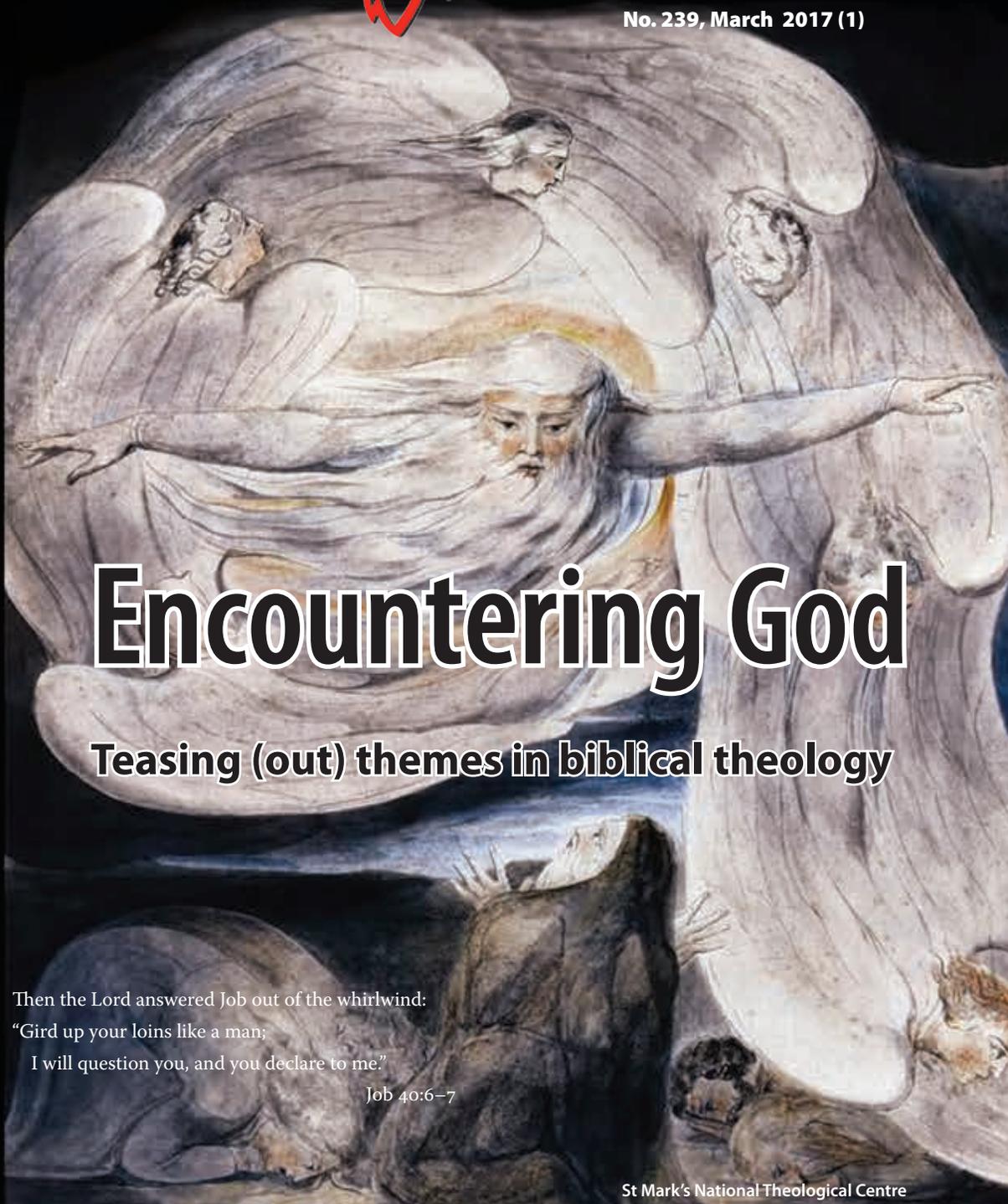




St Mark's Review

A journal of Christian thought & opinion

No. 239, March 2017 (1)



Encountering God

Teasing (out) themes in biblical theology

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:

"Gird up your loins like a man;

I will question you, and you declare to me."

Job 40:6-7

St Mark's National Theological Centre

15 Blackall Street, Barton, ACT 2600 Australia

a partner in the School of Theology of Charles Sturt University

Editor Dr Michael Gladwin
Reviews editor Dr Bernard Doherty
Editorial committee Chair: Revd Dr Andrew Cameron
Typeset by Graham Lindsay, Barton Books
Printed by KainosPrint.com.au,
PO Box 311, Calwell ACT 2905
Published by St Mark's National Theological Centre
15 Blackall St, Barton ACT 2600

Subscription Rates

Individuals – Australia**

\$17.50 per issue – annual subscription \$70

Individuals – Overseas*

\$25 per issue – annual subscription \$100

Institutional Rate - Australia**

\$30 per issue – annual subscription \$120

Institutional Rate – Overseas*

\$35 per issue – annual subscription \$140

** GST inclusive

*must be paid for in Australian dollars

ISSN: 0036-3103

Please address all correspondence to:

The Editor, *St Mark's Review*
15 Blackall Street
BARTON, ACT 2600 Australia
stmarksadmin@csu.edu.au

Cover image

The image incorporated into the cover design is "Job Confessing his Presumption to God who Answers from the Whirlwind" by William Blake (Public Domain) via Wikimedia Commons.

Material published in *St Mark's Review* is copyright and may not be reproduced without permission of the Editor. The *Review* is indexed by the *Australian Public Affairs Information Service*, *Religion Index One (USA)* and *Australasian Religion Index*.

St Mark's Review is published quarterly by St Mark's National Theological Centre, Canberra. St Mark's is a partner in the School of Theology of Charles Sturt University. St Mark's incorporates the St Mark's Memorial Library and the Centre for Ageing & Pastoral Studies. It shares its site with the Australian Centre for Christianity & Culture.



St Mark's Review

A journal of Christian thought & opinion

No. 239, March 2017 (1)

Encountering God

Teasing (out) themes in biblical theology



Good help can be hard to come by

A helping heart is a great place to start from, but travelling with someone in their personal journey can be complicated and confounding. You need precision tools, careful integration with Scripture, and lots of skills practice to truly make a difference in someone's life — whether you're meeting spiritual and emotional needs, bridging relationships, or mentoring someone in ministry.

St Mark's offers training to help you help better.

CHC 51015 Diploma of Counselling

A highly practical course delivered in a blend of face-to-face and online training.

Pastoral Counselling

We offer **Graduate Certificate**, **Graduate Diploma**, and **Masters** (with specialisation) level courses online through our partner, Charles Sturt University (CSU).

10348NAT Graduate Certificate Professional Supervision (Clinical) (Pastoral)

Giving counsellors and ministry workers the theory and practice of professional supervision within a theological framework.

Ageing and Pastoral Studies

We offer **Graduate Diploma** and **Masters** level courses online through our partner, CSU.



St Mark's Review

No. 239, March 2017 (1)

Contents

Editorial	v	
Jeanette Mathews and David Neville		
Does God come to bury Job or to praise him?	1	
The significance of Y ^{HWH} 's second speech from the whirlwind J. Richard Middleton		
God comes to Job	28	
A response to J. Richard Middleton on Y ^{HWH} 's second speech from the whirlwind Jeanette Mathews		
Conversing with the God of the Pilgrimage Psalms	35	
Melinda Cousins		
The Book of Job as a satire with mention of verbal irony	51	
Virginia Ingram		
UnManning Moses	63	
Anthony Rees		
Suffering in Paul	75	
A case for exaggeration Marian Free		
Beastly hybridity	93	
Leviathan, Behemoth, and Revelation 13 Keith Dyer		
Book reviews	105	
John Stoward Moyes and the Social Gospel	105	
Paradise, patriarchs, promised land		
A thematic introduction to the Pentateuch		110
Childhood on the margins	112	
Mind, matter, and devotion in Hinduism	115	

Editorial

Jeanette Mathews and David Neville

During the second half of September and the first half of October 2016, Professor J. Richard Middleton was Visiting Theologian in Residence within Charles Sturt University's School of Theology, spending two weeks at St Barnabas' College in Adelaide and two weeks at St Mark's National Theological Centre in Canberra. In addition to delivering public lectures in both Adelaide and Canberra, Professor Middleton also participated in the academic life of both St Barnabas' College and St Mark's in various other ways. In scholarly terms, perhaps the highlight of his time in Australia was his participation in two seminars: a two-day scholars' workshop in Adelaide focused on 'Lament in Scripture and Life'; and a seminar on biblical theology in Canberra, in which Professor Middleton presented the keynote paper. His visit to Australia was supported by a grant from Charles Sturt University's Centre for Public and Contextual Theology (PaCT).

J. Richard Middleton is Professor of Biblical Worldview and Exegesis, Northeastern Seminary at Roberts Wesleyan College in Rochester, New York. His expertise is in Old Testament theology, with particular emphasis on Genesis, Psalms, Job, and 1 and 2 Samuel, as well as in creation theology, eschatology, and also Christian worldview. The author or co-author of four books, Middleton is currently working on a book tentatively titled *The Silence of Abraham, the Passion of Job: Explorations in the Theology of Lament* (forthcoming from Baker Academic). In this book he is comparing Abraham's ominous silence in Genesis 22 when instructed to sacrifice his son (the Aqedah) and Job's outspoken challenge to God in response to his sufferings, which God finally affirms as 'right' speech. Seminar participants in both Adelaide and Canberra were privileged to hear presentations relating to his current research project: in Adelaide, a paper titled 'Unbinding the Aqedah from the Straightjacket of Tradition: An Inner-Biblical Interpretation

of Abraham's Test in Genesis 22'; and in Canberra, 'Does God Come to Bury Job or to Praise Him? The Significance of YHWH's Second Speech from the Whirlwind,' now published as the lead article in this number of *St Mark's Review*.

Middleton begins his study of YHWH's second speech from the whirlwind toward the end of the book of Job by noting that despite readers' appreciation of Job's refusal to accept his suffering quiescently, interpreters have generally accepted that his protestations provoke divine censure. God's speeches seem designed to put Job in his place for daring to impugn divine justice. Middleton rehearses various reasons for that traditional interpretation but then proceeds to identify and to explore the significance of textual details that suggest an alternative interpretation, including the reason for YHWH's appeal to two sea monsters, Behemoth and Leviathan, to which Job is in certain respects compared. Reflection on these sea monsters leads Middleton to reconsider—on the basis of textual resonances between Job and other biblical passages—human identity and vocation in relation to God as Creator and divine interlocutor. Indeed, Middleton suggests that the reason for YHWH's *second* speech is to prompt Job to speak back to his maker, to provoke Job to appreciate that the Creator of earth and sea not only delights in the cosmos but also craves relational integrity with the entire created order, including Job himself as a 'vigorous conversation partner.' Middleton also gestures to his larger research project by unearthing textual details that provoke the question of whether Job's audacious speech might be a biblical response to the Aqedah.

Responding directly to Middleton, Jeanette Mathews finds much in his study with which to agree, including his affirmation of the theological legitimacy of Job's audacious speech and also his central contention that the express intent of God's speeches from the whirlwind is to invite honest dialogue. Even so, she draws attention to the precedence of silence in the book of Job (2:13). Moreover, by putting Job in dialogue with Habakkuk, Mathews affirms divine *presence* as the decisive feature that enables movement from lament and complaint to trust and confession.

In her article Melinda Cousins draws on her recent doctoral research. There she investigated the Psalms of Ascents (Psalms 120–134) through the lenses of theological interpretation and Biblical Performance Criticism, approaches that highlight the relational nature of the psalms as opportunities both to speak to God and be spoken to by God. Here she develops that

idea by describing this process as a ‘conversational experience.’ She specifically explores the theological vision of these pilgrimage psalms through the metaphors of distant sojourner, trapped bird, weaned child, and pilgrimage itself, suggesting that the implied corresponding vision of God is enlarged beyond images that are more familiar to readers and performers of the Psalms. Though focusing on a different set of texts, Cousins affirms Middleton’s assertion that God wants to be in conversation with God’s creation.

Virginia Ingram returns to the book of Job with an investigation of its genre as satire. In concluding that the high level of verbal irony present in the book of Job gives justification for classifying the book as a satire, she turns her attention to the purpose of the book. Her argument that it challenges a narrow concept of retributive justice coheres with Middleton’s assertion that the book of Job remains relevant due to its refusal to accept easy answers to the question of suffering. Ingram’s suggestion that Job gives evidence for an evolving concept of God in relation to justice has very real implications for the perpetration of atrocities in our own time inspired by particular concepts of God.

Anthony Rees also touches on biblical readers’ concepts of God, aiming to understand the fraught relationship between Moses and YHWH as he reads the story of the waters of Meribah (Numbers 20:1–13). Drawing on the work of David Clines and, more recently, Susan Haddox, Rees explores the presentation of Moses’ masculinity conveyed in the story. Again, there are resonances between this study and Middleton’s, since the story suggests it is an inadequate grasp of revelation on Moses’ part that raises YHWH’s ire, just as Middleton implies Job has not fully understood what God wants of him. Yet in arguing that Moses ‘oversteps his agency’ in the Meribah story, Rees takes the divine-human encounter in a direction different from Middleton. Rather than the vision of God challenging the fearful Job to ‘gird up your loins like a man’ (Job 40:7, NRSV), Rees suggests the authors of Numbers have seen YHWH’s ‘hegemonic masculinity’ threatened by Moses’ decisive action and have seen that Moses is put in his place—‘unmanned’ as stated in the title of Rees’ article.

Thus all four articles focused on Old Testament texts (and the formal response to Middleton’s study) prompt us to consider the nature of our encounters with the divine—and how we read and re-use texts to tease out the evolving nature of those encounters. The author of each article presents

challenges for us to consider, but also an assurance that the divine-human encounter is deeply worthwhile.

In the first of two New Testament studies, Marian Free makes a case for understanding Paul's frequent references to his own suffering as instances of exaggeration for rhetorical effect. Contesting the long-held view that Paul's hardship catalogues evidence his conviction that the 'age to come' had already broken into the present age and thereby initiated the long-anticipated 'messianic woes', Free notes that Paul himself does not directly interpret his sufferings as signs of the 'new age' impinging on the present. She does not dispute that Paul suffered hardship and mistreatment, but she argues that the reasons for such suffering are more mundane than apocalyptic or eschatological, indeed, that Paul's accounts of his suffering are probably exaggerated in the service of defending his apostolic identity and authority in the face of criticisms from opponents. Unlike the biblical account of Job, within which innocent suffering is given voice and frank complaint against such suffering is honoured, Paul's hardship catalogues are read as rhetorical self-defence strategies, and his various other references to suffering are taken with a pinch of interpretive salt.

In the final article, 'Beastly hybridity: Leviathan, Behemoth, and Revelation 13', Keith Dyer begins by observing that although Middleton has shown that the beasts of Hebrew creation and wisdom traditions epitomise God's peaceful creation rather than symbolise chaotic forces to be overcome violently, beastly chaos seems to return at the close of the biblical canon. Cognisant that several recent scholars have detected links between the two beasts described in Revelation 13 and other versions of the Leviathan and Behemoth traditions, Dyer challenges the earth- and creation-denying assumptions of dualistic apocalyptic interpretations of a biblical text that twice affirms the 'book of life from the foundation of the cosmos' (Rev 13:8; 17:8) and also declares that 'the *basileia* of the *cosmos* of our Lord and of his Christ has come' (11:15). Dyer argues instead that the two beasts are hybrid agents of the ancient dragon of the Babylonian traditions, representative of human attempts to control and exploit the natural world, rather than negative images of the wildness of creation itself. Indeed, he concludes his study by echoing Middleton's interpretive insight that 'whilst God rejoices in the wildness of creation, neither the protology of Genesis nor the eschatology of Revelation conceives of it as either originating in or culminating in a chaos that must be overcome violently'.

Encountering God is the overarching theme of this number of *St Mark's Review*, in which facets of the divine-human encounter are explored within the larger framework of the Creator-creation dynamic found within various biblical texts. By virtue of its subject matter, biblical theology is an unpredictable enterprise. Perusing the articles that follow will not necessarily confirm one's theological presuppositions and prejudices, but to engage open-mindedly with these studies may well open up new horizons of understanding.