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Chapter 3

RESTORATION IN HAGGAI–ZECHARIAH AS DEPENDENT UPON DIFFERENCE

In the social sciences, the subject of action cannot be observed, understood or explained in and of itself, except through—inside of, with and by means of—social relations. The postmodern can only be transcended through a careful and comprehensive reading of social relations, one that is multi-dimensional and supra-functional—in short, relational.¹

If, as Žižek proposes, violence disturbs, and ideally destroys, an existing social-political structure or order (the last would be the result of a true revolution, as he explains); if in that process it creates the space for something new, something that fulfills a greater social need, it is violence that serves a more “objective” purpose. It creates the space for (re)creation, but it must do so without any preconceived plan for its future outcome, following a plan would mean that the “pattern” (and, consequently, the structure itself) of the “destroyed” structure had been preserved. For instance, replacing the figurehead in a tyranny even if through revolutionary action doesn’t replace the tyranny with a different governing structure. Žižek maintains that violence refers to the fundamental dismantling or interruption of an ordered system, whether social-political or interpersonal. Violence is not a thing *sui generis*, so to speak, but another aspect of the relational act that in meting out its consequences recognizes, and sometimes preserves, the categories of distributed relationships within a social world. *My blowing up a bus is not an act of autonomous evil, as though evil “just happens.” As a terrorist act, it testifies to my marginal position within a dominant social-political hierarchy. And in choosing that act of violence, one that strikes at the dominant order but does not overcome it, I am insuring that my social-political position and that of the group to which I belong will remain marginal in relation to that dominant order.* What violence assumes, Žižek points out, is an element

1. Donati, *Relational Sociology*, 135.

of social facticity, a “plausibility structure”² upon which the meanings and constructed orders of the social world are based. The truly violent act is an attempt to redefine the nature of that “base,” not to abstract it but to locate it more fully in a redesigned social world (a big Other whether that be the “social substance of mores,” *à la* Hegel, or “a substantial set of customs and values,” *à la* Lacan).³ For Žižek, rewriting, or restructuring, social-political hierarchies is a truly violent act *if* it dismantles preexisting institutions and hierarchies.

Žižek argues that restructuring, or “disintegrating,” relational patterns of authority interrupts distributed relations of power, which would include a revision of the difference that separates the member from the nonmember, since that difference depends upon the dominant hierarchy of power.⁴ In the context of Yehud, this entails identifying the acts of separation that isolate the people already in the land as “other” vis-à-vis the “remnant” community. And in that, there is an ideological violence that takes place as members of the remnant community no longer relate themselves to the people already in the land self-awaredly as Judean immigrants but as native citizens. *It’s never, “Hey, may we join you here?” but “Get out of our land, squatters! You are nothing like us!”* To understand that is to grasp more fully the implied intent that lay behind Haggai’s and Zechariah’s employment of the Jerusalem temple or crown as a shared central(izing) symbol. Haggai’s emphasis upon the Jerusalem temple and Zechariah’s emphasis upon the crown—which we should really write as “crown(s),” as we will discuss below—must first be interruptive acts before they can be considered constructive. They do not reinforce the dominant order of the social-political world but require a revision of it. They must, in other words, redirect expectations and assumptions regarding authority in Yehud away from traditional institutions that developed in the wake of the exile. The Jerusalem temple, the symbolism of which has been redefined for a new context, will be raised from the ashes. Those ideological ashes are of a forgone social-political world that must find its own demise in the temple’s construction—a phoenix that Zechariah likewise envisions in the text’s oracle of the crown(s). There *is* a connection between the past and the narrative present found in the symbol of the temple, which suggests that Haggai–Zechariah is not entirely “Žižekian” in its philosophy. But

2. Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 45.

3. For Žižek, this is a type of “objective violence,” cf. Žižek, *Violence*, 1–2. On the “big Other” in both the Hegelian and Lacanian senses, see Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, 34.

4. Cf. Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, 20–36.

that connection is made primarily for the ideological gain of the remnant community (cf. Hag 2:1–9); the new temple will not be the same as the old but, “The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former...” (2:9).

The (De)Constructive Role of Ideology

Žižek’s emphasis upon “objective violence,” violence at the level of the base in contrast to the levels of the infrastructure or the superstructure, is not surprising given his sometimes bellicose attitude toward ideology.⁵ He maintains that ideology’s role as one of the primary motivations behind the things that people do always fails to close any exchange with the outside as the area against which we distinguish ourselves. Because this act of distinction is foundational for identity, we must be in constant negotiation with the things against which we define ourselves.

This is why ideology is not simply an operation of closure, drawing the line between what is included and what is excluded/prohibited, but the ongoing regulation of non-closure. In the case of marriage, ideology not only prohibits extramarital affairs; its crucial operation is to regulate such inevitable transgressions... In this way, an ideology always admits the failure of closure, and then goes on to regulate the permeability of the exchange with its outside.⁶

Ideology’s “non-closure” is why, for example, the line between “what is included and what is excluded” is ritualized within the religious law of the biblical texts. Under the anxiety of non-closure, ritual provides a tangible sense of certainty through a façade or symbolization of closure.⁷ The law regulates not only the behavior appropriate for a community’s internal relations but how its members may or may not relate (through exchange, contract, or other) to others outside the community. “*Ammonites and Moabites will not be permitted in the assembly of Yahweh*” (*Deut 23:4, translation mine*). But we must be clear, at least when invoking Žižek,

5. And here he is quite influenced by Marxist leanings.

6. Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, 29.

7. C. Bell points out that rituals, among other actions, create a harmonious sense of order and stability by categorizing meaning and experience and by demonstrating values and forms of social organization (cf. *Ritual*, 135). She is supported in this by J. G. A. Pocock, “Ritual, Language, Power: An Essay on the Apparent Meanings of Ancient Chinese Philosophy,” *Political Science* 16 (1964): 3–31, cf. 6; also cited in *Ritual*, 135.

that we recognize the additional role in which the law, or its representative authority, takes hold of the individual—a concern that may be best expressed in a critique of the fascist tendency to impose bodily control over individuals. Žižek clarifies his point through an engagement of Gilles Deleuze:

Deleuze’s theory of fascism [is] a theory whose basic insight is that fascism does not take hold of subjects at the level of ideology, interests, and so on but directly at the level of bodily investments, libidinal gestures, and so on... Fascism is a life-denying view, a view of renunciation, of the sacrificial subordination to Higher Goals; it relies on impersonal microstrategies, manipulations of intensities, which work as life-denying.⁸

The temptation to read Ezra–Nehemiah—and we will clarify this connection to Haggai–Zechariah—as something akin to fascist, as authoritarian or intolerant views or practice, is there. Violence to enforce obedience, as Nehemiah demonstrates, and a discouragement of disagreement with the leader, religious and political, in Ezra–Nehemiah, could in fact convey fascist-type tendencies in terms of seemingly authoritative or intolerant views. The general trend in biblical interpretation is to see even that type of violence as a means to a moral end. But employment of violence within Ezra–Nehemiah is a moral act only for the *golah* community and cannot be described as such for the people outside that community. Its action preserves the boundary between inside and outside. And that is a general phenomenon, as Peter Berger writes: “[E]very society is faced with the problem of allocating power among its members and typically develops political institutions in consequence. The legitimation of these institutions has the special task of explaining and justifying the requisite employment of means of physical violence, which employment indeed gives their peculiar ‘majesty’ to the institutions of political life.”⁹ The actions described within the text portray the formation of a community within a “foreign” context. Nehemiah’s actions are meaningful only for the *golah* community as it sought to establish the security of its place and position within the province. This distinction between “residents” and “citizens”—where Ezra–Nehemiah identifies the immigrating Judeans as citizens in contrast to the residents, or people already in the land—also provides the ideological basis for Haggai–Zechariah’s position on the sacred nature of the Jerusalem temple and the gold and silver crowns of Zech 6.

8. Slavoj Žižek, “The Ongoing ‘Soft Revolution,’” *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (2004): 298.

9. Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 91.

The potencies of the symbolisms of temple and crown are best understood after exposing their underlying ideological processes. The relative, cultural particularities of any given idea of restoration reminds us that there is no universality in restoration, a truth Louise Bourgeois, whose work often reacted to Catholic ideals, invoked when she proclaimed, “My art is a form of restoration in terms of my feelings to myself and to others.”¹⁰ There is no prefabricated world (an eschatological “new Jerusalem”) that can be placed wholly, like the delineated product of a cookie cutter, into a foreign social-political context and function effectively and in consistency with dominant social-political attitudes and behaviors. Perceptions of God in Ezra–Nehemiah and Haggai–Zechariah, and that includes the role of the temple, crown, and land, are products of the social-political conflict the remnant community thought itself embroiled in with people already in the land. Consequently, any meaning that symbols such as the temple might have are products both of utopian aspiration—*this is what our restored, stabilized world will look like*—and reaction to a failed realization of that stabilized world. R. A. Mason, as he is summarized by John Kessler, was close to this when he argued,

[H]e identified certain priestly expressions and preoccupations in the book: בֵּיד (through Hag. 1:1) etc. used in connection with Moses in Exod. 9:35; 35:29 etc.; the temple as the abode of Yahweh (Hag. 1:9; cf. Ezek. 37:27); the term מְלָאכָה (work Hag. 1:14; cf. Exod. 35:29). Mason viewed this priestly-Deuteronomistic redaction as having occurred quite rapidly following the proclamation of the oracles. According to him, the goal of the framework was to attenuate the eschatological hope found in the oracles, thereby integrating such notions into a more theocratic context. Mason concluded that despite the fact that many of the promises announced by the prophet were not yet fulfilled, for the author of the redactional framework, the first fruits were already present in the community: the existence of a people sensitive to the divine world, and a rebuilt temple.¹¹

These “first fruits” to which Mason refers were the behavioral patterns and cultural values, meanings, and attitudes that codified the distinction between insider and outsider, not according to the functioning social-political context but to the “restored” society. In other words, the community tried to impose the foundation for restoration through dogged preservation of the insider–outsider distinction that defined it. In Haggai, this restoration

10. Taken from <http://www.brainyquote.com>.

11. J. Kessler is summarizing Mason’s argument in *The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 34–35.

looked akin to a theocracy, which would require—despite apparent scholarly desire for mere revision of existing social-political institutions!—a dismantling of previous social-political order and the construction of a new one. Note Haggai: “Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the LORD of hosts... The latter splendor of this house will be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity...” (Hag 2:6–8). This “shaking” (v. 6) is not merely something akin to dislodging debris from a carpet. The language used in Haggai refers to the type of shaking from Israel’s theophanic traditions—a radical, world-transforming shaking after which the “debris” falls neatly into appropriate sacred or profane categories.¹²

Yet, as David Petersen describes, there is an additional element:

Further distinguishing this language from typical theophanic descriptions is the scope of such violent agitation. It is no longer just the mountains which quake. The entire cosmos vibrates, as indicated by the two polar sets: earth–heavens, sea–dry land... The shaking of these elements serves as a nonverbal proclamation that Yahweh is acting decisively on behalf of his people, a community gathered around the rebuilt temple.¹³

Despite his description of metaphor as a nonverbal proclamation, his interpretation of Haggai’s oracle as bringing about a structural change is consistent with Žižek’s assertion that true political change can only come through violent action. In Haggai, the temple represents the central axis around which the old order would collapse. As the dust settled, the rebuilt temple would stand out as something not only connected with past traditions, as they were preserved within the cultural memory of the community, it would stand out as the representative symbol, a shared one, of a new social-political order. John Collins puts it this way: “Haggai’s prophecy...entails not only wealth in Jerusalem but also the submission and subordination of the other nations. This prediction was not a sober assessment of the political prospects.”¹⁴

12. See David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 67. He cites in support of his argument Jörg Jeremias, *Theophanie: die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965), 66–69.

13. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 67.

14. John J. Collins, *Joel, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2013), 53.

We are faced again with the utopian aspirations of the biblical texts. Like that of Ezra–Nehemiah, Haggai’s vision of restoration was very much utopian. And the prophet’s emphasis upon wealth and political power are clearly linked. Not only does wealth support political position, but the centralization of material and ideological power in Jerusalem mimics the centralization of the collective identity being developed. In other words, there is a parallel between the internal formation of the collective identity of a community and the formation of an externally recognized social-political body. In this case, the collective identity of the remnant community was projected as the requisite political identity of the restored reality—a new system of power relations symbolized by and in the Jerusalem temple and crown.¹⁵ There is a further parallel here in the exodus tradition: “Yet now take courage, O Zerubbabel, says the LORD; take courage, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; take courage all you people of the land, says the LORD; work, for I am with you, says the LORD of hosts, according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt. My spirit abides among you; do not fear” (Hag 2:4–5).¹⁶

The “first fruits” that Mason describes refer to the “setting of the stage,” so to speak, for the dramatic, world-changing actions of Yahweh—the type of which may be called “revolutionary actions” in terms more familiar with Žižek’s vocabulary. These fruits, we recall, were “sensitivity to divine presence in the world” and, and here we must include Zechariah as Haggai’s more cultic half, a rebuilt temple.¹⁷ Where the latter was a physical symbol of a “restored” social-political order, the former speaks to the ideological attitudes, behaviors, and identities reflecting the ordered world whose power was centralized in the Jerusalem temple.

15. Cataldo, *Breaking Monotheism*, 61; idem, “Yahweh’s Breast.”

16. The connection between the Babylonian immigrants (returnees) is found also in Zechariah. P. Ackroyd, for example, writes of the prophetic command to take gold and silver from the community for the crown(s): “Returning exiles from whom silver and gold can be obtained is reminiscent of those passages in Ezra which point to contributions made by exiles to the restoration of the Judaeen community. Such contributions, whether made by the exiled Jews themselves or by government, fit well with Persian restoration policy. They also fit in well with the conception of the return as being in some sense a new Exodus, with a new spoiling of the Egyptians (Ex 12.35–36). So the action here performed is naturally to be linked to the hopes of restoration which follow upon the return to Judah of some of the exiles” (*Exile and Restoration*, 195).

17. As C. L. Meyers and E. M. Meyers note, Haggai–Zech 1–8 was completed before the Jerusalem temple was rebuilt (*Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, AB 25B [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987], xlv).

Saving the Temple from the “Other”

When it comes to an analysis of the “other” in the traditional sense, in the sense of the marginalized nonmember, the minority, or the “foreigner,” it is not the “other” as an object that we analyze. We analyze the identity, rather the negative or inverse of our own identity, as it is legitimated within the rules of our own social worlds. That is, the identity of the “other” is not an object in the essentialist sense, but the response as social-political agents to the intersection of our performances that is forced upon outsiders. *Like the American who says, “Are not all Mexicans lazy and stubborn to the expectations of Capitalism? I saw one once, and all he did was take siesta.”* Such performances serve the purpose of staving off perceived threats to the stability of our social worlds and their formalized rules.¹⁸ Consequently, the concept of “other,” which takes on objective value, regulates our distance from others by symbolizing the catastrophic effect (upon identity) of anomy or lawlessness.¹⁹ It reflects the negative side of membership—a symbolic reminder of the ideological annihilation one risks outside the ordered world. That is why monotheistic traditions require the presence of a “profane” other. Restoration requires the constant reminder of its absence—*there is a possible reality outside of this ordered world*. One must expel but not forget the foreigners, and eliminate but ritualize the consequences of all ritual impurities.²⁰ The failures in religious fidelity must be projected upon the body of the “other” whose expulsion reinforces the boundary between member and nonmember, insider and outsider.

What this means is that we produce the “other” through the performance and articulation of our own identities. That is why, for Žižek, the “other” will always be a source *and* a product of conflict.²¹ And that is why the very articulation of our own identities requires the “other,” why our relationship with the “outside” can never be “closed,” and why we will always find ourselves at the intersection of a dependent relationship with the other. The nonmember, or outsider, must always exist for the sake of ourselves; the distinction between insider and outsider will always fail to be fully closed, for Žižek. And it is this failure that requires the continued performance of ideology. As we cited above, “[A]n ideology always admits the failure of closure, and then goes on to regulate the

18. Cf. Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, 34–35.

19. *Ibid.*, 35.

20. Cf. Blenkinsopp’s discussion of Udjahorresnet’s influence on Cambyses to restore the cult of Sais (“The Mission of Udjahorresnet and Those of Ezra and Nehemiah,” *JBL* 106 [1987]: 410).

21. Žižek, “Plea,” 232.

permeability of the exchange with its outside.”²² And perhaps that is why within the biblical tradition restoration necessitates law’s regulations for engagement with outsiders, whether written, such as in Judaism, or ethical, such as in Christianity.

Jerusalem Temple as a Potentializing Symbol

This permeability, or “failure of closure,” to which Žižek refers in the previous quote, can be found in the meaning of the Jerusalem temple as a potentializing symbol and as a shared object central to the collective identity of the remnant. The people already in the land, whose identity has been reduced to “other” by the biblical author, must want to participate in the construction of the temple because this supports through external validation the identity of the member. They must want to participate in it precisely because of their rejection from being able to do so. It is in this way that they express as part of their identities the absence of fulfilled desire, of an internalized incompleteness that can only be fixed through active engagement of the ordered world or its prevailing norms. Ezra–Nehemiah identifies this explicitly in its discussion of rejecting the aid of Sanballat and others (cf. Ezra 4:2). Haggai implies it through the text’s emphasis upon the necessity of the temple as a symbolic representation between god and people, and the positively productive aspect of Yahweh’s presence in the midst of the restored community. For instance, “Before a stone was placed upon a stone in the LORD’s temple, how did you fare?... Since the day that the foundation of the LORD’s temple was laid, consider: Is there any seed left in the barn? Do the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree still yield nothing? From this day on I will bless you” (Hag 2:15–19).

Petersen’s assessment that Hag 2:15–19 is part of a text used in a temple ceremony, or the “foundation stone ceremony,” is in my judgment convincing.²³ As is his contention that reconstruction efforts began, possibly under Sheshbazzar, before the rededication ceremony and the laying of the foundation stone. “Rather than presenting a chronological inconcinnity, this order of events is exactly that which we should expect.

22. Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, 29.

23. See his discussion in Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 88–90. M. Boda also makes this case (in “Messengers of Hope in Haggai–Malachi,” *JSOT* 32 [2007]: 116–17). But contrast with Meyers and Meyers, who argue that Haggai was written for the dedication of the temple.

Work on the footings and some basic construction would have been necessary for the formal dedication of a temple that had been destroyed and defiled.”²⁴ It is tempting to read this dedication as primarily a theological activity, as John Kessler does, and to view the passage as one depicting a change in the relationship between deity and people.²⁵ But doing so problematically attributes active agency to the deity and makes the divine–human relationship, and not social-political relevancy, the central idea of text. It overlooks the possibility that “Yahweh” was *not* a real divine agent but the symbolic mechanism through which historical intersubjectivities and intersectionalities were regulated.²⁶ Moreover, it misses the fact that the value of the temple as a potentializing symbol was wrapped up entirely in the so-called remnant community’s projected desire for social-political ascendancy and relevancy—desires that are very frequently linked with the more theological term “bless.” Again note, “Do the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree still yield nothing? From this day on *I will bless you*” (v. 19, emphasis mine).

There is no clean theology in Haggai. The symbolism of God and temple is directed at the distinction between the remnant community and the people already in the land, the latter whose collective identity was not, we might infer, based on the centrality of the defunct Jerusalem temple as Yahweh’s domicile. Can we not see in Haggai’s emphasis a subjective gesture in positing the existence of God as a “big Other” vis-à-vis the prophet’s community? The concept of “big Other” as Žižek describes, “is a virtual entity that exists only through the subject’s presupposition...”²⁷

The rededication ceremony, as such ceremonies typically do, gave purpose to the object. It identified the temple as the physical symbol of the community’s position in relation to those already in the land. That is the meaning of the preceding verses:

If one carries consecrated meat in the fold of one’s garment, and with the fold touches bread, or stew, or wine, or oil, or any kind of food, does it become holy? The priests answered, “No.” Then Haggai said, “If one who

24. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 89.

25. He writes, for instance, “I view שום-אבן אל-אבן as a parallel to the phrase היום אשר-יסד היכל-יהוה in v. 18, and see both phrases as referring to a step of a more ritual and ceremonial nature that enabled the community to enter into a new phase in its relationship with its deity” (*Book of Haggai*, 207).

26. Cf. Žižek’s discussion of how centralized, symbolic mechanisms regulate social distance in group relations in order to create and preserve stability (*In Defense of Lost Causes*, 34–35).

27. Ibid., 113.

is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?" The priests answered, "Yes, it becomes unclean." Haggai then said, So it is with this people, and with this nation before me, says the LORD... (Hag 2:12–14)

The dedication of the temple symbolized, necessitated even, a restructuring of the social relationships that defined the social context of the province. After all, the temple symbolized a new collective identity, one that cast as outsiders those who had already been in the land. The expectation expressed in Haggai is not too far from the injunction in Numbers,

Speak to the Israelites, and say to them: When you cross over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their figured stones, destroy all their cast images, and demolish all their high places. You shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given you the land to possess... But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those whom you let remain shall be as barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides; they shall trouble you in the land where you are settling. And I will do to you as I thought to do to them. (Num 33:51–56)

The temple symbolized not another "church on the corner" but a radically changed social-political order built around an identity expressed in religious terms. This order necessitated an "other," the nonmember, who portrayed in antithesis the identity of the member.

Put differently, the Jerusalem temple is the shared object upon which is based the collective identity of the immigrating community (Ezra–Nehemiah designates this community as *golah*).²⁸ *The Divine has chosen us to be the seed of a new Israel. The temple offers a microcosm of that choice and our corresponding world.* Haggai's emphasis lays further in the temple's symbolic reference to collective action as a basis for collective identity—the temple is interpreted as a shared collective symbol.²⁹ To note, "Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored, says the LORD. You have looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away" (1:8–9). The need for appropriate collective action, and its role as a means of improving the group's social position,³⁰ is emphasized there.

28. See also Cataldo, "Yahweh's Breast."

29. Ibid.

30. S. C. Wright and M. E. Lubensky correctly argue that rather than defaulting merely to prejudice as being the primary force behind intergroup relations, collective action and social protest are a means of improving one's social-political position (cf.

And note further, “Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of the prophet Haggai, as the LORD their God had sent him; *and the people feared the LORD*” (v. 12, emphasis mine).³¹ Haggai’s emphasis upon ritual clearly connects the temple to the remnant with material prosperity and, logically, given the obvious importance of material prosperity and control over it, to provide greater stake in the power relations of the province.³² Is that not the sense in Hag 1:4–11? The prophet clearly connects the economic standing of the people (v. 12, שְׁאִרֵּית הָעָם) to the level of attention that the Jerusalem temple and its associated rituals receives. “*Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house is desolate*” (Hag 1:4)? Rebuilding the physical temple is not an end in itself; the cultic rituals that animate the temple are likewise expected—and that point is made clear

“The Struggle for Social Equality: Collective Action Versus Prejudice Reduction,” in *Intergroup Misunderstandings: Impact of Divergent Social Realities*, ed. Stéphanie Demoulin, Jacques-Philippe Leyens, and John F Dovidio [New York: Psychology Press, 2009], 292–93. One must endeavor to understand *why* groups behave the way they do and hold the prejudices that they do. In relation to our discussion of Haggai, their assertion reminds us to look for motivations behind Haggai’s emphasis upon what characterizes group identity through action, behavior, and attitude, all of which reside at the heart of collective identity and must be controlled.

31. Note also Kessler, who writes, “[Verses] 12–15 constitute a tightly packed unit, narrative in form, revealing the over-arching redactional themes into which the oracles of Haggai are being integrated. The section stresses the authority and role of the prophet, and the efficacy of his words. The content of this section is utterly essential to the rest of the book, since all of what follows presupposes a restored relationship between Yahweh and his people, and a building whose reconstruction is in process” (*Book of Haggai*, 153).

32. Collins likewise identifies the importance of ritual in Haggai and its connection to material prosperity (cf. *Joel, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 49–51). Kessler argues that Hag 1:3–11 links the two independent traditions of covenant violation and neglect of the temple. And in doing so, Haggai “finds a new ‘sphere of application’ for an existing body of traditional material, that is the curse of the Deuteronomistic tradition. Such ‘curses’ are normally imposed for cases of flagrant disobedience to the law, especially idolatry (cf. Deut 28:14–15, 46–48, 58–59; Lev 26:3, 14, 15). In 1:3–11, Haggai applies the curse vocabulary to a question not dealt with in that tradition” (*Book of Haggai*, 155). Kessler’s link between Haggai and Deuteronomy is possible but still presumptuous. The general formula for blessings and curses was not unique to the Deuteronomist but a common literary motif in the ancient Near East.

with the inclusion of Joshua, the high priest, in the response described in the following verses:³³

Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of the prophet Haggai, as the Lord their God had sent him; and the people feared the Lord. Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message, saying, I am with you, says the Lord. And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month. (Hag 1:12–15)

The actions of Yahweh responded directly to the people's ritualistic behavior; prosperity was the reward for fulfilled obligations.³⁴ Here Kessler is (finally) close to the mark:

While neglecting to rebuild the temple does not constitute idolatry or flagrant disobedience to the commandments, our prophet sees in it a gesture of contempt. The text portrays Haggai as deploying a hermeneutical strategy whereby his specific situation is viewed on the basis of a tradition that never specifically envisaged such a state of affairs. The broader notion of the fear of Yahweh is thus interpreted and applied with reference to a specific historical situation.³⁵

33. Petersen's comments regarding the functionaries of governor, priest, and prophet are apropos here for understanding the critical role that the religious institution was playing in the order of the social-political world: "The author of this history of Haggai seems interested in highlighting the importance of Haggai the prophet. Just as Zerubbabel receives the label of governor, and just as Joshua is known as high priest, so Haggai receives an official title in order to have a similar standing with his peer functionaries. All three major characters receive role labels. Yahweh had, to be sure, sent Haggai, and Haggai was directed to speak Yahweh's words. Without this specific human agent, Yahweh's words would not have been communicated in an appropriate way" (*Haggai and Zechariah*, 56).

34. See again Collins, *Joel, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 49–51. See also Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 155. But compare E. Assis who argues that Haggai's focus is on the Jerusalem temple itself (see "The Temple in the Book of Haggai," *JHS* 8, Article [2008]: 8, n.p. Online: http://www.jhsonline.org/Articles/article_96.pdf). While Haggai does focus on the building more than any ritualistic specifics, it is naïve to separate the physical temple from its symbolic importance as legitimated and expressed ritualistically. Moreover, the temple building is important precisely because it is the shared collective symbol at the core of the remnant community's identity.

35. Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 156.

This “broader notion,” again, refers to the traditions, rituals, and other behaviors and activities that legitimate the social importance of the temple. It is in effect the cultural or religious normative, the one of which cannot be separated from the other. C. Meyers and E. Meyers argue that Haggai, along with Zechariah, emphasized a reorganization of national life and institutions in the so-called restoration period.³⁶ One may be inclined to agree with the authors but with the following qualification: one cannot speak yet of a “national” identity in a descriptive sense. The prophet’s vision is prescriptive, constructive, world-building. It is meant to establish a pattern that would reflect not a past national identity but one that was almost entirely the ideational product of a minority within the social-political context of Yehud. It is the “new thing” that represents the culmination of divine action, restoration. Or, as B. Oded puts it, “[Haggai and Zechariah] envisage a radical new beginning, not emptiness of the land on the one hand or a continuity of the ‘great majority’ on the other.”³⁷ If it symbolizes the collective identity and authority of the remnant community, the Jerusalem temple is meaningful *only* if its symbolic meaning is legitimated both internally within the community and externally by those considered to be designated as “nonmembers.” “*Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do...*” (Ezra 4:2). But legitimating the symbolic value of the temple as described in Haggai also requires that nonmembers accept their “otherness” in relation to the remnant community (parallel Ezra–Nehemiah’s “*golah*”). In that, they must accept the authority of the community over them and over regulating the normative order and its function of distributing social groups. *That* is the ideological goal of the community.

The Necessity of Violence for Utopia

Up, up! Flee from the land of the north, says the LORD; for I have spread you abroad like the four winds of heaven, says the LORD. Up! Escape to Zion, you that live with daughter Babylon. For thus said the LORD of hosts (after his glory sent me) regarding the nations that plundered you: Truly, one who touches you touches the apple of my eye. See now, I am going to raise my hand against them, and they shall become plunder for their own slaves. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me. Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! For lo, I will come and dwell in your midst, says the LORD. Many nations shall join themselves to the LORD on that day,

36. Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, xliv.

37. Oded, “Where Is the ‘Myth of the Empty Land’ to Be Found?,” 62.

and shall be my people; and I will dwell in your midst. And you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. The LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem. (Zech 2:6–13)

Up! Flee! Escape! Plunder! Rejoice! What does Zechariah imply regarding restoration? Violence can create space for the institutions and structures necessary for restoration, including those attitudinal expectations that accompany the remnant's ideology regarding it. Can we not infer that from the prophet's chosen series of verbs? Underlying this, to be sure, is an absolute dependence upon the authority of Yahweh, which is clearly expressed in the unfolding oracle. Put differently, there is a radical dependence upon an external authority—but *one that demonstrates no clear material existence*—capable of reshaping social-political contexts. *God will bless us even if we don't yet have national power in the imperial province.* The prophet commands the audience to flee the annihilation inevitable in Yahweh's creative act: destroying the old order to make space for the creation of a new order. Thus, the contrast is set up: the community shall be "saved" while the surrounding peoples, or at least the social-political structures that define them, will be annihilated (whether symbolically or literally does not obscure the intended meaning). The inherent violence of restoration as a utopian vision is expressed in this. But we must be clear that utopian thinking itself is not always overtly violent. Some utopian thinking depends less upon an obvious radical structural change and more upon a subversive change brought on by replacing actors within an already known and idealized structure. The Christian vision of Heaven, for example, cherishes the symbolism of the archaic monarchic social-political structure. This strikes a chord with the statement of the always interesting Terry Eagleton that, "Some conservatives are utopianists, but their utopia lies in the past rather than the future. In their view, history has been one long, doleful decline from a golden age set in the age of Adam, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Samuel Johnson, Jefferson, Disraeli, Margaret Thatcher or more or less anyone you care to mention."³⁸

In general, utopian thinking is driven by a dependence upon the possibility of a pure state, of a stabilized equilibrium that, having learned the lessons of the past, recent or other, no longer runs the risk of falling victim to self-destructive behaviors and attitudes. Shmuel Eisenstadt credited the so-called Axial Age with the advent of utopian thinking in its "proper" sense, in which developed "visions of an alternative cultural and social

38. Terry Eagleton, *Why Marx Was Right*, Kindle digital ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 70.

order beyond any given place or time.”³⁹ His original theory on the Axial Age, which responded to Karl Jaspers’s earlier work, incorrectly assumes that multiple, disparate cultures shared a singular, universal cause in the unique development of higher-order thinking.⁴⁰ Thus, the basic premise of an Axial Age is itself fairly utopian, whether appealing to the concept of an original paradisiacal order, in which knowledge “between good and evil” was clear and didn’t need to be learned, or in a historical materialist sense akin to Marx’s adoption of Hegelian thought.⁴¹ The critical point of Eisenstadt’s proposal, one that we *can* work with, is that utopian thinking, which emphasized an alternative reality “beyond any given place or time,” expects radical change within the prevailing social-political order. The quality and intensity of this change, however, depends upon the unique cultural circumstances of the authoring community. These unique circumstances are a consequence of the context in which it must intervene: it should, in Žižek’s terms, “move the underground”⁴² and change implicit social-political behaviors and practices that sustain the explicit attitudes and anxieties that lay at the heart of collective identity.

For Zechariah, this is not found in the absence of a pre-exilic State or even in the presence of Judeans in locations other than Judah. It is found in the desire for a radical change within Yehud—one that benefits the remnant. Yahweh’s “raising his hand against” the nations that “touched the apple of his eye” should be read more as a demonstration of power resulting in collateral damage *before* the real change comes. That is how we should read, והיו שלל לעבדיהם וידעתם כי-יהוה צבאות שלחני (“and they will become plunder for their servants, *then* you will know that the LORD

39. His emphasis is upon utopian thinking within a religious framework. He writes further, “Such visions contain many of the millenarian and revivalist elements which can be found also in pre-Axial or non-Axial ‘pagan’ religions, but they go beyond them. The Axial religions combine those other elements, emphasizing the necessity to construct the mundane order according to the precepts of the higher one, and with the search for an alternative ‘better’ order beyond any given time and place” (Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, “The Expansion of Religions: Some Comparative Observations on Different Modes,” *Comparative Social Research* 13 [1991]: 48).

40. For Jaspers, see “The Axial Age of Human History,” *Commentary* (New York) 6 (1948): 430. Even Eisenstadt himself later rejects the idea of a singular Axial Age, choosing axial ages, plural (cf. “Axial Civilizations and the Axial Age Reconsidered,” in *Axial Civilizations and World History*, ed. Jóhann Páll Árnason, S. N. Eisenstadt, and Björn Wittrock, *Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture* 4 [Leiden: Brill, 2005], 531–74).

41. For further criticism of S. Eisenstadt’s early position, cf. Cataldo, *Breaking Monotheism*, 21–24.

42. Žižek, *Violence*, 171.

of Hosts sent me"; Zech 2:13 HB; 2:9 ET). The identity of the remnant is not found in the demise of nations or even in the act of return itself. In the sense of the latter, one could easily credit the human king Darius with one who acts effectively within preexisting structures and does not require structural change. Is this not the sense also of Zech 3:2: "And the LORD said to Satan, 'The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this man a brand plucked from the fire?'" Satan, the accuser, the antagonist who does not appear to be a member of the dominant social-political community but attempts to work within it, symbolizes the "other" who legitimates the system by protesting its success. (And is not a similar role played by the *am ha'aretz*, the "foreigner," and the "unrepentant" Judeans?) It is in the choosing of Jerusalem that the accuser (השטן) is silenced and is reduced to an object against which the subject's desire may be cast. In other words, the accuser becomes the object upon whom the anxieties and relations that threaten to destabilize the collective ideology of the remnant are projected. The figure of the accuser symbolizes the *faillite de la communauté* to carry out structural change. Thus, the drama portrays the internal conflict of the community, between those who fear assimilation and those who favor an active role in restoration: mainly creating space for divine action by or through exclusion and ritualistic behavior.⁴³ One cannot help but be reminded of the *am ha'aretz* in Ezra–Nehemiah. While the NRSV translates *hasatan* as "Satan," the diabolical "other" upon whom the evils of God are cast in gross projection, the Hebrew used literally means "the satan," or "accuser." In other words, the "accuser" is the inverted lens in which is seen the proper patterns of social-political (nomic) behavior. *Your stain exaggerates my purity. My self-identity as chosen by God necessitates your rejection.* In Ezra–Nehemiah, the *am ha'aretz* fulfill this same purpose: they are rejected not for the sake of their own rejection but so that the collective identity of the *golah* community may be distinguished. Yet the accuser is in reality far from an external body; despite his portrayal as an outsider he is instead the antithesis to the narcissistic self-expression of the community. In that sense, the satan is the truer appearance of the social-symbolic identity of the community. In fact, Petersen identifies the satan with Yahweh's anger, which functions within a legal nexus.⁴⁴ In this passage, restoration, divine election, are what Žižek would term "false

43. Žižek describes this pattern in *Less Than Nothing*, location 134, in his description of religious condemnation of atheism and the image of the resulting reality as the "underside" of religion (or the order and favorable image the religion has for itself).

44. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 190.

screens.”⁴⁵ Their purpose is not to express the community’s desire but to render palpable the real situation of the community; the community continues to find itself on the periphery of social-political authority. Fixing this situation is necessary for restoration (cf. Zech 2:9–12).

In the passage from Zechariah, the celebration of the presence of Yahweh implies several things: (1) the actions of Yahweh demonstrate authority over the international scene (cf. v. 9); (2) Yahweh’s selection of and return to Jerusalem would necessitate modification of the structures and institutions already in place; (3) Jerusalem must become a sacred space in which the profane are cast out (moved to the “outside”) and only the “righteous” are present. Is not the typical attitude of an accuser a desire *for* authority and a fetishistic eagerness to sully others in order to attain that authority? And can it not therefore be said that the very unity of restoration, which the symbol of Joshua (see below) now embodies, actualizes itself only in the body of the community?⁴⁶ Peter Ackroyd was close to this when he wrote,

It is God who, as indicated in ch. 1–2, has declared his intention of restoring his city and taking up his place there again. So here it is clear that the accusation against Joshua is not to be interpreted in personal terms, but as one directed against him as a representative of the whole community. [And note further, t]he following phrase points in the same direction. The “fire”...here clearly refers to the disaster of the exile, and a comparison of the parallel in Amos 4.11, together with other passages in which the word “*serepa*” is used, also point to a sense of total desolation rather than of ordinary fire. The deliverance of Joshua is not a personal matter; *it is the rescue of the community of the restoration which has taken place and is here declared even more clearly.*⁴⁷

Petersen’s Typology of the Profane “Other,” or Satan

As Petersen observes, the typology of the satan, which is assumed in Zechariah, is consistent with social-political norms (and not strictly theological constructions): “one who acts in a legal context, one whose action inspires a negative connotation, [and] one of the divinities functioning in the divine council.”⁴⁸ Yet there is a further assumption regarding the attributes of the legal context in which the symbolic agent of the satan

45. Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, 12.

46. I am drawing from Žižek’s discussion of “fetishistic illusion” (ibid., 133).

47. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 184, emphasis mine.

48. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 190.

functions as the productive inverse of what Yahweh as a shared symbol represents. Namely, this legal context emphasizes the positive action of Yahweh—action that is “positive” because it is consistent with the community’s expectation for a stabilized social-political order. One may consider such an order “stabilized” when it fulfills the desires of the community so effectively that the community harbors no conscious feeling of need. Petersen is partly correct that the indictment of Joshua by the accuser is indirectly a challenge to Jerusalem *and* to Yahweh, who chose it.⁴⁹ But it is more so a constructivist rebuke of the existing social-political structure: the “proper” and stable legal context, faithfully embodied in the community of obedient members, should be managed by Yahweh through his representative. Yahweh’s rebuke defines the arena in which restoration as productive action should occur.⁵⁰ What this choice *means*, of course, is that the social-political context of Yehud must be restructured in support of (1) either the high priest or (2) the community symbolized in the figure of the priest.

Petersen’s second point of his typology, one whose action inspires a negative connotation, may be better understood through the symbol of the “bad breast” in Melanie Klein’s object-relations theory.⁵¹ Within that framework, the satan is the symbolic object upon which the community projects its bad experiences as it seeks preservation of social-political stability by reducing heightened anxieties—such anxieties are the consequences of fears of instability and ultimately annihilation or death. One can see a similar sense of this in the imagery of Joshua’s dirty robes. The filth in Joshua’s clothing “rests in the clothes and not in the person, its removal will, presumably, be easier—at least if done by the deity.”⁵² The filthy clothes, just like the scathing rebuke, may be removed and projected externally upon the “bad object” when the obedient community behaves consistent with the desire of Yahweh. Such a manner will, it is thought, preserve the community as something identifiably distinct: “The angel said to those who were standing before him, ‘Take off his filthy clothes.’ And to him he said, ‘See, I have taken your guilt away from you, and I will cloth you with festal apparel.’ And I said, ‘Let them put a clean turban on his head.’ So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with the apparel...” (Zech 3:4–5). Cleanliness is certainly likened to being in a “right” position before Yahweh.

49. Ibid., 192.

50. Cf. *ibid.*, 191.

51. See her work Klein, *Envy and Gratitude*.

52. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 194.

Petersen's third characteristic, a divinity functioning in the divine council, reflects a common literary and legal motif in the ancient Near East. Mythic imagery of the divine world usually reflected the common structures of the social-political world. The Psalmist, for example, describes the throne room and entourage of the divine world in ways that mirror their corollaries in Jerusalem (cf. Pss 45:6; 89:3–4). And even Hammurabi describes his throne as a microcosm of the divine realm (cf. *Hammurabi* I:50; IV:6). *The world of the divine looks hauntingly like our own!*

Zechariah presumes a context in which authoritative (and legal) decisions are meted out, but a context that is organized under the authority, or the auspices of authority, of Yahweh. This sense of Yahweh is not one common to Yehud (recall that the people of the land worshiped Yahweh [cf. Ezra 4:2]) but constituted a symbolic reflection of the remnant community. In other words, it was the community's desire for restoration that shaped the vocabulary and meaning attributed to the Divine (cf. Zech 8:1–5). The figure of the accuser connects the vision to the known quantity—that is, to the social-political structures and institutions with which the people in the land were already familiar. Yet the figure is also symbolically silenced by virtue of his profanity. Petersen writes,

The accuser, and other people in the community, could properly question the ability of the “unclean” high priest, to remove the people's 'awon when he himself is contaminated as a result of the exilic experience. No doubt such was the gist of the satan's indictment of Joshua. This particular vision presents a way in which such an objection may be met. The exilic experience, a punishment by fire, is understood potentially as an experience of purification, just as it is of contamination.⁵³

What is at stake in this vision of the satan is the very nature of authority. The accuser who draws question to the possibility of restoration is silenced while “God” who symbolizes the authority and corresponding social-political structures of restoration speaks boldly.⁵⁴ Joshua, the

53. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 195–96.

54. Ackroyd's position is consistent with our statement: “A twofold refrain here emphasizes (cf. 6.15, etc.) that the prophet is acting in the divine commission (cf. Hag. 1.12ff.)—the obscurity of the text of the first of these statements unfortunately leaves it somewhat in doubt as to what is its precise intention, though the general sense is clear. The protection of the exiles and the subordination of the hostile power—here perhaps directly with reference to the situation in Babylon in the beginning of Darius I's reign—are demonstrable, presumably because at the moment at which the words were

religious figure who symbolizes the community and its dependence upon a restored reality symbolized in God, becomes transformed through the experience of the exile and Yahweh's re-clothing of him. Both actions demonstrate the power and authority of Yahweh over the powers of the world—and most notably those in the province of Yehud. The purification of Joshua and the community must occur before the so-called Branch can arrive. “*Now listen*, Joshua, high priest, you and your colleges who sit before you! For they are an omen of things to come: I am going to bring my servant the Branch” (Zech 3:8, emphasis mine).⁵⁵ The combination of the particle of entreaty and the Qal imperative (שִׁמְעוּ-נָא) may assume two important responses from the audience: (1) that it must listen (presumably for its own well-being) but that (2) the audience is also faced with the opportunity not to accept the speaker's basis for the command; thus a possible interpretation of the particle with “please” as a “polite particle.”⁵⁶ In other words, there is a designation of authority in the statement, a recognition that authority must be legitimated, and an expectation that preservation of the “things to come” will require certain legalistic and ritualistic behaviors (Joshua was the high priest, after all!). And the prophet's recounting of the words of Yahweh, “and I will remove the guilt of this land in a single day,” expects the central importance of the law. To get that point, we need only refer back to Leviticus, which claimed that transgression of the law would lead to the exile, which meant a permanent loss of land (cf. Lev 18:24–30). This connection is implied also in Zechariah's seventh vision in which “wickedness” is cast off into the land of Shinar (Babylon; 5:5–11). Wickedness here refers to actions that threaten or destabilize the normative order of the community. They were cast into Babylon because of this wickedness.

given in their present context, either by the prophet or by some other, the fulfillment of them in Darius' favorable policy and the rebuilding of the Temple allowed the confirmation of the prophet's position to be recognized” (*Exile and Restoration*, 180).

55. Note also Petersen's assertion, “Despite this focus on Joshua, one does wonder about the identity of those sitting before Joshua. Many commentators suggest that they comprise a group of priests. Unfortunately, there is little warrant for this assertion... Those addressed and referred to could equally well be important members of the newly revived society in and around Jerusalem, quite possibly those who had returned from Babylon” (*Haggai and Zechariah*, 208–9).

56. Regarding this use of the particle, see Bent Christiansen, “A Linguistic Analysis of the Biblical Hebrew Particle *Nā'*: A Test Case,” *VT* 59 (2009): 379–93 (387); see also 379–80. For further reference, see Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 208.

There is a further consideration in 3:8: the invocation by the prophet of the symbolism of the “branch” may refer to the Davidic ruler. Petersen, for example, connects this imagery with Isa 11:1, which states, “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.”⁵⁷ This emphasis upon a Davidic ruler does not expect a mere substitution of the political figurehead. The institution of the local monarchy had given way to a governorship remotely administered by an imperial king. What must happen is precisely what the purification of Joshua implies: when it emerges from the fires of judgment and purification, the stain of the past must be replaced by something new. Or, as Petersen puts it, “The image of a just and beneficent ruler is called up by the metaphor. Restored royal government at Yahweh’s instigation will redound to the welfare of Judah and Israel.”⁵⁸

And it is with this understanding that Zechariah’s oracle of the crown(s) is made clearer.

The word of the LORD came to me: Collect silver and gold from the exiles—from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah—who have arrived from Babylon; and go the same day to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah. Take the silver and the gold and make a crown,⁵⁹ and set it on the high priest of Joshua son of Jehozadak; say to him: Thus says the LORD of hosts: Here is a man whose name is Branch: for he shall branch out in his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. It is he that shall build the temple of the LORD; he shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. (Zech 6:9–13)

The crown symbolizes the possibility of a new order, of restoration, but it does so without certainty. Restoration is still a “thing to come.”

The Law as Constructive in Light of Petersen’s Typology

The law as it is envisioned by the biblical literature does not govern the province. It provides the blueprint for the construction of a desired reality. I wrote elsewhere that *divine* law expresses an alternative.⁶⁰ It demands a new pattern of behavior in its function of reshaping social-political

57. Ibid., 210.

58. Ibid.

59. This is the NRSV’s attempt to alleviate the confusion from the Hebrew text which has עֲטָרוֹת, or “crowns,” plural.

60. Cataldo, *Breaking Monotheism*, 113–14.

relations.⁶¹ It interrupts the productive flows of the social-political body that shapes what Foucault terms “bio-power.” And because, as Robert Wilson previously observed,⁶² notions of judicial authority are already strongly linked with a society’s social political structure in contrast to an external law, and because divine law is external, the authority upon which divine law depends is known or manifest through revelation, which is an interruptive act that at times implicitly and at others overtly challenges the established structures of a society. Divine law both systematizes and categorizes that revelation.⁶³

Our assertion here is not far-fetched. Written law in ancient Near Eastern contexts tended to be ceremonial rather than functional.⁶⁴ Michael LeFebvre, for example, argues that this is true even for the so-called Deuteronomistic Reform under Josiah: “It ought not to be supposed that Deuteronomic scribes invented the idea of written legislation as a replacement for kings. The ‘intermediate’ state represented by the Deuteronomic law looks like an enhanced juridical treatise (even kings are taught by it), but law writings are not yet perceived as *being* ‘the law.’”⁶⁵ LeFebvre is certainly correct in that regard and his observation is relevant beyond the context of Josiah’s reform even for the context of Yehud during the Persian period. Perhaps the more important point, however, is that the law needed to be introduced; it was something that must be taught (cf. Ezra 7:25; compare with 1 Esd 8:23). This indicates that it was not already integrated within the normative order of the social-political context. In fact, its introduction is revolutionary, in the sense that Žižek defines the

61. That the nature of law is to support authority is generally accepted. As Ake (“A Definition of Political Stability,” 271) writes of laws and political behavior generally, “Obedience to the law constitutes political behavior just as much as contesting elections does. For, whether intended or not, the effect of obedience to the law is to uphold the authority of those who make decisions about what the law should be, and how it should be enforced. To uphold this authority is to aid in maintaining aspects of the distribution of power to make decisions for society.”

62. Robert R. Wilson, “The Mechanisms of Judicial Authority in Early Israel,” in *The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall*, ed. H. B. Huffmon, F. A. Spina, and Alberto Ravinell Whitney Green (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 60.

63. For the original context of this paragraph, see *Breaking Monotheism*, 113–14.

64. Cf. Michael LeFebvre, *Collections, Codes, and Torah: The Re-Characterization of Israel’s Written Law*, LHBOTS 451 (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 1. See also the discussion in John Van Seters, *A Law Book for the Diaspora: Revision in the Study of the Covenant Code* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1–40.

65. LeFebvre, *Collections, Codes, and Torah*, 87, emphasis in original.

term. That is, the legitimation of a new law requires that the previous social-political order be radically overturned. Of course, the problem is that the proposed law is not based within any existing social-political order. It is, according to Ezra–Nehemiah, a product of Ezra’s scribal activities. It is not a reflection of how people act and think but an overly idealized plan for behavior and action.⁶⁶ Suffice it to say here that in the absence of an established, legitimating social world envisioned by the law that Ezra purportedly introduced, Zechariah’s vision of the crown(s) (6:9–14) does not refer to a mere substitution of one political figurehead with another but an entire reconstruction of the social-political order. Zechariah’s vision necessitates the social-political context that Ezra’s law imagines.

The symbolism (i.e., the meaning) of the crowns in Zechariah is a much debated topic within scholarly discourse. Two examples, Petersen and Collins, are quick to assert that the act of crowning does not denote rulership.⁶⁷ But what other meaning should be read into the act if we are to avoid concluding that it was a meaningless ritual? Moreover, the act or symbolism of crowning took place within a context largely shaped by utopian aspirations and desires for restoration. As Ackroyd points out: “The making of the crown naturally suggests a royal symbol...”⁶⁸ While crowning Joshua does not make the high priest a king, it is consistent with the general desire for a “restored State.” Moreover, one cannot overlook the placing of crowns *in memoriam* within the temple, which may or may not have been built at this time.⁶⁹ Whether or not the crown(s) indicate a shared rule by the high priest and the Davidic “seed” or possibly a rule by the priest alone is not entirely clear. The Hebrew clearly has “crowns,” plural, while English translations generally opt for the singular. One can also not disregard the oracle in ch. 4 that seems to describe a type of dyarchy:

66. Cf. P. Miller’s theological analysis of the purpose of divine law as something that “charts a way of freedom” (in “Divine Command/Divine Law: A Biblical Perspective,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 23, no. 1 (2010): 33–34.

67. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 272–81; Collins, *Joel, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 91–92. See also Lars Gösta Rignell, *A Study of Isaiah, Ch. 40–55* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1956), 185 n. 49, as cited in Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 197 n. 89.

68. *Ibid.*, 193.

69. Cf. Boda, “Messengers of Hope,” 113–31. See also Paul Redditt, “Themes in Haggai–Zechariah–Malachi,” *Interpretation* 61, no. 2 (2007): 192, who describes Haggai–Zech 1–8 as the plan for the temple (a plan that ultimately did not pan out).

And a second time I said to him, "What are these two branches of the olive trees, which pour out the oil through the two golden pipes?" He said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." Then he said, "These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth." (4:12–14)

Where Zech 4:6–14, which frames the above passage (vv. 12–14), seems to emphasize the importance of Zerubbabel, Zech 6:9–14 seems to emphasize the role of the high priest, Joshua. Petersen also wrestles with this bifurcated focus. As a response to the obvious anxieties, he provides a possible, but not entirely convincing, solution that Zech 6:9–14 is less about any identification of a political authority and more about providing "pride of place" to the individual important in rebuilding the temple.⁷⁰ Yet he also notes that the "matrix of both oracles" deemphasizes the role of Zerubbabel.⁷¹ And compare with, "In sum, 6:12–13 is a carefully constructed oracle. It serves to enhance the status of the royal figure, Zerubbabel, and at the same time to explain the relative positioning of the two figures, Davidide and priest. Both explicitly and implicitly the Davidic scion achieves pride of place."⁷² What sense to make then of the apparent deemphasis upon Zerubbabel if not that the obfuscation of which Zechariah may be guilty (retreating from any answer as to who should be political authority) was intended to preserve hope in a possible restoration even at the failure of any particular individual?⁷³ In other words, that the text does not describe a real state of affairs but one desired, the specifics for some—we would be better saying "much"—of which remained imaginary.

Coggins may support that conclusion with his assertion that the "problem" with Haggai and Zechariah centers upon Zech 6:9–15. His view is that the text has been modified—a view that "arises from the fact that in both vv. 11 and 14 the Hebrew text has 'crowns.'"⁷⁴ But what produces such uncertainty produced through textual modification if not that what the prophet

70. See Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 276.

71. See *ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*, 278.

73. In this sense, we find some agreement with Ackroyd, "The function of the leaders is again in ch. 6 related to the declaration of God's purpose. Here, somewhat as in ch. 3, a number of oracles are gathered, together with a symbolic action which is concerned with leadership and its relation to the new age; and these all follow upon the vision of 6.1–8, which has already been briefly considered, in which the action of God towards the nations and towards his people in exile in Babylon is again set out" (*Exile and Restoration*, 194).

74. R. J. Coggins, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 14.

imagined remained unfulfilled? What changes in our understanding if we take seriously Zechariah's assertion that the cult was not fully established?⁷⁵ The crown symbolizes the *possibility* of a new order, whether diarchic or theocratic.⁷⁶ Yet the preservation of the crown(s), if kept in remembrance and not immediately employed as potent symbols, symbolizes possibility but not certainty. This possibility, as a space for action, expects restoration. The law, one should also bear in mind as being generally true for monotheistic traditions, provides the blueprint for that restoration.⁷⁷

The symbolism of the crown(s) in Zechariah is an extension of the law in that the law stipulates the proper pattern of behavior (social-political) and the crown confirms the ideal of authority. In the first instance (law), a new order complete with supporting social-political and religious institutions is envisioned. In the second (crown), the authority of the figurehead (symbolic) of the waiting distribution of power is confirmed. The satan symbolizes the profane, accusatory "other" who must be resisted, whose position in the distribution of power must be redefined. Thus, the satan represents those who stand outside the community, who become the foil against which restoration was mapped out.

75. J. Alberto Soggin, *Introduction to the History of Israel and Judah*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1993), 282.

76. Interpreting the symbolism of the crown in Zechariah as a "possibility" for a new order is consistent with Ackroyd's assertion that three main themes can be identified in Zechariah: (1) the temple, (2) the new community and the new age, and (3) the people's response (cf. *Exile and Restoration*, 171). The third "theme" emphasizes the necessity of a collective action that externalizes behavioral patterns of restoration.

77. This proposal is permissible even if, as Ackroyd and Edelman have both argued, Zechariah the prophet is the same as the one identified in Neh 12:4, 15, therefore son of Iddo. In that case, rather than Zechariah being a later arrival upon the scene, his oracle began in Babylon and described symbolic action in Jerusalem "as an act of faith" in Zerubbabel. Ackroyd explains the possibility of this chronological change in order to maintain relative consistency with the rest of Zech 1–8 as such: "The view then that 3.8–10 represent earlier words called to mind because of their significance for the assurance now given to Joshua and so to the community in 3.1–5 would seem to be the right one. We must then, not unreasonably, assume that 6.14... represents a later element, and that the last words of 6.10 'who came from Babylon' is a later addition made in the light of the events, at a time when the words of the earlier period were being grouped together or re-expounded by the prophet himself" (ibid., 197–98).

Finding Order in Restoration

Religion...serves to maintain the reality of [the] socially constructed world within which men exist in their everyday lives. Its legitimating power, however, has another important dimension—the integration into a comprehensive nomos of precisely those marginal situations in which the reality of everyday life is put in question.⁷⁸

“Nomos” is the system and framework of common meaning and inter-subjective relationships that define a socially constructed reality. It is the life-blood of social consciousness. It is law where “law” denotes the regulation of social-political actions and their agents in support of the dominant normative order. It stabilizes that world by categorizing behaviors and ideas as being in either support of or a threat to it. “*We cannot build the foundations of a state without rule of law.*”⁷⁹ Every such reality, Peter Berger observes, “must face the constant possibility of its collapse into anomy.”⁸⁰ By providing a sense of “order,” nomos presents itself as “an area of meaning carved out of a vast mass of meaninglessness, a small clearing of lucidity in a formless, dark, always ominous jungle.”⁸¹

Nomos is nearly synonymous with what Žižek, in the spirit of Lacan, describes as the “big Other,” which is the social order—a shared set of customs and values that imposes itself upon individuals.⁸² The figure, symbol, ideology, or other, of the big Other, according to Žižek, is the axiom needed to regulate one’s distance from others.⁸³ It is for this reason that nomos, as the stability of the normative order, may be described as a big Other when by definition it refers to the *idealized* order, which one might, for example, find in utopian rhetoric about restoration within the Bible.⁸⁴

78. Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 42.

79. Mahmoud Abbas, “We Cannot Build Foundations of a State Without Rule of Law,” September 2011, n.p. Online: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/mahmoud-abbas-we-cannot-build-foundations-of-a-state-without-rule-of-law-5344466.html>.

80. Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 23.

81. Ibid.

82. I am using Žižek’s description of the Other in the manner in which he defined it (cf. *In Defense of Lost Causes*, 34).

83. Cf. *ibid.*, 35.

84. Because we are not discussing anything “other” in an objective sense, which could then operate in an independent fashion by influencing one’s social and political decisions, we must specify that we are referring to the thing that *becomes* other

Ultimately, nomos, or normative order, and we are depending largely on Peter Berger’s framework for this concept, is an order that requires a marginalized other against whom it cultivates distinction and difference in a world-building act of self-preservation. There is a great deal in that statement that needs to be unpacked. Berger describes nomos as the externalized and objectivated product of our world-building activities.⁸⁵ We create the social reality that we become subject to, constrained within its rules and regulations. We know ourselves, we come into social consciousness, by perceiving differences between ourselves and others. Even utopian desires, such as restoration, are products of an already created reality, situated within its “plausibility structure.” The qualities of such desires are meaningful within the reality we already know, in which we have contributed to the knowledge base and expressed our desires in light of or in response to already determined categories of knowledge. That is why Žižek wrote that a true revolution must have no goal apart from destruction of preexisting social-political institutions.⁸⁶ What this means for the biblical texts in their attempt to constructively map out restoration is that their vision of restoration is very much a product of the “profane” world it rejects. Their interest in restoration is to reinvent the difference that distinguishes the remnant community from the broader social-political context. On that general sociological theme Berger writes further:

Worlds are socially constructed and socially maintained. Their continuing reality, both objective (as common, taken-for-granted facticity) and subjective (as facticity imposing itself on individual consciousness), depends upon specific social processes, namely those processes that longingly reconstruct and maintain the particular worlds in question. Conversely, the interruption of these social processes threatens the (objective and subjective) reality of the worlds in question. Thus each world requires a social “base” for its continuing existence as a world that is real to actual human beings. This “base” may be called its plausibility structure.⁸⁷

(Other) in our social worlds. It is the sense of order, and Deleuze would describe this as a fundamental desire, against which we measure our actions and which also acts upon us to shape our behaviors as members of a group or culture.

85. Cf. his discussion in *Sacred Canopy*, 4.

86. See for example Žižek’s description of Marxist Revolution in *In Defense of Lost Causes*, 176. Note also his discussion of negation in terms of revolution (194). Revolution is the necessary first step in creating a new world, complete with new Master-Signifiers—that which gathers or orients otherwise free-floating ideological elements. True revolution is not a revision or emendation of a past world.

87. Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 45.

Even desires, such as for restoration, are realities constructed in response to a primary difference between what constitutes and preserves the normative order and that (in the form of anomy) which threatens it. In that sense, restoration is built upon the backs of the excluded; the restored world is knowable only in contradistinction from the world left behind. As Philip Davies once put it, “individual...identity is meaningless without the existence of other identities from which it can be differentiated.”⁸⁸ Likewise, the people already in the land are crucial for differentiating the identity of the remnant community. As we have and will discuss, we see three primary strategies within the biblical texts for doing just that: imposing strict ideological parameters on identity production; ritualizing and institutionalizing collective identity and agency within a framework supporting divine authority—one that (if only in theory) supplants all “earthly” authorities; and creating a discourse of resistance through symbolic (but sometimes also physical) walls and other expressions of resistance to an external “other.”

As a specific point of focus, we might again refer to the following passage in Zechariah:

Escape to Zion, you that live with daughter Babylon. For thus said the LORD of hosts (after his glory sent me) regarding the nations that plundered you: Truly, one who touches you touches the apple of my eye. See now, I am going to raise my hand against them, and they shall become plunder for their own slaves. *Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me.* (2:7–9, HB 10–13, emphasis mine)

Petersen observes that the Hebrew word used for “touch(ing)” (נגַע, cf. v. 12) often denotes a harmful touching, hitting, or killing—or in a phrase, “malevolent action.”⁸⁹ Such actions are typically associated with those that cause disruption or disorder (cf. Ps 73:14; Isa 53:4; Amos 9:5; Josh 9:19; and even touch a woman in Gen 20:6). The symbolism of the eye, Petersen argues, is meaningful in that the eye is the most sensitive part of the body. Consequently, “Anyone who acts injuriously toward Israel is, at the same time, acting injuriously toward Yahweh, toward one of the most sensitive and important parts of Yahweh’s being.”⁹⁰ But let us not overlook the fact that directed violence (malevolent action) by an “other” is the necessary step in highlighting the status of the community as “precious”

88. Philip R. Davies, *Memories of Ancient Israel: An Introduction to Biblical History—Ancient and Modern* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 106.

89. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 177.

90. Ibid.

to Yahweh. This sense is shared by both the exodus tradition and by Ezra–Nehemiah’s co-option of that tradition as a symbolic reference to the return of the *golah* community, or “Israel,” for Ezra. This “directed violence” is necessary because it exposes the true need for restoration: the creation of a new social reality.⁹¹ In Zechariah, divine action is prompted through violence as the deity is roused to respond. (Is this theme not true for much of the Bible?) As the prophet puts it, the threat of loss ignites jealousy within the deity: “Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath. Thus says the LORD: I will return to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts shall be called the holy mountain” (8:2–3).

Jealousy, which is either noble or ignoble based on the object, fears to lose what it has.⁹² It is aroused when the object of desire runs the risk of being unattainable. In Zechariah, the jealousy of Yahweh preserves the difference between insider and outsider. The claim in 8:8 that “they shall be my people and I will be their God” appeals to the Mosaic Covenant, which presented the basis of the constitution of Israel/Judah including the people’s acquisition of the land. The intent, just as it was in the exodus tradition, is to emphasize the distinction between the community as the desired object of Yahweh and others against whom the community is contrasted. The utopian element of this desire is expressed even further in v. 23: “Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from nations of every language shall take hold of a Jew, grasping his garment and saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’”⁹³

We return to our previously stated point: as a stabilized order, *nomos* necessitates a perpetually marginalized “other” in order to sustain itself by cultivating distinction and difference. *You must exist to remind me of the differences that mark my uniqueness and that shape the contours of a stable world.* This other represents symbolically the consequence of a disordered world: the ideological loss of collective identity and the

91. On this role of violence, see the discussion in Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, 150.

92. I am using M. Klein’s description of “jealousy,” which she took from Crabb’s English Synonyms (in Klein, *Envy and Gratitude*, 181–82).

93. Petersen makes a similar observation in *Haggai and Zechariah*, 319. Note further, “Given the specific language of this oracle, someone must have been saying that *elohim* was with Israel. The *goyim* report that they have heard such things reported. Put another way, there is implied dialogue here just as there was explicit dialogue in the previous oracle. The *goyim* have been provoked to speech and movement by an expression of religious particularism, not by some universal cultural appeal” (320).

institutions that support it. When that order is utopian, when its intent is to create something new—and how can we avoid Žižek’s haunting echo here?—violent action perpetrated against the preexisting social order is necessary to pave the way. We cannot help but return to the possibility that restoration is fundamentally a revolutionary act; it expects structural change within the social-political world. It reflects a fundamental drive to create a world in which the collective identity of the group may be projected broadly and outwardly as the dominant social identity. The group member becomes the paradigmatic political subject. With the foci of our remaining chapters in mind, we would do well to observe that this revolutionary tendency within the biblical text is a consequence of its growing monotheistic orientation and violent demand: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exod 20:3).