THE LITERARY AND THEOLOGICAL FUNCTION
OF DIVINE SPEECH IN THE PENTATEUCH

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Since the publication of the first results of my study on divine speech in the Pentateuch\(^1\) closer examination enabled me to make a few adjustments in the Synopsis of the divine speech formulas and to adduce further evidence for the patterns I discovered.\(^2\) When I was invited to read a paper at the Salamanca meeting of the I.O.S.O.T., I decided to present to this audience the results of my further investigation of this fascinating subject. On the basis of my discovery of the literary function of the formulas denoting divine speech in the Pentateuch, where they are arranged in such a way that they form distinct patterns and give structure to the material, I made a closer study of divine speech itself by examining the form of the divine oratio recta.

Throughout the Pentateuch, the words reportedly spoken by God are consistently ushered in by introductory formulas containing verba dicendi, or, when these are lacking, by לֶפֶרֶשׁ. The literary form of "performative speech", also known as "interior monologue" (in German "die erlebte Rede"—a better term would be "subjective speech") where a thought is expressed from the viewpoint of the subject in question without any introductory formula, does occur in the Pentateuch (e.g. in Gen. xxvi 7,9, xxxii 31, xli 51,52), but is only once employed with regard to God (Deut. xxxii 32-35), where the divine speech is easily recognizable.\(^3\)

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\(^2\) "Additional remarks on the pattern of the divine speech formulas in the Pentateuch", \textit{VT} 34 (1984), pp. 91-5. Since I completed this article I have realized, as a result of a remark by one of my students, Mr H. Nobel, that the conversation of the two angels with Lot in the Sodom story should be included in the divine speeches of the Pentateuch. When these four divine speech formulas in Gen. xix 2, 12, 17 and 21 are included, the pattern in Genesis is: \(7+4+7+4+7+4+7+4+7+4+7+4+7+4+7+4+7+4+7+4\).

whole, it is relatively easy to determine and to delimit precisely the words to be regarded as divine speech. So far I have come across two problems in this respect: first, the question whether the poetic utterances in Gen. viii 22 and ix 6 should be regarded as belonging to God’s speech or not, and, second, the problem whether the ethnographic notices in Deut. ii 10-12 and 20-23 should be considered part of the divine speech.

The quotation in Gen. viii 22, which C. Westermann, for example, considers to be part of the divine speech, seems to me to be so detached from the divine speech, seeing its form, its position in the context and its contents, that it can better be regarded as a concluding remark by the narrator. I do not consider it part of the preceding divine speech. The utterance in ix 6 is different; being enveloped by other words spoken by God (in vs. 5 and in vs. 7), it cannot be separated from the rest of the divine speech. It should therefore be regarded as an integral part of the divine speech. The fact that God speaks here about himself in the 3rd person, is not exceptional: it occurs many times in the Pentateuch. As a matter of fact, the majority of the divine speeches in the book of Leviticus are phrased in 3rd person singular, and so is a large section of the Decalogue (Deut. v 11-16), which nobody would consider a later addition. As for the ethnographic notices in Deut. ii, I consider them part of the divine speech, first, because they are completely enveloped by other divine words (as in Gen. ix 6) and, second, for a number of other reasons which I put forward in my paper read at the Louvain conference on Deuteronomy.

When it comes to the precise determination of the introductory divine speech formulas, there are no problems in the great majority of cases, where we have stereotyped phrases, but in some instances it is not immediately clear what the exact scope of the introductory formula is, e.g. Gen. i 22 way̨bārek ʾōtām ʾelahim lęmōr—should the whole phrase or only lęmōr be regarded as the introductory formula? Or Gen. xv 1 ʾahar had̨ēhārim hāʾelleh hāyāh ʾēb̨ār yhwh ʾel-ʾābrām bammah̨ezeh lęmōr. The whole sentence has the function of introducing the divine speech that follows; do we here have an exceptionally long introductory formula or is it only: hāyāh ʾēb̨ār yhwh ... lęmōr, or only lęmōr?

The divine speeches in the Pentateuch have either the form of the dialogue or that of the monologue. Since indirect speech, used in connec-

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* E.g. Gen. ix 16, xvi 11, xviii 19, xix 13f., xxi 17; Ex. iii 12, iv 5, xix 21f., 24, xx 7, 10-2, xxiv 1, xxx 11-6, 34-8, xxxi 15, xxxiv 10, 14, 23f., 26; passim in Lev.; Deut. i 8, 36, ii 12, 21, v 11-6. In Deut. xxi the references to YHWH between the divine speeches are part of the comment by the poet. The divine speeches are vss. 20-7, 32-5; 37-42; the poet’s comments are in vss. 28-31 and 36. See the author’s article referred to in the previous note.