

ELECTION

early 19th cents., in America it was rather the OT idea of a "chosen people" which captured the literary imagination. In *White Jacket* Herman Melville echoes a conviction, to be found in Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702) and Timothy Dwight's *The Conquest of Canaan* (1785), that the OT history of Israel, God's chosen people, is the prefiguration of a divine plan to be realized in the history of the American people, the "new elect." In American texts from Thomas Shepard's *The Covenant of Grace* (1651) and Edward Johnson's *Wonder-Working Providence of Sion's Saviour* (1654) to Michael Wigglesworth's *Day of Doom* (1662) it is suggested that just as God had in the past delivered his chosen people by means of the Exodus from Egypt into the Promised Land of Canaan, so now he was delivering his "elect from every tribe and nation" (cf. Matt. 24:31) into the land of milk and honey across the Atlantic. Melville writes to prepared readers when he says, "We Americans are the peculiar, chosen people — the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world" (*White Jacket*, 189; cf. 1 Pet. 2:9). Melville's own religious background in the Reformed Dutch Protestant Church well fitted him to take up the Calvinist theme, since it was integral to the "family history" of his own denomination as the "elect" or "covenant people," a connection he would have celebrated many times a year as a boy when, after a baptism in the Sunday morning service, the congregation sang from the denominational hymnbook (1847; 1860) the 1562 Geneva setting for Ps. 105 by "Maitre Pierre," the tune for which was also denominated "PIERRE" in the hymnal, "Unto the Lord Lift Thankful Voices." It includes the words:

Ye seed from Abraham descended,
To whom his favors were extended,
And Jacob's children, whom the Lord
Has chosen, hearken to his word.

This hymn, which, with its emphasis on the precedence of family ties throughout the generations over any worldly affections, may bear relationship to Melville's troubled autobiographical novel *Pierre, or the Ambiguities* (1852), concludes:

The Lord his covenant people planted
In lands of nations which he granted,
That they his statutes might observe,
Nor from his laws might ever swerve.

The American literary penchant for biblical typology, so strongly developed in writers of Calvinist background such as Melville, Hawthorne, and Edward Taylor, is itself rooted in this application of OT covenant to a present in which America is seen as Israel, as Dwight's poem puts it, now finding itself on "new Canaan's promised shores" (*Conquest of Canaan*, 10.1.484). American literary typology thus depends to some degree upon a doctrine of election as premise. When in the 19th cent. the premise

is subtly eroded by, among other things, Romantic individualism and residues of Methodist and evangelical conversionism, then, as in James Russell Lowell's famous Harvard "Oration Ode" (1810), the old Puritan vision of American as "the Promised Land / That flows with freedom's honey and milk" is not always attributed to divine election but often to individual faith: "'Tis not the grapes of Canaan that repay, / But the high faith that failed not by the way."

In England, despite Galsworthy's gentle jibe (*Talking at Large*, 153) that he supposed Americans and Britons "both . . . consider our respective nations the chosen people of the earth," the doctrine of election was made most conspicuous in literature by providing a focus for attacks on self-righteousness. In Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit*, in which people of all sorts subscribe to formulas "sacred and salutary" while living moral lives of grotesque impropriety, Mrs. Clennam's assumption that she is one of the chosen, full of the "grace and favour to be elected," justifies to her own mind obsessive vengeance. In her jealous hatred of an old rival for Mr. Clennam's love she asserts: "it was appointed to me to lay the hand of punishment upon that creature of perdition." In exhibiting a self-appointed religious woman who is anything but humbled by the doctrine, Dickens caricatures what he takes to be a rigid and oppressive view of personal election, one still satirized by John Betjeman in "Calvinistic Evensong" a century later. Betjeman countenances a view of poetic inspiration, however, which owes something to the history of the doctrine in England (see his poem *Olney Hymns*).

John Galsworthy's story (1915) turned into a play, *The First and the Last* (1921), deals, however ironically, with a central element in the doctrine of election frequently better grasped, as G. K. Chesterton observed, by its opponents than its adherents: the NT idea of election ought above all to produce humility in the "elect," since they have and can do nothing to merit it; in practice, many who consider themselves "elect" are unduly "puffed up" (cf. 1 Cor. 4:6). In writing of George Bernard Shaw, who had an ardent distaste for the doctrine, Chesterton suggests that Shaw nevertheless grasps the NT principle well enough in his distinction of true from false virtue: "that reversal is the whole idea of virtue; that the last shall be first and the first last" ("The Dramatist"; cf. Matt. 20:16).

The great 20th-cent. novel on the theme of election is undoubtedly Chaim Potok's *The Chosen* (1967), an American Jewish tale of the search for both individual and national identity in which election as personal calling to rabbinic vocation contests with an appeal to fulfillment of the biblical covenant and promise to Israel of a return from diaspora and captivity to the Promised Land in Palestine. Resistance to the American appropriation of the "chosen" mythos in political life reaches its zenith in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), a dys-

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topia in which American fundamentalists have erected a society based upon rigid implementation of OT law and social custom. Atwood's anti-jeremiad deplores the possibility of a biblicist America declaring itself the only "chosen" and judging the rest of the world "reprobate."

See also PREDESTINATION; VOCATION.

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ELEVENTH HOUR See LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD.

ELI See HOPHI AND PHINEHAS; SAMUEL.

ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI? Aramaic for "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" this is Jesus' cry from the cross (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34).

See also SEVEN LAST WORDS.

ELIHU See JOB.

ELIJAH The varied and colorful career of Elijah the Tishbite may be divided into seven distinctive episodes: his sudden appearance on the national scene of Israel, as he announces to King Ahab the forthcoming drought and immediately flees (on God's command) to the brook Cherith, where he is fed by ravens (1 Kings 17:1-7); his reviving of the son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-24); his successful contest with the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:20-40); his flight from the wrath of Ahab's wife Jezebel, in the course of which he despairs, falls asleep under a broom (KJV "juniper") tree, is awakened and fed by an angel, and then fasts for forty days and forty nights at Mt. Horeb (1 Kings 19:1-18); his judgment upon Ahab and Jezebel in the matter of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21:1-29); his intervention in Ahaziah's attempted embassy to Baal-zebub (2 Kings 1:1-18); and his translation into heaven in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:1-12).

There are scores of legendary embellishments of these events in Jewish tradition. According to one, the son of the widow of Zarephath was to become the prophet Jonah; another has it that in the contest with the prophets of Baal, the water which filled the trench around the altar to God sprang from Elijah's own fingers (see Ginzberg, *LJ*, vol. 4). But it was Elijah's translation into heaven which most sparked the imagination of later generations; this incident, together with the prophecy of

Malachi (4:5-6) that God will send Elijah before "the great and terrible day of the LORD" to "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers," generated a veritable torrent of speculation. According to Zohar Haddah Ruth (1-2), Elijah had to fight with and vanquish the Angel of Death before (as a living man) he could gain entrance to heaven; once admitted, he took on the responsibility of ordering and directing the blessed. He has, according to some sources, protected and instructed the great talmudic scholars, lesser rabbis, and the poor and destitute; he rewards the just and punishes the unjust; and in the last days he will bring peace to Israel and order the tribes for Messiah's coming (Ecclus. 48:10-11; 'Ed. 8.7; cf. S. Liptzin, "Elijah in Yiddish Literature." Many of these legends and beliefs have also been adopted and modified by Muslim commentators).

In Christian tradition, the Gospels' association of Elijah with John the Baptist (Matt. 11:14; Luke 1:17; 9:8; 9:19; John 1:21) complicates the understanding of his role. In Christian pictorial iconography his appearance usually follows NT descriptions of John — a tendency justified in part by Elijah's habit of living (by choice or necessity) in the wilderness. The Desert Fathers and other ascetics trace their lineage not only to Christ's sojourn in the wilderness, but back through John to Elijah. (A 3rd-cent. Apocalypse of Elijah strongly resembles the book of Revelation.)

In general, however, the attention the Fathers give to Elijah is slight. He is typically seen as exemplifying absolute devotion to God in the face of enmity and persecution — a position modified by Luther, who in a polemical vein compares the Reformers to Elijah and the Roman church to the prophets of Baal (*Works*, ed. T. Bachmann [1960], 35.200-201) — or, through his dealings with the prophets of Baal, as providing justification for the slaying of God's enemies. For St. Clement of Rome, Elijah is a type of the simplicity and poverty to which Christians are called (1 Clem. 17:1). Many Christian commentators have identified Elijah and Enoch, the other biblical character who did not experience a natural death, as the two witnesses of Rev. 11 who will appear in the last days.

Many of the theological uses of the Elijah narrative are repeated in literature. In Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*, the prophet is cited as an example of the virtue of fasting (3.1890-93). The same tale's friar asserts that both Elijah and Elisha were friars (3.2116-18), an allusion to the traditional identification of Elijah as the founder of the Carmelites. Milton, in his *Apology for Smectymnus*, sees Elijah's mockery of the prophets of Baal as an example of humor used properly for instruction — in response to Bacon, who had called such tactics into question. Swinburne, however, turns Elijah's mockery of the prophets of Baal against Christians in his "Hymn of Man":

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ELIJAH

Is he drunk or asleep, that the rod of his wrath is unfelt
and unseen? . . .
Cry aloud till his godhead awaken; what doth he to
sleep and to dream?
Cry, cut yourselves, gash you with knives and scourges,
heap on to you dust;
Is his life but as other gods' lives? Is not this the Lord
God of your trust?
. . . O fools, he was God, and is dead.

Hardy, in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, is similarly skeptical, implicitly comparing the silence of the Christian God with that of Baal: after Tess is raped, his narrator asks, "Where was Tess's guardian angel? where was the Providence of her simple faith? Perhaps, like that other god of whom the ironical Tishbite spoke, he was talking, or he was pursuing, or he was on a journey, or he was sleeping and not to be awaked." Howard Nemerov recalls the contest on Carmel to make a different kind of point:

. . . when Elijah on Mount Carmel brought the rain
Where the prophets of Baal could not bring rain,
Some of the people said that the rituals of the prophets
of Baal
Were aesthetically significant, while Elijah's were very
plain. ("On Certain Wits")

Milton makes significant use of Elijah in *Paradise Regained*, where he cites Elijah's sojourns in the wilderness as types and patterns for Christ's own desert fast. Christ himself, addressing Satan disguised as an inquiring stranger, calls attention to Elijah's example (1.351-55). Andrew and Simon, unable to find Jesus, fear that he has been "caught up to God . . . like the great Tishbite," and seek him "as those young Prophets then with care / Sought lost Elijah" (1.1-20). This connection is further explored when Christ dreams that he sees Elijah fed by the ravens, then fed by the angel under the juniper (2.260-78). This incident comes in for ironic treatment in Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, where it becomes a concern of Ernest Pontifex, thanks to a painting of "Elijah or Elisha (whichever it was) being fed by ravens in the desert" which hung in the dining room.

When Ernest was a very small boy it had been a constant matter of regret to him that the food which the ravens carried never actually reached the prophet. . . . One day . . . he had clambered up to the picture and with a piece of bread and butter traced a greasy line right across it from the ravens to Elisha's mouth, after which he had felt more comfortable.

Later Ernest, as a young priest, angered his Bishop by preaching a sermon on "what kind of little cake it was that the widow of Zarephath had intended making when Elijah found her gathering a few sticks. He demonstrated that it was a seed cake."

Although the notion of inheriting another's mantle (from 2 Kings 2:1-12) has become common enough to lose the force of allusion, some English writers have

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recalled the source. Robert Burns, in his prefatory "Dedication" of his *Poems* ("to the Noblemen and Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt"), writes that "The poetic genius of my country found me, as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha — at the plow; and threw her inspiring mantle over me." In *Billy Budd*, Melville describes the dawn of the day on which Billy was hanged: "Like the prophet in the chariot disappearing in heaven and dropping his mantle to Elisha, the withdrawing night transferred its pale robe to the peeping day." Dryden produces an ironic reversal of the story. As his Elijah (Flecknoe, the dullest of poets) sinks, the mantle rises up to Mac Flecknoe:

Sinking he left his drugget robe behind,
Borne upwards by a subterranean wind.
The mantle fell to the young prophet's part,
With double portion of his father's art. (*Mac Flecknoe*, 214-17)

Another common phrase deriving from the Elijah narrative is the "still small voice" of 1 Kings 19:9-12 — modified in Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" to "the still, sad music of humanity," and in Tennyson's "Break, Break, Break" to "the sound of a voice that is still."

William Blake refers to Elijah more generally as a great exemplar of uncompromising prophetic power. In *Milton*

Los is by mortals nam'd Time. . . .
But they depict him bald & aged who is in eternal youth
All powerful and his locks flourish like the brows of
morning
He is the Spirit of Prophecy the ever apparent Elias.
(pl. 24, 68-71)

In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (pls. 22-24), Blake creates "A Memorable Fancy" in which an angel — convinced by a devil that "no virtue can exist without breaking [the] ten commandments," and that "Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse, not from rules" — embraces the "flame of fire" out of which the devil speaks, and thus "[is] consumed and [arises] as Elijah."

Melville's *Moby-Dick*, in which Ahab is so prominent, is not without an Elijah, although his appearance is brief (chap. 19, "The Prophet"). Just before he boards the *Pequod*, Ishmael is confronted by an apparently crazy old man, an ambiguous prophet — "wants to be, will be, and then again, perhaps it won't be, after all" — who warns vaguely of disaster to come. On finding that the man's name is Elijah, Ishmael is worried, but soon shrugs off his concern. This Ahab will be spared nothing — perhaps because his Elijah is so peripheral to his story.

See also CHARIOT OF FIRE: ELISHA; JEZEBEL; NABOTH'S VINEYARD; TWO WITNESSES.

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ALAN JACOBS

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ELISABETH Elisabeth is remembered in Christian tradition because of her relationships to others who are more significant in the story of salvation: she was the mother of John the Baptist and cousin to Mary the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:5-18). Elisabeth and her husband Zechariah were given a child in their old age, a miraculous event foretold (Luke 1:11-22) by the angel Gabriel. In the tradition of barren women in the OT, Elisabeth attributed her pregnancy to God's care for and pity on her: "to take away my reproach among men" (Luke 1:25).

News of Elisabeth's pregnancy was also part of the angels' annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:26-37). When Mary arrived for a visit with her cousin, the child in Elisabeth's womb leapt, prompting her to utter the words which became part of the liturgy venerating Mary: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb . . ." (Luke 1:42). Some commentaries have compared John's leap in Elisabeth's womb to David's dancing before the ark because her words of greeting to Mary ("And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" [Luke 1:43]) echo those of David ("How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?" [2 Sam. 6:9]). According to tradition, Elisabeth protected John from the slaughter of the innocents by fleeing with him to Uti-Desert, where a rock opened up to conceal them until danger had passed.

Elisabeth and Zacharias are celebrated as saints, their feast day being November 5. Elisabeth is more prominent in the visual than in the literary arts, particularly in mosaics and paintings depicting the visitation of Mary or in scenes of the two mothers with their sons. She is included in a list of notable biblical women in the Anglo-Saxon "Journey Charm"; and she is routinely mentioned as part of Gabriel's message to Mary in annunciation carols (e.g., R. Greene, *Early English Carols* [1977], nos. 233-57). She is featured in the "Visitation" or "Salutation" plays of the medieval mystery cycles.

Later references to Elisabeth are scanty. William Blake mentions her in a description of an illustration in *The Vision of the Last Judgment*: "The Holy Family consisting of Mary Joseph John the Baptist Zacharias & Elisabeth receiving the Bread & Wine among other Spirits of [the] Just made perfect." In James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*, Stephen Dedalus compares his friend Cranly to John the Baptist: "the child of exhausted loins . . . those of Elisabeth and Zachary."

See also MAGNIFICAT; MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS.

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ELISHA The career of Elisha, although intimately connected with that of the prophet Elijah, has a distinctive history to which both commentators and writers have attended. His independent prophetic vocation begins at

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2 Kings 2:13, as he picks up the mantle of the departed Elijah; his story continues (with occasional interruptions) through 2 Kings 13:21, which describes how a dead man, tossed into Elisha's tomb, was restored to life upon coming into contact with the prophet's bones. This final miracle is alluded to in Ecclus. 48:12-14, where it is said of Elisha, "No word could overcome him, and after his death his body prophesied. He did wonders in his life, and at his death were his works marvellous."

Theological commentators, both Jewish and Christian, tend to focus on two special problems arising from the biblical account. The first revolves around the proper interpretation of Elisha's claim to "a double portion of [Elijah's] spirit" (2 Kings 2:9). The events related in the text hardly seem to support the conclusion that Elisha was twice as great a prophet as Elijah (the Hebrew phrase itself, meaning literally "a mouth of two" or a double mouthful, is ambiguous); yet St. Jerome, Martin Luther, and many other translators and interpreters have tried to save the "plain sense." Rabbinical commentators argue that Elisha performed twice as many miracles as Elijah, sixteen to eight (Baraita of 32 Middot, 1); the medieval Christian theologian Peter Damian uses the same argument, but attributes twenty-four miracles to Elisha, twelve to Elijah (*Acta sanctorum*, July 20). The second issue which has prompted extensive commentary is the incident in which Elisha called bears down upon a group of boys who taunted him (2 Kings 2:23-25): was the prophet following the will of God? Here the rabbis are particularly inventive: the Haggadah argues that those who mocked Elisha were not boys, but men behaving like boys; other commentators say that Elisha saw, with his prophetic gifts, that the boys were the sons of evil parents and would grow up to be evil themselves, and furthermore argue that God punished him for yielding to his anger by visiting him with a serious illness (Sota 46b-47a).

The morbid humor associated with this incident is not lost on Charles Lamb, who writes of one Thomas Coventry that he "made a solitude of children wherever he came, for they fled his insufferable presence, as they would have shunned an Elisha bear" ("The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple"). Joyce provides a modification of the Vg rendering of the taunt of the boys in *Ulysses* ("Proteus" episode): "*Descende, calve, ut ne nimium decalveris*" ("Come down, bald one, lest you become even balder"). In his poem "Baldhead Elisha," A. M. Klein comments on "the horrible / Vengeance that bears / Wreaked for the honour / Of forty-two hairs!"

Elisha's miracle of making "iron swim" (2 Kings 6:5-7) is alluded to by Milton in his "Animadversions," when he says that his opponent needs a better foundation for argument than the trivial one he has provided, "which you may now deplore as the axehead that fell into the water and say, 'Alas, master, for it was borrowed,' unless you have as good a faculty to make iron swim, as you had to make light froth sink." Of all Elisha's miracles, however,

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with the Bible he knows so well when, in *The Return of the Native*, he writes:

Human beings, in their generous endeavour to construct a hypothesis that shall not degrade a First Cause, have always hesitated to conceive a dominant power of lower moral quality than their own; and, even while they sit down and weep by the waters of Babylon, invent excuses for the oppression which prompts their tears. (6.1)

A similar viewpoint is represented by Ruskin in his *Fors Clavigera* (Letter 91). The narrator of Eliot's *The Waste Land* describes his post-party emptiness with an allusion to the verse, replacing "Babylon" with "Leman," a ME word for "lover": "By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept." Elizabeth Smart's autobiographical *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* recalls the verse in order to lend poignancy to her own often bitter recollections of an alienated and "exiled" life.

See also BABYLON; HARP.

RIZPAH Rizpah was a concubine of King Saul. Ishbosheth, Saul's son, accused Abner of having relations with her (2 Sam. 3:7-11). Two of her sons were subsequently hanged by the Gibeonites (2 Sam. 21:8-11), along with five sons of Saul's daughter Michal; Rizpah kept watch over their bodies to prevent the birds and beasts from devouring them. The pathos of her story was popular with 19th-cent. preachers and is prominent in William Cullen Bryant's poem "Rizpah" as well as Tennyson's "Rizpah," both of which are dramatic monologues.

ROCK Although there are exceptions, the Bible and ancient translations of it usually make a distinction between rock (*sur* or *sela* in Hebrew; *petra* in Greek) which is part of a natural rock formation and stone (*eben* in Hebrew; *lithos* in Greek) which is not part of a natural rock formation. Although "rock" and "stone" are used in similar ways as symbols of hardness or strength or were both used as altars or landmarks, the only place where they are used as parallels is in the expression "stone of stumbling and rock of offence."

The words for "rock" are often used to describe a place of refuge in the rocky hill-country of Palestine. From this developed the practice of referring to God as a "rock" (nearly always with the word *sur*). This OT title for God is most often found in prayers and poetry, and while other ideas may be included, the name conveys primarily that God saves and protects his people (e.g., Deut. 32:15, 18; Pss. 62:2; 71:3).

The best-known occurrence of "rock" in the Bible is probably that in Matt. 16:18 where there is a wordplay between the name *Peter* (the masculine Greek form *Petros*) and the rock (the feminine form *petra*) on which the Church was to be built. Roman Catholics have interpreted this verse to mean that St. Peter would be the foundation for the Church and have used the verse to

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justify the Papacy. Historically, Protestants have tended to interpret the rock as Peter's confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. In the modern period there is a tendency even by Protestants to recognize that this verse did point to Peter's foundational role in the origin of the Church, but without seeing this as a basis for the Roman Catholic Papacy.

The use of the word *rock* in 1 Cor. 10:4 is surprising, for it identifies Christ as the spiritual rock which followed the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings. This identification has its origin in the OT accounts of water being supplied to the Israelites from a rock (Exod. 17; Num. 20). That the rock followed the Israelites is not part of the OT text, but was adopted by Paul from Jewish tradition (see, e.g., the targums on Num. 21:16-20 or Midr. Num. 1.2 and 19.26). This text then assumes that the preexistent Christ ministered to the ancient Israelites and is used to substantiate a warning to the Corinthians. It is this passage which yields such allusions as characterize F. W. Faser's "The Shadow of the Rock," in which "The Rock moves ever at thy side, / pausing to welcome thee at eventide"; the metaphor is extended in Willa Cather's novel *Shadows on the Rock* (1931). Augustus Toplady's "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me" (1775) identifies the smitten rock of Exod. 17 and Num. 20 with the cross, and is probably an influential mediation of such allusions in later literature. T. S. Eliot's fragmentary play *The Rock* derives most of its biblical information from imagery connected with Heb. *'eben* and Gk. *lithos*, "stone."

See also PETER; SMITTEN ROCK; STONE; STONES CRY OUT; TEMPLE.

ROOT OF ALL EVIL See MAMMON; *RADIX MALORUM*.

ROSA SINE SPINA See MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS; ROSE WITHOUT A THORN.

ROSE OF SHARON A reference to the bride of the Song of Songs (2:1), the rose of Sharon becomes part of medieval typology of the Virgin Mary (e.g., in St. Anthony of Padua and St. Bernard of Clairvaux). Jonathan Edwards, in his *Personal Narrative*, says that the words represent to him "the loveliness and beauty of Jesus Christ"; for Edward Taylor the phrase inspires a poem in his *Poems and Sacramental Meditations*, the "Reflexion" to his first meditation, which compares the perfume of the rose to the sweetness of Christ's sacrifice celebrated in the Eucharist. In Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, Prior Aymer agrees with her temporary captor that Rebecca is as beautiful as "the very Bride of the Canticles," indeed "the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley," then counters his licentious intentions with the parry "but your Grace must remember that she is still but a Jewess" (chap. 7).

ROSE WITHOUT A THORN From at least as early as St. Paul's reference to "the thorn in the flesh," the thorn

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comes to represent even more than the thousand natural ills and shocks to which humanity is heir: it stands as a generic term for the moral imperfection and all our woe which entered the world through the Fall. Reading the curse mentioned in Gen. 3:18 ("Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee") in this way, the Fathers infer a *rosa sine spina* of the lost Eden, creating the tradition to which Herrick refers ("Before Man's fall, the Rose was born / (St. Ambrose says) without the Thorn" ["The Rose" in *Noble Numbers*]), and thus establish one of the principal cultural utensils for Milton's poetic recapture of Paradise: "Flowers of all hue, and without thorn the rose" (*Paradise Lost*, 4.256).

Milton's image is not therefore, as was sometimes supposed by early commentators, an Italian conceit, but is well documented from patristic sources (e.g., St. Basil, *Hexameron*, 5.45 [PG 32.1211]; St. Ambrose, *Hexameron*, 3.2 [PL 14.188], cited in G. W. Whiting, "And Without Thorn the Rose," *RES* n.s. 10 [1959], 60-62). The tradition is glanced at in Marvell, who sees in the freshness of the nymph playing amid the flowers the possibility of removing Nature's blight by disarming "roses of their thorns" ("The Picture of Little T. C. in a Prospect of Flowers"), while a sentimental age later, in Burns's song "The Banks o' Doon," the lass separates the rose from its thorn to image the gulf, here sexual, between innocence and experience ("But my fause luvver staw my rose, / And left the thorn wi' me").

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RUTH The OT story of Ruth the Moabitess is an idyllic romance built around the life of a domestic heroine. As a pastoral work, the story has a strong elemental quality in its references to home, family, religious devotion, earth, harvest, love, and nation.

The plot is a comic, U-shaped sequence. The four chapters are structured so as to accentuate the climactic nighttime meeting between Ruth and Boaz: (1) the tragic background of the story, (2) the early stages of the romance, (3) the encounter at midnight on the threshing floor, and (4) the denouement. Underlying the story is a quest for a home (Ruth 1:9; 3:1), and there is a continuous tension between emptiness and fullness which is resolved happily in the last chapter. The story is noteworthy for its careful ordering of events; its use of the archetypes of harvest and the stranger or exile; its drama; its dramatic irony (Ruth and Boaz are oblivious to the likelihood of marriage); its controlling metaphor of ingathering; the use of allusion to salvation history (the domestic world of an obscure woman becomes linked with the mainstream of OT history); and the intricate characterization of Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi.

Thematically the story celebrates the commonplace (nature, earth, harvest, family, home), domestic values, and wedded romantic love. It is also a story of divine

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providence. Late in the story (4:17) the writer suggests yet another interpretive framework when he places the child of Ruth in the Davidic/messianic line, thereby calling attention to the story as a chapter of salvation history. (The only other biblical reference to the story, Matt. 1:5, likewise places Obed and Boaz in the genealogy of Jesus.)

In midrashic commentary Ruth is praised for her extraordinary beauty (Ruth Rab. 2.4; cf. Shab. 113b; Peshitta Ruth 3.3), but also for her piety (Ruth Rab. 3.3; Pirke R. El. 23.115b), and though she was by birth a Moabitess, by virtue of her acceptance by Boaz and his blessing she became for tradition one of "the mothers of Israel" (Pesiqtat Rab. Kah. 16.124a). For St. Augustine she was a model widow and yet blessed in her second marriage because her motive was "having seed such as was at that time necessary in Israel" (*De bono viduitatis*, 10). In lines which anticipate the image of Keats, St. Jerome writes to a female Christian convert: "My soul rejoices, yet the very greatness of my joy makes me feel sad. Like Ruth, when I try to speak I burst into tears" (*Ep.* 71). Dante's Ruth is a model of modest faith, seated on a petal of the white rose with two other mothers of Israel, Sarah and Rebecca, representing "those who believe in Christ yet to come" (*Paradiso*, 32.10-24).

Poets' allusions to the story have covered its main phases. In Milton's Sonnet 9 ("Lady that in the prime of earliest youth") Ruth appears with Mary, sister of Martha, as a norm of true spiritual virtue, and if the speculation is accurate that the young woman of the sonnet is Milton's first wife Mary Powell, the allusion also includes Ruth's domestic identity as the idealized bride.

Blake, in *Jerusalem*, follows Dante, listing Ruth with Bathsheba and others as the "Material Line" culminating in Mary (62.11), so emphasizing her sexuality. In a series of popular early 19th-cent. graphic illustrations on the theme of Ruth, four of eleven plates deal with sexual iconography in the narrative — notably the paintings of Laurens, Rembrandt, Delacroix, and Poussin, in the latter of which a harvest scene provides relevant background. Another iconic representation frequent in the 19th cent. shows Ruth gleaning, as in "The Solitary Reaper."

Byron compares himself and his readers searching after truth to Ruth and Boaz gathering grain (*Don Juan*, 13.96). Whittier remembers Ruth at the feet of Boaz when he says regarding a mountain lake under the moon that it "Sleeps dreaming of the mountains, fair as Ruth / In the old Hebrew pastoral, at the feet / Of Boaz" ("Among the Hills").

Ruth the exile prompts the most evocative of all the allusions to the story. In his "Ode to a Nightingale," Keats elaborates his theme of the bird as a symbol of the immortality of nature by asserting that the song to which he is listening is "the selfsame song that found a path /

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Through the sad heart of Ruth when, sick for home, / She stood in tears amid the alien corn" (65-67).

The book of Ruth has been the subject of a host of dramatic adaptations. While many of these have been intended for religious instruction, serious literary adaptations include *Ruth and Naomi* (1786) by the Comtesse de

Genlis (Stephanie Felicite Ducrest du St. Aubin), Andrew Young's dramatic poem *Boaz and Ruth* (1920), and William Ford Manley's *Ruth* (1928).

Bibliography. Boattie, D. R. G. *Jewish Exegesis of the Book of Ruth* (1976); Rauber, D. F. "Literary Values in the Bible: The Book of Ruth." *JBL* 89 (1970), 27-37. LELAND RYKEN

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SABBATH REST At the beginning of creation the Spirit of God was hovering over the watery chaos (Gen. 1:2) without apparent rest. After six days, however, God had made the universe according to his will and rested on the seventh (Sabbath) day (1:31-2:3; Heb. *shabbat*, "rested"). The earth reverted to chaos when God unleashed the Flood as a punishment for human sin, preserving only the family of Noah (one of the possible meanings of whose name is "rest"), whom alone God had found righteous in that generation (6:7-9; 7:1). After the Flood Noah released a dove from the ark, but the creature at first found no rest upon the waters and returned to Noah (8:9).

When the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt, they were permitted no rest, but after their liberation they were commanded both to rest on the Sabbath day and to give rest to their bondservants on that day (Deut. 5:14-15). In keeping the Sabbath they were to enter into God's creation rest (Exod. 20:8-11) and delight in God's works (Isa. 58:13-14). Furthermore, when they entered the Promised Land, they were to give the land sabbatical rest one year in seven (Lev. 25:1-7), lest they be chased out of the land, so as to give the land rest as it lay desolate (Lev. 26:33-35, 43), while Israel itself in such a situation would have no rest, but would pine in her iniquity (Lev. 26:36-39; Deut. 28:65-67). For the Israelites themselves, entering the Promised Land can be spoken of as entering God's rest (Deut. 12:9), though through unbelief the generation which left Egypt was divinely prevented from entering this rest (Ps. 95:7-11).

When Israel occupied the Promised Land, the people and the land enjoyed rest when their enemies were subdued (Josh. 1:13; 21:43-44; Judg. 5:31), and God himself was spoken of as resting after the wilderness journeys in the Temple at Jerusalem (1 Chron. 28:2; Ps. 132). Yet the true resting place of God is not a material structure but the hearts of the contrite (Isa. 66:1-2); and Israel, though in the Promised Land, was exhorted to rest in God and find strength (Isa. 30:15).

In Ecclus. 24:1-8 the Wisdom of God seeks rest in the watery chaos of the nations (cf. Gen. 1:2), but finds it only in Israel, while in the NT the Spirit of God rests upon Jesus Christ (as had been prophesied of the Messiah in Isa. 11:2) at his baptism (John 1:32; cf. Mark 1:9-10), a thought further emphasized in the apocryphal Gospel of the Hebrews (cited by St. Jerome in his commentary on Isa. 11:2). According to Matt. 11:29, humans can also rest in Jesus Christ, in contrast to Judaism, which had become a religion of heavy burdens.

Heb. 3:7-4:11 interprets Ps. 95:7-11, with its implied promise of rest for the people of God after Joshua's conquest, as referring to something which is available to Christian believers. This could be either rest from works (hence rest of conscience, 4:3, 10), or the coming heavenly rest (cf. Rev. 14:13).

In various Jewish and Christian apocalyptic writings, as well as in talmudic sources, the age to come is described as a perpetual Sabbath, and in Heb. 4:9 a similar