THE BIBLE, CHRISTIANITY, AND CULTURE

ESSAYS IN HONOR OF PROFESSOR PETR POKORNÝ

EDITED BY PAVOL BARGÁR

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The Bible, Christianity and Culture
Essays in Honor of Professor Petr Pokorný

Pavol Bargár (ed.)

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PREFACE

This book originated in the *Donatio Universitatis Carolinae* award and research support that Professor Petr Pokorný received in 2017. It was envisioned, designed, and originally conducted as a project exploring the biblical roots of Christian culture. Experts in various theological and philosophical disciplines, both from the Czech Republic and abroad, were to probe this topic from their particular perspectives. The hoped-for output was to be a coherent collective study of the proposed topic.

However, due to the unexpected passing away of Prof. Pokorný in early 2020, the project could not be executed according to the original plan. Rather than a collective monograph, therefore, the present book is a collection of essays that investigate various aspects of the Bible and Christianity in their relation to culture as a broad human phenomenon. The book is divided into two sections. While the first section focuses on particular issues in the Bible, the second addresses historical, philosophical, and cultural developments. As Petr Pokorný was actively and importantly involved in the initial stages of the project, two essays are written by him personally. The whole book, then, is dedicated in his honor.

I am immensely grateful to Prof. Pokorný for inviting me to be part of this project since its beginning, as project secretary, book editor, and one of the authors of the essays. Furthermore, I would like to thank all the colleagues who contributed as authors to this volume. My sincere gratitude and appreciation go to Dr. Joyce Mauler Michael for translating to English most of the essays in this book and language editing all of them. Furthermore, I am indebted to Prof. Stephen Bevans, SVD, of Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and Rev. Dr. Michael Trainor of Australian Catholic University in Adelaide for kindly reviewing the manuscript and providing their insightful comments. Finally, a special thanks goes to Karolinum Press, and particularly editor Dr. Josef Táborský, for their very professional publishing services.

Pavol Bargár
Prague, Czech Republic
June 25, 2022

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

The invitation to be involved in this project felt like a rare honor because I had a strong sense that its exploration of the Christian/biblical roots of European culture had the potential to bring scholarship out of the sacred halls of study into a perplexed and perplexing world that surely could benefit from the academy's insights. This possibility has been confirmed as I have worked on the texts that comprise this collection. However, its diversity of authors and topics has presented some unique challenges that I will seek to identify in these comments.

(1) The biblical text itself has raised some interesting dilemmas. Professor Petr Pokorný originally requested that the New Revised Standard Version be used for all biblical citations, and unless a specific translation is identified in the text or in a footnote, the NRSV has been employed throughout the book. However, in some cases, the wording of the Czech Ecumenical Translation (ČEP) was closely tied to a particular author's reflections and/or provided a valuable alternative to familiar English translations. Thus, my understanding of the ČEP is occasionally included in order to preserve the relationship between the author's thoughts and the biblical text that underlies those or to share some of the striking imagery that the Czech translation uses. A notable example of this practice occurs in the Pokorný chapter on the resurrection, where the wording of the ČEP is so critical to the discussion at some points that I have used brackets to insert my understanding of that translation into citations of the NRSV.

The content of two other chapters have also required special approaches to the biblical text: (a) Dr. Lenka Karfíková's philosophical analysis of 1 Corinthians 15:28 and the surrounding context discusses Paul's insights in relation to major works by Origen and Augustine. The NRSV translation of 1 Corinthians 15:42, 50–54 employs the terms "perishable" and "imperishable," but the official English translations of Origen and Augustine that were provided typically share the King James Version's use of the words "corruptible" and "incorruptible." Thus, for the sake of consistency and clarity, I have cited the KJV at pertinent points in that essay. (b) Dr. Jan Roskovec's reflections on Paul's views of justice and justification also posed a challenge because the Czech word "*spravedlnost*" means both "justice" and "righteousness"—which have subtle, but important, differences in connotation in English. Thus, it was

difficult to convey the radical transformation of the notion of justice that is introduced by Paul's reflections on justification using the NRSV's rendering of pertinent passages in Pauline writings where the word "righteousness" typically appears. After my first two attempts to address this difficulty fell short, I opted to use the phrase "righteous justice" to translate *spravedlnost* when the text refers to God so that the bond between justice, justification, and righteousness could be preserved. However, in the end, I handed my efforts over to two colleagues in the United States so that Dr. Roskovec's revisions could be properly represented. Thus, the present form of the chapter is the work of Professor Roskovec, Rev. John Rauhut, and Rev. L. Cean Wilson, rather than myself.

(2) The complex issue of gender neutral speech has also posed a challenge. In the case of human beings, I have rarely, if ever, used a masculine noun or pronoun to refer to an unspecified person unless such a designation was essential to an author's imagery or was required by a foreign phrase. Instead, I have usually employed plural formulations in order to avoid the awkwardness of she/he and him/her. However, I have rarely been gender neutral when it comes to God. In part, this is because the NRSV frequently does not use gender neutral terms to speak of God; thus, some amount of gendered language is unavoidable in essays which are based on that translation. However, beyond that, I perceive that many of the current options for genderless God-talk pull God into the commendable human struggle to move beyond language that breeds inequality and injustice. As noble as these efforts are, they are often—or necessarily—"engineered" by human beings, rather than inspired by the immanent otherness of the Great I Am. Thus, such attempts may become a source of confusion and conflict in the human sphere—ironically imperiling the very ideals that they seek to safeguard. I occasionally have glimmers of transformational ways to "de-gender" our references to God, but those remain elusive. Thus, I have continued to use masculine pronouns for God, except for a few instances where the inappropriateness of those pronouns was too stark for them to be retained.

(3) Switching abruptly to more technical matters, I would note the following:

(a) I have typically presented the titles of non-English works in the language in which they were written, followed by English translations in parentheses, on the occasion of their first occurrence. In footnotes, bracketed translations have been provided the first time a particular work is mentioned, but in subsequent references, the title of the work has been retained in its original language. This practice may periodically remind readers that several linguistic and cultural worlds have given rise to this book.

(b) Transliterations of words written in non-Latin scripts have generally not been provided unless the transliteration is so well known in English that

its inclusion enhances the intelligibility of a particular essay. Yet, occasionally, an author's writing style or emphasis on a particular foreign term has led me to break that "rule."

(c) With regard to the positioning of foreign words and their English equivalents, when foreign terms serve an "illustrative" purpose, they have been placed in parentheses following the English word. However, when they are central to the content of the essay, the foreign words have been presented in the body of the text and have been followed by the English wording in parentheses.

(d) Unusual words or key phrases have been put in quotation marks only the first time they occur in a given chapter, except in rare instances of repeated citations of biblical phrases and such. The treatment of repetitions of italicized words is more dependent on their function in the text than on a general rule.

(e) Complete bibliographical information for each individual work has been provided in a footnote the first time that it occurs in any given chapter. The book's length and breadth may make this a useful practice for readers who want to explore specific topics further.

(f) Decisions about the capitalization of particular religious, philosophical, historical, and cultural terms have been based on the *Chicago Manual of Style* and other respected style manuals. However, there may be some inconsistencies in capitalization that reflect particular authors' preferences.

(g) Because the original essays followed the documentary conventions that are standard in their culture of origin, it has been a struggle to implement a uniform way of handling issues like the abbreviation of classical texts; the punctuation of works that include volume, section, page, and line numbers; and such. I am especially grateful to Dávid Cielontko and Zuzana Vítková for providing me with pointers regarding the documentation of Qumran and Nag Hammadi texts. Since continued explorations of these matters have sometimes led me to adopt slightly different patterns that seemed to be more in keeping with the general principles of the *Chicago Manual of Style*, I need to apologize for resulting irregularities in form.

(4) Indeed, I am painfully aware that discriminating readers will spot innumerable inconsistencies in the text. Thus, I want to briefly mention some reasons for this state of affairs:

(a) I was surprised by my own lack of awareness of all of the issues that the *Chicago Manual of Style* addresses. The complexity of the technical aspects of some of the chapters meant that I immersed myself in that imposing work more intently than I typically do, and in the process of doing that, I invariably discovered rules about a myriad of matters that I had routinely handled in different ways. Another complicating factor reflects the fact that many European publishers require the use of British styles of spelling, punctuation,

and documentation. My attempts to adopt such practices over the years mean that my North American stylistic "habits" are not as "pure" as they once were. Finally, due to the length of the text, I submitted each chapter to Dr. Pavol Bargár separately at the time of its completion. This meant that although I made a concerted effort to remedy stylistic shortcomings in chapters that were still in process as soon as I discovered a new rule, I could not correct such errors in chapters that had already been submitted. Thus, an additional source of inconsistency emerged.

(b) The diverse ways of handling citations of classical works and historically specific terms that appear online made it virtually impossible to determine which options really were "established," to borrow one author's terminology. One day, I would be sure that I had found the definitive solution to a knotty issue, and the next day, I would find a different—equally credible—possibility that would lead me to question my previous decision. The resulting ambiguity has greatly increased the likelihood that particular issues have unintentionally been treated in different ways in individual chapters.

(c) The variety of topics, styles of writing, and ways of handling technical issues pursued by the seventeen authors of these essays have made it difficult to maintain a single pattern. In some chapters, the chosen method of handling a specific issue has worked naturally, while in other cases, an author's writing style and content adopted a different approach. Thus, in the end, I have realized that I can only pledge to seek consistency within a given chapter, rather than throughout the entire book.

(d) This translation has now been through many stages of review as the authors have provided written responses to my questions about specific passages; as my English proofreaders/editors have suggested idiomatic changes; and as Dr. Bargár has proposed additional revisions. Thus, I have been through the second draft of the translation at least six times as I have prepared questions for, and incorporated the responses of, each of the participants in the process. Yet, although Dr. Bargár has now determined that all of the chapters are ready for publication, some authors may rightfully make other changes that may unintentionally introduce patterns that are inconsistent with established English conventions and may occasionally modify my attempts to prepare a translation that is both faithful and idiomatic.

Notwithstanding this litany of inconsistencies, I want to extend hearty words of appreciation to Rev. Wilson and Rev. Rauhut who created the current form of chapter 7; to Rev. Dr. Beverly Schmidt who began the process of reviewing the text from the perspective of a native reader of English; to Fay Bierly Kay who carried on and completed that task with care and creativity; and to Dr. Bargár who admirably agreed to assemble this book's bibliography, patiently granted me the time I needed to wrestle with the documentary and

terminological challenges outlined above, and simultaneously devoted many hours to reviewing each chapter and offering unwavering counsel and support. I am more than grateful to these committed folks, and above all, to the authors who responded to my questions with thoughtfulness and wit. I trust that every person involved in this process will forgive the errors and misrepresentations that remain in the text, and will eventually be glad to know that the insights contained in this book have finally made their way into the public sphere.

This "conclusion" brings me to a pair of final comments. This book is a child of COVID-19. Due to restrictions on travel and interaction, I could not meet directly with any of the authors to iron out mysterious passages and technical issues. Indeed, this text's gestation period was long and belabored since every step had to occur in written form, rather than dialogically. Yet, I am convinced that it represents an important challenge and source of hope during this time. A critical leitmotif of this collection is its insistence that the Christian faith is "defined" by the affirmation that every human life has inimitable worth. Yet, as I write this, there have been nearly five million COVID-related deaths in our world, and that overwhelming number appears to be having a numbing effect which sometimes results in a stunning disregard for the sanctity of life. In some circles, self-centered individualism trumps the common good, and some people seem to be unwilling or unable to acknowledge that the brilliant tapestry of the world becomes less radiant each time the unique spirit of one of COVID's victims is prematurely erased in ways that do not honor death's potential to become the crown of life.

Yet, our Euro-American and human cultural heritage directs us toward a more gracious possibility. Thus, during the darkest days of isolation and uncertainty, I regularly found myself being heartened by these essays, which were written in 2018–2019 before COVID-19 had appeared on the horizon. Indeed, the conviction that the Christian tradition is grounded in a resurrecting story which demands and enables the realization that the life of every person has irrepeatable value resounds throughout the book because it is a truth that transcends the particular circumstances of any specific time or place. Thus, the words that Jan Hus wrote in the 1400s subtly introduce this theme whenever the hymn "Jesus Christ, the Bountiful Priest" is sung or heard: 'You lived in the world with us, your body suffered wounds for us, . . . in your grace; you have deigned to dwell in us [and] . . . to sustain us, . . . in your grace.' Of course, the unique ability that Czech words and melodies have to remind us of our abiding worth does not end there. In fact, it was carefully nurtured across the centuries until the communist era when a bard named Miloš Rejchrt wrote another cherished chorus that contains these words: "Stay with us, Lord, when it is growing dark; stay with us when the day is drawing on; . . . Open eyes that do not see you, that do not see truth, that

only have delusion. Awaken trust in us like children have. Speak to us Lord; say 'Peace be yours.'"[1] Other refrains from different times similarly call us to see every person's irreplaceable worth; to turn our eyes toward truth; and to raise our voices on behalf of all who have not yet been able to perceive or lay claim to their inherent value. Precisely because these melodies transcend the particular circumstances of any specific time or place, they have power in each and every time and place. If we dare to embrace the irrefutable sanctity of every human life even now that darkness seems to be closing in again, a grand chorus of peace may resound once more.

J. Mauler Michael
Prague, Czech Republic
October 15, 2021

1 My fanciful paraphrase of random phrases from Hus's hymn is based on the ancient Czech version of the text in *Evangelický zpěvník* [Protestant Hymnal](Lahr/Baden: EPB for the Synodal Council of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, 1979), 308. My translation of Miloš Rejchrt's hymn is based on the chorus and the second verse of the text found in *Evangelický zpěvník/ Dodatek* [Protestant Hymnal Supplement] (Prague: Kalich, 2004), 622.

PRESUPPOSITIONS AND BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIANITY: THE BIBLE AND THE EARLY CHURCH

MOSES, THE MULTILATERAL MEDIATOR: THE MESSAGE OF THE CHIASTIC STRUCTURE IN THE SORY OF THE GOLDEN CALF (EXOD 32–34)

PETR SLÁMA

SERVANT OF THE LORD

The epithet "the servant of the Lord" (עבד־יהוה) does not appear even once in the book of Exodus, which provides most of the biographical information about Moses. This title appears at the end of the book of Deuteronomy, surprisingly in the sentences about the fact that he has died (Dt 34:5). Immediately thereupon, we learn that he was buried in Moab, although exactly where is not known; that he lived to see "one hundred twenty years" and "his sight was unimpaired;" and that although Joshua assumed command after him, "never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Dt 34:10). The fact that the phrase "Moses, the servant of the Lord" sounds familiar to us in spite of this is due to the fact that it turns up at dozens of points in the sequential literary work about the history of the Jewish monarchy that constitutes one of the foundations of the Hebrew Bible—that is, in the "Deuteronomistic History" and especially, in its book of Joshua. It is also in Chronicles and in Nehemiah that the phrase "the servant of God" (עבד־האלהים)—which incidentally, is a precursor of an Arabic epithet and later, of the proper name Abdullah—appears only in connection with Moses.

However, the phrase "servant of the Lord" appears in many passages in the Bible and by no means always in relation to Moses. The use of this designation in the "Servant Songs" in Deutero-Isaiah is the most striking and admittedly, also the most thought-provoking. The author of this text from the turn of the sixth and fifth centuries BCE represents the servant of the Lord as the one who has to fulfill an important mission, yet who "will not cry or lift up his voice" (Is 42:2). The task consists of "raising up the tribes of Jacob" (Is 49:6). At the same time, the unknown one will remain faithful in a situation of strife and oppression (Is 50:5–9). As a result, he will be so disfigured (marred) that he will bear no resemblance to a human being (Is 52:14). In Isaiah 52:13–53, he is finally represented as someone who has suffered so heinously that it appears that the Lord has cast him aside. Yet, it comes to light that his defeat and suffering have salvific significance—which is not clarified further—for the well-being of those who observe his suffering. We do not find a more exact prefiguration of Jesus's passion narrative in the Hebrew Bible, just as we do not find a more precise soteriological justification

of Jesus's substitutionary death than Isaiah 53:4–6: "Surely, he has borne our infirmities; . . . yet, we accounted him . . . struck down by God. . . . But he was wounded for our transgressions. . . . All we like sheep have gone astray . . . , and the Lord has laid on him the in iniquity of us all."

Therefore, it is surprising how little the New Testament explicitly uses this motif. We would expect many more direct and indirect references to Isaiah 52–53, especially by the apostle Paul, who in the Letter to the Romans, contemplates the vicarious effect of Jesus's suffering. More often than not, he chooses a secondary motif when he quotes from a song about the Suffering Servant. For example, in Romans 10:16, when he reflects on why Israel did not accept Christ, Paul quotes the rhetorical question—"who has believed what we have heard"—from Isaiah 53:1 as an explanation. Of course, it is possible that the motif of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 52–53 constitutes such an obvious foundation of Jesus's story that New Testament authors do not even bother to present particular citations. Another possible explanation for the scanty use of the motif of Isaiah 52–53 in the New Testament may be the fact that by the first century CE, Deutero-Isaiah's Suffering Servant was already associated with a certain biblical figure to such a degree that a new identification with Jesus would have met with resistance.

Who was the figure of the Suffering Servant most frequently identified with during the first century? According to the Bible's internal chronology, which knows nothing of the modern consensus dating Deutero-Isaiah to the post-exilic period, such a candidate would be King Hezekiah. In the second half of the eighth century BCE, he was Isaiah's contemporary and patron. The end of the original part of Isaiah (chapters 36–39) and its parallel in 2 Kings feature a series of scenes of their encounters with one another. Hezekiah survived Sennacherib's siege and a deadly illness (2 Kgs 18–20). When rabbinic literature wants to neutralize inflamed messianic expectations, it mentions Hezekiah as a messiah who has already been here.[1]

In the second part of the book of Isaiah, salutations to "Jacob my servant" are scattered among the Servant Songs (Is 44:1, 2b; 48:20). That led some rabbinic scholars to consider the "servant" to be a cypher for a collective hero—the people of Israel.

In the opinion of some researchers, Zerubbabel, who was chosen by the Persians to be the leader of the Jewish returnees from the Babylonian exile, historically lies hidden behind the image of the Suffering Servant.[2] Bold expectations about the restoration of the Davidic dynasty were obviously linked to the appointment of the grandson of the last king of Judah to be its

1 See the Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 28b and especially, Sanhedrin 94a.

2 James Washington Watts, ed., *Persia and Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 222. (Rabbinic literature is also discussed here.)

governor (1 Chr 3:17). In Haggai 2:23, the Lord addresses him as "Zerubbabel my servant, son of Shealtiel." Yet, as Zechariah 4 implies, this Zerubbabel mysteriously vanishes from the scene at some point, perhaps eliminated by domestic or foreign adversaries. According to Watts, it is precisely this traumatizing event that the Servant Song in Isaiah 52–53 reflects.

In the opinion of other thinkers, the Suffering Servant is the Persian ruler Cyrus himself. The Servant Song in Isaiah 52–53 is said to reflect the grief of his grateful Jewish subjects at the moment that news of his death reached them.[3] According to Klaus Baltzer, the author of a commentary on Isaiah, the whole text of Deutero-Isaiah is a libretto in six acts whose main hero is Moses himself.[4] Roughly speaking, that work is contemporaneous with the emerging Mosaic Torah, which was depicted in the Pentateuch as the sum of Moses's teachings. At exactly that time, Moses became an integrative figure, who enabled hitherto competing emphases to be combined with one another. Of course, it is not surprising that given this position, Moses would subsequently be the exalted servant of the Lord. Yet, what events in his life are the passages in Isaiah 52–53 related to?

HISTORICAL QUERIES ABOUT MOSES

The question of the "historical Moses" has occupied readers since antiquity. Jews had even then to come to terms with Egyptian historians who mapped Egypt's troubled relations with its Asian neighbor, whose territory the historians regarded as Egypt's buffer zone. In rough outline, the story of Exodus—Israel's escape or deliverance from bondage in Egypt—corresponds to a pattern of mutual contact and confrontation between the Nile empire and its northeastern neighbors from the third to the first millennia BCE. These neighbors, who mostly were Semitic inhabitants of the Levant, found themselves in a situation of direct or mediated domination by Egypt during the Late Bronze Age (the sixteenth to the twelfth centuries BCE) and the beginning of the Iron Age (the eleventh to the tenth centuries BCE).[5] This pattern involved waves of the Semitic population from the Levant who repeatedly came to Egypt (1) for economic reasons (more or less as described in Genesis 41:57–42:5); (2) as captives of Egypt (for example, after Merenptah's punitive expedition); or even

3 Jon Lawrence Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 51ff.

4 Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40–55* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001).

5 Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Touchstone, 2001), 65; Jan Christian Gertz, Angelika Berlejung, Konrad Schmid, and Markus Witte, *Grundinformation Altes Testament: Eine Einführung in Literatur, Religion und Geschichte des Alten Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

(3) as invaders. Later they usually left, fled, or were expelled.[6] The complexity of this pattern is precisely why it is not possible to relate the oldest traditions about Moses to a particular event in Egyptian history.

Memories of Moses could have gradually been linked to traditions about Semitic invaders and usurpers that the Egyptians themselves recounted, but the narrative invariably took on specific features of Egyptian oppression and deliverance based on the time in which it was related. For example, in the seventh century BCE, the story of the Exodus acquired new immediacy. More than a hundred years after the destruction of northern Israel where it had originated long before, the basic plot of story of the Exodus was already part of Judah's collective memory. Necho II, the Egyptian pharaoh at that time, started a massive construction enterprise. As archeological explorations in the area of the present-day Wadi Tumilat in the eastern Nile Delta and the writings of Herodotus consistently verify, Necho set out to build a canal that would connect the Nile with the Red Sea.[7] For this, he enlisted scores of foreign workers, apparently also from Judah. The narrative in the first chapter of the book of Exodus about building activities and the subjugation of the Israelites includes a number of practical realities that correspond precisely to this historical period.

Concerning the leader of the Israelites, whom the book of Exodus portrays as Moses, the Great Harris Papyrus from the twelfth century BCE describes the chaos that overcame Egypt after the death of Pharaoh Seti II. It is said that for a short while at that time,

> the land of Kam [Egypt] had fallen into confusion, everyone was doing what he wished, there was no superior authority for many years which had priority over others. The land of Kam was under the chief of nomes, each was killing another out of ambition and jealousy of another coming after him. After some years, A-ar-su, a Kharu [Syrian] amongst them as chiefs placed the whole country in subjection to him. One united his companions to drag things away, were treated the gods as if they were men, no sacrifices or offerings were made in their temples.[8]

Memories of this Syrian usurper may have provided the basic relational constellation and plot of the conflict between Egypt and its Levantine neighbors. In this form they have been encountered and preserved both by the Jews and by the Hellenized historian of Egypt called Manetho. During the more than three-thousand-year history of Egypt's domination of the entire region,

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6 Regarding the captives of Merenptah's forces, see Helmut Utzschneider and Wolfgang Oswald, *Exodus 1–15*, International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2012), 76.

7 Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 66; Herodotus, *Histories* 2.158.

8 Samuel Birch, ed., *Facsimile of the Hieratic Papyrus of the Reign of Rameses III* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1876), plate LXXV.