה, instruction.¹⁸ In this sense the bearer of revelation, whether priest or prophet (or both), is almost never properly independent of the cult.¹⁹

However, it is fitting to re-emphasize the importance of the *word*: even where revelation in the OT involves visions as part of the cultic experience, it expres-

¹⁴ N. B. such "stimuli" should not be reduced to "the ordinary 'mechanics' of how the divine message came to the prophets" (thus Rogerson, *Supernatural*, 15). The prophets did distinguish between the triggering *stimulus* and the acting *source* of revelation: note e.g. Jer 18; also König, *Offenbarungsbegriff*, 2:299. Cf. the sequence of "seeing" and "hearing", vision and interpretation, in apocalyptic literature.

¹⁵ Cf. e.g. Eichrodt, "Offenbarung", 1599; Sauer, "יעד", 745; Levine, "Presence", 82.

¹⁶ Cf. Haag, "Révélation", 599.

¹⁷ Isa 6 is only the most obvious example; cf. cultic theophanies in Psa 18:7–15; 97:1–5; 114; Hab 3:34 ff.; Nah 1:3 ff. See further Kuntz, *Self-Revelation*, 215–231 and passim; Westermann (*Lob*, 75 f.) and Jeremias (*Theophanie*, 154) relate the cultic epiphany and theophany motifs respectively to the Red Sea and Sinai traditions. The frequency of cultic visions (not only in pre-exilic texts) would seem to militate against a sharp polarization between a visionary and a priestly party in Israel, posited by P. D. Hanson as the origin of apocalyptic (*Dawn*, 209 ff., 280 ff.; cf. Plöger, *Theocracy*, 45 ff.). Contrast e.g. Eaton, *Vision*, passim; Meyers, "Tôrâ", 70–74.

¹⁸ Cf. Deut [17:8–11; 19:16–19]; 31:9; 33:8, 10; Judg 18:5 f.; 1 Sam 23:9–12; 30:7 f.; Jer 2:8; 18:18; Ezek 44:23; Hos 4:6; Mic 3:11; Mal 2:7; 2 Chr 15:3. See Thomson, *Revelation*, 42 f. Also e.g. Josephus *Ap* 1:29.

¹⁹ Gyllenberg, "Kultus", 77. Note Clements, *Prophecy*, on Torah, priesthood and prophecy (71 ff.); and conversely, on the prophetic censure of cultic abuse and corruption (93 ff.).

ses and brings to bear a *message* from God.²⁰ Rendtorff's 1961 call to arms of "revelation [sc. exclusively] through history" fails to recognize that revelation in the Bible is impossible without the word: "Il n'y a révélation qu'à partir du moment où il y a parole."²¹

1.4. Revelation and the Hiddenness of God

The origins of the theme of a revelation of divine secrets can, I submit, be traced with fair probability to the Old Testament theology of God's hiddenness.

1.4.1. *The Problem of Divine Hiddenness*

Prophetic revelation and the cult granted the believer the possibility of knowing God and His intentions. But this was not an unequivocal confession: "O Lord, by your favour you made my mountain to stand strong; but when you hid your face, I was dismayed" (Psa 30:8). The Old Testament also displays an acute familiarity with God's silence and hiddenness.

This hiddenness is not an abnormality, an unfortunate occasional blemish in an otherwise predictable system of theology.²² New revelation from God may not in fact be forthcoming for long periods of time: "In those days it was rare for Yahweh to speak; visions were uncommon" (1 Sam 3:1 NJB). Characters like Job, David, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, all have to cope at one time or another with the torment and agony of God's silence. True, God's silence and absence are never His last word, and therefore the hiddenness of Yahweh is not ultimately a cornerstone of an OT theology of revelation. Nevertheless, God is not simply "available" to man, whether in daily experience or in the cult.²³

²⁰ See Psa 50:3; cf. Kraus, *Psalmen*, 1:80 (pace Mowinckel, Weiser et al.): "Die Theophanie ist ein Lautwerden der קול-יהוה (Ps 29,3 ff.). Jahwe 'redet' (דבר) und 'ruft' (קרא): Ps 50,1." He also identifies this as the distinction between theophany and the "Theoria" of Greek religion: *Theologie*, 45.

²¹ De Pury, "Sagesse", 26. See Rendtorff, "Offenbarungsvorstellungen", 40 and passim; he has since modified his view in "Offenbarung und Geschichte" (1981), e.g. 48. For the "revelation through history" debate see titles by Rendtorff, Zimmerli, Barr, Muschalek/Gamper, et al. in the bibliography.

²² Cf. Balentine's statistical observations (*Hidden God*, 7 f. (cf. 85)): on 26 occasions God is said to hide His face (סתתר); seven times He hides Himself (עלם, סתתר); and ten times the things of God are said to be hidden (סתתר, צפן, כחד, כחז).

²³ Cf. Weiser, "Beziehungen", 522: even in the cult, God's familiarity was never allowed to overshadow His mysterious awesomeness (see e.g. Psalm 68:36); this tension engendered much fruitful theological reflection in the Psalms and elsewhere. Cf. Kraus, *Psalmen*, 80 (on Psa 80:4, 94:1); Eaton, "Self-Revelation", 331; Peritt, "Verborgenheit", 373.

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