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AN INTERFAITH WISDOM: SCRIPTURAL REASONING BETWEEN JEWS, CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS

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Scriptural reasoning can be approached from many angles, as other essays in this issue demonstrate. This essay considers it as a wisdom-seeking engagement with Jewish, Christian and Muslim scriptures. Its origins, practices, understandings and social settings are described and discussed, with some concluding remarks on its possible contribution to the public sphere in the twenty-first century.

1. Core Identities in Conversation

There are many convergent reasons why it makes sense for interfaith engagement among Jews, Christians and Muslims to make their scriptures a primary focus. Each tradition's scripture is at the heart of its identity. This is so in rather different ways, but recognizing those differences can be a source of illumination to each. Scriptures are formative for understanding of God and God's purposes; for prayer, worship and liturgy; for normative teaching; for imagination and ethos; and so on. All religions meet new situations and are challenged to change over time, and if a new development is at all important it is inevitable that debate about it will appeal to scripture. Many of the bitterest disputes within and between all three faiths centre on appeals to scripture. So an attempt to deal with the core identity of any of the three will inevitably involve its scripture.

This is sometimes taken as a reason for avoiding scriptures in dialogue situations. The Tanakh, the Bible and the Qur'an are the main platforms of those within each tradition who stand against dialogue and in favour of self-protective or aggressive confrontation. Each of these scriptures has

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texts that can be used to legitimate violence, claims to superiority, blanket condemnations, cruel punishments, suspicions, oppressive morality, and hostility to those who are not believers in God as identified by one's own tradition. Their scriptures are where the particularity of each is evident "warts and all", and have been widely used in polemics between them as well as in attacks on each by secular critics. Even for many of those who do believe it right to engage in dialogue and collaboration the scriptures are where they find what is most distinctive, most difficult and least negotiable. So to study together anything other than very carefully selected passages might seem a recipe for increasing tensions and meeting many impasses.

Yet, despite the problems, the attractiveness of this approach is considerable. If it were to succeed it could not only bring core identities into conversation; it could also sustain them there. Within each tradition, scriptures are a focus of endless study, conversation and dispute, and around them have grown up enduring forms of collegiality. One of the critical things lacking in relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims is such centres of long term collegiality where ways of study, understanding and application can be worked at and passed on across generations. The study of their scriptures has been overwhelmingly intra-traditional, supplemented in varying degrees by academic study in uncommitted environments. Yet, given the fundamental nature of the issues between them (with roots going back many centuries), given the necessity of engaging with scriptures if those issues are to be satisfactorily dealt with, and given the richness and complexity of each scripture and its associated traditions, then the only appropriate way is that which each faith has followed itself: the creation of groups, traditions, networks and institutions able to form readers dedicated to study and discussion.

These are matters which require more than one person and more than one lifetime. They have to be handled by communities who can learn together how to go about this novel and urgent task. There are almost no places in the world at present where collegial conversations are sustained jointly around these three scriptures and traditions of interpretation. In a few universities the scriptures of each tradition are studied alongside each other, but that has very rarely led to deep interplay between all three. Yet there are some initiatives in this direction, and I will devote the rest of this essay to discussing one in which I have been privileged to take part.

2. *Scriptural Reasoning: An Introductory Description*

This initial description of scriptural reasoning (and, even more, the discussion in later sections) is offered as only one portrayal of something that has already evoked many other descriptions and is constantly producing more.[1] Because scriptural reasoning by definition draws people of very different commitments and disciplines into engagement with each other it is a

phenomenon which is bound to be described differently even (perhaps especially) by those who know it best: part of its own approach is to resist "authoritative overviews" of the three scriptures and traditions of interpretation that are being brought into conversation, and so its own character likewise calls for diverse descriptions. What follows in this and the following sections portrays and interprets it from the standpoint of a Christian academic participant whose main academic areas are biblical interpretation and contemporary critical and constructive thought, and whose chief interest in this article is in the wisdom it might yield for interfaith engagement today.

Scriptural reasoning had its immediate origins in "textual reasoning" among a group of academic Jewish text scholars (mostly of Tanakh and Talmud), on the one hand, and philosophers and theologians, on the other hand, who were concerned that there was little fruitful engagement between their sets of disciplines.[2] They began to meet together to study texts from scripture and Talmud in dialogue with Western philosophy, in particular those Jewish philosophers who had themselves tried to cross this divide, such as Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig (perhaps the most embracing influence), Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, and Eugene Borowitz. The text scholars were trained in both traditional Jewish interpretation and the methods of the modern Western academy, and the philosophers and theologians were likewise students of Jewish thought as well as of Western thought from classical Greece up to the present. The name they gave to what they did, "textual reasoning", simply referred to the two sides that were brought together: the interpretation of traditional texts and the practices of philosophical and theological reasoning. A core question they shared was about Judaism after the Shoah, leading them to interrogate both the Western modernity within which the Shoah had been possible and also the resources—premodern, modern and postmodern[3] or contemporary—for responding to it within Judaism.

One perhaps surprising conclusion[4] that many of them came to was that post-Shoah Judaism needed both to appropriate afresh its scriptures and traditions of interpretation and at the same time to engage more deeply with others who are wrestling with the meaning of their faith today, especially Christians and Muslims. This latter conclusion had not been arrived at abstractly. It was rooted in some of the group already having found congenial Christian thinking going on, especially in Yale around Hans Frei and George Lindbeck.[5] Their Christian postcritical, "postliberal" hermeneutics, which had learnt much from Karl Barth, had many resonances with the Rosenzweig approach to Judaism.[6] In addition, at Drew University in the late 1980s and early 1990s there was a scriptural interpretation group[7] around the Jewish thinker Peter Ochs (who had previously been at Yale and knew Frei and Lindbeck) that included Christians and later Muslims. So when the textual reasoning group, whose first co-chairs

were Ochs and the philosopher David Novak, began in 1991 there were already within it the seeds of later Abrahamic developments.

These began to be cultivated when some Christian academics (including Daniel Hardy and myself) began to attend the lively, learned and argumentative textual reasoning sessions at the annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion in the early 1990s. This led into "scriptural reasoning", which was first Jewish-Christian[8] and then in the late 1990s became Jewish-Christian-Muslim. There were large questions to be tackled if this was to work. They were wrestled with in two settings, a summer meeting of a small group for a few days of intensive scripture study, with discussion of the various dimensions of scriptural reasoning (cf. the sections to follow below); and a larger group that eventually met twice a year, in Cambridge and wherever the American Academy of Religion was meeting.[9]

The four key strands that were brought together in these ways were: Jewish textual reasoning as already described; Christian postliberal text interpretation (whose main theological reference point was Karl Barth, in particular as interpreted by Frei at Yale); a range of less text-centred Christian philosophies and theologies, both Protestant and Catholic; and Muslim concern simultaneously for the Qur'an and for Islam in relation to Western modernity (especially understood through the natural and human sciences and technology).

In what follows I will think through this young movement from various angles—its collegiality, its institutional relations, its ways of coping with the meaning of scriptures, and its significance for public education and debate.

3. *An Abrahamic Collegiality: Not Consensus but Friendship*

At the centre of the collegiality of scriptural reasoning is reading and interpreting selected texts from the Tanakh, Old Testament/New Testament and Qur'an in small groups, whose inspiration is the Jewish practice of *chevruta* study,[10] and also (when there is more than one group) in plenary sessions, which often have the purpose of pursuing more theoretical, philosophical, theological and "public issue" questions related to the text study and of discussing matters relating to the group's process, governance and future development.

In scriptural reasoning done between academic Jews, Christians and Muslims[11] the priority of small group study means that each one is first of all bringing to the table his or her own scripture, a much-studied and much-loved book. They also bring what Aref Nayed has named their "internal libraries":[12] all they have learnt not only through tradition-specific activity in study, prayer, worship and experience but also what they have

learnt through whatever academic disciplines they have studied—and also, of course, elements from a range of cultures, arts, economic, political and social contexts.

A recurring image used to describe the social dynamics of this encounter is that of hospitality—and the resources of each scripture on hospitality have often been a focus for study. Yet this is three-way mutual hospitality: each is host to the others and guest to the others as each welcomes the other two to their "home" scripture and its traditions of interpretation. As in any form of hospitality, joint study is helped by observing certain customs and guidelines which have been developed through experience over time. These are the prudential wisdom of the practice of scriptural reasoning and, like most such customs, are best learnt by apprenticeship that sees them being performed and imitates them or improvises upon them. Put in the form of maxims, a selection of those most important for collegiality would include:

- Acknowledge *the sacredness* of the others' scriptures to them (without having to acknowledge its authority for oneself)—each believes in different ways (which can be discussed) that their scripture is in some sense from God and that the group is interpreting it before God, in God's presence.[13]
- The "native speakers" hosting a scripture and its tradition need to acknowledge that they do not exclusively own their scriptures—they are *not experts on its final meaning*; guests need to acknowledge that hosts are to be questioned and listened to attentively as the *court of first (but not last) appeal*.
- The aim is *not consensus*—that may happen, but it is more likely that the conclusion will be a recognition of deep differences.
- Do not be afraid of *argument*, as one intellectually honest way of responding to differences—part of mutual hospitality is learning to argue in courtesy and truth, and each tradition as well as each academic discipline embraces complex practices of discussion and dispute.
- Draw on *shared academic resources* to build understanding—members of different faith communities may be trained in the same field or share a philosophy (pragmatism, critical realism, phenomenology, idealism).
- *Allow time* to read and re-read, to entertain many questions and possibilities, to let the texts unfold within their own traditions of interpretation and in (often unprecedented) engagement with each other, to stick with a text without premature resolution of its difficulties, and to sound the depths.
- Read and interpret with a view to the fulfilment of *God's purpose of peace* between all—this shared hope (however differently specified) can sustain endurance through inevitable differences, misunderstandings, confrontations and resentments.

- Be open to *mutual hospitality turning into friendship*—each tradition values friendship, and for it to happen now might be seen as the most tangible anticipation of future peace.

Many of those maxims are embraced in the following account by Nicholas Adams:

> Scriptural reasoning is a practice of "publicizing" deep reasonings, so that others may learn to understand them and discover why particular trains of reasoning, and not just particular assumptions, are attractive or problematic. *Scriptural reasoning makes deep reasonings public.* It sees them not as particularistic obstacles to debate, but as conditions for conversation, friendship and mutual understanding. Without deep reasonings, there are no religious traditions to speak of. Depth is not obscurity, however: the acknowledgement of depth is a recognition that it takes time to plumb. Scriptural reasoning models the discovery that making deep reasoning public is not only risky—because one makes oneself vulnerable when revealing what one loves—but time-consuming. It is a non-hasty practice, and is thus a kind of beacon in our time-poor world . . . Each of the three Abrahamic traditions has its own rules for interpreting scripture (and internal disagreement about these rules), and, even if there is overlap between them, it is not the overlap that makes scriptural reasoning possible. The significant point of contact is a shared acknowledgement that scriptural texts are sacred, together with a shared desire to do scriptural reasoning. The most striking thing about the context of scriptural reasoning is not consensus but friendship. To use the word *chevruta* [related to "friendship"] to describe the meeting of Muslims, Jews and Christians is itself surprising, and the actual friendships that are formed through such study do not lessen the surprise. Consensus can be measured and managed, and that to an extent is an appropriate object of a theory like Habermas'. Friendship is altogether more confusing, and even the most sophisticated philosophical accounts of it somehow repeat the absurdity of the hopeless lover who tries to persuade the other to love him by using arguments. Abstract description of friendship is nearly as pointless as thirstily trying to make sense of water. Friendship is nonetheless the true ground of scriptural reasoning, and who can give a good overview of that? The traditions have different understandings of friendship with God, friendship with members of one's own family, one's own tradition and with strangers. Somehow, the recognition that each worships the one true God moves scriptural reasoning beyond an interaction determined by conventions for showing strangers hospitality. Showing strangers hospitality is a significant enough miracle. Yet scriptural reasoning does not quite reproduce this context: when members of three traditions meet together to study shared scripture, who is the

> guest and who is the host? In a way that is difficult to be clear about, the participants in scriptural reasoning all find themselves invited, not by each other, but by an agency that is not theirs to command or shape. There is an "other" to the three traditions, and that seems in an obscure way to make friendships possible.[14]

The picture of a collegiality of intensive study and conversation that emerges from such description might be seen as a boundary-crossing liturgy. This gathers in hospitality and friendship members of academic institutions whose primary communities are synagogue, church and mosque. Its quasi-liturgical character is appropriate, since it is likely that study of scripture which acknowledges the presence of God (variously identified) comes as close to worshipping together as faithful members of these three traditions can come with integrity.

A further question arising from this is about the institutional location of this collegiality of scriptural reasoning.

4. House, Campus and Tent

In the sort of scriptural reasoning I have been discussing,[15] the participants are simultaneously members of a synagogue, church or mosque ("houses"), of a university ("campus"), and of a scriptural reasoning group ("tent"). What is the relation of the tent to the house and campus? They are clearly very different types of location.

4.1. House

The houses are the main homes of the three scriptures and their traditions of interpretation. Synagogues, churches and mosques are of course themselves diverse, not least in how their scriptures are understood and acted upon. Scriptural reasoning has in fact drawn participants from various strands of Islam, Judaism and Christianity, and the setting of interfaith interpretation can open the way for fresh dialogue within each community. Yet it is not part of any of the traditions to engage in joint study of their scriptures with the others. So scriptural reasoning is a complex combination of what is at the core of each tradition with what is novel for each. As with any innovation it needs to be discussed and tested, not least with reference to scripture.

Is there a valid justification for scriptural reasoning from within Judaism, Islam and Christianity? I have heard many, some of them incompatible even within one faith tradition. But the practice of scriptural reasoning can proceed without agreement on its rationale. There are of course some within each tradition who would dispute its validity, but so long as faithful members of each tradition in fact practise it and justify it in tradition-specific ways the presumption must be that it can have a place in relation to each house.

The matter goes deeper than justification of its validity and its permissibility. There is also a case to be made for the positive enhancement of each house. The origins of scriptural reasoning, as recounted above, included a specifically Jewish group of "textual reasoning". This intra-traditional dynamic has been repeated within the other two traditions. There are Muslim quranic reasoning groups and Christian biblical reasoning groups which were begun by those already participating in scriptural reasoning. It is as if the intensity of study and conversation around the three scriptures increases the need of participants for a comparable "in-house" intensity. *Far from interfaith engagement being in competition with involvement in one's own tradition, the depths of one evoke the depths of the other.* So part of the promise of scriptural reasoning is to be a stimulus to "house" members to study and interpret their own scriptures and traditions of interpretation with new energy.

Such renewal need not happen only among those who also take part in scriptural reasoning – for many reasons interfaith study is more restricted in numbers than in-house study and likely to remain so. Scriptural reasoning might be seen as one niche in a house's ecosystem that is more likely to flourish if within other niches there is lively, faithful and thoughtful study of the house's own scripture. "Thoughtful" indicates the presence in each house of traditions of reasoning and argument in relation to their scriptures, and of institutions where there is transgenerational collegiality dedicated to sustaining and developing these. It is especially important that such places are seeking wisdom both within and across their own boundaries.

For those who take part in scriptural reasoning an issue raised by its non-competitive dynamic is about the balance of interfaith and intra-faith study. One way of approaching this is in terms of time. Scriptural reasoning ideally requires a long time at any one session, but that does not mean it has to happen very frequently. This is a matter for discernment within each community. Judging from experience so far, the ideal periodicity of the practice of scriptural reasoning is not that of one's daily in-house scripture-saturated prayer, scripture study/recitation, meditation, and such-like; nor that of one's weekly (or more frequent) gathering for community worship, instruction, and such-like; rather its optimal rhythm seems to be of less frequent meetings, perhaps monthly or quarterly. During its development its main participants met twice or three times a year. Yet, however frequent the meetings, as in most groups the value is proportionate to regularity, which is all the more important if gatherings are seldom.

The other essential feature of a group that meets relatively seldom is the quality of communication between meetings, both within itself and more widely. Here electronic communication has greatly helped. Scriptural reasoning has a website and an electronic journal so that those in the wider community of the houses and campuses can listen in and respond to what is going on; and e-mail ensures that there can also be regular

communication among direct participants. The combination of face to face meetings with electronic interaction produces a new dimension of collegiality uniting "richness" with "reach".[16] As the "houses" too become better networked and alert to such possibilities a practice such as scriptural reasoning has the potential to help those who seek to develop rich scripture study within and across the boundaries of their own house.

4.2. Campus

Just as the "traditional and untraditional" nature of scriptural reasoning tests the character of any mosque, synagogue or church and provokes various responses, so its "scriptural and reasoning" nature is a sensitive matter in universities. If the ideal "house" for scriptural reasoning is one that acknowledges a strong internal justification for this new practice and then uses it to go deeper simultaneously into its own scripture and the scriptures of others, the ideal university in the present state of our complexly "religious and secular" world might be described as "interfaith and secular", a campus where there is shared ground among those of many faiths and none.

I will summarise briefly the rationale for such a university that I have discussed at greater length elsewhere.[17] The model for the modern research university, the University of Berlin founded in 1810, was a renewal and reform of the Medieval university pattern, with a new thrust towards innovation in research, uniting this with teaching in a context of academic freedom. A further and less remarked aspect of Berlin was its "religious and secular" character. There was academic freedom without church control, the state founded, financed and controlled it, and the philosophy faculty with its ideal of *Wissenschaft* was the overarching integrator: all of which justifies its description as secular. It also included theology as an academic discipline not simply subsumable under *Wissenschaft*, it educated clergy for the state church, and it had a good deal of continuity with the religiously-rooted values of the Medieval university, so that it also had a religious character very different from the militantly secular higher education institutions generated by the French Revolution. The Berlin model of a research university uniting *wissenschaftlich* teaching and research across a wide range of disciplines generally won out over the French in the later development of universities in most countries, but its religious and secular character had a more mixed history.

On the one hand, German academic theology and philological and historical research in the field of religion led the world in rigorous thought and *wissenschaftlich* scholarship, and German-speaking universities were the arena for many formative debates about the nature of religion, faith and reason, faith and history, religion and modernity, and so on. On the other hand, the university as a whole tended to become more secularised, and its religious character continued to be limited to Protestant and Catholic strands of Christianity. So, whereas Berlin in 1810 could be seen as

genuinely religious and secular and also responsive to the actual religious character of its society, most of its successors in Germany and around the world (and especially the world-class universities with a global horizon) have failed to sustain either feature: they are predominantly secularist in an ideological sense; and in a multifaith and secular world, where the vast majority of people are directly related to a religious tradition, and where each major religious tradition is in complex relationships with other religions and with secular forces and worldviews, the largely secularised universities are unable to respond academically. They do not on the whole educate people able to engage intelligently in this multifaith and secular world, nor do they foster the high-quality religion-related study and debate across disciplines necessary to make thoughtful critical and constructive contributions to the public sphere or its various dimensions (political, economic, cultural, technological, religious).

Perhaps it is time for a new Berlin-like surprise, enabling the twenty-first century, globally-oriented university to be reformed both in relation to key elements that shape it as an academic institution (interdisciplinarity, the integration of teaching and research, all-round educational formation, collegiality, polity and control, and contribution to society) and also in relation to its hospitality to the religious and the secular together. In this way a plurality of wisdom traditions could contribute to its conversations, deliberations and decisions in the interests of education and research that have a fundamental concern for the long-term flourishing of humanity and its environment.

Yet even without such an ideal comprehensive surprise, there are some universities where the religious and secular dimensions are both taken seriously. They provide conditions where questions raised by the religions, between the religions and about the religions can be pursued through a range of academic disciplines in both critical and constructive ways.[38] Those conditions include above all the creation of an institutional space that might be described as "shared ground" or "mutual ground". It is to be contrasted with both "neutral ground" and "contested ground". Neutral ground is what a secular society or institution often claims to provide in matters of religion. A problem is that the conditions for entering it are usually secular in the sense of requiring particular religious identities to be left behind: norms, concepts and methods have to be justifiable in non-religious terms.[39] Contested ground is where there is no agreement about how to constitute it. Historically, neutral ground is a solution to otherwise irresolvable conflict, especially over religious matters. But the high cost of this has been illustrated above by the ill match between secular universities and our religious and secular world. Neutral ground is best seen as a necessary, temporary but in the long term unsatisfactory solution to the need for places of peaceful engagement that respect the integrity of all participants and encourage them to contribute from the riches of their traditions.

Mutual or shared ground[20] is the preferable solution. It is to be found in various forms in a range of universities, especially in Britain and North America. It is the most congenial space for scriptural reasoning, since it might be seen as a wider version of scriptural reasoning's practice of mutual hospitality. Scriptural reasoning can both benefit from an environment of shared ground and also in its own small way try to enrich it. Its ability to gather Jewish, Muslim and Christian academics from many disciplines into a form of collegiality that is productive in academic as well as other ways can be a sign to secularised universities that academic integrity is not in tension with all forms of religious conviction. Yet it can also easily act as a provocation to those in the university who are still rightly sensitive to the dangers of religious domination, dogmatism and divisiveness. The practice of scriptural reasoning in university settings, even those that offer shared ground, must meet strong challenges from several sides. Can it practice relevant disciplines (which can range through a great many faculties) to the highest standards of the various international "guilds" of academic peers? Can it relate across these disciplines? Can scriptural reasoning be taught well in universities according to appropriate norms and standards? Can it give plausible theoretical accounts of a hermeneutics that critically and constructively draws together the three scriptures and their premodern, modern and late modern traditions of interpretation? Above all, what about its "reasoning"? How does it relate to the *Wissenschaft* that was so important in the founding of the University of Berlin? This ideal has since pluralized in various directions in different fields, though without losing a family resemblance that generally still exerts a strong pressure towards academic accountability in rational terms?

In the course of trying to meet such challenges there are inevitable counter-challenges which the university must meet—it is the character of shared ground that the questioning is mutual. This is sometimes a matter of confronting common academic prejudices and *idées fixes*, such as a modern parochialism that cannot take the premodern seriously in matters of truth, or an incapacity to appreciate intellectual achievement in the area of religious thought, or a failure to respect the large numbers of religious academics who are at least as intelligent, well-educated, sophisticated and critically alert as their secular colleagues, or an insistence on religious and theological positions meeting standards of rationality that are by no means accepted throughout the university, or a blindness to the complexly religious and secular character of our world. It also has potential implications for how disciplines are conceived, researched and taught, especially those that have to do with the religions. And it brings into the seminar room ways of approaching substantive matters, such as God, revelation, the nature of scripture, faith, tradition, ethics, politics, and so on, that can differ greatly from usual approaches.

Overall, scriptural reasoning is a small sign of something more widespread but still contested in the academic world: the emergence of new "religious and secular" settlements that provide mutual ground for exchanges across many boundaries. Whether such ground expands is likely to be the major factor in its university future.[21] But it is important that, for all its flourishing in some university environments, it is not simply assimilable to any university setting or model. It has its own character which will now be described.

4.3. Tent

Academic scriptural reasoning sessions have been carried on in hotels, conference centres, universities, seminaries and private homes. "Tent" is an image for the space of study and conversation wherever they actually happen. It has scriptural resonances of hospitality (cf. Genesis 18) and divine presence (cf. Exodus 40), and with the whole Middle Eastern culture of nomads and desert travel in which the Abrahamic scriptures are rooted. It suggests the fragility of a network of Jews, Muslims and Christians who are part of the well-established structures of houses and campuses but who also gather in this lightly structured setting. It is of a different order to a house or campus, suggesting (at least in our culture) a place that is not one's permanent home, and not in competition with the others as religious or academic institutions.

A tent is also connected with travel between places. This "in-betweenness" is a significant metaphor in various ways for scriptural reasoning. It is concerned with what happens in the interpretative space between the three scriptures; in the social space between mosque, church and synagogue; in the intellectual space between "houses" and "campuses", and between disciplines on the campuses; in the religious and secular space between the houses and the various spheres and institutions of society; and in the spiritual space between interpreters of scripture and God. These are spaces inviting movement in different directions and discouraging permanent resting places, and are suited to the tent's lightness, mobility and even vulnerability. Yet in addition there is resilience and durability in a good tent, and it can be used at short notice and in conditions and locations that are unsuited to large buildings. It also allows for an intimacy of encounter that may be harder to achieve in more institutionalised settings.

A further resonance is with leisure activity. This may seem odd for something that is taken seriously and is the focus for a good deal of work. But it is in line with the appropriately peripheral character of scriptural reasoning within both house and academy. Within the house, as discussed above, studying scriptures with those of other houses can never have the focal importance of studying one's own scriptures. Within the academy, too, scriptural reasoning is non-focal with regard to any particular academic's

field (at least at present).[22] Scriptural reasoning does not encourage anyone to become an "expert" in scriptural reasoning, as if it were possible to know all three scriptures and their traditions of interpretation in a specialist mode. It is an advantage to try to learn each other's languages, both literally (especially Hebrew, Greek and Arabic) and metaphorically (customs, history, traditions of thought and practice, and so on), and it is helpful if some members of one house have made a special study of another house; but none of this is essential for scripture reasoning. The usual pattern is for each to be especially proficient in their own tradition and to be able to "host" discussion of their scripture. But at least one of the other traditions is generally outside one's academic specialty, and so study of that, together with study of all three together, is more like a leisure activity, something peripheral to whatever one writes most of one's books about. This does not mean that books cannot be written about it, but they are likely to be jointly authored or else, like the present article, acutely aware of the limitations of one perspective on something that intrinsically requires at least three perspectives.

Scriptural reasoning's tent can be pitched within the grounds of a house or a campus, but it has to be wary of becoming too much at home there, for different reasons in each case. Within a specific "house"- under the auspices of a church, mosque or synagogue -the obvious danger is of the host inhibiting full mutuality between the three as hosts and guests, since the ground is "owned" by one party. Within a campus there is more possibility of fully mutual ground, though it is probable that for historical reasons any particular university will be weighted towards one or two of the three. There are other possible problems with universities: policy, curricula, appointments and funding are not necessarily in the hands of those who appreciate a practice such as scriptural reasoning; university and even departmental politics can swing in different directions; and universities are not always unselfish enough to share in something that is at home in many places, including some of which they might not completely approve.

For these and other reasons scriptural reasoning has tended not to become too dependent on any particular house or campus, however good the camping there; but it is very young, and, if it continues, new institutional forms more integrated with houses or with campuses or other settings may be generated by it in time.[23]

5. Coping with Superabundant Meaning

When the three scriptures and the traditions of interpretation that they have inspired are put alongside one another one is faced with three unfathomable oceans, three universes of meaning.

Not only that, but beyond the traditions there is a further universe of academic study dedicated to these three scriptures and their histories of

interpretation, drawing on philology, literary theory and criticism, history, theology, philosophy, psychology, psychoanalysis, social anthropology, sociology, political theory and ideology, postcolonial theory, art history, media studies, cultural studies, music, and liturgy.

Not only that, but each of the universes is expanding daily as unprecedented numbers of people in all three traditions (billions worldwide) and beyond them continue to search for meaning in these scriptures and in the responses to them.

Now in addition imagine the possibilities of the three in interaction with each other, and the further infinity of interconnections that open up.

Finally, imagine the three, in interaction with each other, exploring issues in contemporary life, seeking wisdom for each tradition, for the three in their relations with each other, and for the flourishing of our world.

That overwhelming superabundance of meaning is clearly beyond any individual human comprehension, any encyclopaedic mind, or any series of volumes, or computer database. This is not just because of the problem of sheer quantity. Much of the meaning—the interconnecting that is only possible for a well-trained memory and mind, the making of judgements that have taken into account an appropriate range of factors, the discernment that grows out of years of prayer and meditation, the capacity for self-awareness and self-critique that require spiritual as well as intellectual maturity, the immersion in community life that shapes a sense of what rings true, the education in a discipline that has accumulated and tested learning over centuries—is embodied in people who have been formed over long periods, and whose way of understanding is inseparable from who they are. Even such people can only begin to cope with the abundance if they are in sustained collegial relationships with each other. Further, the essential responsibility towards the future is only possible if the collegiality includes apprenticeships across generations. So a necessary condition for coping is groups and networks of people of different generations who embody vital dimensions of the seeking and finding of meaning. The most vital of all these dimensions is that of living, wise embodiment of the core identities of Islam, Judaism and Christianity. This is the most obvious and simple reason for the impossibility of overviews or comprehensive expertise: no one can live and think bearing more than one of these core identities at the same time.

Within this collegiality, how is the abundance coped with? The basic way is through each coming with their scriptures and "internal libraries" and engaging in reading, listening and interpretation in conversation with the others. Within that I would identify in particular three fundamental and coinherent elements.

5.1. Plain Sense with Midrash

The first task of an interpreter of scripture is to try to do justice to its plain sense. There is of course much discussion about what the plain sense is, but

the sorts of things that need to be taken into consideration are the manuscript evidence; the lexical meanings of words in their semantic fields; the significance of syntax, figures of speech, genres, contexts, and resonances with other texts; sequences and habits of thought and expression; the relation of sense to reference; implicit presuppositions; and (most complex of all) different ways of construing and relating those things in different strands of the tradition and in the various schools and disciplines of interpretation today.

The latter points to the insufficiency of the plain sense in certain crucial respects. Its polyvalence, surplus of meaning and openness to multiple interpretations frequently generate an abundance of possibilities. This laying out of many interpretations may be sufficient if one's interest is phenomenological, surveying these fascinating possibilities without concern for any current relevance or application. But, if one believes that these texts can be retrieved as sources for understanding and living today (and scriptural reasoning includes at least three sets of people who do believe that about their own scriptures), and that that involves the search for their contemporary meaning and the risk of application, then more is required. One Jewish way of naming this "more" that has been the topic of much discussion in scriptural reasoning is "midrash", and Christian and Muslim traditions have their equivalents of this.[24] Midrash is the discovery of a sense for the time and place of the interpreter.

Midrash can seem idiosyncratic, an improvisation on the text that may seem to maintain only a tenuous relation to its plain sense. But in any scriptural tradition it is unavoidable if the meaning of the text is to be "performed" today. Its combination of recognition of the plain sense with discernment of an applied sense is at the heart of what I call a wisdom interpretation of scripture.[25] This is the central way in which scriptural reasoning copes with the abundance of meaning: by trying to take as much as possible of it into account, by always giving priority (as Judaism, Christianity and Islam traditionally do) to the plain sense, and by risking a contemporary extended, midrashic sense that has emerged out of wisdom-seeking conversation across traditions and disciplines. This contemporary sense is a performance of interpretation for now. It does not seek to be normative knowledge or to be the only valid interpretation or to be demonstrable and invulnerable; rather it seeks to be wise. It is not so much about mapping the ocean (though maps help) as about diving in search of the pearl of a deep sense that rings true now.

5.2. Theory

Midrash copes with the abundance of meaning through first-order interpretation, seeking to improvise wise contemporary senses of specific texts. A complementary, second-order strategy is the development of theory. Indeed one might say that as midrash has been the characteristic outcome

of the small *chevruta*-style text-study scriptural reasoning groups, so theory has been the typical product of plenary sessions. The larger setting is less suited to close study of texts, but better at trying to distil into concepts and theories a second-order description of what has gone on in a number of smaller groups and discussing their wider connections and implications.

Theory, often closely connected with particular philosophies, theologies, social sciences or natural sciences, is also prominent in published writings on scriptural reasoning. The second-order "moment" of concepts interconnected in theory is suited to written presentation—such as most of the essays in the present issue. On the other hand, it is extremely hard to do justice in print to the complex oral exchanges of small groups studying three scriptures at once, and even harder for one person to do so. An early draft of the present article attempted to give an example of scriptural reasoning focussed on texts from Tanakh, Bible and Quran that had been discussed during a five-day conference. It faced some problems that in combination I judged to be insuperable. The chief one was the impossibility of condensing hours of discussion (often apparently fragmented or centrifugal) around these texts into anything that would fit in an article. A second problem was that the oral character of the exchanges, together with their context in the biographies of the members, in the history of the group and in all the other things that were going on in the conference (including a good deal of theoretical and political discussion) repeatedly made specific interpretations, if reproduced in writing, seem not only bare but even misleading. They cried out for "thick" description, for substantial annotation, for explanation, and for sensitive characterisation of each "voice" if justice were to be done to what had actually gone on. It is not surprising that there has been considerable discussion among those taking part in scriptural reasoning about the importance of developing forms of rich, multidimensional description and the use of social (or cultural) anthropology to assist in this. A third problem was that I became acutely aware that my account of the discussion around these texts was that of a certain Christian interpreter and needed to be complemented by accounts from the other participants—this would be possible, but not in the space available here.

So I decided not to try to give an example of actual text interpretation, and to remain content for now with introducing scriptural reasoning from various angles. The practical conclusion is not that it is impossible to be more descriptive but that it is not possible now in the genre of an article; therefore as scriptural reasoning continues there needs to be more work on appropriate forms of description. But even so, as regards actually learning scriptural reasoning, one should not have too high expectations of such work. It is in the nature of an intensive, dialogical social practice that it is best learnt by initiation into the group followed by apprenticeship.

What might be an appropriate fixed form for presenting conversation around these three sets of texts? The printed page is especially limited—it

is stretched to its limits in presenting the rabbinic debates around scripture in the Talmud, which are probably the nearest traditional equivalent to scriptural reasoning—and they are only coping with one scriptural "ocean of meaning". It may be that an interactive electronic medium with the possibility of pursuing several different lines of thought from the one word or verse (as through hypertext) and of holding on screen several text boxes, any of which can be searched with reference to the other (and variant translations called up at will), would do better, not least because it might be able to draw users into the creative process rather than just reproducing one past instance of it. But, like Talmud, any attempt to reproduce the results of face to face interplay is likely to be difficult, underdetermined, and in need of long apprenticeship in order to follow the allusions, moves and leaps. One is reminded of Plato on the dangers and disadvantages of writing over against live conversation: a writing cannot respond to questions and cannot adapt to particular audiences, and so is inferior to oral διαλεγεσθαι (*dialegesthai*—conversation, dialogue or dialectic).[26] But it can present sets of interconnected ideas well.

Theory's second-order discourse is also relatively well suited to the individual authorship that is the norm in specialist academic publishing in theology, philosophy and other arts and humanities subjects. Again, Plato is instructive. His earlier works were fully dialogical, trying to catch the dynamics of Socrates in conversation. After the *Phaedrus* the dialogue form is minimal, the readers for whom his works are written seem to be philosophers or trainee philosophers and the theoretical sophistication of the works increases. For Plato, philosophy was learned and developed through face to face conversation in the context of a whole way of life, and his later writings are aids to that process rather than attempts to produce a literary imitation of it in dialogue form.[27] In the centuries that followed, the living heart of his philosophical tradition was the conversational teaching of the Academy in Athens.

With regard to scriptural reasoning, this underlines the emphasis above on its collegiality; and, while it reduces any expectation that it will be done justice by theoretical accounts, it also makes theory modestly complementary to discussion of scripture. The unreproducible density and dynamics of conversation in small groups gathered around scriptural texts may be central to its practice and to the quality of its collegial scriptural wisdom, but that quality also needs the contribution of theory to sustain intellectual rigour and creativity.

At the beginning the most influential theoretical contribution was Peter Ochs' use of C. S. Peirce's semiotics and relational logic, and that has continued to be a fruitful resource.[28] It has Christian counterparts in Oliver Davies[29] and Chad Pecknold[30] and a Muslim appropriation is seen in Basit Koshul, who also draws on the social theory of Max Weber and the philosophy of Mohammed Iqbal.[31] Nicholas Adams has engaged in critical

discussion with Jürgen Habermas in dialogue with German Idealist philosophy from Kant to Schelling and Hegel,[32] while Randi Rashkover has given theoretical consideration to the original Jewish-Christian dimension to scriptural reasoning.[33] Other important theoretical contributions have been made by Gavin Flood, Timothy Winter, Ben Quash, Robert Gibbs and Daniel Hardy.[34]

Such variety shows the capacity of scriptural interpretation to stimulate conceptual thinking in dialogue with pragmatism, idealism, phenomenology, social theory, legal theory, scientific theory, ethical theory, philosophy of language, philosophy of history, systems thinking, feminist theory, and hermeneutical philosophy. The very diversity also resists any theoretical overview—there can be no overall master theory where so many conceptual descriptions and analyses engage with each other. The intersection of such theoretical accounts also intensifies the conversation around scriptural texts and their implications.

So the effort to "make deep reasoning public" (Adams, above) simultaneously leads deep into scriptures and deep into theories, interweaving premodern and modern discourses.

5.2. Analogous Wisdoms

A further dimension of coping with the superabundance of meaning is the relating of these mutually informing discourses of theory and scriptural interpretation (plain sense and midrash) to their practical implications in various spheres of life—which is, of course, a leading concern of the rabbinic sages in their midrash and of comparable strands in Christianity and Islam. The condition for wise Abrahamic practicality is that each tradition allows itself to have its own wisdom questioned and transformed in engagement with the others. This means recognising them as analogous wisdoms with the potential of worthwhile interplay.

Collegial wisdom-seeking by Jews, Christians and Muslims can go on in other ways than through conversation around their scriptures, but considering each scripture is essential to any wisdom that might claim to be in line with each tradition. Above all, attention to the scriptures helps ensure that emergent wisdom is related to God and God's purposes in history and for the future. Within scriptural reasoning perhaps nothing has been theologically more fundamental than the threefold sense that study and interpretation are happening in the presence of God and for the sake of God, in the midst of the contingencies and complexities of a purposeful history, and in openness to God's future and for the sake of God's purposes. Yet precisely in the understanding of God, history and eschatology lie some of the most profound and stubborn differences—the Christian description of which is in terms of God as Trinity, and an account of creation, history and the future in which Jesus Christ is both central and ultimate.

How might this situation of radical differences with regard to analogous categories be coped with wisely? Christian participants in Scriptural reasoning have not found it helpful to concentrate on arriving at doctrinal agreement with Jews and Muslims on the Trinity, christology and eschatology (or at agreement on analogously distinctive Jewish or Muslim beliefs and practices). That is not only virtually inconceivable but may in most contexts be an unwise path, leading deep into the marshes created by centuries of misunderstandings and polemics. A well-worn path into interfaith cul de sacs is to focus on "secure disagreements" which complacently reinforce the identity of each with minimal mutual exploration, learning or challenge. Rather, what has been found fruitful is continual engagement with the scriptures that have contributed both to such doctrines and to the shaping of a whole way of life (with worship, ethics, institutions and so on). This can lead to conversation and understanding that do not ignore the disagreements but also do not get stuck in them. Ways of handling fundamental disputes can be worked out, essential to which is each tradition trying to discern and share its own wisdom of dispute. And intrinsic to that discernment is the wise interpretation of scripture. That is an urgent quest within each tradition and one that can benefit from both of the others.

6. *Scriptural Reasoning in the Public Sphere*

Finally, a brief word about the possibilities of scriptural reasoning in the public sphere. The main point is an extension of what was said about scriptural reasoning in universities—which might indeed be considered part of the public sphere. Once it is recognised that we are in a multi-faith and secular world and that secular worldviews and principles have no right to monopolise the public sphere in the name of neutrality, then we need ways of forming the sort of "mutual ground" that allows each tradition to contribute from their core belief, understanding and practice. That requires many bilateral and multilateral engagements, and among those is trilateral dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims. Earlier sections have described scriptural reasoning as allowing rich and deep encounter that both does justice to differences and also forms strong relationships across them. It is a new collegiality that might have an impact on the public world in several ways: by being a sign of reconciliation; by being a site where Jews, Christians and Muslims can work out in dialogue the considerable ethical and political implications of their scriptures; and by encouraging analogous practices among Jews, Christians and Muslims in positions of public responsibility.

Secularised societies have generally failed to mobilise religious resources for public wisdom and for peace. Religions have often reacted against them, faced with a choice between assimilation or confrontation. But there

is another possibility: mutually critical engagement among all the participants aimed at transforming the public sphere for the better.[35] For Jews, Christians and Muslims committed to this the best way forward is through simultaneously going deeper into their own scriptures and traditions, deeper into wisdom-seeking conversation with each other and with all who have a stake in the public good, and deeper into activity dedicated to the common good. So one promise of scriptural reasoning is the formation of people through collegial study, wise interpretation and friendship who might be exemplary citizens of the twenty-first century, seeking the public good for the sake of God and God's peaceful purposes.

NOTES

1 Nicholas Adams, "Scriptural Difference and Scriptural Reasoning"—chapter 11 in the forthcoming *Habermas and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), available on-line at http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals/jsrforum/writings/AdaHabe.html; Peter Ochs, "Reading Scripture Together in Sight of Our Open Doors", *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* Vol. XXVI, no. 1, new series (2005), pp. 36–47; Aref Ali Nayed, "Reading Scripture Together: Towards a Sacred Hermeneutics of Togetherness", *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* Vol. XXVI, no. 1, new series (2005), pp. 48–53; Basit Bilal Koshul, "Affirming the self through accepting the Other" in *Scriptures in Dialogue: Christians and Muslims Studying the Bible and the Qur'an Together*, edited by Michael Ipgrave (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), pp. 111–118; Randi Rashkover, "Cultivating Theology: Overcoming America's Skepticism about Religious Rationality", *Cross Currents* Vol. 55, No. 2 (June 2005), pp. 241–251; C. C. Pecknold, *Transforming Postliberal Theology: George Lindbeck, Pragmatism, and Scripture* (New York and London: T. & T. Clark/Continuum, 2005); Ben Quash, "Holy Seeds: The Trisagion and the Liturgical Untilling of Time" in *Liturgy, Time, and the Politics of Redemption*, edited by C. C. Pecknold and Randi Rashkover (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006). For further resources, see also the web-site of the *Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* Forum at http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals/jsrforum/.

2 For the best account of textual reasoning by participants and commentators, see *Textual Reasonings*, edited by Peter Ochs and Nancy Levene (London: SCM Press, 2002).

3 In the early years they used "postmodern" in self-description, but as that term has become overused and ceased to have much specific meaning they have tended to drop it. My own preferred term for the modernity that has been traumatised by the Shoah and other twentieth century horrors and disasters is "late modernity", with "chastened modernity" for those aspects of it that have tried best to learn from the twentieth century.

4 Cf. Peter Ochs, "Reading Scripture Together in Sight of Our Open Doors".

5 For a good gathering of the types of thinking that fed into this pre-history of scriptural reasoning see *The Return to Scripture in Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Postcritical Scriptural Interpretation*, edited by Peter Ochs (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993).

6 Randi Rashkover, *Revelation and Theopolitics*.

7 This grew out of a course on "Kant and Scripture".

8 For a Jewish account of Christian theological engagement with Judaism that includes discussion of various strands that have fed into scriptural reasoning see Peter Ochs, "Judaism and Christian Theology" in *The Modern Theologians. An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, edited by David F. Ford with Rachel Muers, third edition, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 645–662.

9 Out of these have grown a variety of elements, including: a unit in the programme of the annual meeting of the AAR, groups in various parts of the world, a grassroots body called the Children of Abraham Institute (CHAI), the online *Journal of Scriptural Reasoning*, a research group based at the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton focussing on

medieval scriptural interpretation in Judaism, Islam and Christianity, a scriptural reasoning programme at St. Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation in London, postgraduate programmes in the University of Virginia, contributions to interfaith gatherings in Qatar, South Africa, Karachi, London, Durham, Berlin, Georgetown, and much else--cf. the article introducing Scriptural Reasoning in *Christian Century* by Jeffrey W. Bailey, forthcoming 2006.

10 *Chevruta* (fellowship) study is an ancient rabbinic method of studying Jewish texts that continues into the present. By engaging with a text in very small group settings, students learn through interaction both with the text and with each other. The method not only facilitates and deepens their education, but can also forge and strengthen relationships among students. The traditional setting for *chevruta* study was the *yeshivah*, a Jewish institution for the advanced study of religious texts. In scriptural reasoning the usual group size is between six and nine, allowing for two to three members of each faith tradition.

11 The other main types so far have been among Jews, Christians and Muslims from congregations (who may or may not have academic training) and among academics who include Jews, Christians, Muslims and others (usually specialists in one of the scriptures or traditions).

12 In plenary discussion at a scriptural reasoning conference in Cambridge, June 2003. Cf. Aref Ali Nayed, "Reading Scripture Together: Towards a Sacred Hermeneutics of Togetherness".

13 In a situation, such as the second one described in the previous note, in which some participants are not in any sense members of one of the three faith communities, scriptural reasoning is only likely to work well if those in this fourth category, together with those who are Jewish, Muslim or Christian, conform to certain norms, such as imaginative understanding and respect for how the others take their scriptures, willingness to be as vulnerable as the others in exposing their basic convictions to argument, and unwillingness to claim either an overview or a neutral vantage point.

14 Nicholas Adams, from chapter 11 of *Habermas and Theology*.

15 Cf. note 11 above on other types.

16 The Jewish textual reasoning group has drawn on Jewish traditional resources to think about the significance of their intensive electronic interaction with each other, seeing it as a form of "oral Torah".

17 Cf. David F. Ford, "Faith and Universities in a Religious and Secular World (1)", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* Vol. 81, no. 2 (2005), pp. 83–91 and "Faith and Universities in a Religious and Secular World (2)", *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* Vol. 81, no. 3 (2005), pp. 97–106.

18 For a brief account of the field of theology and religious studies in such a setting see David F. Ford, *Theology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 2000), especially Chapters 1 and 2; for a discussion of the field with reference to several countries and types of institution, see *Fields of Faith. Theology and Religious Studies in the Twenty-first Century*, edited by David F. Ford, Ben Quash and Janet Martin Soskice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

19 Cf. *Fields of Faith*, Part 1 "The End of the Enlightenment's Neutral Ground"; also Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003) for a secular critique of the neutral public sphere in the United States.

20 See *Fields of Faith*, Part II "Meetings on Mutual Ground" and the perceptive discussion by Nicholas Adams, Oliver Davies and Ben Quash in *ibid*. Chapter 13 "Fields of faith: an experiment in the study of theology and the religions".

21 For the sake of brevity I have not covered a range of other institutional settings where scriptural reasoning can be practised, such as seminaries (some of which are closely related to or even integrated with universities), or institutions with Muslim, Jewish and Christian chaplaincy but no academic study of religion or theology. Each raises issues which require discussion with reference to their specific conditions.

22 It is of course possible to imagine it as an academic specialty in which one person might fill an academic post devoted to it. This would require a careful job description to avoid the impossible demand for threefold expertise, and the ideal would be a team of at least three.

23 Historical parallels would suggest that a driver of new forms is likely to be divisions among scriptural reasoners leading to different schools of thought and varying relationships with religious communities, universities and other settings.
24 For a Jewish understanding of midrash in relation to scriptural reasoning see Ochs, "Reading Scripture Together in Sight of Our Open Doors". On Muslim interpretation see Aref Ali Nayed, "Reading Scripture Together: Towards a Sacred Hermeneutics of Togetherness".
25 Cf. David F. Ford, "Reading Scripture with Intensity: Academic, Ecclesial, Interfaith, and Divine", *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* Vol. XXVI no. 1, new series (2005), pp. 22–35.
26 Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 275C, 257D, 275E, 276C, 277D.
27 Cf. Charles H. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue. The philosophical use of a literary form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 376–392.
28 See Peter Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism and the Logic of Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and "Scriptural Logic: Diagrams for a Postcritical Metaphysics", *Modern Theology* Vol. 11, no. 1 (January, 1995), pp. 65–92.
29 Oliver Davies, "The Sign Redeemed: A Study in Christian Fundamental Semiotics", *Modern Theology* Vol. 19, no. 2 (April, 2003), pp. 219–241; *The Creativity of God: World, Eucharist, Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), especially chapters 2, 4, 5, 6; for reference to scriptural reasoning see e.g. p. 121.
30 C. C. Pecknold, *Transforming Postliberal Theology*.
31 Basit Bilal Koshul, "Studying the Western Other, Understanding the Islamic Self: A Qur'anically Reasoned Perspective", *Iqbal Review* Vol. 46, no. 2/4 (April & October, 2005), special issue, pp. 149–174.
32 Nicholas Adams, *Habermas and Theology*.
33 Randi Rashkover, *Revelation and Theopolitics*.
34 Cf. the following essays in this special issue *The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning*: Flood, "The Phenomenology of Scripture"; Timothy Winter, "Quranic Reasoning as an Academic Practice"; Quash, "Heavenly Semantics: Some literary-critical approaches to scriptural reasoning"; Robert Gibbs, "Reading with Others: Levinas' Ethic and Scriptural Reasoning"; and Daniel Hardy, "The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning", on the way these can be understood together.
35 Potential contributions to a Stout-like public space might be found in such works as: Peter Ochs, "Abrahamic Theo-politics: A Jewish View" in the *Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, edited by William Cavanaugh and Peter Scott (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003); Adams, "Scriptural Difference and Scriptural Reasoning"; C. C. Pecknold, "Democracy and the Politics of the Word: Stout and Hauerwas on Democracy and Scripture", *Scottish Journal of Theology* Vol. 59, no. 2 (2006), pp. 1–12; Robert Gibbs, "The Rules of Scriptural Reasoning", *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* Vol. 2, no. 1 (May, 2002), available on-line at http://etext.virginia.edu/journals/ssr/issues/volume2/number1/ssr02-01-gr01.html, and Robert Gibbs, *Why Ethics?: Signs of Responsibilities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Mike Higton, *Christ, Providence and History: Hans W. Frei's Public Theology* (New York and London: T. & T. Clark/Continuum, 2004); Randi Rashkover, *Revelation and Theopolitics*; and cf. the article introducing Scriptural Reasoning in *Christian Century* by Jeffrey W. Bailey, forthcoming 2006.