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Chapter 7

A Zion in the North: The Jerusalem Code and the Rhetoric of Nationhood in Early Modern Sweden

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the perception of Sweden as a counterpart to the Israelite people in the Old Testament played an important part in the construction of Swedish nationhood. The widespread use of biblical parallels in the political discourse of the period has been recognized for a long time, but in recent research the significance of the parallels has been questioned by scholars who have described them as merely a kind of commonplace religious phraseology, with no further implications. In this chapter however, I will argue that the parallels must be taken seriously and that the Jerusalem code provided a cornerstone of the rhetorical construction of early Swedish nationhood. Central to my argument is that the identification with the Israelites should be understood as figural in character, rather than genealogical or translational, and that the Jerusalem code offered a rhetorically flexible mode of representation that united past, present, and future as well as the individual and the society.

Introduction

In February 1693, festivities were arranged all over the Swedish Baltic empire to celebrate the centennial of the so-called Uppsala Assembly (*Uppsala möte*). A century prior, at the 1593 synod, the clergy, the State Council, and Duke Karl (later King Karl IX) formally agreed to adopt *Confessio Augustana* as the general confession of the

Note: In this chapter, I have tried to develop further some arguments in my earlier studies on Israelite rhetoric in early modern Sweden. In some parts, the text is based on Nils Ekedahl, “‘Guds och Swea barn.’ Religion och nationell identitet i 1700-talets Sverige,” in *Nationalism och nationell identitet i 1700-Talets Sverige*, eds. Åsa Karlsson and Bo Lindberg, *Opuscula Historica Upsaliensia* 27 (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 2002).

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Fig. 7.1: The Swedish Bible versions from the seventeenth century were edited on royal command and printed with the king's great coat of arms on the front page. References were frequently made to Sweden as the new Israel, and in the so-called Gustavus Adolphus Bible from 1618, the Latin phrase *Non fecit taliter omni nationi* (He has done this for no other nation), was placed beneath the royal coat of arms. The phrase was taken from Psalm 147 in the Psalter, where it referred to God's covenant with Israel and Jerusalem. In this case, however, it was turned into a confirmation of the elect status of the Swedish people. Copperplate engraving by Vallentin Staffansson Trautman in *Biblia Thet är: All then helgha Scrifft / På Swensko*, Stockholm, 1618.

country.¹ Thus, the foundation was laid for the Lutheran confessional state that Sweden would become during the following century. A hundred years later when Karl XI wanted to demonstrate the unity of his kingdom, the adoption of the Lutheran confession was the historical event he chose to focus upon.²

The rhetorical basis of the centennial provided the idea that Sweden was a people of God on a par with Old Testament Israel, and it appears symbolic that the conferral of academic degrees in Uppsala began with the singing of the hymn “Jerusalem, thou holy city” (*Jerusalem, tu helge stad*).³ The Israelite identification recurs in a short suite of poems written by Bishop Haquin Spegel (1645–1714) and published under the Roman-sounding title *Carmen saeculare*.⁴ Stylistically, the poems imitated Horace’s famous hymn commissioned by Emperor Augustus for the Secular Games in Rome in 17 BC. Their content, however, revolved around Christian themes, and together they repeated a number of key ideas associated with the notion of Sweden as God’s chosen people. The poems may therefore serve as a starting point for some reflections on the importance of the Jerusalem Code in the rhetorical construction of nationhood in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Sweden.

In the first poem, Spegel thanked God for the fact that the Lutheran doctrine had been prevailing in Sweden. Like Horace’s hymn, the poem was founded on a metaphor of light, in this case taken from the account in Josh 10:12–14, telling how God had made the sun stand still in the sky for an entire day to help the warring Israelites against their pagan enemies. A similar, but even more remarkable miracle was, according to Spegel, that God had allowed “the sun of righteousness”, that is Lutheranism, to shine over Sweden without a break for a hundred years: “It is great that the sun brings the day out of the shadows and is born anew and is yet always the same, as the day and the night alternate in their delightful orbit. / Much greater is it that God in honour of Joshua’s victory stopped the sun and moon and doubled the day’s length. / But greatest of all works of God’s goodness is that the sun of righteousness has shone constantly over the North in ten times ten years.”⁵ The message was clear: just as God had protected his chosen people in the Old Testament he was now protecting Lutheran Sweden. The metaphor of light returned in the following stanzas, where

1 Ingun Montgomery, “Uppsala Möte 1593,” *Kyrkohistorisk årsskrift* (1993). For a wider context, see *Värjostånd och lärostånd. Religion och politik i meningsutbytet mellan kungamakt och prästerskap i Sverige 1593–1608*, Studia Historico-Ecclesiastica Upsaliensia (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 1971).

2 Nils Ekedahl, *Det svenska Israel. Myt och retorik i Haquin Spegels predikokonst*, Studia Rhetorica Upsaliensia 2 (Hedemora: Gidlunds Förlag, 1999), 32–77.

3 Ekedahl, *Det svenska Israel*, 43.

4 Haquin Spegel, *Samlade skrifter*. 3. *Världsliga dikter*, eds. Bernt Olsson, Barbro Nilsson, and Birgit Neumann, vol. 1 (Stockholm: Svenska Vitterhetssamfundet, 2006), 110–14.

5 *Grande, quod semper nitidum diem Sol/ Promit ex umbris, aliusque & idem/ Nascitur, gratum variante cursum/ Nocte dieque.// Grandius multo, decus in triumpho, / Quod DEUS Josuae, remoratus orbes/ Solis & Lunae, spatium diei/ Congeminavit.// Sed DEI summus bonitatis actus, / Usque quod denos decies per annos/ Lucidus Sol justitiae frequenter/ Splenduit Arcto.* Spegel, *Samlade skrifter*, 111.

Spiegel prayed to God that he would continue to let *Verbi radii*, “the sun-rays of the Word”, shed light on the Swedish realm. Only in the light of Scripture – that is, the Lutheran interpretation of the Bible – could the people stick to the truth and disclose the heresies of other Christian denominations.⁶

That the monarch played a central part in the rhetorical construction of Sweden as a Lutheran Israel becomes clear in the next poem, in which Spiegel addressed Karl XI as a divinely appointed guardian of true religion. No direct references were made to the Israelite kings in the Old Testament, but the servile tone of the address reminds us that theocratic ideals were cherished in Sweden at that time.⁷

In the third poem, Spiegel finally turned to his fellow countrymen. They were invited to celebrate that God had proved himself full of grace and had renewed his covenant, but most of all they were reminded of the moral obligations imposed on all Swedes by the Lutheran confession:

Though, the great joy should be mixed with fear
That God won't leave us without punishment and discipline,
If he awaits in vain the light of faith among us
. . .
Therefore, we should believe that the Lord's threat will come true
That old sinners will certainly be cursed
And that hundred-year-old children will be pushed away from the bosom of God
If they don't grow and thrive by the milk of reason.⁸

According to Spiegel, God's covenant with Sweden meant that all subjects were united in one faith and could listen to the Bible “in lovely freedom”. This was truly worth celebrating, but if the covenant should remain, the people had to live in line with Lutheran teachings, or otherwise punishment and destruction would follow in the same way as it had done for the Israelites in the Old Testament.⁹ The main objective of Spiegel's rhetoric seems to have been to remind his readers that if they

⁶ Ekedahl, *Det svenska Israel*, 35–40.

⁷ Cf. Carl-E. Normann, *Prästerskapet och det karolinska enväldet. Studier över det svenska prästerskapets statsuppfattning under stormaktstidens slutskede*, Samlingar och studier till svenska kyrkans historia 17 (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1948); Bo Lindberg, “Teokratisk åskådning och naturrätt,” in *17 Uppsatser i svensk idé- och lärdomshistoria* (Uppsala: Bokförlaget Carmina, 1980).

⁸ *Doch bör then stora Frögd beblandas med en Fruchtan/ At Gud ei lemnar oss förutan Straf och tuchtan/ Om han skal Trones lius fjäängt hos oss förbida . . . Förthenskul bör oss tro thet Herrans hoot wil san- nas/ At gamle Syndare the skola wist förbannas/ Och hundrad åra barn ifrå Guds Sköte drifwas/ Som af Förnufftens Miölk ej wäxa eller trifwas.* Spiegel, *Samlade skrifter*. 3. *Världsliga dikter*, 1: 114.

⁹ The destruction of the Temple was a popular topic in early modern literature that has been studied by Beatrice Grooves, *The Destruction of Jerusalem in Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), see also her article in this volume. For Danish-Norwegian references, see Eivor Andersen Oftestad, “Who can Approach our Jerusalem without Crying?” in this volume, 235–57.

neglected to repent of their sins, they would have no advantage of the covenant but would instead be subject to God's wrath like all other peoples. His poem therefore ended in a sharp, moralizing exhortation.

Taken together, Spegel's poems illustrate some key components of the identification of early modern Sweden as a people of God. The first one is that the Bible is the ultimate source of authority, and the Lutheran confession as the only true interpretation of it. The second is that of confessional belief as *vinculum societatis*, the bond uniting all inhabitants of the realm. Another cornerstone provided the notion of nationally shared religious and moral obligations and the idea of divine retribution, meaning that God promised eternal salvation and temporal patronage as long as the people lived in accordance with his commandments, but punished and chastised the country if they failed to do so. A further component – that became increasingly important throughout the seventeenth century – was the perception of the monarch as *vicarius Dei*, ruling in the name of God like the Israelite judges and kings. Altogether, these components shaped a biblically encoded vision of history that joined past and present in the form of a narrative – or myth – and defined a common destiny for both the individual and the nation.

In my dissertation *Det svenska Israel: Myt och retorik i Haquin Spegels predikokost* (1999), the chief argument was that this identification of Sweden with Old Testament Israel provided a conceptual basis for the entirety Spegel's sermons which justifiably can be regarded as a rhetorical enactment of the Jerusalem code. Most explicitly the identification was expressed in sermons delivered at state occasions like the centennial in 1693, Karl XI's funeral in November 1697, and Karl XII's coronation a few weeks later – events portrayed in accordance with Old Testament precedents. Nonetheless, it is also easily recognizable in other kinds of his preaching, for example homilies made at the funerals of leading public officials and their relatives, as well as his sermons on the Passion of Christ. Since I could demonstrate that the exposition of the myth had many similarities with the rhetoric developed in the political discourse of the time, I suggested that the identification with Israel had broader relevance and should be recognized as a key metaphor of early modern Swedish nationhood.¹⁰

In terms of theory, my interpretation was guided by the concept of “confessionalization” developed by Heinz Schilling and Wolfgang Reinhard in the 1980s. At the time I wrote my dissertation the concept was rarely mentioned in Sweden, and when I made use of it, it was in fact the first time it had been applied in Swedish historiography. As formulated by Schilling, “confessionalization” designates an overarching historical process typical of the early modern era, characterized by the formation of confessional churches, the imposition of social discipline, and the construction of bureaucratic state apparatuses.¹¹ The formation of cultural or national

¹⁰ Ekedahl, *Det svenska Israel*, 18–21, 68–77, 213–23.

¹¹ This concept has been widely employed in German historiography since the 1980s, but in Swedish research the discussion about its relevance and applicability has started only recently. For a general introduction to the concept and its history, see Heinz Schilling, “Confessionalization:

identities was not addressed explicitly from the beginning, but was introduced as a topic of discussion relatively soon thereafter, and in a later work, *Early Modern European Civilization and Its Political and Cultural Dynamism* (2008), Schilling focuses on the question in a way that confirms my conclusions. According to him, Sweden was a country where the Lutheran confession proved vital for the formation of “the collective mentality and national awareness”, from the seventeenth century onwards: “In Sweden, for generations, Reformation and nation were almost inseparable, and Lutheranism became the focal point of inner cohesion and self-assertion, as well as outward independence . . .”. Schilling maintains that the confessionalization process gave rise to “comparatively little friction” in Sweden and contributed decisively to both the building of a strong state and the rise of a shared “cultural and national identity” among the inhabitants.¹²

In general, my interpretation of the Israelite rhetoric has been accepted by the academic community.¹³ Other scholars have added further evidence of the identification, and in their dissertations, Peter Ericsson and Anna Maria Forsberg have analysed the

Historical and Scholarly Perspectives of a Comparative and Interdisciplinary Paradigm,” in *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555–1700. Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan*, eds. John M. Headley, Hans J. Hillerbrand, and Anthony J. Papalas (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

12 According to Schilling, the collective attitudes of modern Sweden can be understood as a kind of secularized Lutheranism, making the Swedes convinced of moral superiority and giving them a determination to convert the rest of the world to their way of life.

13 See for example Jonas Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk. Nationell och politisk självbild i Sverige från sen stormaktstid till slutet av frihetstiden* (Stockholm: Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion, 2000), 151–81; Kjell Blücker, *The Church as Nation: A Study in Ecclesiology and Nationhood*, European University Studies. Series XXIII: Theology 697 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), 149, 271; Peter Ericsson, *Stora nordiska kriget förklarar. Karl XII och det ideologiska tilltalet*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Studia Historica Upsaliensia 202 (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 2002), 124–32; Hans Helander, *Neo-Latin Literature in Sweden in the Period 1620–1720: Stylistics, Vocabulary and Characteristic Ideas*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Studia Latina Upsaliensia 29 (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 2004), 408–10; Anna Maria Forsberg, *Att hålla folket på gott humör: informationspridning, krigspropaganda och mobilisering i Sverige 1655–1680* (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 2005), 78–112; Pasi Ihalainen, *Protestant Nations Redefined: Changing Perceptions of National Identity in the Rhetoric of the English, Dutch and Swedish Public Churches, 1685–1772*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions: History, Culture, Religion, Ideas 109 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 146–73, 360–66, 522–34; Bo Lindberg, *Den antika skevheten. Politiska ord och begrepp i det tidig-moderna Sverige*, Filologiskt arkiv 45 (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 2006), 129–30; Joachim Östlund, *Lyckolandet. Maktens legitimering i officiell retorik från stormaktstid till demokratins genombrott* (Lund: Sekel Bokförlag, 2007), 47–116; Sylvia Ullberg, “Segern vid Narva – en gudagåva,” in *Gud, konung och undersåtar. Politisk predikan i Sverige under tidigmodern tid*, ed. Peter Ericsson, Opuscula Historica Upsaliensia 35 (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 2007); Johan Sundeen, *Andelivets agitator. J.A. Eklund, kristendomen och kulturen*, Ugglan, Minervaserien / Skrifter från Högskolan i Borås (Stockholm: Norma, 2008), 206; Andreas Hellerstedt, *Ödets teater. Ödesföreställningar i Sverige vid 1700-talets början* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2009), 21, 101; David Gudmundsson, *Konfessionell krigsmakt. Predikan och bön i den svenska armén 1611–1721*, Bibliotheca Historico-Ecclesiastica Lundensis 56 (Lund: Universus Academic Press, 2014), 157–61; Elena Dahlberg, *The Voice of a Waning Empire: Selected Latin Poetry of Magnus Rönnow from the*

use of the parallel in ecclesiastical legislation as well as in liturgical texts and royal proclamations.¹⁴ Further instances are mentioned by Hans Helander in *Neo-Latin Literature in Sweden in the Period 1620–1720* (2004), as well as in Pasi Ihalainen’s impressive study, *Protestant Nations Redefined: Changing Perceptions of National Identity in the Rhetoric of the English, Dutch and Swedish Public Churches, 1685–1772* (2005), which offers ample evidence of Israelite rhetoric in eighteenth-century Swedish preaching and makes systematic comparisons with the use of it in England and the Netherlands. Ihalainen clearly demonstrates that biblical parallels were especially long-lasting in Sweden, while they disappeared gradually in the two other countries during that century.¹⁵ In most cases, the historians have interpreted – explicitly or implicitly – the use of the Jerusalem code as a means of ideological propaganda, aiming at securing political control for the state authorities.

Some objections, however, have been made, mainly by Ihalainen and Joachim Östlund. In his dissertation, Östlund studied the legitimation of state power in Swedish prayer day proclamations from the mid-seventeenth century up to modern times. Starting from a point of view inspired by Charles Taylor’s discussion of the early modern period as an era characterized by “social imaginaries” based on natural law, social contract, and the individual, he observes the existence of biblical rhetoric, but finds no clear identification of Sweden with ancient Israel. He argues that “the image of Sweden as a new Israel is not explicitly reflected in the material” and concludes that the Lutheran confession played no central part in the proclamations, which – on the contrary – emphasized the unity of all Christians. In his view, the confessional religion “is hard to place on par with national identity” in respect to seventeenth-century Sweden.¹⁶

Ihalainen’s objections are more specific. Working in the tradition of conceptual history, he has examined the construction of the idea of a Protestant nation during the Enlightenment, and has brought up some issues related to my previous research. He accepts the overall picture and admits that “in Spiegel’s rhetoric, the Swedish Israel truly existed” and, based on numerous examples, he convincingly concludes that the Israel model was used to a greater extent in eighteenth-century Sweden than in other Protestant countries.¹⁷ On some points, however, he questions my conclusions. His first critical issue regards the nature of the relationship

Great Northern War, ed. Elena Dalhberg, trans. Elena Dahlberg, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Studia Latina Upsaliensia 34 (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2014), 88–93.

¹⁴ Ericsson, *Stora nordiska kriget förklarar*, 91–132; Forssberg, *Att hålla folket på gott humör*, 2005: 97–112.

¹⁵ Ihalainen, *Protestant Nations Redefined*, 146–73. See also Pasi Ihalainen, “Svenska kyrkan och det moderniserade nationella tänkandet 1789–1810,” in *Sjuttonhundratals 2006–2007* (2007), 25–48.

¹⁶ Östlund, *Lyckolandet*, 30–32, 280–81.

¹⁷ Ihalainen, *Protestant Nations Redefined*, 147.

between Sweden and biblical Israel, since he argues that claims of a “direct continuity” from the ancient Jewish to the early modern Swedish nation are difficult to identify. He finds it doubtful to talk about Sweden as a new “chosen nation”, and questions whether it is justified to speak of a formal covenant between God and the Swedes: “It may be an exaggeration to suggest that the history of the Swedish church and state were understood as being part of the history of the chosen people as described in the Bible . . . Claims of direct continuity between the history of the Jewish and Swedish nations are few in eighteenth-century state sermons.”¹⁸ Another point he finds worth considering is whether the Israelite parallels were part of a conscious rhetorical strategy or were simply a kind of traditional phraseology, used in sermons and other types of religious discourse when discussing political matters. According to him, the parallel functioned primarily as a part of the political doctrine of theocracy – at least in the seventeenth century – and much of the references to Old Testament Israel should be understood merely as rhetorical embellishment or traditional means of expression.¹⁹

The critical issues raised by Östlund and Ihalainen are different in nature and emanate from differing historiographical and theoretical assumptions. Nevertheless, I would argue that their interpretations coincide, as they both leave out the hermeneutical and rhetorical code underlying the Israelite language. Certainly, they recognize the existence of biblical parallels in the texts studied, but as the instances observed are registered one by one and read as a kind of conventional phraseology with no further implications, the inner coherence of the identification remains unclear. In this chapter, I will therefore suggest that the Jerusalem code provided a rhetorical basis for the shaping of biblical nationhood in early modern Sweden and that we should understand this code essentially as a variant of the “typological” or “figural” interpretation of the Bible.

As a part of traditional biblical hermeneutics, figural interpretation has often been identified with the custom of establishing historical and narratological correspondences between the Old and the New Testaments. In fact, however, it offered far more than a method for the textual study of the Bible, and in practice it was also believed to be relevant for the interpretation of the history of the Christian church. Throughout the last 80 years, the nature of figural thinking has been much discussed, especially with reference to Early Christian and Medieval exegesis (Leonhard Goppelt, Jean Daniélou, Henri de Lubac) and modern literature and historiography (Erich Auerbach, Northrop Frye, Hayden White).²⁰ It was, however,

¹⁸ Ihalainen, *Protestant Nations Redefined*, 147.

¹⁹ Ihalainen, *Protestant Nations Redefined*, 154.

²⁰ The literature about this hermeneutical tradition is enormous. The names within brackets represent some important major contributions: see Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald Madwig (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2002); Erich Auerbach, “Figura,” in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: Manchester University Press, 1984), 9: 11–76; Jean Daniélou, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies of the Biblical Typology of the*

also central to Lutheran-Orthodox hermeneutics and homiletics, and my intention here is to exemplify how the efforts to shape a Lutheran nationhood in early modern Sweden were based on the Jerusalem code as a figural mode of representation that turned Old Testament Israel into a prophetic prototype for the nation, and integrated past, present, and future as well as the individual and the society. However, before we delve further into these issues, a short account of the use of the Israelite identification in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Sweden is necessary.

God's People in the North

In my study of Spiegel's sermons the Israelite language was interpreted as a part of the Lutheran rhetoric of confessionalization, reaching a peak in the late seventeenth century. As such, however, the language was older, and the earliest Israelite parallels in Sweden originate from the late Middle Ages. In *Chronica regni Gothorum*, a chronicle of Swedish kings written in the 1470s, Ericus Olai, canon and professor of theology in Uppsala, compared the Swedes' burdens under King Erik of Pommerania with the Israelites' lament in Egypt, and implicitly portrayed Engelbrekt Engelbrektsson, the commander of a Swedish uprising against King Erik, as a new Moses or Judas Maccabaeus.²¹ The parallels were not pursued further, but their presence proves that a perception of Sweden as a nation formed on biblical models was already extant before the Reformation. In this case, the main purpose seems to have been to legitimize a political revolt against a designated tyrant, and most probably the parallels were intended for the domestic political elite. Potentially, however, all inhabitants of the Swedish kingdom were included.

In the subsequent century, the identification was taken up by Gustav Vasa, who – as pointed out by Martin Berntsson in this volume – portrayed himself as a new Moses, delivering the Swedes from Danish rule and restoring national independence. He claimed he was installed by God to defend the true religion, and in contemporary historiography authorized by himself, he was compared with Old Testament personages like Joshua, Gideon, David, and Jehoshaphat. Yet again, biblical parallels were employed in favour of political change, but in this case, they were primarily

Fathers, trans. Wulstan Hibberd (London: Burns & Oates, 1960); Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale. Les quatre sens de l'écriture*, 4 vols. (Paris: Aubier, 1959–64); Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982); Hayden White, *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

²¹ Biörn Tjällén, *Church and Nation: The Discourse on Authority in Ericus Olai's Chronica Regni Gothorum (c. 1471)* (Stockholm: Historiska institutionen, 2007), 103–06. As mentioned in Chapter 8 in this volume (Martin Berntson), political references to the story about Judas Maccabaeus had already been made in early fifteenth-century Sweden, but seemingly without any clear identification of the Swedes with the Israelite people.

aimed at promoting an indigenous upstart ruler, whose regime was dependent on its capacity for gaining political support from the rest of the nobility as well as from the people in general. First and foremost, the purpose was to legitimize the king's power.

The need for vindicating the ruling branch of the Vasa dynasty was still urgent in the early seventeenth century, and it is clearly reflected in the Reformation centennial organized by Gustav II Adolf in 1621. Formally, the purpose was to celebrate the Lutheran Reformation, but as demonstrated by Carl-Axel Aurelius, in reality it was turned into a commemoration of Gustav Vasa's uprising against the Danish king Christian II in 1521, depicting the future king as a Lutheran *Wunderman* parallel to Moses.²² Through this, the Israelite connection was made part of the legitimation of princely power in Sweden, and henceforth the ruling dynasty was portrayed as heirs to Old Testament leaders. At Gustav Adolf's burial in 1634, the clergy was instructed to compare the king's death with that of Judas Maccabaeus, and at the burial of Karl XI in 1697 the model was used again, as the same biblical text (1 Macc 9:20–21) was pointed out as a fitting point of departure for the official sermon extolling the late king as the defender of the true church.²³ The choice of a Jewish rebel leader as model for the official memorial of the Swedish monarchs may appear somewhat odd, but was probably a result of the tradition described above.

The king and the royal family were thus made central to the Israelite identification. At the same time, it is obvious that the people were gradually assigned an important role, and in retrospect the centennial in 1621 symbolizes a turning point in the construction of the biblical nationhood in Sweden. In the celebrations, the focus was certainly on Gustav Vasa, but the importance of national independence was acknowledged, and at the same time the king was glorified as a new Moses, the course of Reformation in Sweden was portrayed as a liberation of the entire people from political as well as religious slavery, parallel to the Exodus in the Bible.²⁴ This meant that the people were made part of the myth and described as a nation, and from this time forth, the inhabitants of the Swedish realm were often paralleled with the Israelites as members of an ethnic community (cf. Fig. 7.1). Early examples can be found in the royal mandate for the centennial, where the Swedes were compared with "God's children" in the Old Testament, as well as in a printed sermon by the royal chaplain Johannes Botvidi, according to which the inhabitants of Sweden henceforth constituted a people of God: "Even you are now God's people, like Israel in old times [. . .] So we are also God's Israel, true Israelites."²⁵

²² Carl Axel Aurelius, "'Sverige, känn dig själv.' En studie av det svenska reformationsjubileet år 1621," *Kyrkohistorisk årsskrift* 87 (1987), 105–08.

²³ Ekedahl, *Det svenska Israel*, 97–109.

²⁴ Aurelius, "'Sverige, känn dig själv,'" 107.

²⁵ *J ären nu äwen så wäl Gudz Folck som Israels Barn på then Tijdhen woro . . . Så äre wij ock Gudz Israel, the rette Israeliter.* Johannes Botvidi, "Tree predikningar, håldne vthi häarfärden ååt Lijffland, anno 1621," (Stockholm: Christoffer Reusner, 1627), 38. See also Yngve Stenermark, "' . . . I

Particularly, Israelite rhetoric was put forward on the annual prayer days (*böndagar*) that were introduced on regular basis in the 1620s.²⁶ On those days, all inhabitants were obliged to attend services in their parish churches, and from the early 1640s, the days were accompanied by printed proclamations issued from the Royal Chancery. The proclamations contained theologically based accounts of the current political situation, and as the clergy was obliged to recite them from the pulpit, they provide a rich source for our understanding of the construction of a Swedish nation in the Jerusalem code. Ongoing political events were interpreted in light of the Old Testament – particularly the prophetic and historical books – and the tone of the message was often harsh and reproaching, reminding the people of their religious and moral duties. Like the Israelites, the inhabitants were obliged to observe God’s commandments, and behind the exhortations to penitence, it is easy to recognize the Old Testament idea of divine retribution (See Fig. 7.2). According to this idea the prosperity of the country was a result of the people’s religious and moral rectitude: as long as the inhabitants proved themselves faithful to Christian piety God would bless the country, but if they deviated from it and gave way to sin and self-sufficiency, he would punish them with disease, famine, and war.²⁷ In this respect, the tone of the proclamations reflects the tendency towards moral exhortation that some scholars have identified as typical of the preaching of this period.²⁸

Typical of the Israelite identification was that it addressed the entire people, and that every inhabitant was spoken to as member of a nation parallel to the chosen people of the Bible. Originally in the Middle Ages, this seems to have referred to the “Swedes” as an ethnic community opposed to a Danish or German king, but in the prayer day proclamations it was applied to the Swedish kingdom as a political body: Swedes, Finns, Germans, Danes, Estonians, Livonians, and residents of other nationalities were all included as “children of Swea” – as far as they accepted the authority of the Swedish monarch and the Lutheran confession of the state, which was highlighted as the uniting bond of society. In doing so, the prayer day-proclamations communicated a vision of a national community, based on collective religious and moral obligations, and rhetorically they remind us of the “prophetic mode” identified by Patrick Collinson in seventeenth-century English preaching: “The invocation and construction of the nation in the prophetic mode ignored in

de därtill förordnade texterna.’ Datum och texter till de allmänna tacksägelse-, faste-, bot- och böndagarna 1621–1983,” *Kyrkohistorisk årsskrift* 97 (1997), 159.

26 The first decades of the seventeenth century seem to have been a period of intensified religious propaganda. On the introduction of prayer days in the Kingdoms of Denmark-Norway, see Andersen Oftestad, “Who Can Approach our Jerusalem without Crying?” in this volume, 251.

27 Cf. Göran Malmstedt, *Helgdagsreduktionen. Övergången från ett medeltida till ett modernt år i Sverige 1500–1800* (Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg 1994), 193–218.

28 Cf. Henrik Ivarsson, *Predikans uppgift. En typologisk undersökning med särskild hänsyn till reformatorisk och pietistisk predikan*, 2nd abbreviated ed. (Lund: Håkan Ohlssons, 1973), 211; and previous literature mentioned there.



Fig. 7.2: The Bible in the vernacular was often used as a symbol of the covenant between God and Sweden. As such, it was believed to illustrate both the blessings following from showing obedience towards God's commandments and the punishments imminent to those neglecting them. This can be seen on the title page of the Bible edition 1655, which was crowned by an opened book quoting Deut 5:1 ("Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgements which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them") and 1 Sam 12:15 ("If ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you and your fathers"). Copperplate engraving by Jan van de Velde in *BIBLIA, Thet är: All then Helga Skriff, PÅ SWENSKO*, Stockholm, 1655.

the generality of much of its rhetoric all social and political distinctions, investing an entire and undifferentiated people – England – with a shared moral and religious responsibility”.²⁹ In my view, Collinson’s description is highly relevant in respect to Swedish prayer days, which in the same way shaped an idea of nationhood that included all inhabitants, regardless of social rank or ethnicity. In Swedish research, much work has been devoted to the creation of a “Gothic” national identity during the early modern period, but it is still obvious that the efforts to promote a vision of nationhood on the grounds of the Old Norse literature never reached the same range as the Israelite language. In general, the “Gothic” language was restricted to the nobility and the learned, and even though it was supported by the authorities, the attempts to promote “Gothic” virtues were almost never made relevant to ordinary people and seem to have only occasionally reached beyond the universities and the state bureaucracy.³⁰ The Israelite version of nationhood was, on the other hand, repeatedly communicated to all inhabitants by means of the annual prayer days, and as it described religious and moral duties pertaining to everyone, there is good reason to characterize it as the most powerful trope in creating a national identity capable of including all inhabitants in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Sweden.³¹

During the period of royal absolutism from 1680 to 1719, the identification with Israel was deeply influenced by the prevailing doctrine of theocracy. The Swedish kings were portrayed as monarchs directly appointed by God, and at his burial, Karl XI was depicted as a “Northern Hezekiah” (*Hiskias septentrionalis*) by Archbishop Olaus Swebilius, who expressed the immeasurable sorrow of all “inhabitants of Jerusalem” and “daughters of Zion”.³² Similarly, the poet and military prosecutor Israel Holmström compared Karl XI with King Judah and deplored the loss of “Israel’s defender”.³³ The death of the king was described as a consequence of the people’s disobedience to God, but his wrath seems to have ceased quite soon, since

29 Patrick Collinson, “Biblical Rhetoric: The English Nation and National Sentiment in the Prophetic Mode,” in *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*, eds. Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 26.

30 See, for example, Gunnar Eriksson, *The Atlantic Vision: Olaus Rudbeck and Baroque Science* (Canton, MA: Science History Publications, 1994); Patrik Hall, *The Social Construction of Nationalism: Sweden as an Example* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1998), 148–69; Johanna Widenberg, *Fäderneslandets antikviteter. Enoterritoriella historiebruk och integrationssträvanden i den svenska statsmaktens antikvariska verksamhet ca 1600–1720*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Studia Historica Upsaliensia 225 (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 2006). Widenberg argues that efforts were made to disseminate the “Gothic” version of nationhood, but these cannot possibly be compared with the systematic propagation of the Israelite model.

31 Cf. Ekedahl, *Det svenska Israel*, 220–23.

32 Ihalainen, *Protestant Nations Redefined*, 152. See also Normann, *Prästerskapet och det karolinska enväldet*, 168–70, 93–225.

33 Israel Holmström, *Samlade dikter. II. Kunglig panegyrik, gravdikter, bröllopsdikter, suppliker, politiska dikter*, edited by Bernt Olsson, Barbro Nilsson, and Mats Malm. Svenska författare: Ny Serie (Stockholm: Svenska Vitterhetssamfundet, 2001), 43–90.

at Karl XII's coronation a few weeks later, another panegyrist described the occasion as a renewal of Sweden's status as God's chosen people, with the young king as a "signet ring" according to Hag 2:24: "Behold, a new covenant the Heavenly King has made / with the daughter Sweden/ that will never be broken".³⁴ The enthronement was depicted as corresponding to the Davidic covenant in the Bible (2 Sam 7), a cornerstone of Jewish messianism, and not surprisingly messianic overtones are noticeable in several panegyrics addressed to the new king.

The glorification of Karl XII continued through the Great Northern War. The king was regularly compared to Israelite warriors, fighting for the true religion, and in a sermon Jesper Swedberg, Bishop of Skara, confidently declared that all Swedes were willing to obey him in the same way as all Israel had obeyed Joshua.³⁵ An extreme example of messianic rhetoric is found in a poem from December 1714, where the king's return from his exile in the Ottoman Empire was paralleled with the coming of Christ at Christmas: "Two Kings at the same time are now approaching Sweden / to cool the heath of anxiety by the dew of grace". King and Christ were described as "each other's self and friend" (*hwars andras jagh och wän*), and in the poem Karl was transformed not only into a national Messiah, but also made identical with Christ.³⁶ For this period, Ihalainen's observation that Israelite rhetoric was largely employed to underpin the doctrine of theocratic monarchy is fully justified.

The scope of the identification was, however, not restricted to the king. As before, the people were included, and while Karl XII was extolled at the level of a demigod, his subjects were portrayed as members of a chosen nation. Biblical parallels were frequently applied throughout the war, which generated a wave of Israelite rhetoric. In the parish churches, the parallel was employed to celebrate victories as well as to explain defeats, and in a sermon delivered on the day of thanksgiving after the battle of Narva in 1700, one preacher compared the Swedes to the Israelites fighting against the Amalekites in Exod 17 and stated that the victory over the Russians confirmed God's protection of his own people, referring to Isa 41:8–9: "But thou, Swedish Israel [. . .] Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away."³⁷ Ten years later, in the prayer day proclamation of 1710, issued after the

³⁴ *Ty si! ett nytt Förbund har Himmlens Konung slutet/ Med Dottren Swea-Land/ dät äy ska blifwa brutet.* Jonas Phragmenius, *Den majestätlige glädie-sohl*, som genom den stormächtigaste Konungs och herres, Konung Carl den Tolfstes... högst-önskelige anträde til regementet, år 1697, den 14 decembris, i Norden, och särdeles öfwer Sweriges Rike och des underliggiande provincier, uppgick (Stockholm: Olaus Enaeus, [1697]), [D]v.

³⁵ Ericsson, *Stora nordiska kriget förklarad*, 131. See also Helander, *Neo-Latin Literature in Sweden in the Period 1620–1720*, 409.

³⁶ *Twå Kungar på en gång til Swerje sig nu nalcka / At med sin nåde-dagg thes ångest-hetta swalcka.* The quotation is taken from Ekedahl, *Det svenska Israel*, 114.

³⁷ *Men tu Swänske Israel [. . .] Tu skalt wara min tienare: ty jag uthkorat tigh/ och bortkastar tigh icke.* Simon Isogaeus, *Med Gudz hielp, en segrande hielte kung Carl then tolfte* (Stockholm: Michael Laurelius, 1701), § LV.

disastrous defeat at Poltava, the Swedish kingdom was compared to Jerusalem laying desolate after the destruction of the Temple: “O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.”³⁸ The adversities were described as divine punishments, due to the unfaithfulness and disobedience of the people, and the listeners were urged to repentance, according to the Old Testament idea of retribution. But the Israelite rhetoric was also employed in order to ensure the listeners of God’s mercy, for instance Swedberg, who in a sermon asked God to rescue the country by putting an end to the war praying: “Convert Your people, the children of Sweden: and stop this bloodstained war. [. . .] Bless Your people, the children of Sweden, and the land You have given us.”³⁹

It is difficult to estimate to what extent this identification was accepted by the local communities. That at least some individuals believed in it, is witnessed by letters and diaries written by Swedish soldiers and prisoners of war in Russia, in which the captivity was portrayed as a divine punishment or trial of faith, the authors compared themselves to the ancient Jews exiled to Babylon.⁴⁰ How far the understanding of the situation was shaped by the theocratic doctrine is exemplified in one diary, where the despair felt by the prisoners when told about the death of the king is described in words taken from the Psalter: “Who will now, next to God, care for us, poor prisoners, or strive for our deliverance and welfare. . . . We sat down in our huts of captivity in this Siberian Babel and wept heartily, thinking about the unfortunate death of our most gracious king, and our Swedish Zion.”⁴¹

The death of Karl XII in 1718 brought an end to the theocratic doctrine as a political ideology. Nonetheless, the identification with Old Testament Israel continued, and Ihalainen has charted the extensive use of it in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Sweden, especially in “state-sermons” delivered at important political occasions. In a wider European context, the relevance of biblical parallels declined as the century went on, but in Sweden the Israelite language remained strong and received increased attention during the early years of the reign of Gustav III.⁴² Appellations like “our Swedish Jerusalem” or “Zion of the North” were

38 Ericsson, *Stora nordiska kriget förklarar*, 130. Cf. Dan 9:16.

39 *Omwendt Titt folck Sweriges barn: och stilla thetta blodiga kriget. . . . Welsigna Titt folck Sweriges barn / och landet som Tu oss gifwit hafwer.* Jesper Swedberg, *Sermones censuales. I. En undersätlig beskattnings predikan. II. Sweriges undersåtars andeliga krichshieip* (Skara: A. Kiellberg, 1712), § 23.

40 Cf. Gudmundsson, *Konfessionell krigsmakt*, 156–61.

41 *Hoo skall näst Gud nu sörja för oss fattige fångar eller sig om vår förlossning och wälfärd bemöda . . . Wi suto i våra fångehyddor i detta ciberiska Babel ock greto hiärteligen, enär wi tänckte uppå vår nådigste konungz olyckelige dödzfall, jämte vårt Swea Zion.* Joachim Mathiae Lyth, *Karolinska krigare berättar. Joachim Mathiae Lyths dagbok* (Stockholm: Rediviva, 1986), 89. Cf. Ps 137:1.

42 Ihalainen, *Protestant Nations Redefined*, 170–73.

frequently used, and in a 1746 sermon, Archbishop Jacob Benzelius explicitly declared that Sweden was “God’s heritage and his people of inheritance” (*Guds arfwedel och Hans egendomsfolk*).⁴³ In 1769, Andreas Forssenius, Bishop of Skara, in a similar way compared the inhabitants of the Swedish kingdom with “the children of Israel” and described the amalgamation of church and state in terms of a “Zion of Sweden”.⁴⁴ Still in 1810, after the loss of Finland to Russia, the dethronement of the ruling dynasty, and the election of a French Marshal as heir to the throne, current political events were interpreted in Israelite terms: “Blessed be the Lord, God of Israel, God of Swea, for he has visited and redeemed his people!”⁴⁵ Even the events that describe the dawn of modern politics in Sweden were thus announced within an Old Testament religious framework.

The identification of state, church, and nation were facilitated by the strong confessional unity in Sweden, where religious, political, and ethnic identities often were intersecting. A good example of these intersections can be found in a prayer day sermon printed in 1759. In this sermon, Abraham Pettersson, vicar in Stockholm and chaplain to the king, summoned his readers to strengthen the national unity by confessing their Lutheran faith, according to 1 Pet 2:17: “Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor.”⁴⁶ Originally, the words had been addressed to the members of the early Christian church, but Pettersson applied them to the subjects of the Swedish king and explained that only the Lutheran confession could unite all inhabitants. Confessional unity was said to be fundamental to the state, and therefore, everyone must belong to “the sole and true God’s church and congregation in the world”. But at the same time, it was fundamental to the national community, and it appears symptomatic that Pettersson declared that a god-fearing person loves “his God-made siblings, his compatriots, more than foreign people” (*sina af Gud gjorda syskon, sina Landsmän mer än utlänningar*). By uniting people in a spiritual community, the Lutheran faith made all inhabitants fellow countrymen, sharing the same religion and national identity. According to Pettersson, being “a child of Swea” automatically meant being “a child of God”.⁴⁷

⁴³ Edvard Leufvén, *Upplysningstidens predikan. I. Frihetstiden* (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelse, 1926), 30.

⁴⁴ Ihalainen, *Protestant Nations Redefined*, 164.

⁴⁵ Ihalainen, “Svenska kyrkan och det moderniserade nationella tänkandet,” 29. Cf. Luke 1:68.

⁴⁶ The sermon is discussed in Ekedahl, “Guds och Swea barn”, 57–69. A thorough analysis of Pettersson as an exponent of late Lutheran-Orthodox theology, influenced by the pietist movement, is given in Benkt-Erik Benktson, “*Du Herrens Tjänare*.” *En analys av Abraham Petterssons teologiska typ*, *Studia Theologica Lundensia* 28 (Lund: Gleerup, 1968).

⁴⁷ Ekedahl, “Guds och Swea barn”, 62.; Cf. Benktson “*Du Herrens Tjänare*, 191–208. For a broader picture of the discussion in early modern Sweden about the political importance of unity in religion, see Ingmar Brohed, *stat, kyrka, religion. Ett problemkomplex i svensk akademisk undervisning under 1700-talet*, *Skrifter utgivna av Institutet för Rättshistorisk forskning. Serien 1, rättshistoriskt bibliotek 22* (Stockholm: Institutet för rättshistorisk forskning, 1973), 71–187.

In the second half of the century, the Israelite identification seems to have weakened, as the world view became more secularized and the pietist movement put a stronger emphasis on the piety of the individual. The change is reflected in Pettersson's sermons, where "the children of God" were sometimes separated from "the children of Swea", in accordance with the pietist practice of addressing true believers, awakened Christians, and unrepentant sinners as different audiences of preaching.⁴⁸ Hence, in one of his sermons he separated the first category from the latter, and describing "the children of Swea" as consisting mainly of unrepentant sinners, he portrayed "the Children of God" as true believers in the pietist meaning of the word. At the same time that Pettersson was firmly rooted in the theology of Lutheran Orthodoxy and still employed traditional Israelite language, his sermons give evidence of a gradual dissolution of the unity between the national and the religious communities and reflect the decline of the Israelite model of nationhood during the eighteenth century.⁴⁹ As modernization progressed during the following century, the process accelerated, and even though some Swedish scholars and churchmen belonging to the so-called "Young Church Movement" (*ungkyrkorörelsen*) attempted to revive Israelite rhetoric in the first decades of the twentieth century, it had by then lost most of its power as a national metaphor.⁵⁰

Commonplace or Code?

As we have seen, references to Old Testament Israel are frequent in official proclamations, as well as in sermons, orations, and poems from early modern Sweden. The parallels with the ancient Israelites provided a powerful metaphor, and in view of their pervasiveness, it seems justified to regard the parallels as expressions of a biblically encoded vision of Swedish nationhood. But in which ways did they operate in terms of rhetoric, and in which ways can they be related to a wider framework of early modern religion and culture?

According to Östlund and Ihalainen, the Israelite language was essentially a kind of conventional religious phraseology, widely used but of limited social and political significance. As already mentioned, Östlund confirms the abundance of Old

⁴⁸ This method of preaching, sometimes called "orthotomic application", is described in Erik Vikström, *Ortotomisk applikation. Bibelordets tillämpning och delning enligt den konservativa pietismens predikoteori*, Acta Academiae Aboensis. Ser. A, Humaniora 48:2 (Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1974), with special reference to the early, conservative pietist movement.

⁴⁹ Ekedahl, "'Guds och swea barn,'" 66–69.

⁵⁰ Cf. Steven A. Mitchell and Alf Tergel, "Chosenness, Nationalism, and Young Church Movement: Sweden 1880–1920," in *Many Are Chosen: Divine Election and Western Nationalism*, ed. William R. Hutchison and Hartmut Lehman (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994); Blücker, *The Church as Nation*; Sundeen, *Andelivets Agitator*, 203–27.

Testament parallels in the prayer day proclamations, but as he finds neither a distinct identification with Israel nor any clear traces of Lutheran confessionalization, he concludes that the parallels played only a marginal part in the construction of Swedish nationhood.⁵¹ His conclusions, however, are hampered by the fact that he pays no attention at all to the biblical pericopes given for preaching in the proclamations, which means that the very reason for disseminating them is neglected.⁵² In addition, he is apparently unfamiliar with the confessional phraseology of the time, and thus textual passages communicating a distinctively Lutheran stance remain unobserved, for example verbal markers like “the pure and unadulterated Word of God” (*Guds rena och oförfälskade ord*), “the light of the Gospel” (*Evangelii ljus*), “the way to salvation” (*salighetens väg*), and “true faith and confidence” (*rätt tro och förtröstan*). When examined more closely, his conclusions appear questionable in more than one respect.⁵³

Ihalainen has adduced a large number of instances that confirm the extensive use of Israelite language in eighteenth-century political preaching – but at the same time, he calls the nature of the identification into question and argues that it is difficult to find evidence of an imagined “direct continuity” between the ancient Israelites and early modern Swedes. Moreover, he claims that the “seriousness” of the identification requires critical examination, since according to him the parallels should be understood as a “commonplace version of a more general early modern way of conceptualizing the nation” rather than a “conscious rhetorical strategy”.⁵⁴ Like Östlund, he tends to consider the Israelite language as a sort of commonplace oratory, consisting of time-honoured clichés of only little practical significance.

In my view, such an interpretation means a drastic underestimation of the rhetorical power of the Israelite model of nationhood, particularly as it obscures the fact that the Old Testament parallels relied on a larger hermeneutical system – the Jerusalem code – that organized the understanding of history as well as of contemporary events. It remains unclear what kind of evidence Ihalainen would find conclusive, but his question seems to be based on the presumption that legitimate claims of a “serious” and “direct” continuity should be based on a manifest act of election or translation, by means of which Sweden was positively designated as a chosen people. This was not, however, the way in which early modern Lutherans imagined divine election to operate, and the main problem is that Ihalainen’s question overlooks the metaphorical character of the Jerusalem code and its origin in the tradition of “typological” or figural

⁵¹ Östlund, *Lyckolandet*, 106, 218.

⁵² The pericopes given for preaching in the prayer day proclamations are listed in Stenemark, “. . . I de därtill förordnade texterna”. The dominance of the Old Testament is striking, and many pericopes clearly invite identification with the ancient Israelites. Cf. Ericsson, *Stora nordiska kriget förklarar*, 91–103.

⁵³ For examples, see Östlund, *Lyckolandet*, 91, 100.

⁵⁴ Ihalainen, *Protestant Nations Redefined*, 147–49.

interpretation. This tradition was still alive within the Protestant churches of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and even though Luther, Melancthon, and other reformers had favoured the literal meaning of the Bible and criticized the fourfold interpretation of Scripture, it offered preachers and writers an influential rhetorical code, applicable not only in deciphering the message of the Bible but also in construing the spiritual meaning of present-day events. This means that the biblical parallels cannot be perceived only as commonplace references to blank clichés, but must be understood as expressions of a code or linguistic framework that structured the understanding of contemporary events.⁵⁵

As such, the tradition of figural interpretation was based on two assumptions: firstly, that God's activity in order to save the world and bring humanity to redemption was consistent throughout history; secondly, that this kind of interpretation refers to historical (or at least allegedly historical) events, persons, and institutions and must be separated from any kind of theological or philosophical allegory.⁵⁶ The latter point has been emphasized by Erich Auerbach, who in a classic article defined *figura* as a relation between two historical situations:

Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life.⁵⁷

Fundamental to the interpretation is that it concerned temporal events as testimonies of God's *oikonomia* or "economy" of salvation. This economy was believed to be following a timeless pattern that repeated itself from generation to generation, but – as pointed out by Auerbach – since it was hidden and mysterious, interpretation became

⁵⁵ Kevin Killeen, "Veiled Speech: Preaching, Politics and Scriptural Typology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Preaching*, eds. Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington, and Emma Rhatigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 401. The ubiquity of figural thinking in the early modern period has been demonstrated by many scholars. For a few examples, see Steven N. Zwicker, *Dryden's Political Poetry: The Typology of King and Nation* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1972); Joseph. A. Galdon, *Typology and Seventeenth-Century Literature*, De Proprietatibus Litterarum. Series Maior (The Hague: Mouton, 1975); Earl Miner, ed., *Literary Uses of Typology from the Late Middle Ages to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Paul J. Korshin, *Typologies in England, 1650–1820* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Valborg Lindgärde, *Jesu Christi Pijnos Historia rijmwijs betrachtad. Svenska passionsdikter under 1600- och 1700-talet* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1996); Mary Morrissey, "Elect Nations and Prophetic Preaching: Types and Examples in the Paul's Cross Jeremiad," in *The English Sermon Revised: Religion, Literature and History 1600–1750*, eds. Lori Anne Ferrell and Peter E. McCullough (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Kevin Killeen, *The Political Bible in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁵⁶ Cf. David L. Baker, *Two Testaments, One Bible: A Study of the Theological Relationship between the Old and New Testaments* (Leicester: Apollos, 1991), 267.

⁵⁷ Auerbach, "Figura," 53.

necessary, and in order to clarify the ways in which God was working in the mundane world, historic parallels or “typologies” were pinpointed that made it possible to understand the course of events and to discern the deeper meaning of history. In its most basic form, the method meant that correspondences were established between the Old and New Testaments, where the stories of the former were read as adumbrations or “prefigurations” of the latter, which in turn were supposed to complete or “fulfill” the meaning of the former, as for example when Christ was portrayed as a second Adam and when his death and resurrection was paralleled with the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt.⁵⁸

Sometimes figural interpretation has been identified exclusively with the establishment of “typologies” within the Bible, especially as connections between “types” and “antitypes” are already pointed out in the New Testament.⁵⁹ In principle, however, it represented a way of understanding human existence rather than a technique for textual analysis, and as has been demonstrated by many scholars, it was soon applied to the history of the Christian church. Temporal events were believed to bear witness to God’s providential care for his chosen people, and in contrast to other ancient mythologies, the Bible depicted a *mythos* still unfolding in time. According to Northrop Frye, a characteristic feature of the figural interpretation – or “typology” – was that the meaning of history was believed to reveal itself diachronically: “Typology is a figure of speech that moves in time: the type exists in the past and the antitype in the present, or the type exists in the present and the antitype in the future. What typology really is as a mode of thought, what it both assumes and leads to, is a theory of history, or more accurately of historical process.”⁶⁰

The main key to the understanding of history provided the story of Christ, which was believed to have fulfilled the Old Covenant and revealed the true essence of salvation. Nonetheless, when it came to the era of the Christian church and the life within the new dispensation, the pattern was often taken from the accounts of the Israelite people of the old dispensation, whose experiences were supposed to make latter-day Christians able to recognize the spiritual forces at work in human affairs of their own lifetime. The Old Testament narratives were believed to be relevant to all times, and in the fortunes of the Israelites, the blessings following from faithfulness to God were made plain along with the punishments that were the

58 In Anglo-American research, “typology” has frequently been taken to denote the tradition of figural interpretation in its entirety. However, in Lutheran-Orthodox hermeneutics, *typologia* referred specifically to historical parallels within the Bible, as a part of the *sensus literalis*, whereas figural interpretation was considered as being a kind of spiritual reading, expounding the *sensus mysticus* of the Scriptures. Cf. Goppelt, *Typos*, 6–7 and Bengt Hägglund, *Die Heilige Schrift und ihre deutung in der Theologie Johann Gerhards. Eine Untersuchung über das alllutherische Schriftverständnis* (Lund: Gleerup, 1951), 229–36.

59 Cf. Goppelt, *Typos*, 61–205.

60 Frye, *The Great Code*, 80–81.

inevitable consequence of infidelity and disobedience. As a hermeneutical tool working “vertically” through time, the figural mode turned the Jerusalem code into a cornerstone of Christian understanding of sacred history.

Employed in this way, the Jerusalem code presented a dramatized vision of history, presenting a “storyworld” offering a set of typical roles and situations, and to the two principles already mentioned, I would like to add that God’s providential care was imagined to be fathomable only in the form of a narrative, unfolding in time. The moral and spiritual lessons following from the Old Testament were not theoretical or philosophical in nature, but embedded in narrative structures that visualized God’s guidance of the world.⁶¹ In the scholarly debate in Sweden, this poetic or mythic character of the Jerusalem code has been noted by Carl-Axel Aurelius, who has called attention to the doctrine of providence as a tacit presupposition underlying the Old Testament dominance in seventeenth-century preaching. Characteristic of this doctrine was that the ways in which God’s providential care was operating were believed to be revealed in the stories of the Israelites: “The Old Testament was in the first place regarded, not as a book of laws but as a book of history, God’s history with the people of Israel – and with any people. As such it tells about God’s providence, and this article [of faith] seems to be one of the self-evident presuppositions of the seventeenth century.”⁶² In the accounts of the Israelites, early modern readers could study divine providence at work, guiding and supporting his chosen people, but also disciplining and punishing them when deviating from the covenant. At the same time as the stories provided a narrative structure to which contemporary events could be compared, present-day situations were transposed into a biblical setting that favoured certain attitudes and practices.

A feature of seventeenth-century Lutheran preaching that has often been commented on, is the recurrent criticism of the listeners’ religious and moral behaviour, as well as the description of war, famine, and disease as self-inflicted divine punishments, due to the people’s lack of faith and unwillingness to follow God’s commandments.⁶³ This can easily be applied to the prayer day proclamations and other Swedish texts relating to the Jerusalem code, which regularly portrayed the moral standard of the Swedes in dark colours and contained sharp exhortations to repentance

61 This narrative character has been underlined by Frye, who has described the plot of the Bible as a series of promises, disasters, and deliverances, started by the fall of man and leading through history to the restoration of the heavenly Jerusalem. Frye, *The Great Code*, 169–98.

62 Aurelius, “‘Sverige, känn dig själv,’” 117.

63 See, for example, Ingvar Kalm, *Studier i svensk predikan under 1600-talets första hälft med särskild hänsyn till Gamla Testamentets ställning* (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1948), 80–99; Ivarsson, *Predikans uppgift*, 140–52; Aurelius, “‘Sverige, känn dig själv,’” 110–15; Peter Ericsson *Opuscula Historica Upsaliensia* 35, “Det välsignade konunga regemente. Johannes Rudbeckius och makten,” in *Gud, konung och undersåtar. Politisk predikan i Sverige under tidigmodern tid*, ed. Peter Ericsson (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2007), 82–91, 129–34. For Danish-Norwegian examples, see Eivor Andersen Oftestad’s article in this volume, 235–57.

and conversion. Being “watchmen on the walls of Zion”, the clergy were supposed to remind the inhabitants of their responsibility as members of a chosen nation, and rhetorically, the moralizing appeals can be perceived as a Lutheran parallel to the *sensus moralis* in medieval exegesis and homiletics.

In some cases, the harshness of the Israelite rhetoric has led scholars to characterize it as “negative” and aimed at “producing sinners”, that is promoting social discipline by instilling a feeling of inherent sinfulness among the listeners. It has also been argued that “the basic sinfulness of the people” constituted an “absolutist idea” principally opposed to any “positive national identity”.⁶⁴ This is not, however, a necessary conclusion. The moralizing appeal of the proclamations and sermons had nothing to do with absolutism or theocracy as political doctrines, nor is it self-evident that the national identity was strengthened only by “positive” models, reassuring the audience of their superiority to others and confirming success. On the contrary, there are many examples of the opposite, and in the case of early modern Sweden it is equally justified to argue that the Israelite language created a sense of shared destiny and a feeling of community in suffering, by reminding every listener of his or her religious responsibility for the well-being of the people. It is also noteworthy that these moralizing appeals were particularly employed in times of adversity or crisis, apparently in order to explain the hardships confronting the people and to assure the listeners that there was still a possibility of redemption by conversion and faith in God’s promises.⁶⁵ This clearly demonstrates that the moralizing rhetoric of many texts cannot be taken solely as efforts to inculcate societal discipline, but that it was also aimed at propagating a shared identity among the listeners.

It is against the background outlined above that I suggest we should understand the Israelite version of early modern Swedish nationhood. Based on the biblical accounts of the Israelite people, the Jerusalem code offered what Kevin Killeen has called “a primary discursive language of political thought” that was both coherent and flexible and able to be employed in different settings and for differing purposes.⁶⁶ The understanding of the present situation was modelled upon the Old Testament “storyworld”, which offered a narrative structure to which the fortunes of the country could be compared and a set of role models, ranging from the king and those in power to the humblest peasant. As a rhetorical tool, the code made it

⁶⁴ Forssberg, *Att hålla folket på gott humör*, 99; Ericsson, *Stora nordiska kriget förklarar*, 90; Ihalainen, *Protestant Nations Redefined*, 153.

⁶⁵ Cf. Forssberg, *Att hålla folket på gott humör*, 97–99.

⁶⁶ Killeen emphasizes that the Bible, and the Old Testament in particular, offered a “scriptural lens”, by which questions about politics, statehood, and nationhood were transposed into an Israelite setting, making what is here called the Jerusalem code the “normative medium of commentary on contemporary events”, Killeen, “Veiled Speech,” 388. For a further discussion, see Kevin Killeen, *The Political Bible in Early Modern England*. Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

possible to situate early modern Sweden within sacred history and invest contemporary political events with a deeper meaning. In Antiquity, the Israelite model of nationhood had been related to the universal Christian church, but already in the Middle Ages it was used – as demonstrated by Adrian Hastings – to identify national communities, and when autocephalous Protestant state churches emerged in Europe after the Reformation, the model was applied not only to them, but by implication also to the states to which they belonged. During the early modern era this practice became widely employed in Europe, particularly in Protestant countries like England and the Netherlands, but sometimes also in Catholic countries, for example in Austria during the reign of Emperor Leopold I.⁶⁷ The close connection to the state was particularly strong in early modern Sweden, where the relationships between state, church, and nation were inextricably intertwined throughout the period.

A Spiritual Israel

As pointed out by many scholars, the figural mode represented a flexible and multifaceted strategy of reading the Bible and interpreting history. Typically, however, this understanding was metaphorical rather than literal in nature, referring to the “spirit” rather than to the “flesh”, and concluding what previously has been said in this chapter, I want to return finally to Ihalainen’s wish for clearer evidence of a “direct” and “serious” continuity between early modern Sweden and the Old Testament Israelites.⁶⁸

As already mentioned, Ihalainen takes for granted that any kind of “direct” and “serious” continuity must be founded in some positive act of election or translation that manifestly designated the Swedes as God’s new chosen people in singular. In early modern millennialism there certainly existed notions of such an election, for example when the Puritans in New England claimed that they were a new nation elect and when Swedish Karl XI was assigned the role of a chosen king by a prophet named Eva Margareta Frölich and was supposed to inaugurate the thousand-year kingdom of Christ on Earth.⁶⁹ There were also the widespread notions of *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii*, according to which a certain power or body of knowledge had been handed over from one people or country to another throughout history, thereby investing specific churches, countries, or rulers with special

⁶⁷ Cf. Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 195–96.

⁶⁸ Killeen, “Veiled Speech,” 389.

⁶⁹ Frölich’s life and prophecies are described in Bo Andersson, “Eva Margaretha Frölich. Nationell eskatologi och profetisk auktoritet,” *Kyrkohistorisk årsskrift* 91 (1991): 57–81.

authority.⁷⁰ Characteristic of all these notions was that history was supposed to be linear, consisting of a series of divine elections or transfers of chosenness that had taken place consecutively and established a genealogical continuity “horizontally” over time.⁷¹ This way of construing a historical continuity must, however, be clearly separated from the tradition of figural interpretation described above, which instead operated “vertically”, by establishing connections to God’s mysterious plan or *oikonomia* of salvation throughout history. Rather than presuming any kind of linear continuity, the figural mode was based on a direct observation of resemblances between historical events, which were connected to each other regardless of causal circumstances. From this follows that Ihalainen – by postulating what seems to be an almost supersessionist idea of a positive act of divine election or translation that supersedes earlier elections as a necessary condition for a “serious” identification – blinds himself to the way in which the imagined continuity between Old Testament Israel and the states of early modern Europe were actually established.

In Lutheran theology, the figural interpretation was part of the *sensus mysticus* of the Scripture and, as observed by Auerbach, the figural connections identified were supposed to be “spiritual” and results of an interpretive act founded in faith.⁷² Typical of the *figura* was that two or more historical situations were related to each other immediately over time, with no interceding instances, and rhetorically it worked like a metaphor, bringing separate entities together on the ground of some shared quality.

A good illustration of this metaphorical character of the *figura* is the poem by Spegel quoted in the introduction of this chapter, where the ruling position of the Lutheran confession in seventeenth-century Sweden was compared to the superiority of the sun among the heavenly bodies as well as with God’s assistance to the ancient Israelites by making the sun stand still in the sky for an entire day. Together the three stanzas form the figure of a rhetorical *incrementum*, and whereas the natural sun is referring to the level of creation, the halting of the sun in the sky refers to the old dispensation, and both examples together are portrayed as pointing forward to the “sun of righteousness” shining over Lutheran Sweden as the fulfilment of God’s promises of his providential care for his people. The relationship between the three instances illustrates the metaphorical character of the figural interpretation and demonstrates the spiritual nature of Sweden’s position as a new Israel: the continuity between the two nations was not imagined to be the result of any “horizontal” translation, but was established “vertically” throughout history on the basis of a spiritual or “mystical” resemblance grounded in God’s *oikonomia* of salvation.

⁷⁰ In line with this is also *translatio templi*, discussed in Eivor Andersen Oftestads article *Translatio Templi*, in volume 1 of this series, 49–55.

⁷¹ See, for example, Raphael Falco, *Cultural Genealogy: An Essay on Early Modern Myth* (London: Routledge, 2017).

⁷² Auerbach, “Figura,” 53–60. About *sensus mysticus* and *figura*, see Häggglund, *Die heilige schrift und ihre deutung*, 229–41.

Another example that illustrates the spiritual and metaphorical nature of the *figura* can be found in the sermon by Johannes Botvidi, mentioned previously, in which Sweden was identified as a new Israel: having declared that the Swedes had become “true Israelites”, Botvidi immediately reminded his listeners that this designation was to be understood “not according to the flesh, but according to the promise” (*icke effter Kötet, uthan effter Löfftet*). The Swedes were truly Israelites, but spiritually, according to their Lutheran faith rather than according to descent or ethnicity.⁷³ In a similar way, another preacher reassured his listeners that God’s promises of protection and salvation in the Old Testament were still binding to the Swedes living in the new dispensation (*wij i thet Nya Testamentet*), but emphasized that they should be understood as spiritual and figural in character.⁷⁴

The metaphorical nature of the figural identification is also evident with respect to the question of whether there was or was not a belief in a national covenant with God in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Sweden. In his study, Ihalainen rejects the existence of such a concept, arguing that there is only scarce evidence of “covenant theology” in Swedish state sermons from the eighteenth century and that most passages mentioning a covenant in fact allude to the spiritual bond formed in baptism between God and the individual Christian.⁷⁵ His observations are certainly correct, and it is worth noting that it is difficult to find references to covenant theology in seventeenth-century Swedish preaching: the references observed by Östlund in the prayer day proclamations reminding the listeners to “return to covenant, grace and friendship with God” and “remain in the covenant of grace established with God” also reflect the Lutheran doctrine of baptism as a *foedus gratiae*.⁷⁶ Ihalainen’s position may thus appear strong. Nonetheless, I would argue that there is good reason to insist on the existence of a figural identification with the covenant between God and Israel in the Old Testament. One reason is the fact that a national covenant is actually mentioned, sometimes – as noted by Anna Maria Forssberg – in the prayer day proclamations, but most frequently in panegyric poems and orations, like Spiegel’s poem mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, as well as in the 1697 oration where Karl XII’s accession to the throne was portrayed as a latter-day parallel to the Davidic covenant in 2 Sam 7.⁷⁷ Also noteworthy is the fact that the calls to conversion addressed to all inhabitants of the Swedish kingdom on the prayer days turned the individuals’ baptismal covenants into a collective, national one.

This evidence must not, however, be taken to imply that Spiegel or anyone else in a leading position really believed in an actual covenant between God and Sweden, or in some kind of divine predilection for the Swedish nation as such. The

⁷³ Botvidi, “Tree predikningar,” 38. Cf. Gudmundsson, *Konfessionell krigsmakt*, 156.

⁷⁴ Ullberg, “Segern vid Narva – en gudagåva,” 177, 189–92.

⁷⁵ Ihalainen, *Protestant Nations Redefined*, 154.

⁷⁶ Cf. Östlund, *Lyckolandet*, 105.

⁷⁷ Forssberg, *Att hålla folket på gott humör*, 97–98.

nature of the national covenant was figural, and rather than founded in any manifest act or theological doctrine it was metaphorical: rhetorically it functioned like a figure of thought, moving in time as noted by Northrop Frye and identifying Sweden as a spiritual realization of God's promises to the faithful in the Bible. When Spegel portrayed the jubilee in 1693 as the renewal of a national covenant concluded by the adoption of the *Confessio Augustana* a hundred years earlier, he certainly did not imply that the decision of Uppsala the assembly was to be understood as a positive act of divine election what he actually suggested, was that Sweden's commitment to the Lutheran faith should be interpreted as a spiritual "fulfilment" of God's covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai, with the Christian Bible as correlate to the Mosaic Law, obligating the inhabitants to identify themselves as Lutherans.

On this point, it is worth observing that the identification with Old Testament Israel seems to have been primarily intended for domestic use, to promote a Lutheran identity among the subjects of the Swedish realm. Claims of a unique national destiny are rare, and the references to the Old Testament appear to have been employed neither to propagate contempt for other confessions or nations, nor to suggest that the Swedish people were the only object of God's predilection. This fact should be noted, as we have seen it was possible for several countries – for example Sweden, England, and the Netherlands – to simultaneously identify themselves as peoples of God. The identification certainly meant that one's own country was given a special position, but it was seldom used in order to claim a solitary chosenness or to exclude other states or nations from the Christian community, and it was fully possible to identify one's own country with the biblical Israel without necessarily questioning others' Christian belief or confessional identity.⁷⁸ In his study, Östlund has argued that the recurrent argumentation in the prayer day proclamations in favour of Christian unity in Europe proves that confessional religion was irrelevant to early modern Swedish nationhood.⁷⁹ In light of what has been said about the tradition of figural interpretation it is, however, clear that this is a precipitous conclusion. In the figural mode, people were believed to be able to maintain several levels of religious loyalty (Lutheran, Protestant, Christian), and the identification of one own's country as an elect nation seems generally to have been fully compatible with identifying it as a part of a larger, universal Christian community.

Typical of the Israelite language was thus that several identifications could be appropriated simultaneously, and the fact that Sweden was depicted as Lutheran nation protected by God must not be taken to imply that other nations were believed to be abandoned by God or denied the possibility of recognizing themselves

⁷⁸ Killeen has noted that the Israelite identification in seventeenth-century England was normally imagined to be contingent, without claims to exclusiveness. Killeen, "Veiled Speech," 394.

⁷⁹ Östlund, *Lyckolandet*, 101–03.

as chosen peoples. That God's election had been removed from the Jews and transferred to the Christians was usually considered as a given fact, and at Haquin Spegel's funeral in Uppsala in 1714, the congregation was told that the Swedes had been "coopted" by God "out of sheer love", in the place of the "disobedient" and "obstinate" Jewish nation.⁸⁰ Sometimes the adversaries of the Swedish realm were also compared to the enemies of Old Testament Israel, as for instance in 1623, when the Habsburg empire was paralleled with heathen Babylon, and in 1701, when the attacking Russians were equated with the Egyptians and Amalekites.⁸¹ But on the whole, these kind of parallels are remarkably few, and in general the wars with neighbouring states were portrayed as divine punishments due to the Swedes' religious laxity, rather than godly sanctioned campaigns to conquer foreign nations or raise feelings of national self-esteem. The claims to chosenness were spiritual and figural, and rather than being *the* new Israel, replacing other nations or denominations, Sweden was identified as *another* people of God, equivalent to the ancient Israelites.

⁸⁰ Helander, *Neo-Latin Literature in Sweden in the Period 1620–1720*, 410–11.

⁸¹ Cf. Erik Ringmar, *Identity, Interest and Action: A Cultural Explanation of Sweden's Intervention in the Thirty Years War*, Cambridge Cultural Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Forssberg, *Att hålla folket på gott humör*, 90–112; Ullberg, "Segern vid Narva – en gudagåva".

