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BULLETIN NUMBER 16

THE NINETEENTH ANNUAL MEETING

The Nineteenth Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies was held concurrently with the Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Canadian Section of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis in Wycliffe College, Toronto, May 15th and 16th, 1951.

FIRST SESSION, TUESDAY EVENING, MAY 15th.

The President, Professor D. K. Andrews of Knox College was in the Chair, and the meeting was opened with prayer by the Honorary President, Dr. F. H. Cosgrave, there being twenty-five members and two visitors present. It was moved and carried that the publication of the proceedings of eighteenth annual meeting, as printed in the fifteenth annual bulletin, be taken as the reading of the minutes of the last annual meeting.

Expressions of regret for inability to attend were received from the following members: Principal R. Armitage, Rev. J. R. Harris, Canon R. A. Hiltz, Principal H. A. Kent, and Rev. C. B. Reynolds.

MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL REPORT

The Secretary-Treasurer reported that the membership of the Society numbers 71, of whom 42 had paid the fee for the current year; that the Bulletin for 1950 had been mailed to all members; that there was a credit balance of \$11.17 in the treasury, with all accounts paid. On report of the loss sustained by the Society through the death of the late Principal W. R. Taylor, Professor McCullough was asked to prepare a formal minute recording the contribution of Principal Taylor to the Society. Attention was also called to the loss, by death, of the Rev. Canon H. R. Cody.

OTHER BUSINESS:

1. Professors Macpherson and Williams were appointed auditors.
2. Professors Andrews, Beare and McCullough were elected as a Nominating Committee.
3. Nominations to Membership:
Dean L. H. Schaus, Professor R. K. Harrison, Professor Thomas Barnett, Professor George Thompson, Rev. Emlyn Davies, Rev. J. D. Smart, Rev. David Crane, Rev. R. H. Beattie, Professor Wilfred Smith, Rev. E.M. Checkland, Dr. Gerald Harrop, Professor Charles Newcombe, Professor James Guthrie, and Rev. Canon E. K. Moffatt.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

The annual Presidential Address was delivered by Professor D. K. Andrews, entitled: "Jahweh: God of the Heavens".

Professor Hettlinger extended the welcome of Wycliffe College to the members of the Society on behalf of Principal Armitage, and refreshments were served.

SECOND SESSION, WEDNESDAY MORNING, MAY 16th.

The Auditors reported that the financial affairs of the Society were as stated in the report of the Secretary-Treasurer.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Honorary President	Professor Emeritus J. H. Michael
President	Professor David Hay
Vice-President	Professor R. J. Williams
Secretary-Treasurer	Professor John Macpherson
Executive Committee	Professor S. M. Gilmour
	Professor R. Lennox
	Professor M. T. Newby

The retiring Secretary-Treasurer, Dr. G. H. Johnson, was warmly thanked for the efficient way in which the duties of the office were filled during the preceding five years.

The persons nominated for membership at the previous session were elected to membership.

PAPERS READ BY MEMBERS

Professor F. W. Beare - "The Parable of the Guests at the Banquet"
Dr. F. H. Cosgrave - "The Codex Cennamensis, Commonly Called The Book of Kells"
Rev. J. Zeman - "The Road in the Desert of Second Isaiah"

The meeting adjourned at 12:30, to re-assemble in the afternoon.

THIRD SESSION

The following additional papers were read by members:

Professor E. R. Fairweather - "Origen as Exegete"
Professor W. S. McCullough - "Some Suggestions on the Prophet Amos"
Professor W. E. Staples - "Notes on Zephaniah I"
Professor David Hay - "Jesus' Visit to the Tomb of Lazarus"

Following expressions of appreciation for the hospitality of Wycliffe College and for the work of the retiring President and Executive, the meeting was adjourned.

YAHWEH, THE GOD OF THE HEAVENS

One of the many titles applied to Yahweh in the Old Testament is the expression, "the God of the heavens." Apart from Gen. 24: 3, 7, it is found only in literature of the post-exilic period, especially in that connected with the Persian era. Though it occurs only twenty-two times, its use is limited to certain types of situation. An examination of these may give us an insight into the religious concepts and theology of the period.

The title occurs with greatest frequency in the Aramaic portions of the Old Testament, being found six times in Ezra, chapters 5 - 7, and four times in Daniel, chapter 2. In addition, Aramaic influences may be seen in most other instances where the term is used. In II Chron. 36:23 and Ezra 1: 2 it is employed in a decree attributed to the Persian Monarch Cyrus. In Syria and Palestine the royal decrees of the Persian kings were published in Aramaic, and it has been claimed that these two passages are the Hebrew version of such an Aramaic decree. Nehemiah is represented as using this title for God while he was a cupbearer at the court of the Persian king in Susa (Neh. 1: 4, 5; 2: 4). In such a situation he might have been expected to use Aramaic terminology, for the officials of the Persian empire known to the Jews used Aramaic. This is the case with Rehum, Tattenai, and their colleagues in Ezra, while in Dan. 2: 4, where the context shows that the author had a Persian type of court in mind, we are expressly told that the official interpreters of dreams in Babylon addressed the king in Aramaic. Likewise, when Nehemiah spoke of "the God of the heavens" to another Persian administrator, Sanballat, governor of Samaria (Nah. 2: 20), it is probable that the governors were regarded as addressing each other in Aramaic, the language of diplomacy. Even in Gen. 24: 3, 7 it is employed by Abraham when he is commissioning a servant to go to Aram-nahoraim in search of a wife for his son among people who spoke Aramaic. (Cf. Gen. 31: 47.) Separately these examples may not carry a great deal of weight, but taken together they form a fairly consistent picture of Aramaic associations with the title.

Outside of the Old Testament the expression is also used in an Aramaic setting. Cowley lists nine places where "the God of the heavens" appears as a title for Yahu in the correspondence of the Aramaic-speaking Jewish colony located at Elephantine in Egypt in the fifth century B.C. (Aramaic Papyri, p. 275). Thus, for example, reference is made to sacrifice offered to "Yahu, the God of the heavens" (No. 27, l. 15); Bigvai, the Persian governor of Judah, is wished health from "the God of the heavens" (No. 30, l. 2) and promised much merit "before Yahu, the God of the heavens" (ibid., l. 27) if he will aid in rebuilding the temple at Elephantine. This evidence suggests that the title was widely used in the Aramaic of the Persian period, while in the Old Testament it regarded as more at home in an Aramaic than in a Hebrew setting.

K. G. Kuhn, in Kittel's Theologische Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament III, 94, n. 148, suggests that the title may represent Persian influence on the religious terminology of the fifth century B.C.

But it has no prototypes in the documents of the Persian kings. Both Darius, in the Naqsh-i-Rustam inscription (l. 1; see JNES IV 1945, 40 f.), and Xerxes, in a foundation tablet from Persepolis (see Ancient Near-Eastern Texts, ed. J. Pritchard, p. 316 f.), call Ahuramazda the great God. This term occurs twice in the Aramaic sections of the Old Testament, in Ezra 5:8, where Tattenai explains to the Persian king about the building of the Jerusalem temple, and in Dan. 2: 45, where Daniel is addressing the king of Babylon. But it did not attain the same frequency of usage as the title "the God of the heavens." The latter term, which does not occur in the Persian records, seems to have been a title for the Deity which came into currency with the spread of Aramaic as the language of diplomacy and commerce, and, finally, of everyday speech throughout Palestine and Syria.

In the Aramaic of the Old Testament the divine name Yahweh never occurs, and, in a number of cases, "the God of the heavens" is used as if it were a substitute for the name. This is quite obvious in Ezra, the early chapters of which deal with the return and the restoration of the temple of Yahweh at Jerusalem. The Jewish author, when he did not call this simply "the house of God," designated it as "the house of Yahweh" (e.g., 2:68), and the Jewish builders claim that they are erecting it "for Yahweh, the God of Israel" (3: 3). However, in the Aramaic passage which follows, Tattenai, the Persian governor of Syria and Palestine, called it "the house of the great God" (5: 8), and the Jewish builders reported through him to Darius, "We are the servants of the God of the heavens and the earth" (5: 11). Likewise, in the account of Ezra's journey to Jerusalem, the author of the Hebrew narrative described Ezra in the following terms: "Ezra the priest, the scribe, learned in matters of the commands of Yahweh and his statutes in Israel" (7: 11). But, in the very next verse, the Aramaic letter of introduction given to Ezra by the Persian king, Artaxerxes, is quoted as follows: "Ezra the priest, learned in the law of the God of the heavens." It is quite evident that the title "the God of the heavens" takes the place of the divine name in these Aramaic parallels.

If we raise the question as to why this should be so, it seems obvious that more is involved than the mere change from one language to the other. Names can be represented without difficulty in any language. The colony at Elephantine did not hesitate to make use of the divine name in their Aramaic correspondence, though they spelled it differently than our Hebrew sources, using only three letters YHW. Why, then did the biblical writers not use it in the Aramaic sections of the Old Testament?

In each of the cases we have just mentioned the change from the use of the divine name in Hebrew to the use of the title in Aramaic has also been associated with a shift from a purely Jewish situation to one in which foreign kings and officials are involved. This applies not only to the use of the title, but to the use of Aramaic in general; in the Old Testament Aramaic speech is always associated with a foreign setting, and, usually, with court or diplomatic circles. Even in the

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story of Sennacherib's invasion Aramaic is represented as the language of royal officials from Assyria (II Kings 18: 26). In Ezra it is used in sections which consist mainly of correspondence with and by Persian officials. The author begins to use Aramaic in 4:8 when he quotes the letter of Rehum and his colleagues to the Persian king. He continues to use it as he quotes the reply received, tells of its effect on Jewish activities, relates how Tattenai made a new investigation, quotes his correspondence with Darius at length, and describes the rebuilding of the temple that resulted. Then, as he describes the dedication of the temple, he reverts to Hebrew. In chapter 7 he likewise uses Aramaic when he quotes the rescript which Artaxerxes issued in favour of Ezra. The reason for this is the fact that Aramaic was the language of official correspondence in Syria and Palestine under Persian rule.

Likewise, in Daniel Aramaic is used when the narrative describes episodes and speeches at the royal court in Babylon. The author switches from Hebrew to Aramaic in 2: 4, at the point where the religious officials address the king in Babylon. He shifts back to Hebrew in chapter 8 where the scene changes to Susa and the matter of the narrative especially concerns Jerusalem and the Jewish people.

Outside of Ezra and Daniel, Aramaic is only used twice in the Old Testament. In Gen. 31: 47 it occurs in the name which the Aramaean Laban gave to the witness-cairn at Galeed. In Jer. 10: 11 it is employed in a verse addressed to the idol-makers of the nation, i.e., to a non-Jewish audience.

Thus, the very use of Aramaic seems to imply a departure from purely Jewish norms and the presence of an alien element in the narrative. Accordingly, it would seem that the use of the title "the God of the heavens" as a substitute for the divine name in biblical Aramaic is to be associated with the presence of this alien atmosphere.

Furthermore, when we examine the precise passages where the term occurs in these Aramaic sections, we find it usually employed by a foreign ruler or in speeches addressed to a foreign ruler. In Ezra 5: 11, 12, it is used by Jews who report to Darius, "We are the servants of the God of the heavens," and in 6: 9, 10, by Darius in his reply, "Whatever is needed for burnt-offerings to the God of the heavens let it be given to them day by day without fail, that they may offer sacrifices of a soothing odor to the God of the heavens." In 7: 12 - 26 it is used four times in the rescript issued by Artaxerxes on behalf of Ezra. In Dan. 2: 37, 44, it occurs in speeches addressed to the king in Babylon. Only in Dan. 2: 18, 19, does it occur in the Aramaic narrative, describing Daniel's experiences, and we note that it is here regarded as a title by which Daniel and his fellow Jews might refer to Yahweh in Babylon. Thus, the title "the God of the heavens" was used in correspondence with and by foreign officials and rulers and by Jews living at a foreign court.

The same observation may be made about the use of the title in the Hebrew of the Old Testament. It occurs along with the divine name in a decree attributed to Cyrus (II Chron. 36: 23; Ezra 1: 2).

In Neh. 2:20 it is used in addressing the Samaritan governor Sanballat, the Ammonite Tobiah, and Arabian Geshem. In Jonah 1: 9 it is employed by the prophets in speaking to the sailors of the ship going from Joppa to Tarshish; their nationality is not indicated, but they are not Jews. In Gen. 24: 3, 7, it is used in instructing a slave with a mission to a foreign district. In Psalm 136 it is used when the psalmist has all mankind, and not merely Israel, in mind. In this psalm people are invited to worship Yahweh for various reasons drawn from the story of creation in Genesis and the story of the exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan. The Israelites, who enjoyed all these benefits, were to worship him as Yahweh, the God of gods and Lord of lords, for he rescued them from all their foes. Then, in vs. 25, the horizon is suddenly widened, and all flesh are said to receive food from God. In the next verse the invitation to give thanks apparently applies to all flesh, and it is expressed in the words, "Give thanks to the God of the heavens." This title is introduced after the goodness of Yahweh to non-Israelites has been mentioned. In all these cases it is used in connection with non-Israelites. And, just as in the case of the Aramaic examples, we have in Hebrew three instances where it is used in the story of a Jew, Nehemiah, living at a foreign court (Neh. 1: 4,5; 2:4).

One further observation must be made in connection with the use of the title. Only once does a foreigner who is not a convert to the worship of Yahweh use the divine name along with the title. This occurs in the preamble to the decree of Cyrus already mentioned which runs as follows: "Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth has Yahweh, the God of the heavens, given me, and he has commissioned me to build him a house in Jerusalem."

This use of the divine name by Cyrus raises the question of authenticity. Might a Persian monarch have used the name of the Hebrew God? The authenticity of this decree, especially in the form given it in II Chron. 36: 23 and Ezra 1: 2 - 4, has been widely discredited. The view of W. H. Koster and C. C. Torrey, that it is a Jewish forgery, does not have many supporters today (cf. Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 821), but many regard it as a Judaized version of an original decree. Recent studies by H. H. Schaefer (Esra der Schreiber) and others indicate that we must ascribe greater reliability to the letters and decrees quoted in Ezra. That Cyrus should permit Jews to return to Judah, and that he should take an interest in the building of a temple to their God in Jerusalem is entirely in accord with what we know of the policies of that monarch and of his early successors. These rulers not only encouraged the native religions of different parts of their empire, assuming the role of protector, but they also made provision for sacrifices and the celebration of cultic acts and posed as worshippers of the local gods. Thus, on the well-known cylinder inscription Cyrus had prepared for Babylonian readers, he posed as the worshipper of Marduk. In a passage very reminiscent of Ezra, he said, "He (Marduk) pronounced the name of Cyrus, king of Anshan, declared him to be ruler of all the world." Later, reference is made to the restoration of ruined sanctuaries in certain cities east of the Tigris river, and Cyrus claimed, "Furthermore I resettled upon the command of Marduk, the great lord, all the gods of Sumer and Akkad, whom Nabonidus had brought into Babylon to the anger of the lord of the gods,

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unharmd, in their former chapels, the places which make them happy." (Cf. Ancient Near-Eastern Texts, p. 315.)

In the light of this it is quite plausible that Cyrus might have addressed himself to Judaeans, posing as a worshipper of Yahweh and claiming Yahweh had given him all the kingdoms of the earth. He may well have used the name Yahweh in writing to the Jews, as he used the name Marduk for the Babylonians.

Two things bear this out. One is the rather enigmatic expression yigrā' bhishmi in Is. 41: 25, where the passage alludes to Cyrus. This has usually been rendered, "he shall call upon my name," and interpreted to mean that Cyrus would eventually recognize Yahweh. Skinner says, "The clause can hardly mean less than that Cyrus will acknowledge Jehovah as God" (Isaiah 40 - 66, ad loc.). Volz explains it by saying, "since for Deutero-Isaiah there is only one Godhead, all foreign piety is associated by him with Yahweh" (Jesaja II, ad loc.). However, the idiom involved, as Sidney Smith points out in Isaiah XL - LV, p. 161, does not mean "call upon the name" elsewhere in Second-Isaiah, but rather "call with the name." This verse, then, should mean, "From the east he calls (or makes proclamation) with my name," and it is most easily understood if it referred to a decree or promise such as we have in Ezra 1: 2 - 4, issued by Cyrus in the name of Yahweh.

Secondly, a Jewish author would scarcely invent the terminology ascribed to Cyrus in Ezra 1: 3, "the house of Yahweh, the God of Israel, since he is the God who is in Jerusalem." A Jew would hardly compose a phrase limiting Yahweh in that fashion. It is simplest to assume that he is giving us a Hebrew version of what Cyrus said, and that the use of the divine name by the Persian king was an unavoidable fact.

Perhaps it was a rather inconvenient fact, for this single instance of the use of the divine name by a Persian king serves to point up its avoidance in other passages. The name Yahweh is found elsewhere only on the lips of his worshippers. Not only should we consider, then, the meaning of the title "the God of the heavens," but also why the name Yahweh was sometimes avoided and this title substituted for it.

From this study of the use of the title three things seem to emerge which require fuller consideration. First, for Jews of the diaspora, whether they be like Daniel in Babylon or Nehemiah in Susa or the colony at Elephantine in Egypt, Yahweh was the God of the heaven. Second, this title was considered appropriate in addressing non-Jews, providing a point of contact between Yahwism and the general religious consciousness of the gentiles. Thirdly, the divine name was not considered suitable for use in discussions with such gentiles, but was reserved for bonafide worshippers of Yahweh. These will now be discussed more fully.

"The God of the Heavens" as a Title Used in the Diaspora and Post-Exilic Judaism.

The title "the God of the heavens" belongs, as we have seen, to the Persian period. Then, Israel was no longer a geographical and political entity, but Jews were settled in many different parts of the ancient world. People from Israel had been carried off to various parts of the Assyrian empire in the eighth century. In the sixth Judaeans were transported to Babylonia. Still others fled to Egypt and settled there. Second-Isaiah even speaks of them living in the west (43: 5), apparently indicating the Mediterranean coasts and islands. Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel tell of Jews who lived in Babylon, Ecbatana, and Susa.

This fact radically changed the outlook of these people. Their personal experience and their conception of the power and influence of Yahweh their God was quite different than before the exile. Just as their knowledge of the world was growing, their conception of Yahweh was changing. The pre-exilic theology had emphasized the power and activity of Yahweh in the history of Israel; the post-exilic theology did not lessen the emphasis on Yahweh's activity on behalf of Israel, but set it in a wider cosmic setting. The God of Israel was no longer a local or national Deity; he was the God of the heavens, whose rule is universal. He was not limited to Jerusalem, or to Judah, but his power, his influence, and his authority over the lives of men extended to Ecbatana, and Susa, and Elephantine as well. Yahweh was the supreme, sovereign Deity, who controlled the destinies of all the nations, and his all-inclusive rule was indicated by calling him "the God of the heavens."

There are other expressions, more or less popular, in the Persian era, which indicate the same thing. In Daniel, for example, Yahweh was sometimes identified as the Most High who rules over the kingdoms of men (e.g., 4:24). In Second-Isaiah the word 'El (God) is used for the same purpose, to call attention to the universal rule of Yahweh. 'El was not only the old West-Semitic term for "god", but it was the name of the primeval deity from whom all life and all authority stemmed. Second-Isaiah sought to encourage the exiles by ascribing to Yahweh the title and sovereign authority of 'El. This is evident in his repeated emphasis on the sole divinity of Yahweh when he says, "Before me there was no God ('El) formed, and after me there shall be none" (43: 10). Yahweh's authority was not delegated to him by some higher, older, or more universal source of authority. Yahweh was the final, absolute source of authority himself. So he can say, in 43: 12, "I am God ('El) from of old, and from now onward the same." There was no room for any temporal or spatial -- i.e., national, -- limitations on Yahweh's power. He had no colleagues or equals. "To whom can you liken 'El (Yahweh)?" asked the prophet (40: 18).

The scattering of the Jews, then, may be said to have resulted in a deepening realization of the universal and absolute character of Yahweh's rule, and this is indicated in a certain preference for the title "the God of the heavens" in some literature of the period.

There is nothing quite like Second-Isaiah's affirmation of the uniqueness of Yahweh in the pre-exilic period, nor is there any similar emphasis on his universal authority. Second-Isaiah, at the opening of the Persian period, is the first explicit exponent of monotheism in the Old Testament, and the experience of the exiles and the diaspora Jews in their widely scattered settlements served to confirm this idea.

This did not mean a radical change in the quality of Israel's faith in Yahweh, or in their conception of his character and purposes. It did mean a fuller realization of the extent of his authority. There are many instances, before the exile, where the reality of Yahweh was contrasted to that of other gods, but emphasis is usually placed on the pre-eminence of Yahweh rather than on the nonentity of the other gods. Yahweh was a great God and a great King above all gods, a God to be feared in the divine council (Ps. 89:7). Yahweh was much superior to them, but they did exist. Yahweh alone was to be served in Israel, yet the Israelites could and did often serve the alien gods. Deuteronomy is full of warnings against such practices. Israel might tell of the work of Yahweh on her behalf from early days, she might be and was conscious of the claim of Yahweh upon her loyalty and of his authority over her life. But it was only their actual contact with the other religions that convinced them of their emptiness and sham.

This sense of their emptiness was always connected with the error of idolatry, and did not, as we shall see, deny the reality of a genuine religious awareness among the other peoples. The sham of idolatrous religions became apparent to Israel first in the immediate contact with Baalism in Palestine. Even Hosea could assert that the gods at the fertility shrines and the images in Samaria and Bethel were but blocks of wood or stone. They possessed no real authority over their worshippers and contributed nothing to their well-being.

This is true even of Second-Isaiah as an exponent of Monotheism. His argument is not so much against the validity of other religions per se; it is rather against the reality of the idolatrous gods worshipped in the Chaldaean empire, the impotence of these idols, and the folly of idolatry in general. He used two types of argument. Sometimes he pointed out that the idols were merely objects of wood or metal which a frail man had made; they were so much inert matter, fashioned at great expense and with wearying toil by man. At other times, he claimed that these idolatrous gods had no influence on the course of history. Only in Israel was there an adequate philosophy of history and a consistent purpose. The gods of Babylon never fostered in their worshippers any conception of an ultimate goal in life, and never provided any real clue as to what the outcome of events would be. So, in contrast to the evidence of the hand of Yahweh in Israel's history, the lack of any control over the history of Babylon showed the unreality of their gods. As Israel came into contact with these other religions, she came to realize the superiority and understand the implications of her own. Yahweh was alone really God.

But along with this went a growing sense of the extent of Yahweh's power. Sometimes it is suggested that, as early as the eighth century B.C., Amos understood the universality of Yahweh's

power, and that this explains his references to the punishment of nations outside Israel for their sins; as a righteous God, he would punish wickedness anywhere. But this is due to a failure to properly understand Amos. What Amos claimed was that Yahweh could inflict judgment on any foreign nation which caused injustice to his people. He did not think of a universal law of justice operating equally in all races; the nations on whom judgment was pronounced were all guilty of atrocities against Israelites, with one exception; and in that one case, Moab was guilty of an atrocity against an ally of Israel, for Edom was allied with Israel against Moab at the time. Amos believed that Yahweh could punish any foe who injured his people.

Isaiah thought in similar terms when he spoke of Assyria as the rod of Yahweh's anger. When Yahweh was angry with his people, he might use any foreign agent to punish them. But this does not mean that the fortunes of Assyria were the continual care of Yahweh. He might whistle for the bee that is Assyria, when he needed to punish his people, but once his purposes were served Assyria might cease to be of concern to him.

In contrast to this pre-exilic point of view, post-exilic writers regard Yahweh as the lord of the destiny of the nations, and all their fortunes depend on his will. This, too, was a realization which came out of the practical experience of the exiles and of the Jews in the Persian empire. No longer was Judah an independent kingdom, with her own king and system of government. Judah had become a small district in a province of the Persian empire. Her fortunes could not be disentangled from those of the empire. What happened in the distant parts of the earth might have a tremendous bearing on the fate of Judah, as Zechariah's vision of the chariot from the north-land which gives rest to Yahweh's spirit (6: 8) indicates. If Yahweh was God, then he must control the destiny of all the nations. His sway must be universal. Since they were confident that he was God, then he was "the God of the heavens," and he alone.

"The God of the Heavens" as a Term of Rapprochement with the Gentile World

Besides expressing the monotheistic faith of the postexilic Jew, the title "the God of the heavens" formed a basis of theological discussion with foreigners, and especially with the Persian monarchs. The term seems to have been regarded as a point of contact between the religion of Israel and the religious awareness of the gentile peoples. The Persian kings are represented as recognizing God in his capacity as "the God of the heavens" and encouraging his worship. Even Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel is said to recognize that "the God of the heavens" or "the Most High" rules over the kingdoms of men. He is pictured as being sometimes forgetful, and sometimes boasting in his own powers and prowess, but by the force of circumstances he is made to acknowledge God's authority and rule. Both in his case, and in that of the Persian kings, the monarch is regarded as being much more sympathetic and responsive to such a belief than the officials of his kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar never willingly persecutes those who worship "the God of the heavens"; he is tricked into doing so by jealous and scheming officials. In Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jewish leaders can usually count on the support of the Persian monarchs if their case is fairly presented, but they had had to

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contend with local opponents and officious petty-governors who tried to malign them and misrepresent their motives and aims at the Persian court. The king himself believed that there was a "God of the heavens", and even wished to see that he was honoured by suitable sacrifices.

This reflects an awareness of the basic religious concepts of the Persian rulers as indicated by the royal inscriptions which still exist. These inscriptions mention one supreme God, Ahuramazda, creator of the universe, by whose grace alone the kings held office. This deity was not an idol-god whose image could be set up in a temple. On his tomb, Darius is represented as offering homage before a fire burning on an altar in the open air. The symbol of the God in the form of a winged man hovers in the sky above. The contrast between this and the Babylonian or Assyrian concepts would be quite plain were we to compare the representation of the gods in similar scenes there. In the latter the king often stands before the god himself. But in the Persian scene the God is not a visible form on earth; his presence is symbolized, rather than represented, by the winged figure which hovers above. The symbol is, indeed, of Assyrian origin, being a representation there of the sun-god Shamash who soars through the sky as a winged disk. But in a Persian setting it is no longer associated with other idol-gods; it is the symbol of the supreme "God of the heavens". This symbol, which must have been well known to the peoples of the empire, including the Jews, was in itself a constant reminder that these kings recognized "the God of the heavens."

The biblical references reflect the generally tolerant attitude of the earlier Persian monarchs toward the religions of the various peoples in their empire. Cyrus' cylinder inscription tells of his provision for the restoration of temples in Babylonia. Contemporary records explain that Cambyses had himself recognized as the son of the gods in Egypt just as did the Egyptian pharaohs before him restored the temples and revenues of the goddess Neith at Sais, and provided proper funerary honours for the Apis bull. That later documents such as the letter of the Elephantine Jews to Bigvai represent Cambyses as destroying Egyptian temples and hostile to the gods is due to an animus caused by certain strictures which he placed on the power of the cults. (Cf. A. T. Olmstead, History of the Persian Empire, p. 90f.) In the case of Darius, an inscription records his patronage of a temple of Apollo in Asia Minor. Quite in accord with this is the biblical record of favours bestowed on the Jerusalem temple by the Persian kings. This policy undoubtedly was largely responsible for the favourable attitude towards the Persian monarchs in the Old Testament and the willingness to credit them with a genuine recognition of an overruling Providence.

It is true that Xerxes, in an inscription at Persepolis, refers to the suppression of a local religion at one place in his empire. But this religion is described as demon-worship, and Xerxes suppressed this in favour of the pure worship of Ahuramazda the great God. This act may well have increased, rather than diminished, the Jewish estimate of his character.

This favourable attitude is so much in contrast with the situation in the later part of the Persian period that it calls for comment. In the fourth century the Persians appear in the role of

vindictive conquerors rather than benevolent overlords. Revolts against Persian rule took place and they were ruthlessly crushed. Whatever other factors were involved in the creation of this new situation, religious factors were important. The worship of Mithra and of the mother-goddess Anahita gained popularity and found official recognition in the empire at the end of the fifth century B.C. Thus, in Jewish eyes, the Persian religion of the fourth century must have had an entirely different character than that of the preceding period. There could be no tolerance of a religion which included the worship of the goddess Anahita. This change in the Persian religion may well have played an important role in strengthening the particularist tendencies of Judaism in the later Persian period.

But the Judaism of the fifth century, at least, is characterized by a willingness to credit the foreign kings with a genuine religious awareness. This depends not only on the profession of belief in a supreme God by the Persian monarchs and in their tolerance of the beliefs and practices of Judaism along with the other religions of the empire. It involves a recognition by Jews of genuine moral and religious values in the Persian religion. Thus, in Second-Isaiah, which violently ridicules the idol-worship of Babylonia, there is nothing which would lead us to include the Persian religion under the same condemnation. Instead some verses seem to recognize its validity. The allusions to Cyrus, such as 41:2, seem to emphasize the idea of righteousness or right, an important concept in Persian thought. Just as Darius claims, in the Naqsh-i-Rustam inscription, "By the favour of Ahuramazda, I am of such a sort that I am a friend of the right, I am not a friend of the wrong," so Cyrus apparently posed as a defender of the right to the various peoples in the Neo-Babylonian empire whose help he sought to enlist on his own behalf. So in Second-Isaiah, Cyrus is more than the mere tool of Yahweh, or rod of Yahweh's anger as Assyria was according to the first Isaiah; Cyrus is Yahweh's servant who does his bidding that men may know from east to west that there is only one God (Cf. 45: 6).

Thus, the usage of the title "the God of the heavens" seems to be associated with a recognition of a certain validity in the religion of the Persian kings. The same recognition occurs with reference to the religion of ordinary folk. In the book of Jonah, for example, when the ship is in danger of foundering, the sailors frantically try to save it and pray to their various gods hoping that the deity responsible will cease his wrath or come to their aid. When Jonah must explain to them who he is, he says, "I am a Hebrew and I fear Yahweh the God of the heavens." The sailors apparently worship their personal gods, but they also may be expected to recognize an overruling God of the heavens. What Jonah does is to identify Yahweh as this supreme God for the sailors. Yahweh is "the God of the heavens" whom even the gentiles recognize in their conception of a sovereign authority over the universe, but whose name they do not know. These sailors, when they learn that Yahweh is this great God and that he is the cause of their troubles, are smitten with still greater fear, and, after the truth of Jonah's statement is proved by the stilling of the sea, they make sacrifices to Yahweh, being converted to his worship.

By contrast the people of Nineveh, who are not told by the prophet that Yahweh is the God of the heavens but only that in forty days their city will be destroyed, repent of their evil deed and, accepting this as a genuine warning from 'Elohim (God, or the divine world in general), they call to 'Elohim for mercy. They are apparently not converted to Yahweism, but they repent of their evil conduct before God as they understand him. Even in Nineveh there is a real awareness of God, a genuine sort of faith, though they do not know the name of God. They become God-fearers, they do not become proselytes.

The Special Knowledge of God Implied in the Use of the Divine Name

While the use of the title "the God of the heavens" is associated with the recognition of a general religious awareness among the gentiles, it also implies a special revelation for Israel. It is significant that the title is used not merely as a phrase descriptive of Yahweh, but as a substitute for the divine name in correspondence with foreigners. The avoidance of the use of the divine name with foreigners points to the special character of Israel's faith.

It seems obvious that knowledge of the name implies knowledge of the character of God. This is in accord with Hebrew conceptions where the name is more than a label; it is part of the personality, even the core of the personality, which stamps it as distinct from other personalities and reveals its nature. So knowledge of the name of God means knowledge of his real character as distinct from awareness of his reality and authority. Among the nations such an awareness of the ultimate authority of the God of the heavens could be discerned. But only Israel knew his name, and, therefore, his character and purpose.

In the Old Testament, therefore, Israel always enjoys a place of special favour and responsibility before the rest of the world which she never loses even in passages with the most universal outlook. Second-Isaiah, for example, is an explicit and emphatic monotheist with a broad outlook. But he does not assert that there is only one God, and then speculate as to the character of this one God. Rather, he asserts that Yahweh alone is God, an assertion he makes because he recognizes in the character of Yahweh a reality not found in the idol-gods of Babylonia. It is his knowledge of Yahweh's character and will that indicates he alone is God. The important thing, then, is that the nations as well as Israel should come to know Yahweh in his true character. Once Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt by a series of mighty acts in which he revealed his glory to her. Second-Isaiah saw the hand of Yahweh in the mighty acts of his day, in the rise of Cyrus and the expected return from Babylon, and he looked forward to the revelation of Yahweh's glory in such fashion that not only Israel alone, but all flesh together, would see it (40:5).

But, even in this new situation, Israel would still have a special place. According to chapter 49, for example, Israel was to be a light to the nations so that Yahweh's salvation would extend to the ends of the earth; yet the nations would extend royal honours to the people through whom Yahweh was made known to them. According to 49:23,

kings would be their foster fathers and queens their nursing mothers, bowing to the earth and licking the dust from their feet. It is difficult, even in visions of the future, for the prophet to lose sight of the fact that Israel alone knows the name of God, and so has a treasure not found elsewhere in the world.

More important is the question of what sort of character and purpose the name was assumed to reveal. A discussion of the etymological origin of the name is not so valuable in this connection as an investigation of its meaning for post-exilic Judaism. This would be best answered by an examination of the acts and purposes with which the name is associated, an examination too long to undertake in the present paper. It may, however, be said that the name was revealed to Moses as the name of the God who came to deliver his people from bondage. Knowledge of God as deliverer is at least one thing which distinguished Israel's faith in Yahweh from the more generalized belief in "the God of the heavens." Rabbinic exegesis worked on the theory that the word 'Elohim referred to the judgment of God, while the name Yahweh indicated his mercy and love. This is hard to maintain in the light, for example, of the vindictive judgment posited by some writers for the day of Yahweh. But such judgment is a means of mercy for his people, and the Christian would agree that love is the essence of the character of God. The distinction between the name and the title may well be indicated in the phrase of Nehemiah 2: 5, "Yahweh the God of the heavens, the great and terrible God, who keeps loving faith with those who love him and keep his commandments."

THE PARABLE OF THE GUESTS AT THE BANQUET

A Sketch of the History of its Interpretation

Professor F. W. Beare

This paper commenced with a comparison of the forms in which the parable appears in Luke 14: 15 - 24 and in Matthew 22: 1 - 14. It showed that the original setting of the parable had been lost, and that it has been given a new setting, and therewith a new point and emphasis, by each of the evangelists. In both versions, it has been subjected to expansion under the influence of allegorical interpretations which were given to it by the early church. The history of its interpretation was then traced through the early Greek Fathers - Irenaeus, Origen, and Chrysostom, and such representatives of the Latin Fathers as Jerome, Augustine and Gregory the Great. The new emphasis of the Reformation was noted in the interpretations of Luther, Melancthon and Calvin. Finally, brief reference was made to the epoch making work of Julicher, and the most recent approaches of Form Criticism.

The paper has been published in a volume of studies presented to Professor F. C. Grant, under the general title: "The Joy of Study" (MacMillan and Company, New York).