

## The apophatic way

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In a work of consummate scholarship entitled *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality*, Belden Lane examines wild terrain and spiritual life.<sup>1</sup> He considers the experience of mountains and deserts to exude the qualities of winter, and that they are more kenotic than pleromic. They convey us to our edges, and it is in these liminal places that people reflect on their antecedents, and consider their future. One geographer contended that definitions of mountains are as much a function of stories attached to them as their physical properties.<sup>2</sup> Mountains set personal limits and demand personal energy. They are areas of uncertainty. Psychogeographers argue that internal mental maps play a formidable role in defining mountains. Thus in addition to geodetic qualities there are also symbolic categorizations. Hillman argues that the ascent of a mountain embraces the puer aeternus, the child-like wonder which engulfs us and leads to glory. Their rugged fierceness also favours encounters with God and ecstasy. In addition, the God of Sinai demands absolute trust because of its location.

The vertical dimension has an enormous effect on Judeo-Christian theology. Its profound influence portrays a sense of increasing worth at higher elevations. This is especially true in a spiritual sense if we accept what Rudolf Otto defined as 'the holy' or 'numinous' or 'wholly other' as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.<sup>3</sup> Mircea Eliade noted "the mountain occurs among the images that express the connection between heaven and earth."<sup>4</sup> Mountains are detached from ordinary human life, they are realms seldom encroached upon, and are invested with mystery and

foreboding. God's spiritual characteristics are metaphysically expressed in mountains: inaccessibility, transcendence, awesomeness, immovability and eternity. We find this metaphor rendered explicitly in Psalm 125: 1-2

Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion  
which cannot be moved, but abides for ever,  
As the mountains are  
round about Jerusalem,  
as the Lord is round about his people,  
From this time forth and for evermore.

The aspirational aspects of the vertical dimension are expressed in Psalm 121: 1-2

I lift up my eyes to the hills  
From whence does my help come?  
My help comes from the Lord  
Who made heaven and earth.

As noted, Judeo-Christian literature is replete with references to mountains. Suffice it here to mention a few. Sometimes they are the locus of specific significant events. Abraham bound Isaac on Mount Moriah, intending to sacrifice him, but this was averted by the provision by Yahweh of a ram caught by its horns in a thicket (Genesis 22: 9-14). The mountains of Gilboa were the site of another sacrifice for Israel, the deaths of Saul and Jonathan which David laments:

Thy glory, O Israel  
Is slain upon thy high places!  
Let there be no dew or rain upon you  
(2 Samuel 1: 19, 21)

Mount Carmel is featured prominently in biblical literature. The Shunammite woman visited Elisha there (2 Kings 4: 25), and Elijah's victory over the prophets of Baal, in which his oblation

was consumed by fire in contrast to that of prophets of Baal, took place on this mountain (1 Kings 18: 20-40).

Mountains also form prominent locations in the Christian New Testament. Jesus was on a mount when he delivered the beatitudes (Matthew, 5). When Jesus met a Samaritan woman at a well, she made reference to the rival temple on Mount Gerizim (John 4: 20).

This chapter, however, will focus on three specific mountains in the Judeo-Christian literature, namely Sinai, Zion, and Tabor. All are of colossal importance in terms of their spirituality, and it could be contended they exceed all other mountains in this respect.

The first problem to be addressed is geographical, namely that of their precise locations. We will commence with Mount Sinai. An excellent discourse on this is provided by Hobbs.<sup>5</sup> The Sinai

Peninsula, roughly triangular in shape is bounded by the Mediterranean Sea, the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aquaba. Its northern latitude is approximately 31°10'N., while its vertex, Ras Muhammad, is 27°43'N. The south of the peninsula, the Upper Sinai massif, which rises to 2665 metres, contains Precambrian rocks, the most common of which is red Ikna granite, estimated to be 580 million years old. Uplift occurred in the Micocene Epoch approximately 25 to 10 million years ago. This uplift precipitated volcanic activity, and in places dicrite, ignimbrite, chyolite and syenite overlie the granite. The principal mountains include Jebel Katarina, and Jebel Musa.

May to mid-September is generally cloudless, and in July and August the mean maximum temperature is 34°C at Saint Katharine Monastery, whose elevation is 1600 metres. Snow comes in November, and in January and February on Jebel Katarina's summit (2665 metres) temperatures may fall to -14°C.

Hobbs discusses the meanings of Sinai and Horeb.<sup>6</sup> Were they identical? In his discussion of the cosmic mountain in the Old Testament, Richard Clifford makes an interesting comment. He contends that in the Elohist and Deuteronomic sources, the equivalent of Sinai, Horeb, is located in diverse settings. In Exodus 33: 6, Moses went to Horeb, the mountain of God, and Kings 19: 8 reveals that Elijah spent 40 days at this mountain. In the 14 other references, mountain is not used as a term. It is an indefinite location

where Yahweh reveals himself, and not simply the counterpart of Sinai in the Yahwist and Priestly traditions.<sup>7</sup>

Various suggestions are made as to the meaning of Horeb including arid mountain, disintegrating mountain, and desert place. Jebel Musa and Jebel Katerina have been likened to breasts, *sine* in Persian.<sup>8</sup> Bedouins affirm that the name Sinai is derived from the Arab word *sinn* (tooth) as a result of the jagged appearance. Another suggestion is that the name is derived from the Hebrew word *seneh*, which translates as bush or the burning bush.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps this is because the shrub is located there or that pyrolusite provides tree-like patterns on Jebel Katarina and Jebel Musa. Another possibility is that Sinai's peaks mean 'mountains of the moon'. Sin was the Mesopotamian moon god, and this term was possibly provided by the Assyrians in the eighth century BCE, subsequent to their domination of the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>10</sup>

Other clues as to Sinai's location may lie in the biblical references to quail and manna which provided the Israelites with food. Numbers 11: 31 refers to quails (*coternix coternix*) being delivered by a sea-wind at Yahweh's fiat, and they lay two cubits deep on the ground for a distance of one day's march on either side of the camp at Kibroth-ha-Tavaah. Perhaps the scale is exaggerated but such birds currently are frequent on Sinai's Mediterranean Coast during their autumnal migration. In the 1930s Alexandria and Port Said were deemed to be invaded by quails.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly manna may have been a natural resource of the area. *Trabatina mannipara* and *Najacuccus serpentina*s are two insect species, and in the mountainous highlands of Sinai's South and in its lowland North they infest tamarisk trees. They suck its sap which is rich in carbohydrates, and remnants of it form on the tree, and these small globules descend to the ground.<sup>12</sup> It is edible and currently Bedouins indulge in its taste.

These foods may provide clues as to the route of the Exodus and thus to the location of Sinai. Generally it is believed that the Exodus took place between 1500 and 1200 BCE. One suggested route is a northern one near to the Mediterranean Coast.<sup>13</sup> Here quail are more abundant than in the south, and so is the tamarisk tree which has been suggested as a source of manna. This suggestion is strengthened by the fact that Serabit al-Khadim to

the south was heavily garrisoned by the Egyptians because of its mining, and this would deter the Israelites. Others do not concur with this view and argue that Pharaoh's troops would use the 'way of the Philistines' and that a southern route through the high Sinai mountains would provide more adequate water and pasture for large numbers of people and their flocks.<sup>14</sup> There is yet a third school of thought which contends that the 'Way of Shut' provided a central passage for the Exodus since it was least used by Egyptians.<sup>15</sup>

Sinai still poses problems as to its location and height. Exodus 14: 1 relates that its location is in the desert of Sinai but makes no reference to its height or appearance. Perhaps its vagueness results from its celestial connections. Exodus 14: 17 affirms death of anyone who touches it, and contact with this sacred place is forbidden.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps Jebel Musa is still its most likely location. To some the artwork in Serabit al-Khadim in west-central Sinai suggests it is Sinai, but Egyptian turquoise mining makes it an unlikely location for Hebrew refugees. It has also been contended that Har Karkom, 80 kilometres northwest of Eilat, is the scared mountain. Its rock art and remains suggest it was an important place of worship.<sup>17</sup> However, its remains date to the Bronze Age, approximately 2900-2000 BCE, and thus it pre-dates the accepted dates for the Exodus, and thus it is an unlikely site. Some suggested Sinai is many miles from its traditional location. Included here are Petra and Jebel Baghir, northeast of Aqaba. Another unlikely location is in northwest Arabia between Wadi 'Araba and Wadi Ithm. Robertson<sup>18</sup> argues for this location and cites St Paul (Galatians 4: 25) "Now Sinai is a mountain in Arabia ... ." As we have noted, some aver a northern route for the Exodus, and thus potential locations are in southern Israel or northern Sinai. Jebel Sin Bisher and Jebel Halaal are suggested locations.

Most geographers and scholars, however, assume a southern route for the Exodus and assume a high peak in the southern part of the Sinai Peninsula to be the location.

The real Sinai demands three elements. First, it must be a mountain peak overlooking an area where people stood. Second, sufficient space for a multitude must be adjacent to it, and third this space must allow people to approach but not touch it. These criteria suggest Jebel Musa or Jebel Serbal as the true Sinai. The

latter is a sacred mountain to Bedouin. They take off their shoes in homage to it. Its ruggedness supports this claim.

Jebel Musa, however, is still the favourite. It is vindicated by the requirements of Exodus. The multitude of Israelites could have been accommodated on the Plain of ar-Raaha. But then which peak was Sinai? Was it the highest summit of Jebel Musa? The highest peak is blocked from view from ar-Raaha by Ras Safsaafa. Ritter argued that it was essential for the campers to see the place of the law-giving.<sup>19</sup> Jebel Musa's highest eastern summit was favoured, and if this were the case the camping ground would be Wadi Asha'iyya and not ar-Raaha. The former could certainly support flocks.

The burning bush (seneh) may give further clues. It has been identified as *Loranthus acacia*. This is a parasite whose crimson flowers decorate acacia trees. When the sun blazes through its leaves it looks like a flaming fire. The plant is known in Sinai today.<sup>20</sup>

Meteorological and geological phenomena may also suggest locations. A Sinaitic cumulus cloud, black in the centre and white at the edges, which extends from horizon to the zenith and frequently emits lightning could be the pillar of fire and cloud.<sup>21</sup> This cloud precedes heavy weather in Sinai, and thus it is possible that it was responsible for the drowning of the Egyptian host. Moses may also have been aware as a result of his stay in Midian that porous limestone when struck with a stick would produce water.<sup>22</sup> This phenomenon can be demonstrated in Sinai.

Perhaps the pyrotechnical theophany suggests Sinai was a volcano. This could generate fear and thus inhibit the Israelites from ascending it. However we contend that the most likely site for Sinai is Jebel Musa.

Although the location of Mount Zion has been subject to conjecture, there is a relatively short distance between its suggested sites, and certainly not the large geographical displacement that there is for suggested sites for Sinai. Levenson avers that Zion was a hill in eastern Jerusalem located between the Tyropoean and Kidron Valleys. What is currently called Mount Zion is located across the Tyropoean Valley from ancient Zion, and is to its southwest. The Mount Zion of today was only designated as such

in Byzantine times, and scholars deem it inaccurate. Perhaps this misunderstanding partly arises from the fact that many tourists consider the current city walls as very ancient but in fact they were constructed four and a half centuries ago in Turkish times. Current geography can help create false impressions. Jerusalem of the Hebrew Bible in the era of the monarchies was located at the current site of the village of Silwan, southeast of the old city. Biblical references to Zion generally refer to the Temple Mount which supports the highly impressive mosque, the Dome of the Rock. Complications arise from the fact that Jerusalem's name changed several times as a result of local geopolitics. For Jews the city is Jerusalem, for Arabs the term is Alquds, the name being derived from their word for holy. Prior to David's conquest the city was designated as the Stronghold of Zion (1 Samuel 5: 7) The conquest took place at approximately 1000 BCE. Letters from the Canaanite King of Jerusalem to his overlord, the Egyptian Pharaoh in the fourteenth century BCE, bear testimony to the fact that the name was Jerusalem, it being an important city state in the Late Bronze Age. Psalm 76: 3 refers to Salem as God's tent, and Zion as his dwelling place. Thus it is transparent that Jerusalem was also referred to as Salem, actually the name of a Canaanite deity. Abraham was also blessed by the priest-king of Salem (Genesis 14: 18), and Levenson considers this was possible in adumbration of regal and priestly functions commencing with King David.<sup>23</sup>

What was the mountain of the Transfiguration? Was it possibly Mount Hermon? The scriptures' reference to intense whiteness may reflect Hermon's covering of snow. However, by the late fourth century CE Tabor had been identified as the mount of the Transfiguration in Mark 9. Thomas affirms that its name is derived from the Hebrew word *Tabbus* meaning navel.<sup>24</sup> Lowe mentions that it has a gentle rounded form, a shape similar to the Greek carved stone at Delphi, which was regarded by the Greeks as the centre of the universe.<sup>25</sup> Tabor is 1730 feet high but appears imposing because of its location on a plain north of Megiddo. Lane cites Eliseus, an Armenian who made a pilgrimage to Tabor in the seventh century CE. It provides a major contrast to the desert barrenness of Sinai:

Around it are springing wells of water and many densely planted trees, which blossom from the rain of the clouds and produce all kinds of sweet fruits and delightful scents; there are also vines which give wine worthy for kings to drink ... The path by which the Lord ascended is winding, twisting this way and that; [but] whoever wishes to climb up to pray can easily make the ascent.<sup>26</sup>

We now turn to the spiritual aspects of Sinai, Zion and Tabor. The theophany at Mount Sinai is perplexing. No metaphor is adequate to describe it. Exodus 19: 16-22 creates the impression of a hurricane with its attendant fire, lightning and cloud. Verse 18 suggests a putative volcano with its contingent fire and smoke. Fear induces quaking in the people.<sup>27</sup> The domains of God and Israel intersect here. Only the octogenarian Moses may ascend the mountain Yahweh has descended. If the people try to ascend Sinai, jeopardy and destruction await them. Sinai creates awe and mystery which Rudolf Otto aptly describes as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (a fearsome and fascinating mystery).<sup>28</sup> Nobody can explain the theophany granted to Moses. Some traditions affirm Sinai and Horeb as identical but we cannot be sure this is the case. Psalm 68: 8-9 and 16-19 are perhaps examples of Israel's oldest poetry, and probably predate the Pentateuchal narrative. These verses record a military march by Yahweh and his retinue<sup>29</sup> across wasteland which divides the mountain from Israel. The divide is significant. In this earlier narrative Sinai has a very close connection with Yahweh; it is his abode and has a closer association than simply a place where the law was revealed. In the earlier tradition it is Yahweh's favourite dwelling place, and interestingly not in Israel. It was here that two attributes of Yahweh combine, a bush and a fire. The Deuteronomistic homilist (4: 254) defines God as a devouring fire, but neither predominate. Perhaps the most important point is that God's disclosure occurs in a remote wilderness, detached from state authority.<sup>30</sup>

In Psalm 97: 8 Yahweh's theophany and apparition have been transferred from Sinai to Zion. The latter has absorbed the former.<sup>31</sup> Yahweh is no longer remote from human governance. Also post-

biblical rabbis revered its location. Solomon's Temple was deemed to have been built there, and Abraham's attempted sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moriah occurred in the same place. Zion and Moriah are possibly identical. Both Sinai and Zion have attributes of the cosmic mountain which we must now consider. The identification is stronger in the case of Zion. Levenson designates five principal attributes defining the cosmic mountain.<sup>32</sup> He confirms that centrality is possibly the most important of these. Primitive minds regarded geography as a manifestation of transcendent reality. Levenson posits this view so aptly:

It is difficult to imagine ... that ancient Israel possessed such a highly developed empirical geography that she could imagine Jerusalem as physically central, but geometrically peripheral. The notion that something can be spiritually central but physically peripheral is quite modern; it was rigorously attacked only four centuries ago, in the age of Copernicus and Galileo.<sup>33</sup>

Eliade articulates the second attribute well: "The temple or sacred city, in turn, as the place through which the Axis Mundi (the axis of the world) passes is held to be a point of junction between heaven, earth, and hell."<sup>34</sup> The Temple Mount is a major locus of communication between God and man.

Thirdly Levenson considers the issue of perception of time on the cosmic mountain. In empirical or linear time each event has a predecessor, and does not return, and Eliade defines this succession as profane time. By contrast there is what Eliade defined as *illud tempus*. Temporality is unimportant and the moment transcends time. In this case divine creative energy endures. Time decay and its ravages do not impact upon the divine on the cosmic mountain.<sup>35</sup>

Also the Temple Mount is very sacred space and is differentiated by this sacrality from the surrounding world. This latter cannot impinge on the holy. The perfection of the divine presence is guarded.

There are also associations with the Garden of Eden. J. Dochment in its creation narrative (Genesis 2: 4-14) makes

reference to precious stones in close proximity to Eden as does Ezekiel (28: 4-5, 13-14) in a reference to Eden on God's mountain. The primal beauty of Eden is preserved on the Temple Mount. The priordial river of Eden bifurcates into four distributaries, namely the Pishon, Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates. Some considered a miraculous stream to flow from the cosmic mountain. Springs were sacrificial in nature. David instructed that Solomon be anointed in the spring of the Gihon to express his kingship.

Mount Zion is conceived as the centre of the world, and it provides the junction between heaven and earth, a place of communication. There are, however, antecedents to the conception of Zion as a cosmic mountain which we must now consider.

A fascinating account of the cosmic mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament is provided by Richard Clifford.<sup>36</sup> He affirms that gods meet on these heights, and they are the meeting place of heaven and earth. Decrees are issued from them, conflicting natural forces use them as a battleground, and they are the source of fertility and water. In the Hebrew Bible the cosmic mountain is best exemplified on Mount Zion since Yahweh chose to dwell there. There are, however, as mentioned, Canaanite antecedents. In 1929 the Ugaritic tablets were found at Ras Shamra, and they reveal that Baal-Hadad, the Canaanite storm god, has his dwelling place on Mount Zahon. Much of the lore which applies to the mountain applies to Mount Zion. Both are impregnable, the scene of battles and the abodes of gods. It is the divine presence which sets them apart.

The Canaanite concept of the cosmic mountain provides insight into the religious views of the peoples of the Syro-Palestinian littoral. Cosmic mountains were each associated with a different deity. El's mountain was a place of power and decree, but he did not decree a temple. Baal's Mount Zaphon was the locus of banqueting. He feted Koshar wa-Khasis prior to the latter's construction of his palace,<sup>37</sup> and when his temple was finished he gave a celebratory banquet to 70 gods.<sup>38</sup>

The Ugaritic text shows the mountain of Baal and El to be cosmic. El's mountain was a locus for decrees, gods met to debate issues, and paradisiac water provided fertility. Baal's mountain

endured combat which determined life and death. It also commemorated victories.

Motifs were transferred from Canaanite Zaphon to a hill in Israel. Exodus 15 provides examples of this. In some cases Zion is a reflex of Zaphon, the site of the Lord's presence, and inviolability against action. Psalm 48 bears testimony to this. Zaphon traditions are clearly revealed in this song. Phrases such as "City of our God", "His Holy Mountain", "The Beautiful Height", "Mount Zion" and "The Reaches of Zaphon" demonstrate this. Ugaritic texts of the second millennium BCE portray El's mountain as the location where the divine assembly meets, Baal is seen as inhabiting a mountain which had to withstand attacks from fearful adversaries. Mount Zion was a repository for Zaphon traditions including monstrous attacks, impregnability and the celebration of kingship.<sup>39</sup>

We now turn to a theoretical theological consideration of mountains in the Judeo-Christian tradition with emphasis on Sinai and Tabor.

Belden Lane discourses the apophatic tradition in Christian dialogue with relation to God as an inaccessible mountain.<sup>40</sup> The tradition began in the fourth century BCE as a criticism of theological presumption. He opines that it was a response to Neoplatonism advanced by Porphyry and Plutinus, but more importantly to Gregory of Nyssa's criticisms of the view of Eunomius. The latter was an advocate of the Arian heresy, and argued that the entire nature of the divine could be perceived by the human mind. Gregory thought God's nature could never be fathomed and cited Moses' Sinai experience of unknowing (agnosia) as an illustration of inability to have any comprehension of the divine mystery. It is impossible to create images for the deity. God may be a rock for Israel, but there are far more ways in which God is dissimilar to a rock. The apophatic tradition is a *via negativa*. Less is more. It stresses the incomprehensible and ineffable aspects of God.

The term apophatic is derived from the Greek, *apo* (beyond) and *phasis* (image). It is in direct contrast to the *kataphatic* view, whose genesis is *kata* (according to) and *phasis* (image). This latter sees metaphorical characteristics of God, who can be perceived as

lover, judge, father, still small voice, and raging fire. The kataphatic view is exemplified in Ignatian and Franciscan spiritualities which stress a love of nature and emphasize the five senses. The apophatic way embraces contemplative prayer, relinquishing naming and possessing, and following the *via negativa* which empties the self in silent contemplation. The apophatic way rejects all mental images from the natural world to portray the divine. It abandons the ego. As Saint Bonaventure noted *Ego dormio, sed cor meum vigilat*<sup>41</sup> (As the ego sleeps, the heart remains vigilant). The external false self disappears.

Lane aptly cites John of the Cross to exemplify the apophatic way:

There in the lucky dark,  
stealing in secrecy, by none espied;  
nothing for eyes to mark  
no other light, no guide  
but in my heart: that fire would not subside

That led me on - that dazzle truer  
than high noon is true  
to where there waited one  
I knew - how well I knew! -  
in a place where no one was in view.<sup>42</sup>

Sinai is within the apophatic domain. Thunder, lightning and a black cloud hide Yahweh. There is no divine image upon which to focus. It is a dark unknowing landscape of terror, but a theophany took place there, and this unknowing was extremely compelling to the imagination. The mountain is a disorienting place. It provokes both confusion and insight. It exhibits a fierce presence, and hides Yahweh's incomprehensible greatness. But he is covered by darkness, a canopy of thick cloud (Psalm 18: 17). Perhaps, most importantly, Sinai was barren and insignificant, and these were factors which recommended it as the locus of divine revelation.

In an excellent chapter Lane compares Sinai and Tabor as representing the apophatic and kataphatic ways.<sup>43</sup> The former exemplifies the apophatic approach to spirituality, and the latter

the kataphatic converse. However, they are interpenetrating and never totally dissonant. Sinai is fierce, barren, rugged and displays the divine's aniconic being. By contrast Tabor is light, green and clear, and lacks the disconcerting darkness of Sinai. The former possessed images, the latter lacked them.

Lane further affirms an overlaying of images for Sinai and Tabor.<sup>44</sup> The two mountains are juxtaposed in the synoptic accounts of the transfiguration in their overlay of Exodus 24 and 33. Both relate ascent of mountains and Moses and Jesus each take three friends up Sinai and Tabor respectively. Specifically, Moses ascended with Aaron, Nadab and Abiba, and Peter, James and John accompanied Jesus. There is also a double incorporation of the mountain of the old covenant into the mountain of the new. 2 Kings 1: 19 relates Elijah's theophany at Horeb/Sinai. The appearance of Moses and Elijah with Jesus on Tabor seals the overlay.

The glory, however, in both cases, is suffixed by suffering and loss. Moses had approached Yahweh on the mountain subsequent to his people's demands for a golden calf to worship (Exodus 32: 1). Elijah faced Jezebel's wrath and vengeance (1 Kings 19: 2). The transfiguration described in Mark 9 is deflated by announcements in the preceding and subsequent chapters of Jesus' rejection and suffering. The road from Tabor leads to Golgotha.<sup>45</sup> These apocalyptic visions give a taste of ecstasy and glimpses of future glory. As Lane avers:

It incorporates a theology of hope into a theology of abandonment and loss.<sup>46</sup>

Both mountains are also challenges to established orders. Moses had experienced the defeat of Egyptian oppression, Elijah had challenged Jezebel, and Jesus had demanded opposition to the authorities in Jerusalem. These mountains also symbolized identification with society's marginalized.<sup>47</sup>

As noted the mountains display opposites. The aniconic power of the apophatic tradition is found at Sinai. It is kenotic and there is a sparcity of images. (Lane aptly comments on spiritual poverty of postmodern culture in intentions to locate the iconographic

images of a parking lot and four-star restaurant at an assumed site of the burning bush).<sup>48</sup> Elijah at Horeb found no images of Yahweh in earthquake, wind and fire, but in the calm silence. By contrast Tabor exemplifies the kataphatic tradition with its clarity and provocative imagination giving rise to artistic expression. Its iconic character is revealed in its lucidity of image. Lane cautions that kataphatic approaches become over-confident and dogmatic without apophatic critique.<sup>49</sup>

The two mountains provide, albeit simplistically, masculine and feminine landscape appraisals. Fierce remote Sinai could be conceived as masculine, and gentle Tabor as a sweet mother.<sup>50</sup> Yet women love wilderness too. Inaccessible mountains compel the imagination and dreams occur. Yet size is not the major factor. Mount Scopus and the Mount of Olives overshadow diminutive Mount Zion, but the latter is a hillock of great faith and deep longing. Perhaps it is the most important mountain in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

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