<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assigning the Book of Lamentations a Place in the Canon</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Greg Goswell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will the Real Job Please Stand Up? Politico-Pastoral Exegesis of Job 38 in the Wake of Nicea</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Charles Meeks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Theological and Exegetical Significance of Leviticus as Intertext in Daniel 9</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By G. Geoffrey Harper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was King over Israel in Jerusalem”: Inerrancy and Authorial Ambiguity in Ecclesiastes</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Russell L. Meek</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Reviews</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review Index</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Assigning the Book of Lamentations a Place in the Canon

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Lamentations is one of a number of books that is found in more than one position in the different canons of Scripture. These canons are a product of different reading communities, each with their own interpretation of the biblical books. The present study is based on the premise that where a biblical book is placed relative to other books reflects an evaluation of the book by ancient readers, with the ordering of books viewed as a paratextual phenomenon. With regard to Lamentations, two different positions (each with its own rationale) are found in the Hebrew and Greek canons. The alternate placements of the book of Lamentations reveal that the compilers of these canons viewed its theological and historical meanings in different ways. These two different contexts are intended to shape the reader’s perception of what the book is about. Consciously or unconsciously, the contemporary reader is influenced by the positioning of a biblical book. Thus, canonical placement is not value-neutral and needs to be critically evaluated.

KEYWORDS: Lamentations, paratext, canon, Jeremiah, reception history

INTRODUCTION

There has been a shift in recent discussion of the meaning of the book of Lamentations, with increasing recognition that canonical positioning is of possible hermeneutical significance.¹ This development is in accord with the current scholarly interest in canonical issues and with the rise of

¹. E.g., Robin A. Parry, Lamentations (Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 18: “The placing of Lamentations within the biblical canon was not unreflective and was intended to guide Jewish readers in their interpretation of the text”; idem, “Prolegomena to Christian Theological Interpretation of Lamentations,” in Canon and Biblical Interpretation (ed. Craig Bartholomew and
the study of paratext in particular. The term “paratext” (coined by Gérard Genette) refers to elements that are adjoined to the text but are not part of the text, if “text” is given a minimal definition and strictly confined to the words. The paratext of Scripture encompasses features such as the order of the biblical books, the names assigned to the different books, and the schemes of textual division within the books. Since these elements are appended to the text, they provide a frame of reference for the text and reflect an interpretation of the text. They are, in effect, aids for readers. Genette uses the metaphor of the “threshold” (seuil) of a building, paratext providing a way of entering a text. Though they can be conceptually differentiated, this study assumes that text and paratext are integrally related and that their interrelationship provides evidence of how different communities of readers understood the biblical books and how they wished the books to be interpreted.

In this discussion I will focus on one paratextual feature, namely the order of the placement of the biblical books, using the book of Lamentations as a test case. I argue that various ancient readers understood Lamentations differently. I seek to show that their construal and use of the text is (in part) preserved in the varied canonical orders. To that end, first, I examine the positioning of Lamentations in the Hebrew canon, one that reflects the liturgical use of Lamentations as one of the Megillot. My conclusion is that this placement does not tie the book to any one ancient historical event and affirms its ongoing role in

Anthony Thiselton; Scripture and Hermeneutics 7; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 393–415, here 399 n. 18.


4. On the last feature, see Marjo C. A. Korpel and Josef M. Oesch, eds., Delimitation Criticism: A New Tool in Biblical Scholarship (Pericope: Scripture as Written and Read in Antiquity 1; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2000).

5. Gérard Genette, Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation (Literature, Culture, Theory Series 20; trans. Jane E. Lewin; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1, 2: “More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a threshold.” It “constitutes a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of transaction: a privileged place of pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that . . . is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it” (italics original; suspension points mine).
the religious life of God’s people. The relation of Lamentations to neighbouring Hebrew books (chiefly the other books of the *Megillot*) is also explored. The overall effect of this canonical collocation is to affirm the muted hope expressed in Lamentations that God will respond favourably to the pleas of his suffering people. Next, I show that placement of Lamentations in the Greek Bible makes the Jeremiah connection fundamental to a proper reading of the book. This leads to a rapprochement between the prophet of judgment and the people who suffer at the hands of God. In the Greek Bible, Lamentations is read within the prophetic tradition and its canonical conversation partners are prophetic books. Neither placement of Lamentations needs to be viewed as having priority over the other. Lastly, turning from reception history to the issue of the influence of biblical book order on contemporary readers, I explore how reading Lamentations in its different canonical settings potentially changes a reader’s understanding of the book. I ask and try to answer the questions: Is it necessary that we decide whether one is a better or worse canonical placement? If not, how does scrutinising these different canonical placements assist contemporary interpreters?

Paratextual elements give access to the early reception history (*Rezeptionsgeschichte*) of the books that make up the Bible. Looking at the biblical paratext as an example of reception connects this approach to the burgeoning field of reception criticism. Part of the history of the use and interpretation of the biblical text that would otherwise be hidden from view is preserved in its paratextual features. The position of a book reflects the post-authorial valuations of ancient readers, though what exactly the perceived relation between adjoining books may be can often only be discovered by reading and comparing the books themselves. This is what I will attempt, though the results must be tentative, seeing that those responsible for the biblical canonical orders did not record their reasons for placing particular books in the positions they did.

With regard to Lamentations, one frequent suggestion for the *Sitz im Leben* is that the poems come from ceremonies of mourning in the fifth month (Ab) in the years following the fall of Jerusalem such as those mentioned in Zech 7:3, 5; 8:19 (cf. Jer 41:4–9). Whatever the

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6. For the multifarious aspects of the reception of Lamentations, see Paul M. Joyce and Diana Lipton, *Lamentations through the Centuries* (Wiley-Blackwell Bible Commentaries; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013). The issue of canonical placement is not, however, addressed.

merits of this theory of origins, it is a speculative interpretive context to
the extent that the book itself makes no statement about its provenance,
whereas the positioning of Lamentations relative to other biblical books
is a definite contextual datum and, therefore, is a factor that is and should
be taken into account in the reading process. Lamentations is one of a
number of Old Testament books that is found in more than one canonical
position, other notable examples being Ruth and Daniel. Lamentations is
placed either among five festal scrolls or it follows the prophecy of
Jeremiah. Such alternatives reflect the different uses and interpretations
of this work within the Hebrew and Greek canonical traditions.

ITS PLACE IN THE HEBREW CANON

In the Hebrew Bible, Lamentations is placed in the third division of the
canon (Writings) under a section called the Five Scrolls (Megillot), this
being a late (post-Talmudic) canonical grouping. The order of these five
books in Codex Leningradensis (B19\(^3\)) (the basis of BHK\(^3\), BHS, BHQ)
and in Sephardic codices appears to be based on the principle of
chronology: Ruth, Song of Songs (written by a young Solomon?),
Ecclesiastes (by Solomon when he was old?), Lamentations, and Esther.\(^8\)
These five books are grouped together for liturgical reasons, for public
reading at the five main festivals. In some Hebrew Bibles (especially
those used by Ashkenazic Jews) the order reflects the sequence of the
major Jewish festivals in the calendar (assuming the year starts with the
month Nisan): Song of Songs (Passover), Ruth (Weeks), Lamentations
(Ninth of Ab), Ecclesiastes (Booths), and Esther (Purim).\(^9\) The liturgical
rationale of the Megillot grouping is confirmed by the fact that it is
placed directly after the Pentateuch in the Italian editions of the Hebrew
Bible in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,\(^10\) for the Pentateuch and the

\(^8\) There is, however, some minor variability in the codices; see the tables provided by
Michèle Dukan, La Bible hébraïque: Les codices copiés en Orient et dans la zone
séfarade avant 1280 (Bibliologia 22; Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006), 67; Julius
Steinberg, Die Ketuvim: ihr Aufbau und ihre Botschaft (BBB 152; Hamburg: Philo,
2006), 133, 152; Roger Beckwith, The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament
Church and Its Background in Early Judaism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 452–64;
Peter Brandt, Endgestalten des Kanons: Das Arrangement der Schriften Israels in der
jüdischen und christlichen Bibel (BBB 131; Berlin: Philo, 2001), 151–71.

\(^9\) L. B. Wolfenson, “Implications of the Place of the Book of Ruth in Editions,

\(^10\) For details, see C. D. Ginsburg, Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of
the Hebrew Bible (1897; repr. New York: Ktav, 1966), 3, 4; Wolfenson, “The Place
Megillot are the only portions read in their entirety in the lectionary of the synagogue.

An earlier tradition preserved in the Babylonian Talmud tractate Baba Bathra (14b) reads: “Our rabbis taught that the order of the prophets is Joshua and Judges, Samuel and Kings, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Isaiah and the Twelve . . . The order of the Writings is Ruth and the Book of Psalms and Job and Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs and Lamentations (וקינות), Daniel and the Scroll of Esther, Ezra[-Nehemiah] and Chronicles” (my translation). It is a baraita originating in the Tannaic period (pre-A.D. 200). Louis Jacobs argues that “order” (סדר) in this Talmudic passage means the chronological order in which the compilers of the various books of the Writings lived, with the Men of the Great Synagogue responsible for Daniel, Esther, Ezra[-Nehemiah], and Chronicles. The position of Lamentations is toward the end of the list and immediately precedes Daniel and Esther. This order predates the arrangement of the five festal scrolls in the Megillot, but still Lamentations follows hard on the heels of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. Also noticeable is the coupling of “Song of Songs and Lamentations” (the conjunction is not always represented in English translations), forming a small generic grouping of two poetic anthologies: the one romantic and the other mournful. This implies that the connection of Lamentations is fundamentally with the (mostly) poetic books that precede it rather than with the (predominantly) narrative books that follow (Daniel and the Scroll of Esther, Ezra[-Nehemiah]).

Lamentations is read on the annual festal commemoration of the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. and A.D. 70, so that in Jewish liturgy it is

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15. Pace Steinberg, Die Ketuvim, 144–51. Steinberg places Lamentations with the books that follow in what he calls a four-book “national-historische Reihe” that (he suggests) reflects the situation of the Diaspora (145). I find his schema unconvincing, namely two parallel four-book series that each (he claims) shows a movement from sorrow to joy: Job-Proverbs-Ecclesiastes-Song of Songs matched by Lamentations-Daniel-Esther-Ezra(-Nehemiah). Certainly, the book of Ezra-Nehemiah is anything but joyful, with its final picture of the people’s failure to carry through their pledge to reform their behaviour (Neh 13). See Greg Goswell, “The Handling of Time in the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah,” TrinJ 31 (2010): 200–03.
associated with the ninth day of Ab (the fifth month [= July/August]), the anniversary of these tragedies (Josephus, *J.W.*, 6.250, 268).\(^\text{16}\) Though presumably written as a reaction to the earlier capture (cf. 2 Kgs 25:8; Jer 52:12),\(^\text{17}\) clues to dating and historical specifics are difficult to discern in Lamentations itself. Iain W. Provan may go too far when he argues that we have no clear idea as to the historical period to which the text relates, but it is true that Lamentations makes no reference to the Babylonians or Nebuchadnezzar and only speaks in general terms of the “enemy/enemies” (e.g., 1:10, 16; 2:7, 16; 3:46).\(^\text{18}\) That Lamentations gives little away as to the precise crisis to which it is the response means that the book is not wedded to any one historical event, with the result that Lamentations lends itself to liturgical use (and rabbinic reapplication).\(^\text{19}\)

A liturgical reading of the text further loosens its connection to an ancient event, and Lamentations is remarkably non-specific in regard to identifiable historical references (as is psalmic language generally).\(^\text{20}\) As with communal laments like Pss 74 and 79,\(^\text{21}\) wherein those who sacked the temple are not identified, the lack of specificity and the stereotypical imagery within Lamentations fits it for reuse in new contexts (in the aftermath of the A.D. 70 destruction and post-Holocaust).\(^\text{22}\) In line with this, according to Brevard S. Childs, “The suffering of one representative man [in Lam 3] is described in the language of worship which transcends any one fixed moment in


history." Certainly, its liturgical use (as one of the *Megillot*) is a recognition and affirmation of its ongoing role in the religious life of God’s people.

**Lamentations and its Hebrew Neighbours**

Readers routinely view enjambment as a clue that significant relations are to be discerned between a particular book and its canonical neighbours, and this reading habit forms the basis of the analysis that follows. The assumption is that a book is more closely related to books next to it or nearby, and less closely related to books placed far from it. In terms of the relation of Lamentations to neighbouring books in the Hebrew canon, notably the other books of the *Megillot*, Lamentations alludes to destroyed Jerusalem’s widow status (1:1: “How like a widow has she become”; cf. 5:3) and forms a parallel to Naomi’s situation as featured in the book of Ruth (e.g., 1:1, 5, 20–21). The books of Ruth and Lamentations, each in their own way wrestle with the problem of theodicy, given their recognition of God’s involvement in distressing situations and the decimation of a family on the one hand and of the city of Jerusalem on the other (Ruth 1:20, 21; Lam 2:1–8). The books of the *Megillot* have in common that God seldom speaks or directly acts, and women play a key role in nearly all of them (the exception in regard to the latter being Ecclesiastes [N.B. 7:28]). The book named “Ruth” has as its central character Naomi, whose crisis it is (the loss of her husband and sons) (1:3–5), but its main character is ever-active Ruth, who appears in every scene in the book except one, and she is a divine agent in the restoration of the fortunes of the family. God’s direct involvement is stated by the narrator of Ruth only once (4:13), though God is repeatedly referred to by characters within the story, so that one of its themes is the (largely) hidden nature of God’s providence (1:6, 9, 16–17, 20–21; 2:12, 20; 3:10, 13; 4:11, 12, 14). A theological reading of the


book would interpret the rescue of Naomi’s family within the wider story of God’s purposes for Israel (given the genealogy leading to David in 4:18–22), with the implication that divine kindness will uphold the dynasty of David for the benefit of Israel as a whole, so that the book of Ruth (like Lamentations) has the fate and future of the nation as a whole in its purview. By contrast, there is no happy ending to Lamentations; however, its placement near or next to Ruth implies that the hopeful sentiments in Lam 3 are not to be viewed as a passing mood or momentary venture of faith.

Ecclesiastes (following it or preceding it) shares the sombre mood of Lamentations and generalises its negative experience of the vicissitudes of life. Jennie Barbour discerns various links between Qohelet’s poem about old age and death (12:1–7) and the Israelite tradition of the city lament that found normative expression in Lamentations (e.g., desolate and silent streets [Eccl 12:4, 6; cf. Lam 1:1; 5:18]; the contrast of past/present conditions using gold/silver [Eccl 12:6; cf. Lam 4:1]; imagery of death and darkness [Eccl 12:2; cf. Lam 3:2, 6]; the impact on different social classes [Eccl 12:3; Lam 1:18; 5:11–14]).

In both books, however, the depressing tone is relieved at various points (e.g. Eccl 2:24; 3:13, 22; 5:18 [Heb. 17]). If we keep in mind the ending of Ecclesiastes (12:13, 14), it is not as unorthodox as sometimes suggested, and Stephen de Jong argues that “the theology of Qohelet is to be located within the mainstream of the Old Testament.” Likewise, the strophes at the centre of Lamentations (3:22–24, 25–27, 31–33) reflect the credal declaration of God’s character given in Exod 34:6–7 (his kindness, faithfulness and mercy), and they are not to be discounted just because the book also contains protest against what God has done to Zion (e.g., 2:20: “Whom have you ever treated like this?”). God is acknowledged as the cause of his people’s suffering (e.g., Lam 1:12–15; 2:1–8), but a divine response of mercy is hoped for but not taken for


32. Heinrich Gross (Klagelieder [Die Neue Echter Bibel; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1986], 28) calls Lam 3:22–23 “den Höhepunkt des Liedes” and cites similar sentiments found in Pss 86:13; 103:8; 145:8.
granted in the final dialectical verses of the book (5:20–22). What we can say, therefore, is that Lamentations and Ecclesiastes resist readings that (in the name of piety) would attempt to explain away the contradictions of the human experience of suffering. On the other hand, they are not totally pessimistic about life’s prospects. In both books, simplistic answers are avoided, but hope is not extinguished.

In Song of Songs, the woman is the first speaker (1:2–7) and the main speaker in the song, but it is probable that God is mentioned at only one point in this collection of songs about romantic love. In Lamentations, one of the two main speakers in the early chapters is “the Daughter of Zion” (ד الأه) (see below), and her speeches are full of passion and pathos. The use of Song of Songs at Passover suggests that the song is viewed as an expression of God’s love for Israel as seen in the exodus deliverance (Song of Songs Rabbah). There is a long history of this interpretation in Judaism, though to read Song of Songs as a full-blown allegory is now viewed as untenable. The love lyrics of Song of Songs can, however, be understood as picking up the reconciliation scenes between God and Israel, his estranged wife, imagined in Isaiah and Hosea, books that precede it in the ordering of the Hebrew canon (cf. Isa 54:6–8; Hos 2:14–15 [Heb. 2:16–17]). In the more immediate setting provided for Song of Songs, this resonates with the book of Ruth.


34. This assumes that Song 8:6 uses Yah in reference to God (YHWH) and is to be translated “the flame of Yah”; see the discussion provided by J. Cheryl Exum, Song of Songs (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 253–54 and David R. Blumenthal, “Where God Is not: The Book of Esther and Song of Songs,” Judaism 44 (1995): 81–82.


37. Roland E. Murphy, The Song of Songs (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 28–32.

The marriage of Ruth and Boaz produces a child who signals the restoration of Naomi’s family (Ruth 4:17) and is a portent of God’s kindness to Israel (via the dynasty of David). The structure of the poems of Song of Songs is disputed, but a number of scholars find a repeated pattern in the main units of the song (the bringing of the separated lovers together), though they do not agree on the exact dimensions of the units and use different terms to label the pattern: seeking and finding (Cheryl Exum), desire and union (David A. Dorsey) and rendezvous (Elie Assis). In line with this, in Lamentations there is the plea that the strained relationship between God and Zion be restored (e.g., 2:18–20; 3:55–57; 5:1, 19–22). The placement of Lamentations near or next to Song of Songs can be taken as implying that ultimately a reconciliation will take place between God and “the Daughter of Zion.”

In the case of the book of Esther, the heroine Esther’s initiative is highlighted (e.g., 4:16), so that the book entitled “Esther” is aptly named. The failure to refer to God in the book of Esther must be intentional and serves a function in the narrative, namely to foreground human initiative and courage. By contrast, God is mentioned in Lamentations, though he is not recorded as speaking or making any response to the pleas directed at him. The book of Esther describes and celebrates the deliverance of the Jews from their enemies (8:15–17; 9:17–22). When the tragic expressions found in Lamentations are followed by a reading of the neighbouring book of Esther, this could be taken as implying that the city and nation will survive the crisis described in Lamentations. The overall effect, therefore, of reading Lamentations as one of the Megillot is to affirm the intimations of hope found in Lam 3 (esp. vv. 22–33).

**Its Place in the Greek Canon**

The book of Lamentations is traditionally assigned to Jeremiah, and the Septuagintal placement directly after the prophecy of Jeremiah (Codex


40. In a canonical story of deliverance, we expect God to be there, and, as noted by Fox, “[s]uch a violation of expectations is surely no accident.” Michael V. Fox, Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 235; see also Greg Goswell, “Keeping God out of the Book of Esther,” EQ 82 (2010): 99–110.
Sinaiticus) is an *authorship* statement. This positioning of the book is followed by the Vulgate and subsequently English versions. This makes the book of Lamentations a personal reaction by Jeremiah to the fall of Jerusalem (the account of which immediately precedes in Jer 52), though the suffering community is also given a voice in the communal lament found in Lam 5. Consistent with its position in the Greek canon, the book is named “Laments [of Jeremiah]” (*θρήνοι*), and the Vulgate, under the influence of the Greek title, calls it *Liber Threnorum* abbreviated to *Threni* (“Laments”), with the interpretation, “The laments of Jeremiah the prophet” (*Threni, id est lamentationes Jeremiae Prophetae*).

The book is appropriate to the image of the suffering prophet as depicted in the book of Jeremiah, though, of course, the Hebrew text of Lamentations makes no mention of Jeremiah. He was an acknowledged composer of laments (“Jeremiah uttered a lament [*קינות*] for Josiah”), and this and laments by others over Josiah are said to be preserved in a (lost) book entitled “The Laments” (*הספדningar*) (2 Chr 35:25; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 10.5.1). This reference may well be the reason for assigning the Hebrew name “Laments” (*קינות*) to the book we are discussing (*b. B. Bat* 14b; *y. Šabb*. 16.15.c; *b. Hag*. 8b). The opening of the Targum reads: “Jeremiah the prophet and high priest said . . .” According to the Targum, an allusion to Josiah under the designation “*YHWH*’s anointed” is to be found in 4:20 (cf. an earlier mention of the death of Josiah in Tg. Lam. at 1:18). As well, chronology would favour the time of Jeremiah, for Lamentations gives the appearance of a reaction by a participant in the events surrounding the capture of Jerusalem, though it is the nature of

41. In codices Vaticanus and Alexandrinus, the order is: Jeremiah, Baruch, Lamentations, and Epistle of Jeremiah.

42. The word does not reappear after the opening in the Greek form of the book. In Vaticanus and Alexandrinus *ιερεμιοι* (“of Jeremiah”) is added as a subscript. This amounts to an abbreviation of the superscription present in the Greek version of Lamentations: “And it came to pass after Israel was taken captive and Jerusalem laid waste, Jeremiah sat weeping and lamented this lament [*ἐθρήνησεν τὸν θρήνον τοῦτον*] over Jerusalem and said . . .”); cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 10.5.1, Origen (*apud* Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.25), and *Seder Olam Rabbah* 24. The Talmud also states: “Jeremiah wrote the book of his name, Kings and Lamentations” (*b. B. Bat*. 15a).

43. Jerome, in his listing of canonical books in *Prologus Galeatus*, has: “Jeremiah with Cinoth, that is his Lamentations” (*Jeremias cum Cinoth, id est Lamentationibus suis*) and in the title to his Latin translation has: “They begin Dirges, that is, Lamentations of Jeremiah the prophet” (*Incipiunt Cinoth, id est, Lamentationes Jeremiae Prophetae*); see Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 28, cols. 593–604, 985–86.

poetry to depict a scene with vividness and feeling. A verse like 3:14 (“I have become the laughingstock of all peoples”) sounds like the experience of Jeremiah (cf. Jer 20:7), and there is the general similarity of the suffering of “the man” (הגבר) in chapter 3 to the experience of Jeremiah (especially as reflected in Jeremiah’s “Confessions”). There are associations between Lam 3 and the prophetic lament in Jer 14:1–10, 17–22. The positing of the Jeremiah connection may be one factor among several (male bias? later Christological application? its central location in the book?) that has sometimes resulted in scholars placing undue stress on the male figure of chapter 3 and making the credal expressions of faith and hope in that chapter too determinative in an overall reading of the book, for Lamentations is a book without obvious thematic resolution.

Jeremiah was a prophet adept at mourning (Jer 9:1 [Heb. 8:23]: “O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”) (cf. 8:18–22; 14:1–9; 15:5–9). Verses like Lam 3:53–56 can be read as recalling incidents in the troubled ministry of Jeremiah, notably his being thrown into a pit (בור) (cf. Jer 38:6–13), but other parallels unrelated to Jeremiah that are common metaphors for suffering and oppression (the pit, engulfing waters) are easily found (cf. Pss 42:7 [Heb. 8]; 69:1–2, 14–15 [Heb. 3–4, 15–16]; 88:6–7 [Heb. 7–8]). The point, however, is that possible links with the experience of the prophet are given priority due to the placement of the book after Jeremiah. This is where paratext, reflecting the mode of reading of earlier generations, exerts an influence (beneficial or baneful) on the contemporary reading of the text, with the canonical positioning of a book suggesting (but not compelling) a certain line of interpretation, namely Lamentations is read as giving further expression to Jeremiah’s own view of the fate of Jerusalem.


48. References provided by Hetty Lalleman, Jeremiah and Lamentations (TOTC 21; Nottingham: IVP, 2013), 362.
Reading Jeremiah and Lamentations Together

The question of authorship is of little relevance if it is just a matter of historical interest and does not help us to unlock the meaning of the book and guide our reading of the book. The placement of the book in the Greek canon suggests that Lamentations, like the prophecy of Jeremiah, helps the reader to a right understanding of the catastrophe that befell Jerusalem and may be read as a vindication of the teaching of that much-maligned prophet who predicted the city’s downfall. In this regard, Lamentations performs a similar function to Jer 52 (which also does not mention Jeremiah). Certainly, the Hebrew form of the book is strictly anonymous, and there is no irrefutable evidence on which to either affirm or deny authorship by Jeremiah. As for internal evidence purporting a possible connection between Lamentations and Jeremiah’s teaching, the following are representative examples of similarities that have been detected: a negative view of priests and prophets (Lam 2:14; 4:13; cf. Jer 2:8; 5:31; 23:11); the expression “terror(s) on every side” (Lam 2:22; cf. Jer 6:25; 20:3, 10); the motif of bitterness (Lam 3:15, 19; cf. Jer 9:14 [Heb. 15]; 23:15); repeated descriptions of weeping and tears (Lam 2:11; 3:48–51; cf. Jer 9:1, 18; 13:17; 14:17); and the nation’s misplaced dependence on nations that could not save (Lam 4:17; cf. Jer 2:36).49

Juxtaposing the prophecy of Jeremiah and Lamentations in the Greek canon reflects a reading strategy. Robin Parry sees this impinging on several areas of interpretation:50 (1) the mention of the sin of the people of Jerusalem and their leadership in Lamentations is comparatively brief, but this is underlined after the fulsome exposure of the sin of the people and leaders in Jeremiah (e.g., chs. 22–23, 27–28); (2) it accentuates the covenant context of Jerusalem’s failures and long history of God’s patience with his people before judging them (e.g., Jer 25:1–11); (3) despite the revelation of God’s wrath, it is clear that God loves Judah and that God himself is affected by her afflictions (e.g., Jer 4:19–21; 8:18–9:2; 14:17–18); (4) Jeremiah’s oracles of hope (e.g., chs. 30–33) predispose readers to take the hopeful hints in Lamentations itself more seriously than they may otherwise do. In each case, Parry thinks in terms of the impact of the preceding prophetic book on the interpretation of Lamentations, but he says nothing of a retrospective reading of Jeremiah


50. Parry, Lamentations, 161, 162.
as a result of what is, in effect, a canonical addendum to the prophecy of Jeremiah.

In this regard, some recent scholarly approaches view Jeremiah as the implied author of Lamentations, who is a fictive persona, not strictly an historical individual, or, following Nancy C. Lee, Jeremiah may be identified as one of the two primary poetic “voices” who are in dialogue in this polyphonic book, wherein neither perspective is privileged over the other. On this understanding, the prophet has “a rhetorical role” in Lamentations, and, therefore, says Lee, the book may be viewed as a canonical “extension” of the book of Jeremiah. The other identified speaker is the personified city, using the appellative “Daughter Zion,” who is also heard in the book of Jeremiah (e.g., Jer 4:19–21). For example, Lee assigns the verses of Lam 1 to the two poetic singers as follows: the first poetic singer (= Jeremiah) in verses 1–9b, 10–11a, 15c, 17, with the second poetic singer (= “Jerusalem’s poet”) in verses 9c, 11b–15b, 16, 18–22. It is plain, even from a cursory look at the distribution of the verses that neither voice is allowed to predominate or drown out the other, so that multiple viewpoints are allowed to stand.


52. Nancy C. Lee, The Singers of Lamentations: Cities under Siege, from Ur to Jerusalem to Sarajevo (Biblical Interpretation Series 60; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 42.


55. Ibid., 130.


Carleen R. Mandolfo carries this approach further with her dialogic reading of Lamentations (building on her earlier analysis of the psalms of lament), and she reads chapters 1–2 as a response to the dominant portrait of Zion in prophetic books Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel as the “adulterous” wife of YHWH, so that, in Lamentations, Daughter Zion is given the opportunity to talk back to the wider prophetic tradition. One significant observation made by her is that the “Didactic Voice” (basically equivalent to the first poetic singer of Nancy Lee) does not take God’s part or defend YHWH’s goodness and justice. Though acknowledging some responsibility on Zion’s part for what has happened to her (1:5, 8), the Didactic Voice shows empathy with the pain of Daughter Zion and at least to some extent adopts her point of view (e.g., 1:17; 2:1–2), so that this could be viewed as an adjustment of the Jeremianic tradition. The Didactic Voice dominates chapter 2 (2:1–19), but it is (according to Kathleen O’Connor) “an altered voice” who no longer attributes blame to the city, and Daughter Zion is again allowed to speak (2:20–22). So too, the male figure who laments in chapter 3 (esp. 3:1–20; cf. Jer 20:14–18) can be viewed as an adjustment of the persona of Jeremiah. He acts, in effect, as a representative of the suffering Daughter Zion, who does not speak for herself in that chapter but whose grievous suffering is acknowledged and felt (e.g., 3:48; 51). In other words, the enjambment of Jeremiah and Lamentations results in a rapprochement between the prophet and the people whom he roundly condemned in his prophecy.

**Lamentations as a Prophetic Book**

In the Greek canon, Lamentations is read as a prophetic book with other prophetic books (chiefly Jeremiah) as its conversation partners. With


regard to books other than the prophecy of Jeremiah, scholars have found affinities between Lamentations and Ezekiel, with both books giving graphic descriptions of Jerusalem as “widow” and degraded wife (Lam 1:1, 2; 2:15; Ezek 16:6, 8, 14), and in both she is likened to “a filthy thing” (נדה) (Lam 1:8, 17; Ezek 36:17). So too, the message of judgment that the prophet Ezekiel was given to proclaim to the rebellious house of Israel, written on a scroll, consisted of “lamentations (קינן) and mourning and woe” (2:10). According to Westermann, “Calling the announcement a dirge has the effect of anticipating the [community’s] destruction,” though most of the other occurrences of קינן in Ezekiel concern the judgment of foreign nations (19:1, 14; 26:17; 27:2; 28:12; 32:2, 16).

A hermeneutical implication of the placement of Lamentations in the Greek tradition is that the personification of the city of Jerusalem as female in Lamentations using a number of בת (“daughter”) designations (most pronounced in chs. 1–2) is to be read within the wider prophetic tradition (e.g., Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah). However, in contrast to that tradition, wherein it is mainly found in judgment oracles, in Lamentations the portrayal of Zion as female is used as a vehicle for an empathetic portrayal of the suffering city. Similarities between Lamentations and Isa 40–55 include Zion’s depiction as a widow and a mother bereaved of her children (Lam 1:5, 16; Isa 54:4; 51:18). According to Patricia Tull Willey, Isa 52:11 (“Depart, depart, go out thence, touch no unclean thing”) cites and reverses the formula found in Lam 4:15. God himself is not given a voice in Lamentations, but he could be understood to respond to Zion’s cries of pain in what is found in


Isa 40–55, which open with the divine command to “Comfort (נחם), comfort my people . . . speak tenderly to Jerusalem” (40:1, 2),
whereas five times in Lamentations it is said that Zion has no one to comfort (מנחם) her,
with this motif given prominence by the refrain-like accumulation of the references in chapter 1 (1:2, 9, 16, 17, 21).
Johan Renkema may be right to find in Lam 1:21 an implicit appeal to YHWH by Daughter Zion for comfort, seeing there is no one else to comfort her. Later, the poet in 2:13 expresses a desire to comfort Jerusalem (רצותagua) but confesses that he does not know how to do so, which implies that comfort, if it is to occur, must be provided by God himself.

Linafelt also finds a (belated) response to Zion’s petitions on behalf of her children in Isa 40–55, with the promise of the return of the exiles (depicted as children) to Zion (49:14–26). The opening of this section (49:14: “But Zion said: ‘The LORD has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me’”) reads like an almost exact quote from the unanswered question of Lam 5:20 (“Why dost thou forget us for ever, why dost thou so long forsake us?” RSV). As well, the portrait of the Suffering Ser-


70. Mandolfo, Daughter Zion Talks Back, 104. For a full discussion of Isa 40–55 as a response to the pained speech of Lamentations, see ibid., 103–19; Willey, Remember the Former Things, 130–32.

71. The interaction of these texts is also a feature of the Jewish lectionary cycle of synagogue prophetic readings (Haftarot). See Stern, From Rebuke to Consolation, 17–77.


73. This implication is noted also by Xuan Huong Thi Pham, Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible (JSOTSup 302; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 135.

74. Linafelt, Surviving Lamentations, 62–79.

75. Linafelt, Surviving Lamentations, 72, 73; Parry, Lamentations, 164; Willey, Remember the Former Things, 233, 234.
vant in Isa 50 and 53 bears some relation to the representative suffering (male) figure of Lam 3 (e.g., giving his cheek to the attacker [Isa 50:6; cf. Lam 3:30]). Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer asks the vital question as to the adequacy of the answers provided in Isa 40–55, and, at least for Mandolfo, they are not adequate, since they are at best a partial answer, for the suffering of Jerusalem seems out of proportion to her moral culpability.

Observations about links between Lamentations and other prophetic books are often made in the context of the exploration of composition of biblical books, and, even more recently, in the pursuit of studies in intertextuality, but the direction of influence, dependence, or borrowing is often difficult to determine with any degree of certainty. Benjamin D. Sommer is right to counsel caution in making assumptions, though he himself, for example, views Isa 62:6–7 as alluding to and reversing the lament in Lam 2:17–19, and Isa 51:17–23 as utilizing Lam 2:13–19 for the same purpose of responding to the laments of the book of Lamentations, with the evidence of the suggested link being shared vocabulary and themes. However, determining the exact sequence of who has been reading and reacting to what is not an essential goal when considering the implications of biblical book order as a paratextual phenomenon, for the focus is not on authors or redactors but on what ancient readers thought about the book.

ANCIENT READERS AND MODERN READERS

This study has proceeded on the assumption that the placement of biblical books is an intentional choice by canonical framers, reflecting the habits and convictions of an ancient reading community. Recognition that the biblical paratext represents an interpretation of the text means that the paratext does not have to be viewed as mandating a particular location for the book of Lamentations. Likewise, the existence of different canonical orders warns the reader against prescribing one order as determinative for interpretation. The order of the biblical books is a paratextual phenomenon that cannot be put on the same level as the text


79. Ibid., 128.
itself. It represents a fossilization of the evaluations of ancient readers, and this precludes the idea that one order of books (Hebrew or Greek) has absolute priority over another. To give exclusive rights to any particular order of books would be to fail to recognise the character of paratext as post-authorial *commentary* on the text. A further reason that the canonical order cannot be allowed to dictate the meaning of a book is that this would relieve contemporary readers of their obligation to interpret the Scriptures for themselves.

On the other hand, hermeneutical responsibility includes the requirement to consider (and not lightly dismiss) the insights of previous generations of readers. The alternate positions assigned to Lamentations potentially provide valuable insights and suggest exegetical alternatives that deserve serious consideration by contemporary readers, and I believe that the present study has shown this to be the case. As we have seen, in the Hebrew canon, the perennial relevance of Lamentations for times of suffering is enshrined by its placement among the Megillot, which reflects its periodic reading. The other four books in the Megillot can be understood as affirming the intimations of hope in Lamentations. This canonical context encourages an interpretation of the national and religious crisis as likely to be finally resolved. In the Greek canon, the conversation partners of Lamentations are other prophetic books. The different prophetic books may be viewed as reacting and responding to each other, and the result is that comfort is offered by the prophets to the disconsolate Daughter of Zion depicted in Lamentations. It also allows a rereading of the prophecy of Jeremiah, and the prophet is shown to sympathise with the plight of the judged city and nation.
Will the Real Job Please Stand Up? Politico-Pastoral Exegesis of Job 38 in the Wake of Nicaea

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Ancient Christian commentaries on the Book of Job, and specifically reflection on Job’s direct theophanic interaction with God in Job 38, offer important insights into the contexts of their writers and the writers’ congregations. This is especially clear in the case of two roughly contemporary “commentaries” produced by John Chrysostom and Julian the Arian. These are two of the earliest extant works on Job in the Christian East in the wake of the Nicene and non-Nicene theological and political disputes occurring at the turn of the fourth century. For these two exeges, Job becomes a moldable figure identified with the key tenets of their theological systems, experiencing direct revelation as a result of his exemplification of the exeges’ favored spiritual charisms and political biases due to his ambiguous place in the scheme of salvation-history. Despite each theologian sharing similar methodology, their exegesis produces two vastly different depictions for their readers of what is involved in leading a godly life in general, and how one should attempt to emulate Job himself to become closer to God.

KEYWORDS: Job 38, patristic exegesis, theophany, eunoia, Chrysostom, Julian

INTRODUCTION

Early Christian interpretation of the Old Testament is rife with concern for how Christ is both present in and speaking through the events and peoples of the stream of salvation-history. In light of this, evaluating and comparing the exegesis of early Christian writers on Job, and Job 38 in particular, is an intriguing activity for two main reasons. First, Job stands at a peculiar place in the history of Patristic exegesis, and especially in the production of formal commentaries. Though to the credit of Hilary of Poitiers we know that Origen produced at least one set a homilies on Job,
now lost (as is much of Hilary’s Latin translation of them), interest in the book in the East spiked curiously only amidst the theological and political turmoil of the fourth and fifth centuries, with “non-Nicene” commentaries even persisting alongside “Nicene” commentaries. These non-Nicene texts have been of recent interest to scholars attempting not only to identify their authors but also their readership, and thus, possibly, why their popularity persisted. Besides the commentary examined in this article, of particular note is the work known as the Anonymus in Job, an incomplete commentary (up to Job 3:19) originally attributed to Origen, now primarily identified as “Pseudo-Origen.” In a substantial article from 2003, Leslie Dossey thoroughly examined the commentary to decipher its provenance, concluding that it originated in Vandal North Africa and was likely written by an erudite, Eastern-influenced Arian cleric in the early sixth century. What is most crucial to note here is her assertion that this commentary may depend, in part, on the two works examined below, demonstrating the lasting appeal of both their hermeneutical methodology and the application of the biblical text to their readers’ milieus in very specific ways.

1. Commentaries considered “orthodox” include one by Evagrius, preserved through catenae by Didymus the Blind in his fairly complete commentary (critical edition by Albert Henrichs and Dieter Hagedorn in Didymos der Blinde: Kommentar zu Hiob [Tura-Papyrus] [4 vols.; Bonn: R. Habelt, 1968–1985]); and a sixth-century commentary by Olympiodorus, which also preserves some catenae of Chrysostom’s contemporary Polycronius, the brother of Theodore of Mopsuestia (critical edition by Ursula Hagedorn and Dieter Hagedorn, Olympiodor Diakon von Alexandria: Kommentar zu Hiob [PTS 24; Berlin: DeGruyter, 1984]). In the recent contribution to the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture series on Job, these commentaries are summarily discussed; see Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti, Job (ACCS 6; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), xviii–xxii.

2. The most recent critical edition is edited by Kenneth B. Steinhauser, Anonymi in Iob Commentarius (CSEL 96; Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2006). See also Simonetti and Conti, Job, xix–xx.


4. For an overview of similarities between the three works, see ibid., 76–81. Between Pseudo-Origen and Julian the Arian, Dossey highlights obvious parallels between their Antiochene exegetical styles, their argument for the authorship of Moses, and Job’s origins, for example. Between Pseudo-Origen and Chrysostom, she especially notes their tendency to exegete morally and not simply literally, and suggests that several similarities in turns-of-phrase in conjunction with Chrysostom’s frequently used expression “some say” to introduce interpretive options points to, at least, their sharing a similar source, and at most Chrysostom’s direct dependence on Pseudo-Origen.
What, then, is the reason for the “sudden” explosion of interest in Job in the fourth century? Perhaps it was the connection between the ancient reader in this particular historical milieu and Job’s life situation that resonated the most clearly. Job was a man under the most extreme duress, and yet not only survives, but thrives because of his keen morals and faith in God’s sovereignty. Thus, Job becomes a vision of the Everyman to priest, layman, and monastic alike. To the post-Nicene reader, Job appeared as, among other things, the very model of an active lay spirituality: an exemplary father and paterfamilias administering impartial justice to a household, he was a true example of Christian leadership; possessed of wealth, he was untouched by the money-madness of his fourth-century analogues; above all, in an unbelieving age he was a true worshipper of his Creator.\(^5\)

Job is decidedly threatened by internal politics: the accuser relies on God to act on Job rather than acting simply externally or autonomously as an unpredictable agent of chaos. In this sense, it seems possible that an infant Gentile church in only its first few centuries of existence, used to defending itself against primarily external imperial pressures of persecution, would find less in common with Job than the church after Nicaea, internally divided among party politics.\(^6\) Job in general seems quite naturally to become both a creative outlet of the exegetical style of those in the wake of the first few ecumenical councils of the church in the fourth and fifth centuries and also a mirror of the writers’ own contexts, moldable to whatever pastoral ends the exegete sees fit. What we normally see reserved for homilies in which the expositor is addressing a particular group of people at a particular time actually bleeds into this more formal academic exposition much more transparently than in other examples of early commentating.

Second, Job is unique in that not only does he experience a theophany—what I define as a direct, verbal revelation by God—but he


6. Simonetti and Conti (Job, xix) suggest that the “scarcity of the extant Arian exegetical literature” is “due to the fact that the situation of these heretics was quite difficult at the end of the fourth century, for they had become the target of many harsh legal measures against them. In such a situation, the figure of Job was most suitable to be proposed as a model of firmness and resignation amid different calamities.”
is also a Gentile. It is little wonder that he received little attention before then by commentary writers; he was not a patriarch, nor was he accurately locatable in the timeline of salvation-history. This produces a problem for the Christian exegete: how does a non-Israelite, much less a non-Christian, come into direct contact with God? And, in light of the somewhat esoteric nature of the book as a whole, how would ancient Christian exegetes proceed one level deeper and apply the God-speech of Job 38 to the wider Christian life? Should readers of Job merely dia-chronically personalize and internalize God’s statements, or is Job’s place in the Old Testament canon to act as clay with which pastors and exegesis can use to convey very particular, circumstantial messages about “godly” living?

We will briefly look at the interpretations of Job 38 by two expositors—Nicene John Chrysostom (d. 407) and non-Nicene Julian (ca. 362–95)—in light of these questions for the purpose of gaining a

7. A superb modern critical edition has been edited by Dieter Hadgorn and Ursula Hagedorn, Johannes Chrysostomus: Kommentar zu Hiob (PTS 35; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990). Robert C. Hill is responsible for the only published English translation. See Robert C. Hill, Commentary on Job in St. John Chrysostom: Commentaries on the Sages, vol. 1 (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox, 2006). I am indebted to Prof. Hill’s translation, which is undoubtedly better than my own, and thus references to Chrysostom’s commentary in this text will be made by page number in Hill’s translation. Though dating the original text of this commentary is inexact, it is at least older than 388, perhaps 398, and thus was most likely composed at Antioch; see Johannes Quasten, Patrology (1950; repr., Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1983), 3:433; Vaggione, “Of Monks,” 196 n. 101; Charles Kannengiesser, Handbook of Patristic Exegesis (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 2:784. It is not a pure commentary, but rather something in between a commentary and a set of homilies. See Manlio Simonetti, Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), xxi.

8. It is almost certain at this point that this Julian is also the final editor of the Apostolic Constitutions and the longer form of the Ignatian epistles, and was at least non-Nicene, but more likely a disciple of Eunomius and possibly bishop at Antioch after 380. The dating of this particular commentary is uncertain, but seemingly before the turn of the fourth century. See Vaggione, “Of Monks,” 190–91 n. 50; idem, Eunomius of Cyzicus, 318–19; Simonetti and Conti, Job, xix. This paper will utilize the critical edition by Dieter Hagedorn, Der Hiobkommentar des Arianers Julian (PTS 141; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973). See his introduction, ix–lxxxviii. References to the text of Julian’s commentary will be made by page and line; translations will be my own. Henry Chadwick’s review of this text is generally favorable; though he faults Hagedorn for occasionally missing scriptural allusions, he highlights Hagedorn’s skillful identification of references from classical literature such as Homer, Euripides, Menander, and Pseudo-Plutarch; see Henry Chadwick, review of D. Hagedorn, Der Hiobkommentar Des Arianers Julian, JTS 28 (1977): 559–61. For primary source insights into the distinctive features of Eunomian theology vis-à-vis Arian theology, see Gregory of Nyssa’s Contra Eunomium; Basil of Caesarea’s Adversus Eunomium I–III; Pseudo-Basil’s Adversus Eunomium IV–V. For a
clearer picture of how the theological turmoil of the fourth and fifth centuries affected early Christian exegesis of Job. Julian and Chrysostom both follow Antiochene trends in attempting to understand the literal truth of Job as best can be determined, but both also clearly steer the text and the character of Job toward their own pastoral situations.

**BACKGROUND**

We know very little about Julian, as details are sparse and mostly inferred. Hagedorn concludes that his name is unrelated to other known Julians predating the work and follows Byzantine *catenae* in assuming that Julian was at some point ministering at Antioch, was most likely from Syria, and probably composed the work in the middle of the fourth century. His exegesis, as one might expect, is fairly straightforward and quite literal, following in the broad stream of Antiochene exegetical tradition. Evidence of his probable social and political standing through his exegesis of Job is implicit, yet discernable, as we will discover below.

Chrysostom, on the other hand, is much more well-known; the briefest overview of his life is permitted here. Born between 340 and

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10. Though I would contend that the typical division between Antiochene and Alexandrian exegesis has been largely overblown, there was nevertheless conflict between those who sought to find a higher meaning to the biblical text through *allegoria* (Alexandria) and those seeking for it through *historia*. What is crucial to bear is the point of Frances Young: “The problems with the now traditional account lie . . . in the assumption that Antiochene literalism meant something like modern historicism. . . . The distinctive thing about historical writing was not ‘single-minded pursuit of facts’ but their presentation as morally significant, their interpretation in terms of ‘virtue’ and ‘vice’ and ‘fortune’” (Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002], 166–67). This will be reflected very clearly as we examine each exegete’s application of the theophany of Job to the average Christian’s life; cf. Simonetti and Conti, *Job*, xix. For a bird’s-eye approach to the division between Alexandria and Antioch, see Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 132–76.

350, John was baptized at 18, and after only three years of ministry was exiled by Constantius. Though he would be recalled by Julian in 362, the precedent of exile and return would continue for a number of years. Chrysostom was ordained as a deacon around 380, then to the priesthood in 386, and finally was made bishop of Constantinople in 398. He was highly educated in Greek rhetoric and possibly also in some Latin, and was likely destined to a life of political leadership had his interest in asceticism not been so voracious. Along with two friends, Chrysostom attended an ascetic school and was discipled by Diodore of Tarsus, one of the founders of the Antiochene school of exegesis. During a period of recall (likely when Valens occupied Antioch in 371), Chrysostom withdrew for a four-year period of ascetic monastic life at Mount Silpius, perhaps in an attempt to avoid ordination, only to retreat to full isolation as a hermit for another two years. We can easily see, then, why urban ministry would present a challenge to him. Not only did he need to cater to a vastly mixed audience of pagans, Jews, and Christians, but he was forced to contend with the urban political powers who seemed to be in direct contradiction to the sort of lifestyle he saw as most beneficial to all Christians: asceticism. His relationship with the empress Eudoxia was especially troubling, as her powerful station directly contradicted his strict views on the roles of women; she was a large factor in one of his later exiles and precipitated the events that led to his condemnation by the emperor Arcadius. The final straw for Chrysostom, exhausted of playing the political game with Eudoxia, came after she had a statue of herself erected outside Chrysostom’s cathedral. Having delivered a


series of scathing sermons against the empress around Christmas of 404, a synod was convened just before Easter to depose Chrysostom. After a bloody encounter between imperial forces and catechumens loyal to Chrysostom, he was confined to his palace and refused to leave the city.\textsuperscript{21} Despite receiving moral support from the West, he was finally forced into exile on June 20, sparking a riot that saw both the church (St. Sophia) and the senate burned to the ground.\textsuperscript{22} Chrysostom died in exile only three years later, exhausted from the strenuous journey away from his church.\textsuperscript{23}

As we will notice below concerning Chrysostom’s exegetical methodology, the text is rather uneven throughout with regard to the attention given to each verse or section of Job. As Simonetti and Conti aptly notice: “in some cases, a brief quotation is followed by an extended explanation, while in many other cases an entire series of biblical verses receives only an extremely cursory explanation or is even presented without any explanation.”\textsuperscript{24} Thankfully, though, for our purposes here his commentary on Job 38 is, with some exceptions, relatively complete. As is the case with Julian and other Antiochenes, Chrysostom generally prefers extracting moral lessons from the literality of Job where possible.\textsuperscript{25}

\textbf{JULIAN ON JOB}

The description quoted above concerning how the ancients saw Job is a generalization that will be nuanced differently by our two exegetes. For Julian, even though Job is “descended from a race with no inheritance in Jacob and unable to plead any nobility of descent, he is nonetheless a ‘\textit{theios} \ldots \textit{anēr},’ an archetype of a truly fundamental virtue: \textit{eōnoia} or ‘right-mindedness.’”\textsuperscript{26} This was not a general characteristic of one

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21}Kelly, \textit{Golden Mouth}, 237–49; Liebeschuetz, \textit{Ambrose and Chrysostom}, 246.
\item \textsuperscript{22}Kelly, \textit{Golden Mouth}, 250–51; Liebeschuetz, \textit{Ambrose and Chrysostom}, 247.
\item \textsuperscript{23}Kelly, \textit{Golden Mouth}, 283–85.
\item \textsuperscript{24}Simonetti and Conti, \textit{Job}, xxi.
\item \textsuperscript{25}Mayer and Allen, \textit{John Chrysostom}, 30.
\item \textsuperscript{26}For \textit{eōnoia} as a polemical device used by Julian, see Julian, 3.4–4.14; 6.4–8; 10.14; 14.19–20; 21.15–16; 24.1–2; 20; 51.9–10; 80.11; 96.10. Cf. Vaggione, “Of Monks,” 192–93. Julian uses this term in a more theologically technical fashion than predecessors such as Aristotle (cf. \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, VIII).
\end{itemize}
broadly on God’s side, or an “anonymous” believer, but one who was actually as close to God as possible and reflecting that in life; Job was for all intents a saint. 27 Though he had not been privileged to the special revelation of God in the Law, Prophets, or other Scriptures, he nonetheless utilized to the fullest extent the general revelation given to all humans by being created imago Dei. 28 Thus, Job is not merely an example of moral superiority; to Julian he is the highest example of moral fortitude because of his correct utilization of knowledge for εὐνοον. 29 Julian’s Job embodies the highest possible standard of a well-ordered life, and so Julian’s explanation for the theophany beginning in chapter 38 is poignant: his Job gains the status of a seer, which is “established on the basis of the Theophany . . .; Job (sharing a privilege accorded elsewhere only to Moses) sees the Only-begotten God face to face in the cloud.” 30

As a Eunomian, then, Julian’s Job not only exemplifies right living, but the proper hermeneutic from which God should be understood. Not only must one possess εὐνοον (as opposed to κακονοον, “wrong-mindedness”) to properly interpret Scripture and revelation, but logical precision (τέχνη or ἀκριβεία) is also highly desired. 31 This becomes most evident in Julian’s treatment of the theophany of Job 38, but


is certainly evident throughout the entirety of the text. Julian’s language reveals that this is not a text merely for devotion, fully accessible by anyone with sound motives, but for students of some learning, or at least students seeking to understand the text with technical precision. Nevertheless, this analytic stance is not mutually exclusive with the ancient sense of actually being present and experiencing the words of God afresh through the performative retelling of Job’s predicament. Job’s hermeneutic ought to be the reader’s hermeneutic.

For the text to be alive and present for the reader, though, certain suppositions must be understood. Julian thus takes great pains to apply this hermeneutic to the theophany of Job 38 in the first order to determine how it is that God can interact with his creation at all. Does he occupy the same space as creatures? Does he speak in an audible voice? These are not metaphysical questions of obsession or distraction for Julian, but genuine theological planks whereby the reader may interact with God at the same level as Job (presuming, of course, the reader possesses εὐνοια like Job). Foremost, as a Eunomian, Julian’s God would in actuality be inaccessible apart from the λόγος, the pre-existent Jesus; because of this, any direct revelation from God must come purely from προσωποποίησις, “personification.” That is to say, God is so far beyond our understanding that he graciously utilizes understandable modes of communication for the sake of humanity—both for Job and those reading God’s words to Job.

And so, when we reach the text of the God-speech in Job 38, Julian takes delight in highlighting the various ways God has spoken to humanity, closely echoing the text of Hebrews throughout his exposition. This is not a God who delights in hiding from his creation, but one who has gone to great pains throughout salvation-history to make himself known to his followers: as a man wrestling with Jacob, as a voice speaking to Adam in the garden of Eden, as a burning bush to Moses—and through the Holy Spirit to Paul, interestingly enough. God does not limit himself to one-on-one communication, though, and importantly so; God’s revelation is not limited to a select few. He also made his activity manifest through “the sound of trumpets and a fiery storm” to the whole people of Israel leaving Egypt and through calling down “tongues of fire

32. Take, for instance, Julian’s lengthy explanation for Moses as the author of Job, 1:1–4.18; or Julian’s explanation for how the satan and God can said to converse with one another, 11.16–13.12.

33. Lampe, Patristic Greek, 1189.


35. Julian, 247.3–12.
not to burn, but to illuminate” on the followers of Christ at Pentecost. God’s revelation to Paul was not simply for his own benefit either, for his theophany on the road to Damascus “was not allowed to be without witness, for [God] made the bystanders who saw him on the road and were astounded hear” as well. For Julian, God will choose to utilize any and all aspects of his creation to communicate with humanity, but God does so not out of mere condescension; rather, it is out of concern for making himself accessible. Mixed together with God’s sovereignty and status as the creator of everything is God’s desire to connect with that creation. Thus, if God sees fit to speak through a donkey, so too is it fitting to speak from a whirlwind or through fire.

Another noteworthy aspect of Julian’s exposition of the divine speech in Job 38 is his continued explanation of the amount of separation between humanity and God, and obviously particularly between Job and God. For Julian, God’s speech is not given harshly in order to widen the gulf between humanity and God, nor to highlight the utter futility of humanity in attempting to dialogue with God, but in order to show the reader more about the character of the God who has chosen to make himself known throughout salvation-history. As Julian moves on into 38:3ff., this becomes even more apparent. While it is true that, at the outset, the words of God seem gruff, highlighting the finitude of humanity, Julian draws out the emphasis on the power of God’s βουλή, “will” or “plan,” as the prominent feature of God’s overall discourse.

At God’s behest, all of creation is formed; unlike humanity, God has no need for tools, cornerstones, or support pillars. Julian is emphatic that absolutely nothing happens without God’s will causing it. This is another bi-level argument; on the one hand, Julian implicitly takes God’s theophanic pronouncements here as a proof text for an Arian cosmology, wherein the λόγος could only have been created by the will of the Father, and that the creation of the λόγος was not a necessary action. Thus, he is probably bolstering the viewpoints almost certainly already held by the readers of this commentary. On the other hand, though, Julian may

36. Ibid., 247.16–248.7.
37. Ibid., 248.7–10.
38. Nevertheless, Julian makes the common distinction between seeing God’s ἐνέργεια and his ousia; in theophany, even when speaking directly with God we do so through his “activity” rather than his “essence.” See Julian, 248.5ff.
actually be allowing the ambiguity of God’s answer as a whole to stand, not attempting to be overly exegetical to the point of stifling the text. God’s answer to Job is as mysterious as his answer to all humanity, and though modern theologians may be uncomfortable receiving the answer of “it is simply God’s will” to the question of the problem of theodicy, pastorally Julian preserves the overall goodness of God by allowing that mystery to remain.

This becomes even clearer during Julian’s discussion of 38:7ff., the final portion to which we shall turn in this examination. Those who attempt to pin the problem of evil on lesser creations, such as the stars through astrology, ignore the thrust of God’s answer to Job.\(^{41}\) This is a mistake made by two sets of people: by Job’s “comforters” in the text, and by those who improperly exegete Job; for how can God be called “good,” yet said to be the maker of that which causes evil?\(^{42}\) Even if God did create something capable of determining the fates of people evilly, how could God’s providence not overshadow the providence of lesser beings? If this is not logically sufficient to convince his readers, Julian makes a second attempt by channeling a popular example: by highlighting the illogical possibility of laws attempting to forbid people to act evilly if people are, in fact, not able to control their own actions and act for the good of society.\(^{43}\) Even in the brief space of one verse, for Julian God both justifies his own activity, asserting his ultimate goodness, and speaks a word of encouragement for the readers of Job who are spurred on with the knowledge of their significance in God’s cosmos. Julian does not exegete God as a sovereign dictator, but as an ultimately good and creative God supremely interested in the well-being of his creation:

> If God is good and without a share in any evil, he is the maker of no evil, but the creator of every good thing. For to the extent that he made everything, he made it exceedingly beautiful; so then none of what is made is evil, not that which is above the earth, not the things upon the earth, nor the things in heaven, and therefore neither the stars.\(^{44}\)

\(^{41}\) Julian, 252.13ff. Though his obsession with astrology in this section may indeed be an overall unnecessary diversion, at the least the gist of his argument is relevant for our current discussion.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 253.2–4.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 253.4–9.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., 253.10–14.
Job is innocent of all sin partly, but perhaps precisely, because he has resisted the temptation to blame his tragedies on creation. Despite his παρρησία, “boldness,” in even attempting to dialogue with God, Job’s εὔνοια allowed him direct access to God’s insights into the matter. By direct implication, then, if the reader exhibits similar εὔνοια, she will also be afforded direct interaction with God.

Thus, we see that Julian is content to consistently work on two levels, neither of which is mutually exclusive. On the one hand, Job is a model for εὔνοια, something that, from Julian’s perspective, was not modeled by pro-Nicenes. As such, he is an archetype of one who is able to draw close to God and not perish before God’s glorious theophany—regardless of his political stature or theological influence. On the other hand, Julian consistently exegetes with his readership in mind, inviting the keen observer of the truth behind Job’s high theological vantage onto a similar—and still fully realistic—path toward εὔνοια. Let us now proceed to examine Chrysostom’s treatment of the same passage.

CHRYSTOYOM ON JOB

Chrysostom, despite being a fellow Antiochene academician, portrays a different Job:

_This_ Job is an ascetic philosopher, his children as much disciples as progeny, his wife a temptress and instrument of Satan. Where gluttonous Adam fell his abstemious descendent triumphs, and, abhorring all intemperance, regards no possession as his own, viewing even the loss of children with detachment. A true ‘hero and athlete’ he displays a _dynamis_ as potent as that of any Olympic victor, and equally public. . . . Here is a Job indeed who has left the walls of the city behind; the losses of family, possessions, and friends are but stages in an emancipation.  

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45. Vaggione, “Of Monks,” 195–97. Cf. Chrysostom, _Job_, 15–71; 163–71; C. A. Newsom and S. E. Schreiner, “Job,” in _Hebrew Bible: History of Interpretation_ (ed. John H. Hayes; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 146. Also of interest is the differing concern Chrysostom places on the history of the text; whereas Julian is more concerned with identifying Moses as the author and not historically identifying Job, Chrysostom makes it a point to identify Job as King Jobab of Edom and not worry at all about the potential author of the work. Cf. Hill, _Commentary on Job_, 8–9; Chrysostom, _Job_, 13; 203. Kelly (Golden Mouth, 97–99) highlights Chrysostom’s blatant attitudes toward the rich (and especially rich women) and their extravagant lifestyles in his commentary on the Psalms.

Interestingly, in his exegesis of Gen 15 in homilies 36 and 37, Chrysostom depicts Abraham as a likewise enlightened individual (Chrysostom, _Homilies on Genesis_).
There is certainly reason enough to suspect that Chrysostom’s portrayal of Job is more a result of his current political involvement in his own defense against the non-Nicenes who are variously at power in urban centers around him than anything else, not to mention his ascetic past which factors largely into many of his writings. Indeed, as Vaggione describes, Chrysostom has captured Job “for a cause, and enlisted him in the army of a new, and equally transformed, ‘philosophy.’”46 Nevertheless, Chrysostom exhibits the same exegetical determination as Julian to understand how God interacts with Job in this periscope, and consequently, with the one reading God’s words to Job.

After devoting a lengthy section at the outset of his commentary on questions of setting and characterization of Job, Chrysostom’s pace quickens dramatically until reaching chapter 38 (and quickens again afterward). Chrysostom establishes a link straightaway between the theophany experienced by Job and that of the patriarchs by focusing much more intently than Julian on God’s speech originating from the whirlwind.47 For Chrysostom this was not simply for the sake of shock and awe as perhaps theophanies are so depicted in the Pentateuch; for since Job is a wise man, and this work accounted among the books of the sophoi, God “places a cloud over that righteous man at the time so as to elevate his thinking and get him to think that the voice was coming from on high.”48 Then, Chrysostom takes a somewhat different route than

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18–45 [trans. Robert C. Hill, Fathers of the Church: Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1990]; references to this work will follow the form of homily and paragraph). Abraham is consistently the “just man” who, though being “raised by infidel parents . . . yet enjoyed the divine vision” because of his “devotion to divine things.” God’s attention to his “anticipated virtue once more causes his virtue to be more patent” in choosing to leave his home country of infidels (36.2). He brings his nephew with him as an “imitator of his own virtue,” and in attempting to deceive the Egyptians concerning his wife does not show cowardice but a “spirit of steel,” an “attitude firmer than iron” (36.3). He shows “the extent of his humility,” “his great restraint,” “mildness of spirit” and “the extraordinary degree of his good sense” in his dealings with Lot (36.6). His closeness to God is evidenced by God’s immediate answer to his inquiry into having offspring (36.12). Abraham’s acceptance of God’s promise required “a robust spirit capable of rising above every human consideration and leaving it behind” (37.7). Finally, Chrysostom applies Abraham’s disregard for material wealth (despite possessing much of it) to the members of his congregation (37.16–19). For supplementary information on the text of Gen 15, see Jeffrey J. Niehaus, God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 172–80; Kelly, Golden Mouth, 58–60, 89–90.


47. Chrysostom, Job, 186.

48. Ibid.
Julian in attempting to grasp which concealed intentions God reveals, noting that God actually addresses heinous thoughts guarded by Job, but quite transparent to his Creator.\(^\text{49}\) This has a dual effect: for one, it demonstrates quite clearly how much loftier God is than Job; yet, on the other hand, it further demonstrates the wisdom of Job for not giving voice to these concerns.

This sort of dual layering pervades Chrysostom’s reasoned exegesis, as we see further demonstrated in his explication of 38:3. Whereas on the one hand Job is enjoined by God to “gird his loins” as if entering some sort of sparring match, on the other hand he is invited into a reasoned, rhetorical discourse with God. That is to say, Chrysostom is keen to note that what God is about to say will be marvelous—an answer full of “wisdom and understanding” fit for a discourse with a philosopher—but there is also wonder in God responding at all.\(^\text{50}\)

Much of the remainder of chapter 38 has a tenor of God’s care for creation, and Job as an integral part of it.\(^\text{51}\) Chrysostom’s God has constructed the earth for one such as Job, and where Julian’s God goes into greater detail than is necessary for Job to understand his greatness, Chrysostom’s God is actually sparing Job details of creation and instead stating what he presumably already knows: “If the universe is the beneficiary of such great providence, much more so are you.”\(^\text{52}\) Chrysostom’s God, moreover, is not as much concerned to emphasize the power of his will in such a vast work of construction as his “great skill.”\(^\text{53}\) Working by his will would have been assumed, obviously, but Chrysostom elevates the role of logic and planning involved in creation by fiat. Where Julian’s God has created by the simplest of acts, Chrysostom’s God has spent much time and effort to act “as a fine architect” by knowing the exactly perfect measurements by which to

\(^{49}\) Ibid. This may also reflect somewhat of an internal debate happening in Julian’s city of residence in light of the “Syrians” also making use of Job for their purposes.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 187.

\(^{51}\) In Homily 37.4 on Gen 15, Chrysostom also draws this characteristic of theophanic activity to Abraham’s case, demonstrating that God asserts his care of Abraham in the midst of any deific identification; God is not only God, but the God who has acted in history to safeguard his servant and fulfill his promises.

\(^{52}\) Chrysostom, *Job*, 187. It should be noted that Chrysostom’s conclusion to this chapter is somewhat of a surprise in that he can only imagine that something was awry in Job’s cosmology to have demanded such a spiel by God. Cf. Hill’s (*Commentary on Job*, 230 n. 14) assessment of this, in which he assesses Chrysostom’s conclusion as “premature.”

\(^{53}\) Chrysostom, *Job*, 188.
construct the earth and humanity in the realm of time.\textsuperscript{54} Chrysostom implies that such a philosopher as Job would have the technical scientific knowledge to grasp the magnitude of God’s creative act, more so than one who was close to God but, in the end, reliant on the wonder of the unknown to have faith. On a deeper level, though, Chrysostom’s God is not revealing minor facts about which Job should be dumbfounded, but the purest of wisdom (which, of course, is not wholly unexpected).\textsuperscript{55} Perhaps, with regard to the leadership in the church during Chrysostom’s writing, this is evidence of an implicit appeal to the wisdom of those who have spent more of their lives studying God, Scripture, and the “higher” goals of existence rather than those who have politically jockeyed themselves to leadership through other avenues, as he may be characterizing the non-Nicenes in leadership; unfortunately, at this time we may only speculate.

The import of the text’s relation to the current reader is so great that Chrysostom does not shy from explicitly drawing his reader into that text, noting that “what is said to Job is no more directed to him than to us. \textit{Gird your loins like a man.} We too, in fact, have need of being heartened and challenged.”\textsuperscript{56} Such is the case throughout this theophany. God is speaking in such a way as to draw the listener, not just Job, into the whole of God’s creative activity, the revelation of which is not just reserved for Moses and Abraham and other patriarchs. Chrysostom delights in the imagery of God harnessing the waters and fires and floods nowadays as in olden days.\textsuperscript{57} What is more, these elements of the natural world are not ordered as such \textit{ipso facto}, but only through God’s constant activity for the sake of a witness to humanity.\textsuperscript{58} Likewise, Chrysostom waxes poetic about natural entropy and the organization of the seemingly disorganized heavens: “if in natural creation that is fluid and disorganized there exists such orderliness and such regularity, remember who is responsible for what is made when you see it also in the

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 188–89. Julian may also be subtextually referencing the general governance of the city and empire and locating Job’s place within it, exegeting diachronically, in a sense. Job’s special position with God does not preclude God’s care of Creation nor his πρόνοια, nor indeed ours.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 189.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 188. We find a similar enjoiender in Chrysostom’s commentary on Abraham in Homily 36.15–17, though to be fair the purpose of his commentary is explicitly homiletical.

\textsuperscript{57} Chrysostom, \textit{Job}, 190.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 191.
It appears almost certain at this point that Chrysostom has almost abandoned explicit adherence to his thesis of God’s theophany as an answer to Job’s sapiential problem in favor of the pastoral implications of the theophany. The ontological space between humanity and God is unfathomable based on God’s description of his own activity. Yet Job’s position as an ascetic philosopher grants him access to an audience with the Almighty. Finally, being constantly mindful of the Nicene imbroglio that lies behind his priestly activity, Chrysostom utilizes the opportunities the text gives him to stress how God’s language of birth and generation does and does not apply to the Son; the practical and the theological cannot and should not, in the end, be divorced in the mind of Chrysostom. The cosmology described by Chrysostom’s God is clearly Nicene, and any other interpretation would be fraught with difficulties.

CONCLUSION

It is certainly easy to see divergences in opinion between the two exegetes on Job’s situation. Chrysostom seems to be more interested in asserting the ontological gap between God and Job, and though the gap is large, Job is just the person to engage in a proper philosophical discourse with God. Julian, on the other hand, is interested in how God closes the gap because of Job’s εὐνοία, and how it is no strange thing for God to communicate with one who is so close to him. Though at times Chrysostom’s Job is stared down by a God almost needing to defend his sovereignty, nevertheless he does so on Job’s level; whereas for Julian God is highlighting his own majesty in order to make the theophanic event itself more beautiful and profound. The most profound similarity, despite the differences in Julian’s and Chrysostom’s contexts, is that both focus on the applicability of God’s speech to current readers, and neither allow the reading of the text simply to remain part of an exegetical exercise. Though Job was not reckoned as a member of the line of patriarchs, he indeed did stand somewhat indirectly in salvation-history as one who experienced a direct theophany firsthand. As pre-critical interpreters, it was therefore the task of both Julian and Chrysostom to draw their readers into this theophany, not as mere exegetes, but as part of God’s creation called into participation with Scripture. On one level, Job is the historical figure through which the average Christian can

59. Ibid.

60. See especially ibid., 194.
seemingly most closely relate. On a much more pervasive level, however, Job serves almost as a puppet through which Julian and Chrysostom can disseminate their own theologies, whether anti- or pro-Nicene, to their congregations. However, whether the true path to God was as a person living a well-ordered life evident of a well-ordered mind, as was Julian’s urban rhetor, or, as Chrysostom’s ascetic philosopher by steadfastly remaining detached from the troubles of the world, must be discerned by the subsequent readers of the commentaries.
THE THEOLOGICAL AND EXEGETICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF
LEVITICUS AS INTERTEXT IN DANIEL 9

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Daniel 9 is renowned for the textual and theological problems it raises for interpreters, and for the diverse readings it generates. Yet Dan 9 also presents a fascinating tapestry of inner-biblical quotations and allusions. Within this matrix, however, the voice of Leviticus has not been fully appreciated. Nonetheless, Levitical terminology and thought forms pervade the chapter and perform a significant function. The combined force of these parallels suggests the raison d’être for Daniel’s prayer, elucidates the mediated response and suggests a theological coherence to the chapter as a whole. Thus, this article argues that intertextual sensitivity to the array of Leviticus connections made can constrain exegesis of Dan 9, while at the same time generating new insights into its theological perspective.

KEYWORDS: Daniel 9, Leviticus, Intertextuality, Day of Atonement, Jubilee

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 9 is an intriguing text in an intriguing book. On the one hand, the chapter contains a prayer that has been described as “a liturgical gem in form and expression.”¹ Yet, on the other hand, the chapter’s final verses contain some of the most notorious interpretative cruxes in the Old Testament, earning them Montgomery’s oft-quoted label, “The dismal swamp of O.T. criticism.”²


2. Ibid., 400.
However, problems with Dan 9 are not limited to its denouement. The textual integrity of the chapter has been seriously challenged on a number of fronts. Hartman and Di Lella, continuing a long tradition, appeal to supposed redactional seams (9:4a, 20), the superior quality of the Hebrew, and a unique-to-Daniel use of יהוה to argue that the prayer of 9:4b–19 is an obvious interpolation. Their conclusion finds support from Sibley Towner who suggests that a prayer of confession is a “peculiar” outworking of a perceived need for illumination. More recently, John Collins argues that the revelation imparted to Daniel neither responds to nor addresses the issues raised in the prayer. Collins also finds a flat contradiction between the contingency of Daniel’s “Deuteronomic” prayer and the typically deterministic outlook of apocalyptic literature. With all things considered, Daniel’s entreaty in 9:4b–19 seems out of place and obviously secondary.

As a result, the prayer of Dan 9 has not always received a detailed examination. An extreme example is found in Charles Wright’s commentary, which virtually ignores vv. 4–19 in its otherwise detailed treatment of the chapter. Yet, regardless of compositional history the prayer is part of the received text. Balentine’s approach is therefore preferable. “Chapter 9 now includes this important text [Daniel’s prayer], and the narrative sequence therefore requires that one read through it


rather than around it."\textsuperscript{10} That said, Pieter Venter isolates the difficulty that interpreters continue to face. “The main challenge remains to give an acceptable explanation why the prayer and narrative . . . have been integrated to form one composition.”\textsuperscript{11}

Daniel 9 also presents a number of historical and theological problems.\textsuperscript{12} While many attempts have been made to fit the “seventy sevens” (שבעים, 9:24) with known events, none has proven persuasive enough to sway consensus.\textsuperscript{13} Similarly, the debate surrounding the identity of “Darius, son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of Media” (דריושׁ בן אחשׁורושׁ מזרע مدى, 9:1) is notoriously complex and, although generating a significant body of literature, remains without definitive solution.\textsuperscript{14} Difficulties such as these lead Hartman and Di Lella to suggest that Daniel’s view of history “cannot be taken too seriously.”\textsuperscript{15}


Yet historical difficulties aside, the figure of “Darius” remains important within the narrative framework of the Book of Daniel. For readers, the character is connected with the fall of Babylon (5:30–6:1 [5:30–31 EB]). Thus, irrespective of any possible correlation with the historical figure of Cyrus, “Darius” within the narrative functions to evoke the significant shift of fortunes represented by the termination of Babylonian hegemony and subsequent repatriation of Judah’s exiles. Daniel 9, therefore, invites a reading set against the pivotal moments of 539/8 B.C.

On the theological front, the chapter’s ascription of sin is odd. Instead of an expected focus on the sin of Gentile oppressors, congruent with persecution under Antiochus IV, Daniel’s prayer, in contrast to the other visions of chapters 7–12, seems to highlight the sin of Israel as being the reason for experienced suffering. Furthermore, Collins posits that Dan 9 rejects both a Deuteronomic theology of history and the Chronicler’s interpretation of Jeremiah’s seventy-year prophecy, suggesting that the chapter is at odds not only with its historical and literary contexts but also with the other Scriptures.

Nonetheless, this enigmatic chapter also presents a rich tapestry of inner-biblical quotations and allusions. While various connections between Dan 9 and Leviticus have been noted before, others remain undiscussed. As a result, their combined explanatory power remains underappreciated. Yet as I will contend, increased sensitivity to Leviticus as intertext opens a theological perspective on Dan 9 that can alleviate some of the problems raised above. My aim, therefore, is twofold. First, I will outline connections between Leviticus and Dan 9 before examining their significance for interpretation. In particular, I hope to demonstrate that intertextual connections suggest a theological coherence to the entire text of Dan 9, explain the contingency of the prayer, and elucidate the response to Daniel’s entreaty.

Before I begin, however, a caveat is necessary. In exploring intertextual connections between Dan 9 and Leviticus I am in no way suggesting that Leviticus is the only intertext worth considering, nor even that it is necessarily the most important. Other texts that have demonstrable parallels with Dan 9 include Deut 28, 1 Kgs 8, Ezra 9, Neh 1 and 9, Isa 10, Jer 25–29, and Ezek 28. The exploration of intertextuality in relation to these passages, however, is well beyond the limits of


what I can accomplish here. My purpose is much more specific. What I aim to demonstrate is that careful consideration of Levitical parallels opens a window into the theological intent of Dan 9, which in turn has a bearing on the exegesis of this enigmatic pericope.

SO M E  M E T H O D O L O G I C A L  C O N S I D E R A T I O N S

First, a word regarding methodology is required. Intertextuality has become “trendy,” and its wide-ranging appropriation in relation to OT studies has been charted elsewhere. Regarding Dan 9, the chapter’s interrelationship with other OT texts is widely acknowledged. Towner, following Montgomery, concludes that eighty-five percent of Daniel’s prayer consists of inner-biblical quotation. Indeed, Dan 9 overtly indicates an awareness of, even interaction with, other sacred writings, particularly those of “Jeremiah the prophet” (מִרְמָה הַנְּבֵיא, 9:2) and the twice referenced “torah of Moses” (תֹּרָה מְשָּׁה, 9:11, 13). Intertextuality is an explicit dimension of this text.

Nevertheless, a measure of caution is required. As Christopher Rowland correctly recognises, inner-biblical links in Daniel are typically “allusive and indirect.” The overt references in Dan 9:2, 11, and 13


23. Christopher Rowland, “Apocalyptic Literature,” in It is Written: Scripture Citing
noted above are the exceptions that prove the rule. That does not mean, however, that one must retreat to unrestrained subjectivity. Instead, the need to avoid illegitimate connections that exist only in the eye of the beholder raises the need for proper procedure. The point is widely recognised and various methodologies have been suggested. The classic exploration remains Michael Fishbane’s *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, a significant catalyst for the recent upsurge of interest in the topic and the departure point for studies that have followed. Since *Biblical Interpretation*, principles for testing inner-biblical connections have been further refined. The diagnostic criteria proposed by Jeffrey Leonard are representative:

1. Shared language is the single most important factor in establishing a textual connection.  
2. Shared language is more important than nonshared language.  
3. Shared language that is rare or distinctive suggests a stronger connection than does language that is widely used.  
4. Shared phrases suggest a

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24. Some approaches are more suited to the NT’s use of the OT. So, for example, Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), esp. 29–32; Gregory K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012). While substantial overlap exists, the OT’s use of the OT raises its own unique problems. For instance, while it can be assumed that NT writers/readers were aware of OT texts, the literary knowledge of OT writers/readers is much more difficult to ascertain.


26. Tull, “Intertextuality,” 75, refers to Fishbane’s volume as “the most monumental single work on intertextual relationships within the Hebrew Scriptures.” Yet while undoubtedly seminal, *Biblical Interpretation* also has its limitations. James Kugel has suggested that Fishbane’s categories—scribal, legal, aggadic, mantological—are derived more from rabbinic categories than the biblical material. Moreover, Kugel rightly questions whether “inner-biblical exegesis” is a sufficient explanation to account for all the ways in which authors connect texts. See James L. Kugel, “The Bible’s Earliest Interpreters,” *Proof* 7 (1987): 275–76, 280.

stronger connection than do individual shared terms. (5) The accumulation of shared language suggests a stronger connection than does a single shared term or phrase. (6) Shared language in similar contexts suggests a stronger connection than does shared language alone. (7) Shared language need not be accompanied by shared ideology to establish a connection. (8) Shared language need not be accompanied by shared form to establish a connection.

Leonard’s criteria, or other similar systems that have been formulated, may be used to demonstrate the probability that a given text shares lexical parallels with another. However, as I will note below, conceptual parallels are also vital. While these are by nature less objective than shared terms and phrases, they still perform a significant function. In fact, conceptual similarities may indicate the reason for which lexical parallels have been utilised, for shared language can act as a trigger to bring to mind a wider textual milieu. For this reason, in what follows I will proceed on the basis of demonstrated lexical and syntactical connections to explore wider conceptual parallels that exist between Dan 9 and Leviticus. Each type of evidence should be allowed to bear the weight it can carry. Nevertheless, a confluence of lexical, syntactical and conceptual parallels increases the likelihood that a connection to Leviticus is intended. If that is, in fact, the case, then underappreciating Leviticus as intertext can only result in a reduced grasp of Dan 9.

**DANIEL’S PRAYER (9:4b–19)**

The prayer of Dan 9:4b–19 is a veritable mosaic of intertexts. As noted above, the majority of this passage consists of words and phrases drawn from various parts of the OT. For my purposes here, connections to Lev 26 prove crucial. While parallels to Lev 26 have been noted before, they are more pervasive than has been recognised. Multiple points of contact are discernible at lexical, syntactic and conceptual levels. Taken


29. See n. 27.

together, these connections become essential for grasping the nature of, and reason for, Daniel’s petition. Parallels, albeit with a degree of overlap, may be collated under three headings. Each adds further nuance to the purpose of verses 9:4b–19.

A Shared Focus on Covenant

The first point of connection is a shared focus on covenant. The importance of this theme within the priestly writings is widely acknowledged.31 In Lev 26, the eight-fold repetition of בְּרִית (“covenant”) signifies the importance of the theme for the chapter.32 In fact, Christophe Nihan argues that Lev 26 is unique within the Pentateuch as it not only concludes Exod 19–Lev 25 but also evidences engagement with the Patriarchal covenant(s) as well as material from Deuteronomy.33

In Dan 9, covenantal language pervades the prayer. The twin references to the “torah of Moses” (9:11, 13) overtly signal the passage’s interest. This focus is furthered by the use of בְּרִית (“covenant”) to frame the chapter (9:4, 27), coupled with the presence of other important covenantal terms throughout: חָסְדָּא (“loving-kindness” 9:4), תּוֹרָה (“torah” 9:10, 11, 13), מָצָא (“commandment” 9:4, 5), שׁפִּיט (“judgment” 9:5), שׁמֵר (“to keep” 9:4 [x2]), שׁמַע (“to hear” 9:6, 10, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19), שׁוּב (“to (re)turn” 9:13, 16, 25), אֲוֹבָד (“to love” 9:4).34 While any one of these terms on its own might simply reflect common word use, the clustering of terms is suggestive. Also of interest is the recalling of the exodus—YHWH is explicitly addressed in 9:15 as the one “who brought your people out from the land of Egypt with a mighty hand” (אָשֶׁר הָעַצֶּאת אֵתָם מִאָרְץ מֵעַמְךָ בִּיד חַזְקָה).

31. E.g., David Noel Freedman, “Divine Commitment and Human Obligation, the Covenant Theme,” Int 18 (1964): 421. Generally included in the Priestly texts are the covenants made with Noah (Gen 9), Abraham (Gen 17) and Phinehas (Num 25). Large sections of the Sinai material are also usually included.

32. Only Gen 17 has more occurrences of בְּרִית; the noun appears only two other times in Leviticus (2:13; 24:8).

33. In Nihan’s compositional model Lev 17–26 is the product of the Pentateuch’s priestly redactors and is written to complement, correct and complete the covenants made with the Patriarchs, the Sinai material, and Deuteronomy. See Christophe Nihan, From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch: A Study in the Composition of the Book of Leviticus (FAT 2/25; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 545–59. The concluding role of ch. 26 within chs. 17–26 thus marks it out as a key text for understanding the nature of God’s covenant with Israel. If Nihan is correct then it is perhaps not surprising that Dan 9 alludes specifically to this text.

The divine names employed in Dan 9 serve as additional pointers to this underlying covenantal concern. The frequent use of אדני (“Lord” 9:3, 4, 7, 9, 15, 16, 17, 19 [x3]) is an appropriate theonym for denoting God’s status as suzerain. However, it is Dan 9’s use of יהוה (9:2, 4, 8, 10, 13, 14 [x2], 20) that is particularly striking, for it is only here that the tetragrammaton appears in the Book of Daniel. This unique-to-Daniel use of יהוה, as noted above, is viewed by some as being problematic and indicative of interpolation even though other chapters within the book also manifest unique use of the divine names. However, the conspicuous use of יהוה in Dan 9 is better understood as a device that brings the God-Israel relationship, and particularly its Mosaic expression, into focus. Meredith Kline rightly concludes that the appearance of יהוה in ch. 9 is “a plain index to its major theme.”

**The Situation Addressed**

A second set of connections relates to the situation addressed. As seen above, the concept of covenant represents a dominant concern in Dan 9 with the language and ethos of ברית (“covenant”) comprising the framework around which the chapter is structured. However, the focus of the prayer is not just on covenant in general, but more specifically on its violation. The calamities experienced by Israel are unambiguously identified as those “written about in the torah of Moses” (9:11, 13). Furthermore, the use of אלה (“curse”) and שבעה (“oath”) in connection with “Moses” (9:11) instantly recalls the warnings against covenant breaking explicated in Lev 26 and Deut 28.

Although many argue that the prayer primarily reflects Deuteronomic influence, in a number of cases the language is particularly Levitical.

35. For example, אלה שמי (“God of heaven”) only occurs in Dan 2:18, 37, 44 (noted by Collins, Daniel, 348-349).


The שָׁמַם root ("to be desolate") is used five times in Dan 9 to depict desolation (9:17, 18, 26, 27 [x2]), yet does not appear anywhere in Deuteronomy. Leviticus 26, however, has the highest frequency of occurrences in the Old Testament (26:22, 31, 32 [x2], 34, 35, 43), where שָׁמַם depicts desolation as punishment for covenant unfaithfulness.

Similarly, the objects of desolation connect Dan 9 to Lev 26. The warning expressed in Lev 26:31, “I will desolate (והשׁמותי) your sanctuaries (מקדשׁיכם),” is explicitly alluded to in Dan 9:17 with a request for YHWH to make his face shine upon “your desolate (שׁמם) sanctuary (מקדשׁך).” Also of interest is Leviticus’s threat of חֶרְבָּה ("desolation") in conjunction with עִיר ("city") in 26:31, 33. In Dan 9, the realisation of such “desolation” (חרבה) is bemoaned in relation to a particular city, viz. Jerusalem (9:2, cf. 16, 18, 19). While Deuteronomy uses עיר in 28:16, there it forms part of a merism describing the sphere in which curses would be experienced by the people rather than being the object of destruction itself.

Thus, Daniel describes his situation using terminology that is particularly Levitical. Importantly, in a wider milieu of covenant resonances, connections to Lev 26 explicate the nation’s suffering as the due consequence for obviating vassal obligations. Israel’s desolation is nothing short of realised covenant curse.

The Nature of Daniel’s Prayer

A third area in which Leviticus as intertext becomes important is clarifying the nature of Daniel’s prayer. As noted, the reality of realised covenant curse is the exigency that provokes appeal to YHWH. Yet the role of the prayer is debated, especially with regard to the type of petition offered and its function in the chapter. Is Daniel’s prayer a prayer for illumination, or is it a prayer of confession and repentance?

The narrative introduction (9:3–4a) gives an important indication. Daniel, having discerned the number of years of Jerusalem’s desolation (9:2), turned to YHWH in prayer with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes (9:3). Hartman and Di Lella posit that such activity was appropriate preparation for receiving a revelation. Thus understood,

39. The emphatic final word of the chapter is the qal participle of שָׁמַם.

40. מקדשׁ ("sanctuary") does not appear in Deuteronomy.

41. חֶרְבָּה ("desolation") is not attested in Deuteronomy.

Daniel prayed for illumination in order to understand his nation’s predicament.

However, the combination of terms for “fasting” (צום), “sackcloth” (שׂק), and “ashes” (אפר) is found elsewhere in the OT only in contexts of mourning and distress (Esth 4:1-3), humility (Isa 58:5), or explicit repentance (Jonah 3:6). That said, for interpretation, contextual use remains the deciding factor. What is the context of Dan 9? As I have suggested, the covenant between YHWH and Israel is the dominant concern of the chapter. Moreover, bolstered by language shared with Lev 26, covenant violation is particularly in focus. In this context, fasting with sackcloth and ashes is best understood as signifying contrition. Norman Porteous concurs, noting that while fasting alone may relate to seeking revelation (cf. Exod 34:28; Deut 9:9), here it is associated with confession of sin.

This conclusion is strengthened by the vocabulary of the prayer itself. In 9:4, Daniel says, “I prayed to YHWH my God and confessed” (ואתפללה ליוהו אלהי ואתודה). While, as Tremper Longman states, “Daniel’s prayer is founded on the Deuteronomic covenant,” the language also draws on Levitical resonances. Important in this regard is the verb ידה which appears in Dan 9:4, 20. The hithpael form used, meaning “to confess,” is rare, appearing only eleven times in the OT, where its use is predominantly connected to postexilic prayers of penitence (Ezra 10:1; Neh 1:6; 9:2, 3). Yet significantly, the same hithpael form also appears in Lev 26. In v. 40a, potential restoration from exile is said to hinge on the enactment of ידה. “But if they confess (והתודו) their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their unfaithful acts with which they acted

44. Longman, Daniel, 234.
46. Lev 5:5; 16:21; 26:40; Num 5:7; 2 Chr 30:22; Ezra 10:1; Neh 1:6; 9:2, 3; Dan 9:4, 20.
47. These prayers are similar in form and content and are often assigned a unique genre. For discussion of Gattung in Dan 9, see Venter, “Daniel 9,” 33–37. See also Richard J. Bautch, Glory and Power, Ritual and Relationship: The Sinai Covenant in the Postexilic Period (LHIBOTS 471; New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 72; Joyce G. Baldwin, Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary (TOTC; Leicester: IVP, 1978), 165; Towner, Daniel, 130; Goldingay, Daniel, 234-235.
unfaithfully against me, and that they also walked in opposition to me . . .” Thus, both contextual similarity—confession by those suffering deserved covenant curse—and unusual verb form, the *hithpael* of יָדָה, link Dan 9 to Lev 26:40.

A connection to Lev 26 is further supported by the fact that each clause in 26:40 is alluded to in Dan 9. The phrase, “But if they confess” (הוֹדְדוּ), is echoed by the *hithpael* of יָדוֹ in Dan 9:4, 20. The required confession of “their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers” (אֲמַרְוָהּ וַאֲמַרְוָהּ אֵבָטָה), expressed in Dan 9:5 with “we have committed iniquity” (וַחֲלוֹנֵינוּ), and in Dan 9:16 with frank acknowledgment of “the iniquities of our fathers” (רוּשָׁנִים אָבָנָה). The next clause, employing מַעְלָם to denote faithlessness, (בָּמַעְלָם אָשֶׁר מַעְלָם), is repeated verbatim with necessary adjustment for context in Dan 9:7: “in their unfaithful acts with which they acted unfaithfully against me”), is repeated verbatim with necessary adjustment for context in Dan 9:7: “in their unfaithful acts with which they acted unfaithfully against you”).

The final phrase, “and that they also walked in opposition to me” (ואֲפִלּוּ אֲשֶׁר הַלָּכוּ עִמְּנֵי), is echoed in Dan 9:10 which confesses that Israel has not walked (לָכָה) in accordance with YHWH’s voice or laws.

Thus, the prayer of Dan 9 is not only best viewed as being a prayer of confession, but it is a confession worded precisely in the form and language prescribed by Lev 26 for those finding themselves in exile and experiencing covenant curses. Therefore, Daniel’s prayer functions canonically as the fulfilment of the injunction of Lev 26:40. Michael Fishbane is right. “The key purpose of Daniel’s prayer was not solely to suggest that old covenant curses had been fulfilled. It was also to emphasize the more hopeful side of Lev. 26, which announced that repentance could terminate the severe decree.”


50. These are the only two places in the Old Testament with this construction, although Ezek 39:26 is similar.

51. The verb לָכָה plays a crucial role in Lev 26 where it is used to communicate the Eden-evoking blessing that would follow obedience (26:12; cf. Gen 3:8) as well as the curse that covenant violation would occasion (26:24).

52. Milgrom (*Leviticus* 23–27, 2330) concludes with regard to 26:40: “Herewith H sets a precedent for all subsequent confessions” (italics removed).


The final section of Dan 9—Montgomery’s “dismal swamp”—has been the subject of much debate, especially with regard to its connection to the prayer of 9:4b–19. That an answer was given as soon as Daniel began praying (9:23) has been taken to support a deterministic outlook that is impervious to supplication. However, as Goldingay aptly comments, immediacy may simply highlight the willingness of God to respond to the prayers of his people. In fact, in the light of what we have seen thus far, 9:23 may function to emphasise the covenant faithfulness and responsiveness of a God who so eagerly desires to restore his people that immediately upon their repentance he acts. In the end, resolution of the issues raised by these verses depends in large measure on whether or not the divine response addresses the concerns of the prayer.

As in 9:4b–19, parallels to Leviticus are once again evident. Indeed, three conceptual connections to Leviticus prove essential for understanding not only the angelically mediated response but also how it relates to Daniel’s petition. Again, while some of the links to Leviticus have been charted before, others have not. Their cumulative force, however, is crucial. As Vogel notes, cultic motifs in Daniel have the potential to generate insight into the book’s theology and the intent of its author(s).

Sevenfold Judgment

The first Levitical concept relates to the “seventy sevens” (שבעים שבעים) that are decreed for Daniel’s people and city (9:24–27). “Seventy” immediately recalls the length of exile Daniel had discerned “in the

56. Goldingay, Daniel, 255.
57. Vogel, Cultic Motif, 224.
“Books” may be a reference to Jeremiah only, or it may also include the Prophets and Torah. Regardless, Daniel understood that seventy years were to elapse before Jerusalem’s restoration. This period could be either literal or symbolic, and refer to the length of the exile (cf. Jer 29:10; Zech 1:12), or to the hegemony of Babylon (cf. Jer 25:12). Either way, awareness of the historical moment implied by the narrative setting of Dan 9 is vital. The juncture is emphasised by the twofold repetition of the phrase בֵּשַׁן אַחֲרֵית (“in the first year”) in 9:1, 2. This “first year” of Darius witnessed the fall of Babylon (cf. 5:31 [6:1]) and provided the catalyst for Daniel to anticipate the restoration of Jerusalem.

What becomes important for this investigation is the combination of the forecasted seventy-year exile with the sevenfold judgment threatened by Leviticus (26:18, 21, 24, 28) to produce the “seventy


60. As argued by Gerald H. Wilson, “The Prayer of Daniel 9: Reflection on Jeremiah 29,” JSOT (1990): 91–99. Wilson posits that Jer 27–29, with its forecast of seventy years, was circulated as an individual letter sent to the exiles in Babylon (94).

61. So Goldingay, Daniel, 240.

62. Edward Lipiński, “Recherches sur le Livre de Zacharie,” VT 20 (1970): 25–55, examines the ANE background associated with periods of seventy years. He concludes: “70 years constitute a time of divine wrath against a city or a temple. It was a time of penance, destined to appease the wrath of God. This concept existed in Mesopotamia and in Israel, at least in the 7th and 6th centuries before our era” (40, translation mine).

63. Determining the terminus ad quo and the terminus ad quem for the exile is problematic. Second Chronicles 36:20–23 equates the end of exile with the proclamation made by Cyrus (539/8 B.C.). Zechariah 1:12, however, seems to imply a date c. 520/19 B.C. Perhaps in context, Zechariah’s concern centres on the temple (cf. Zech 1:16) which had lain in ruins since 587 B.C. and was completed c. 516/5 B.C. (cf. Ezra 6:15), a period of approximately seventy years. See further, Anthony R. Petterson, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi (AOTC 25; Nottingham: Apollos, 2015), 116–17.

64. So Jack R. Lundbom, Jeremiah 21–36: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary (AB 21B; New York: The Anchor Bible, 2003), 249. Lundbom notes that the period between the actual fall of the Assyrian empire (609/8 B.C.) to the coming of Cyrus (539 B.C.) is seventy years.

65. Wallace (Daniel, 155–56) argues that Daniel’s driving question was determining the end date of the exile. However, in Dan 9 the issue seems rather to be that having witnessed the fall of Babylon Daniel understood the need for confession and set about doing that.
sevens” announced by Gabriel (9:24).\textsuperscript{66} That שבעים שבעים forms a word play with the divine “oath” (שבעה) in 9:11, an oath to execute judgment, further connects the “seventy sevens” both to the concept of forewarned divine punishment and to Daniel’s prayer. In this way, exile is extended sevenfold and becomes more than mere dislocation from the land. Restoration in its fullness would be realised, not after seventy years, but after 490 years.\textsuperscript{67}

This understanding of Levitical influence on postexilic conceptions of the exile is supported by consideration of the similar interpretative move made by the Chronicler.\textsuperscript{68} Leviticus 26:35 had promised that during exile the land would rest “all the days of its desolation” (כולם השמה) in order to make restitution for the Sabbath rests not enjoyed every seven years (cf. Lev 25:1–7) due to covenant disobedience. Chronicles develops this idea by integrating it with Jeremiah’s prophecy of a seventy-year exile. “All the days [the land] was desolate (כולם השמה) it kept Sabbath in order to fulfill seventy years” (2 Chr 36:21). Thus Chronicles has in mind enough Sabbath rests to cover 490 years of neglect.\textsuperscript{69}

Once again, the importance of Leviticus for understanding Dan 9 can be observed. Moreover, this connection with Leviticus adds a significant theological dimension to the time periods in ch. 9, a point I will return to below.

\textit{The Day of Atonement}

A second Levitical concept lying behind Dan 9, one that remains virtually unexplored,\textsuperscript{70} is the Day of Atonement. Throughout his prayer Daniel’s concern with the totality of his people’s sin is emphasised by the quantity and variety of synonyms he employs. Nine different roots are used twenty-six times to present an exhaustive catalogue of wrong-

\textsuperscript{66} The connection is widely suggested. See, for instance, Lucas, Daniel, 241.

\textsuperscript{67} I will return to discuss the theological import of the 490 years below.


\textsuperscript{69} I.e., a yearlong rest for every seventh year. Seventy such rests would correspond to a combined period of 490 years.

\textsuperscript{70} To my knowledge only Lacocque (“Liturgical Prayer,” 124) and Collins (Daniel, 349) make the same connection. Neither, however, develops the point.
The culpability of the people, Daniel included, is emphasised by the subjects of the verbs (“we,” “they,” “all Israel”) and by the use of pronominal suffixes (“my,” “our,” “their”). The sin in view is manifestly Israel’s. It is this iniquity, along with his own (e.g., 9:5), that Daniel confesses, establishing, as we have seen, a connection with Lev 26:40 through the use the of the verb יִדְע (”to confess”).

In addition, ידּה in the same rare hithpael form appears in Lev 16:21. There, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest was to “confess” (יַדֹּע) over the head of the “scapegoat” all the “iniquities” (רשׁע), “trespasses” (פשׁע), and “sins” (חטאת) of the people. Critically, this same tripartite description of wrongdoing is also found in Dan 9:24 in relation to the purpose of the “seventy sevens.” While Daniel is still confessing (hithpael participle of ידּה) on the people’s behalf (9:20), Gabriel arrives (9:24) to outline a period of “seventy sevens” that will finish “rebellion” (פשׁע), put an end to “sin” (חטאת), and atone for “iniquity” (רשׁע). The rare combination of terms—פשׁע, חטאת, רשׁע—and the hithpael of ידּה strongly suggests a parallel between Dan 9 and Lev 16. Consequently, it appears that the concerns of Daniel’s confession are addressed by means of evoking Day of Atonement language. Moreover, unlike the annually repeated ritual of Lev 16, Dan 9 hints at a superlative Day of Atonement—one that is able to bring about a permanent end to sin and thereby inaugurate “eternal righteousness” (צדק עלמים).

The parallel with Lev 16 adds rich theological depth to the idea of atonement conveyed in Gabriel’s response. Moreover, Daniel’s concern regarding Israel’s sin was addressed. Allusion to the Day of Atonement is eminently appropriate, for the ritual of Lev 16 was able to deal with the full spectrum of both impurity and wrongdoing—including highhanded sin. The total purging implied by a superlative Day of Atonement would therefore deal with the totality of the nation’s sin so much in view throughout Daniel’s confession. Thereby imagined is the

71. The roots חטאת (9:5, 8, 11, 15, 16, 20(×2), 24), שׁע (9:5, 13, 16, 24), רשׁע (9:5, 15), וַתֵ’ רָשׁ (9:6, 10, 11, 14), וַתֵ’ שׁע (9:7(×2)), וַתֵ’ שׁע (9:11), and פַשׁע (9:24) are all employed to convey the breadth of covenant violation.


73. Doukhan, “The Seventy Weeks,” 20–21, suggests that the indefinite noun forms used in 9:24, in marked contrast to the definite forms used throughout the prayer, perhaps hint at a universal perspective, incorporating, but not being limited to, Daniel’s supplication on behalf of Israel. If correct, then Daniel’s confession was not only acknowledged, it was surpassed.

74. Highhanded sin is indicated in Lev 16 by the chapter’s recall of the Nadab and Abihu incident (16:1; cf. 10:1–2) and by the use of פַשׁע (“rebellion”) in vv. 16, 21.
means for ending Israel’s extended exile.

The Year of Jubilee

A third Levitical connection that provides important conceptual background to Dan 9 is the Year of Jubilee. The Jubilee, outlined in Lev 25, prescribed restoration, cancelation of debts, freedom of slaves and a return to ancestral land every forty-nine years.\(^75\) That the “seventy sevens” of Dan 9 equates to ten complete Jubilee cycles, viz. 490 years,\(^76\) has been widely suggested.\(^77\) Nevertheless, Goldingay disagrees, arguing that Dan 9 does not describe the 490 in Jubilee terms.\(^78\)

However, while the term יובל (“Jubilee”) does not appear in Dan 9, a reference to the number forty-nine (or multiples thereof) would have created immediate associations for Israelite readers familiar with Leviticus.\(^79\) That such a connection would be made is evidenced by the intertestamental literature, among which periodisation of history is a standard feature of historic apocalypses.\(^80\) Such periodisation is readily observable. In relation to my argument here, division of history into periods of forty-nine or seventy are of particular interest. Several examples will suffice to illustrate the widespread use of these numbers.


\(^76\) Various attempts have been made to divide all of Israelite history into blocks of 490 years. For instance, see E. W. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture* (New York: Cosimo, 2005), 5–6; J. W. Bosanquet, *Messiah the Prince: Or the Inspiration of the Prophecies of Daniel* (2nd ed.; London: Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer, 1869), 322–24.


\(^78\) Goldingay, *Daniel*, 232.

\(^79\) The number forty-nine is important in Leviticus beyond its connection to Jubilee. There are seven weeks of days (i.e., 7x7) between the raised sheaf and the Feast of Weeks (23:15); on the Day of Atonement blood is sprinkled a total of forty-nine times (16:14–19). Furthermore, the phrase אני יהוה (“I am YHWH”) appears a total of forty-nine times in the book. See Roy E. Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 455.

\(^80\) Collins, *Daniel*, 352.
In *1 Enoch* 10:11–12, judgment comes after seventy generations; it falls after seventy weeks in 4Q181.\(^81\) *1 Enoch* 91:11–19 and 93:1–10 divide all of history into ten weeks (i.e., 10x7). Periodisation into Jubilee cycles is also evidenced. *Jubilees* reckons the time between Adam and the exodus to be 2,401 years—viz. forty-nine Jubilee cycles.\(^82\) 11QMelch understands the period before the final judgment to comprise of ten Jubilee cycles. Use of the same numerical patterns is also attested in later Judaism. The Talmud combines Jubilee structuring with messianic expectation. For example, “In the last jubilee the son of David will come.”\(^83\) Thus the number forty-nine in the intertestamental period and beyond, based on its connection to Jubilee, had theological overtones over and above any literal sense.

A recent article by Ron Haydon reaches the same conclusion.\(^84\) Haydon approaches the “seventy sevens” of Dan 9 in light of heptadic themes found in the Dead Sea literature. Examination of several Qumranic texts including *Jubilees* and *pseudo-Daniel* (4Q243) leads Haydon to conclude that the heptadic structures employed therein “relay a theological message in the first instance and then a chronological message in a secondary capacity.”\(^85\) Heptadic language thus becomes a means of “theologizing” time.\(^86\)

What then is the theological point being made in Dan 9? The answer has been obscured by the debate surrounding the division of the “seventy sevens.” The accents in MT suggest a division into three distinct periods: “seven sevens,” “sixty-two sevens” and one “seven.”\(^87\) The Septuagint, however, allows for merging the “seven sevens” with the “sixty-two sevens.” Hence, scholars argue both for,\(^88\) and against,\(^89\) the

\(^{81}\) Noted by Goldingay, *Daniel*, 232.


\(^{85}\) Ibid., 208.

\(^{86}\) Ibid., 210.

\(^{87}\) Indicated by the placement of the *atanach* in v. 25.

\(^{88}\) E.g., Collins, *Daniel*, 355.

\(^{89}\) E.g., Edward J. Young, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth,
Masoretic tradition. At the centre of the debate seems to be a desire to make the numbers fit historical events. The fact that no one has done so convincingly, however, should urge caution. Nevertheless, the division attested by MT makes sense when understood against the background of Jubilee.\(^{90}\)

The initial “seven sevens” forms a complete Jubilee cycle of forty-nine years, a “time image”\(^{91}\) with rich theological overtones. George Athas suggests how these “seven sevens” may be integrated into the wider narrative of the book. In his reading of 9:25, Athas argues that the phrase, “from the going out of a word” (מְבָנָא דָּבָר), can justifiably be connected to the imperatives which precede it (“know and understand”) rather than to what follows.\(^{92}\) This rendering has several benefits,\(^{93}\) and two have particular relevance here. First, the “anointed ruler” in verse 25 is now fronted—providing for readers, suggests Athas, a reference to the reestablishment of local leadership at the time of repatriation.\(^{94}\) This historical anchor point means, secondly, that, “the beginning of the seven ‘weeks’ can be placed forty-nine years earlier at 587 BCE . . . . This seven ‘week’ period, therefore, represents the forty-nine-year hiatus in anointed leadership (Davidic and/or priestly) within Jerusalem.”\(^{95}\)

Based on this reading, allusion to the Year of Jubilee in Dan 9:25 makes immediate sense. The “seven sevens” represent the period of exile.\(^{96}\) The completion of this forty-nine-year period, in turn, heralds the Jubilee with all its associated themes of restoration, emancipation of slaves and return to ancestral land. In the implied context of the end of Babylonian lordship (9:1–2), the symbolic freight of the “seven sevens” is evident. However, the twist in Gabriel’s decree is the outlining of an extended exile—a period totalling “seventy sevens.” Therefore, any

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90. Also, rejecting MT’s accents and combining the “seven sevens” with the “sixty-two sevens” into a single period begs the question concerning the seemingly pointless division.

91. I borrow this term from Haydon (“Seventy Sevens,” 214).


93. Ibid., 15–17.

94. Ibid., 16.

95. Ibid.

96. Interestingly, the period between the fall of Jerusalem in 587/6 B.C. and Cyrus’s decree in 539/8 B.C. is approximately forty-nine years.
restoration made possible by the decree of Cyrus would only be partial; as the conclusion to the first in a sequence of ten Jubilee cycles, the “going out of a word” (9:25) would function only as a foretaste of the superlative Year of Jubilee that the entire 490 years anticipated.97

Connecting the Pieces

From the above discussion, it is readily apparent that Leviticus is a crucial intertext for reading Dan 9. While other Old Testament intertexts also remain important, the multiple lexical and conceptual connections to Leviticus together form an essential backdrop for interpretation. The theological freight of the “seventy sevens” is felt when read against the sevenfold judgement warned of in Lev 26. Likewise, the significance of the angelically mediated response, as well as its relevance to Daniel’s petition, is elucidated by allusion to Lev 16. In a context of confessed sin, Dan 9:24 pictures a superlative Day of Atonement. Then, through connection to Lev 25, the concept of Jubilee is utilised to picture not only the foretaste of restoration that repatriation would realise, but also the superlative restoration from “exile” that the tenfold Jubilee anticipated. Yet Leviticus also connects these themes. In Lev 25:9 the Year of Jubilee is set to commence on the tenth day of the seventh month. In other words, the Year of Jubilee began on the Day of Atonement (cf. Lev 16:29–30).98 Thus the period of sevenfold judgment announced to Daniel was forecast to end with a superlative Day of Atonement, a Day whose final and eternal cleansing of sin would initiate a superlative and climactic Year of Jubilee.99

97. Haydon, “Seventy Sevens,” 212, similarly concludes that the specific numerical image conveyed by the “seventy sevens” is a timespan that traces the journey of the faithful from exile to final restoration.

98. Thus Young Hye concludes: “The trumpet blast and loud proclamation signaling the start of the Jubilee should fall on a day possessing the full array of sabbatical associations. The Day of Atonement, not the first day of the year, served the purpose.” Young Hye, “The Jubilee,” 151.

99. This connection seems to have also been made by 11QMelch (see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Further Light on Melchizedek From Qumran Cave 11,” JBL 86 (1967): 25–41). Fitzmyer renders the text of v. 7 as:

In the year of the la[st] jubilee he sai[d ] s [ ]... BLY

[ ] and [tha]t is the d[ay of atone]ment [ ]... The [t]enth [ju]bile (p. 28)

That 11QMelch brings together the Day of Atonement, Jubilee and Isa 61:1 to combine them with a Melchizedek figure who is exalted above the heavenly host provides an intriguing background to the book of Hebrews. The same combination of themes also lies behind Luke 4:17–21. There Jesus declared in the language of Isa 61:1–3, a text
Does appreciation of Leviticus as intertext in Dan 9 provide a way forward for any of the exegetical and theological problems I outlined beforehand? I think it does in several ways.

First, in relation to approaches to Dan 9 I noted that the prayer has often been regarded as secondary on the basis of its atypical language. However, in light of the significant intertextuality present, with words and phrases being drawn verbatim from other OT texts, it is not surprising that the Hebrew is of a markedly different character. I suggest that such distinct terminology, including the unique-to-Daniel use of יהוה, is intentionally utilised to evoke the covenant focus so important to the chapter. Far from being problematic, lexical anomalies, or as Michael Riffaterre terms them, “ungrammaticalities in the ideolic norm,” can actually signal important theological motives.100

Second, Daniel’s prayer is reckoned by some to be “peculiar,” out of step with its narrative context, and ignored by the epiphany. Yet such conclusions invite the question: Why then has the prayer been included?101 Instead, I have argued that chapter 9’s covenantal concern, enhanced by its Levitical connections, pictures a situation of divine curse resulting from covenant unfaithfulness. In this context, a prayer of confession is not only appropriate, it is demanded. Furthermore, the prayer’s confession of Israel’s sinfulness is addressed by the angelically mediated response, which, as we have seen, utilises lexical and conceptual parallels to the Day of Atonement and Year of Jubilee to picture a conclusive end to Israel’s transgression that will usher in a time of untold blessing.

Third, the contingency of the prayer is viewed as being incongruous with the deterministic outlook typical of apocalyptic literature. Towner puts the point bluntly. “When placed in the apocalyptic setting,” the penitential conviction that permeates the prayer “seems to take on an

influenced by the concept of Jubilee (so Wenham, Leviticus, 324), that the promised year of the Lord’s favour (ἐνιαυτὸν Κυρίου δεκατῶν) was being fulfilled in him (Lk 4:17–21). Moreover, John E. Hartley, Leviticus (WBC 4; Dallas: Word Books, 1992), 447, notes that in the days of Jesus there was an expectation that the tenth Jubilee was about to happen.

100. Michael Riffaterre, “Syllepsis,” Critical Inquiry 6 (1980): 627. Additionally, there are enough lexical links between the three sections of the chapter to support its overall unity. For discussion, see Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation, 488; Lucas, Daniel, 234; Jones, “Prayer,” 491; Collins, Daniel, 347-348.

101. The comment by Porteous (Daniel, 136) is telling: “In fact the suggestion that the ineptness of the prayer for its presumed purpose justifies the conclusion that it is an interpolation has obscured the very good reason why the author has put it here.”
element of the absurd.” Thus Collins, following Jones, states that a “deterministic, apocalyptic view of history is in fundamental contrast to the Deuteronomic theology of the prayer.” However, the immediate divine response, addressing as it does the very issues raised by the prayer, indicates that Daniel’s confession functions to allow the promised deliverance to be unfolded. Thus, this pericope relieves a particular tension raised by the exile for a deterministic view of history. While Jeremiah had predicted a return at the end of seventy years, Lev 26:40 made any return contingent upon repentance. Therefore, Dan 9 provides the canonical resolution to this tension between human responsibility and divine sovereignty as Daniel, within the narrative framework of the book, is seen to offer the required confession in the very year that Babylon fell (9:1–2; cf. 5:30–6:1 [5:30–31 EB]).

Fourth, many scholars resist the idea that Israel’s suffering is a result of her sin as it does not fit the context of persecution under Antiochus IV. A second-century setting would seem to demand a focus on Gentile sin, as indeed is the case in the other visions of chapters 7–12. Nonetheless, a straightforward reading of Dan 9, especially against its Levitical background, indicates that the sin in view is demonstrably Israel’s. Therefore, commonly advocated solutions that either question the unity of the text and ignore the prayer’s force entirely or insist that 9:24 has little to do with the sin of Israel prove inadequate in the light of Dan 9’s overall coherence and trajectory. Thus, Dan 9 either raises questions regarding its “fit” with a late provenance or presents further evidence of the heterogeneous nature of Hellenistic Judaism in the second-century.

Fifth, the numbers in Dan 9 have spawned endless debate and speculation. For some, Daniel is seen to be at odds with history, or at odds with other canonical books. For others, the chapter becomes a

102. Towner, Daniel, 140.
104. Although Lucas (Daniel, 242) urges caution against making overly simplistic distinctions.
105. E.g., Hartman and Di Lella, Daniel, 248.
106. E.g., Collins, Daniel, 354.
107. So Hartman and Di Lella, Daniel, 250; Towner, Daniel, 142.
chronological mine for eschatological speculation. However, many such conclusions miss the theological significance of the chapter’s numbers. While numerals in Dan 9 may retain a literal sense, their theological import seems primary. Appreciating the conceptual freight added through intertextual connection to Leviticus adds validation to approaches that read the numbers symbolically.

CONCLUSION

Although in some ways a straightforward text, Dan 9 raises a host of problems that have sparked, and will probably continue to spark, heated discussion. Yet as Portier-Young notes, “Echoes of scripture in Daniel draw the reader into a complex interface with multiple texts, inviting them to search the scriptures and find understanding even as they receive a new frame for their interpretation.” One of those multiple texts is Leviticus. My aim, therefore, throughout this article has been to examine specific links that exist between Dan 9 and Leviticus in order to “find understanding.” In fleshing out intertextual connections, whose combined force has heretofore been underappreciated, it is evident that Lev 16, 25 and 26 exert a significant influence on the vocabulary and theology of Dan 9. The text is, as Kline says, “saturated” with Mosaic expressions. With these connections, the author of Daniel has produced a masterful exegetical ensemble that packs a considerable theological punch. Towner is right. “At first glance the least interesting in the entire Book of Daniel, chapter 9 in the end proves to be rich because of its elaborate inner-biblical connections.”


110. Portier-Young, Apocalypse Against Empire, 267.


112. Towner, Daniel, 127.
“I WAS KING OVER ISRAEL IN JERUSALEM”: INERRANCY AND AUTHORIAL AMBIGUITY IN ECCLESIASTES

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Solomon has been traditionally regarded as the author of Ecclesiastes; however, a review of the evidence for the book’s authorship is inconclusive. Because the authorship of Ecclesiastes cannot be proved definitively and the book itself makes no explicit claims of authorship, it is crucial to disentangle the conversation over the book’s authorship from the issue of inerrancy. In our defense of God’s inerrant and infallible word, evangelical scholars must be careful not to argue more than the text itself will allow. There are compelling arguments for and against Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes, but ultimately the ambiguity of the biblical evidence cautions against dogmatism on this point. Therefore, the debate over Solomonic authorship should not be couched in terms of one’s view of inerrancy.

KEYWORDS: Qohelet, Ecclesiastes, inerrancy, authorship, Solomon

INTRODUCTION

In a 1969 article in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, Gleeson Archer succinctly highlighted the primary reason many evangelical scholars hold to Solomonic authorship and an early date for the book of Ecclesiastes: “. . . theological problems aris[e] from the denial of the genuineness of even one book of the Bible.”1 Archer is certainly correct to point out the theological difficulties with holding to a position that undermines the integrity of the biblical text. Indeed, if a biblical book purports to be the work of a particular author, and yet is not, then evangelicals are in the unenviable position of relying on an unethical—and thus errant—text for their life and faith.2

2. Silva states, “If the author of a NT epistle, for example, claims to be the apostle Paul,
Scriptures that declare the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are not trustworthy, then “we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Cor 15:19 ESV). For this reason, we defend, for example, the authorship and early date of Daniel. The questioning of its date and authorship stems at least in part from the belief that Daniel could not have written the book that bears his name because its speaks of things that occurred long after his death (vaticinium ex eventu). Thus, the critical view is founded at least partially on anti-supernatural biases and disbelief in predictive prophecy. By calling into question the authorship of Daniel, one is calling into question the veracity and truthfulness of the witness of Scripture.

However, is this the case with Ecclesiastes? Is Archer correct when he states that “[Ecclesiastes] purports to be composed by the son and successor of King David, since it so affirms in its opening verse”?³ Because many evangelicals agree with Archer’s assessment,⁴ the argument regarding the authorship of Ecclesiastes has often been framed in terms of biblical inerrancy. However, does this put evangelicals in the place of having to argue a position that the Bible itself does not necessarily affirm? Does Ecclesiastes purport to have been written by Solomon? If not, does affirming non-Solomonic authorship undermine the integrity of biblical text?

This article examines the evidence for the authorship of Ecclesiastes in order to demonstrate that biblical inerrancy is not at stake, regardless of one’s view of the book’s authorship. Simply put, this article will show that the question of Ecclesiastes’s authorship is an in-house debate among evangelicals, not a litmus test to determine who is in and who is out. In order to accomplish this task, we will first overview the history of interpretation regarding Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes. Then we will closely examine the evidence for the book’s authorship. The analysis will show that there are compelling arguments on both sides of the issue, but ultimately the ambiguity of the biblical evidence cautions against dogmatism on this point, indicating that the debate over

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³. Ibid. See also Silva (“Old Princeton,” 75), who states that Solomonic authorship “appears to be the claim of the book itself.”

Solomonic authorship should not be couched in terms of inerrancy. First, however, a word about inerrancy is in order.

**INERRANCY**

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy is widely considered among evangelicals to be the foremost expression of the doctrine of inerrancy. Its 18 articles outline what its proponents, myself included, affirm and deny regarding the inerrancy of Scripture. For the purposes of the present discussion, it can be simply stated that the Chicago Statement views inerrancy as the doctrine that the Bible, as revelation from God in its entirety, is inspired by God, authoritative, infallible, and without error, falsehood, or deceit. Further, while these affirmations apply specifically to the original autographs, the statement denies “that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant” (Article X).

This broad definition of inerrancy indicates that readers must treat the Scriptures with utmost respect in seeking to understand their meaning and apply its meaning to our lives. There is not space here to examine all manner of hermeneutical processes by which to interpret Scripture, but it can be safely assumed that those who hold to inerrancy likewise value authorial intent and therefore seek to understand the author’s intended meaning in any given passage of Scripture. Further, it is also very often the case that these readers will employ the grammatical-historical method, whose goal “is simply to figure out what the biblical writer, under divine guidance, was saying.” The question we must ask, then, is whether there is sufficient evidence in the biblical text either to affirm or to deny Solomonic authorship. If the answer turns out to be “no,” then Solomonic authorship simply cannot be an issue tied to the doctrine of inerrancy.

Thus, as we turn to examine the evidence for and against Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes, may we keep in mind the words of Moisés Silva and beware of turning this inter-evangelical debate into a means of excluding some from the table:


The doctrine of infallibility assures us that we can have total confidence in God's revelation to us. It does not mean, however, that we may have total confidence in our particular interpretations of the Bible. . . a commitment to inerrancy entails that we will believe such interpretations as are clearly demonstrable from the scriptural text, but inerrancy does not automatically settle interpretive debates . . .

**History of Interpretation**

**Solomonic Authorship**

Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes has held sway among both Jewish and Christian interpreters for the majority of its history of interpretation. Eric Christianson points out that many scholars have interpreted the debate regarding its ability to “defile the hands” as being settled on account of Solomonic authorship. However, he shows that even at this early date Solomonic authorship was not the book’s saving grace. Instead, Ecclesiastes gained entrance into the canon because “Solomon or no, it is ‘argued well’ and that the words bring pleasure to the ear.”

Similar to the debate today, “[t]he significance of Solomon as author [grew] almost grotesquely out of proportion.”

Among early Jewish interpreters, *Targum Qoheleth* affirms Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes. In typical Targumic fashion, it supplies a plausible explanation for Solomon’s having written the book:

> When King Solomon of Israel was sitting on his royal throne, his heart became very proud because of his wealth, and he transgressed the decree of the Memra of the Lord; he gathered many horses, chariots, and cavalry; he collected much silver and gold; he married foreign peoples. Immediately the anger of the Lord grew strong against him. Therefore, He sent Ashmedai king

7. Ibid., 78–79.


10. Ibid.
of the demons, against him who drove him from his royal throne and took his signet ring from his hand so that he would wander and go into exile in the world to chastise him. He went about in all the districts and towns of the Land of Israel. He wept, pleaded, and said, “I am Qohelet, who was previously named Solomon. I was king over Israel in Jerusalem.”

While early Christian interpreters may not have adopted the “evil demon” theory in full, they did hold that Solomon wrote the book in his old age, after having apostatized and then repented for his idolatry. For example, John Jarick indicates that Solomonic authorship was crucial for Gregory of Thaumaturgos, who notes that Solomon “lost and subsequently regained wisdom.” Other early Christian interpreters who affirm Solomonic authorship include Origen, “who began the tradition of a ‘Solomonic Corpus,’” Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, and John Chrysostom. What these early interpreters have in common, other than their view of Solomonic authorship, is that they base their assessment on Eccl 1:1: דבריו קהלת בן דוד מלך ברושלים (“The words of Qoheleth, son of David, king in Jerusalem”) and 1:12: אני קהלת היתי מלך על ישראל (“I, Qoheleth, was king over Israel in Jerusalem”). These two phrases, along with the author’s description of his opulence in chapter 2, convinced early interpreters that the book of Ecclesiastes indeed contained the words of Solomon.

Modern interpreters have been much less likely to attribute the book to Solomon, as the authorship of the book came under heavy criticism in post-Enlightenment scholarship. Nevertheless, there are several evangelical scholars who hold to Solomonic authorship. Gleason Archer supports his view of Solomonic authorship by arguing


12. John Jarick, ed. and trans., Gregory Thaumaturgos’ Paraphrase of Ecclesiastes (SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies 29; Atlanta: Scholars, 1990), 314 (as cited in Christianson, Ecclesiastes through the Centuries, 93).

13. Christianson, Ecclesiastes through the Centuries, 92–93.

14. For several eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scholars who held to Solomonic authorship, see G. A. Barton, The Book of Ecclesiastes (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1959), 21–22.

15. In addition to the works examined here, see Walter Kaiser, Jr., Ecclesiastes: Total Life (EBC; Chicago: Moody, 1979); James Bollhagen, Ecclesiastes (Concordia Commentary; St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2011); R. J. Kidwell and Don DeWelt, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs (Bible Study Textbook Series; Joplin, MO: College Press, 1977).
that the linguistic irregularities in Ecclesiastes are best explained by
Solomon’s diplomatic exposure to Phoenicia during his reign as king
over Israel. Archer relies heavily on the work of Mitchell Dahood, who
argues that Phoenician influence indicates a fourth century date of
composition, though Archer comes to a different conclusion.¹⁶

Much of the data assembled by Dahood shows a close
relationship to the Ugaritic literature of Moses’ time, and so
there is every reason to deduce from this the suitability of the
language of Ecclesiastes to a genre cultivated among the
Phoenician-speaking peoples and adopted from them by a gifted
tenth century Hebrew author, composing in a dialect of
Canaanite (namely, Hebrew) very closely related to Phoenician
itself. . . . No sound argument for the spuriousness of Qohelet as
a work of Solomon’s can be based upon its grammar, language,
or style.¹⁷

Duane Garrett also argues forcefully that Ecclesiastes is the work
of Solomon himself.¹⁸ For Garrett, the book’s counsel regarding how to
relate to a monarch clinches Solomonic authorship. As Garrett points out,
very few Jews in postexilic Judah would have had opportunity or
concern to speak with their ruling monarchs.¹⁹ Why would a book
concerned with behavior before a king be written to an audience with no
opportunity to heed the author’s advice?

Daniel Fredericks also defends Solomonic authorship of
Ecclesiastes, but he is unwilling to posit a date of composition in the
tenth century.²⁰ Instead, he argues that the form of the book we now have
can be dated no later than the preexilic period. Nevertheless, Fredericks
holds that the book is the work of the historical person Solomon but was


¹⁸. Duane Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (NAC 14; Nashville, TN: B&H,
1993).

¹⁹. Ibid., 261. Incidentally, one also wonders how many Israelites in preexilic Judah had
opportunity to speak to Solomon. Nevertheless, the point remains—the number was
certainly larger when the king actually lived in Jerusalem, rather than ruling from some
distant land.

²⁰. Daniel Fredericks and Daniel Estes, *Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs* (AOTC 16;
Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity and Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2010), 1–263.
perhaps reworked by a later scribe or school. Fredericks’s 1988 monograph, *Qoheleth’s Language: Re-Evaluating Its Nature and Date*, systematically deconstructs the linguistic arguments against Solomonic authorship, demonstrating that the book’s ostensibly late features can be explained by its unique genre and other literary considerations. For example, many of the book’s grammatical features, such as the anticipatory pronominal suffix, discordant subject and predicate, and missing definite article, among some fourteen other characteristics, point to a North Israelite vernacular language for the book. Beyond the unique literary qualities of the book, Fredericks also finds significant intertextual evidence that connects the book to the narrative of Solomon’s reign in 1 Kings, as well as other portions of the so-called Solomonic Corpus, which further indicates Solomonic authorship. He sums up his argument by stating that “[t]he large number of presumed evidences for a late date for Qoheleth’s language is an accumulation of errors, errors made in the wake of the initial presupposition of a late date.”

Martin Shields is also hesitant to argue for a tenth-century date of composition for Ecclesiastes, but he insists that the book must be dated before the exile. Relying on the work of Ian Young, he argues that the book cannot be dated based on linguistic evidence because it is “far more ambiguous than most are willing to admit.” Consequently, Shields turns to historical references within the book to determine a date


22. Fredericks, *Qoheleth’s Language*.

23. Ibid., 256–57.


25. Ibid., 264.

26. Martin Shields, *The End of Wisdom: A Reappraisal of the Historical and Canonical Function of Ecclesiastes* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 23. See also Ian Young, *Diversity in Pre-exilic Hebrew* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 145–55; idem, “Concluding Reflections,” in *Biblical Hebrew: Chronology and Typology* (ed. Ian Young; JSOTSup 369; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 276–311 in which Young “constructs a history of the Hebrew language in which Qoheleth’s language could plausibly be preexilic” (Shields, *End of Wisdom*, 23,n.6). However, note Oswald Loretz, who argues that the language of Qoheleth is the only aspect of the book that provides any basis for dating (*Qohelet und der Alte Orient: Untersuchungen zu Stil und theologischer Thematik des Buches Qohelet* [Herder: Freiburg, 1964], 23–29, esp. 29)).
for its composition, which he also finds wanting due to their ambiguity. However, royal references within the book indicate that it must have been composed for an audience who would have had occasion to interact with royalty, which limits the date and provenance to be either pre-exilic within Israel or post-exilic outside of Israel. Having established these two possible scenarios, Shields then argues that the “Solomonic Fiction” would only have had traction within Jerusalem and the reference in Eccl 4:17 “to the ‘House of God’ in which sacrifices are offered [is] indicative of the temple rather than a synagogue” indicating that Ecclesiastes was composed in pre-exilic Israel.

Non-Solomonic Authorship

Didymus the Blind is an important early interpreter who was not as certain about the authorship of the book, stating, “[a]ctually the Spirit is the author of the divinely inspired Scriptures . . . . Either the real author is Solomon, or some [other] wise men have written it. Maybe we should opt for the latter so that nobody may say that the speaker talks about himself.” The Babylonian Talmud concurs, stating that “Hezekiah and his colleagues wrote (Mnemonic YMSHK) Isaiah, Proverbs, the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes” (b. Baba Bathra 15a). Eric Christianson points out that this view is repeated in several other rabbinic commentaries, such as “Isaac ibn Ghiyath (1038–89) on Ecclesiastes, David Kimchi (1160–1235) on Proverbs and Samuel ibn Tibbon on Ecclesiastes, c. 1200.”

Centuries later, Martin Luther echoed these sentiments to deny the Solomonic penning of Ecclesiastes. As Craig Bartholomew points out, Luther’s commentary on Ecclesiastes argues that the book was Solomonic in origin, though compiled by a later group of “disciples.”


28. Quoting Ian Young, “the most important difference between pre-exilic Jerusalem and post-exilic Jerusalem was quite simply that in pre-exilic Jerusalem there was a king, whereas in post-exilic Jerusalem there was not” (Young, Diversity in Pre-exilic Hebrew, 146–7); Shields, End of Wisdom, 26–7.

29. Ibid., 27.


31. Christianson, Ecclesiastes through the Centuries, 96.

32. Bartholomew, Ecclesiastes, 44.
However, in Luther’s *Table Talk*, he takes this a step further, stating “[t]hus he [Solomon] himself did not write the book, but it was composed at the time of the Maccabees, by Sirach,” thus anticipating the criticism of Hugo Grotius by over a century. 33 Grotius argued in the mid-seventeenth century that the book’s language indicates a late date for its composition, thus precluding Solomonic authorship. 34 With this argument, Grotius laid the foundation for the denial of Solomonic authorship based on the book’s language for the next several centuries.

**Persian Period Date**

Many modern scholars place the provenance of Ecclesiastes in the Persian period, but C. L. Seow has presented the most convincing argument for a Persian period setting for the book of Ecclesiastes. 35 Before writing what has become one of the standard commentaries on Ecclesiastes, 36 he developed his view on the date of the book in two articles. Seow examined the “Socioeconomic Context of ‘The Preacher’s’ Hermeneutic” in a 1996 article in which he argued that the economic condition of the postexilic period—most notably the rise of coinage in the early sixth century B.C.—matched Qoheleth’s concern with and description of money. 37 Seow states that Ecclesiastes as a whole


“reflects a monetary and commercial economy, an environment that is different from the largely subsistence agrarian culture of preexilic and exilic Judah.”

Furthermore, Seow connects what he sees as Qoheleth’s pessimism with the pessimism regarding royal land grants that Persian period literature illustrates. Seow argues that such grants had been prohibited in Mesopotamia during an earlier period, but were rampant in Persian Judea. These land grants provide the background for Qoheleth’s enigmatic statement against overlords in Eccl 8:8. Finally, Qoheleth’s theological solution to uncertainty—to trust God in an uncontrollable world—fits well within Persian Judea, a “perplexing new world of rapid political, social, and economic innovations.”

In a second article, Seow outlines his argument for a Persian period date of Ecclesiastes based on linguistic evidence. Building on the work of scholars such as Franz Delitzsch, Seow argues that the presence of Aramaisms and Persianisms make Solomonic authorship a virtual impossibility. Although Seow notes that the presence of isolated Aramaism “says nothing about its provenance,” he also points out that “a high frequency of Aramaic expressions in a book is a likely indication of a late date . . .” Seow closely examines the linguistic features that could be considered late, ultimately conceding that many of them can be accounted for by an explanation other than a late date for the book’s composition. However, the presence of the two Persian loanwords in the book (פרדס and פתגם) and the use of שלט in a “legal/economic sense” make the Persian date a certainty for Seow.

38 Ibid., 174.
39. Ibid., 180.
40. Ibid., 189.
43. Ibid., 665. However, see Dominic Rudman, who argues that the book cannot be dated to the Persian Period based on these terms. Instead, Rudman places the book in the Hellenistic Period (“A Note on the Dating of Ecclesiastes,” CBQ 61 [1999]: 47–52).
Hellenistic Period Date

While Seow has developed a strong argument that is based both on linguistic and cultural factors, the majority of critical scholars today date the book to the Hellenistic period, with the *terminus ad quem* set in the early second century by the Qumran fragments of Ecclesiastes and Sirach’s use of the book. The arguments for the Hellenistic setting for Ecclesiastes are similar to the arguments used by Seow to posit a Persian setting for the book’s composition. For example, Norman Whybray argues that the economic activity and social turmoil depicted by Ecclesiastes fits best within the Hellenistic context. James Crenshaw argues that the book’s vocabulary and grammatical features, as well as the implication that Qoheleth’s readers would be able to implement his advice regarding “fine clothes and anointing themselves with expensive oils,” indicate a certain peace and prosperity that was experienced during the Hellenistic Period.

Other scholars point to philosophical similarities between Ecclesiastes and Greek philosophy to argue for a date in the Hellenistic period. For example, Michael V. Fox argues that the book’s author exhibits the ideals of personal autonomy found in Greek philosophical thought. Likewise, Rainer Braun avers that Ecclesiastes depends heavily on Greek philosophy. John Gammie goes so far as to state that

We may conclude that the Stoics, along with other Hellenistic philosophies, had an impact on the ancient Israelite sage, not only in specific teachings of divine causation, the cyclical nature of events, the relative value of education/wisdom, etc., but also


in form of argumentation and, because of its advanced philosophy of language, possibly also in making Qoheleth more sensitive to the range of connotations in his use of terms such as 'ibel.\textsuperscript{49}

Among evangelical scholars, Craig Bartholomew is notable for his arguments in favor of a Hellenistic setting for Ecclesiastes. He places the book in the Hellenistic period based on its epistemology, calling the author of Ecclesiastes “a believing Israelite who has become aware of and attracted by tenets of Greek thought that were in the air.”\textsuperscript{50} However, Bartholomew also states that “it is hard to be certain on this issue [the authorship of Ecclesiastes] and there is nothing at stake theologically either way” and that “the main concern must be to ascertain what the author has actually written, whoever he was.”\textsuperscript{51}

Finally, many scholars point to the language of the book as a definitive indicator that it belongs in the Hellenistic period. H. W. Hertzberg, one of the first scholars to defend this position, contends that book’s language represents a transitional period in the development of Hebrew. Qoheleth’s affinities with Mishnaic Hebrew indicate that he wrote during a period in which the language was undergoing significant change.\textsuperscript{52} Antoon Schoors agrees that the preponderance of linguistic evidence points to a late date, though he does note that Qoheleth’s language differs in some respects from Mishnaic Hebrew.\textsuperscript{53}

More recently, Mark Sneed has argued for a Hellenistic date based on sociological factors within the book.\textsuperscript{54} Sneed posits that the social stratification, system of taxation and other economic factors, and the administration of the Ptolemaic government provide the most likely setting for the book. In Sneed’s opinion, Qoheleth’s pessimism, based on his observations of the world of Ptolemaic Judea, accurately describes life experienced by Jews in Ptolemaic Judea.


\textsuperscript{50} Bartholomew, \textit{Ecclesiastes}, 58.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 48, 54.


\textsuperscript{53} Antoon Schoors, \textit{The Preacher Sought to Find Pleasing Words: A Study of the Language of Qoheleth} (Leuven: Departement Oriëntalistiek, 1992), 15.

\textsuperscript{54} Mark Sneed, \textit{The Politics of Pessimism in Ecclesiastes} (Ancient Israel and Its Literature 12; Atlanta: SBL, 2012), esp. 85–154.
The vast array of possibilities regarding the date and authorship of Ecclesiastes may lead one to wonder whether Solomonic authorship is still a viable option in light of the mounting evidence against the traditional interpretation. In what follows the evidence for the book’s date and authorship will be examined to determine whether or not one can firmly support a particular position—either late or early—on this issue without going beyond the bounds of the text itself.

Claim of Authorship?

One of the weakest points of the argument in favor of Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes is that the book itself never explicitly purports to be the work of Solomon. This has led some to argue that it is a pseudonymous work, which is perhaps the reason why evangelical scholars have been quick to defend Solomonic authorship. For, as Archer noted, if even one book of the Bible is intentionally misleading its readers, then the integrity of the entire canon is called into question. However, a pseudonymous work is “by definition written under a false or assumed name, [and] is meant to conceal the identity of the writer.” Is this the case with Ecclesiastes?

The premier verse cited to argue for Solomonic authorship is Ecclesiastes 1:12: אני קהלת הייתי מלך על ישראל בירושלם. This verse clearly states that a person named Qoheleth “was king over Israel in Jerusalem.” This seems to indicate that the speaker was either David or Solomon, for there were no other kings who ruled over Israel from Jerusalem, save Rehoboam, who ruled over the United Monarchy only very briefly. The difficulty with making this the linchpin for the argument for Solomonic authorship is that there was never a time in Solomon’s life when he “was” king over Israel. Targum Qoheleth recognized this problem early on and introduced the story regarding Ashmedai, the evil demon who ruled in Solomon’s place, to account for a period in Solomon’s life when he did not rule over Jerusalem. To indicate that he was “king over Israel in Jerusalem” at the time of writing, the author could have used the

58. See above.
same nominal construction used in the previous clause: אני כללתי. However, by using a verbal clause the author introduced ambiguity into the identification of Qoheleth, which is perhaps the first clue of his literary artistry. By giving the reader enough information to cause him to think of that great king without actually claiming to be him, he invites the reader to examine the pursuit of wisdom from the perspective of an historical figure who, quite literally, had everything his heart desired. Nevertheless, even this argument is not solid, for as Fredericks has pointed out, the phrase used in 1:12 could also be translated as “I have been king over Jerusalem,” which would mitigate the difficulty of there never having been a time when Solomon “was” king over Israel in Jerusalem.59

Only four verses later, the author claims to have increased in wisdom beyond “all who were before me over Israel” (אני הנה הגדלתי והוספתי חכמה על כל אשר היה לפני על ירושלם). Such a statement seems strange coming from Solomon because the only ruler before him was David. Tremper Longman points out that he could be referring to the Jebusite kings who ruled before David conquered Jerusalem, “but that would be passing strange coming from an Israeliite king. After all, these were pagan, alien kings, and hostile to Israel.”60 Daniel Fredericks may help in this regard when he notes that the author “does not specify that he was greater in wisdom than just those who were kings before him, but included any predecessor in Jerusalem, such as elders, wise men, prophets and so on . . . so his statement is not to be applied simply to David, but to others such as Adoni-zedek (Josh. 10:3).”61 Such a close reading of the text supplies a plausible explanation for the author’s statement, but the ambiguity remains.62 Even though these verses can be explained, the need for explanation itself indicates that the book does not explicitly claim Solomonic authorship, thus Joyce Baldwin’s statement

59. Fredericks and Estes, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs, 77.


61. Fredericks, Ecclesiastes, 83.

62. Doug Ingram (Ambiguity in Ecclesiastes [LHBOTS 431; London: T&T Clark, 2006]) has argued that ambiguity exists throughout Ecclesiastes and is there intentionally. In the case of authorship, whether the ambiguity is intentional or not is a non-issue; it remains ambiguous nonetheless. Further, an important issue in inerrancy is determining authorial intent, and while readers may not be able to determine conclusively that the author intended to be ambiguous, it is at least clear that he did not make his identity known overtly (see Silva, “Old Princeton,” 69–73).
that “Qoheleth is no more pretending to be Solomon than Shakespeare is pretending to be Hamlet.”

**Solomonic Texts?**

Having demonstrated that Ecclesiastes does not explicitly claim Solomonic authorship, the question must be raised whether or not it intends to be read as the work of Solomon. It is of extreme importance, however, to maintain the nuance of this question so as not to defend a position that the biblical text itself does not defend, namely overt attribution to Solomon. Duane Garrett points out that one of the primary arguments against Solomonic authorship is that the “Solomonic Fiction” lasts for only the first few chapters of Ecclesiastes. If this argument is correct, then it seems that the author was not Solomon, for he shed the king’s garb when it was no longer fitting for his thesis. However, Eric Christianson maintains that the Solomonic motif is an important part of the rhetorical strategy of Ecclesiastes that permeates the entire work. Likewise, Jürgen van Oorschot argues that the association with Solomon legitimates the wisdom of Ecclesiastes by attaching it to a well-known authority.

An important section in Ecclesiastes for Solomonic authorship is Eccl 2:1–11. In this passage, the author boasts about his accomplishments in this world, accomplishments that could only have been achieved by someone of royal capacities. The author states that he built houses, gardens and parks with all sorts of fruit trees and an irrigation system to water them (Eccl 2:4–6). He acquired many slaves and more heads of cattle than anyone else “before me in Jerusalem” (Eccl 2:7). To this, he added silver, gold, and treasure from other kings, along with entertainers and concubines (Eccl 2:8).

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64. Garret, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, 225, citing R. B. Y. Scott, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes (AB 18; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 200; and R. N. Whybray, Ecclesiastes, 4. See also Craig Bartholomew, Ecclesiastes, 47.


C. L. Seow, like many other interpreters, thinks that these verses are meant to establish a link between the author of Ecclesiastes and Solomon. He states that “they call to mind the activities and fabulous wealth of Solomon in 1 Kgs 3–11. Indeed it is difficult not to think of Solomon when the author concludes in 2:9 that he ‘became great and surpassed’ all who preceded him in Jerusalem.” The parallels between the account of Solomon’s reign and the author’s statements in this text leap off the page: both were exceedingly wealthy, both possessed scores of slaves and concubines, both completed building projects.

However, the open-and-shut case for Solomonic authorship is not so clear-cut. For example, it has been demonstrated elsewhere that the reference to parks, gardens, fruit trees, and irrigation may be an echo of the Garden of Eden in Gen 2. Furthermore, Stuart Weeks has recently called into question the association with Solomon in every aspect in this passage. For example, Weeks states that “Solomon in 1 Kgs 10:23 ‘became greater than all the kings of the earth in wealth and wisdom,’ while Qohelet, more modestly, outdoes only his predecessors in Jerusalem.” Weeks also shows that the types of activities that Ecclesiastes describes are not the stuff of royal inscriptions. Rather than focusing on the good that the king has done for his people, as was common in royal inscriptions, the activities listed in Eccl 2 focus on the good that is done for the author.

Also important for Weeks is the difference between the way that the author of Ecclesiastes accumulates wealth and the way that Solomon accumulates wealth. The latter does so through a special grant from God (1 Kgs 3:28; 5:9–10), along with trading partnerships (1 Kgs 9:26–28; 10:11, 14, 22), taxation (1 Kgs 10:15), and gifts (1 Kgs 10:25). The author of Ecclesiastes seems to accumulate wealth through other means, such as “growing fruit trees or


68. Ibid.


71. Ibid., 26–27.

72. Ibid., 27–28.
breeding cattle,” though this is not entirely clear from the passage itself.\textsuperscript{73} Therefore, it is still possible to associate Solomon with the author of Ecclesiastes based on this text, but even here the ambiguity regarding authorship remains: the author has given us just enough details to create a link with Solomon, but not enough to be definitive.

\textit{Non-Royal Texts?}

Longman lists several verses that are problematic for Solomonic authorship because they appear to be written from the perspective of someone who is not the supreme ruler in the land.\textsuperscript{74} Ecclesiastes 4:1–3 is one such passage. In it, the author decries the oppression experienced by the less fortunate but indicates that nothing can be done to ameliorate their suffering: \textit{ואֲנִי לֹא מָנָחֵם וַיִּמְדּוּ עֵשָׁקָם כָּחַ וַאֲנִי לֹא מָנָחֵם (“And there was no comforter for them. And in the hand of their oppressors was power, and there was no comforter for them”).\textsuperscript{75} As Longman states, “[Solomon] was the mightiest ruler of the land. He could easily have done more than bemoan the plight of the oppressed; he could have taken steps to alleviate it. From what we know of the biblical Solomon, he did the opposite . . . (1 Kings 12, especially v. 4).”\textsuperscript{76} Even if one grants, with Christianson, that the passage is meant only to make the reader aware of injustice, the fact remains that,

\begin{quote}
If Qoheleth is counting himself among the ‘upper class,’ . . . his position is morally bankrupt according to the wisdom tradition and the connection to Solomon is thereby unlikely, for to relieve the suffering of the poor is to correct injustice (cf. Ps. 146.7; Prov. 14.31; 22.16; 29.13 etc.).\textsuperscript{77}
\end{quote}

Longman’s analysis of this passage therefore should not be taken lightly, for if the author of this text is the biblical Solomon, then these words are in direct contradiction both to his recorded actions and to the values of the wisdom tradition. Thus, while non-Solomonic authorship based on

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 28.

\textsuperscript{74} Longman, \textit{Ecclesiastes}, 4–6.

\textsuperscript{75} On the linguistic difficulties of Eccl 4:1, see Aron Pinker, “The Oppressed in Qohelet 4:1,” \textit{VT} 61 (2011): 393–405.

\textsuperscript{76} Longman, \textit{Ecclesiastes}, 6.

this text alone is not necessarily a foregone conclusion—people can and do change—the dissonance created by comparing this text with Solomon’s actions in 1 Kgs 4 (and the report of Rehoboam in 1 Kgs 12) makes the association with Solomon tenuous.

Ecclesiastes 5:7–8 provides a particularly problematic text for Solomonic authorship, for the author encourages his reader not to be surprised at injustice and unrighteousness because those with power look after their own best interests. The meaning of this passage is notoriously difficult to ascertain, but with Michael Fox one can concur that “it is possible to get at its gist.” Namely, the author’s point is that it is “[f]ar better for a country to be thoroughly agrarian rather than to be burdened with a stratified and self-serving bureaucracy.” As Longman points out, this text reads as “protest literature against the king, not by him,” leaving one to wonder, as with Eccl 4:1–3, why the single person with the power to rectify injustice in bureaucracy would refuse to do so.

A final verse that muddies the association with Solomon is Eccl 10:20, in which the author gives advice regarding appropriate thoughts and speech to the king:

גֵּמָּה בְּבֵיתֶךָ מֵלֵךְ לֹא תְּקַלָּק וּבְחַדרֵי מְשֻׁבָּךְ לֹא תְּקַלֵּל עַשִּׁיר
כִּי עַוף הַשָּׁמָּיִם יְלִידֵת אַל הַקּוֹל וּבֵית הַדָּגִים יְגִידֵת דָּבָר

Even in your thoughts do not curse the king, nor in your bedroom curse the rich. For a bird of the heavens will carry your voice and a master of wings will declare your word.

Such a statement regarding how to interact with a king “assumes that the king is a suspicious bully. Such a statement might be made about Solomon, but not by Solomon.” Nevertheless, Christianson is perhaps correct in his assessment that such advice would be best received coming from a person with intimate knowledge of monarchial dealings, that is, a king.


79. Michael V. Fox, A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build Up: A Rereading of Ecclesiastes (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 234.

80. Ibid.


82. Ibid., 6.

83. Christianson, A Time to Tell, 140.
That each of the interpretations presented above is plausible again illustrates the ambiguity that the author has weaved throughout his narrative and highlights the fact that the modern interpreter must hold loosely his position regarding authorship. These texts can be interpreted in ways that support Solomonic authorship, but the very fact that the reader must develop explanations seems to indicate special pleading.

Aramaisms

The language of Ecclesiastes has proved to be especially problematic with regards to Solomonic authorship. The book contains multiple Aramaisms, two Persianisms, and its grammatical constructions resemble that of other biblical books from the period of late biblical Hebrew (LBH). It was noted above that Grotius anticipated this criticism in the seventeenth century when he argued that the book’s language precluded a tenth-century date for composition. In the nineteenth century Franz Delitzsch followed Grotius’s statement with this famous remark that, “Wenn das B. Koheleth altsalomonisch wäre, so gäbe es keine Geschichte der hebräischen Sprache.” Was Delitzsch correct in his assessment of the language of Ecclesiastes?

The large number of Aramaic words in Ecclesiastes has led a few scholars, such as Frank Zimmerman and H. L. Ginsberg, to argue that the book was originally written in Aramaic, though their assessment has not been well received. Nevertheless, the book’s Aramaisms cause many to date it late, even if they do not go so far as Zimmerman and Ginsberg.

Daniel Fredericks has pointed out two important considerations that may account for the high frequency of Aramaisms in the book.

84. For an exhaustive list of Aramaic features of Ecclesiastes, see Fredericks, Qoheleth’s Language, 208–41.

85. Franz Delitzsch, Koheleth. 197.


First, wisdom literature, “due to Aramaic being the possible origin and vehicle of many wisdom sayings that passed from nation to nation, and came to BH [Biblical Hebrew] is likely to have a higher concentration of Aramaisms than other biblical books.” \(^{88}\) Second, poetry is likely to have more Aramaisms than prose because of “a poet’s normal use of a larger vocabulary to enrich his language, drawing upon recondite and archaic words,” which may indicate that the “Aramaisms” in Ecclesiastes “may not be real Aramaisms.” \(^{89}\)

After establishing the above two principles, Fredericks works through each of the forty-eight Aramaisms in the book of Ecclesiastes and whittles the list down to seven legitimate Aramaisms based on a methodology that excludes from consideration words that occur equally in early biblical Hebrew (EBH), words that have cognates in EBH, words with Semitic cognates, words with identical forms, words whose frequency cannot determine lateness, and words that appear infrequently in EBH, then resurface in Ecclesiastes. \(^{90}\) In Fredericks’s view, the genre and poetic features of Ecclesiastes account for the remaining seven Aramaisms. \(^{91}\) Although some have sharply criticized Fredericks’s work, \(^{92}\) he provides an adequate explanation for the Aramaisms in Ecclesiastes that demonstrates the book cannot be dated based on their presence.

**Persianisms**

C. L. Seow’s argument for the Persian period date of Ecclesiastes rests heavily on his treatment of the two Persian loanwords found in the book: **פרדס** (Eccl 2:5) and **פתגם** (Eccl 8:11). \(^{93}\) Seow lists all of the Persian loanwords found in the OT, noting that “it appears, then, that there is no

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91. Ibid., 241.


93. See also, among others, Barton, 52; Aare Lauha, *Kohelet* (BKAT 19; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 7.
clear evidence of Persianisms prior to the Achaemenid period. Importantly, the prophetic books associated with the first return to Judah—Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi—contain no Persianisms. Seow points out that the word פְּרָדָס is attested first in Old Persian in the Persepolis Fortification Tablets circa 500 B.C., in Akkadian in “several late Babylonian texts” from the second half of the sixth century, and in Greek in the early fourth century. Likewise, פְּתַמָּג is first attested in Old Persian in the Persepolis Fortification Tablets, then later in “Aramaic documents from Elephantine and North Saqqâra in Egypt, all dated to the fifth century.”

Some scholars have been criticized for arguing that Persian words entered the Hebrew language only because of Persia’s military expansion that began in the sixth century, but this is not Seow’s argument. His demonstration that these words appear nowhere prior to the sixth century, regardless of the imperializing force of Persia, must be taken seriously, though it may be the case that the words were known to the author of Ecclesiastes through sources that have not yet come to light. Therefore, while Seow’s argument for the sixth century origin of these words is compelling, there remains enough uncertainty in light of the paucity of evidence to prevent definitively dating Ecclesiastes to such a late time period.

**Grammatical Features**

Finally, there are several grammatical features of the book that indicate it may have been written at a relatively late date in the history of biblical Hebrew. For example, Antoon Schoors points out more than thirty features within Ecclesiastes that are similar to LBH. These features include Ecclesiastes’s use of the imperfect waw-consecutive, the co-


95. Ibid., 648–49.

96. Ibid., 649.

97 Ib., 650.

98. See, for example, Franz Dornseiff, Antike und Alter Orient (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1959), 200.

hortative, the infinitive construct used with the preposition *lamed*, and the use of the infinitive construct consecutive, among many others.\(^{100}\) However, Fredericks has demonstrated that of all the grammatical features used to posit a late date of composition for Ecclesiastes, only one of these appears exclusively in Ecclesiastes and LBH: “the absence of the infinitive absolute to emphasize a finite cognate verb.”\(^{101}\) As he aptly remarks, though, “[t]his is an argument from silence at best.”\(^{102}\) Fredericks’s study indicates, at the very least, that the linguistic evidence cannot be used to fix a late date for the book of Ecclesiastes, and more recent scholars (noted above) have concurred.

**CONCLUSION**

The book of Ecclesiastes has presented its interpreters, both ancient and modern, with a plethora of difficulties, not the least of which is the question of who penned its words. While most ancient interpreters held that Solomon wrote the book, there were detractors even then. Most modern scholars argue that the book could not have been written by the famously wise king of Israel, though many evangelical scholars hold that Solomon did in fact write Ecclesiastes, and as Gleason Archer showed us, Solomonic authorship has become entangled in the debate over biblical inerrancy. However, should this be the case? Must evangelicals affirm Solomonic authorship or else deny that the Bible is God’s inerrant word?

The analysis presented here demonstrated that the book itself makes no explicit claim to authorship and is certainly not pseudonymous. The internal evidence is too ambiguous to engender certainty regarding its authorship. Many features of the book seem to indicate Solomonic authorship, but just as many may indicate otherwise. And those features that do point to Solomon as the author can be interpreted in a way that undermines Solomonic authorship. Likewise, the features used to conclude that Solomon did not write Ecclesiastes can be explained in a way that seems to indicate Solomonic authorship. The book’s language is also an unfair measure of its authorship and date; it is simply too ambiguous to provide irrefutable evidence for either Solomonic or non-Solomonic authorship.

Despite the ambiguous nature of the evidence, the arguments presented above for a date of composition in the early period of Israel’s

100. For an exhaustive list, see Fredericks, *Qoheleth’s Language*, 125–69.

101. Ibid., 155.

102. Ibid.
monarchy are more compelling than those that argue for a significantly later date. Most especially, as Garrett has argued, why would a book composed after the monarchy purport to give advice for dealing with the monarchy? And why would the author claim to rule over Israel from Jerusalem if he never did? Given the clear monarchial tone of the work, the book would certainly be disingenuous if it were written during a period when there was no monarchy in Israel. Furthermore, despite the ambiguity of the passages that imply Solomonic authorship, they are more clearly Solomonic than the “anti-royal” passages are non-Solomonic. Finally, one must not discount the strength of the argument from church history, which by and large held to an early date for the book’s composition until very recently.

Ultimately, though, the author of Ecclesiastes cannot be proved definitively and the book itself makes no identifiable claims of authorship. For that reason, it is crucial that we disentangle the conversation over the book’s authorship from the issue of inerrancy. In our defense of God’s inerrant and infallible word, evangelical scholars must be careful not to argue more than the text itself will allow.
BOOK REVIEWS


This book constitutes volume 18 in the series Themes in Biblical Narrative. As most of the other volumes in this series, the articles were first presented at a European conference devoted to the reception history of a key biblical topic, theme, or character. The individual studies are consistently of a very high scholarly standard. It should be noted, however, that more than a third of the 17 articles are written in German (in contrast to the preceding volumes, which featured maximum two non-English articles). While this is unlikely to constitute a major problem for the intended academic audience, it nevertheless reduces the accessibility for some students and/or scholars.

The articles are all focused on the concept of God as Father, yet they interact with a wide range of primary texts. After a helpful introduction, the volume falls into four natural sections. The first part is devoted to the concept of God in ancient Egypt and ancient Greece, looking both at the cult and at their narrative and philosophical texts. Alexandra von Lieven highlights the dual significance of divine parenthood in Egypt. Not only are the deities understood as parents of the world in the sense that a divine sexual act generated the cosmos but also in their continuous care for the people and animals of Egypt. Turning to Greece, Heinz-Günter Nesselrath argues that the notion of Zeus’s fatherhood in Homer’s writing is “patriarchal” in the sense that it serves to emphasize his duties toward his creation as head of the family. The third article by Franco Ferrari explores the reception of Plato’s writing, with focus on the understanding of Timaeus 28c3–5 and its statement about the difficulty to make known to all people the creator and father of the world. The second part explores the notion of God’s fatherhood in ancient Judaism. In the sole article devoted to the Hebrew Bible, Hermann Spieckermann argues that preexilic royal theology adopted the language of divine fatherhood from Egyptian royal ideology. Later, post-exilic laments cemented this tradition and emphasized God’s discipline and paternal care for his people. The other five articles in this section each analyze a particular early Jewish text: Jacques van Ruiten looks at
Jubilees, Lutz Doering explores the material from Qumran, Robert Hayward discusses the Pentateuchal Targumim, Beatrice Wyss studies the writings of Philo, and Mladen Popović analyses the writings of Josephus. Each article highlights how the text under investigation portrays God as father. The metaphor of the father-son relationship between God and Israel found in Jubilees emphasizes God’s love for and election of Israel. Select material from Qumran speaks of God’s parental guidance and forgiveness of Israel. The Pentateuchal Targumim speak of God’s fatherhood to a higher degree than the parallel texts in the Hebrew Bible. Philo goes even further and employs the metaphorical father-child relationship at great length and variety in his allegorical writing. Josephus speaks of God as the father not only of the Jewish people but also in a more universalistic manner as the father and origin of all, thus betraying not only Greek but also Roman influence.

The six articles in the third section all look at the NT where the notion of God’s fatherhood reaches its climax. Florian Wilk investigates the significance of the address to God as “Father” in three of Jesus’s prayers (Mark 14:32–34; Matt 11:25ff // Luke 10:21–22; and Matt 6:9–13 // Luke 11:2–4). In each, Jesus expresses trust in God’s loving care yet also asking him to be like a father. Ross Wagner, turning to Paul’s writing in Galatians, argues that Paul remains particularistic in his discourse of God, the Father of all things. Reinhard Feldmeier highlights how the notion of God’s fatherhood gradually gained signif-icance, from its small beginnings in the Hebrew Bible, via an increase in the Gospels, to its culmination in the Epistles (Romans, Galatians, the hymn about Christ in Philippians). Felix Albrecht explores the ways in which 2 Cor 6:16–18 draws on different traditions in the Hebrew Bible and how the idea of God as a Father combines God’s promises to the community with his promised to each individual follower of Jesus. George H. van Kooten traces the origin of the epithet “Father of all” in Eph 3:14–15 and 4:6 to the Greek writings of Homer and Hesiod, as well to its application by the Greek philosophers Heraclitus, Pythagoras, and Plato. He further argues that the statements in Ephesians constituted polemics against contemporaneous Greek philosophical ideas. Finally, Jane Heath investigates how the metaphor of God’s fatherhood is nuanced when understood in relation, not only to other sets of parents who are referred to in the NT, but also the often ambiguous language of “fathers” in the Hebrew Bible. In particular, she highlights how many texts in the NT polarize God as father against Abraham as father.

The concluding part returns to ancient Greece, looking at the idea of God’s fatherhood in Greek texts from the Late Antiquity. Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta explores the concept of God’s fatherhood as portrayed by the Gospel of Truth, a Gnostic texts preserved among the texts from
Nag Hammadi. He detects two traits in this depiction. Although God the Father is portrayed as remote and transcendent, he has also been accessible and active in history. Finally, Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler investigates the language of the divine father in the writings of two Neo-Platonists: Plotinus and Porphyry. While Plotinus uses the father metaphor to describe the chronological relationship between the hypostases, Porphyry employs the same metaphor when seeking to depict the relationship between the individual soul and the highest deity.

This book is not an easy read and all readers will not be interested in all articles. Yet it is ultimately a very useful volume for those scholars who wish to gain an in-depth understanding of the backgrounds, meanings, and uses of the metaphor of divine fatherhood in the Bible and in other texts from Antiquity.

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The state of flux in scholarship is perhaps nowhere more evident than in Pentateuchal studies—and, arguably, in the study of Leviticus in particular. Text, Time, and Temple presents an anthology of critical studies in Leviticus that, aside from the individual contributions, serves as a glimpse into the variety of current approaches being utilized in biblical studies.

In the first chapter Bryan D. Bibb offers a brief overview of the history of scholarship on Leviticus, noting that the twentieth century’s two major themes were the dating of the Priestly source (P) and Mary Douglas’s influential application of anthropological models to the study of biblical ritual. Bibb then focuses upon the trends of the past decades, his digest covering the significant impact of Jacob Milgrom, along with that of others who have worked in his wake. This entry into Leviticus studies situates the volume’s essays, which are summarized in a final section.

Michael Hundley’s essay in the second chapter interacts with the work of Benjamin Sommer whose book, The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel (Cambridge University Press, 2009), explores the ancient Near Eastern perception of divinity as possessing fluidity,
capable of having more than one body and so being fully present in different locales. Hundley contrasts the view of YHWH’s tabernacle presence, whereby the static cult statue is replaced by the divine glory (and its images of fire and cloud), revealing and veiling YHWH’s transcendent presence.

In chapter three Jonathan Burnside considers the place of necromancy within the literary structure of Lev 20, arguing that the chapter is well-integrated and cohesive. While the necromancy references (Lev 20:6, 27) have commonly been considered later emendations, disconnected from their context, Burnside urges their logical placement within the text’s internal Decalogue structure by appealing to the relationship between necromancy and idolatry, dishonouring parents, and adultery.

Israel Knohl examines the parallels between Israel’s cultic rituals and those of northern Syria and southern Anatolia in chapter four. Assuming a genetic connection, he speculates that early Semitic inhabitants of the northern region had mingled with Hittite and Syrian populations before Assyrian aggression caused them to flee south into Canaan, their ritual heritage subsequently encoded in the Priestly texts.

The question of how YHWH speaks to his people in the so-called Holiness Code (H, Lev 17–26) is taken up by Reinhard Müller in the fifth chapter. He argues that the phrase “I am YHWH” interspersed throughout this section mediates YHWH’s voice through the scriptural text itself, particularly as priests read them before the community. Their recitation of “I am YHWH” manifested his presence while also reminding the people of his distinct voice and authority—that is, the law heard through the voice of the priest was nevertheless divine commandment for their sanctification.

In chapter six James Watts pursues the significance of the sin and guilt offerings legislated in Lev 4–5. He asserts these offerings were lucrative innovations by priests amidst the political decline of Judah’s royalty throughout the eighth to sixth century B.C. Given the catastrophe of exile, the priests hedged their claims (and status), along with the role of these offerings, by delimiting their atoning efficacy to unintentional sins. Within the rhetorical context of the Torah, the sin and guilt offerings likely addressed the reader’s need for ritual atonement textually.

Christoph Nihan’s essay in chapter seven studies the connection between blood disposal and the work of the קפר ritual for unintentional sin in Lev 4. Rejecting prevalent proposals which require a co-herent, uniform meaning for blood or its use, he suggests the blood ritual for the sin offering established a relationship between the offerer and the inaccessible deity, which in turn served to mark out (“index”) the role of
the sanctuary in the community, along with distinguishing the various social and political hierarchies of Israel.

Leigh Trevaskis compares the prohibitions on sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman in Lev 15:24 (designated a P text) and 20:18 (designated H), investigating why the penalty in the latter text, being cut off from the people, is more severe than in the former, which merely involved seven days of impurity. Beyond the assumption that Lev 15:24 refers to inadvertent ritual violation while Lev 20:18 addresses intentional sin, he proposes that the woman in the “impurity (נדה) of her uncleanness” in H (cf. 18:19) serves to symbolize forbidden “abominable customs” (18:30). Though not explored in this contribution, it is interesting that Lev 18:19, which is connected to the P text by use of נדה, does not itself delineate any penalty, while in 20:18, which legislates being cut off, the term נדה is not actually used but rather דוה, opening the possibility that two different scenarios with a bleeding woman may be being addressed.

In chapter nine, Deborah Rooke examines the gendered terminology of the blasphemer narrative (Lev 24:10–23), yielding some brilliant insights. The story draws a boundary between Israel and other nations, rejecting the blasphemer’s Egyptian identity, which has already been associated with profaning the name of God (Lev 22:32–33).

Francis Landy’s essay in chapter ten presents a structuralist analysis of the laws of the שׂטה and the Nazarite in Numbers 5–6 (the volume’s focus on Leviticus notwithstanding). Landy argues that both cases involve liminal persons who pose a problem for priestly order and which must be addressed by either elimination or reincorporation.

In the eleventh chapter, Rüdiger Schmitt approaches the diseased house legislation (Lev 14:33–57) as an “intellectual ritual.” Observing its lack of performative detail, Schmitt claims the text functions as didactic literature, promoting the spiritual and social control of priests as indispensable ritual specialists.

Ida Fröhlich examines the three sins that defile the land in H: inappropriate cultic practices, bloodshed, and sexual transgression, focusing on how the latter category may lead to disinheritance not only in ritual texts, but also in historical narratives and in later texts (from Qumran and 1 Enoch) that interpret biblical tradition.

Jeremy Milgrom closes the volume with a personal reflection on his father’s seminal work in Leviticus, conveying Milgrom’s deep appreciation for ancient ritual and its relevance for the pressing issues of contemporary life.

Some of the foregoing essays are marked by needlessly negative presumptions about the text’s priestly provenance. Nevertheless this volume as a whole contributes insightful analysis and constructive
scholarship, demonstrating the benefit of alternate approaches. Schools with post-graduate biblical studies will want it in their library.

L. MICHAEL MORALES
Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary


Joel Barker is assistant professor of Biblical Studies at Heritage College and Seminary in Cambridge, Ontario. The book is a revised version of his Ph.D. dissertation written under the direction of Mark Boda at McMaster Divinity College. In it, he applies an emerging model of rhetorical criticism to the book of Joel. His model of rhetorical analysis was originally adopted from the study of ancient Greek rhetoric by G. Kennedy and applied to New Testament interpretation. It has been adapted by K. Möller and C. Shaw for use with the prophetic texts of Amos and Micah, respectively. Barker’s main thesis is that rhetorical analysis provides a framework for a unified reading of Joel.

An introduction surveys the methodologies employed to interpret Joel and their results. Joel is well suited for rhetorical analysis because there is such little evidence that would help to locate the book in an identifiable historical setting. Barker also argues that the possibility of a unified reading of Joel revealed through rhetorical analysis deserves to be considered when evaluating arguments for a multi-layered history of redaction behind the final form of the book. The same holds for arguments that Joel represents a major redactional stage in the formation of the Book of the Twelve as a whole. Chapter 1 describes the model of rhetorical analysis to be applied to Joel. It contains four primary elements: the rhetorical unit and constitutive subunits; the rhetorical situation addressed, implied, or created by the text; the rhetorical strategy revealed in the structure, choice, and form of language; and the rhetorical effectiveness of the text in addressing the issues determined by the rhetorical situation.

Chapters 2–8 apply the rhetorical model to the major units within Joel. Joel 1:1–14 introduces the rhetorical situation of the book by describing the threat posed by a locust plague and accompanying agricultural crisis. The text identifies groups within the community and calls them to recognize the severity of the threat and to respond by
gathering under the leadership of the priests in order to seek divine aid for their threatened condition. Joel 1:15–20 makes a transition from the announcement of the crisis to the active expression of lament while deepening the awareness of the threat by invoking the Day of the Lord. Joel 2:1–11 increases the sense of urgency and the associations with the Day of the Lord by describing the plague as an invading army, its sights set on Zion, with none other than YHWH leading the advance. The turning point comes in Joel 2:12–17 in the prophet’s call to repentance, a call motivated by the revealed character of YHWH and containing specific instructions regarding the ritual and verbal form this repentance should take. The results of the presumed repentance urged in 2:12–17 are reported in 2:18–27 as YHWH removes the threat, the people are called to rejoice, and YHWH promises restoration. Such results underscore the persuasiveness of the prophet’s appeals. Joel 3:1–5 and 4:1–21 make use of the persuasive capital gained in Joel 1:1–2:28 by making further promises of future restoration and salvation. Joel 3:1–5 and 4:1–21 nevertheless exceed the first section of Joel in the cosmic scope of the events portrayed, their undetermined future orientation, and the heightened drama of the events to come. Barker highlights these tensions while pointing out several elements of rhetorical and logical continuity. A concluding chapter summarizes the persuasive power of the book of Joel as a literary unit.

Barker effectively demonstrates the benefits of his method of rhetorical analysis for reading the book of Joel. Though the method originated in the study of Greek rhetoric, the criticism that may be applied to this work—that it is anachronistic to employ Greek rhetoric in the study of Hebrew literature—does not hold in this particular application of the method to Joel. It would be interesting to see if the method would be as helpful when applied to a book like Zephaniah, for example, which is more formally diverse and lacks the implied narrative structure that one finds in Joel. Another appeal of Barker’s method is that it does not require a firm conclusion to the difficult question of the historical setting of Joel. Nevertheless, the rhetorical situation of the book receives sharper focus if one accepts a postexilic setting. The fragility of the agrarian economy, the role of the priests, the sensitivity to the threatened status of Zion, and the absence of any armed defense in postexilic Yehud strengthen the text’s rhetorical urgency and sharpen its appeal for the merciful intervention of YHWH. The generalized guilt depicted in postexilic penitential prayers (Ezra 9, Neh 9, and Dan 9) would also mitigate the unresolved question of what sins Joel urged the community to repent of. Though Barker’s rhetorical analysis strengthens the argument for a postexilic setting, it nevertheless does not require such a setting. It is arguably more in keeping with the scriptural status of Joel to
apply the outcome of the prophet’s call to repentance, as Barker does, to the future setting portrayed in chapters 3 and 4 than to the reconstructed events behind chapters 1 and 2. The treatment of Joel as a self-contained literary unit also fits with other recent studies that show resistance to the theory of the Book of the Twelve as a compositional unit, or at least insist on analysis of the individual books within the Twelve before addressing the question of compositional layers across the larger corpus of the Twelve. Finally, Barker’s method does successfully provide a framework for reading Joel as a unified text. His reading acknowledges the tensions within the book, but provides a rational basis for holding the tensions together within the logic of the book’s overall argument. His method does not require a conclusion of a single layer of composition, but it does demonstrate a sense of coherence within the final form of the book.

The method of rhetorical analysis that derived from the study of Greek literature has produced a significant and growing body of work that has been illuminating for the study of New Testament texts. Barker’s work shows that this method can be successfully adapted to Hebrew prophetic literature with good results. Barker’s work provides a helpful model for rhetorical commentaries on Old Testament works similar to recent commentaries in the area of New Testament studies. Scholars and students who wish to employ rhetorical criticism in the study of Old Testament texts would have benefited from a bibliography of the works used by Barker, although this limitation may have been imposed by the series or the publisher. Nevertheless, all who seek a clearer understanding of the argument and message of the book of Joel will benefit from this work.

**BARRY A. JONES**
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With the contributions to this *festschrift*, colleagues and former students honor the scholarly and pedagogical legacy of Douglas A. Knight. Pages xvii–xxii provide Knight’s publication record, which bears witness to his numerous contributions to critical scholarship at the highest levels as
well as his deep concern for the ethical implications of interpreting the Bible. The totality of the list of contributors—which includes Jon Berquist, Robert Wilson, Norman Gottwald, James Crenshaw, and many others—is immediately impressive. It also testifies to the importance of Knight’s impact on biblical studies.

The contributions are impressive both in their breadth and in their relevance for current issues and discussions in the field. For example, Israel Finkelstein answers criticisms of his recent publications that argue for a second-century B.C. Hellenistic date for the lists of returnees in Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 2:1–67; Neh 7:6–68). Philip Davies presents a case for separate and independent origins for Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah, arguing that any previous unity (i.e., a unified kingdom of Israel) in the biblical witness is the result of a powerful cultural memory resulting from Judah’s assumption of an Israel-identity subsequent to the northern kingdom’s fall. In light of his case, Davies proposes a new genre: a history of Judah. Robert Wilson surveys recent scholarship on the prophetic literature that deals with composition and the production of texts in the Persian period. Although he deftly contributes to the common theory of an elite class of scribes and their unique role(s) in this enterprise, he cautions that there are still many unanswered questions about the production of prophetic literature as a whole (perhaps especially the relationship between oral and written literature). This sampling is adequate to make the point about the volume as a whole: its contributions cover a large cross-section of issues and are highly relevant for present discussions and scholarly currents in the field right now.

Despite the book’s obvious academic rigor and its relevance for present issues, evangelicals will likely find many of the conclusions problematic. As the field shifts further away from the perpetually crumbling pan-Babylonianism that once dominated critical discussions on the origins of all things Old Testament, a newer “pan-Persian” explanation is concretizing as a common replacement and, undoubtedly, a substantial scholarly current in the field. Therefore, the context of Persian Empire (as well as the subsequent Hellenistic context) becomes the Petri dish out of which grew the Old Testament. For example, Kristin Swanson explains Judges as a satirical piece that provides social commentary on Ezra’s leadership and addresses Persian-era concerns for the identity of the “other.” For Niels Peter Lemehe, “The schism between the North and the South found in the collective memory of the Old Testament can easily be explained in light of political, religious, and demographic developments in the Persian and Hellenistic periods” (p. 48). He says forthrightly of the Davidic Kingdom, “This kingdom never
existed” (p. 42). I suppose what emerges from the volume is actually more of a pan-Persian-Hellenism combination.

That is not to say the volume lacks excellent information. To the contrary, there are numerous troves of helpful observations for everyone in the field. A particularly lucid and informative piece is Jack Sasson’s investigation of the tenth commandment about covetousness. This essay is remarkable because of the breadth of primary and secondary sources that it engages in so short a space as well as its penetrating observations and meaningful conclusions. Furthermore, the sum of the volume is most definitely useful for bringing readers up to speed on some of the central currents in critical scholarship. The contributors have shaped and continue to shape their respective niches and the field as a whole. That point is beyond dispute.

For evangelicals, however (a constituency of which I am a participant, and whose basic ideologies—difficult as they can sometimes be to define—I undoubtedly share), many conclusions in the volume, as well as the larger implication that most of (if not all of) the Old Testament emerged from the Persian and Hellenistic periods, are untenable and very difficult (for all intents and purposes, impossible) to accept. The issue is the place and role of the Bible itself in the investigative process. A quote by Israel Finkelstein illustrates the point: “I tend to give archaeology a central, independent role and treat the text as a stratified literary work whose layers are embedded with the ideological goals of their authors and the realities of their time” (p. 50). For Finkelstein, then, archaeology is admittedly primary and the text secondary (or perhaps, central and marginal, respectively). There is an irony in all of this. Archaeology, though working through thousands of years of time and multitudinous, shifting layers of cultural strata and seemingly infinite pieces of realia is “independent”; however, it is “the text” that is stratified and in flux. Of course, Finkelstein’s place for the Bible—though at the margins—is still too much for Lemke, who criticizes Finkelstein for having “fallen into the same trap as many biblical scholars—trying to rescue whatever can be saved from ‘ancient Israel’” (p. 43). So, for evangelicals there is a root, ideological gap that ultimately problematizes this volume’s contributions. The biblical witness is (usually) present in the investigative process, but it is far too marginalized as a factor and witness.

Based on these observations, I recommend the volume only to those in the guild who wish to see windows into some of the more reconstructive and biblically skeptical academic currents in the field. For those wanting more comprehensive treatments of the Persian era in general, I recommend leaving this work behind and consulting the major historical works by Pierre Briant and Amélie Kuhrt. For those wanting a
The conservative integration of Persian history and the biblical witness, I recommend the pertinent works by Edwin Yamauchi, whose thorough historical investigations have ensured their ongoing relevance.

R. Michael Fox
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It is a pleasant thing when one encounters a book that fills a need in scholarship. It is still more pleasant when, upon reading, one finds that book to be thoroughly researched and clearly written. I was thus delighted to read Andrew Brown’s _The Days of Creation_. The volume offers a comprehensive look at the history of Christian interpretation of the “days” of the first creation narrative in Genesis. Anyone acquainted with contemporary secondary literature on this subject has encountered sweeping claims about what the tradition does and does not say, typically used to bolster the interpreter’s own exegesis of the text. Brown’s volume definitively demonstrates that the only broad claim one can make about the tradition on this subject is that broad claims are hard to make. Manifold Christian commentators have weighed in on the original intent of this text, and a variety of positions have been espoused for a variety of reasons.

The book contains seven chapters, a plump bibliography (37 pages), and several useful indexes (26 pages). In addition to the author, the publisher deserves credit as the volume is well laid out, generally well edited (although the occasional error appears), and reasonably priced.

After a brief introductory chapter in which Brown lays out his project, the meat of the study commences in chapter 2, “The Days of Creation in the Church Fathers.” He begins in fact somewhat prior to that, noting the literal interpretation of Josephus and the ideal, non-literal interpretation of Philo. The difference witnessed between these two well-known Jewish interpreters adumbrates what one finds in Christian interpretation over the following two millennia, and indeed, Brown credits Philo with being a source of some of the ensuing non-literal interpretation among the church fathers (p. 20). Irenaeus, for example, espoused a world-week interpretive scheme according to which each day represented one thousand years, to culminate soon in Jesus’s millennial
reign on earth (pp. 22–23). Origen too eschewed literal interpretation, seeing that as inconsistent with God’s character; he instead favored a timeless, essentially instantaneous creation. Instantaneous creation also became the position of Augustine, who receives a more thorough treatment than any other interpreter in the book—justifiable given not only Augustine’s lasting influence and repute, but also how frequently and erroneously he is invoked by modern interpreters. Brown shows that, despite the title of Augustine’s *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, he considered creation over a span of time incompatible with God’s character: “We cannot be so foolish or rash as to imagine that any such temporal good would accrue to the Eternal and Unchangeable” (p. 48, citing Augustine, *Literal Meaning*, 4.18.34). Brown explains that “Although he takes ‘day’ metaphorically, this for Augustine remains literal exegesis” (p. 52). Brown eventually assesses him as follows: “Yet Augustine’s literal meaning certainly stretches the definition of ‘literal’ meaning and minimizes historical reality . . .” (p. 53). But Augustine was not the only voice of his era. Brown also draws attention to the contemporary Antiochene tradition, which favored literal days, and the Cappadocian tradition, where one sees an adherence to literal days but a simultaneous questioning of this view.

Chapter 3 covers “The Days of Creation in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance,” during which time one observes a gradual shift away from Augustine’s view of instantaneous creation toward a more literal understanding of the six days. This shift can be illustrated by important figures at either end: in the early eighth century, the Venerable Bede adopted the idea of instantaneous creation but qualifies this that the various created things “were brought into being instantly on their respective days” (p. 62, emphasis Brown’s). Five hundred years later, Nicholas of Lyra had almost entirely shed Augustine’s position, interpreting the days with an “avowed literalism” (p. 93). The key figure between these two, of course, was Thomas Aquinas, whom Brown considers a “turning point” (p. 102) in the interpretation of the days of creation. Brown reflects, “Thomas’ synthesis of interpretations of the creation narrative in Genesis reveals an appreciation for the philosophical serviceability of Augustine’s view, but at the same time the growing admission of its poor compatibility with the plain sense of the biblical text” (pp. 89–90); this rejection of Augustine’s view smoothed the road for many later interpreters to follow suit.

In chapter 4, “The Days of Creation in the Era of the Reformation,” Brown tackles the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the first part of this period, both Catholicism and the burgeoning Protestant movement were marked by emphatic belief in the clarity of Scripture and that ordinary humans can grasp the meaning of Scripture.
For this and other reasons, interpretation of the days of creation as literal 24-hour periods dominated scholarship during this time, and is found among such figures as Martin Luther and John Calvin. Like Aquinas, many theologians of this era struggled to adhere to the writings of the church fathers—particularly Augustine. While favoring literal interpretation, such vacillation can be summarized by one of Brown’s notes: “Every church father must however be brought to the bar of Scripture, and Luther’s advice is ‘to read them with discretion’” (p. 111, quoting Luther’s Lecture’s on Genesis, 61). This literalist bent gave rise to increased interest in establishing world chronologies, leading to the attempts to date the creation of the universe by John Lightfoot (1647) and, more famously, James Ussher (1650). Non-literal treatments of Gen 1 did appear throughout this time, but they remained on the periphery until the latter part of the seventeenth century. By this time the biblical creation account had begun to receive challenges from the natural sciences, namely astronomy, in which Copernicus’s heliocentric theory had won the day, and geology, where hard-to-explain fossils regularly emerged. Isaac Newton did his best to reconcile the new scientific evidence with the biblical account by being one of the pioneers of the day-age theory, wherein the “days” of creation corresponded to longer periods of time in which the cosmogonic events occurred. His contemporary and interlocutor, Thomas Burnet, dispensed with Gen 1 altogether—counterintuitively, out of respect for the biblical text—by asserting that it described only the present form of the earth, not its ultimate origins. From this point on, all commentators were forced to take the natural sciences into account when interpreting the days of creation, and in many cases “philosophy, the handmaiden of divinity, usurps her mistress” (p. 157).

Chapters 5 and 6, “The Days of Creation and the Ambition of Reason in the Eighteenth Century,” and “Nineteenth-Century Interpretation of the Days of Creation until the Origin of Species and Essays and Reviews,” chronicle interpretations of Gen 1 as the field of geology became better and more widely understood. As the incompatibility of geologists’ results and the literal understanding of the days of creation became more widely recognized, an array of harmonizing proposals arose, including diluvial theories which understood the geological strata as having settled during Noah’s flood, ruin-restitution theories in which an older world was devastated and then restored just prior to the creation week, mystical interpretations, and more. But while naturalists continued to attempt to reconcile their findings with Gen 1, the “‘balance of power’ between the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture was shifting . . . in the Western mind” (p. 169). In the first half of the nineteenth century, three main theories competed, the “semi-concordist” (see p. 197 passim)
gap theory which consigned the long geological epochs to the period prior to Gen 1:3, the concordist day-age theory which interpreted the “days” of creation as epochs but kept the order of creation in tact (akin to the most common form of today’s “old-earth creationism”), and a literal, young-earth approach. Interestingly, around mid-century—prior to Darwin’s seminal work—under the increasing influence of the natural sciences, scholars tended simply to ignore the Genesis account when pondering the earth’s origins. All three views of reconciling Gen 1 with scientific evidence lost ground, with “‘young-earth’ belief [becoming] dormant and virtually undetectable in published literature for decades to come” (p 240; cf. qualifying remarks on p. 295). Brown attributes this to both the increasing gap between scientific and biblical authority, and the increasing influence of historical criticism, especially among the clergy, hence his placement of the watershed Essays and Reviews on par with the Origin of Species in the title of the chapter.

Brown fittingly concludes with a seventh chapter, “The Shape of the History of Christian Interpretation of Genesis 1:1–2:3,” in which he not only summarizes the preceding discussion but also helpfully assesses the importance of the history of interpretation for present views of and debates about the creation narrative.

I read all that Brown had written, and it was very good. There is much to praise about this book. Brown lucidly presents, explains, and contextualizes (and occasionally assesses) an array of interpretations. He judiciously chooses what material to include in his historical survey. He manages to be thorough and meticulous while (usually) avoiding excessive detail, keeping what could have been a bloated volume at a manageable 298 pages of text. Dividing all the material into six main chapters and a concluding seventh also furnishes a clever homage to the hexaemeral source material. If I were to search for flaws, I could only find two. First, as with many historical surveys, the writing at times becomes rather dull. The occasional exclamation points Brown inserts in a well-intentioned but futile effort to spice things up only draw more attention to this. Second, in a few spots Brown misses the forest for the trees, focusing on the minutiae of peripheral interpretations without adequately placing them in historical and intellectual context. Such lapses are rare, though, and neither of these peccadillos significantly detracts from the volume.

What is most impressive is that Brown somehow covers nearly two millennia of charged interpretations of a text that continues to inspire heated debate without any apparent agenda. (Indeed, after finishing the book I can only guess at Brown’s own position; this is no small feat.) Not until the final chapter does he challenge any modern interpreters of the Gen 1 account, and here he calls out scholars on both sides of the
main evangelical divide (old earth and young earth) in equal measure. After a few quotations of particularly heinous misuse of the Christian tradition by contemporary writers, Brown states, “All of this serves as a warning against an unvetted eagerness to recruit ancestral support for modern viewpoints without an accompanying willingness to do the serious historical research required” (p. 285). This articulates what has already become evident through a careful reading of the book and is one of the most significant payoffs of The Days of Creation. Nearly every conceivable interpretation of the creation narrative has a long and illustrious pedigree. Conservative readers cannot reasonably claim that Darwin is to blame for all old-earth readings and think that if one denies evolution all problems with literal days go away. In fact, for centuries before Darwin, countless Christian interpreters struggled with a literal interpretation for other scientific reasons (challenges from astronomy and geology nearly vanquished literal interpretations before evolution even caught on) as well as for theological (why would God require time to create?), scriptural (the apocryphal Sir 18:1 suggests instantaneous creation, to say nothing of the difficulties of reconciling Gen 1 with Gen 2, including the apparently single day of creation in Gen 2:4b), and logical (how could there be three days before the creation of the sun?) reasons. On the other hand, more progressive readers of Gen 1 display stunning ignorance when perpetuating the canard that literal interpretation of the days of creation is a relatively recent invention of fundamentalists. Literal interpretation was known among the church fathers and became the standard reading for much of the Middle Ages, as can be easily seen in the writings of such figures as Thomas Aquinas or Martin Luther. In sum, Brown has made it much easier to call the lie on those who caricature and misconstrue opposing views.

The Days of Creation should thus impose some much-needed order onto a conversation that has often been תָּהוּ וּבָהוּ. For this, Andrew Brown deserves our thanks. This reviewer would love to see him embark on a similar project on the historical interpretation of Genesis 2–3, but perhaps, having completed this work, it is time for him to rest.

ANDREW KNAPP
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Aaron Chalmers teaches Old Testament and Hermeneutics at Tabor Adelaide, Australia, as the head of the School of Ministry, Theology, and Culture. In *Exploring the Religion of Ancient Israel*, Chalmers writes an introductory text for the non-specialist (i.e., beginning students) in an attempt to inform the general lack of knowledge and dispel common misconceptions concerning the primary participants in the religion of ancient Israel. He provides a socio-historical reconstruction of the social locations and roles of four members within the religion of ancient Israel: prophet, priest, sage, and common people.

Chalmers restricts discussion in chapter 1 to the three sources used for reconstructing the religious and social world of ancient Israel: the OT text, ancient Near Eastern texts, and Syro-Palestinian archeology. Chalmers grants to the OT text a role in his socio-historical reconstruction because correlations with extra-biblical inscriptions and archeology lead him to believe the OT “faithfully represent[s] life in the Iron Age period” (p. 6), even though he contends, “Most of the OT, at least in its final form, clearly postdates the events it is recording” (p. 2). Ancient Near Eastern texts, according to Chalmers, provide a valuable source for socio-historical reconstruction. The author gives helpful and balanced remarks to help the beginning student navigate between the dangers of uncritical comparison (parallelomania), on the one hand, and the refusal to compare the OT text with another society’s texts (parallelophobia), on the other. Concerning Syro-Palestinian archaeology, Chalmers proposes a balanced approach, suggesting that one source (the Bible or archaeology) is not better than the other. “It all depends on precisely what we are trying to reconstruct” (p. 12).

In chapters 2, 3, and 4, Chalmers offers a reconstruction of the priest, prophet, and sage in the religion of ancient Israel by posing three questions to each figure. How did one become a priest, prophet, or sage? What did one do as a priest, prophet, or sage? And where could one find a priest, prophet, or sage? Of particular interest is chapter 4, where Chalmers reconstructs the image of a sage in the society of ancient Israel. Building upon the insights of von Rod and Crenshaw, Chalmers provides reasoned evidence and arguments that the sage in ancient Israel likely taught, advised, and arbitrated disputes and were situated “within the royal court and key educational centres (if these existed)” (p. 87).

Before moving into the fifth and final chapter, Chalmers provides a brief excursus on the role of the king in the religious life of ancient Israel, arguing the king played a crucial role by establishing, maintaining, and reforming the central cult (e.g., David and Solomon in Jerusalem and Jeroboam I in Dan).

Chalmers concludes his study with a reconstruction of the religious life of the common people of ancient Israel in chapter 5. As in
previous chapters, Chalmers structures the material around a series of questions covering whom, where, and when the common people worshipped. The common people, according to Chalmers, engaged in a form of religion in contrast with “the form of religion that we find enshrined in the OT and, in particular, its legal sections” (p. 98). Chalmers reconstructs the religious life of the people largely through archaeological findings, noting the OT offers little with regard to the beliefs and practices of the common people. Yet, he correctly brings to light OT texts that correlate the picture presented by archaeology.

*Exploring the Religion of Ancient Israel* presents a number of strengths that make it a suitable text, at least pedagogically speaking, for beginning students. First, Chalmers writes in clear and simple prose, increasing the book’s effectiveness as an entry-level text. Second, the book is arranged in a delightful way with informative discussions that introduce the student to important scholars (e.g., Dever, Wellhausen, von Rad), orient him or her to significant debates (e.g., the minimalist-maximalist debate), and highlight various ancient Near Eastern parallels and archaeological insights (e.g., the Baal cycle, the sanctuary at Tel Dan, Asherah inscriptions from ancient Israel). Third, the book provides helpful direction for students who desire more with a bibliography at the end of each chapter. Each bibliography includes the best in recent scholarship and reflects a wide spectrum of scholarly opinion. Finally, the greatest strength of *Exploring the Religion of Ancient Israel* is the concise yet comprehensive manner with which Chalmers introduces household and family religion in ancient Israel. Chalmers displays here, as he does elsewhere in the book, familiarity with the current state of the discipline. His focus on family religion in ancient Israel is timely given the publication in the same year of William Dever’s *The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel: Where the Bible and Archeology Intersect* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012) and Rainer Albertz’s and Rüdiger Schmitt’s *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012).

Yet *Exploring the Religion of Ancient Israel* presents at least two weaknesses. First, Chalmers restricts his study to “social world” questions, noting in contrast that the OT “focuses on religious and theological issues” (p. 2) and that the “text’s primary theological and kerygmatic focus means that almost everything that interests us in our attempt at socio-historical reconstruction appears only peripherally or incidentally” (p. 7). One wonders why religious and theological issues do not at least help answer “social-world” questions. The religious or theological beliefs of the prophet, priest, sage, or common person would indeed seem to help reconstruct a fuller picture for each member. It is indeed curious then to find statements such as, “ANE texts have the
potential to provide significant insight into the religious beliefs and practices of the common people” (p. 10). This tension may have been alleviated if Chalmers would have offered a rationale for separating religious and theological beliefs from “social-world” questions; or, perhaps if he would have defined religious beliefs and/or theological issues. Second, a discussion on the role of the interpreter or historian in the process of socio-historical reconstruction would improve this book. Beginning students need to be made aware of the impact a historian’s epistemology and/or worldview can have on the outcome of historical reconstruction (see Jens Bruun Kofoed, “Epistemology, Historiographical Method, and the ‘Copenhagen School’” in *Windows into Old Testament History: Evidence, Argument, and the Crisis of ‘Biblical Israel’* [ed. V. Philips Long, David W. Baker, and Gordon J. Wenham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002]).

Despite these criticisms, Chalmers accomplishes his goal to provide an accessible introductory text to the religion of ancient Israel for the beginning student or non-specialist. *Exploring the Religion of Ancient Israel* is well balanced and researched. Chalmers navigates well between various extremes and the difficult land between biblical studies and archaeology. I would recommend this as a supplemental text to a book on the history of “biblical Israel” because Chalmers effectively brings out the nitty-gritty of “real life” in ancient Israel. Not all will agree with Chalmers’s middle-of-the-road stance between minimalist and maximalist historians. Yet, his balanced approach models for students a way to weigh the evidence without necessarily inculcating him or her in an interpretative tradition.

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*The Raging Torrent: Historical Inscriptions from Assyria and Babylonia Relating to Ancient Israel* translated and annotated by Mordechai Cogan. Jerusalem: Carta, 2008. xiii + 250 pp., US $64.00, hardcover.

*Bound for Exile: Israelites and Judeans Under Imperial Yoke, Documents from Assyria and Babylonia* translated and annotated by Mordechai Cogan. Jerusalem: Carta, 2013. xiii + 177 pp., US $64.00, hardcover.

Mordechai Cogan is professor emeritus of biblical history at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Having written several books, including
commentaries on books of the Hebrew Bible, in Hebrew and English, Cogan displays a scholarly prowess that few can mirror. This review will treat *Raging Torrent* and *Bound for Exile* as a pair, both of which further display his scholarly capabilities. *Raging Torrent* easily stands alone, but *Bound for Exile* often refers readers to passages in the earlier volume to provide needed context. Consequently, publishing these as a single volume would have helped.

*Raging Torrent* and *Bound for Exile* are printed on semi-glossy paper and are about the size of an electronic tablet, though about twice as thick each. These titles are selective anthologies primarily of ancient Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian texts related to the ancient Hebrew kingdoms. Both volumes contain black and white photographs of ancient reliefs, monuments, and other artifacts printed occasionally alongside associated texts. *Raging Torrent* contains 25 images and *Bound for Exile* contains 37. Both titles provide helpful black and white maps illustrating military campaigns or locations associated with the ancient excerpts with which they are associated. Although the maps are black and white, they are well done and are an especially valuable part of these volumes. The regional shading, different kinds of arrows, and selection of toponyms on each map offers helpful clarification and broad orientation. *Raging Torrent* contains eight maps and *Bound for Exile* contains six. Both titles conclude with brief glossary, chronological tables, and indexes of biblical references, divine names, persons, and geographical and ethnic names. Each chapter is self-contained, with each section of the chapter concluding with its own bibliography.

Cogan’s explanations are consistently brief. The introduction to each volume is 10 pages, including bibliography. Each new section within chapters typically begins with an introduction of one to four short paragraphs. Cogan’s economic style keeps the focus on the ancient texts themselves. After the presentation of the translation, Cogan offers brief commentary of key passages or explains difficult or idiomatic expressions. The passage-by-passage comments may provide historical details or may make comparisons to terms or expressions in Akkadian, Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, and so on. This is typically done by non-technical transliteration in the respective font as needed to illustrate a given point. The commentary often cites relevant biblical passages and provides cross references to relevant passages in Cogan’s pair of anthologies. Each text provides a list of the published texts and other available English translations of the texts, as well as secondary literature cited in Cogan’s introductions and explanatory notes.

The layout and the elements offered make these well suited for academic use. Students and courses will benefit by the sustained serious yet accessible introduction and commentary, as well as the judicious
commitment to brevity. These same virtues could make these handbooks useful to preachers and other ministers of the Scriptures as well. These volumes are readable, and both comprehensive and concise, and offer all-in-one guidance for study.

The chapters of *Raging Torrent* are arranged chronologically from the mid-ninth century to the late sixth century B.C.E., most named for emperors: (1) Shalmaneser III, (2) Adad-nerari III, (3) Shalmaneser IV, (4) Tiglath-pileser III, (5) Sargon II, (6) Sennacherib, (7) Esarhaddon, (8) Ashurbanipal, (9) Assyrian Eponym Chronicle, (10) Neo-Babylonian Chronicles, (11) Nebuchadnezzar II, (12) Cyrus II, King of Persia. Cogan typically provides a single witness to an emperor’s annals (presumably selected for its virtues). For example, Cogan selected the earliest version of Sennacherib’s campaign against Judah (from the Rassam Cylinder) along with three other passages that relate to biblical events (pp. 111–29) versus Cogan’s translation of these same texts along with texts commemorating Sennacherib’s campaigns against Merodach-baladan and Babylon in COS (2:300–305) versus eight different versions of Sennacherib’s annals in Luckenbill (ARAB, 2:115–159) versus the final edition from the Taylor Prism in ANET (pp. 287–88).

Below is a selection that exemplifies Cogan’s commentary. It comes from a portion of the Taylor Prism that speaks about the Assyrian response to Hezekiah’s refusal to submit and pay tribute in 701 B.C.E. As shown, translation of selected annalistic records in full is followed by specific passages repeated in boldface font along with commentary:

> I took out 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, cattle, and sheep, without number, and counted them as spoil—The number of captives deported is extremely large and is at odds with the population estimates of the kingdom of Judah suggested by archaeologists, who set it at approximately 120,000; see Shiloh 1981; Broshi and Finkelstein 1992. The Assyrian scribes sought to enhance the king’s victory by inflating the numbers; on this practice, see De Odorico 1995:172–174; for a different opinion, see Millard 1991. (p. 120; the full references are included at the end of the section).

> He himself [Hezekiah], I locked up within Jerusalem, his royal city, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him with armed posts, and made it unthinkable (literally, ‘taboo’) for him to exit by city gate—The topography of Jerusalem did not easily permit the use of siege-wall technique, and so instead, fortified
positions were erected to cut the city off from the outside world.  

(p. 120)

The brief commentary is typical of what Cogan provides for all the selections in the pair of anthologies under review. By way of comparison, ANET and ARAB provide translation but no notes on these selections, and COS offers a few minor text oriented notes but no commentary. The informative commentary sets Cogan’s reader apart from typical biblical background readers.

Cogan’s second volume offers a much-needed collection of the disparate and fragmentary evidence of exilic life of Israel and Judah. Over the past couple of decades numerous articles and short studies have appeared explaining the significance of recovered evidence like the celebrated “city of Judah” (āl Yaḥudu) as one of the refugee communities in the outskirts of Babylon in the sixth century B.C.E.

The chapters of Bound for Exile are arranged topically/chronologically around the exiles of Israel and Judah respectively: (1) Assyrian Provinces of Magiddu and Samerina, (2) Israelites in Assyrian Exile, (3) Treatises and Oaths in the Assyrian Empire, (4) Kingdom of Judah as an Assyrian Vassal, (5) Judeans in Assyrian Exile, (6) Judeans in Babylonian Exile. Cogan finds the biblical texts historically reliable, to a large extent, and sees the various kinds of ancient texts and text fragments corroborating and illuminating the biblical text. In a few places, Cogan expresses skepticism concerning the historical accuracy of selected biblical texts.

While Raging Torrent presents official empire texts, the collection of texts in Bound for Exile is of a different order. Cogan explains in the introduction:

Though the royal inscriptions provide a basic picture of the course of political and military events, they are ideological compositions that fail the investigator who asks: Under what conditions did the captives live in their new homes? Were they settled in groups according to place of origin or as individuals, dispersed randomly? Can their social status—slaves, state dependents, homesteaders—be determined? Partial answer can be found in the texts that were generated in the routine operation of the imperial bureaucracies; in addition, there are the everyday, common texts that accompanied the course of the daily lives of the people who lived under their thumb. (p. 1)

Since “[t]hese documents were not subject to ideological constraints” they need to be interpreted with a different set of concerns (p. 1). The
sectional introductions in this volume frequently draw explicit attention to passages in the Hebrew Bible which the texts illuminate.

The diverse texts collected, introduced, and briefly explained by Cogan provide readers glimpses of the fate of the exiles. Some exiles of Israel served among the chariot troops. Many served as a part of building projects, bricklaying, and canal digging (see ch. 2). The sparse evidence of Judean exiles in Assyria reveals some as laborers in building projects while others served as soldiers or musicians. In addition, traces of evidence point to aspects of refugee life like records of the sale of lands and persons, as well as the sleuthing required to get at the ethnicity of personal names (see ch. 5). Cogan also gathers together disparate clues to Judean life in Neo-Babylonian exile. These include the well-known records of rations for Jehoiachin as well as place names, personal names, and various mundane records like inheritances and forbidden marriages (see ch. 6). Readers can see for themselves the severe limitations in terms of the scarcity of historical testimony to the exilic existence of the Hebrews. At the same time, the gathered and explained evidence will help dissolve some longstanding ideas regarding the “long lost ten tribes of Israel.”

Sensationalistic and partisan interpretation of the exile of the ancient Hebrews has been commonplace in the past couple of decades. Students may run across parts of the large mass of “myth of the exile” studies, some extremely skeptical of the scriptural accounts. (For one work which gave rise to much allusion and consideration, see Hans Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah during the “Exilic” Period* [Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996]). Others have questioned the biases of some of these postmodern and minimalist scholars as being anti-Semitic (See Adele Berlin, “The Exile: Biblical Ideology and Its Postmodern Ideological Interpretation,” in *Literary Construction of Identity in the Ancient World* [ed. Hanna Liss and Manfred Oeming; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010], 341–56]). While determining possible relationships between anti-Semitic sentiment and scholarly ideology keeps the presses running and students talking, it does not necessarily translate into exegetical competency. *Bound for Exile* provides students a clear and accessible collection of primary sources to help negotiate historical judgments in the face of wildly disparate and often sparkly scholarly claims. Cogan is clear, careful, and reserved in his judgments. Cogan’s readers could provide useful complement to Gary N. Knoppers’s recent interpretation of the biblical and historical accounts of the exiles of the Israelites and Judeans, as he cuts through the heated debate about them (two chapters offer sustained interpretation of the much-contested exiles of the people of the ancient Hebrew kingdoms; see Gary N. Knoppers,
While there is great value and necessity in secondary interpretations, there is also need for a collection of primary texts such as Cogan has put together. Students need a chance to read and study the very small cache of written evidence for themselves.

The value of Cogan’s pair of anthologies is apparent for students and teachers of the Hebrew Bible. These readers could well serve courses devoted to 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, and the Prophets, as well as historical background of the Old Testament. In addition, the brevity, clarity, and richness of these readers also makes them viable for use by the busy preacher or minister of the Scriptures. But the genre of biblical background anthologies raises philosophical issues.

Whenever I look through anthologies of materials designed for students of the Scriptures, I remember Jack Sasson’s important scathing criticism of an ancient-texts reader some years ago (“On Relating ‘Religious’ Texts to the Old Testament,” MAARAV 3 [1982]: 217–25). One of his criticisms is the tendency to “biblicize” ancient texts that did not function analogously to the emerging authority of the Hebrew Scriptures. Another problem is fragmenting ancient sources to isolate the passages supposedly relevant to biblical interpretation. It is hard to disagree with Sasson’s emphasis on considering ancient Near Eastern texts in their own rights and contexts. As a teacher, I worry about the mercenary spirit of taking historical artifacts and texts out of context to serve as ingredients in inadequate interpretation of the Scriptures. But the opposite problem of ignoring historical context is omnipresent among many parts of evangelical study and ministry. The choice does not need to be everything or nothing.

Mercenary agenda cannot replace serious study of ancient Near Eastern historical and religious texts in their own right as one part of the academic preparations to serve Christ and teach and preach the gospel. Students should study full texts in translation as part of academic training for exegesis. Yet, many of the textual witnesses to the ancient Near Eastern empires come in the form of monumental propaganda and text fragments of all sorts that are well suited to a collection of texts. The right kind of anthologies used well can help meet the need for sound biblical exegesis. Responsible Christian exegesis needs rich and yet brief collections of historical texts like those provided by Cogan.

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In many respects, the OT is a product of its ancient Near Eastern milieu. This is incontrovertible thanks to the copious ancient Near Eastern texts discovered and translated since the 1800s. There are significant implications of this reality, and Hayes is correct to point out the most important implication when he states early in this volume that any claim for interpretive authority requires a level of cultural literacy. In other words, interpreters who exhibit a familiarity and capacity with the texts of the ancient Near East enjoy a greater level of respect and influence. I am inclined to agree. Consequently, this volume is a compendium of primary sources deemed by Hayes to be foundational for the cultural literacy necessary for quality biblical interpretation.

The volume is the result of years of teaching, as well as Hayes’s dissatisfaction with available resources. Hayes notes that many resources offering primary texts from the ancient Near East do so in a minimalistic manner. There is often just the text with essentially no discussion of the background and/or relevant comparative data. Where such information does occur, it is often overly technical or too cumbersome for the typical undergraduate and/or seminary student (p. 5). Yet the goal of this monograph is more than just filling a personal conviction and perceived void. It seeks to be an influential voice in comparative studies. First, and fundamentally, it attempts “to make intelligent comparison between biblical and ancient Near Eastern texts” (p. 6). In addition, Hayes makes an exerted effort to offer a significant entry for each chosen text, which includes a discussion of the text’s literary features and comparative phenomena. Third, Hayes intends that his presentation will function as a catalyst for the passionate and motivated student (p. 6). Thus, his ideas make no claim of finality, but instead they aim to engender thought and development.

The introduction consists of two chapters. Chapter 1 offers personal reflections on comparative studies, which are intermingled with declarations about the organizational principles governing the book. Chapter 2 offers the briefest of surveys regarding the developments within comparative studies as a sub-discipline. This is a very nice touch as it offers a historical and intellectual context for the work. Most importantly, though, this survey ultimately advocates a need for methodological balance. Comparative analyses are not about merely emphasizing the similarities or the differences. Both matter and both must be intelligently considered in light of each other. Furthermore, Hayes suggests that comparative analyses must be able to accommodate
and foster contemporary theological discourse if the sub-discipline hopes to enjoy a vibrant future. In other words, comparative studies must be able to develop models that will allow their respective conclusions to transcend an ancient context (pp. 35–36). Admittedly, this is a fascinating concept, but it is unfortunately unclear. If there is one thing that deserves attention or warrants further discussion, it is this issue.

The organization of this monograph mirrors the canonical divisions of the Hebrew Bible. There are sections devoted to the Pentateuch, the Former and Latter Prophets, and the Writings. Within each section, there are well-known comparisons—such as the Taylor Prism vs. 2 Kgs 18–19; ancient Near Easter treaty texts vs. Deuteronomy; Enuma Elish vs. Gen 1–2; the biblical and Mesopotamian flood narratives—and there are lesser known comparisons—such as the Letter to Gadatas vs. Ezra 6; Hittite plagues and prayers vs. Pss 88–89; Udjahorresne vs. Nehemiah. Each chapter presents the chosen extrabiblical text with an introduction of basic historical data (date of composition, place of composition, original language, and translation notes) and a notification of the applicable biblical texts. After the text, Hayes presents a significant discussion, which offers an intelligent and responsible comparative analysis. After the discussion, there are reflection questions, which would serve nicely as a catalyst for debate in a classroom setting. A list of suggested readings closes out each chapter.

Hayes’s discussions are undoubtedly the payoff for this monograph. Indeed, Hayes draws some interesting comparisons (e.g. the Baal Myth, Karatepe Inscription, Hos 2, 1 Kgs 18 and 2 Kgs 23 under the rubric of “Praise of Polemics for Baal”; pp. 287–96). Yet more impressive are his analyses, particularly since they are both methodologically balanced and insightful. Moreover, his thoughts offer plenty of fuel for subsequent debate. For example, Hayes is hesitant to draw too many connections between the birth narratives of Sargon and Moses. In short, Hayes believes that the differences are too significant, even those between the general contours of each narrative. Yet his statements about the sociological critique of Egypt implicit to the biblical account of Moses’s birth encourage one to ponder the significance of socio-political criticism throughout the Exodus narrative (p. 118). Is this nuance of the Mosaic birth narrative symptomatic of a larger tendency driving the Exodus account?

Some of Hayes’s critical positions likely will not sit well with some evangelicals, and Hayes recognizes this. However, for the purposes of evaluating this particular work, evangelicals need not be overly concerned with such details. Instead, the assessment of Hayes’s work should stem from the quality of his analyses. Frankly, any concern over Hayes’s position on critical issues should not prevent the adoption of this
work as a text for any relevant course or seminar. In my opinion, this text represents one of the most useful works devoted to introducing the methodological issues and fruit of comparative studies.

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This commentary is part of a series which, according to the editor’s preface, “fully affirms the divine inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture” and which maintains that the key message of the Bible as a whole is the Good News of God’s work to reconcile the world to himself, through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. This review will explore to what extent Lessing’s commentary on Isa 56–66 accomplishes these goals.

In the introduction, Lessing outlines the message of the concluding 11 chapters of the book of Isaiah when read together (although not consecutively): God is returning soon (56:1) to punish idolaters among his own people (59:16–18) and to differentiate between faithful and non-faithful servants (65:13–15). Jerusalem will be exalted and the centre of the new creation (60:4–22; 61:4–9; 65:17–25; p. 3). Lessing further sets out his own aims. These include a desire to investigate the literary, theological, and canonical function of the text and to read it with Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection as its focal point (p. 25). In short, what is the Sitz in der Literatur of a given text within the book of Isaiah and within the Protestant canon?

In the rest of the introduction, Lessing discusses some general aspects of Isa 56–66. First, after a fairly cursory summery of historical-critical theories pertaining to the gradual growth of Isa 56–66, Lessing advocates Isaianic authorship of the entire book of Isaiah on the basis of the superscription in Isa 1:1 and the references to Isaiah in Rom 10:20. The problem here is a matter of methodology. If you choose to engage in historical questions, you need to interact with historical-critical theories, either accepting or refuting the various arguments. If, however, you choose to read the text in its current canonical form and to focus on its theological message, authorship (Isaianic or otherwise) does not matter. Given that Lessing declares his belief that the prophecies in Isa 56–66 stem from God (p. 10), it might have been preferable to leave aside the question of authorship.
Lessing then turns to the relationship between Isa 40–55 and Isa 56–66 and argues for the two parts to be “intricately connected by means of the overarching thematic development of Isaiah.” Following primarily Shalom Paul, Lessing highlights the shared thematic and lexical links. Again, I detect a certain methodological confusion. The distinction between Isa 40–55 and Isa 56–66 is largely a historical-critical construct with which readers of the canonical text do not need to concern themselves. As above, Lessing could thus have limited his discussion to the theological continuity in the extant form of Isaiah. As Lessing states, “the inspired book is divinely intended to be read as a whole” (p. 20).

The same critique is true also for the next section on the historical background of Isa 56–66. Why discuss this topic at all, if as Lessing maintains, “Isaiah 56–66 asks us to bracket out historical questions” (p. 23)? The type of Christ-centred, canonical approach that Lessing advocates does not need to locate the message of Isa 56–66 in history. Lessing is offering a theological reading of Isa 56–66 and that is good. Furthermore, the choice between historical-critical scholarship and theological scholarship is not a matter of either-or; they can coexist as they explore different questions.

Lessing then explores the conflict between the protagonists and the antagonists evident in Isa 56–66. Lessing interprets it “as a vision oriented towards the painful break between Judaism and Christianity that is narrated in the NT.” In this sense, the debate in Isa 56–66 foreshadows the discussion about who is part of the “new Israel” in Rom 9–11; Gal 3; and Phil 3. Likewise, the ingathering of the Gentiles in Isa 56:1–8 and 66:18–21 points forward to the message of the NT which seeks to incorporate both Jews and Gentiles in the new Christian community. The final section in the introduction is devoted to the structure of Isa 56–66 and the arrangement of the individual oracles into a chiastic design, centred around what Lessing calls “the fifth Servant Song” (Isa 61:1–3).


Each subsection opens with Lessing’s own translation, followed by extensive textual notes, which explain matters of grammar as well as key words and concepts. In these notes, Lessing interacts with the ancient versions and sometimes opts to deviate from the Masoretic Text.
in favour of another version. For instance, his translation of Isa 57:17 follows the temporal aspects of the Septuagint.

Lessing then offers a theologically focussed commentary where he discusses the structure of the pericope as well as its theological significance within Isa 56-66, the book of Isaiah, and the Protestant canon as a whole. For example, how is a theological theme employed in a given pericope, and how does it relate to the other occurrences of the same theme elsewhere in the Bible? Lessing devotes much thought to each individual verse and in most instances connects its message to the preaching in the New Testament. The commentary concludes with a summary of the canonical message of the pericope and reflections. The latter section functions almost as an excursus as it singles out one aspect of the pericope’s message and expands on it. For example, the reflections on Isa 56:1–8 and Isa 58:1–14 focus, as one might expect, on the Sabbath, while Isa 56:9–57:21 looks at pride and humility. Other topics are more unexpected. For example, rather than looking at the role of lament in Christian worship, the reflections following Isa 63:7–64:11 explore the notion of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

The commentary uses a set of 15 icons which are placed in the margins throughout the commentary. They are used to highlight themes such as the Trinity, the Passion, Christology, and the Eucharist. They may be useful to some readers, but I found myself flipping the pages back to the key (pp. xix–xx) to verify their meaning.

On the whole, this is a useful commentary to pastors and other people involved in preaching and teaching the Bible in a Christian context. At the same time, the reader needs to be aware of the inherent danger of this type of commentary where the message of the original text to the people of Israel is overshadowed and in some cases also replaced by its canonical meaning. In my view, a historical reading and a Christian reading of a text in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament are complementary rather than at odds with one another. The canonical meaning of the Old Testament as directed to the church does not replace the meaning of the Hebrew Bible to the Jews.

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The core of this volume consists of papers originally delivered at the Evangelical Theological Society’s Psalms and Hebrew Poetry Consultation (2009–2011). Several additional essays were added, bringing the total number of chapters to nineteen. The authors form a veritable who’s who of evangelical scholarship, many of whom have made significant contributions to Psalter studies. The book, then, promises much. Its stated purpose is fourfold: (1) to “celebrate” the impact of the psalms on Christian faith, (2) to highlight current trends in scholarship, (3) to explore key theological, literary and canonical themes, and (4) to provide a tool for pastors and professors (pp. 15–16).


Part 2 focuses on psalms of praise; the essays are primarily exegetical in nature. Francis X. Kimmitt exegetes Ps 46 before making extended comments regarding praise in contemporary Christian worship. This is followed by an exploration of mythopoeic imagery in Robert B. Chisholm’s “ Suppressing Myth: Yahweh and the Sea in the Praise Psalms.” A third essay by Andrew J. Schmutzer, “Psalm 91: Refuge, Protection, and Their Use in the New Testament,” attempts what he terms “multiplex” interpretation (p. 85). In doing so, he helpfully provides a worked example of how to blend multiple considerations (literary context, canonical placement, structural analysis, etc.) in order to arrive at a “thick” description of Ps 91. Schmutzer follows his exegesis with an intriguing exploration of the psalm’s Jewish and Christian reception history.

Part 3 is the longest section. Its five essays explore another central, yet often neglected, genre: the lament. Michael E. Travers’s essay, “‘Severe Delight’: The Paradox of Praise in Confession of Sin,” looks at Pss 32 and 51 and questions notes of praise in these psalms of confession. In a similar vein, Daniel J. Estes looks more broadly at the movement from lament to praise evident in many individual laments, concluding that meditation upon God—on his character, past deeds, word, etc.—is the critical catalyst for the transformation of mood from
pain to praise (p. 162). Allen P. Ross takes a closer look at the language used in lament psalms. In particular, he mines the “Thou” sections to tease out factors that instigate appeal to God in situations of strife. The result is a helpful compendium of the various stances taken by the psalmists. Two further chapters round out this section. Walter C. Kaiser’s “The Laments of Lamentations Compared to the Psalter” engages another canonical perspective on lament. The final chapter by Randall X. Gauthier presents a detailed text-critical investigation of LXX Ps 54 in which he gives fascinating insight into the range of possible translation motives displayed by those responsible for the Old Greek Psalter.

The book’s fourth section takes a step back to consider a major development in psalms studies in the last 30 years, namely, the canonical shaping of the Psalter. The opening essay by Robert L. Cole focuses attention on the introductory function of Pss 1 and 2. His essay contains a helpful elucidation of some of the lacunae bequeathed to scholarship by form-criticism (pp. 184–85, 193–95), as well as mapping a better way forward. David M. Howard Jr. then examines the interplay between human and divine kingship as a possible organisational motif for the Psalter. The remaining two chapters focus on Book V. Michael K. Snearley examines the role of the king in Pss 107–150 and attempts to throw light on the editorial purposes behind the collection. The chapter by Tremper Longman III, “From Weeping to Rejoicing: Psalm 150 as the Conclusion to the Psalter,” forms a nice inclusio with Cole’s essay and is suggestive regarding the role played by the Psalter’s final psalm.

Finally, part 5 tackles the communication of the psalms in contemporary preaching. Rather than doing this via abstracted principles, four example sermons are presented: Mark D. Futato on Pss 16 and 23, David A. Ridder on Ps 84, David M. Howard Jr. on Ps 88, and John Piper on Ps 117.

*The Psalms*, as might be expected, is full of exegetical gold. Its authors utilise their interpretative experience to draw out many fascinating aspects of the psalms under discussion. Readers will benefit from sitting at the feet of learned expositors. Moreover, several chapters provide a model of exegetical praxis that students of the psalms would do well to emulate. Furthermore, key insights derived from the last century of psalms studies are presented in an accessible form that will aid greatly those seeking either an introduction to the field or a survey of recent developments, and, more importantly, *why* and *how* these developments are significant.

At the same time, however, there is a notable lack of consistency across the volume as a whole. Some of this, no doubt, is to be expected in a collection of individual essays which had their genesis as conference
papers. Yet while one can cope with, for instance, consecutive chapters differing in the identification of the figures of Ps 2 (chs. 12, 13), other variance reflects editorial inconsistency. Original languages are sometimes transliterated—in both general purpose (e.g., p. 222) and academic (e.g., p. 139) styles—and sometimes not (e.g., p. 84). While translation is often provided, this is not always the case (e.g., p. 78). Moreover, in addition to Hebrew, Greek and Latin script, ch. 11 also contains untransliterated Syriac and Coptic. It is thus unclear as to what level of proficiency is being assumed for readers, as well as corresponding implications regarding their ability to grasp and follow the contours of the arguments presented. Potential difficulty is not helped by the reversal of Hebrew script on some pages (e.g., pp. 154–55).

Related to this editorial inconsistency is a wide variance in pitch. Walter Kaiser’s essay on Lamentations (by its topic already somewhat odd in a volume dedicated to the psalms) represents one end of the spectrum. His chapter is short (only seven pages) and is written at an introductory level. Randall Gauthier’s essay, on the other hand, while not the longest in the book, is highly technical and full of specialised terminology. Again, it is difficult to discern who the intended audience is. In relation to Gauthier’s chapter, one can easily imagine appreciative nods from specialists but furrowed brows from non-specialists.

In sum, The Psalms is a somewhat uneven, yet nevertheless commendable, collection of individual essays. That said, it is also a showcase of erudite evangelical scholarship and is full of valuable insights for those who can access them. While my students will find some of the material hard going, this title will definitely be on their reading list next semester.

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Jeffrey Stackert, Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible at the University of Chicago Divinity School (Ph.D., Brandeis University), developed the foundation for this book in his essay “Mosaic Prophecy and the Deuteronomic Source of the Torah” (Deuteronomy in the Pentateuch, Hexateuch, and the Deuteronomistic History [ed. Konrad Schmid and Raymond F. Person Jr.; FAT 56; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012]). In the
present work, Stackert begins by clearly outlining his line of inquiry. First, what are we to make of the Torah’s various portrayals of Mosaic prophecy? Second, what are the implications that they carry for the reconstruction of the relationship between law and prophecy in Israelite religion? Thankfully, he spends a brief, but adequate, amount of time covering the influence that nineteenth-century Pentateuchal scholarship has had on reconstructions of Israelite religion during the last two centuries. Stackert agrees with much recent scholarship that the “evolutionary” model of Israelite religion (from Former Prophets to Torah, or prophetic spontaneity to legal rigidity) is inadequate and must be set aside (pp. 2–19). In this same vein, he chides the separation of the Torah and the Former Prophets in scholarly treatments of the development of Israelite religion—a separation encouraged by canonical categories rather than historical inquiry.

Stackert goes on to define and defend his method of reading the literary portrayals of Mosaic prophecy in the Torah—the Neo-Documentary Hypothesis. Though many current Pentateuchal scholars may disagree with the claims of this method, Stackert spends an ample amount of space explaining and defending the approach so that the rest of his study may be understood clearly (pp. 19–26). He makes no effort to conceal his approach to the text. Finally, Stackert explains that his study is primarily concerned with the literary portrayal of prophecy and law within the Pentateuchal sources and the implications of these portrayals for the reconstruction of Israelite religion. He undertakes this literary study with the tools of recent archaeological evidence as well as an adept understanding of ANE literature and culture. Stackert contends that the ideological views of the authors of the sources concerning prophecy and law are relayed within their portrayal of Moses as prophet and lawgiver. Furthermore, it is these politically driven viewpoints that Stackert intends to reconstruct from a careful reading of the texts for the purpose of reconstructing the sources’ perspectives on prophecy, law, and the proper relationship between the two. (pp. 27–31)

In chapter 2, and against recent arguments to the contrary, Stackert argues that each of the Torah sources depicts Moses as a prophet and describes prophetic aspects of his vocation. He spends the chapter exploring and demonstrating the call, mode of operation, and legitimazation of Moses’s prophetic vocation in J, E, and P (pp. 36–69). He demonstrates their similarities to ANE depictions of prophetic practice as well as their similarities to other depictions of prophecy in the Hebrew Bible. Yet he is careful to nuance the differences in the portrayals, whether differences from ANE sources or differences among the Torah sources themselves, both in mode of operation and legitimation. Such attention is paid to nuancing because, according to
Stackert, it is in these differences that the political and religious ideologies of the authors’ shine through (p. 39).

In the following three chapters, Stackert utilizes the Neo-Documentary method to reconstruct the J, E, D, and P sources. He then carefully investigates the ideological views of these sources with respect to prophecy and law. His chapter on E is particularly interesting, as he not only reconstructs an independent E source but also claims that the E source is the most stringent in its anti-prophetic ideology (pp. 70–73, 123–25). This assertion goes against the grain of the consensus, which often views E as a source congenial to prophetic practices. If Stackert’s reconstruction of the E source and its narrative order are accepted, then it is hard to ignore his argument that E’s political agenda in history writing is the nullification and replacement of prophecy by Mosaic law. (Although his arguments may at times seem radical, it must be noted that he stays true to the method that he espouses.) Furthermore, if this claim and his dating of the E source (the classical dating) is accepted, then Stackert makes a strong case against developmental views of Israelite religion. Even as he concedes that there were social segments that preferred law to prophecy, he demonstrates that these dissenting ideological agendas (prophecy vs. law and those in between) existed together rather than in some developmental continuum, hence the reason why polemical historiography, such as the E source, was necessary.

After reconstructing the E source and its political/religious ideology, Stackert examines D to determine its stance on law and prophecy. He investigates D texts that reuse and reinterpret E (e.g., Deut 1:9–18; 5; 13:2–6; and 18:15–22). With an examination of narrative context in D and comparison to E, Stackert contends that D attempts to reverse E’s complete elimination of prophecy after Moses. However, he argues that D attempts to retain E’s emphasis on law and E’s suspicion of prophetic innovation (pp. 126–28, 165–67). D pays respect to and is influenced by E’s arguments even as it realizes the impracticality of its stance toward prophecy (and so sets about to revise it in the spirit of E). Each of the scenes in D that Stackert examines portrays this interpretive movement.

As for P and J, Stackert argues that these sources differ from E and D in their silence concerning the relationship between prophecy and law (pp. 168–69). P, in this silence, condemns prophecy. No possible future for prophetic activity is allowed. For one, P fails to legislate any material concerning prophecy and its correct practice, while at the same time condemning any action taken contrary to or not provided for in the legal material (e.g., the unlicensed actions of Nadab and Abihu in Lev 10:1–2). Second, P does not follow E and D in making Moses the prophetic archetype. Rather, P depicts Moses’s prophetic inspiration as
necessary only for the founding of the cult. The cult and the priesthood then stands in the place of Moses and prophetic communication as the only legitimate form of communication and interaction with the deity. For these reasons, Stackert argues that P denies prophecy any place in Israelite religion with both historical and legal claims (pp. 170–90). On the other hand, J provides a helpful contrasting voice to the other sources. J’s narrative portrays Moses as a prophetic leader just as the other sources do, but it does not make any argument concerning the correct relationship of prophecy and law. Rather, according to Stackert, J does not consider a legislated relationship at all. In Stackert’s view, this source’s lack of discourse against either prophecy or law assists the critic in highlighting these themes of contention in the other sources (p. 191).

With this monograph, Stackert provides both a reaffirmation and a critique of earlier scholarship on the Pentateuch and the history of Israelite religion. With a critical literary evaluation of the sources of the Pentateuch, Stackert claims that the developmental argument (prophecy succeeded by legislation) holds true for some sources. However, he contends that the ideological narratives of E, D, and P are expressions of religious imagination or ideal contending against other forms of Israelite religion. This is contrasted with J’s lack of engagement or acknowledgement of their arguments. Stackert calls for a recognition that Israelite religious history consisted of “a complex, religiously heterogeneous social matrix” (p. 199). Although many Pentateuchal scholars may disagree with Stackert’s choice to employ a source-critical approach, it is necessary to note (despite general arguments over the method) that Stackert remains true to the method. If any criticism is to be directed to Stackert, it must engage with the “Neo-Documentary” approach itself, not with his utilization of the method. The only place where the reader may be left desiring more is in Stackert’s engagement with the text as “political allegory” (pp. 28–31). Perhaps due to issues of space and economizing, Stackert only directly addresses this facet of his approach in less than four pages of his introduction. Throughout the monograph, his understanding of the source texts as political and/or religious ideology and allegory resurfaces, but it is usually only in his concluding remarks about the source narratives and their viewpoints. Unfortunately, his assessments about each source’s political and/or religious ideology and employment of narrative as allegory are not brought together in his conclusion in the same comprehensive way as his other arguments. This is a disappointment primarily because this facet is one of the most tantalizing aspects of the monograph. However, his overall approach and methodology is clearly laid out from the beginning. The lack of further exploration concerning narrative as political and/or religious allegory may be contributed to a desire to front his primary arguments concerning
past scholarship’s shortcomings in its understanding of the development of prophecy and law within ancient Israelite religion. Thus, Stackert has provided yet another voice to the ever-evolving field known as Pentateuchal studies.

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W. Dennis Tucker Jr. is currently an Associate Professor of Christian Scripture at the Truett Seminary at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. Prior to that, he taught at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. Tucker’s works on the Psalms include *Diachronic and Synchronic: Reading the Psalms in Real Time* (London: T & T Clark, 2007), co-edited with Joel Burnett and William Bellinger and *The Psalter as Witness: The Theology of the Psalter* (Baylor University Press, 2015). *Constructing and Deconstructing Power in Psalms 107–150* is one of the most recent monographs on Book V of the Psalter. Here, Tucker discusses how the texts of the Psalter deconstruct the power ideologies promulgated by the Achaemenid Empire on one hand, and construct a counter ideology of YHWH’s kingship on the other.

Tucker contextualizes his work by bringing together two recent conversations in Psalms research. First, he draws on anti-imperial concepts in Book V raised by E. Ballhorn and E. Zenger (pp. 9–10) and then feeds them into the second conversation, which is a socio-ideological one. It is within this framework that he reads the Psalter.

Tucker defines a Persian “imperial ideology” in three ways. First, the Persian king is to rule with universal dominance, rule, and reach (pp. 28–29). Second, this rule is one that embraces a joyous participation of its vassals instead of harsh subjugation (p. 34). Third, the Achaemenid Empire is to be defined by cosmic order and harmony (p. 41). With supporting evidences, Tucker claims that these Achaemenid ideologies were indeed propagated, known, and understood throughout the Empire (pp. 41; 47).

Tucker spends the next few chapters analyzing the various collections in Book V of the Psalter, showing how the texts subvert these imperial ideologies. For example, Tucker argues that the term, “distress” (צר, Ps 107:2; 6; 13; 19; 28), is likely to be read as hostile “oppressors”
The term, “nations” (גוים), is also important in Tucker’s analysis. Its use in the Davidic collection (Pss 108–10) speaks of “Israel’s struggle against hostile nations” (p. 68). Tucker surmises that the opening Davidic collection and the Hallel Psalms (Pss 108–110; 113–18), in general, maintain a negative assessment of the empires and nations.

The Psalms of Ascents “may have been nationalized in an effort to address political threats faced by those who prayed the psalms” (p. 96). Psalms 135 and 136 are also critiques of foreign powers that had induced chaos and instability, and functioned as “obstacles” for Israel to enjoy her inheritance (p. 119). Psalm 137 is yet another reminder of the current threats that Israel was experiencing in view of the past (pp. 122–23).

The above deconstruction of imperial ideologies is made vis-à-vis a construction of YHWH’s power and his rule over Israel. Tucker highlights how this is done through the Zion tradition. When the Temple and Jerusalem fell, the theological claims of Zion’s “inviolability” (Pss 46:5; 48:1–3) were reinterpreted by Israel. YHWH now rules as “God of the heavens”, and dispenses his blessings from Mount Zion (p. 142). This is manifested in texts such as Pss 113:5–6; 123:1; 115:3; 128:4, 5; 129:8; 132:15; 133:3; 136:26; 144:5–7. Another view of “constructing power” in Book V is by reclaiming the notion of YHWH’s power in creation. However, the clearest challenge to the Persian ideologies in Book V is the claims of YHWH’s kingship (p. 158). Tucker points out that Psalm 145 and the final Hallel (Pss 146–150) present a kingdom of YHWH that seeks to overturn all earthly kingdoms.

Tucker’s thesis, as a whole, can be viewed in two main sections. The first argues that Book V of the Psalter deconstructs the ideologies of the Persian Empire. The second argues how Book V constructs YHWH’s sovereign rule over his people Israel. It is YHWH, not Ahuramazda the Persian deity, who creates the world and rules with order. It is YHWH, whose compassion and justice bring about an orderly and joyful life.

Tucker’s work is a mixture of diachronic and synchronic analyses. Methodologically, he first postulates a socio-historical backdrop by means of a diachronic analysis and complements it with a synchronic reading. In approaching Tucker’s work, one must first consider two levels of assumption. On one level, one has to deal with Tucker’s understanding and reconstruction of the historiography in Book V. On another, one must also wrestle with the reconstructed ideologies based on the evidence presented.

While Tucker claims that Book V addresses primarily a Persian ideology (p. 16), many of his arguments are read through the general term, “foreign nations.” By the evidence he presents, it is clear that Egyptian ideologies are also in view in Book V (p. 108). I am not sure if
Tucker can sustain a distinct Persian ideology in Book V, or needs to. Notably, Tucker has also skipped about half of the total number of psalms in Book V in his discussions.

I believe that one has to sustain an argument of how Book V relates to Books I–IV in the Psalter in some way. This is crucial because many of the themes in Book V that Tucker has raised (e.g., YHWH’s kingship and foreign enemies) are also found in the earlier books of the Psalter which may not have been written under foreign imperialistic regime. The question is why are these themes in Book V alone singled out for deconstructing the Achaemenid ideologies? Despite these limitations, Tucker’s work is a helpful contribution to the research on the shape of the Psalter. His work will be well received by those interested in studying the Psalter under the Persian period. Tucker has identified a plausible socio-ideological setting through which Book V can be read and provided new and helpful puzzle pieces in search of the elusive setting of the Psalter.

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This is a welcome addition to the growing literature on the book of Psalms, particularly those focused on lament. Bruce Waltke’s reputation precedes him. He is Professor Emeritus at Regent College, and his contributions to the volume principally appear in the exegetical sections. James Houston is also Professor Emeritus at Regent. He provides the historical commentary and profiles of each interpreter throughout the volume. Erika Moore is Professor of Old Testament at Trinity School for Ministry. Her contributions include the exegetical portion of Ps 39 as well as the editorial glue for the whole volume.

Their work amounts to a second book in a series of “historical commentary” on the Psalms, but one which is able to stand on its own. The first volume, *The Psalms as Christian Worship* (Eerdmans, 2010) included a thorough introduction to the history of Psalm interpretation (some 112 pp.), as well as commentary on Pss 1–4, 8, 15, 16, 19, 22, 23, 51, 110, and 139. Pulling from different genres, it provided a well-rounded view of how the Psalms were both understood and incorporated into Christian life and practice throughout the ages. Much like that first
volume, in this volume the authors offer commentary on individual psalms while drawing on various pastoral voices of lament throughout Christian history. Their stated reason for doing so is to “recover the spiritual ends of the patristic commentators” (p. 46), but through the plain sense of Scripture rather than allegorical language.

Instead of choosing psalms formally defined as laments in the modern context, they selected the penitential psalms (Pss 6; 32; 38; 102; 130; 143). In addition, Pss 5, 7, 39, and 44 were chosen. For the contributors, a Christian theology of lament does not begin by distinguishing praise psalms from lament psalms, but is built from “a basic human posture of our finitude, of our sinful nature, of our need of redemption, of our trust and communion with God, all in the light of God's purpose for humanity to be created and destined in the *imago dei*” (p. xi). Thus, while they admit that their choice of psalms might appear counter-intuitive, part of their goal is to highlight how differently our understanding of lament may be from earlier interpreters. In doing so, their approach is theological rather critical.

Following a brief prologue and introductory chapter on Christian lament, the volume devotes each remaining chapter to the selected psalms. Each chapter takes the same four-part shape: (1) the voice of church, in which one primary voice from the church is summarized, (2) the voice of the psalmist, where a translation and text-critical notes are offered for the psalm, (3) commentary, including both introduction and exegesis, and (4) a conclusion, drawing together these strands. Closing the book is a helpful glossary of key terms, as well as indices of authors, subjects, and references. Surprisingly, there is no bibliography. One might have expected at least a listing of primary sources or recommended secondary readings (this was also sadly missing from their first volume).

Reading through the prologue and introduction, one gets a sense that they are frustrated by elements of the contemporary discussion. In agreement with many, they note that the church has lost its ability to lament both corporately and individually, and how this affects the pastoral ministry. “[W]e cannot express our solidarity with . . . those in the depths of despair and darkest desolation” (p. 2). At the same time, they equally bemoan aspects of the contemporary attempt to revive lament in the church. Much of their ammunition is aimed at Brueggemann and his students, whose basic approach is “a revolt against biblical orthodoxy in that it provides a psychological alternative” (p. 4). For the authors, lament in the Psalms is not protest; the “I AM” cannot and should not be reduced “to a god whose sense of social justice is being questioned like an accused criminal in the dock” (p. 3). Rather, lament is prayer to God, a confession in which “the sufferer seeks to
share his suffering with God and with hope of deliverance” (p. 7). The result of lament is not a listing of accusations against God, but “a deeper trust and more perceptive knowledge gained” (p. 10). Their aim, then, is to provide an alternative contemporary model of lament built up from biblical expressions and a theological anthropology, achieved in concert with the pastoral voices of yesteryear (the “historical” part of the commentary).

Are they successful? In the prologue, they note that the selection of earlier interpreters was not aimed at comprehensiveness, but at providing vignettes illustrating pastoral theology at different points in church history (p. xiv). Sometimes this is done very well. For example, the summary of Gregory of Nyssa with Ps 6 stands out. However, at other points this is left undeveloped. For example, the discussion of Jerome with Ps 5 is rather lackluster. All in all, however, they allow the various voices (Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, Erasmus, Calvin, Luther, etc.) to help inform their own exegesis of the selected psalms. Beyond the missing bibliography, there is also a lack of a concluding chapter to tie the book together. The introduction prepares the reader well for the chapters ahead, but a conclusion looking back and finishing that introduction would be a fitting addition. They leave that work to the reader. There are some other legitimate concerns, such as the employment of Waltke's alternative view of the superscriptions, or their all-too-simple distinction between the old and new dispensations. Yet these should not take away from the volume’s great contribution. At the very least, it is another reminder of how valuable the history of interpretation can be for contemporary scholarship.

I would recommend the volume to scholars, students, and church leaders alike, but it may be a bit too much for the average layperson. I am unsure if more volumes in this series are forthcoming, but if so, I look forward to them.

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The divine council has received considerable academic attention in recent years. This study is an expansion of her 2012 doctoral dissertation at St. Michael’s College of the University of Toronto. While points of the
review that follows are negative, readers should know that this reviewer considers the book a worthwhile contribution.

The author provides a readable overview of the phenomenon of an assembly of divine beings (gods and otherwise in the author’s parlance) in the Hebrew Bible. Chapter 1 provides a summary of previous scholarship and the author’s methodology. With respect to the latter, the author outlines her criteria for what qualifies as a divine council scene: terminology (e.g., סוד, קהל, בני האלהים, צבא השמים) and council motifs (e.g., the divine courtroom). White also imposes a limiting criterion on her study: only passages that shed light on council membership receive focused attention. The result is that Yahweh’s Council considers only the following passages in significant detail: 1 Kgs 22, Isa 6, Job 1–2, Zech 3, and Dan 7.

The author’s second chapter examines the above criteria and therefore serves as a justification for excluding Ps 82 and Deut 32 from her membership-structural analysis and conclusions. While the exclusion of these two passages might create the impression that White seeks to avoid taking a position on the debate over whether YHWH or some other deity was head of Israel’s heavenly council in these two passages, this is not the case. White clearly aligns herself with the preponderant view, asserting that Ps 82 and Deut 32 “represent a council under the authority of a God other than Yahweh” (p. 20). As a scholar who has published a contrarian understanding of this majority perspective, this reviewer will return to this issue below.

Chapters 3–7 concern themselves with the list of passages produced via the author’s criteria. White offers her own translations and relevant points of exegesis in chapter 3 (“Exegetical Issues in Council of Yahweh Texts”). She then moves on to “Council Members and Their Functions” in chapter 4. It is noteworthy that she includes divine actors that are often neglected in council discussions (e.g., “Those Standing Here” and “Interpreting Persona”) as well as human beings who see or interact with the council. The data of chapter 4 are fodder for chapter 5 (“Synchronic Analysis”), and it is this chapter that puts forth White’s real contribution to divine council research. Chapter 6 (“Diachronic Analysis”) attempts to date the texts yielded by the author’s methodological approach. Chapter 7 consists of a concluding summary.

The value of White’s volume is twofold. First, Yahweh’s Council introduces readers who are new to the study of the divine council to the major passages and interpretive issues. While there are fine dictionary-length summaries of the divine council, White’s overview offers more detail in a number of respects, especially council participants. For example, she devotes considerable attention to השן, thereby introducing readers to a range of interpretive quandaries usually explored elsewhere.
Yet breadth is also the enemy of depth. While White capably gives readers the lay of the land when encountering the divine council, other published treatments (e.g., Mark S. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2001], 41–66) are still required reading to fill gaps in White’s portrayal.

White moves beyond survey in chapter 5, where she offers a new perspective on the structure of, and hierarchical relationships within, the divine council. She writes (p. 138):

I propose a new understanding of the council structure that will be based completely on the function of characters themselves because of the difficulty regarding identity. This is also a reflection of the royal court of ancient Israel where members would engage in various roles, both administrative and judicial. Thus some characters may fit into more than one category of membership. The structure also determines degrees of membership or agency within the Council of Yahweh.

The wording obscures clarity, but the thought is nevertheless significant. One is either an insider or outsider to an institution, hence the idea “degrees of membership” is awkward. Rather, White is referring to status within the group of which one is a member. Her observation that status may be fluid depending on agency makes good sense in this reviewer’s judgment. Other scholars have noted how divine council language includes the vocabulary of administrative tasks (e.g., מלאך) and the royal court (דין). However, usefulness (and thus importance) of an administrative agent can fluctuate with circumstance and skill set. There is no coherent reason to assume that writers familiar with such transparent earthly bureaucratic realities would be resistant or incapable of employing them in expressing YHWH’s rule in the spiritual world. However, White mistakenly relegated the מלאך יהוה to a low-tier status purely on the basis of the term (p. 141), apparently forgetting both her own admission on page 125 that the מלאך יהוה and יהוה may be interchangeable and recent scholarship that contributes to such an approach (e.g., Esther J. Hamori, *When Gods Were Men*: *The Embodied God in Biblical and Near Eastern Literature* [BZAW; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008]). Her labeling of השטן as an “advisor” is odd (p. 141) as nowhere advises YHWH. Rather, he reports and challenges YHWH’s assessment of Job. Despite these idiosyncrasies, White’s thinking in chapter 5 is fresh and therefore welcome, whether one would embrace the author’s conceptions of council structuring or not.
The innovative insight of ch. 5 is unfortunately offset by the propensity of the author to uncritically embrace consensus thinking elsewhere. Accepting that Ps 82 and Deut 32:8–9 should be read as indicating YHWH’s subordination to another deity is one case in point. In her discussion of these two passages, White notes a handful of exegetical counter-arguments to this perspective (pp. 26–41) and correctly references the reviewer’s dissertation and one journal article (“Monotheism, Polytheism, Monolatry, or Henotheism? Toward an Assessment of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible,” *BBR* 18.1 [2008]: 1–30.) as disputing such a conclusion. Nevertheless, her treatment is inadequate.

In addition, the writer's conclusion that the divine council alludes to a polytheistic background, which is created through a consideration of plural אֱלֹהִים, the council itself, and the belief that stripping the gods of immortality in Ps 82:7 was prompted by a monotheistic breakthrough, is not new. Nowhere does White deal with evidence to the contrary of this evolution, such as the nearly 180 occurrences of divine plurality language in the much later Qumran material, many of which are in explicit divine council contexts (see Michael S. Heiser, “Monotheism and the Language of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *TynB* 65.1 [2014]: 85–100, which is missing from White’s bibliography). White overlooked other important sources with regard to her treatment of YHWH’s subordination in Ps 82. For example, David Frankel’s *JHS* article on Ps 82 articulates the consensus view of YHWH’s subordination with clarity (see David Frankel, “El as the Speaking Voice in Psalm 82:6–8,” *JHS* 10 art. 16 (2010): 2–24). This reviewer offered a detailed rebuttal to Frankel’s points and the broader argumentation for seeing YHWH and El as distinct deities in this journal (“Does Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible Demonstrate an Evolution from Polytheism to Monotheism in Israelite Religion?” *JESOT* 1.1 [2012]: 1–24). Both are also missing from White’s bibliography.

Despite these shortcomings, YHWH’s Council deserves attention on the part of all those interested in the divine council and, more broadly, the discussion of Yahwism in Israelite religion.  

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BOOK REVIEW INDEX

The Divine Father: Religious and Philosophical Concepts of Divine Parenthood in Antiquity edited by Felix Albrecht and Reinhard Feldmeier (Reviewed by L.-S. Tiemeyer) 87

Text, Time, and Temple: Literary, Historical and Ritual Studies in Leviticus edited by Francis Landy, Leigh M. Trevaskis, and Bryan D. Bibb (Reviewed by L. M. Morales) 89

From the Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence: A Rhetorical Reading of the Book of Joel by Joel Barker (Reviewed by B. A. Jones) 92


Exploring the Religion of Ancient Israel: Prophet, Priest, Sage and People by Aaron Chalmers (Reviewed by B. S. Davis) 101

The Raging Torrent: Historical Inscriptions from Assyria and Babylonia Relating to Ancient Israel translated and annotated by Mordechai Cogan (Reviewed by G. E. Schnittjer) 104

Bound for Exile: Israelites and Judeans Under Imperial Yoke, Documents from Assyria and Babylonia translated and annotated by Mordechai Cogan (Reviewed by G. E. Schnittjer) 104

Hidden Riches: A Source Book for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East by Christopher B. Hayes (Reviewed by D. B. Schreiner) 110

Isaiah 55–66 by R. Reed Lessing (Reviewed by L.-S. Tiemeyer) 112
The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul edited by Andrew J. Schmutzer and David M. Howard Jr. (Reviewed by G. G. Harper) 115

A Prophet Like Moses: Prophecy, Law, and Israelite Religion by Jeffrey Stackert (Reviewed by R. Purcell) 117

Constructing and Deconstructing Power in Psalms 107–150 by W. Dennis Tucker (Reviewed by P. C. W. Ho) 121

The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary by Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore (Reviewed by A. C. Witt) 123

Yahweh’s Council: Its Structure and Membership by EllenWhite (Reviewed by M. S. Heiser) 125