

## DIVINE REVELATION AND HISTORY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

J. Robert Vannoy  
Professor of Old Testament  
Biblical Theological Seminary

It does not require a great deal of reading or study of the Old Testament to become aware of the close connection that exists in Old Testament literature between divine revelation and history. Large sections of the Old Testament are in the form of historical narratives. In these narratives God is represented as *speaking* and *acting* in human history: (1) to make himself known, and (2) to effectuate advances in the outworking of his plan of redemption.

From beginning to end the Bible depicts the redemption of man as something that God accomplishes by working within the context of ordinary human history. Adam and Eve fell into sin in the Garden of Eden through the temptation of Satan. Their sin resulted in alienation from God, from one another, and the natural world around them. It brought death to them and their descendants. God, however, *spoke* and promised that the seed of the woman would be the means by which ultimate victory would be won over Satan and death itself (Gen 3:15).

The promise of this seed was the promise of Jesus, who, as we know from subsequent revelation, was God incarnate, being born of the virgin Mary. Jesus lived, suffered, died and rose from the dead in space-time history to redeem fallen humanity, to restore fellowship with God and ultimately to restore all creation.

The historical sections of the Old Testament depict the work of God in human history in bringing to fulfilment the promise of the coming of the seed of the woman. This promise initially given to Adam was renewed and amplified when God spoke to Abraham and said that in "thy seed all nations of the earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:3). Abraham was also told that his descendants would become a great nation, that they would sojourn in a land not their own, and be afflicted there 400 years, after which God would deliver them and bring them into the land of Canaan which he had already promised to give to Abraham and his descendants for their homeland. Subsequent Old Testament historical narratives show how God did indeed deliver the descendants of Abraham from Egypt under the leadership of Moses and Aaron by many miraculous signs and wonders, and how he entered into covenant with them at Mt. Sinai where he spoke and gave his law amidst the thunderings and lightnings that enveloped the mountain. After suffering 40 years of wilderness journeys because of disobedience, Israel was brought into the land of promise. The history of Israel in the land is for the most part a history of continual apostasy and turning away from the LORD with some few exceptions of times of revival and reformation, but at the same time it is a history in which the LORD's longsuffering and covenant faithfulness are repeatedly manifested. In due