JOHN HILL CSSR, *Constructing Exile: The Emergence of a Biblical Paradigm* (Cascade Books: Eugene, Oregon, 2020). Pp. x + 128. Paperback. US$21/£16/AU$21.

John Hill states that the aim of his book is to trace the development of exile as a paradigm in Israel's tradition and beyond. Hill's understanding of paradigm is based on that of Jacob Neusner who states that "it consists of generalizations concerning the human situation, patterns of conduct and consequence, and the paradigm governs present and past without distinction" (117). The Babylonian conquest and exile was, in modern parlance, a traumatic experience; something shocking, new or "unknown." Human beings respond to trauma by relating it to the "known"; for Israel these were its established traditions and customs. According to Hill, responses commenced soon after the conquest and continued into the period after Persia conquered Babylon, established the province of Judah or Yehud, and allowed exiles in Babylon to return. This process continued into the NT period.

In Chap. 3 Hill comments on texts that he judges record initial responses to the trauma. There were two main types; those that express grief, mourning and confusion, and those that seek an explanation for the disaster. The former are most likely the earliest responses, the prime example being the Book of Lamentations. While its first four chapters are in acrostic form and therefore display some order, this collapses in the final chapter. The book ends with a plea to Yhwh, wracked by uncertainty. Lamentations and other texts judged to be early, such as Jeremiah's sermon to refugees in Egypt in Chap. 44, indicate a tendency to blame God. In contrast, the Former Prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, laid the blame for the catastrophe squarely on the people and their rulers. The most serious accusation in such books was the people switching allegiance from Yhwh to other gods who would be more reliable providers.

While these books claimed that Yhwh summoned the Babylonians to devastate the Davidic kingdom of Judah for its infidelities, the fact that the people continued to live in Babylon and other diaspora locations raised the question what Yhwh had in store for them. According to Hill this prompted three distinct responses; namely assimilation, separation and confrontation (cf. Chap. 4). An example of the first is Jeremiah's letter to the exiles in Babylon in Chap. 29; examples of the second are a number of proposed priestly (P) texts in the Pentateuch, in particular Gen 1:1–2:4a; examples of the third are parodies of Babylonian deities in the so-called "Second-Isaiah" such as 44:9–20 and 47:1–6. These varying responses presumably interacted with one another, as well as with the expressions of mourning and grief.

The rise of Persia and its conquest of Babylon prompted further reflection about Judah's destiny. According to Hill, texts associated with this are the prophecies of return and restoration in Second-Isaiah, Jeremiah 31–34, Ezekiel 33–37 and 40–48, as well as texts in other prophetic books and in the Torah. He astutely

notes that these offer a variety of divine motives for restoration; for Second-Isaiah it was Yhwh's compassion for the people and their suffering, for Ezekiel it was to reveal to Israel and the nations that Yhwh alone "is Lord." Exiles did in due course return to their land but now as part of the Persian empire, which lasted much longer than the neo-Babylonian one it replaced. Texts that Hill in Chap. 5 links to this period are Haggai, Zechariah 1–8, Ezra and Nehemiah. But although these speak of restoration, in his estimation they reflect the reality that Judah's existence after the fall of Babylon was still one of servitude—to Persia.

In Chap. 6 Hill undertakes to "explore those situations that gave rise to the belief that the exile had not yet ended" (88). Key texts here are the so-called 'Third Isaiah,' aspects of the MT of Jeremiah, and the late books of Daniel and Baruch. Third Isaiah was addressed to a community that, like the early exiles, was in grief and mourning but, in this case, it was not over loss of land, city and temple, but over the failure of the promises of restoration to be realised. The impression these texts convey is that, although the community was living in post-exilic Persian Yehud, its experience was no different, or little different, from being in exile. In short, the exile has not ended. Hill's concluding chapter, Chap. 7, traces the emerging paradigm of "unended exile" in the Gospels and in the corresponding period in Judaism, in particular its account of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE by Roman forces and its aftermath. Thus, the paradigm of exile enabled Jews and Christians to interpret events in their respective periods.

Hill provides a clear and concise analysis of relevant texts, and his thesis of how Israel gradually transformed the historical trauma of the Babylonian conquest and exile into a meaningful paradigm is persuasive. An additional contribution of this book is that it shows how the paradigm provided, and continues to provide, a way for Jews and Christians to respond to and explain issues that inevitably accompany the collapse of fundamental value systems. To do all this in 118 pages is an impressive achievement.

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