man heart became a genuine possibility.

See also Atonement, Day of; Covenant; Creation; Decalogue; Election; Faith; Fall; Grace; Holy and Holiness, Clean and Unclean; Image of God; Law; Messiah; Promises, Divine; Repentance; Sacrifices and Offerings; Sin, Guilt; Theophany.


J. N. Oswalt

THEOMACHY. See Creation.

THEOPHANY

A theophany may be defined simply as a visible manifestation of God, a self-disclosure of the deity. The word does not occur in the OT or NT but is a theological word formed by the combination of two Greek words, theos (“god”) and phainein (“to appear”). Thus theophany refers to an appearance of God. The Greek word was actually used in nonbiblical literature to refer to the displaying of images of gods at a festival at Delphi. In the OT the Niphal of the verb r h (“to see”) frequently occurs in the context of a theophany with the meaning “to appear” (Lev 9:23; Num 14:10; 16:19, 42 [MT 17:7]; 20:6).

As theophanies are normally understood to be temporary manifestations of God, many scholars maintain that they are restricted to the OT, since the NT understanding of the incarnation of Christ removes any need for further visible manifestation of God.

1. Theophany and Theology
2. Types of Theophanies
3. Ancient Near Eastern Background
4. Theophanies and Old Testament Contexts
5. Manner of Manifestation
6. Characteristics of Theophanies
7. Human Reaction to Theophany
8. The Form of Theophany Accounts
9. Theophany and the Angel of the Lord
10. Theophany and the New Testament

1. Theophany and Theology.

Since God is understood to be different and distinct from his creation (i.e., *holy), he is in no means limited by it (1 Kings 8:27; Ps 139; Amos 9:2-4). Thus when he appears in theophanies he in essence limits himself to specific and particular forms within the context of the *creation he has made.

Theophany should be regarded as one of the means whereby God reveals himself to humanity. Whereas God’s special revelation may be di-
Theophany

vided into the broad categories of word and deed, God's revelatory deeds occur as either theophany or miracle. A theophany is a form of divine revelation wherein God's presence is made visible (or revealed in a *dream) and is recognizable to humanity.

2. Types of Theophanies.
Theophanies occur in various ways in the OT. These include (1) a direct message (Ex 19:9-25); (2) a message in a dream (Gen 20:3-7; 28:12-17); (3) a message in a vision (Gen 15:1-21; Is 6:1-13; Ezek 1—3; 8:1-4); (4) a message by an angel (Gen 16:7-13; 18:1-33; 22:11-18; 32:24-30; Ex 3:2—4:17; Josh 5:13-15; Judg 2:1-5; 6:11-24; 13:2-25); and (5) a message by an angel in a dream (Gen 31:11-13). Some OT theologians, such as W. Eichrodt and G. Davies, would eliminate the category of dreams from the list of theophanies, since the manifestation of God is not a physical reality but takes place only in the mind of the dreamer. Yet the broader definition that includes any manner in which God chooses to reveal himself seems to be the safest way to approach the subject.

2.1. Theophany and Covenant.
J. J. Niehaus has isolated reasons God appeared in theophanic glory in conjunction with his *covenant relationship with the nation of Israel. First, God appeared to initiate the covenant. This occurs in Genesis with reference to creation (Gen 1:1—2:3), in Genesis 15 with relation to *Abraham and in Exodus 3—4; 19 with relation to *Moses and the nation of Israel at large. Second, God appeared to instruct, or correct, his covenant partner. We find an example of this manner of manifestation in Joshua 5:13-15 with the angelic appearance to Joshua and in 1 Kings 18:20-40 to illustrate his power to the nation. Third, God appeared in theophany to commission or encourage a prophet (Is 6; Ezek 1; 1 Kings 19:9-18). Fourth, God appeared to the nation to bring covenantal judgment on his rebellious subjects. This would include his intervention after the *Fall of humanity (Gen 3:8-19) as well as the judgment on *Nadab and Abihu (Lev 9:23—10:2).

2.2. Theophany in Pagan Religion. The nonoccurrence of God's appearing in the form of an animal in the OT is related to the avoidance of any association of Israelite worship with paganism. It was customary in the ancient Near Eastern cultures, particularly in Egypt, for a god to be associated with an animal form. Thus this distinction was in part related to Israel's call to be holy, distinct from the world and the surrounding nations.

3. Ancient Near Eastern Background.
The notion that a supernatural being or god could reveal himself or herself to humanity was generally accepted not only in the ancient Near East but also in the Hellenistic world during the OT and NT eras. In the ancient world the attribution of human victories and defeats to the action of gods and goddesses was a common phenomenon. These engagements by the gods in human military conflicts required theophanic language. The use of theophanic language was naturally and frequently extended to favored monarchs who went to battle against rebellious vassals.

3.1. Glory and Theophany. Mesopotamian epics frequently refer to the “glory” (melammu) of the gods as part of the military armament used to defeat their enemies and thus demonstrate their power. This is analogous to the “glory” (kabod) or glory-cloud (see Ex 24:16) of the Lord, which also was seen to be a manifestation of power and strong enough to destroy anyone who should gaze upon it. This form of the divine presence was manifested at the ratification of the covenant at Sinai and represented God appearing as a witness to his covenant with his people. A good case can be made for identifying this form of the divine presence with the appearance of the Spirit of God at creation in Genesis 1:2 as well as at Pentecost at the ratification of the new covenant in Acts 2. The glory of God is also associated with God’s “face” (panim, Ex 33:18-20).

3.2. Thunderstorm and Theophany. In contrast to both Mesopotamian and Canaanite traditions, in Israel God was not associated in theophany with beneficent phenomena of nature (e.g., rivers, trees, and the sun and moon) but rather with those natural forces that often terrify people, such as the lightning flash, the dark thundercloud or the raging storm—all aspects of a majestic thunderstorm. While data from the ancient Near East may suggest that covenant relationships between gods and humans did exist, there is no evidence that a covenant relationship of this form was initiated with the god appearing in a storm theophany. This is all the more striking, as many ancient Near Eastern traditions did portray gods as in some sense cre-
ators. This uniquely distinguishes the Sinaitic covenant from the other covenants of the ancient Near East.

4. Theophanies and Old Testament Contexts. Many of the OT theophanies occur in the Pentateuch, particularly in the patriarchal narratives and Exodus, but they also appear in the conquest events, as well as in Judges. Theophanies also occur in prophetic literature, often in association with the prophetic call of the individual prophet to service.

4.1. Patriarchal Narratives. In the patriarchal narratives the theophanies of the Lord are accompanied by the announcement of divine promises. These theophanies were not spirit appearances but specific temporary manifestations that were not accompanied by the frequent outbursts of nature in earthquakes, fire, cloud, wind, thunder and smoke, such as occurred in the Sinai theophany. The patriarchs normally responded to these appearances by erecting an *altar (Gen 12:7; 26:24-25; 28:12-19; 35:1-15).

4.2. Sinai Theophany. Later during the exodus-conquest period, Sinai and the ark of the covenant dominate the biblical narratives. The Sinai theophany was accompanied by cataclysmic events, although it is emphasized that when God spoke to Moses no form was seen (Deut 4:12, 15). The revelation of God to Moses and then to the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai was the watershed event in Israelite history and as such marked a change in the way God would manifest himself in theophanies. Up to this point in time God had manifested himself to the individual patriarchs, but now with the creation of the nation of Israel and the establishment of the *tabernacle, the special dwelling place of God, God’s appearances would usually be connected with the ark or the tabernacle. In essence, the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle became a portable Sinai. The martial character of the Sinai theophany was evident not only in the cloud in the battle of the sea (Ex 14:19-29) but also in the assembling of Israel in military companies by tribe, and in the march from the mountain by tribes following the divine warrior. The pillars of cloud and fire and the other heightened forms of natural phenomena at Sinai were understood to be sense-perceptible representations of God’s presence (Ex 13:21-22; 14:19-20, 24). “The cloud” (with the definite article; Ex 24:15-18; 40:33-38; Num 9:15-23) referred to the tabernacling presence of God, as did “the name.” This pillar or glory filled the holy of holies at the dedication of the Mosaic tabernacle and rested between the cherubim on the cover of the ark (Ex 25:22; 40:34-38). Later, during the monarchy, the temple in Jerusalem and the Temple Mount of Zion were viewed as the special place of God’s presence among the people. The same glory of the Lord entered Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 8:11).

5. Manner of Manifestation. The different writers of the OT portrayed the appearances of the Lord in various yet remarkably similar ways. Sometimes the Lord appeared as a man, sometimes as or in the person of “the angel of the Lord.” Frequently the phrase “glory of the Lord” is used to describe a theophany (e.g., Ex 24:16-18). Similarly the phrase “pillar of cloud” occurs in Exodus 33:9 to mark a theophanous appearance on Mount Sinai.

5.1. Concealment of God in Theophany. While the essential characteristic of every theophany is the appearance of God, in every theophany God’s power must be held in check. Whenever the Lord reveals himself, he also conceals himself. The reason for this is the recognized danger to the one who gazes on God’s appearance. In an encounter with God or one of his envos, the survival motif is constant. The reason for the concealment certainly is related to the idea of God’s holiness. The concealment often took the form of a thick, dark cloud. This understanding is reflected in the first appearance of the angel of the Lord, when the angel appeared to Hagar. Hagar asked, “Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?” (Gen 16:7-13; cf. Judg 6:22-23). A possible consequence of having a visual perception of God was the danger of forming a “graven image,” if even only a mental one (Ex 20:4).

5.2. Freedom of God. The various ways in which God revealed himself is an indication of his freedom. He could use fire, thunder, lightning, his Spirit or his angel to reveal his presence, but all are to be equally understood as genuine revelations of God.


6.1. Divine Initiation. A prevalent characteris-
tic of all OT theophanies is their divine initiation. This feature distinguishes theophanies in the Bible from those alleged to occur in pagan societies that resulted from persistent and strenuous efforts (1 Kings 18).

6.2. Temporary. Another common feature of the theophanies is that they are always temporary. Theophanies are always transient manifestations and are to be distinguished from the ongoing testimony of the existence of God through nature (Rom 1:19-20). The temporary nature of the theophanies is related to their purpose. After the purpose of the theophany is accomplished, the divine appearance ceases. Perhaps the best example of this is Mount Sinai, where God met with Moses alone and then appeared to him after the exodus among the Israelites. Subsequent to the Mosaic period we hear nothing of manifestations of God from Mount Sinai.

6.3. Holy Space. God imparted holiness where and for how long the theophany lasted. For example, God warned Moses that he was on holy ground (Ex 3:5; cf. Josh 3:15). As long as the Lord was present in theophany, the sacred place was holy because God’s presence sanctified it. The Lord’s holiness later sanctified the tent of meeting (Ex 29:42-43). The Lord descended to the entrance of the tent in order to commission someone (Ex 33:7-11; Num 11:24-25; Deut 31:14-15) or to carry out his judgment (Num 12:5-15). Later in Israel’s history the Lord’s holiness sanctified the Solomonic temple (1 Kings 8:3). God’s theophanic appearance at the dedication of Solomon’s temple as at Mount Sinai placed this temple in the framework of the Mosaic covenant and revelation. This connection was reinforced through the presence of elders and other leaders, and a seven-day feast on both momentous occasions (1 Kings 8:1, 65). The transference of the symbols of the Lord’s presence to the temple was analogous to the movement of the pillar of cloud to the tabernacle. Thus it was not a great leap for later theophanic appearances to be associated with Mount Zion, the special residence of the temple, which became the site associated with the Lord’s presence. Theophanic images of Sinai are set in Mount Zion (Is 24:23; 40:5). God appeared on Mount Zion as a thunderstorm going to war against Israel’s enemies (Ps 18:7-20; 29:1-11; 97:1-5; 144:1-11). In fact, in the prophetic writings theophanies are associated primarily with Zion (Ezek 1; 10; Amos 1:2; Mic 1:2-4; Zeph 1). As was mentioned above, it is God’s presence that makes a place holy, but that holiness is gone when God departs from the designated place. Mount Sinai was holy only as long as God was present there. God left the temple as a consequence of Judah’s abominations (Ezek 8—11), thus depriving the shrine and the city of its sanctity.

6.4. Natural Sites. God appeared at locations in the natural environment such as springs (Gen 16:7), rivers (Gen 32:22-32) and trees (Gen 12:6-7) but predominantly at mountains (Gen 12:8; 22:1-14; 28:12; Ex 19; Ps 48). For many cultures of the ancient Near East the mountain was considered the most conducive location for communication with the supernatural. God’s glory covered Mount Sinai for six days (Ex 24:15-18), just as God’s Spirit moved in creation for six days (Gen 1:2-31). Niehaus observes that this correlation was intended to suggest that a new creation was taking place in the exodus events analogous to the original creation.

6.5. Terminology. The Hebrew term qôl (“voice,” Gen 3:8; Ex 19:16; Ps 29:3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9; 46:6 [MT 46:7]; 77:18 [MT 77:19], Joel 2:11; 3:16 [MT 4:16]) is common in theophanies and is used to indicate the thunderous and frightening sound of the appearance of God. Trumpeting the sound of the divine presence occurred at Sinai, at Pentecost and at every Day of the Lord (cf. Jesus’ Parousia). The sound of God’s coming signaled even the initial theophany in the garden. The root rôm (“thunder”) is sometimes used in conjunction with qôl (Ps 29:3; 77:18 [MT 19]; 104:7).

6.6. Topography. In many of the OT theophanies, topography and nature were disturbed. These disruptions frequently took place in the atmosphere (Ex 19:16-19; 1 Kings 19:11-13).

6.7. Israel’s Benefit. Theophanies often introduced momentous events (Ex 3:1-12), further revealed God’s plan (Gen 15:1-17; 28:12-17), supported the wavering (Ex 3:2—4:17; Judg 6:11-24) and were restricted to Israelites, except in such cases where foreigners had contact with Israelites (Gen 20:3-7; Num 22:20-35).

6.8. Sinaitic Theophany. In all of Israel’s history, God’s self-disclosure at Mount Sinai was unique because it was here that God entered into a covenant relationship with the entire nation. Important to the theophany at Sinai was the recognition of God as Israel’s king and thus rightly the bestower of his will through his “law. This is similar to ancient Near Eastern practices.
of newly established kings imparting new legislation. Laws were the inevitable outcomes of the theophanies of the Lord as king (Ex 19—24; Ps 132; Is 2:2-4). Theophanies forcibly impressed on God’s people the sovereignty of God, and assured them of his presence and concern for them.

7. Human Reaction to Theophany.
The human reaction to God’s appearance was always one of fear and terror. This fear was not the result of God’s being mysterious or even all-powerful but rather a result of his being totally separate and distinct from humanity and creation. The terror of God’s theophany was a common element in the Jewish intertestamental literature (Jdt 16:15; Wis 5:21-23; Sir 16:18-19; 43:16-17; As. Mos. 10:3-6; 1QH 3:32-36). The terrorizing appearance of God explains why God was often cloaked in a cloud in the theophanic appearance: the full revelation of his glory would totally overwhelm and could in fact destroy a human onlooker (Ex 20:19; Deut 18:16).

8. The Form of Theophany Accounts.
8.1. Old Testament Accounts. Genesis 26:23-25 provides a good example of the literary components of a theophany:

- introductory description: “From there he went up to Beer-sheba. And that very night the LORD appeared to him and said,”
- divine self-asseveration: “I am the God of your father Abraham;”
- quelling of fear: “do not be afraid,”
- assertion of divine presence: “for I am with you”
- hieros logos (holy word): “and will bless you and make your offspring numerous for my servant Abraham’s sake.”
- concluding description: “So he built an altar there [and] called on the name of the LORD.”

The same forms occur in the important Sinaitic theophanies. For example, Exodus 3:1—4:17 contains an introductory description (Ex 3:1-4), a divine self-asseveration (Ex 3:5-6), an assertion of gracious presence (Ex 3:7-8a), the hieros logos (Ex 3:8b-10), a protest by the addressee (Ex 3:11), and hieros logos with repetition of the earlier elements (3:12—4:17). Likewise, Exodus 19:16—20:17 contains an introductory description (Ex 19:16-21a), the hieros logos (Ex 19:21b-22), a protest by the addressee (Ex 19:23), hieros logos (Ex 19:24) and hieroi logoi (Ex 20:1-17).

8.2. Ancient Near Eastern Accounts. Scholars have noted that these same motifs are also observed in the Assyrian theophanies. J. J. Niehaus has shown that these identical motifs are also to be found in the NT with the apparition of the angel Gabriel to Mary (Lk 1:26-38), the angelic theophany to the shepherds (Lk 2:8-20), the account of Jesus walking on the water (Mt 14:22-23; Mk 6:45-52; Jn 6:16-21), the transfiguration (Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:2-8; Lk 9:28-36) and the appearance of angels at the empty tomb (Mt 28:1-8; Mk 16:1-8; Lk 24:1-12; Jn 20:10-18), as well as Jesus’ postresurrection appearances (Lk 24:36-49; Jn 20:19-29). Theophanic descriptions frequently occur in the form of hymns explaining God’s being and appearance in poetic form (Judg 5:4-5; cf. Deut 33:2-5, 26-29).

8.3. Words of Theophanies. God’s word, the hieros logos, should be considered a critical component among the elements of theophany. According to G. von Rad, all the phenomena that accompanied the theophany were mere accessories to the divine pronouncement that inevitably formed the center of the theophanic event (von Rad, 2.19). Even though the visual component in all of these theophanies was important, if not awesome, the heart of the matter in each case was what Yahweh had to say (Niehaus 1995, 29). Without the words accompanying the theophany, the phenomena and meaning of the theophany would go unexplained. Thus God explained that the meaning of the vision given to Abram was the establishment of the covenant (Gen 15:17-21). This is also illustrated through the first Sinaitic theophany, when God appeared and explained that Moses would lead the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex 3:1-10). An indirect outcome of the explanation of the theophanous events was God’s intention to reveal more of his personal nature. Through the effect of the divine appearances accompanied by the divine communication, God’s people ultimately learned more of God’s power and attributes.

Many consider the appearances of the angel of the Lord as constituting theophanic events. There are justifiable reasons for viewing these appearances as theophanies, especially since the angel of the Lord is frequently equated with God. The deity of this unique angel is suggested...
Traditio-historical Criticism

by the facts that he (1) is identified as God (Gen 16:7-13; 18:2, 10, 13; 22:10-12, 15-18; Ex 3:2-6, 14, 18; Judg 2:1, 5; 6:11, 14, 16), (2) is recognized as God (Gen 16:9-13; Judg 6:22-24; 13:21-23; cf. Gen 32:24-30 with Hos 12:4-5), (3) is described in terms befitting the Deity alone (Ex 3:2-9, 14; 23:20-23; Josh 5:15), (4) calls himself God (Gen 31:11, 13 [in reference to the “angel of God”]; Ex 3:2, 6, 14), (4) receives worship (Josh 5:14; Judg 2:4-5) and (5) speaks with divine authority (Judg 2:1-5). The angel of the Lord who appeared in the burning bush (Ex 3:2) not only says he is God (Ex 3:6) but is designated as God by the text (Ex 3:4). The angel of the Lord received sacrifice (Judg 6:21), and Gideon feared his life because he had gazed at God (Judg 6:22). The angel who wrestled with Jacob (Hos 12:4) was recognized to be God (Gen 32:30). The angel-of-the-Lord theophanies are linked with major statements in redemptive history, including the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants.

In postexilic times the theophanic cloud came to be called the Shekinah, which signified God’s “dwelling” with his people (Ex 25:8). The glory-cloud is associated with the first and second comings of Christ (Mt 17:5; Acts 1:9; Rev 1:7; 14:14). The crowning event of the book of Exodus was the theophany of the Lord at the completion of the tabernacle. In a similar way God also descended on the day of Pentecost in the NT and filled the church, a temple of living stones. God appeared in glory in the OT and will appear in like manner in the eschaton (Is 24; Rev 19—22). The OT recognizes a future time when the Lord’s theophany will be continuous (Is 60:19).

See also DREAMS.


M. F. Rooker

TÔLÉDÔT. See GENEALOGIES; GENESIS, BOOK OF.

TORAH. See LAW.

TOWER OF BABEL. See BABEL.

TOWN. See CITY, TOWN, CAMP.

TRADITIO-HISTORICAL CRITICISM
As applied to biblical texts, the term “traditio-historical criticism” (also “tradition criticism” or “tradition history”) describes the attempt to uncover the folk traditions that lie behind passages in the Bible. The method assumes that much of the material of the Pentateuch—both the narratives and the legal texts—went through a long process of oral composition, transmission and modification before any written texts were produced. On the basis of analogies from other cultures and by applying rules that ostensibly distinguish oral material from material that began as written texts, scholars have attempted to describe the tradition history of the Pentateuch (and of other biblical texts). Such an analysis demarcates which texts began as oral tradition, who were the tradents (storytellers) that created and passed on these tales, what was the original setting (Sitz im Leben) and purpose for a given tale, and the process by which the oral tale was transformed into a written document. Advocates of the method claim that the results of a tradition-critical analysis are useful for gaining an understanding of the theology and history of OT Israel.

1. From Oral Tradition to Written Text
2. The Beginning of Traditio-historical Criticism
3. The High-Water Mark of Traditio-