Excerpts from: *"The Beauty with the Veil:* Validating the Strategies of Kierkegaardian Indirect Communication through a Close Christological Reading of the Hebrew Old Testament"

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The Christian community is still taught to sing the song of Moses, to remember the Passover Lamb, and to say with every true son of Abraham, *"We* were in Egypt." Thus "we are invited to make the world the Scripture projects our own, to find our place in it, and to indwell it" (Bartholomew, 2012, p. 76).

For such a project, the literary forms that were available to the biblical historians, beginning with Moses, were apparently inadequate to say what they wanted to say, with a result that the arrival of the Torah was something completely new in the world. The Chronicle form (e.g., an ancient pharaoh listing his achievements) lacked narrative sinews for connecting events in order to contextualize them or indicate their significance. The Epic form (e.g., the Akkadian account of creation known as *Enuma Elish*) was too bound up with polytheism; these epics were cultural artifacts attributed with magical power to influence the gods through ritual reenactment, gods who could be used. The biblical writers must have felt something deeply wrong with telling the story of *I Am* in such a way. The narratives they created were meant to take quite a different place in people's lives:

> Where the Mesopotamians put amulets and icons to ward off evil, the Israelites are commanded to symbolically place the story of Exodus. And where the central epics of Mesopotamian polytheism were employed in magical ceremonies, the Hebrews are commanded to tell the story of the Exodus in a rhetorical celebration of Passover. (Patrick & Scult, 1990, p. 38)

Old Testament narratives mirror the way their hearers encounter their world within a lived experience of sequence and movement, a sense of time and of place. In other words, story is the form for the communication of truth that is most like life, and is the most effective for permeating social contexts and for revealing truth's relational dimensions. Preeminent Christian scholar Clifford Christians (2002) speaks of this way of knowing as one that is "close to the bone in the creaturely fabric of everyday life" (p. xi). Biblical historical prose is deceptively straightforward. An ingenious verisimilitude attaches to the way it simulates the ambiguities of life and the complexities of human nature, characterized as it is by ubiquitous narrative gaps for readers to fill in and bundles of motivations for them to sort out (Bartholomew, 2012, p. 83; Alter, 2011a, p. 115). Such is the account of Moses. Such, indeed, is life.

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When Hebrew poetry deals with Israel's history (e.g., Ps 78, 105, and 106), there is "no narrative *realization* of the events invoked; their intelligibility depends on the audience's detailed knowledge of the events" (Alter, 2011, p. 29-30). The poems lack the exposition of independent narratives, but are a form of literary play involving information already secure in cultural memory. Kierkegaard springs to mind with his concern for "the intimate realization of the significance of what was already known" (Craddock, 2002, p. 77). The Hebrew poet's recasting of familiar historical prose into evocative images and patterns contributes much to my thesis. Whatever need they were addressing in their community and in ours, it has less to do with supplying information where it was lacking and more to do with the communicating the capability of praise as believers are brought into fresh contact with what they have long known if only to see it as for the first time.

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