

How Shall We Speak of God?

The Verbs of God

The One Who Delivers and Commands

The One Who Promises and Leads

PROMISE

Gen 18:1-15; Luke 1:37; Mk 10:27

Is 43:1-7

Ps 88; 3

LEAD

Deut 8:2, 4

Ps 23; 78:40

Ex 17

The One Who Creates and Creates Again

CREATE (never used for any but YHWH: “causing to be that which was not”; create/resurrect/justify by grace)/MAKE/FORM

Rom 4:17

Is 43; 45; 49; Prov. 8:22

CREATE AGAIN

Jer 4:23-26

Mk 4:35ff

Gen 1 & 6-7

Is 54:9

Is 65:17ff & Rev 21

(YHWH’s endless work: the reordering of creation from chaos/flood/exile/death: all synonyms for power against life, YHWH’s adversary or YHWH’s tool)

Gen 1-11/CREATE Gen 12-50/SWEAR Ex 1-15/DELIVER Ex 16-18/LEAD

19-Nu 10/COMMAND Nu 10-36/LEAD Joshua/RE-CREATE

The Story Line of Our Lives

The Adjectives for God: Exodus 34:6-10

All these adjectives are about God’s *relatedness* not God’s *self-being*, about God’s *fidelity* not about God’s power: The question for Moses is *not* “Is God *powerful*?” but “Can God be *trusted*?”

The Names of God: Description and Evocation

saved	→	saving	→	Savior
transforming	→	strong	→	Sovereign
present	→	faithful	→	Faithful One

Nouns about God are “holding rooms where you store verbs.” They are a way for freezing for a moment *verbal* testimony. Conventional theology assumes nouns describe God. In English, nouns evoke a *particular* God who is not that God before utterance. (see p. 143, note 4). The poets of Israel evoke images that cause the God of Israel to be this particular God.

The Names of God: Metaphors

There has been over a long period of time a homogenization about how we speak about God. The homogenization lead to reductionism. So that , some argue, what we are basically left with in the OT is King, Judge, Warrior, Father.

Some make the argument that all language about God is metaphorical. Monotheism becomes idolatry if the rich diversity in the evocative language in the texts is disallowed.

Begin with the recognition that all “God-talk” is *inadequate* and *tentative*. Every noun for God arises from and is imbedded in narrative accounts/witnesses of transformation and arises out of them.

The biblical theologian must work many metaphors. Each metaphor must be played out fully on its own terms. Metaphors should not be mixed. (Ex. “ransomed by the blood” is a mixed metaphor. Ransomed: economic; by the blood: priestly.)

Groups of Metaphorical Images for God (not exhaustive):

1. Familial images: Father, Mother, Womb-like mother love (compassion, mercy, *hesed*)
2. Geographical images: Rock of Ages, Higher Ground
3. Military images: Warrior, Fortress, Shield
4. Judicial images: Advocate, Counselor
5. Economic images: Paid Bride Price, Ransom (Is 43:3), Pearl of Great Price
6. Mythic images: poetic construals from life in the worlds of gods borrowed from the ancient east (Ps 2:4; 82:1; Mt 25)
7. Political images: language of sovereignty and command (“Thus says YHWH”)
8. Pastoral images: Ex 34; Ps 23
9. Medical images: Jer. 8:22; Jer 30:12, 13, 17; Ex. 15:26 (“I AM YHWH who heals you.”)
10. Artistic/Aesthetic images: Gen 1:31; Is 45 (What if our lives were a painting, a sculpture not yet finished?)
11. Priestly images: Leviticus; Rom 3

God is unutterable therefore we must use many images none of which is adequate. The best picture we have is the Crucified God on the Cross. Still, the Creator’s disclosure to the created is not full.