

THE IDENTITY OF ISRAEL'S GOD
IN CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE

RESOURCES FOR BIBLICAL STUDY

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THE IDENTITY OF ISRAEL'S GOD IN CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE

Edited by

Don Collett, Mark Elliott, Mark Gignilliat, and Ephraim Radner





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Essays in Honor of Christopher R. Seitz

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Preface

The essays in this volume are offered in celebration of Christopher R. Seitz and his wide-ranging contributions to the theological disciplines. As observed in the title of the *Festschrift*, Professor Seitz's scholarly interests and probing reflect the fertility of his own mind and his desire to breach the walls separating the various theological disciplines. Those who have studied under Professor Seitz will not struggle to recall his ability to move seamlessly from a discussion of von Rad to Diodore or Beuken to the English Prayer Book tradition. Classically trained in the critical tradition of Old Testament studies, Professor Seitz eventually understood the quest for catholic objectivity assured by critical approaches as having run its course. His interests turned to include the Christian interpretive tradition, finding within this broad river a set of reading instincts properly deemed Christian. Yet, for Professor Seitz, the turn to the tradition has been no mere atavistic retrieval but demanded some accounting of our current providential moment on the far side of modern critical inquiry. Moreover, his identity as a churchman has remained central to his critical and constructive work, as the contents of his many books attest. We believe that coming generations will recognize with gratitude Seitz's crucial role in opening up again the study of the Old Testament and wider canon to the creative tools of theological and ecclesial reflection.

The essays in this book reflect the scope of Professor Seitz's own interests and work, as well as his deep and constructive influence on many of the individual contributors and their own scholarly work. The chapters are too many to offer a *précis* of each one of them, but the larger themes contained in the book's title present themselves throughout the volume. Stephen B. Chapman's chapter, for example, demonstrates the value of diachronic understandings of the Old Testament's compositional history for the sake of a richer synchronic reading. Figural exegesis as a faithful reading practice commensurate with Scripture's ontology appears in several chapters, for example, Gary A. Anderson, Joseph L. Mangina,

and Donald Collett, to name a few. Nathan MacDonald and Robert C. Kashow offer trenchant examples of critical exegesis. Daniel R. Driver and Jamie A. Grant engage the Psalter's history of reception and pastoral implications. Neil B. MacDonald's essay on the risen Jesus's sovereignty over time reflects Seitz's long-term concern to think of the identity of Israel's God as a constraint on our understanding of Jesus's identity, an interest whose roots are traced to Seitz's earlier days at Yale during the tenure of Hans Frei. Mark W. Elliott's essay leans into Seitz's larger biblical theological interests, particularly the ways in which a two-testament canon characterizes God's identity. Likewise, Ephraim Radner's essay provides a thought-provoking experiment on Christian and Jewish relations to a shared scriptural inheritance. Both communities of reading must come to theodical terms with a missing body: Jews and their temple, Christians and their Christ. Raymond C. van Leeuwen offers a fine essay on Ecclesiastes and its affirmation of the goodness of creation and the inescapability of *hebel's* claim on it. Several essays on John's Gospel appear, notably, David Trobisch's. Grant Mackaskill provides a compelling case for Paul's positive reception of Israel's torah in critical conversation with N. T. Wright and Douglas Campbell. The chapters listed here are illustrative of the volume's broad sweep. What might appear *prima facie* as an inchoate collection will prove on second glance to hold together. For this volume reflects the tireless energy and enthusiasm our honoree has for the Christian canon, its verbal character, principle subject matter, and continued life-giving presence in Christ's church.

A few words should be said about this book's honoree. Years ago, James Crenshaw wrote a helpful biography of Gerhard von Rad. Crenshaw situated von Rad within his academic context and training. We follow von Rad from his student days to his professorship at Heidelberg. Along the way, Crenshaw offered readers a capable outline of von Rad's life, with a useful entry to the broad contours of his work. Brevard Childs thought the same of Crenshaw's biography and said as much in a review of it. But something was missing from Crenshaw's biography in Childs's estimation. "Probably those scholars who were privileged to know von Rad personally will come away with some feelings of incompleteness. The full dimension of his unusual personality tends to get lost in the description of his work."¹ Crenshaw's presentation of von Rad the man struck Childs as colorless,

1. Brevard S. Childs, review of Gerhard von Rad, by James L. Crenshaw, *JBL* 100 (1981): 460.

when apparently for those who knew him, his person was round and robust, his sermons the stuff of homiletical legend. The magnetism of the man seemed lost in Crenshaw's presentation.

What Childs felt was missing from the biography is, in fact, a difficult feature to deliver. One had to experience von Rad in the flesh, and, unfortunately, von Rad no longer roamed the earth. Many of the contributors to this volume, however, have experienced Seitz in person. If there are stuffy academics out there, Christopher Seitz is their antipode. His presence fills a seminar room. So many of us crammed into these settings to watch him in action: quick, capacious, energetic, inquisitive, bulldogged, and all of this intermingled with uproarious laughter. One of the contributors to this volume once compared Professor Seitz's lecturing and seminar style to a jazz musician. "Watch and enjoy it," he quipped, "but don't try to imitate it." How could we? There is only one of him, and the features mentioned here only reflect his professional life. Seitz's marriage to Elizabeth, his love of sporting dogs, his basketball experience as an undergraduate at UNC Chapel Hill, and a host of other features of Seitz's existence attest to a life lived full and well. For those of us who studied under Professor Seitz, we remain grateful to have been caught in his gravitational force. As Heb 13:7 reminds, we give thanks for those who delivered the word of God to us.

Mark Gignilliat

Abbreviations

1 Clem.	1 Clement
1 En.	1 Enoch
AB	Anchor (Yale) Bible
ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABRL	Anchor (Yale) Bible Reference Library
<i>AbrN</i>	<i>Abr-Nahrain</i>
AcBib	Academia Biblica
<i>Adv. Jud.</i>	John Chrysostom, <i>Adversus Judaeos</i>
AGAJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
A.J.	Josephus, <i>Antiquitates judaicae</i>
ANEM	Ancient Near Eastern Monographs
ANF	Roberts, Alexander, and James Donaldson, eds. <i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325</i> . 10 vols. 1885–1887. Repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOTC	Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries
ApOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
ArBib	The Aramaic Bible
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
<i>AThR</i>	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
ATSAT	Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament
b.	Babylonian Talmud
BBRSup	Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplements
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentum
Ber.	Berakot

BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BHGNT	Baylor Handbooks to the Greek New Testament
<i>BHS</i>	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BJSUCSD	Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego
BMSSEC	Baylor-Mohr Siebeck Studies in Early Christianity
BRLJ	Brill Reference Library of Judaism
BSNA	Biblical Scholarship in North America
BTCTB	Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible
BThSt	Biblich-theologische Studien
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CC	Continental Commentaries
CEB	Common English Bible
<i>ChrCent</i>	<i>Christian Century</i>
<i>CJT</i>	<i>Canadian Journal of Theology</i>
ConBOT	Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series
CTM	<i>Concordia Theological Monthly</i>
<i>CurBS</i>	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
<i>Dial.</i>	Justin Martyr, <i>Dialogus cum Tryphone</i>
<i>Doctr. chr.</i>	Augustine, <i>De doctrina christiana</i>
ECF	Early Church Fathers
EHS.T	Europäische Hochschulschriften Reihe 23, Theologie
<i>Ep. Adolph.</i>	Athanasius, <i>Epistula ad Adelphium</i>
ESV	English Standard Version
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>The Expository Times</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOC	Fathers of the Church
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments

<i>Haer.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Adversus haereses</i>
HALOT	Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm. <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Translated and edited under the supervision of Mervyn E. J. Richardson. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HBS	History of Biblical Studies
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	Eusebius, <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i>
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>IJPR</i>	<i>International Journal for Philosophy of Religion</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
ITC	International Theological Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBTh	Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie
JCTCRS	Jewish and Christian Texts in Contexts and Related Studies
<i>JHebS</i>	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</i>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
<i>JRH</i>	<i>Journal of Religious History</i>
<i>JSem</i>	<i>Journal for Semitics</i>
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal of the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal of the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal of the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal of the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTC</i>	<i>Journal for Theology and the Church</i>
<i>JTI</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Interpretation</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
KJV	King James Version
LAB	Liber antiquitatum biblicarum
LD	Lectio Divina

LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LNTS	The Library of New Testament Studies
LW	Luther Works
Menah.	Menahot
MJTh	Marburger Jahrbuch Theologie
MNTS	McMaster New Testament Studies
<i>Mos.</i>	Philo, <i>De vita Mosis</i>
<i>MoTh</i>	<i>Modern Theology</i>
MThSt	Marburger Theologische Studien
<i>Mut.</i>	Philo, <i>De mutatione nominum</i>
NA ²⁸	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland, 28th ed.
NAC	New American Commentary
NCB	New Century Bible
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplement Series
<i>NPNF</i>	Schaff, Philip, and Henry Wace, eds. <i>A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</i> . 28 vols. in 2 series. 1886–1889. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996.
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTL	New Testament Library
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
ÖBS	Österreichische Biblische Studien
OECS	Oxford Early Christian Studies
<i>Op.</i>	Hesiod, <i>Opera et dies</i>
<i>Opif.</i>	Philo, <i>De opificio mundi</i>
OPSNKF	Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Old Testament Studies
<i>PAAJR</i>	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research</i>

PG	Migne, Jacques-Paul, ed. <i>Patrologia Graeca</i> . 161 vols. Paris, 1857–1886.
PL	Migne, Jacques-Paul, ed. <i>Patrologia Latina</i> . 217 vols. Paris, 1844–1855.
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentaries
<i>ProEccl</i>	<i>Pro Ecclesia</i>
PRS	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
<i>RivB</i>	<i>Rivista biblica</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
<i>Sacr.</i>	Philo, <i>De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini</i>
SBAB	Stuttgarter biblische Aufsatzbände
SBET	<i>Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology</i>
SBJT	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SCJ	<i>Stone-Campbell Journal</i>
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions (supplements to <i>Numen</i>)
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTSU	<i>Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt</i>
<i>Somn.</i>	Philo, <i>De somniis</i>
<i>Spir.</i>	Ambrose, <i>De Spiritu Sancto</i>
SSN	Studia Semitica Neerlandica
StABH	Studies in American Biblical Hermeneutics
STAR	Studies in Theology and Religion
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
STI	Studies in Theological Interpretation
<i>Strom.</i>	Clement of Alexandria, <i>Stromateis</i>
SymS	Symposium Series
TANZ	Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter
TDOT	Botterweck, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds. <i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Translated by John T. Willis et al. 16 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–2018.

THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>ThTo</i>	<i>Theology Today</i>
<i>TJT</i>	<i>Toronto Journal of Theology</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>Virg.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De virginibus velandis</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VWGTh	Veröffentlichungen der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZBAT	Zürcher Bibelkommentare Alte Testament
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

A Tribute

Claire Mathews McGinnis

An occasion for a Festchrift is always bittersweet. In celebrating the life's work of one of our esteemed colleagues we also acknowledge the passing of time, the maturing of a generation of teachers and scholars, and the humbling truth that our influence will one day remain only in those things we have written and in those students whom we have mentored. Chris's body of written work speaks for itself. What cannot be captured in a curriculum vitae are the ways in which a scholar or teacher has affected students in the classroom, the colleague down the hall, or the scholar in a professional working group. Thus I would like to use this occasion to share something about Chris Seitz as a person, a teacher, a priest, and a mentor.

One of the good fortunes in my life was to have Chris as the director of my dissertation. In retrospect it was an important pivot to where I am today, having had a long and happy career at just one institution. I had floundered a bit for a dissertation topic in the prophets and, as was typical of me at the time, had landed on a question that was much larger than I would have been able to accomplish with the skills and knowledge I then had, in a reasonable amount of time. If not for Chris's help I imagine I would have found myself in a position I most dreaded: as the graying graduate student toiling away in the Yale Divinity library while multiple generations of students commenced, and completed, their degrees.

At the time Chris was working on *Zion's Final Destiny* (Isa 36–39).¹ He suggested that I might focus my research on chapters 34–35 and their role within the larger whole. I immediately recognized it as a very doable topic and one that would place me at the table of Isaiah scholars working on the redactional history and nature of the book's shaping as a whole. I also had

1. Christopher Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah; a Reassessment of Isaiah 36–39* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

had the embarrassingly good fortune of having been offered a job, contingent on the successful completion of a dissertation, and the topic Chris offered me was key to my actually taking hold of this position.

Another benefit for which I am equally grateful is that writing under Chris's direction enabled me to get to know him in ways I would not have, say, in the classroom or at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. There is a kind of intellectual passion and religious commitment that animates and focuses his work. These passions are combined with a particular intensity. Had I not known him personally, in professional meetings I likely would have misread this intensity as a kind of intellectual aggression. But there are others sides of him that temper this intensity. In particular, I am fond of his humor. He is actually very funny. It's not the kind of humor that resides in retellable jokes but more an attitude, a way of coming up with quips in the moment that are both contextually à propos and outrageously truthful. I believe that every family has its own repository of inside jokes, and a number of Chris's quips have become part of my own family's shared tradition. This humor is also paired with a kind of funniness that can lift one's spirits. Chris can also be incredibly pastoral. I remember one particular conversation after the accidental death of a Yale Divinity School student in which we talked about the complexity of people's lives. I was struck by the wisdom shared in that conversation and by the experience of such a pastoral conversation in the hall of offices that usually inspired a kind of anxiety and fear among our cadre of aspiring biblical scholars.

When he was at Yale, Chris's majestic Weimaraner, Brør, was something of a sidekick and a fixture on campus. One day when Chris was preaching in Marquand chapel, Brør could hear Chris's voice from his office below and accompanied the sermon with howling Amens. Chris handled this with grace and humor. Of all the small pieces of advice my Herr Doktor Professor offered during my dissertation stage, one particularly helpful one was to walk when troubling through a knotty problem. We once took a stroll with Brør to talk through some Isaianic problem, and this is a practice that has served me well (without the company of Brør, of course).

Chris has roots in North Carolina. Although Baltimore has long been my home, my family spent summer vacations in Pawley's Island, South Carolina, where Chris later served in an Episcopal parish. We shared this particular connection to place, and I appreciated his willingness to broaden our friendship beyond the confines of office and library. He was

a strong advocate for me, helping to make connections with de Gruyter in Germany, through whom the dissertation was published, and welcoming me into the community of Society of Biblical Literature scholars working on Isaiah.

I am equally grateful for his mentorship during my pretenure and early tenured years when I was also bearing children. So much had been invested in my academic training, both by my professors and by the kind donors through whom I received financial aid. The feeling that I had to make good on their expectations was a heavy burden, but as a mentor Chris always supported my choices to forego writing projects in order to spend more time with my children in their preciously short childhoods. This was an invaluable affirmation and gift.

In more recent years our paths have diverged geographically and intellectually. While I am sure there are many things on which we might now disagree, there are also certain fundamental ones I believe that we share; I have a real appreciation for Chris's prolific effort to extend Brevard Child's canonical work and on retrieving and upholding the Christian church's long tradition of reading the Elder Testament and the New in tandem, in keeping with the rule of faith. Chris's advice and mentorship have been integral to launching my own satisfying career as a teacher and scholar. For this, for his good humor, pastoral concern, and intellectual passion, I remain always in his debt.

God in Scriptural Proximity: Notes on the Contribution of Christopher Seitz

Daniel R. Driver

With twenty book projects appearing over the last thirty years (1988–2018), Christopher Seitz has been productive. Gathered together, his output somewhat recalls that of a bishop of the early church: there are commentaries, sermons, accounts of theological method, guides for preachers, technical treatises, bursts of correspondence with other prominent theologians (trading essays with Francis Watson in the *Scottish Journal of Theology*, for example, perhaps as Augustine and Jerome traded letters), and even a few engagements in church controversy that might appear to revive the ancient genre of ecclesiastical polemic (contra Bishop Spong of Newark instead of, say, Bishop Faustus of Mileve). The work is uniformly serious.¹ Even the lightest books carry a certain heft. A thin blue volume in a series designed to aid preachers in their use of the lectionary is chiefly about Advent.² A series of Lenten reflections, wonderfully illustrated with woodcuts, is keyed to the seven last words of Jesus from the cross.³ Advent and Lent are seasons in which Christians meet an acute application of prophetic testimony. In Advent, liturgically ordered churches hear of “the last day, when he shall come again in glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead.” On Ash Wednesday, too, they hear a call to “rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for

1. A serious tone prevails even when the writing is playful, as in his review of Harold Bloom’s *The Book of J*, trans. David Rosenberg (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990) (Christopher R. Seitz, “Wellhausen Goes to Yale,” *ChrCent* 108 [1991]: 111–14).

2. Christopher R. Seitz, *Advent/Christmas*, Proclamation 4: Aids for Interpreting the Lessons of the Church Year, Series C (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

3. Christopher R. Seitz, *Seven Lasting Words: Jesus Speaks from the Cross* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness" (Joel 2:12–13, as per the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*). As an Anglican with major works of scholarship on Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Joel, it is hardly surprising that Seitz addresses biblical themes of expectation and hope and restoration only insofar as they are rooted in the more ponderous themes of conflict and judgment and exile. The prophets insist that weal is bound to woe, and Seitz does not evade their sober witness. Even so, it would be a mistake to cast his more popular writings in the usual mold of modern academic scholarship extended into modes appropriate to ecclesial and pastoral settings, as if they were side projects.⁴ Seitz's work is voluminous and serious; it also has uncommon range. There is a New Testament commentary on the epistle to the Colossians.⁵ There are recent efforts, too, that may best be filed under the subject heading of Trinitarian theology.⁶ His area of expertise includes the Old Testament prophets and the hermeneutics of Christian Scripture, but he frequently pushes beyond conventional disciplinary limits.

If this body of work is transgressive, it is so largely because of its traditionalism. It is governed by a specific vision of the Christian church and of its proper relationship to Christian Scripture. Much of it is obviously informed by Seitz's dual vocation, first as an ordained Episcopal priest, then as a professor who was tenured at Yale University before moving to the University of Saint Andrews, followed by the University of Toronto. (Lately he has also been Professeur Invité at Centre Sèvres, a Jesuit seminary in Paris.) By way of illustration, consider the kinds of exegetical ventures that are on display in *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (2001).⁷ The end of John's Gospel is connected to the end of Ecclesiastes. The earthly Jesus, as that designation might be understood by the church fathers, is pursued in language from the book of Isaiah, and affirmed there as a type that stands in accordance with the rest of Christian Scripture. Leviticus 17–18 is connected with Acts 15,

4. Christopher R. Seitz, ed., *Reading and Preaching the Book of Isaiah* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

5. Christopher R. Seitz, *Colossians*, BTCB (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2014).

6. Christopher R. Seitz, "The Trinity in the Old Testament," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering, Oxford Handbooks in Religion and Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 28–40.

7. Christopher R. Seitz, *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

in which the Council of Jerusalem discerns how the law of Moses pertains to gentile Christians—not merely as another example of how biblical theology operates but, in this case, primarily as a salvo in the charged debate about same-sex blessing in the Episcopal Church (USA). The hymn from Phil 2 is studied in connection with prior Old Testament use of the divine name and with later theological judgments that crystalize around the phrase *homoousia* as Nicene dogma emerges.⁸ Prayer in the Old Testament is surveyed and presented as a “figural reality.”⁹ And so on. These probes are framed by sets of essays that pose challenges to academy and church alike. In one set, serious biblical interpretation is found to be in crisis in the academy. The pressures and acids of historicism have led to “a disfigurement of Scripture in the name of relating the testaments developmentally.”¹⁰ The other set addresses predicaments specific to the Anglican Communion, where the outcomes of debate about biblical interpretation manifest themselves in things like the 1998 Lambeth Conference, the 1997 Virginia Report endorsed there, and some older revisions to Rite I in the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* (ECUSA). *Figured Out* is quintessential Seitz, and there is no book of contemporary biblical scholarship quite like it. There are other ways of being a Christian and a biblical scholar, of course, but among those writing in the field today, there are few whose research is as explicitly marked by ecclesial concerns. In an age when exegetes are repeatedly warned about their religious commitments, Seitz gives the impression of being truly radical, in both of the main senses of that word. He takes his cues from Nicene Christianity.¹¹ In so doing he can stress points about Christian Scripture that, if they are in one sense remedial, are also a little disruptive.¹²

8. The coordination of judgments and concepts is an important strategy for Seitz. It is adapted from David Yeago, “The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis,” *ProEccl* 3 (1994): 152–64.

9. Seitz, *Figured Out*, 175.

10. Seitz, *Figured Out*, 15.

11. Christopher R. Seitz, ed., *Nicene Christianity: The Future for a New Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001).

12. For remedial, see Christopher R. Seitz, *Word Without End: The Old Testament as Abiding Theological Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 109. In being disruptive lies the utility of his frequently assigned defense of the name “Old Testament.” The piece is ideal for showing students why someone might want to uphold traditional language in spite of strong calls to find other terms (Christopher R. Seitz, “Old Testa-

Seitz's earliest work is more conventional, from a disciplinary standpoint. It is worth reviewing in light of what develops later. *Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah* (1989), the published abridgement of his 1986 PhD dissertation at Yale, is a hardworking historical- and literary-critical analysis of responses to the exile in Israel's prophetic literature, especially in Jeremiah but also in Ezekiel and 2 Kgs 24/25. It addresses a number of difficult questions. How should one evaluate prophetic reactions to the events of 597 and 587, given the variety of exilic traditions in the Bible? How do the prophets testify to these events as divine judgment? How is the message of judgment extended, first from the monarchy to the nation of Judah, and then to all nations? How is the hope of Israel's postexilic restoration introduced? Who exactly are the "people of the land"? How, in the end, are all the different traditions coordinated? Answers in the case of Jeremiah are especially fraught, given the divided circumstance of this prophet remaining in the land after Ezekiel, King Jehoiachin, and others are carried away to Babylon in 597, and seeming thereafter to spare as little thought for the exilic community as it in turn spares for the remnant back in Judah. Moreover, as Seitz concludes, "The final form of the book of Jeremiah reflects significant redactional intervention carried out under the influence of Ezekiel traditions." Seitz can say this with confidence because, he argues, he has been "able to successfully isolate a major level of post-597 Jeremiah tradition."¹³ Methodologically, the project is designated sociohistorical—not canonical, as more recent readers might expect. It calls for an intensive historical and literary analysis that builds on a century of biblical scholarship even as it attempts to break the deadlock, then fully in evidence, of standard critical approaches (literary, form, redaction). In this manner it addresses a crisis in scholarly interpretation of literature that itself responds to the greatest crisis in the history and theology of ancient Israel. The study is technical and perfectly at home in a series with other *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*.

Considerable development is in evidence if one compares *Theology in Conflict* to Seitz's most recent major title. Appearing some three decades

ment or Hebrew Bible? Some Theological Considerations," *ProEccl* 5 [1996]: 292–303; repr. in Seitz, *Word Without End*, 61–74).

13. Christopher R. Seitz, *Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah*, BZAW 176 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 295. This layer he terms the scribal chronicle.

later, *The Elder Testament: Canon, Theology, Trinity* (2018) is more difficult to classify.¹⁴ It opens on an autobiographical note, and, with numerous references to the author's previous efforts, it sustains a retrospective mood. It presents mature thought on more than a dozen issues that, while they are all fairly clearly related, make a single thesis statement elusive. In essence the argument seems to be that "one can properly speak of extensional sense-making if rooted within the literal sense, a mode of reading often termed figural or typological"—except that one needs to add something about how the "theological pressure of the *sensus literalis*" operates in specifically Christian and Trinitarian terms, about what this has to do with objectivist and subjectivist models of biblical criticism, about how sense can multiply due to the Bible's literary contours and associations, and about how the theory is born out in the series of exegetical test cases that conclude the book.¹⁵ The program is ambitious, and readers could be forgiven for thinking that it is really three books in one.

Elder Testament does hang together as a unitary but complex statement, and it provides a good synopsis of Seitz's larger project. The three parts signaled in the book's subtitle are first an orientation to the line of approach (basic terminology and questions of method), second an overview of how to understand the major contours of the Old Testament (subdivided as Pentateuch, Prophets, and Writings), and third a series of representative examples (scriptural sense-making at work). It is a high-level account of, and an attempt to follow, the church's apprehension of the triune God revealed in Christ as he is spoken of in all the Scriptures. Themes that will be familiar to Seitz's readers are taken up in fresh ways. In part 1, the dignity and venerability of "Old Testament" is upheld in novel language, borrowed from French: the twofold Christian Bible is founded on *l'Ancien Testament*. "Canon" is likewise affirmed and understood as a rule of faith, on the basis its early church usage. Canonical interpretation is defended as an optimal way now to apprehend what Clement of Alexandria called "the concord and harmony of the law and the prophets in the covenant delivered at the coming of the Lord" (*Strom.* 6.15, quoted several times). Seitz touches on Scripture's form and content, its plain sense, its subject matter or *res*, its formal history (economy), its divine ontology, its commanding force, its capacity for extension. In short, he argues that

14. Christopher R. Seitz, *The Elder Testament: Canon, Theology, Trinity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018).

15. Seitz, *Elder Testament*, 44.

“the literal sense has this larger canonical coefficient.”¹⁶ Part 2 enters the “Elder Testament” on that theological and hermeneutical basis. It criticizes the pinched historicism that isolates modern interpretation from the interpretive tradition. At the same time, it commends the value of critical insight when harnessed to a proper appreciation of the canon’s unique shape and “pressure.”¹⁷ Israel’s Scriptures might be compared to the planetary model of an atom, in which Law and Prophets constitute the nucleus around which the Writings move in orbit, somewhat like electrons.¹⁸ The existence of known isotopes does not alter the basic nature of a stable core that organizes and energizes a certain valency. Finally, part 3 aims to show what all this means in practice. Here, too, are themes familiar and novel. The divine name is connected to the triune name, through readings of Pss 2 and 110, Phil 2, and the “mind” (διάνοια) of Prov 8. Modern readings of Ecclesiastes are reevaluated in light of creation themes (drawn from Gen 1–11 mostly, but also John 1). The “scriptural Christ” is pursued in the letter to the Hebrews. Following the logic of Justin Martyr, trinitarian ontology is brought to bear on biblical theophany. All together the work coheres around Seitz’s expansive vision of “the richness of the Elder Scripture as funding Christian theology.”¹⁹

What manner of work is this? No longer is it a question of adjusting the standard methods to suit a specialized purpose, as in *Theology in Conflict*. Biblical texts are taken case by case, without recourse to a master theory of composition. Seitz has long studied and characterized instances of critically sponsored theological overreach and historical misapprehension, and he takes the lessons to heart. For instance, he warns that reflection on the meaning of the divine name continues to be misled by an ingrained predisposition “to think of historical sources and authors in

16. Seitz, *Elder Testament*, 277.

17. “Pressure,” another key concept for Seitz, builds on the formulation of C. Kavin Rowe, “Biblical Pressure and Trinitarian Hermeneutics,” *ProEccl* 11 (2002): 295–312, which itself builds on observations made by Brevard Childs.

18. Timothy J. Stone, *The Compilational History of the Megilloth: Canon, Contoured Intertextuality and Meaning in the Writings*, FAT 2/59 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), compares the Writings to “a system of planets” (7). My revision of the analogy gives an appropriately central place to Law and Prophets as the system’s nucleus. Both metaphors soon run into limitations, however, not least concerning the complex history of canon formation.

19. Seitz, *Elder Testament*, 262.

disagreement.”²⁰ To this extent historical criticism becomes a foil in his later work.²¹ At the same time, tutored by deep historical study, he fights hard against an uncritical epidemic of false or misleading conclusions about the hermeneutical significance of different canonical orders (the so-called rival orders). When considering the known arrangements of books in the Prophets and the Writings, he insists on letting a biblical book be what it is in its historic formation and use, which may or may not include a layer of sequential association. There is the alluring case of the Book of the Twelve.²² “Yet the case of the three Major Prophets equally establishes that order and sequence may not mean very much at all.”²³ The ad hoc analysis practiced here is strenuous, and its results can feel unpredictable. One thinks of T. S. Eliot’s quip that, in criticism, “there is no method except to be very intelligent”—also, in the case at hand, at least a little adventurous. This biblical-theological enterprise has no well-established schools at present. The prevailing model of biblical scholarship prepares technicians to operate like land surveyors, measuring out the extent of this or that property, adjudicating claims to land ownership, updating the standard maps. The basic task is to prove and maintain legal boundaries. This model is amply reflected in Seitz’s early work, in the first years after he earned his ticket. What one sees lately, though, is more like the work of an orienteer. Here now is someone who ventures forth into territory for which, at least in the remoter parts, neither the County Clerk’s Office nor the Bureau of Land Management maintain good records. While some of the gear may be similar, the revised task is to determine one’s position well enough that a body can navigate in open country. Borders are not maintained but routinely crossed, precisely as a matter of course. Scripture is the common territory, in this analogy. Key differences include the goal, which is not so

20. Seitz, *Elder Testament*, 108.

21. Seitz, *Elder Testament*, 70.

22. Christopher R. Seitz, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets: The Achievement of Association in Canon Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).

23. Seitz, *Elder Testament*, 160. See further Seitz, “The Unique Achievement of the Book of the Twelve: Neither Redactional Unity Nor Anthology,” in *The Book of the Twelve: An Anthology of Prophetic Books, or, The Result of Complex Redactional Processes?*, ed. Georg Steins and Heiko Wenzel, Osnabrücker Studien zur Jüdischen und Christlichen Bibel 4 (Göttingen: V&R unipress; Universitätsverlag Osnabrück, 2018), 37–48; Seitz, “Response,” in *The Shape of the Writings*, ed. Julius Steinberg and Timothy J. Stone, Siphrut 16 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 329–52.

much to regulate as to inhabit the space, and the amount of travel. Seitz covers a lot of ground.

Methodological study and exegesis lay the foundation for a theoretical apparatus that gradually opens up to the possibility of figural reading identified by that name, if it is grounded in the Bible's literal sense. A hallmark of Seitz's commentary at every stage of his career is its concern with the special capacity of biblical language for extension. It surfaces already in *Theology in Conflict*, where the prophetic traditions of Jeremiah are shown to exhibit signs of convergence and divergence with other biblical traditions. Sometimes they stand in irreducible tension with the contemporaneous traditions of Ezekiel. In the final analysis, though, Seitz finds evidence of meaningful proximity between Jeremiah and the traditions of Ezekiel and 2 Kgs 24/25, which he accounts for as "the strong likelihood that the book of Jeremiah received secondary enrichment in Babylonian Exile." Thanks to the book's editorial history, Jeremiah acquires a theological stance in common with Ezekiel.²⁴ *Zion's Final Destiny* (1991) also speaks of a diverse set of traditions that, "when taken together, enrich one another" even as they can be distinguished from other known theologies of Zion.²⁵ This thesis challenges the scholarly construct that exiles Second Isaiah to Babylon, thoroughly isolating Isa 40–55 from the rest of the book (as Bernhard Duhm himself had not done). Instead, it argues that elements of the Hezekiah-Isaiah material in chapters 36–39 drive growth in the book of Isaiah as such, as, in and after the dramatic deliverance of 701, Hezekiah is identified with the city, and the sick king and city are each granted a reprieve from death. Isaiah's multifaceted message of salvation in Jerusalem continues to hang over the city even after its royal house falters and its walls fail. What will finally become of Zion? The larger book of Isaiah addresses the question in a singular way, focusing not on

24. Seitz, *Theology in Conflict*, 160. This proximity is called "temporal" in the present context; elsewhere it is characterized as literary (128), theological (218, 219), or historical (227, 229, 233, 236).

25. Christopher R. Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah; A Reassessment of Isaiah 36–39* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 147. Zion, in the theology of Isaiah, is not inviolable (cf. certain psalms). With the benefit of hindsight, Seitz's discussion here anticipates later emphasis on biblical pressure, too. "The growth of the book of Isaiah was not the consequence of a general suitability, or of intriguing *relecture* possibilities, but of the pressing need to hear the divine word regarding Zion in 701 within the context of Zion's defeat in 587 B.C.E." (147). The message of Proto-Isaiah is one that pushes forward.

an anonymous prophet in exile, nor even on a returning exilic people, but rather on Zion itself, and God's work in and through it. The city's destiny soars far beyond a day that would, in time, be reckoned among the "former things," when Isaiah of Jerusalem saw and spoke truly of deliverance from the hand of Assyria.

Implications sketched at the end of *Zion's Final Destiny* are filled out in two installments of commentary on Isaiah.²⁶ The first part, *Isaiah 1–39* (1993), is of special note because of the way it signals a transition from sociohistorical to an officially more canonical approach to interpretation. At least three strands of continuity with past work stand out, namely, in Seitz's regard for the book's organic growth, its own overt interest in extension, and the sophisticated figural portraits that emerge in consequence. First, the book's spectacular growth, quite in contrast with a book like Micah, calls for explanation. The Isaiah tradition expands "precisely because Isaiah's salvation preaching was vindicated in the course of history," which earned his broader message of salvation an expectant hearing in generations to come.²⁷ Second, extension itself becomes a theme for reflection, particularly in the précis of Isa 1–12. In anger God stretches out his hand against his people (5:25). That hand reaches out further and further, picking up Assyria as an implement against Samaria (9:12, 17, 21), followed by Jerusalem (10:4, 10–11), but not allowing the ax to exalt itself over the one who wields it (10:15–16). The arm that delivers judgment seems to get longer and longer until, in time, the ominous signal raised for foreign nations in 5:26 "is handed over to the root of Jesse" in 11:12.²⁸ Third, when Isa 36–39 is reintegrated with its present literary context, instead of taking a back seat to historical questions about the events of 701, Hezekiah and his father, Ahaz, emerge as figures who set contrasting types of faith and unfaith.²⁹ The comparison is made in 1991, very briefly, and

26. Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, IBC (Louisville: John Knox, 1993); Seitz, "The Book of Isaiah 40–66: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, ed. Leander E. Keck et al., 12 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 6:307–552.

27. Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 102. See the contextual discussion (98–105) and the handy but unmarked summary of his past findings about Isa 36–39 material in the introduction (9).

28. Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 108. "Rather than being assigned a task of judgment," he observes, "the root of Jesse is to stand as an ensign of justice for the nations." See further pp. 15, 26, 49–50, 88–95, 108–10.

29. Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny*, 95–96.

amplified with great sophistication in 1993. Isaiah's presentation of Ahaz looks ahead to Hezekiah, and Hezekiah's looks back to Ahaz, but not only so. The obedient king invites positive association with many things: King David in prayer, Jerusalem in recovery, Isaiah's ideal of quiet strength, Immanuel as foretold, and also, with due caution, "the messianic role that Jesus fulfills."³⁰ It is a rich portrait born of the conviction that Isaiah's focus is "relentlessly theological."³¹ With sustained attention to the extension and enrichment of prophetic tradition, and the capacity of Isaiah's figures to act as types, it is easy to see how groundwork is being laid for a book like *Figured Out*. At the same time, the commentary on Isa 1–39 stands in fundamental continuity with *Zion's Final Destiny*, which announces a "contribution ... [made] chiefly in the area of method and exegesis" without yet framing its method in canonical terms.³² Deep exegetical study and reflection prepare Seitz to develop some pointed hermeneutical reformulations in the years ahead.

The influence of Brevard Childs on Seitz's work is not as direct as many casual readers now suppose. It is worth remembering that Seitz's dissertation director at Yale was Robert Wilson. *Zion's Final Destiny* is dedicated to Brevard Childs and Klaus Baltzer, named as "honored teachers," but its boldest conclusion actually inverts one that Childs supports in *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis* (1967).³³ Against the hypothesis that Wilhelm Gesenius first advanced in 1821, Isa 36–37 is given historical priority over the parallel material in 2 Kgs 18–19. Childs seems to have his greatest impact on Seitz as a senior colleague at Yale and as the author of *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (1992).³⁴ Interestingly, the impact of Childs's magnum opus on English-language scholarship is almost negligible when compared to his landmark *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (1979), but its importance for Seitz's later work is

30. Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 75. Immanuel is Hezekiah, for Seitz, but the identity is open to further association. See pp. 64–75, 78, 242–61 (esp. 255–56).

31. Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, 253. Cf. Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny*, 206: with characteristic pluck he contends that, because "Second Isaiah is Zion-centered, in geographical and theological terms," its "provenance" is not really "exilic" as much as it is "theological."

32. Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny*, 208.

33. Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, SBT 2/3 (London: SCM, 1967). See especially excursus 2 (137–40).

34. Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

hard to overstate.³⁵ In a 1994 review essay Seitz calls *Biblical Theology* “a book in search of an audience” and one that “will be judged by the widest variety of readers as learned but unsatisfactory and by an even smaller audience as the most brilliant proposal for theological exegesis offered in recent memory.”³⁶ It goes without saying that he belongs to the smaller group. His subsequent efforts begin to register a critical appreciation and extension of Childs’s approach to Christian Scripture, with Isaiah as only the most obvious area of contact. In point of fact, in range and content *Elder Testament* invites direct comparison with *Biblical Theology*.³⁷ This is not the place to pursue a detailed analysis, although it is notable that Seitz coedited both a *Festschrift* and a *Gedenkschrift* for Childs and supported his later framing of the so-called canon debate.³⁸ It must suffice, at present, to outline a few of the more obvious differences between these two practitioners of biblical theology.

On some leading issues it fair to say that the student surpasses the teacher. The theological framework in *Elder Testament* is Trinitarian rather than christological, which is an important correction. Seitz goes deeper into what Childs calls “hermeneutical reflection,” which is frequently illuminating.³⁹ In biblical commentary, too, Seitz’s results are often more compelling. Quite a few readers have found Seitz’s Isaiah commentary

35. The situation is a little different in Europe, where *Biblical Theology* was quickly translated into German. See Daniel R. Driver, *Brevard Childs, Biblical Theologian: For the Church’s One Bible*, FAT 2/46 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 33–101 for a discussion of “Reading Childs in English and German.”

36. Seitz, *Word Without End*, 108–09, originally published as “We Are Not Prophets or Apostles: The Impact of Brevard Childs,” *Dialog* 33 (1994): 89–93. The judgment seems to be confirmed in Craig Bartholomew et al., eds., *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*, Scripture and Hermeneutics 7 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), where Seitz presents a taxonomy of critics whose mutually contradictory positions are self-canceling, serving only to “confirm that the canonical approach offers the most compelling, comprehensive account of biblical interpretation and theology presently on offer” (63).

37. See the reflective and critical comments in Seitz, *Elder Testament*, 35–50.

38. Christopher R. Seitz and Kathryn Greene-McCreight, eds., *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Christopher R. Seitz and Kent Harold Richards, eds., *The Bible as Christian Scripture: The Work of Brevard S. Childs*, BSNA 25 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013). See also Bartholomew, *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*.

39. Among other examples see Christopher R. Seitz, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics: Toward a New Introduction to the Prophets*, STI (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

more useful than that of Childs, which Benjamin Sommer shrewdly calls a “supercommentary on earlier scholarship.”⁴⁰ (The most obvious limitation of Seitz’s commentary is that it appears in two places.) His exegetical judgments are sophisticated and subtle—not to the point of being *raffiniert*, but enough to challenge and stimulate his readers. Distinctives like these are most welcome. Judgment on other matters will vary. Whereas the tomes of Childs are encyclopedic, Seitz’s essays are occasional and episodic. This is not necessarily a drawback, since length and format undoubtedly contribute to the weak appetite for *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*. Then again, if it is unnecessary to replicate Childs’s thoroughly documented command of all relevant literature, Seitz’s later bibliographies become highly selective.⁴¹ Whatever its shortcomings, though, it seems possible that more people will read and profit from *Elder Testament* than any of Seitz’s early titles and perhaps even than Childs’s *Biblical Theology*. This is because *Elder Testament* engages an audience that appears to grow by drawing in a number of professional theologians. If so, it owes much to Seitz’s attempt actually to do the source work, which a great many Christian theologians simply take for granted, off the back of the Trinitarian conclusions of the early church. What makes the effort so intriguing is that it does not take the New Testament as a shortcut to Trinitarian conclusions, either. Instead it grapples directly with the prior witness that was the earliest church’s only authoritative testament to the identity of Israel’s God. This is no work for an epigone. Although Seitz could not pursue his ends in the way he does without a major debt to Childs, he consistently charts his own path, pushing against and beyond Childs in ways deemed necessary. Once the parameters of his biblical-theological ambition are recalibrated by Childs around 1992, Seitz picks up the grand proposal in earnest, testing, proving, and refining it through a wide-ranging series of independent studies. The manifold fruit of this labor includes a rather more robust proposal for the recovery of figural reading, based on a distinctive sense of the Bible’s extravagant capacity for associative meaning.

40. Benjamin D. Sommer, review of *Isaiah: A Commentary*, by Brevard S. Childs, *Bib* 83 (2002): 581.

41. Christopher R. Seitz, *Joel*, ITC (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016) is thoroughly stimulating, but it suffers from a bibliography that is brief, overly reliant on a favorite source (here Jörg Jeremias), and possibly missing in one part, rendering some references unfollowable. So also Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, review of *Joel*, by Christopher R. Seitz, *JTS* 68 (2017): 707–9.

Important strands of continuity connect work before and after 1992, as we have begun to see. Over his entire career Seitz endeavors to describe the correct stance of Christians to their Scriptures, especially insofar as the Scriptures of Israel bear witness now together with the New Testament to the triune God made known in Jesus Christ. A signature critique of his amounts to a caution against artificial notions of proximity to Jesus. He makes the point in several contexts. The fullest and most recent discussion appears in *The Character of Christian Scripture* (2011), in an analysis of prominent approaches to New Testament theology that threaten to become biblical theology simpliciter.⁴² Some earlier statements are also instructive. I was still a graduate student in Saint Andrews when Seitz left for Toronto, at which time the Biblical Studies Seminar in Saint Mary's College was poring over Richard Bauckham's account of *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*.⁴³ Seitz marked that book's arrival with appreciation in Canada, in the Wycliffe College *Morning Star* (an internal newsletter for students). He also offered a correction. What does it mean to speak of eyewitness testimony to Jesus? Bauckham speaks of John the Elder. Seitz points instead to Irenaeus's claim to have a direct link, through Polycarp's memory, to the first disciples, and he observes that the testimony of Polycarp was worth treasuring only because it was judged to be "in accordance with the Scriptures." Seitz explains:

It was not enough to tell the story of Jesus, even hot from the sources, without relating this to the written testimony of Israel. When our creeds or the New Testament say Jesus Christ was "in accordance with the Scriptures" they are on a trail that was there from the beginning, and did not cease being crucial to how we might speak of Christ.... The trail back

42. Christopher R. Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible*, STI (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011). Above all see ch. 2, "Biblical Theology and Identification with Christian Scripture: 'We Are Not Prophets or Apostles'" (93–113), which challenges the widespread assumption that "the church stands in a more direct relationship with the NT than the OT" (99). Apropos of the following anecdote, the book is dedicated to "the students in the Scripture and Theology Seminar at the University of St. Andrews, 1998–2007." My first academic appointment happened to take me from Saint Andrews to Toronto in 2008.

43. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

to Jesus, brought alive by the Holy Spirit's utilization of the stories about him, takes us straight into the Old Testament.⁴⁴

Is not the Elder Testament an eyewitness? Are not Moses and Isaiah? Are not we, too, eyewitnesses in the way that counts most for Irenaeus, if we observe the testimony of the prophets and apostles? The point is rehearsed in other places.⁴⁵ One of the most arresting applications of it is to the Decalogue, which, he argues, is accessed most directly by gentile Christians not through Exod 20 or Deut 5, but through the express provision to include foreign sojourners in Israel's midst under the laws of Lev 19.⁴⁶ Or again, to use a metaphor he picks up from Luther, when the gentile church reads the Scriptures, we are like "surprised guests at the reading of a will, discovering that we had been given a share of an inheritance we did not know was there in earnest, ready to be passed on to us."⁴⁷ A preliminary version of the same perspective also appears at the front of one of Seitz's very first publications, the thin blue aid to the lectionary in Advent (Year C). He writes:

44. Christopher R. Seitz, "Accordance," *The Morning Star* (Wycliffe College) 23.16 (21 Jan 2008): 1–3.

45. E.g., cf. Seitz, *Figured Out*, 105, with Seitz, *Elder Testament*, 128, which states: "Proximity to incarnate or risen Jesus is not chronological privilege at all. Jesus Christ is who he is by disclosure of the Holy Spirit, who spake by the prophets."

46. Christopher R. Seitz, "The Ten Commandments: Positive and Natural Law and the Covenants Old and New—Christian Use of the Decalogue and Moral Law," in *I Am the Lord Your God: Christian Reflections on the Ten Commandments*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Christopher R. Seitz (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 18–38. Leviticus 19 contains a version of at least nine of the Ten Commandments. It also stipulates, "When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God" (Lev 19:33–34, NRSV).

47. Seitz, *Character*, 209. The major point, spelled out elsewhere in the same book, is that proper (historic) apprehension of the character of Scripture "[allows] each respective Testament to sound its theological notes, each as Christian Scripture, each equidistant and at once proximate to the subject matter they individually share" (171, repeated from 156). This formulation serves as a positive restatement of what he means when he picks up Childs's message that "we are not prophets or apostles." See also Seitz, *Elder Testament*, where "we" are said to come to the Bible as "outsiders," as "people being talked about, not to.... When the book is then opened and we listen, we find that we are part of the story, in the role of the nations outside of a relationship, but one that was intended to include us in time" (57, 59).

Advent allows us to participate in texts that speak of Jesus at his earliest earthly moment. This is their brilliant gift to us. We cannot be sure in any sense that temporal or geographical proximity to Jesus was an aid to faith or discipleship (John 20:29)... Our distance from these first events is no more of a hindrance for us at our twentieth-century vantage point than it was for the first Christians. Faith in the one whom God raised from the dead opens our eyes to that child in the crib, enabling us to gaze in awe and wonder with the eyes of the first witnesses. Through the vehicle of the biblical witness, with all its rich expectation, we are empowered to go to Bethlehem and worship the child who becomes the terrifying king.⁴⁸

Part of the point here concerns the relative lateness of the birth narratives in the Gospels. Another part, not to be missed, gestures at the way Scripture lessons in Advent, through the voice of the prophets, speak to the “terrifying” second advent of Christ. In other words, Seitz’s earliest tutor on the matter at hand is the lectionary, with an implicit wisdom that holds sway for him long before scriptural study can be pursued in seminary or university. The eventual reminders about proximity and distance, and the keen sense of what it truly means to be drawn near to God through a double but equidistant testimony to God’s ways in the world, ultimately develop out of an ancient tradition of Christian formation that grounds itself in public reading of publicly available, scriptural testimony to the God of Israel made known in Christ. The theme, like many others Seitz explores, cannot be abstracted from Christian identity.

A canonical approach to Christian Scripture needs comprehensiveness and flexibility, and Seitz cultivates both virtues in his scholarship. His work in general operates, to use his own words, “at the service of Christian theology at the most *basic* and the most *comprehensive* levels.” What does it mean to attend to such elements together? “A canonical approach is an effort to read texts in a fresh way, to engage in questions of historical, theological, practical, and conceptual significance, and to keep the lines of communication between the Testaments, between the Bible and theology, and between them both and the church, open and responsive.”⁴⁹ This vision accounts for the distinctive mix Seitz produces, with commentary that reaches from prophet to apostle, criticism than spans church and academy, history that is developed in ways needful

48. Seitz, *Advent/Christmas*, 8.

49. Seitz, *Character*, 85, emphasis added.

and neglected, hermeneutical theory that attaches to extensive textual study, and theology that pushes beyond concepts in order to make suitable judgments about God's triune identity. Seitz pushes hard on all these fronts. The contributors to this Festschrift number among those whose thinking about such things is spurred and clarified as a result, and so it is only right to conclude with a word of thanks for efforts that are consistently sharp and faithful.

Works of Christopher R. Seitz

Including reviews, we believe the following to be a complete bibliography of Christopher Seitz's published works. A number of articles and book chapters in the late 1990s and early 2000s were reprinted within two collected essay volumes, *Word without End* and *Figured Out*. These have been notated at the end of the respective entries as *WWE* or *FO*, with corresponding page numbers. In some cases, reprinted works were slightly revised. All works are organized chronologically by type.

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The Exegesis of the One God

Ephraim Radner

Some years ago I struggled to write a theological commentary on the book of Leviticus. What I discovered was that Jewish readings of the book, over time, were far more “Christian” than Christian readings, in the sense of perceiving in the book a living God, permeating the details, and engaging in the realities of life and death, suffering and redemption. Christian readings, apart from Origen and his eventually constrained tradition, tended to be argumentative, tendentious, propositional, and narrow, with little to say beyond the christological fulfilment of carnal sacrificial practice. In Jewish readings, on the other hand, all of history and divine life flowed through the particulars of the text, where God was continually expressing himself, deeply and truthfully, in the way that Christian theology has, in theory, always claimed in its dogmatic assertions regarding the *Logos asarkos*, the eternal life of the Word working through all of history, including even and especially in Israel.

Christopher Seitz has been at the forefront of a movement in biblical and theological scholarship that has sought to reclaim the Old Testament as a christologically truth-bearing text in its own right. Part of his argument has been that typological readings of the Old Testament—perhaps even Origen’s here and there—are not external impositions of either the New Testament itself or later Christian apologists but emerge from the internal pressures of the Old Testament text’s own literal articulation. His discussions, following the lead of Brevard Childs, have built upon the sensitive tracing of the text’s own formation—for example, identifying the redactive seams of a text (traces of its prehistory) and coordinating these with other distinctive elements internal to the larger canonical network of textual detail and, from this, noting the ways that a passage’s intertextual refashioning, given in a stable final form, opens up—even if it leaves unexplored directions of implied or potential reference that, in fact, both Jews

and then Christians took up as divine signposts and revelations. So, for instance, the famous theophanies of Mamre or Sinai at the burning bush, are editorially structured, in their lexical and grammatical forms, to press for reconfigured notions of the divine character and unity.¹

Seitz's readings of the Old Testament tend to be rich, variegated, and allusive in ways that much modern Christian scriptural reading is not. But they are also, in a fashion, surprisingly analogous to traditional Jewish interpretation in this variegation, if not in their specific christological articulation. Aspects of this parallel have been noted and Childs's own engagement with the question of Jewish midrash as being such a parallel to some of his basic orientations tackled the question directly.² Childs was himself uncomfortable with the parallel, however, and tended to resolve the question on the basis of the difference of Christianity's distinctive relationship with a closed canon and with its particular christological referent. Here, I would briefly suggest that a case for the parallel, and one established on a basic theological plane, can be made and made in such a way as to illuminate the nature of the more doctrinal differences between Judaism and Christianity, differences whose historical foundations, under the pressure of the centuries, may have begun now to crumble.

1. Christopher R. Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible*, STI (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 66–70; Seitz, *The Elder Testament: Canon, Theology, Trinity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018), 40–46, 50, 261–70. On Childs, see the perceptive thesis by David Barr, “The Pneumatology of Brevard S. Childs” (MA thesis, University of Virginia, 2014); on related discussions, C. Kavin Rowe, “Biblical Pressure and Trinitarian Hermeneutics,” *ProEccl* 11 (2002), 295–312.

2. Daniel R. Driver, *Brevard Childs, Biblical Theologian: For the Church's One Bible*, FAT 2/46 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 160–205. Childs's views about midrash and its relationship to both canon and specifically Christian readings of Scripture is complex and evolved over time, quite significantly. My point here is only to note that Childs always saw the Old Testament's scriptural fund of meaning—exegetical and otherwise—as necessarily open to a range of referential possibility, something that both Jews and Christians, each in their own way, recognized. His more mature notion of the New Testament's own peculiar character of christological dependency in the first instance, does not alter the fundamental hermeneutic parallel between Jews and Christians with respect to the Old Testament. Rather, it establishes what I will call their theodical compass.

A Single Hermeneutical Religion

I suggest, then, a thought experiment: Judaism and Christianity are at one in their relationship to the biblical text. While I mean this to imply that they have the same God, who has the same identity, provides the same providential revelation, and gives it to the same end, my experiment is not aimed at arguing this or at offering another version of the two-covenant theology. I have no primary interest in parsing out Jews and gentiles or Israel and church here. Rather, my thought experiment is focused mostly on the scriptural text and is aimed at indicating how two historical trajectories of interpretation of Old Testament/Tanakh end in the same referential space, driven by parallel, if diversely motivated, hermeneutical orientations. One might move in various theological directions from this kind of claim. But it is the fundamental textual claim I want to reflect upon. Hence, the real issue is not whether Judaism and Christianity are the same religion in a broad sense, but whether they are the same religion hermeneutically, that is, in relation to interpreting texts as divine revelation.

There is a standard, and quite persuasive, view of Christian engagement with the Scriptures of Israel: the encounter with and belief in Jesus as the promised Messiah of the Scriptures encouraged his followers to scrutinize these Scriptures as speaking about just this person, Jesus of Nazareth.³ That is, initially, the first interpretive move was one, broadly, of recognizing prophetic fulfillment. But as Jesus's identity became more clearly grasped in terms of a high Christology—and this was, arguably, by some of his first followers—that identity was, in various ways, divinely appropriated (whether as Wisdom, Son of God, *torah*, or God himself). The Scriptures then became viewed not only in prophetic terms, but as expressions, in a broad way, of Christ himself; they were his at root, as much as they might here and there point to him. From the Scriptures, whether in Old Testament theophanies or Prov 8, the Christ emerges. This constitutes the full Christianizing of the Old Testament and gives rise to a range of exegetical intuitions and strategies, none of them methodical, but taken together comprehensive.

According to this standard perspective, the key hermeneutical Christian move is tethered to the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth, and here the key historical event is the resurrection of the crucified one. Apart from

3. See the simple claim made by Childs in *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 526.

the resurrection, the identity of Jesus as Messiah would be obscured, and there would be no demand to search the Scriptures for explanatory or tethering prophecies. Nonetheless, the Christianizing of the Scriptures referred to above does not depend on the resurrection. While the resurrection remains the historical hinge of the Christian narrative, it is not the hermeneutical hinge. That hinge, rather, lies in asserting a divine appropriation of Jesus more particularly, and this is linked specifically with the resurrection's sublation in the ascension, the disappearing body of Jesus. Only to the degree that Jesus is integrated with the sovereign life of God himself can the Scriptures reflect him wholly, and this integration is given in the historical fact that he is no longer here but is in heaven. Blessed are those who do not see but believe—the teaching of Jesus here (John 20:29) and of Peter later (1 Pet 1:8)—underscores the crucial place of both the missing Jesus and his relocation and hence full identity as the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth.

Just to be pointed, I am going to characterize this hermeneutic hinge as one bound up with theodicy, or as a theodical hinge, from which flows a range of not just interpretive but emerging dogmatic claims: Jesus is crucified, dead, and buried; on the third day he rises—in that sense justifying his death; yet this resurrected body and reasserted messianic identity is both brief and elusive, available only to a few (1 Cor 15:1–8). It is the fact that Jesus then ascends to heaven, sitting at the right hand of God, that provides the full justification for his identity, including the mysteriously unchanged character of the world he rules. The identity of Jesus is inserted into and appropriated by God himself.

It is this hermeneutical hinge that Christianity shares with Judaism, particularly on the basis of a parallel theodicy. Both Christians and Jews lose the historical body of their devotion—Jesus and the temple respectively—and both rediscover it within these bodies' appropriated existence within the life of God: the crucified one now rules the universe from heaven, while the temple, in its heavenly establishment, is eventually seen as the place of God's own suffering and redemptive life on behalf of Israel. Each awaits its historical reappearance, simply because each is an extension of divine reality.⁴ As a result, the Scriptures refer—for each group—to

4. Reflection on the "heavenly temple" (or Jerusalem more broadly) predates the Second Temple's destruction. But it gains special traction and meaning later. On earlier Jewish discussions (as they may relate to conceptions in Hebrews), see Jared C. Calaway, *The Sabbath and the Sanctuary: Access to God in the Letter to the Hebrews and Its Priestly Context*, WUNT 2/349 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 120–40. Like the

the fullness of God, first of all, before they refer to specific historical artifacts. Christians and Jews, in the post-Jesus epoch, cull the Scriptures, in all their detail, for the revelation of God, whose life has integrated within it, the full range of the Scripture's referential detail.

Justin's Two Advents and Their Shared Theodical Hinge

This thought experiment is not an evidential argument. But we can note some examples of the kind of evidence it might engage. So, for instance, we can look at Justin's *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, a complicated text by any measure for understanding Jewish and Christian self-identity and one that has received recent scrutiny, from Seitz included. What the *Dialogus* offers is a window onto just this theodical hinge that constitutes the pressures of history upon exegetical discovery.

Whatever the reasons for the growth of the early church, it is clear that early Christians faced a theodical challenge, such as 2 Pet 3:4 makes clear: there are many who ask "where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."⁵ In a world seemingly unchanged in its quotidian form and history, the claims to a fulfilled messianic promise, now ordered by a disappeared Messiah, are difficult to establish, especially to questioning Jews. Thus, only when the Jews themselves face a parallel kind of theodical challenge—the final obliteration of their national and geographically tethered hopes—can someone like Justin compellingly engage them on the basis, not only of a shared Scripture, but of a Scripture that is now open to typological frameworks upheld, not by historical events in the first instance, as by those events' referential reach into the being of the heavenly God himself. It is here that Justin's appeal to the christological reading of the Old Testament theophanies, so much studied of late, enter. But it is important to see that a christological reading of the theophanies is offered primarily in the context of a world without self-evident divine self-assertion.

ascended Christ, the temple did not exist as some kind of ideal divine form, but as a divine reality awaiting its eventual historical reestablishment. On the key event of the temple's destruction as placing the heavenly temple's reality within the chronological promise of its eventual eschatological rebuilding, see David Flusser, *Judaism of the Second Temple Period: Sages and Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 65–75.

5. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical translations are from the AV/KJV.

That is, Justin's typological claims have purchase in a world where, as Justin deftly underlines at the opening of his dialogue, divine glory is historically postponed *for both peoples* and not only for Christian followers of a crucified and ascended Messiah. Justin's Jewish interlocutor introduces himself this way: "'Trypho,' he said, 'is my name. I am a Hebrew of the circumcision, a refugee from the recent war',... I am called; and I am a Hebrew of the circumcision, and having escaped from the war lately carried on there."⁶ Justin will play off of this reality—the Bar Kokhba revolt of 132–135—at times vigorously placing the Jews' political disaster in the context of their persecution of Christ and his followers and of their ages-long infidelities, the actual mark of which, borne in the flesh, is circumcision (Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 16, 26). More importantly, this kind of historical experience allows Justin, in the wake of Jerusalem's final fall, to call the Jews to enter the same space of political powerlessness and depolarization occupied by the Christians (Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 24). In this common space, the Scriptures can be opened to new interpretive possibilities, new at least in comparison with Trypho's now war-scarred and battered literalisms.

The actual theodical hinge here is fundamental. Justin orders his argument initially by an evidential claim: historical experience shows everyone that the law, as interpreted by the Jews, is clearly useless; it does not bring the blessings it promised; and therefore, it requires reinterpretation in its textual enunciation. This is Justin's first rhetorical move, by which he is able to claim that the real meaning of the law's demands and fulfillment—in contrast to Jewish externalities—lies in their internalized actualization (e.g., the sacrifice of the heart). More importantly, Justin can now tie these demands to the (otherwise unexpectedly) humiliated Christ in the key text of §13, where Isaiah's prophecies about the suffering servant become the central foundation upon which Justin will then justify the historical dissonance of messianic fulfillment (*Dial.* 13).

Trypho can keep asking how the claims about Jesus can make sense, if in fact the Scriptures seem to indicate a more historically concrete messianic realization. His main objection lies in the incongruence he sees between the promised glorious reign of the Messiah—as given, for example, in Daniel—and the Christian messianic claims for the humili-

6. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. Thomas B. Falls (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 4 (1.3). See also 9.3 (p. 18).

ated Jesus. Justin's own valorization of demonic exorcism in Jesus's name is not sufficient to overcome this dissonance. Trypho tells Justin, "Sir, your quotations from Scripture prove that we must look forward to that glorious and great Messiah who, as the Son of Man, receives the everlasting kingdom from the Ancient of days. But, the one whom you call Christ was without glory and honor to such an extent that he incurred the last curse of God's law, namely, he was crucified" (*Dial.* 32.1). Even if one wished to accept the notion, held by some, that the messiah might have come already and remains hidden, at some point he is to be revealed in glory (*Dial.* 110.1). In the face of these questions, however, Justin's primary appeals to Isaianic prophecy have traction because he can now locate them within what he calls the "dispensation of suffering" that follows the crucifixion, one that is now shared in an immediate way by Trypho's own experience. But Justin and Trypho seem to agree on the ultimate intent of Daniel's prophecy, which is to point to the glorious coming of God's rule upon earth. But now history, as it were, has intervened with a provisional period of waiting.

The climax to this discussion comes, after a long series of discussions of Jewish failure (as a kind of shadow to the Christian spiritualization of prophecy), in §§48–53. Here Justin seems to say that history *demand*s some kind of two-advent coordination of experience. He has played with this theme already and seemingly drawn on Trypho to agree to some extent (*Dial.* 36, 39), but the conversation is somewhat vague.⁷ Now the two-advent framework is brought in as a theodically dramatic stage, one that Justin can act upon with vigor (*Dial.* 110). Justin recites the way that the complete destruction of the Jewish nation (*Dial.* 46), now bereft even of prophetic voices, settles into dust as the Christian reality emerges, prophetically established but now ordered to some kind of deeper divine meaning.

It is this seedbed of historical failure—Christian and Jewish both—that provides the ground for Justin's christological interpretations of Scripture. The interpretations themselves do not depend, for Christians, on this coordinated misery. But, because it is one shared by Jew and Christian together now, these interpretations are viewed as having apologetic leverage for Jews as well, so Justin at this point can move to his more celebrated (in the history of dogma anyway) consideration of the divinity of Christ and of

7. See A. J. B. Higgins, "Jewish Messianic Belief in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*," *NovT* 9 (1967): 304–5.

his incarnation, engaging the theophanies of Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, and Prov 8 (*Dial.* 55–62). A crucified messiah, an “economy of Passion” (*Dial.* 31), an ascended and reigning Lord, and a required advent still postponed all point to scriptural texts that speak of the nature of God, not simply of a series of events. If the messiah’s truth is given in the deflation of Israel’s historical claims, it is only because that truth always lay outside of history itself, in the bosom of God’s own being. Hence, Jesus is indeed to be found in all the Scriptures from Genesis on.

Justin’s *Dialogue* has recently received some careful analysis, in particular for the ways it may evidence a range of messianic or broader theological beliefs within Judaism and early Christianity at Justin’s time.⁸ There is good reason to believe, for instance, that Jews already had a way of engaging the *Logos asarkos* before Jesus and hence that Christians, even before Justin, worked with a store of received theological ideas about the divine Word that could be diversely deployed in their own sense-making and apologetics. Perhaps some Jews could even posit an incarnation of sorts.⁹ These issues deserve critical study. But what I am proposing is that the death of the Messiah and his bodily (and hence narrowly historical) disappearance, on the Christian side, refashioned and limited this range of possibilities and arguments in a profound way, interiorizing its referents within God for a specifically theodical purpose. This movement was what opened up the Scriptures to new forms of exegesis. Jews, conversely, began

8. One must take serious consideration of Boyarin’s controversial argument that Justin’s *Dialogue* represents a visible moment in the process of separation between Jews and Christians, who in fact shared a range of similar and even overlapping beliefs (including belief in a variously interpreted divine Logos). Christians were, in fact, originally but one among many Jewish religious parties. Part of Justin’s argumentative rhetoric, according to Boyarin, is to “take away the Logos from Judaism” and claim it as a distinctive Christian truth, contributing to the erection of a distinct Christian religion. Bucur has built on this line of thinking, offering his own distinctive correctives. Yet, in the end, neither Jew nor Christian could pry loose from the other that which God held for them tightly; the separation, that is, may have been only apparent. See the chapter entitled “Justin’s Dialogue with the Jews: The Beginnings of Orthodoxy,” in Daniel Boyarin, *Borderlines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 37–73; and Bogdan G. Bucur, “Justin Martyr’s Exegesis of Biblical Theophanies and the Parting of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism,” *TS* 75 (2014): 34–51.

9. See Nicholas Perrin, “Messianism in the Narrative Frame of Ecclesiastes,” *RB* 108 (2001): 37–60.

to do something similar, although it would take several centuries outside of institutionalized dogmatizing to reach more doctrinal claims about this—via kabbalah and Hasidism, for instance, and finally, via the pressures of the Holocaust. The pressures of historical experience, that is, were crucial hermeneutical keys. The issue is not that the text's purported reference and its truth are simply or merely constructed responses to social pressure. Rather, such pressure, as it was eventually shared and within the arena also of a shared Scripture, gave rise to a gradually intersecting set of practices and finally dogmatic forms.¹⁰

The Movement of Theodical Pressure

Thus, it is correct to speak of the internal pressures of the literary text of the Old Testament as pushing in a direction that Christians will engage in a (logically consistent) Trinitarian way. But it is just as correct to see these pressures as coming from outside the text, as it were, from (in a believer's framework) the providential stripping from history of otherwise expected scriptural referents (the victorious body of the Messiah or the temple, both of which disappear from experienced temporality). The Trinity would not have emerged from the Scriptures, were not the Scriptures wrenched from other expected historical fulfillments. Furthermore, it is just this wrenching that is shared by Jews and Christians together.¹¹ That would take some time to become clear, however. For as the Jews decreased, the church, it seems, increased. By the time Chrysostom was writing his tirades against the Jews of Antioch, he was doing so from the vantage of Christianity's political ascendancy as the central religion of the empire.¹² Over and over

10. This proposal of mine, however, is an experiment, and the last claim is precisely one that can neither be proven, nor even provided adequate tools for evaluating, given the long history of divergent theological systems and attitudes that have grown up among Jews and Christians. Luther's theology of the cross would, of course, make little sense in a Jewish context (it would even, as it ended up doing, prove deeply hostile to that context). But Luther's theology of the cross is itself something that has been subjected to difficult rereadings over the past two centuries, and especially most recently, and may well itself be a husk to some deeper kernel Christians and Jews might both recognize as true.

11. Baruch M. Bokser, "Rabbinic Responses to Catastrophe: From Continuity to Discontinuity," *PAAJR* 50 (1983): 39.

12. John Chrysostom's eight sermons often entitled "Against the Jews" can be found in an accessible (but anonymous) English translation, curated by Roger Pearse

again, Chrysostom can point to the complete destruction of Jewish institutions as itself the fulfillment of Scriptural prophecy, including Jesus's own. By contrast, the church's survival of persecution and even flourishing is, for Chrysostom, proof of divine providential favor and, of course, of Christian scriptural interpretation itself.

In the Gamaliel test, as Chrysostom says, the Christians (seem to) win: "Therefore there can be no dispute or question but that the Church has won the victory crown" (*Adv. Jud.* 5.10). According to his reading of Daniel, there is to be no end to the Jews' bondage. There is no forgiveness, only punishment. Turning to Malachi and Zephaniah, Chrysostom now reads these prophets in a sequential fashion as predicting both the end of Jewish worship and sacrifice and the Christian expansion in the world (*Adv. Jud.* 5.12). But the destruction of Judaism's institutions—in temple and sacrifice—lie behind the failed carnal literalisms of their biblical reading (*Adv. Jud.* 6). Temple, altar vessels, sacrifice, ordination: all are too carnally particular and all are now passed by in the ruination of the temple. As a result, Chrysostom scorns synagogue worship, for such worship is now consigned to failed mimicry of laws that history has rendered unachievable in this age. Meanwhile, Chrysostom argues, the Old Testament laws of worship, given the historical transition marked by Jerusalem's destruction, must find their fulfillment in the Christian spiritualizing symbolism of their details: typological reference represents the law's true end. Only Christians can spiritualize the law, he insists. Having done so, they leave the Jews behind to be swallowed by the wreckage of their fleshly exegesis, one that can offer no solace within the ruins of Jerusalem.

Of course, Chrysostom seems ignorant of the changes that Jewish scriptural interpretation and devotion had been experiencing over the previous two centuries at least, one that followed many of the lines traced by a two-advent framework of hiddenness, spiritualization, and promised but deferred revelatory glory, very similar in dynamic to Justin's own arguments. It is well known that, after the temple destruction and then, yet more decisively, the annihilation of Jewish nationalism in the Bar Kokhba war of 130–133, aspects of Jewish theology already being explored in and

at "Early Church Fathers—Additional Texts," http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/index.htm#Chrysostom_Against_the_Jews. Translations come from this website. For a published translation, see John Chrysostom, *Discourses against Judaizing Christians*, trans. Paul W. Harkins, FOC 68 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1979).

before Jesus's time were harnessed quite explicitly to the new situation. In this, Jewish exegesis itself began to spiritualize and, in the process, propose as ontologically foundational historical realities like temple and sacrifice itself that could therefore exist independent of their temporal concretization, with or even in God.

The dynamic by which rabbinic Judaism saw concrete biblical practices attached to temple come to be divinely appropriated within the internal character of God is well-known, despite debates over its exact historical map. The process is sometimes spoken of in terms of substitution, as in substituting torah study, or the family order and regulation for temple sacrifice. But the term *substitute* is too functional; acts like sacrifice were deemed substitutable because they were located in God's primal will in the first place, and their enactment in time in various ways were seen as divinely identical somehow. Hence, temple, and torah especially, in developing Judaism come to have ontological status that is internal to God's being, such that they can both be creatively ordering of human decision-making in various historical circumstances, and themselves reflect the very identity of God. Some of this divine internalization follows almost exactly the same trajectories of spiritualizing scriptural texts that Christians themselves engaged. Thus, repentance was substituted for sacrifice, based after all on prophetic texts well-known in the Scriptures (e.g., Isa 58:6; Hos 6:6):¹³

Once as Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai was coming out of Jerusalem, Rabbi Joshua followed him, and beheld the Temple in ruins. Said R. Joshua, "Woe unto us that this place, the place where the iniquities of Israel were atoned for, is in ruins." Said [Rabban Yohanan] to him, "My son, be not grieved. We have another atonement that is like it. And what is it? It is acts of lovingkindness, as it is said, 'For I desire mercy (hesed), not sacrifice' (Hos 6)." ¹⁴

Jews and Christians both appealed to the same texts in their denuded situations. Furthermore, the historical concretization of scriptural referents always remained in place for Jews (as much as for Christians) whose escha-

13. For a good overview, see Dalia Marx, "The Missing Temple: The Status of the Temple in Jewish Culture Following Its Destruction," *European Judaism* 46 (2013): 61–78.

14. Bokser, "Rabbinic Responses," 38.

tological hope for the rebuilding of the temple and restoration of Zion appealed to a reality parallel to the Christian second advent, when the literal, as it were, regains its clear footing. For Jews (again in parallel with Christians), these exegetically propulsive hopes were liturgically reenacted, as in wedding ceremonies, where both mourning and joy are engaged.

Finally, Jewish exegetical devotion came to see torah itself as something linked with, sometimes even identified with, the creative and ordering mind of God.¹⁵ At this point, the full range of historical experience—in its brilliant interventions of glory and catastrophe both, in its extended ennui of toil and suffering—find their place in God's own life, given as they are in the details of the torah's articulation. The *torah kadmonit* (primordial torah) "appears or is at least alluded to, throughout the ages, in pretty much every text that any Orthodox Jew is likely to take seriously."¹⁶ Although this understanding of the torah has its conceptual origins within the pressures of the scriptural text's own articulation prior to Christianity, it only flowers and ramifies in the post-Christian (and destruction) period, even as it also seeks a delicate (if sometimes unconvincing) distance from Christian ideas of intra-Trinitarian relations. Like the Son, the torah was, for some Jewish thinkers, a matter of divine "eternal generation."¹⁷

The difference between the Christian incarnate Logos and the Jewish historically extended Israel are enormous, narratively and—as it plays out—institutionally, and the difference cannot be underestimated. But it is interesting that the Scriptures themselves end up being opened to a vast figural meaning in either case—doctrinally as much as devotionally.

Figural Reading and the One God

Burton Visotzky drew a provocative parallel several decades ago between early rabbinic and early Christian allegorical hermeneutics.¹⁸ He engaged, primarily, the exemplars of R. Akiva and Origen. Visotzky places these parallels under the heading of "jots and tittles" (which he also relates to

15. See the argument, with references, in Samuel Lebens, "Is There a Primordial Torah?," *IJPR* 82 (2017): 219–39.

16. Lebens, "Primordial Torah," 226.

17. Lebens, "Primordial Torah," 230.

18. Burton L. Visotzky, "Jots and Tittles: On Scriptural Interpretation in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures," *Prooftexts* 8 (1988): 257–69.

Jesus's own saying in Matt 5:18). On the one hand, there is R. Akiva's plumbing of the abyss of the law's details:

Rav Yehuda quoted Rav: When Moses ascended to the Heights [to receive the Torah] he found God sitting and drawing crownlets upon the letters. Moses said to God, "Master of the Universe, what is staying Your hand [from giving me the Torah unadorned]?" God replied, "There is a man who will arise many generations in the future, his name is Akiba b. Yosef. He will exegetically infer mound upon mound of halakhot from each and every tittle." Moses requested, "Master of the Universe, show him to me." God said, "Turn backwards [and you will see him]." Moses [found himself in R. Akiba's classroom where he] sat at the back of the eighth row. He didn't understand what they were talking about and felt weak. Then, they came to a matter about which the students asked Akiba, "Rabbi, how do you know this?" He told them, "It is the [oral] law given to Moses at Sinai." Moses felt relieved. He returned to God and said, "Master of the Universe, you have a person like this and [still You choose to] give the Torah through my hands?" God replied, "Silence! This is according to My plan." Moses said, "Master of the Universe, you've shown me his teaching (Torah), show me his reward." God said, "Turn [backward and you may see it]." Moses turned around and beheld [the Roman torturers] weighing his flesh on the market scales. He said to God, "Master of the Universe, that was his Torah and this is his reward!?" God said, "Silence! This is according to my plan."¹⁹

On the other hand, there is Origen's faith in Scripture's inexhaustible store of verbal medicines:

I suppose that every letter, no matter how strange, which is written in the oracles of God, does its work. And there is not one jot or tittle written in the Scripture, which, when men know how to extract the virtue does not work its own work.... The saint is a sort of spiritual herbalist who culls from the sacred Scriptures every jot and every common letter, discovers the value of what is written and its use, and finds there is nothing in the Scripture superfluous.²⁰

19. Visotzky, "Jots and Tittles," 257. The story is taken from Menah. 29b. The two referenced sages are Rav Yehuda (d. ca. 300) and Rav Akiba (d. ca. 250).

20. Visotzky, "Jots and Tittles," 258–59. This comes from the *Philocalia's* quotation of Origen's homily on Jer 39.

Visotzky speculates not so much mutual influence as some kind of shared outlook. Indeed, I would say that the jots and tittles of Akiba and Origen are not simply parallel but spring from the same theological rationale: the truth of the Scriptures lies, in their breadth and detail both, within the very character of God. The Scripture—here the Old Testament or Tanakh—is coextensive with the mind of the Lord.

Where this goes in a range of Jewish, kabbalistic, and Hasidic streams is a complex and debated story, just as is the still uncertain development and outcome of Christian figural reading.²¹ But Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira's Warsaw Ghetto sermons, from the early 1940s, collected under the title of *Esh Kodesh*, represents an almost shocking culmination of this development of torahnic divine internalization.²² Rabbi Shapira's vision of God—with its hidden divine chambers, divine tears and pain, that represents a kind of divine assumption of sin itself in the most mysterious, burdensome, and transfiguring way—builds on a cascading accumulation of these readings and interpretive moves from within in this case especially Hasidic mysticism. But the vision itself is uncomfortably congruent with central Christian articulations of God, held together not arbitrarily but precisely by the way a single Scripture, in this case, is opened up by an inescapable history.

Jewish exegetical tradition, which made use of these multiplying figural readings of the Scripture, including the text's "crownlets," its jots and tittles, upon which finally the *Esh Kodesh* depends, is certainly not some interpretive equivalent to the New Testament. Nor does the New Testa-

21. I have tried to outline some of these streams in the Christian context, themselves often theodically articulated, in the second chapter of Ephraim Radner, *Time and the Word: Figural Reading of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2016), 44–82. This sketch, however, is both incomplete and in many ways, misleading because of this. Jewish figural trajectories are yet more complex, and, obviously, less accessible to non-Jewish scholars. A challenging entry point can be found in Michael Fishbane, *The Exegetical Imagination: On Jewish Thought and Theology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

22. The bulk of these sermons can be found in an English translation in Kalonymos Kalmish Shapira, *Sacred Fired: Torah from the Years of Fury, 1939–1942 [Esh kodesh]*, ed. Deborah Miller, trans. J. Hershy Worch (Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 2000). For a discussion of the difficult placement of R. Shapira's work in the Hasidic mystical stream, see Avichai Zur, "'The Lord Hides in Inner Chambers': The Doctrine of Suffering in the Theosophy of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira of Piaseczno," *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 25 (2011): 183–237.

ment, as I emphasized earlier, simply or mainly interpret the Old Testament as a kind of Christian gloss. The New Testament, rather, presents Jesus the Christ. Yet this distinction is not absolute, since the Christ is only so, not as a person given in absolute terms, but as a person given in the Scriptures, the Old Testament or Tanak. Indeed, if the torah is given to know God, and Christ is the Word made Flesh in order to make God known, then we are back, not so much to an equivalence as a common purpose. My thought experiment, further, is to suppose that both Old and New Testaments lead into the same place, the heart of God, in its conflictive mystery, of divine tears and suffered crucifixion. Christian doctrine, like that of the Trinity, might indeed serve this movement from the Christian side. And to this degree, a Trinitarian referential press can be read as internal to the Old Testament, but only in a certain way, that is, as a gift for divine revelation, as a spade for the digging or as a storehouse for the jots and tittles. The real location of the convergence of Jewish and Christian readings of the Old Testament lie here: in the divine internalization of the Scriptures as a whole, which can only give rise, ultimately, to common claims about God's actual self. It is not so much that the messianic claims about Jesus are cryptically or simply unconsciously upheld by Jews—far from it. It is that these claims, in their doctrinal—and ultimately (for Christians) Trinitarian or (for Jews) torahnic—articulations and elaborations are perhaps dramatic personae held by each, however they name them. The naming is given in history. As Childs put it, if Jews did not at first recognize the Messiah in Jesus, Christians did not understand him.²³ The overcoming of each ignorance is the revelation of God.

But this might mean that the rejected Messiah, then, is not so much the description of a historical response by Jews to the actual Son of God, but is rather the only way that God might ever stand as the Lord God of the universe, of Jew and gentile both. To know God in the level playing field of history is to contest over a shared Scripture, whose meanings belong to the very heart of God and whose outworkings will break upon the reefs of asserted human claims—they will pressure them—to the point that, we pray, the whole world acknowledges the one Lord, and knowledge

23. See Brevard Childs, "Does the Old Testament Witness to Jesus Christ?" in *Evangelium, Schriftauslegung, Kirche: Festschrift für Peter Stuhlmacher zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Jostein Ådna, Scott J. Hafemann, and Otried Hofius (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 63–64.

of God and of God's glory covers the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isa 11:9; Hab 2:14).

The Character of the Biblical God

Mark W. Elliott

God of No-Surprisedness

The God of the Old Testament, to whom Brevard Childs was accustomed to refer as “The Father of (our Lord) Jesus Christ,” is not the sort of God for whom the incarnation came as a bit of a surprise.¹ Not simply because he foreknew it in predestining his Son (some evidence of this, e.g., in Rom 1:4), but because he was in some sense moving in that direction throughout the history of Israel and even before that. In fact the belief that God was active even before that is one reason why a description of the contents of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament as a history of Israel cannot really do service.

So how was God actually preparing himself for incarnation? Well, the figure of Jeremiah could be presented as a prototypical incarnation of God *avant la lettre*. Ulrich Mauser has interestingly devoted a chapter of his stimulating book *Gottesbild und Menschwerdung* to that gloomy prophet as one on whom God’s presence rested and in whom it became almost embodied. Mauser thought that the reader of the Old Testament had to ask “whether the Old Testament picture of God reveals aspects that attest God’s inclination toward incarnation.”² His answer: in Jer 4:10 Jeremiah

1. More precisely, see Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (London: SCM, 1985), 9. He writes: “Although Christians confess that the God who revealed himself to Israel is the God and Father of Jesus Christ, it is still necessary to hear Israel’s witness in order to understand who the Father of Jesus Christ is. The coming of Jesus does not remove the function of the divine disclosure in the old covenant.” This requires a theological dialogue with Judaism right up to the present.

2. “... ob das Gottesbild des Alten Testaments Züge aufweist, die die Neigung Gottes zur Menschwerdung bezeugen.” See Ulrich Mauser, *Gottesbild und Menschwerdung: Eine Untersuchung zur Einheit des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, BHT 43

may well have thought that the prophecy of blessing would hold true, that it might be unthinkable for the covenant God to change his mind. But in fact God had changed, as the prophetic word indicated: "The Word of God thus reveals the temporal quality of God."³ The God of the prophets, at least the major ones, seems to share in the emotions of his people, to the point of even moving against that very people. There is an intensity of his presence in that his word inhabits the life of the prophet. There is no place where the being of God is reserved from his "relating to people,"⁴ and even Hos 11:9 ("I will not execute the fierceness of my anger") is predicated on a change of circumstances.

It might be more accurate to say that, as well as speaking out his words, Jeremiah acts out God's ways. Mauser sees another example of a typological correspondence, when in a later book of his he takes other *prima facie* unlikely candidates as prefigurations of Christ's ministry, albeit they stand for different things in the first three gospels. For example, in Mark the wilderness is one of a number of hostile places; in Matthew, Jesus's life is a wilderness of temptation as he forges a Moses-like covenant renewal; in Luke the wilderness is a designation for the Essene community (Luke 1:80).⁵ Now, of course, in the earlier church tradition of interpretation it was events (*res gestae*) rather than personages or places that provided typology with its poles, as portrayed in the title of Alan C. Charity's still useful work: *Events and Their Afterlife*.⁶ In Mauser's work we see a move from intertextuality to something stronger, even typological, in which the (mighty and more subtle) acts of God reflect each other.

Hezekiah is another such figure, one who receives pride of place in the canonical book of Isaiah and whose function includes tying up the earlier (judgment) and the later (hope) parts. In the person of Hezekiah there is thus a movement from judgment to hope. As Sir 48:22 has it: "Hezekiah saw the last things and consoled the afflicted of Zion." The

(Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1971), 16. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from German and French are mine.

3. "Das Wort Gottes erschließt also die Zeithaftigkeit Gottes" (Mauser, *Gottesbild und Menschwerdung*, 97).

4. "Verhalten zum Menschen" (Mauser, *Gottesbild und Menschwerdung*, 97).

5. Ulrich Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness: The Wilderness Theme in the Second Gospel and Its Basis in the Biblical Tradition*, SBT 39 (London: SCM, 1963).

6. Alan C. Charity, *Events and Their Afterlife: The Dialectics of Christian Typology in the Bible and Dante* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

prophet himself disappears along with Hezekiah in Isa 39. Yet it is not Hezekiah himself who is a model or a type, but his prefiguring deeds, and the active piety and experience of the chastened community that observes and learns from him.

Or, to take one further example, King Josiah might well be considered a type whose actions draw past and future together, as in the vision of nations converging at Jerusalem to hear the law and pledge peace in Jer 7.⁷ Jacques Vermeylen has located this passage at the time of Josiah's reforms, en route to a more permanent and spiritual reform that the messiah would usher in. Again, these are actions under divine governance, not people or places as such.

Yet is the Old Testament for all that merely provisional? What is the difference between (1) using the Old Testament texts as foundational for all else that is said about a theological topic and (2) letting them provide merely a "point of departure"?⁸ Much in every way. In preferring (2), Vermeylen seems to work with a view of the Old Testament faith as in some sense decadent, needing a focus in Christ to prevent its decaying in the postapostolic period, even going back to its old materialist and fetishist ways. Hence he allows for a cosmic imaginary ordered around the temple, which in the New Testament has become identified with Christ and not with the church. It needs to be fixed on that spot, that anchor of the incarnation.

Yet whatever the correctness of such worries about the creeping return to Old Testament ways starting the minute the apostolic age was over (Vermeylen), it needs to be said that there is nothing new in terms of content or significance in the New Testament, for all its upgraded spirituality in the living water offered by Jesus Christ (John 4:10; 7:38). No, the character of God, whether as *ex pluribus unum* or according to some other construction of monotheism, is established; there is a doctrine of resurrection more than hinted at in the Former Testament; grace and faith-justification are there too, whether in Gen 15, Hab 2, or elsewhere. What *is* new is the *reality* of God made available in spiritual power. God therefore is not revising himself with the advent of the New Testament but is rather, as it were,

7. Jacques Vermeylen, *Jérusalem, Centre du monde: Développements et contestations d'une tradition biblique*, LD 217 (Paris: Cerf, 2007).

8. "Comme un point de départ." See Vermeylen, *Jérusalem*, 335. He writes: "Mon choix herméneutique est clair: je lis le texte à partir du canon chrétien des Ecritures, donc le centre de gravité se trouve dans le Nouveau Testament."

applying himself. In the Trinity, God is already extraverted, turned out. The eternal Trinity is not a holy huddle, for all God is a community in his outwardness. Yet there being no real relation to creation means that when God acts toward it he does so out of his will and uses mediation to achieve things, establishing among creatures a relation toward him. God the Lord is one and continues to be one when Jesus is also Lord (1 Cor 8:6).

Likewise the incarnation was not a time for big surprises even in moral instruction to the human race, or even to Israel. Jesus was not revising the law but was saving it from fallacious applications and desiring a hearing of the law in the spirit of the law. To speak of Jesus primarily in terms of an eschatological prophet is to ignore the content of most of his teaching: while his words do speak of judgment as a future fact, this was not unknown to Israel and her Scriptures and what endure are principles of which, long before, the Law and the Prophets would have owned (cf. Luke 16:29–31). Assuming the gospel apocalypses and John 16:21–32, which warns of future sufferings, are authentically traditional in the sense of going back to Jesus himself, it has to be said that there is neither originality nor a metaphysic nor timetable in this teaching. The criterion of dissimilarity has held us captive even after its receiving heavy blows from the New Perspective movement.

In short, the majority of Jesus's teaching of the kingdom involves retrospective retrieval for the sake of the present and the imminent future. Jesus was no progressive in the sense of new ideas corresponding to new situations.⁹ Indeed it seems that the Jesus Seminar and the publications of Marcus Borg and John Kloppenborg had this in their favor: that the Jesus of the gospels is concerned with the present more than with the future, to put it extremely simply. One preserves the Old Testament reading and accords it equal worth with the New, since it was at the heart of the religion of Jesus and the early church until recently. Hence Notger Slenczka seems to commit a category mistake in saying that the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament is a book that belongs to that original community which the church divorced or that the Old Testament is simply not addressed to the church.¹⁰ It is at least arguable that the Old Testament Scriptures in their full range were more quoted with oracular authority in the New

9. Attempts to look at literature on progressive revelation are sparse. See, e.g., Koog-Pyoung Hong, "Elohim, the Elohist, and the Theory of Progressive Revelation," *Bib* 98 (2017): 321–38.

10. Notger Slenczka, "Die Kirche und das Alte Testament," in *Das Alte Testament*

Testament and the church fathers than they were in Tannaitic Judaism. It is better to see the histories of Jewish and Christian interpretation of their common Scripture as intertwined and interdependent.

Reinhard Feldmeier and Helmut Spieckermann

The combination of what Reinhard Feldmeier and Helmut Spieckermann call a “doctrine of God” (*Gotteslehre*), namely, their *Gott der Lebendigen* of 2011 and a Christology, that is their *Menschwerdung* of 2018, itself poses questions. In their usage, incarnation would seem to mean a number of things, but the idea is that mediator figures—whether David-messianic, Son of Man-type, or even the Maccabean martyrs—did service as fore-runners of Christ, even while avoiding the term typology.¹¹ Particular attention at the conceptual level is given by them to a wisdom proto-Christology in the reflection and image of Wis 7:26 and in Solomon’s desire to have Wisdom as bride. Here they see a foretaste of the idea that wisdom will become available to all through the incarnation.¹² There is something exquisitely moral-visionary about this interpretation, whatever else it may omit. Moreover, Jewish (and Christian) theology will not speak of God without also speaking of humanity in the same breath, from creation accounts onward, not least Gen 1:26 or Ps 8. In all this the figure of Noah, with his name signifying God’s ruing and change to have mercy (Gen 6:6), has great significance, and Abraham carries on that covenant as the father of all nations.¹³ God’s righteousness is hidden in Genesis. Abraham is called “my servant” (18:17), which implies he was about to be tested.

in der Theologie, ed. Elisabeth Gräb-Schmidt and Reiner Pruel, MJTh 25, MThSt 119 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013), 83–119.

11. Reinhard Feldmeier and Hermann Spieckermann, *Der Gott der Lebendigen: Eine biblische Gotteslehre*, Topoi Biblischer Theologie 1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011); Feldmeier and Spieckermann, *Menschwerdung*, Topoi Biblischer Theologie 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018).

12. Feldmeier and Spieckermann, *Menschwerdung*, 6. They write: “Nicht nur Salomo hat diese Chance, sondern im Lichte der Menschwerdung Gottes jeder Mensch, der sich die in Gen 3 zur Schuld geöffneten Augen durch den Mensch gewordenen neu öffnen lässt: durch die Öffnung der Schriften (Luk 24: 13–32). Die Emmaus-Jünger tragen ihr brennendes Herz in die Nacht hinein.”

13. See Feldmeier and Spieckermann, *Menschwerdung*, 17. They are bold to assert: “Abraham ist nicht Protagonist einer glänzenden Erfüllungsgeschichte verhe-

It would seem that God's righteousness can take different and not always consistent forms, and mediators are all important. Isaiah 43:22–28 carries a pejorative use of the term mediator from the vantage point of the exile, which would replace institutions (priest, king) with instances (prophets of mediation).¹⁴ Contrast this with the preexilic Ps 21 and its obvious promotion of the king as mediator, who receives blessing to pass on (cf. Ps 72:17). By the end of the Old Testament process there are four figures to be considered as having such a role: the Isaianic servant (Zion), the (Maccabean) martyrs, John the Baptist and the baptism he offered, and finally, Jesus with his authoritative "Amen, Amen I say to you."¹⁵

However grateful one may be for this rich survey, there is a point of theological tension here: Does God use a responsive freedom at each stage, or is he caught up in a continual, inexorable stream that might amount to a process, to escape from which would soon require a radical change of direction?¹⁶ Has one escaped from the Scylla/firepan of the radical discontinuity between testaments into the Charybdis/fire of a process God who is increasingly a character in and less the author of the narrative? The section of the *Menschwerdung* book is completed with recourse to the old Salzburg Christmas hymn on the power of descending love, which seems to incorporate the topos of the king who dresses as a peasant in order to get to know the real feelings of the citizens he encounters.¹⁷ The summary of the hymn as "God has arranged for the partner without which he does

ißenen Segens, sondern Segensträger, der ständig Gefährdung und Verzögerung des Segens erleidet."

14. Isa 63:9b, "der Bote seines Angesichts hat sie gerettet"; cf. Ps 103 with its various mediators of divine presence ("Mittler der Gottesnahe").

15. See Feldmeier and Spieckermann, *Menschwerdung*, 189, for their summaries. Feldmeier and Spieckermann, *Menschwerdung*, 196: "Dieses Bewusstsein seiner 'Gottesunmittelbarkeit' erklärt auch die wohl auffälligste Besonderheit der Lehre Jesu, seine Bildreden, in denen ihm die gesamte Wirklichkeit zum Gottesgleichnis wird."

16. Feldmeier and Spieckermann, *Menschwerdung*, 331.

17. Feldmeier and Spieckermann, *Menschwerdung*, 329: "Das überraschende 'Muss' dieses Abstiegs—immerhin führt die Straße, auf der er jetzt reisen muss, ans Kreuz—erklärt das Lied das Lied dadurch, dass der über jeden äußeren Zwang erhabene Himmelsthroner bezwungen wird von seiner eigenen Liebe ... Menschwerdung ist endgültige Liebestat des Gottes, der in seiner Schöpfung, besonders in seinem liebsten Geschöpf, dem gottebenbildlichen Menschen, *das Gegenüber geschaffen hat, ohne welches er nicht Gott sein will.*"

not want to be God” is more asserted than explained, and its precise relationship to theology in the Bible is somewhat presumed.¹⁸

The New Testament section of the *Menschwerdung* book shows Jesus as the eschatological prophet who trusted in his heavenly Father and the life-remaking power of love coming from him. Jesus’s faith in God grew from two sources that ran together in him: the scriptural witness of God as the source of life and the Savior of his people on the one side, and the powerful presence of the Lord of heaven and earth as loving Father in the life of Jesus on the other.¹⁹ The authors insist that this convergence takes place in Jesus who recognizes his Father in address and obedience and becomes a two-way mediator, such that God works in and through him powerfully.²⁰ Whereas Wis 14:3, Philo (*Opif.* 10), and Josephus (*A.J.* 1.20; 7.380) were happy to call God “Father and Lord of all,” Paul, our authors tell us, thought otherwise: “Paul does not intend to speak of God as Father.”²¹ Paul emphasizes God’s otherness and sovereignty to the extent that humans remain creatures; indeed even those who have become his enemies are given over to death and enslaved under the elements of the cosmos. God is foremost the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that is where his fatherhood is to be located.

Yet surely it is one thing to say that in Christ alone is sonship, another to assert that in him or with reference to him alone is divine fatherhood. After all, Feldmeier admits that in Rom 8:18–39 the love of God is said not to be limited to his children.²² He goes on to write that when it comes to John’s Gospel, the Logos is not the Son until he takes flesh and is only then Christ and Son of God, in whose name believers receive life.²³ With

18. See note 17 (italicized).

19. Feldmeier and Spieckermann, *Menschwerdung*, 203: “Der Gottesglaube Jesu speist sich also aus zwei Quellen, die bei ihm zusammenlaufen: dem Zeugnis der Schrift von Gott als der ‘Quelle des Lebens’ und dem Retter seines Volkes auf der einen und der machtvollen Präsenz des ‘Herrn des Himmels und der Erde’ als liebender Vater (Luke 10:21 par. Matt 11:25) in Jesu Leben auf der anderen Seite.”

20. Feldmeier and Spieckermann, *Menschwerdung*, 217: “In Jesu vollmächtigen Auftreten als Gottes lebendig machendes Handeln *durch ihn* und in Kreuz und Auferstehung als Gottes lebendig machendes Handeln *an ihm*.”

21. “So aber ist die Rede von Gott als Vater bei Paulus nicht gemeint.”

22. Feldmeier and Spieckermann, *Menschwerdung*, 230: “Gerade weil der Schöpfer der Welt zugleich liebender Vater ist, deshalb gibt es auch für das Werk seiner Hände noch Hoffnung und Befreiung von der ‘Sklaverei der Vergänglichkeit’.”

23. Feldmeier and Spieckermann, *Menschwerdung*, 277: “Allerdings muss dem sofort hinzugefügt werden, dass der Logos *vor seiner Fleischwerdung* (λόγος ἄσαρκος)

reference to John 1:14 Feldmeier adds that as “the only born” of the Father the One become flesh is now the Son of God and that this title now employed “absolutely” in the gospel as the predominant title of majesty for Jesus. Correspondingly God becomes Father for the first time in John 1:14.²⁴ Unlike many other religious scriptures, God does not relate to creation as its father, and moreover God’s fatherhood is not defined by thought of a predominance but is rather the expression of his electing action.²⁵ God can now be called “Father.”

Again, there seems to be some rather odd reading of the Trinity here, one that treats God the Father’s relationship with his Son similarly to that with his creation. Surely in John 1:14–18 glory and belonging-identity are ascribed to the Son who is at the side of the Father, *as* Son, prior to any incarnation. The implication is more of a Father-Son relationship that is eternal, while God can still be father in a differentiated way toward his creation, and certainly in a temporal one.

Canonical Overtures

Brevard Childs’s approach always stood fast against any such notions either of paradigm shifts or progressive revelation within or between testaments. Childs liked to work with themes across the canonical witness instead, but not as a tracing of themes as trajectories of development, with a need to find a way to leap a developmental gap between testaments. Old Testament theology cannot be identified with describing a historical process in the past (contra Hartmut Gese) but involves wrestling with the subject matter to which Scripture bears in the here and now. Yet that should not imply a literary reading of Scripture (contra John Barton’s allegation), for the message

noch nicht der Sohn ist. Zum ‘Erlöser der Welt’ (John 4:42), zum ‘Christus, dem Sohn Gottes’, in dessen Namen die Glaubenden ewiges Leben empfangen (20:31), wird er erst durch die Inkarnation, welche als *Fleischwerdung* die göttliche Kondeszendens ‘in der härtestmöglichen Weise’ ausdrückt.”

24. Feldmeier and Spieckermann, *Menschwerdung*, 291: “Als der ‘Einziggeborene vom Vater’ ist der Menschgewordene nun der Sohn Gottes, und das absolut gebraucht ‘Sohn’ wird den auch im Evangelium zu dem für Jesus vorherrschenden Hoheitstitel. Entsprechend wird Gott durch den Sohn zum Vater und erstmals in John 1:14 als solcher bezeichnet.”

25. Feldmeier and Spieckermann, *Menschwerdung*, 291: “und Gottes Vaterschaft wird auch nicht vom Gedanken einer Vorherrschaft bestimmt, sondern ist vielmehr Ausdruck seines erwählenden Handelns.”

of the text is to be applied to the present and is not a closed body of material that is to be analyzed descriptively. It is a bit like a convertible, having a defined shape but open to the elements. It is Israel's faith-construal of history that one starts with and the New Testament's antiphonal response, but Christian theology is the end product. The referentiality of a *res*, while not the same thing as ostensive reference to historical details, forbids a literary reading that is content with merely intratextual correspondences. Accordingly a canonical approach is radically theocentric in its faith-orientation rather than anthropocentric. By focusing on the kerygma itself, such an approach follows the Old Testament's witness beyond itself to its subject matter, who is God, and thus provides a critical basis for genuine theological reflection.²⁶ As rendering the sacred tradition for the future with a kerygmatic focus the biblical canon is hardly *incurvatus in se*.

For Childs, the canon as the repository of the historical faith's content is historical even if it is the first- and second-century CE's historical. What Childs is describing is not so much the existence of some continuity of tradition between the two testaments. Rather, the Old Testament features certain definitions and delineations of key concepts that selectively shape that tradition, and it is this shaped tradition that the New Testament then gets to play around with. Moreover, as Ephraim Radner has often insisted, a figure to be a figure must exist in the historical reality of divine action.²⁷ The Old Testament plays an anchoring role with regard to the New Testament.

When it comes to Christopher Seitz's version of the canonical approach, not least in his book *Figured Out*, the conservatism of the approach is applied to the consideration of issues affecting the church.²⁸ Seitz's work is stamped by an eye on the ecclesial, the church as beset by ethical questions or liturgical: he reminds us that Advent used to be the last not first season in the church calendars. Typology works in the register of meaning for the church today.

26. Brevard S. Childs, "Analysis of a Canonical Formula: 'It Shall Be Recorded For a Future Generation,'" in *Die hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte: Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Erhard Blum (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 363. The fine study by Daniel Driver is most helpful here: Driver, *Brevard Childs, Biblical Theologian: For the Church's One Bible*, FAT 2/46 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 240–41.

27. Ephraim Radner, *Time and the Word: Figural Reading of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

28. Christopher R. Seitz, *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

Seitz understands typological correspondence as illustrative of the different epochs sharing the same categories, with the older being in the driver's seat, giving shape to the earlier even while giving the newer a certain amount to work with freely. Figural reading means the Old Testament witness is taken extremely seriously, and thereby there is affirmed a "meaningful appeal to providence as is implied in the psalmist's 'Thou art my God. My times are in thy hand' (Ps 31:15)." Providence of this sort depends on particular revelation, which is itself grounded in particular election ("in Judah God is known" [Ps 76:1]).²⁹

The gospels therefore provide a fourfold witness that does not amount to a canceling out of each but, as the fathers understood it, of a true polyphony. For the church that responds to providence is the agent of a proper account of the Savior. The canonical Jesus is the Jesus of the gospels, Paul, Hebrews, and the rest. Jesus steps into a providential flow. "Does Jesus's comprehension of his own mission provide the essential ... and starting point for theological reflection? No. To say this is to confuse the authority of God's word held in trust with Israel with the New Testament's according configuring of it."³⁰ Thus the Jesus the church worships is the Jesus informed by a corpus of texts.

The freedom of the New Testament to go its own way corresponds to God's own reactive freedom. He does not always play black at chess, but perhaps at least some of the time he does. Yet when he does he is responding to his own initiatives as taken on by his more ancient people, Israel. The freedom of the New Testament is real but qualified, and yet without the enabling categories and tradition (and people of God) there would be no basis for freedom. A gift is given before the commandment, and that consists of a sign of saving love, which gives room to the "vibration of desire," as Paul Beauchamp has put it. In Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* (Beauchamp tells us) there are two obediences: one to the command, another to that which leads to God. The time of Scripture is in a sense over, but it remains as a necessary foundation or platform.³¹ As the Bible gives up after having

29. Seitz, *Figured Out*, 195.

30. Seitz, *Figured Out*, 116.

31. Paul Beauchamp, *L'Un et L'Autre Testament*, 2 vols. (Paris: Seuil, 1977), 1:227: "Toute la Bible incline à cette union de Dieu et de ce qu'il crée, à la présence de Dieu dans son don.... Le temps de l'écriture, c'est le temps que Dieu s'inscrive dans son monde comme son origine: le livre est déclaré clos quand l'ancien monde est annoncé proche de sa fin. Cet ancien monde s'est fait lui-même loi et lettre, loi qui ferme pas-

provided a way for human flourishing, the pull of the Spirit toward a more personal-relational takes over.

Now this hardly seems conservative, and it reminds one of the desert fathers, or Augustine's *bon mot* that the spiritually mature person will have graduated beyond Scripture.³² Yet this was hardly normal, let alone normative for the churches under Augustine's care, and we should remember how the great theologian became increasingly suspicious of those who thought they could forego basic means of grace and theological instruction based on Scripture.

The Biblical Theology of Paul Ricoeur

James Fodor has argued that for Paul Ricoeur the extratextual reference of the biblical texts mattered, but by this he meant their openness to the actual world.³³ This need not mean subjection of theology to philosophy's agenda, as seemed to happen with the Enlightenment, but some sort of dialogue. Ricoeur was always suspicious of any *reducing of Scripture* to one voice of "history of salvation."³⁴ Likewise for Beauchamp (whose work was foundational for Ricoeur) typology is about fulfillment, not of prophecy (of salvation) but rather of narrative, mostly of the Pentateuch, providing narrated, not merely historical identity. Figure means a coherent organization or schema.³⁵ Allegorical reading would not serve to prove doctrines

sage à tout passage ailleurs qu'en lui, lettre qui s'écrit d'une extrémité du monde à l'autre et met sur toute chose sa griffe." Cf. Zech 14:20.

32. See *Doctr. chr.* 1.43. He writes, "And thus a man who is resting upon faith, hope and love, and who keeps a firm hold upon these, does not need the Scriptures except for the purpose of instructing others. Accordingly, many live without copies of the Scriptures, even in solitude, on the strength of these three graces."

33. James Fodor, *Christian Hermeneutics: Paul Ricoeur and the Refiguring of Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 279. This work, for all its heavier criticism of Hans Frei, has a more nuanced account of the differences between Frei and Ricoeur than is the case with Mark I. Wallace, *The Second Naiveté: Barth, Ricoeur, and the New Yale Theology*, StABH 6 (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990).

34. This is true, despite Fodor's claim that he is too interested in *Heilsgeschichte* in privileging founding events as the points that are illuminated by the narrative and playing down the mundane (see Fodor, *Christian Hermeneutics*, 322 n. 154). Surely Ricoeur would object that the former serves to interpret the latter.

35. Beauchamp, *L'Autre Testament*, 2:225: "La 'figure' signifie aussi une organisation cohérente (*figura* est la traduction ordinaire du grec *schema*)."

but would instead offer “fecundity to nourish virtue and godliness.”³⁶ Inspiration needs to be dependent on and subordinate to a larger concept of revelation. “Revelation is the continuing reality of God’s active presence naming his people.”³⁷ Childs might want to add that this has also a large cognitive element through the transmitted mediation of the Scriptures. When Fodor writes, “Thirdly, Frei not only confuses the world of the text with the world of the reader, but assumes that a semiotic system can be separate from the community which constitutes that system,” the place of the community in forming the Scriptures by rehearsing the word of God is a useful response to this.³⁸ Without buying into reader-response and lives shaped by the word as the determining factors in meaning, there is something pleasingly nonnaïve about Ricoeur’s hermeneutics, precisely because he offers due attention to faith and community.

Ricoeur insists that recalling is not the same as exercising memory, whatever can be affirmed about the faithfulness of memory. No, recall should not be so subjectivized that the what of the remembrance and its distinctive voice are lost. It is one thing to answer a question, another to respond to a call.³⁹ Thus the one reading history may well be the protagonist of history, but she responds to an objective given. There is a continuous chain that runs back through cultural memory. It is tyrants who try to start anew, whereas humanism is rooted. As Ricoeur has confessed: “‘Abiding’—that is, pre-eminently, how I would describe the Judeo-Christian ‘matrix’ of our Western culture.”⁴⁰ Mutations occur within the course of history, but the claims of past sources need to be heard: for example, we should be careful not to deny the Holocaust as factual, as Hayden White’s methods risk doing.

Further, Ricoeur would guard against reducing parables to concepts, for certainly they were not told for the sake of new doctrine. Thus the Old Testament provides just what one needs to know about God: the new

36. *Enchiridion Biblicum: Documenta ecclesiastica Sacram Scripturam spectantia* (Rome: Arnodo, 1956), 220 n. 112.

37. Paul Ricoeur, “Historiography and the Representation of the Past,” in *Two Thousand Years and Beyond: Faith, Identity and the “Common Era,”* ed. David Archard et al. (London: Taylor & Francis, 2002), 51–68.

38. Fodor, *Christian Hermeneutics*, 295.

39. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 24. Cf. Hans-Christoph Askani et al., eds., *Paul Ricoeur: Un philosophe lit la Bible; à l’entrecroisement des herméneutiques philosophique et biblique*, Lieux théologiques 44 (Geneva: Labor & Fides, 2011), 44.

40. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 67–68.

teaching would then aim to apply it to human existence.⁴¹ The parables tell their hearers to be on their guard for enemy activity within mixed communities of belief and unbelief, so one is in no way all-accepting of new ideas. For Ricoeur, Hans-Georg Gadamer had postulated a false objectivity of textual meaning and a false closeness through the agency of a tradition of oral comment and explanation. Rather, distanciation can be a positive thing: let the text stay distant. From that distance, the newness of the New does not stand out so much. For both testaments, much work with the text, its poetry and images has to be done to bring it to the reader, acknowledging the symbolic language.⁴²

Ricoeur's two particular Gifford lectures, left out of the published version of the other lectures (*Oneself as Another*), were those that addressed the place of the Bible in philosophical ethics.⁴³ In the first of these, Ricoeur confesses that the novelty of the New Testament cannot be denied: it is summed up in the function of center, one that the poem of Christ as told about the person of Christ confers to the poem of God.⁴⁴ Yet the latter still keeps its flavor, as it were, even if given a center or rather a recentering, with Christ as a pole in the ellipse, perhaps. There is still a deferring to the mystery of the Name so long as God, the one of Exod 3:14, gets mentioned. Theology as discourse never gets beyond mystery, even a revealed mystery. Faith can fill the universal experience of hope with content of a dynamic sort. It is a refiguration in which unity lies in the future, through action.⁴⁵ Hence one might say that there is an "ontology of action" (*ontologie d'agir*). God is someone in motion, rather than being or even beyond being.⁴⁶

41. Paul Ricoeur, *L'herméneutique biblique*, introduction and trans. François-Xavier Amherdt (Paris: Cerf, 2001), 261.

42. Paul Ricoeur, *Du texte à l'action: Essais d'herméneutique*, 2 vols. (Paris, Seuil, 1986), 2:102.

43. Paul Ricoeur, *Amour et Justice* (Paris: Points, 2008): "Le soi dans le miroir des Écritures" (43–74), and "Le soi mandate" (75–110).

44. Ricoeur, *Amour et Justice*, 73: "La 'nouveau' du Nouveau Testament n'est certes pas niable: elle se résume dans la fonction de *centre* que le poème du Christ confère au poème de Dieu."

45. See the conclusions of James Fodor, *Christian Hermeneutics*, 337. Also, Jérôme Porée, "Justifier Philosophiquement l'Espérance," in Askani, *Paul Ricoeur*, 44: "Car le symbol ne donne pas seulement à penser: Il aide à vivre. Et la métaphore vive ne dit pas seulement l'existence vive: elle la rend telle."

46. André LaCoque and Paul Ricoeur, *Penser la Bible, Couleur des idées* (Paris: Seuil, 1998).

Contra Werner Jeanrond, there is no real place for historical criticism in Ricoeur's thought, since he was not interested in the origins of texts. There simply needs to be a referent in order for a text to have specificity, that is, the name of God, the events of Israel's history, and the kingdom around the person of Jesus identified as the Christ of faith. One should also go out with the text (in contrast to, say, Hans Frei's intertextuality) into an ontology of the possible.⁴⁷ The accomplishment of the Old Testament in the New Testament never ceases to come, and the former gives the latter a structure and a *telos*.

In the introduction to *Thinking Biblically*, cowritten with André LaCoque, Ricoeur mentions that "the third factor, the one that the exegete most takes into account, has to do with the connection between the text and a living community."⁴⁸ This paragraph sounds Childsian; yet in his part of the introduction LaCoque adds: "Despite its many merits, modern exegesis is largely vitiated by this conception of a fixed text, reduced once and all to its current form. Recent 'canonical' criticism contributes—in spite of itself, it is true—to this erroneous conception of a sacred text—that it is not alive." Yet, and this is worth taking to heart, for his part Ricoeur's emphasis is somewhat different:

The founding text teaches—this is what the word *torah* means. And the community *receives* instruction.... In this regard faith is nothing other than the confession of this asymmetry between the word of the teacher and that of the disciple, and between the writings in which these two types of word are inscribed [presumably between canonical texts and commentaries].⁴⁹

There does seem, for Ricoeur, to be a defined founding, canonical text for instruction: its livingness does not vitiate its authority and its givenness.

47. Cf. Ricoeur's designation of the Apocalypse of John as an "out of place" (*hors-lieu*) book.

48. André LaCoque and Paul Ricoeur, *Thinking Biblically: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), xii.

49. LaCoque and Ricoeur, *Thinking Biblically*, xvii: "Let us add in passing, that these reflections concerning the mutual election between a *corpus* of texts and a historical community suggest that we take the closing of the canon for the cause as much as the effect of this elective affinity between founding texts and founding communities." The essay in the volume on Exod 3:14 is illuminating.

Something similar could be said about the biblical God. Likewise there is no gospel without Bible:

If salvation is “word event,” then the communication of this linguistic event of does not happen without an interpretation of the whole symbolic network that constitutes the biblical “given.” Interpretation in which the self is simultaneously the interpreter and the interpreted.⁵⁰

There is a fixedness, an order of call and response, with the text on the side of the divine, notwithstanding the text’s lack of fixedness as text (with its variants, translations, etc.). If anything, the Bible is all the more porous to the divine address to the reader.

A Historical Faith, Bible, and Theology

As for the doctrine of God and Christology, God is for the Bible he who *does*. “The Father-Son relationship underscores the fundamental portrayal of God in the Gospel of John as the living God and the creator of all life (1:1–3; 6:57).... The God of the Gospel of John is the God of life.”⁵¹ God is life-giving and shows the extent of this in raising Jesus. Hence Larry Hurtado can conclude: “So theologizing about ‘God’ in the New Testament is essentially making inferences based on God’s acts.” That’s why there is little explicit theology as such in the New Testament.⁵² Or in the case of Phil 2:9–11, Jesus’s status is defined with reference to God (not vice versa). God exalted him to that status in the ascension.⁵³ When one takes seriously texts such as Rom 9:5 (“over all things”), Jesus is seen to be placed in connection with God, which allows or demands a reshaping into a binitarian account of God. This does mean not that God is reshaped, for as the protological teaching of Col 1:11–20 suggests, God has been with

50. “Si le salut est *word event*, la communication de cet événement de parole ne va pas sans une interprétation du réseau symbolique entier que constitue le donné biblique. Interprétation dans laquelle le soi est à la fois l’interprétant et l’interprété” (Ricoeur, *Amour et Justice*, 98).

51. Marianne Meyers Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 229–30. Cf. Thompson, *The Promise of the Father: Jesus and God in the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000).

52. Larry Hurtado, *God in New Testament Theology*, Library of Biblical Theology (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 35.

53. Hurtado, *God*, 54.

the Son from the beginning. (Hurtado alludes to the interesting issue of whether Isa 6 was referred to the preincarnate or the glorified Jesus in early writers like John.)⁵⁴ But Jesus did not become divine by being recognized as divine, as the apostolic era wore on, any more than God changed from the Old Testament to New Testament. Again, it is hardly the case that God has changed for all that he is redefined. According to Hurtado, "Paul filled inherited statements about 'God' with new content."⁵⁵ Christology was not something separate from the doctrine of God that was then added to the latter, to enlarge and improve it; with Neil Richardson one can speak of "an overlap in which Christ shares in some of God's attributes and actions."⁵⁶ With Francis Watson (against James D. G. Dunn) Christ resignifies God. He does not reshape God.

In an attempt to bring biblical studies and Christian systematic theology into conversation, Christoph Schwöbel writes that if theology is about history, then theology comes from historical, religious experience, through the word as sacramental of an encounter: "Our reading of Scripture has to be filtered through reference to the reflective experience-refracted effects of God."⁵⁷ One starts with the reality of God in the midst of the community grounded in his reality, who communicates through symbols, and this provides a history of God's communication that spells out his identity. Any christological identification of God cannot do without reference to his identification with Israel.⁵⁸ The *Mitte* of the Old Testament is "the ref-

54. Darrell D. Hannah, "Isaiah's Vision in the Ascension of Isaiah and the Early Church," *JTS* 50 (1999): 80–101.

55. Hurtado, *God*, 11, follows Paul-Gerhard Klumbies, *Die Rede von Gott bei Paulus in ihrem zeitgeschichtlichen Kontext*, FRLANT 155 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992).

56. Hurtado, *God*, 13; cf. Neil Richardson, *Paul's Language about God*, JSNTSup 99 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994).

57. Christoph Schwöbel, "Erwartungen an eine Theologie des Alten Testaments aus der Sicht der Systematischen Theologie," in *Theologie und Exegese des Alten Testaments/der Hebräischen Bibel*, ed. Bernd Janowski, SBS 200 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2005), 159–86, 161–62: "Sie [die Schrift] hat vielmehr Autorität im Verweis auf das geschichtliche Handeln Gottes, das wir niemals direkt, sondern stets nur in Beziehung auf seine Wirkungen, im antwortenden Glaubenzugnis und seiner Reflexion erfassen können." See more widely, Christoph Schwöbel, *Gott in Beziehung: Studien zur Dogmatik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

58. Schwöbel, "Erwartungen," 173: "Darum kann eine 'christologische Identifikation Gottes' nicht ohne Bezug zur Identifikation in Israel gelingen."

erential subject of the speech of God in all his differences and tensions.” How God is related to the world in a communicative connection is what is at issue, and “covenant” (*Bund*) is a late expression of this.⁵⁹ Hence just as the Psalms get taken over by the church, the Christ-event universalizes the God-Israel relationship—and makes a foundation for God’s relationship to reality.⁶⁰

One does not have to look too hard to see the *pro nobis* principle of Reformation theology turned into a metaphysic, under the aegis of Hegelian thought. Likewise in the account proffered by Christiane Tietz, quoting Jörg Lauster:

Still, Lauster for himself completely wants to hold fast to the language of “the Word of God.” This does not mean “the quasi-objective notion of a saving God” but describes that human beings in connection with the bible experience what they describe as a concrete “being claimed.” So “Word of God” describes a human reaction.⁶¹

What is sauce for the subject is sauce for the object.

Hence, on the one hand, to fend off any possible charge of supersessionism, the christological profiling offers no new material determination of God’s properties.⁶² Yet, on the other hand, as Schwöbel admits, system-

59. Schwöbel, “Erwartungen,” 172.

60. Schwöbel, “Erwartungen,” 175: “Die Ausdehnung des Heils auf alle Welt ist nur als konstitutiver Aspekt der Selbstzusage Gottes als Selbstbestimmung zur Gemeinschaft.”

61. “Lauster selbst will durchaus noch an der Rede vom Wort Gottes festhalten. Sie meine aber nicht ‘die quasi objective Vorstellung eines rettenden Gottes’, sondern beschreibe, dass Menschen im Umgang mit der Bibel [etwas] erleben ... was sie als ein konkretes Angesprochensein beschreiben. Wort Gottes ... beschreibt ... eine menschliche Reaktion.” Jörg Lauster, *Zwischen Entzauberung und Remythisierung: zum Verhältnis von Bibel und Dogma*, Forum 21 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2008), 23, referred to (with some reservations) by Christiane Tietz, “Das Ringen um die Schriftprinzip in der modernen evangelischen Theologie,” in *Die Streit um die Schrift*, ed. Irmtraud Fischer et al., JBTh 31 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 299.

62. Schwöbel, “Erwartungen,” 177: “Diese christologische Profilierung bietet allerdings keine neuen materialen Bestimmungen der Eigenschaften Gottes.” Canon is viewed as the sum of remembrances: “Der Kanon ist insofern als Ergebnis eines theologisch reflektierten umfassenden Wahrheitsanspruchs zu betrachten” (181). God’s philosophical characteristics can be viewed in contextualization.

atic theology tends to be based on the more recent biblical texts, and on a process within the Old Testament that moves toward monotheism, until an absolute transcendence of God can be traced toward the end. God does change in the process in that he brings his grace and truth to actualization.⁶³ For this Tübingen tradition, the biblical God evolves without undergoing any step-change between testaments; yet all the time the newer is better. The model promoted by Gese of a trajectory-tradition routed through the deuterocanonical Old Testament texts (or the experience behind them) makes this possible.

With reference to Ps 18:10 (“with my God I leap over the walls”) the biblical God can be affirmed to provide new possibilities. “Contingency and Providence are, biblically considered, two sides of the same coin.”⁶⁴ Jesus talked of the kingdom of God as well as of himself as orientation for it. The possibilities of which Ricoeur reminds us are human realities for growth in a positive, spiritual direction in communities of reconciling otherness. Analogously and correspondingly there is an ongoing, two-way illumination of each testament by the other.⁶⁵ There is certainly not a Lessing-like development from particularism to universalism. The word of humans from different centuries, which is spoken through by God, is given an antiphonal, relational, and dialogical feel. We have such possibilities arising out of that address; and on the basis of the revelation God has finished in Christ, fixed and as certain as he is, believers may take many springs forward.

63. Schwöbel, “Erwartungen,” 183: “Wird Gott radikal in Beziehung gedacht, präsentiert uns die Theologie des Alten Testaments nicht nur die Wandlungen der Gottesvorstellung, sondern die Wandlungen Gottes in dem Prozeß, in dem er seine Gnade und Wahrheit zur Verwirklichung bringt.”

64. “Kontingenz und Providenz sind, biblisch betrachtet, zwei Seiten einer Medaille.” Thomas Söding, “Wegweiser der Heiligen Schrift,” in Fischer, *Die Streit um die Schrift*, 8.

65. See Söding, “Wegweiser.” He writes: “Aus diesem Grund ist eine dialogische Hermeneutik angezeigt, die nicht nur das Alte Testament im Licht des Neuen Testaments, sondern ebenso das Neue Testament im Licht des Alten Testaments deutet—und diesen Prozess nicht beendet, sondern immer neu beginnt” (13–14); and, “die Einheit nicht integralistisch, sondern relational und insofern in sich plural erfasst wird, synchronisch wie diakronisch” (21).

The How as Well as the What: Canonical Formatting and Theological Interpretation

Stephen B. Chapman

A genuine curiosity of late modernity is how much liberal and conservative approaches to biblical interpretation resemble each other. For many if not most interpreters in both camps, the goal of biblical interpretation is to reconstruct the history to which the Bible witnesses. The difference between the two camps is then mostly a matter of what type of history is reconstructed and how reliable one finds the history reported in the Bible itself. But revelation (to the extent it is thought to exist at all) is regularly construed as lying *behind* the biblical text, whether it is in the largely secular daily life of ancient Israelites imagined by Karel van der Toorn or the redemptive history “with Christ at its center that lies in back of the text” identified by Richard Gaffin.¹ The biblical text serves instrumentally as a prompt, as testimonial evidence to be used in the assemblage of a historical contextualization that will explain the text’s meaning.

1. Karel van der Toorn, “Nine Months among the Peasants in the Palestinian Highlands: An Anthropological Perspective on Local Religion in the Early Iron Age,” in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palaestina*, ed. William G. Dever and Seymour Gitin (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 393–410. For a critique, see Brent A. Strawn, “What Would (or Should) Old Testament Theology Look Like If Recent Reconstructions of Israelite Religion Were True?,” in *Between Israelite Religion and Old Testament Theology: Essays on Archaeology, History, and Hermeneutics*, ed. Robert D. Miller II, CBET 80 (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 128–66. Richard B. Gaffin Jr., “Systematic and Biblical Theology,” *WTJ* 38 (1976): 294. Cf. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 5, where biblical theology is defined as “the study of the actual self-disclosures of God in time and space which lie back of even the first committal to writing of any Biblical document.”

What goes wanting is sufficient attention to the received form of the biblical text as its own form of contextualization—indeed, a contextualization presumably to be given priority in view of the Bible’s subsequent history of interpretation, especially if the Bible is confessed to be the Scripture of the church or canon. Urgently needed is greater awareness of and insistence on the present literary form of Scripture as an unsubstitutable bearer of theological meaning—not just the plot or story line of Scripture, but its concrete literary self-presentation as a “structure of meaning and effect supported by the conventions that the text appeals to or devises.”²

Here the narratological distinction between story and discourse is especially helpful, and thanks are due to narratologists like Mieke Bal, Seymour Chatman, and Gérard Genette, who have explored it in such illuminating theoretical ways, as well as to those scholars who have applied narratological categories and reading strategies to biblical narrative and its interpretation, especially Robert Alter, Yairah Amit, and Meir Sternberg.³ By *discourse* I mean what Gerald Prince has termed “the expression plane of narrative as opposed to its content plane or story.” In his useful description, discourse has both a substance (e.g., words, pictures, gestures) and a form, which “consists of a connected set of narrative statements that state the order of the story and, more specifically, determine the order of presentation of situations and events, the point of view governing that presentation, the narrative speed, the kind of commentary,” and so forth.⁴

2. Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 8–9. Sternberg views authorial intention as a shorthand expression for the perception of this kind of literary structure within the text. He distinguishes internal (or embodied or objectified) intention from external intention, the sort of thing that might be surmised from other clues, from outside the literary work itself, about an author’s psychology or biography.

3. Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978); Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980). An accessible entryway into the theoretical discussion is provided by Monika Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology* (London: Routledge, 2009). Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2011); Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001); Sternberg, *Poetics*.

4. Gerald Prince, *Dictionary of Narratology*, rev. ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 21. Prince capitalizes certain terms within his definitions in

The crucial insight is that narrative is not identical to the events it describes but constitutes a representation of those events, and this is the case regardless of whether the narrative's genre is historiography or creative fiction. At the same time, narrative representation is more than merely a recounting of story events or elements. The sequencing and character of the elements, along with any other information provided to the implied reader about how to understand those elements, is what distinguishes discourse from story. The story is the what of the narrative; the discourse is the how, so that, as Marie-Laure Ryan has succinctly put it, "narrative is a discourse that conveys a story."⁵

A couple of examples from biblical narrative will serve to explain further. The story about the killing of the priests at Nob in 1 Sam 21 offers an unexpected sequencing of its elements by beginning with David's arrival at Nob and relating the first part of his conversation with Ahimelech without revealing the information—which will later become vital to the story—that Doeg the Edomite is also present. By withholding this information until 21:7, and even then not revealing Doeg's precise location within the topography of the scene, the narrative formally reinforces his status as hidden. The narrator's belated announcement of his presence functions as both a small interruption of the sequence of the story and an analepsis or flashback compelling the reader to reconsider the story from its beginning. What does it mean that Doeg is in the scene as well? Can he overhear what David and Ahimelech are saying? Do David and Ahimelech know that Doeg is lurking nearby and may be able to hear them?

These questions linger into the following chapter, when Saul uses Doeg to kill the priests at Nob. On being told of the massacre, David responds, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul" (1 Sam 22:22).⁶ This confession from David not only changes the reader's understanding of the previous chapter, it communicates a different discourse strategy and thereby alters the sense of the narrative. The present form of the narrative offers a distinctive construal of the story by telling it with both of these analepses. An adequate

order to signal that they appear elsewhere in his dictionary. I have eliminated that convention, which is unnecessary for my purposes here.

5. Marie-Laure Ryan, "Toward a Definition of Narrative," in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman, Cambridge Companions to Literature (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 26.

6. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are from the NRSV.

interpretation of 1 Sam 21–22 must account for the peculiar literary presentation of the basic plot elements in its story and not merely rehearse those plot elements by themselves. The story of Nob could easily be retold without the analepses but that would not sufficiently characterize the narrative as it is found in the Bible.

Another example comes from 2 Sam 17, at the conclusion of the deliberations between Ahithophel and Hushai before Absalom. While Ahithophel proposes attacking David by deploying a strong force of men without Absalom, Hushai advises Absalom to go into battle against David in person. Absalom and his elders praise Hushai's strategy as the better one, and the reader might therefore be led to the same conclusion. But in 2 Sam 17:14b, the narrator intrudes with a jarring observation: "For the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring ruin on Absalom." This narratorial reveal serves as another analepsis, calling for a reconsideration of what has already been told, including David's earlier request for God to "turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness" (2 Sam 15:31) and his enlistment of Hushai as a double-agent (2 Sam 15:32–37).

Yet it is also a prolepsis or foreshadowing, which looks ahead to the continuation of the narrative by providing information in advance about how to make proper sense of what will subsequently occur: Absalom will come to ruin in the end. As in the previous example of 1 Sam 21–22, this information could have been provided in other ways or not at all. But in order to characterize this particular narrative most fully and accurately in its received literary form, the narrative placement of this information and its mode of expression must be included. Without specifying them the story could still be conveyed accurately, but not the narrative. Its discourse would be missing.

That is the main point to be made: in too much biblical interpretation, including theological interpretation, the Bible's discourse is missing. Biblical studies has become a historicist enterprise when it should be a literary discipline, because its rationale for being a discipline is to explicate a text. The typical failing, even in narratively oriented approaches to biblical theology, is to summarize the Bible's contents or paraphrase its plot points as if they related a history, perhaps further abstracting them into propositional or experiential truths, without sufficient consideration of the discourse dimension of biblical narratives (or the poetics of other literary genres in the Bible). This discourse dimension often poses its own theological questions and leads in the direction of distinctive theological

concerns. The same questions and concerns do not come as readily to the forefront of an interpretation when the interpreter attends only to the plot or story of the narrative. In Samuel, for instance, the discourse characteristically ambiguates the story by implicitly posing epistemological questions to the reader (what do we know and how do we know it?) and introducing doubts about the reliability of the story's characters (who is telling the truth and who is not?). The Samuel narrative also retrospectively disambiguates at the discourse level, a literary feature that gives the narrative its distinctive style, drama, and coherence.⁷

With these two rather straightforward examples, it could seem that an emphasis on discourse has only synchronic interpretation in view and thus might be inadequately historical-critical. Since so much historical-critical scholarship has emphasized the multiple sources and editorial layers of biblical narrative, how might such a discourse-oriented approach to theological interpretation function in relation to a composite biblical text? In response to this question, a more complex example with a composite text will now be examined: Gen 1–3.

The historical-critical distinction between a Priestly (or P) account of creation in Gen 1:1–2:4a and a second non-Priestly account in Gen 2:4b–3:24 is foundational to modern Old Testament study. A tremendous amount of critical work, beginning even before the modern era, went into differentiating these accounts and reflecting on how to understand them in relation to each other. Within the classic formulation of the nineteenth-century Documentary Hypothesis, the first account was dated to the exilic period, while the second account was attributed to a Yahwistic writer or J source and dated as early as the tenth century BCE. This meant that the first account was dated well after the second, and critical treatments of the Bible therefore interpreted these two creation accounts separately from one other, contextualizing them historically according to widely disparate reconstructed situations. However, in recent years this approach has suffered from a move to date the J source much later, from growing uncertainty about whether there was a J source at all, and from the dissolution of the Documentary Hypothesis more broadly.⁸

7. See further Stephen B. Chapman, *1 Samuel as Christian Scripture: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

8. For an orientation to this newer scholarship, see Anselm C. Hagedorn, "Taking the Pentateuch to the Twenty-First Century," *ExpTim* 119 (2007): 53–58; Reinhard G. Kratz, "The Pentateuch in Current Research: Consensus and Debate," in *The Pen-*

There has also been increasing awareness of the special role played by Gen 2:4a in the received form of the composite text.⁹ In contrast to older critical views identifying Gen 2:4a (“These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created”) as a postscript to the Priestly creation account beginning in Gen 1:1, more recent appraisals have concluded that this phrase represents a redactional bridge-verse whose function is precisely to transition from one creation account to the other.¹⁰ Frank Moore Cross had already emphasized how the formula “these are the generations” (אלה תולדות), employed throughout the book of Genesis either to mark a genealogy or a major section of the narrative, is always used as an introductory rather than a concluding statement, with the solitary exception of Gen 2:4a in some historical-critical treatments.¹¹ These treatments recognized the Priestly language of Gen 2:4a (including the תולדות formula) and the verbal similarities between Gen 2:4a and Gen 1:1, namely, how a reference to “the heavens and the earth” as well as the verbal root ברא appear in both verses. They reasoned that Gen 2:4a therefore concludes the first creation account.

But if the תולדות formula is always introductory, then Gen 2:4a must serve as an editorial superscript to the second creation account rather than as a postscript to the first.¹² It could have been added by the Priestly

tateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz, FAT 78 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 31–61; Thomas Römer, “Zwischen Urkunden, Fragmenten und Ergänzungen: Zum Stand der Pentateuchforschung,” ZAW 125 (2013): 2–24.

9. See esp. Terje Stordalen, “Genesis 2,4: Restudying a *locus classicus*,” ZAW 104 (1992): 163–77.

10. Stordalen, “Genesis,” 173; Walter Bührer, *Am Anfang...: Untersuchungen zur Textgenese und zur relativ-chronologischen Einordnung von Gen 1–3*, FRLANT 256 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 152: “redaktioneller Brückenvers”; David M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 74–75; P. Joseph Titus, *The Second Story of Creation (Gen 2:4–3:24): A Prologue to the Concept of Enneateuch?*, EHS.T 912 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2011), 90: “to bridge the two stories and to make a dialogue between both.”

11. Gen 2:4; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2; cf. the variant in Gen 5:1 (Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973], 301–5).

12. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 302. Cross pointed out how earlier historical critics sometimes even moved Gen 2:4a to an “original” position before Gen 1:1, without any supporting evidence, in an effort to make sense of how Gen 2:4a could be both Priestly and introductory.

writer who was also responsible for the first creation account but is more likely to derive from a later Priestly hand since it is not integral to the first account.¹³ As a redactional addition it signals an effort to coordinate the two accounts, not only by bridging them, but by providing an implicit reading strategy for how to understand them in relation to each other.

For this reason, Brevard Childs argued against the idea that the two creation accounts had merely been juxtaposed as two parallel but permanently discrete stories. “One must conclude,” Childs reflected, “that the priestly formula serves a redactional purpose of linking together the P and J creation accounts.”¹⁴ He explained:

The introductory formula in 2:4 makes it clear that J’s account has now been subordinated to P’s account of the creation. What now follows proceeds from the creation in the analogy of a son to his father. Mankind is the vehicle of the *toledot*. Thus in spite of the partial overlapping in the description of creation, ch. 2 performs a basically different role from ch. 1 in unfolding the history of mankind as the intended offspring of the creation of the heavens and the earth. When the sequence of events in ch. 2 differs strikingly from ch. 1, the structure of the literature guides the reader to recognize in the shift of idiom a literary device by which further to illuminate the relationship between creation (ch. 1) and offspring (ch. 2). Conversely, on the basis of ch. 2 he now understands that the purpose of the creation in ch. 1 points to mankind and his history.¹⁵

Childs thus viewed the editorial coordination of the two stories as subordinating the second story to the first, but in a fashion that preserves a degree of mutuality between them. In his interpretation, the composite narrative presents humankind as something like the divinely intended offspring of the heavens and the earth, and yet the divine purpose for creation is in turn to produce this offspring.

13. Werner H. Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift*, WMANT 17 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964), 91–93. For an argument that Gen 2:4a is not redactional but simply P, see Marc Vervenne, “Genesis 1,1–2,4: The Compositional Texture of the Priestly Overture to the Pentateuch,” in *Studies in the Book of Genesis: Literature, Redaction and History*, ed. André Wénin, BETL 155 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 35–79.

14. Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 149.

15. Childs, *Introduction*, 150.

On this basis, Childs even insisted that “by continuing to speak of the ‘two creation accounts of Genesis’ the interpreter disregards the canonical shaping and threatens its role both as literature and scripture.”¹⁶ In other words, there once may well have existed two creation accounts, but now there is a single composite account. There *are* not two creation accounts any longer, although it seems as if at one time there *were*. Still to speak of two creation accounts in the present tense (e.g., “there are two creation accounts in the Bible”) is to confuse the text’s prehistory with the text.¹⁷

From this vantage point, a synthetic function exists at the discourse level of the composite creation narrative, and the value of this discourse feature has only increased as diachronic contextualizations of the two creation accounts have newly grown unstable. Not so very long ago, it was more or less a historical-critical dogma that the first creation account originated much later in time than the second. The way to read Gen 1 was to read it against the horizon of the Babylonian exile. The way to read Gen 2–3 was to view it against the backdrop of the Davidic or Solomonic court. It was a naïve mistake to try to read both accounts together or to speak of one creation story instead of two. Theological treatments of creation in the Bible also tended to focus on each individual account as distinct from the other. Even Karl Barth for the most part did so in his *Church Dogmatics*.¹⁸

However, if the J source is also viewed as postexilic, as has been the trend, then the relationship between the two creation accounts must be reassessed, and it may no longer be the case that they are separated from

16. Childs, *Introduction*, 150.

17. As this formulation suggests, it is wrong to think of canonical interpretation as uninterested in historical questions and purely a type of synchronic, literary, or text-immanent interpretation. Canonical interpretation is instead an attempt to correct a conflation of the text with the text’s prehistory by insisting on a cleaner distinction between the two. One might say that canonical interpretation, far from neglecting the “was” of biblical interpretation, observes a sharper contrast between the “was” of the text’s prehistory and the “is” of the text. In this respect, canonical interpretation is arguably *more* historical than what is usually considered historical criticism.

18. Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Creation*, vol. 3.1 of *Church Dogmatics*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958). Barth nevertheless emphasized the close dialectical compatibility of the two accounts, using the formula “creation as the external basis of the covenant; the covenant as the internal basis of creation.” But the fact that he largely worked exegetically with the two accounts *as two accounts* demonstrates the power of the pentateuchal paradigm in place at that time.

each other by such a great expanse of time, that they came from fully distinct social groups, or that their combination was uncoordinated or unartful.¹⁹ Indeed, several interpreters have now proposed that the second creation account is actually later than the first, or that both accounts may stem from basically the same time period. Various proposals along these lines, in roughly chronological order, have been made by Gordon Wenham, Joseph Blenkinsopp, Eckart Otto, Konrad Schmid, Erhard Blum, and Jean Louis Ska.²⁰

Both summarizing these earlier proposals and advancing his own, Ska points out that the closest parallels to creation from dust or clay (Gen 2:7) and a return to dust or clay (Gen 3:19) are found in the Psalms (e.g., 103:14; 104:29), Ecclesiastes (3:20; 12:7), and Job (10:9; 34:15)—usually considered by critical scholars to be later texts (cf. Wis 15:8, 11).²¹ Ska also reemphasizes the odd fact, long a matter of critical comment, that few

19. See H. H. Schmid, *Der sogenannte Jahwist: Beobachtungen und Fragen zur Pentateuchforschung* (Zurich: TVZ, 1976); John Van Seters, *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992). For doubts about the existence of a J source altogether, see Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid, eds., *A Farewell to the Yahwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation*, SymS 35 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006).

20. See Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 53–55; Wenham, “The Priority of P,” VT 49 (1999): 240–58; Wenham, *Rethinking Genesis 1–11: Gateway to the Bible; The Didsbury Lectures 2013* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015), 18–34; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 64–67; Blenkinsopp, “P and J in Genesis 1–11: An Alternative Hypothesis,” in *Fortunate the Eyes that See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Astrid B. Beck et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 1–15; Eckart Otto, “Die Paradieserzählung Genesis 2–3: Eine nachpriesterschriftliche Lehrerzählung in ihrem religionsgeschichtlichen Kontext,” in *“Jedes Ding hat seine Zeit...”: Studien zur israelitischen und altorientalischen Weisheit; Diethelm Michel zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Anja A. Diesel et al., BZAW 241 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), 167–92; Konrad Schmid, “Die Unteilbarkeit der Weisheit: Überlegungen zur sogenannten Paradieserzählung Gen 2f. und ihrer theologischen Tendenz,” ZAW 114 (2002): 21–39; Erhard Blum, “Von Gottesunmittelbarkeit zu Gottähnlichkeit: Überlegungen zur theologischen Anthropologie der Paradieserzählung,” in *Gottes Nähe im Alten Testament*, ed. Gönke Eberhardt and Kathrin Liess, SBS 202 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2004), 9–29; Jean Louis Ska, “Genesis 2–3: Some Fundamental Questions,” in *Beyond Eden: The Biblical Story of Paradise (Genesis 2–3) and Its Reception History*, ed. Konrad Schmid and Christoph Riedweg, FAT 2/34 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 1–27.

21. Ska, “Genesis 2–3,” 17.

explicit references to the creation account in Gen 2–3 can be discovered in the rest of the Old Testament.²² Although the allusions that do exist may be understood as having been inspired by an earlier Genesis account, it might also be the case that they reflect, because of their paucity as well as their character, how the story in Gen 2–3 itself comes from a later historical context. For example, the motifs of Eden and the garden of God find their nearest analogues in postexilic prophetic texts, especially in Isaiah and Ezekiel (e.g., Isa 51:3; Ezek 28:13; 31:8–9; 36:35; cf. Joel 2:3). The most closely analogous text is the lamentation over the king of Tyre in Ezek 28:11–19, in which there are references to Eden (28:13), the garden of God (28:13), the precious stones (28:13, 16), the cherubim (28:14, 16), and the expulsion or fall of humankind (28:16–17).²³

Otto and others who assign Gen 2–3 to a post-Priestly source have even discerned narrative features suggesting that perhaps the second creation account is responding to the first. In particular, the descriptions of how every tree in the garden was pleasant to *see* and *good* to eat (Gen 2:9) and of the woman *seeing* that the fruit of the tree in the center of the garden was *good* to eat (Gen 3:6) appear to pick up on the language of the refrain in Gen 1 (“and God *saw* that it was *good*”).²⁴ The striking combined form of the divine name (“LORD God”) in the second account also seems to make more sense as a secondary development.²⁵

22. For a recent comprehensive survey of this question, see Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2–3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature*, CBET 25 (Leuven: Peeters, 2000). However, Stordalen finds evidence for more echoes of the Eden story in other biblical texts than Ska does.

23. Ska, “Genesis 2–3,” 18–19.

24. Mark S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2010), 276 n. 104, observes the same features but interprets the influence as running in the opposite direction. He suggests that the refrain of Gen 1 may have been inspired by this language in Gen 2:9 and 3:6. He further speculates that perhaps the acts of naming in the second account (Gen 2:19, 20, 23; cf. 3:9, 20) generated the acts of divine naming in the first account (Gen 1:5, 8, 10). His primary move (132–134) is to read Gen 1:1–3 as playing off the language of Gen 2:4b–6.

25. Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 275 n. 81, attributes the combined name to a Priestly editor. For further suggestions about how the J source may be responding to the P source in the creation narratives and the Primeval History, see Craig Y. S. Ho, “The Supplementary Combination of the Two Creation Stories in Genesis 1–3,” in *Stimulation from Leiden: Collected Communications to the XVIIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Leiden 2004*, ed. Hermann

By contrast, Ska concludes that Gen 2–3 “is more or less contemporaneous with” Gen 1, leaving him with the problem of how to relate the two stories to each other historically. He explicitly rejects the notion that they have been editorially coordinated, asserting that Gen 2:4b (“In the day that the LORD God made [עשה] the earth and the heavens”) must be read as describing creation *ab ovo*, requiring the reader to return to the originating situation presumed in Gen 1:1–2: “The reader must, so to speak, cancel the first account in order to be able to read the second. The two accounts are not concurrent and it is not possible to read them in an exclusively synchronic manner because they present themselves as two alternative and exclusive versions of the creation of the world.”²⁶ This verdict seems strangely literalistic and wooden in light of Gen 5:1, where the phrase “When [lit., “in the day”] God created [ברא] humankind, he made [עשה] them in the likeness of God” is clearly used to recapitulate rather than to start over from scratch.

Nevertheless, on the basis of this literary analysis Ska reconstructs his two “more or less contemporaneous” historical contexts. The creation account in Gen 1 becomes “a response of the *élite* of Jerusalem to the accounts of creation known in Babylon, in particular the *enuma eliš*.” Genesis 1 is attributed more specifically to the Jerusalemite priesthood, which wanted to “reorganize the people of Israel in the province of Yehud around the temple.” In opposition, the “people of the land” offered a different creation account, now found in Gen 2–3, in which “the world does not have as its center a God celebrated on the Sabbath” but “a garden entrusted to a farmer.”²⁷ Ska goes so far as to describe Gen 1 as a “foreign” or “imported” account of creation, which is challenged or corrected to some degree by the “indigenous” account found in Gen 2–3.²⁸

Despite what he views as the absence of any editorial coordination in the received form of the text, Ska interprets the eventual side-by-side existence of the two creation accounts to mean that the discrete groups responsible for them must have struck a compromise in the end: “The two

Michael Niemann and Matthias Augustin, BEATAJ 54 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2006), 13–21.

26. Ska, “Genesis 2–3,” 20–21.

27. Ska, “Genesis 2–3,” 22.

28. Ska, “Genesis 2–3,” 22: “To the authors of Genesis 1, the ‘people of the land’ respond that it is not necessary to go to Babylon in order to know how the world was created.”

accounts are found one next to the other in the book of Genesis because, at a certain point, two groups arrived at a sort of ‘historical compromise.’ They had to live together by force.”²⁹ As he envisions it: “After much time and probably many discussions, it was decided to put the two accounts at the beginning of Genesis because no group succeeded in prevailing over the other and, furthermore, they needed one another.”³⁰ Needless to say, this history of contestation is invented out of thin air. While ostensibly the present shape of the biblical literature is being explained by its prehistory, a prehistory is in reality being fashioned in accordance with the biblical literature’s perceived shape. The transposition reveals a practice not of historical investigation but history-like allegory.

Instructively, both Childs and Ska reason theologically through the relationship *between* the two creation stories, on both the synchronic and diachronic levels. Both Childs and Ska care about theology and history. Both give a certain priority to their literary analysis of the relationship between these two stories, as they are now found in Genesis. Indeed, it is their analysis of the present literary form, what might be called the canonical formatting, of the composite narrative in Gen 1–3 that leads them in the direction of two very different theological readings. For Ska, the unreconciled juxtaposition of the stories is historicized as a political compromise between two social groups, even as preference is given to the farmer, who is said to be less interested in worshiping God in a temple and more intent on cultivating the soil from which he came.³¹ In this reconstruction, it is hard to miss the imported normative bias against priestly religion as elitist and foreign, as well as the romantic approbation given to simple, indigenous farmers, whose life is reimagined as fairly secular.³²

Yet Ska and others who are postdating Gen 2–3 can perhaps readjust what may have been a modern overemphasis on the priestly character of creation in Genesis and bring renewed attention to the importance of the wisdom tradition, which can now be more readily identified as a major

29. Ska, “Genesis 2–3,” 23.

30. Ska, “Genesis 2–3,” 23.

31. Ska, “Genesis 2–3,” 22.

32. This in spite of the fact that much anthropological and archaeological scholarship has persuasively deconstructed the rural/urban binary. See Lester L. Grabbe, “Introduction and Overview,” in *“Every City Shall be Forsaken”: Urbanism and Prophecy in Ancient Israel and the Near East*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Robert D. Haak, JSOTSup 300 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 15–34.

aspect of the second creation account. When this account was dated to the tenth century, its wisdom features often went unremarked because the wisdom tradition was usually thought to have had a later impact on Israel's history.³³ A postexilic date for Gen 2–3 will help to highlight those features and reinforce the wisdom tradition's creational dimension.³⁴

More fundamentally, Ska and others who insist on the separate origins of the two stories seem correct in this assessment. Although the second story is now editorially joined to the first, its details and even its verbal syntax have not been reworked. The events of the second story are presented sequentially without clear indications that any creative acts had occurred earlier. In other words, the creations of humankind, land animals, and birds are related as if they are happening for the first time (and in reverse order), rather than as references to what had already happened in Gen 1. The contrast is especially evident in Gen 2:8 and 19, verses that the New International Version renders as pluperfects in an effort to smooth away the tension (e.g., Gen 2:8, "Now the LORD God *had* planted a garden").³⁵ So it remains the case that the present unity of the composite creation account in Gen 1–3 is primarily editorial rather than compositional.

Childs, of course, still accepted the critical view that the second creation account predated the first. However, he discerned such effective editorial coordination between the two accounts that he believed they no

33. For noteworthy exceptions, see George E. Mendenhall, "The Shady Side of Wisdom: The Date and Purpose of Genesis 3," in *A Light unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers*, ed. Howard N. Bream, Ralph D. Heim, and Carey A. Moore, Gettysburg Theological Studies 4 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), 319–34; Luis Alonso Schökel, "Sapiential and Covenant Themes in Genesis 2–3," in *Studies in Israelite Wisdom*, ed. James L. Crenshaw (New York: KTAV, 1976), 468–80. For broader discussion, see Beverly J. Stratton, *Out of Eden: Reading, Rhetoric, and Ideology in Genesis 2–3*, JSOTSup 208 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995). It should be noted that there are now questions about the coherence of the wisdom tradition, as it has been understood and treated in critical scholarship. See Mark R. Sneed, ed. *Was There a Wisdom Tradition? New Prospects in Israelite Wisdom Studies*, AIL 23 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015).

34. See Hans-Jürgen Hermisson, "Observations on the Creation Theology in Wisdom," in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien*, ed. John G. Gammie et al. (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1974), 43–57.

35. I am unconvinced by arguments for a pluperfect use of the waw-consecutive imperfect, as in C. John Collins, "The *Wayyiqtol* as 'Pluperfect': When and Why," *TynBul* 46 (1995): 117–40.

longer function separately. To his mind, they have become a single account in which the first creation story sets the context for the second and the second expands on the first.³⁶ Sometimes Childs has been accused of viewing Israel's tradition-history as too harmonious and devoid of real conflict. But Ska is the one who invents conflict and then must further invent compromise. The difference between Ska and Childs on this point is not that only Childs describes a unifying move within the tradition. They both do.

The difference between them is instead that Ska considers his compromise to have occurred entirely after the two accounts were produced independently and in a manner that did not alter at all each individual account or affect the literary contours of their combination. For Childs, the work of synthetic theological reflection was not something that happened only after the biblical literature had formed, but a phenomenon already occurring as it formed, actually animating the process. Because the two creation stories are coordinated by Priestly features, it made sense to Childs to privilege the Priestly tradition in reading them together.³⁷ However, this would be only the first step in attending to the literary character of both stories as such and the literary-theological character of their combined form.

At its core, then, the decisive matter at issue between Ska and Childs is not the importance of history in biblical interpretation, but rather how to understand the received literary form of the text in relation to its pre-history. Mark Smith has written that "canon criticism or the canonical approach may be viewed as a combination of biblical theology and redaction and literary criticism, using the 'final form' of the text as the fulcrum point for interpretation."³⁸ Yes, but every kind of biblical interpretation uses the received form of the biblical text as a fulcrum point, whether it admits it or not. What makes a canonical approach distinctive is not that it considers this received form but how it considers it.

A canonical approach seeks to give hermeneutical priority to the Bible's discourse in consideration of both synchronic *and* diachronic

36. Cf. Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis*, NCBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 56: "The simple juxtaposition of Yahweh and Elohim as a compound name for God ensures that we read Gen 1 and Gen 2–3 together, in binocular fashion, and that we understand that the God of Israel's covenant is also the God of creation."

37. This would remain the case, according to the logic of Childs's position, even if Gen 2–3 is dated later than Gen 1. Cf. Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 274 n. 77.

38. Smith, *Priestly Vision*, 285 n. 4.

aspects of the biblical text. From a literary perspective, its goal might also be described as a “poetics of editing.”³⁹ In a characteristically brilliant formulation, the honoree of this volume has similarly written of the final-form presentation of the biblical text as “a kind of commentary on the text’s prehistory.” As Christopher Seitz explains further:

Through the arrangement and sequencing of the material as we now have it, [the final-form presentation] is a theological statement made by allowing certain aspects of the prehistory to receive prominence and clarity, and other aspects of that prehistory to recede in importance.... While historical analysis may lay bare levels of tradition..., it will not have adequate theological or literary warrant for determining which level is to have exegetical priority. It will either conclude that the biblical text is a container of competing and incongruent theological claims, or it will wittingly or unwittingly give precedence to one such claim over another.⁴⁰

To disregard or reject the biblical text’s discourse is inevitably to replace the Bible’s own contextualization of its traditions with a contextualization derived from somewhere else.⁴¹

39. This phrase is taken from Susan Greenberg, *A Poetics of Editing* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). An orientation on the literary-theological *effect* of editing is to be distinguished from the bulk of investigations into editorial work on the biblical text, which are merely historically reconstructive and tend to privilege discrete comparisons with other ancient writings, further decanonizing the biblical literature. E.g., John S. Kloppenborg and Judith H. Newman, eds., *Editing the Bible: Assessing the Task Past and Present*, RBS 69 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012); Reinhard Müller, Juha Pakkala and Bas ter Haar Romeny, eds., *Evidence of Editing: Growth and Change of Texts in the Hebrew Bible*, RBS 75 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014); Saul M. Olyan and Jacob L. Wright, eds., *Supplementation and the Study of the Hebrew Bible*, BJS 361 (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018); Raymond F. Person Jr. and Robert Rezetko, eds., *Empirical Models Challenging Biblical Criticism*, AIL 25 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016); Hanne von Weissenberg, Juha Pakkala and Marko Marttila, eds., *Changes in Scripture: Rewriting and Interpreting Authoritative Traditions in the Second Temple Period*, BZAW 419 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011).

40. Christopher Seitz, “Canonical Approach,” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 100.

41. This (de-/re-)contextualizing move is implied in any developmental approach to biblical theology and openly advocated in some recent theological work. E.g., Mark McEntire, *Portraits of a Mature God: Choices in Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis:

The literary presentation of Scripture, its discourse, *is* its message. Attending closely to that discourse is the best way to pursue theological interpretation, not only because Scripture's discourse guides interpreters in a full determination of its meaning, but because Scripture aims to provide more than information—whether about history or morality or doctrine. Scripture's purpose is to change the hearts of its readers, and changing hearts is a matter of the affections and the will, not only the mind. Revelation awaits Scripture's readers not somewhere behind the text but in it.⁴²

Fortress, 2013), 176, on the need for “placing texts in *some kind of order* and tracing a trajectory in the development of the divine character” (emphasis added).

42. It is an honor to contribute this essay in gratitude for the intellectual leadership of Christopher Seitz. The Old Testament has not had a more vigorous defender in this generation of scholars or a bolder theological advocate.

The Tabernacle Narrative as Christian Scripture

Gary A. Anderson

Now worship under the Law was a figure of the mystery of Christ, and so all their actions were a figure of things having to do with Christ—this according to 1 Cor 10:11 (“All things happened to them in figure”).

—Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I–II, Q. 102, A. 6

The title of this essay was the occasion for some personal misgivings. I had the fear that some readers may see the task of interpreting the Bible as a zero-sum game. In other words, reading the tabernacle narrative as Christian Scripture implies a demotion of its significance for Judaism. Nothing could be further from my mind. What this essay proposes is, first of all, to read the tabernacle narrative in complete fidelity to its immediate literary context in the Jewish Scriptures. Having described the relationship between the consecration of the tabernacle and that of the priests and altar, I will then turn to how all of this material might be employed in a christological framework.

1. Two Theophanies or One?

Let me begin by noting that the story about the founding of Israel’s liturgical life (Exod 25 through Lev 10) has two distinctive climaxes, each marked by a theophany, that is, a public appearance of God. The first occurs at the end of the book of Exodus, once the tabernacle has been erected: “Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Presence of the Lord filled the Tabernacle” (Exod 40:33b–34).¹ The second occurs a few chapters latter, in the book of Leviticus, after Aaron and his sons

This essay is a natural extension of what I wrote in Anderson, *Christian Doctrine and the Old Testament: Theology in the Service of Biblical Exegesis* (Grand Rapids:

prepare the first public sacrifices. These rites conclude with a miraculous testimony to God's satisfaction with all that they have done: "Fire came forth from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat parts on the altar" (Lev 9:24a).

To the casual reader, these two events appear to occur in succession. Logic would seem to dictate that the tabernacle complex (including its bronze altar) must be erected before the public sacrifices can begin. Yet strikingly most early interpreters saw the matter differently. According to nearly all of the rabbis (and most of the medieval Jewish exegetes), there was just one theophany. Though Lev 9 follows Exod 40 in narrational order, the two texts were thought to depict a single historical event. This exegetical move was not novel to the rabbinic readers. It can already be witnessed in Pseudo-Philo's *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* from the first century CE. An even earlier attestation to this sort of reading can be found in 2 Chr 7:1–2.²

Distinctive Literary Character

Why was this move made? I think that one can offer two different reasons. The first has to do with the distinctive literary character of the two chapters in question.³ Both chapters are similarly structured. Leviticus 8 takes great pains to show that everything that Moses was commanded in Exod 29 was faithfully carried out in Lev 8 (note the formula that concludes 8:21: "as the Lord commanded Moses"). Let us take a look at one example to get an idea of the overall structure:

Baker Academic, 2017), 95–120. It has been inspired by the pioneering work of Brevard Childs, and as such, I offer it as a fitting tribute to his star pupil, Christopher Seitz.

1. Translations in this essay are taken from the RSV. Occasional adjustments have been made to fit the context of the citation.

2. On the general problem, see the discussion in Cornelius Houtman, *Exodus*, trans. Johan Rebel and Sierd Woudstra, HCOT, 4 vols. (Kampen: Kok, 1993), 3:599. For Pseudo-Philo, see his LAB 13.1–2, which says that after the priests had been anointed (Lev 8) the cloud covered the tent of meeting (Exod 40). The text from Chronicles describes the dedication of Solomon's temple. At its climax, fire consumes the first sacrifices (7:1a, cf. Lev 9:24) and the glory fills the building (7:1b–2, cf. Exod 40:34–35). In other words, the two pentateuchal events have been collapsed into one.

3. My interest is in the final form of text. Most modern commentators devote their attention to establishing a chronological stratigraphy of these texts and ignore how they function in their final form.

Then you shall take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands upon the head of the ram,
and you shall slaughter the ram,
take its blood and throw it upon the altar round about.
Then you shall cut the ram into pieces, and wash its entrails and its legs,
and put them with its pieces and its head,
and burn the whole ram on the altar; it is a burnt offering to the LORD;
it is a pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the LORD. (Exod 29:15–18)

Then he presented the ram of the burnt offering; and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram.
And Moses [slaughtered] it,
and threw the blood upon the altar round about.
And when the ram was cut into pieces, Moses burned the head and the pieces and the fat. And when the entrails and the legs were washed with water,
Moses burned the whole ram on the altar, as a burnt offering,
a pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the LORD,
as the Lord commanded Moses. (Lev 8:18–21, emphasis added)

Leviticus 8 consists of seven such ritual actions, each completing a sequence of commands from Exod 29 and each marked by the approbatory formula, “as the LORD commanded Moses.”⁴ Consider carefully the structure of the chapter in the slightly abbreviated form below (emphasis added):

1. GATHERING (Lev 8:1–4): “The LORD said to Moses, ‘Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and the bull of the sin offering, and the two rams, and the basket of unleavened bread...’ *And Moses did as the LORD commanded him.*”

2. VESTING (Lev 8:5–9): “And Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water. And he put on him the coat, and girded him with the girdle, and clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod upon him, and girded him with the skillfully woven band of the ephod, binding it to him therewith ... *as the LORD commanded Moses.*”

4. The use of this pattern of sevens was first noted by Benno Jacob, *Das Buch Exodus* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1997), 1020–21. The commentary was completed in 1940. See also Gary Anderson, “The Inauguration of the Tabernacle Service at Sinai,” in *The Temple of Jerusalem: From Moses to the Messiah; In Honor of Professor Louis H. Feldman*, ed. Steven Fine, BRLJ 29 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1–15.

3. ANOINTING (Lev 8:10–13): “Then Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them.... And he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron’s head, and anointed him, to consecrate him ... *as the LORD commanded Moses.*”

4. BULL FOR SIN OFFERING (Lev 8:14–17): “Then he brought the bull of the sin offering; and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the bull of the sin offering. And Moses killed it, and took the blood, and with his finger put it on the horns of the altar round about ... *as the LORD commanded Moses.*”

5. RAM FOR BURNT OFFERING (Lev 8:18–21): “Then he presented the ram of the burnt offering ... and Moses killed it, and threw the blood upon the altar round about ... *as the LORD commanded Moses.*”

6. RAM FOR ORDINATION OFFERING (Lev 8:22–30): “Then he presented the other ram, the ram of ordination; and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. And Moses killed it, and took some of its blood and put it on the tip of Aaron’s right ear and on the thumb of his right hand and on the great toe of his right foot ... *as the LORD commanded Moses.*”

7. SACRIFICIAL FEASTING (Lev 8:31–36): “And Moses said to Aaron and his sons, ‘Boil the flesh at the door of the tent of meeting, and there eat it and the bread that is in the basket of ordination offerings, as I commanded, saying, “Aaron and his sons shall eat it....”’ *And Aaron and his sons did all the things that the LORD commanded by Moses.*”

The structure of Exod 40 is almost exactly the same. Exodus 40:1–17 constitutes the command section, while 40:17–33 constitutes the execution section. Just as in Lev 8, the execution section ends in seven approbatory formulas (emphasis added):

1. ERECTING THE TABERNACLE (Exod 40:18–19): “Moses erected the tabernacle; he laid its bases, and set up its frames, and put in its poles, and raised up its pillars; and he spread the tent over the tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent over it, *as the LORD had commanded Moses.*”

2. THE ARK (Exod 40:20–21): “And he took the testimony and put it into the ark, and put the poles on the ark, and set the mercy seat above on the ark; and he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the veil of

the screen, and screened the ark of the testimony; *as the LORD had commanded Moses.*"

3. THE TABLE (Exod 40:22–23): "And he put the table in the tent of meeting, on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil, and set the bread in order on it before the LORD; *as the LORD had commanded Moses.*"

4. THE LAMPSTAND (Exod 40:24–25): "And he put the lampstand in the tent of meeting, opposite the table on the south side of the tabernacle, and set up the lamps before the LORD; *as the LORD had commanded Moses.*"

5. THE GOLDEN ALTAR (Exod 40:26–27): "And he put the golden altar in the tent of meeting before the veil, and burnt fragrant incense upon it; *as the LORD had commanded Moses.*"

6. THE SCREEN AND BRONZE ALTAR (Exod 40:28–29): "And he put in place the screen for the door of the tabernacle. And he set the altar of burnt offering at the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and offered upon it the burnt offering and the cereal offering; *as the LORD had commanded Moses.*"

7. THE LAVER AND COURTYARD (Exod 40:30–32, 33): "And he set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it for washing ... *as the LORD had commanded Moses.* And he erected the court round the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Moses finished the work."

8. THEOPHANY (Exod 40:34–35): "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle."

A careful inspection, however, will note an anomaly in these verses. Unlike the example in Lev 8 where the approbatory formulas encompass all the actions in the chapter, the seventh and final formula in Exod 40 does not (see 40:33). The final actions of the chapter occur after the seventh and final approbatory formula. No doubt this is because the theophany that closes the chapter (40:34–35) constitutes a fit replacement for the approbatory formula—God's decision to take possession of his newly fashioned domicile is a clear marker that he approves of its construction.

If this theophany fills the function of a final approbatory formula, then the chapter has seven plus one such statements, the theophany being the eighth and final one. But this would also match the overall structure of Lev 8–9 for the ordination of the priesthood includes seven discrete ritual actions (Lev 8) that conclude with the rites of the eighth day (Lev 9) that ends with a theophany. A closer reading reveals that both Exod 40 and Lev 8–9 have a similar seven plus one structure, where the eighth element is a theophany.⁵

Interlocking Character of the Chapters

It is not only the case that Exod 40 and Lev 8–9 have a similar structure, but the two chapters interlock, one with the other. As we have seen, the structure of the two chapters looks identical. Each command section has its corresponding execution section followed by a theophany:

Erection of Tabernacle	Ordination of Priests
Exod 40:1–16: commands	Exod 29: commands
Exod 40:17–33: execution of commands	Lev 8: execution of commands
Exod 40:34–35: theophany (eighth event)	Lev 9:23–24: theophany (eighth day)

Yet there is a significant difference. If we look more closely at the second half of Exod 40 we will notice that only half of the commands given earlier in the chapter are fulfilled. Though Exod 40 has the appearance of matching the structure of Exod 29 // Lev 8, it is actually strikingly different, as the following chart indicates:

40:1–8	A. Commands to erect the tabernacle
40:9–16	B. Commands to anoint the priests and tabernacle
40:17–33	A'. Erection of the tabernacle
<vacat>	B'. <Anointment is delayed until Lev 8>

In other words, half of the commands that are given in Exod 40:1–16 are not fulfilled in the second half of the chapter as would be expected.⁶

5. See Anderson, “Inauguration of the Tabernacle Service.”

6. A similar asymmetry can be found between Exod 29 and Lev 8. In Exod 29:7 Moses is told to take the anointing oil and anoint Aaron. But in Lev 8:10–12, when this

Instead, the reader must wait until Lev 8 before all the commands listed in Exod 40 are completed. No doubt it is the curious interlocking character of these two chapters that led ancient interpreters to see the two theophanies that conclude them as reflecting a single, historical event.⁷

For the biblical author, the tabernacle complex possesses two thematic centers: first, the tabernacle building as the site where God dwells, and second, the tabernacle complex as the site where he is served. I think most readers are inclined to see the element of indwelling as ordered to sacrificial service. But that would shortchange the profound theological importance of the concrete, material form of the dwelling itself.

The Tabernacle in Which God Dwells

Perhaps the best place to see the significance of dwelling is in the rules that govern its dismantling in Num 4. In this chapter the three Levitical families—the Kohathites, Gershonites, and Merarites—are assigned the task of taking down the tabernacle to prepare it for its journey. What is striking is how different the process followed by the Kohathites is from that of the other two families. In the case of the two other families, the charge is the portage of the fabrics of the tabernacle (4:25–26) and the supporting pillars and bars (4:31–32). Every detail related to these pieces is handled by the Levitical families themselves. This makes the instructions to the Kohathites quite odd. To be sure the instructions they receive looks, at first, to be just like those of the Gershonites and suggests that the Kohathites will have full responsibility for the items to be listed just as did the Gershonites:

Num 4:2–4	Num 4:22–24
Take a census of the sons of Kohath ... by their families and their fathers' houses This is the service of the sons of Kohath	Take a census of the sons of Gershon ... by their families and their fathers' houses This is the service of the families of the Gershonites

commandment is carried out, Moses anoints both the head of Aaron and the tabernacle! He is clearly carrying out commandments that have been drawn from Exod 29 and 40. What appeared to be two different rites have been collapsed into one.

7. See Houtman, *Exodus*.

But when we learn of the specific type of service that will be required of each of these families, the lists diverge sharply:

Num 4:4–8	Num 4:24–26
This is the service of the sons of Kohath ...	This is the service of the families of the Gershonites ...
When the camp is to set out, Aaron and his sons shall go in and take down the veil of the screen, and cover the ark of the testimony with it; then they shall put on it a covering of goatskin, and spread over that a cloth all of blue, and shall put in its poles. And over the table of the bread of the Presence they shall spread a cloth of blue, and put upon it the plates, the dishes for incense, the bowls, and the flagons for the drink offering; the continual bread also shall be on it; then they shall spread over them a cloth of scarlet, and cover the same with a covering of goatskin, and shall put in its poles.	They shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tent of meeting with its covering, and the covering of goatskin that is on top of it, and the screen for the door of the tent of meeting, and the hangings of the court, and the screen for the entrance of the gate of the court which is around the tabernacle and the altar, and their cords, and all the equipment for their service; and they shall do all that needs to be done with regard to them.

Each text describes the work (“service”) each clan must undertake. But whereas the text immediately assigns the Gershonites to their responsibilities (4:25–26), the Kohathites are displaced by a long interpolation of the responsibilities of Aaron and his sons (4:5–8).

How do we explain this difference? The items that the Kohathites must handle are so imbued with the presence of God that they pose a mortal danger to those not anointed with the holy oils. Not only is physical contact death-dealing (“And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, as the camp sets out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry these, but they must not touch the holy things, lest they die” [4:15]), but even *seeing* the most sacred pieces of furniture poses a mortal danger:

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Let not the tribe of the families of the Kohathites be destroyed from among the Levites; but deal thus with them, that they may live and not die when they come near to the most

holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in and appoint them each to his task and to his burden, but they shall not go in to look upon the holy things even for a moment, lest they die.” (Num 4:17–20)

This fear that even sight of the furniture would be death-dealing recalls other texts in the Old Testament that depict the danger of seeing God. Though the tabernacle did not contain a statue of Israel’s God as did other sanctuaries in the ancient Near East, it did not mean that God’s tangible presence was unrelated to the physical artifacts of the temple. Indeed, God’s presence, even if aniconic, was so real and palpable that all the sacred items in its near vicinity absorbed something of his holiness.⁸

2.

This linkage of God’s person with the building that he inhabits made a deep impression on early Jewish and Christian readers. The most obvious text in this regard is John 1:14 (“the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us”) wherein the incarnation is imagined as an act of God’s dwelling in the flesh of Jesus. In the pages that follow, I would like to examine the way Athanasius interprets this verse in his letter, *Epistula ad Adelphium*. This text was written ca. 370 CE, several decades after the initial confrontation with Arius, and addresses continuing disagreements about the identity of Jesus Christ. As Khaled Anatolios has argued, the Nicene party argued that Arius could not worship the Son because he remained a creature, not God.⁹ In response, later followers of Arius explained that their reverence toward the Son could be justified on the grounds that it “ascended to the Father.” In other words, Christ became an exemplary mediator, conveying the adoration rendered to him to its proper subject: God the Father.

In an argument, however, no side remains on the defensive. It is likely that the anti-Nicene party lodged their own accusations against Athanasius and his circle. If the Nicene party was unwilling to make any qualification regarding the person of Christ while at the same time acknowledging that his humanity was created, then it is they who worship a creature when they

8. A far more detailed account of this theme can be found in Anderson, *Christian Doctrine*, 95–120.

9. Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought*, ECF (New York: Routledge, 2004), 134–35. All of my citations of Athanasius have been taken from this volume.

show reverence to Christ. To this charge, Athanasius vigorously responds: "We do not worship a creature. Never! Such an error belongs to the pagans and the Arians."

In the body of this letter, Athanasius argues that worshiping Christ, the God-man, is not only orthodox but clearly grounded in Scripture. In order to accomplish this, he centers his argument on John's assertion that "the Word became flesh." The words of this verse return over and over again as he makes his way through the letter. As will become clear in his lengthiest scriptural argument, he understands that this phrase is grounded in the tabernacle/temple of Israel. For this reason, the fact that the Word became flesh can never be separated from our obligation to worship it.

After a couple of introductory paragraphs, he gets right to the point. When Christians worship Christ, he argues,

We worship the Lord of creation, the Word of God who has become incarnate. While that flesh, on its own, is a part of creation, it nevertheless became the body of God. And neither do we separate that body from the Word and worship it on its own, nor do we cast the Word far from the flesh when we want to worship him. But knowing, as we said before, that "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14) we acknowledge him as God even when he becomes flesh. Who then would be so senseless as to say to the Lord, "Stand aside from your body so that I may worship you?"... The leper, however, was not such as these. He worshiped the God who was in the body and recognized that he was God, saying, "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean" (Matt 8:2). He did not consider the Word of God to be a creature on account of the flesh, nor did he disparage the flesh because the Word who wore it was the Maker of all creation. But he worshiped the Creator of all as being in a created temple, and so he was cleansed. (*Ep. Adolph. 3*)

The thematic concerns that govern the entire letter are framed by three words that repeat themselves incessantly: Word, (becoming) flesh, and worship. The *Word*, Athanasius declares, became *flesh* in such a fashion that when one *worships* the Christ, no separation can be made between that Word and the flesh that housed it. As Anatolios notes, this (temple-) christology presumes "a single subject of salvific agency and a single object of worship. As such, it anticipates the thinking of his successor, Cyril of Alexandria."¹⁰ The example of the leper is telling on this score. Because

10. Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 235.

this man recognized the saving power of God that resided in the flesh of the Savior, “he worshiped the Creator of all as being in a created temple.” Of course, John 1:14 makes no explicit reference to an act of worship, but Athanasius correctly infers its presence by the fact that Word’s becoming flesh is in the manner of God inhabiting a temple.

The image of the temple returns at the end of the document in the longest continuous piece of exegesis. The section is worth quoting in full:

Moreover, we would like your Reverence to pose to them the following question: When Israel was commanded to go up to Jerusalem to worship in the temple of the Lord, where there was the ark and above it the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat, was this a good deed or a bad one? If they were doing a bad deed, why is it that those who did not heed this law were consigned to punishment? For it is written that the one who disregards it and does not go up is to be cut off from among the people (cf. Lev 17:9; Num 9:13). But if they were doing a good deed, through which in fact they were pleasing to God, must not these defiled Arians, whose heresy is the most shameful of all, be utterly deserving of destruction? For in that case, they commend the ancient people for the honor rendered by them to the temple but do not wish to worship the Lord who is in his flesh, as in a temple. And yet the old temple was fashioned from rocks and gold and was merely a shadow, but when the reality arrived the image was henceforth annulled, according to the words of the Lord, and there did not remain a stone upon another stone, that was not thrown down.

Although the Israelites saw that the temple was made of stones, they did not think that the Lord speaking in the temple was a creature, nor did they scorn the temple and go far off from it to worship. But, in accordance with the law, they went to the temple and served the Lord who revealed himself from the temple. This being so, how can one not worship the all-holy and all-sacred body of the Lord, which was announced by the angel Gabriel and fashioned by the Holy Spirit and became a garment for the Word?... Therefore, the one who dishonors the temple dishonors the Lord who is in the temple and the one who separates the Word from the body rejects the grace that was granted to us in the Word. (*Ep. Adolph. 7*)

It is clear that Athanasius has recognized that the logical home of the Johannine phrase, “the word became flesh” is that of the temple. Accordingly, he almost reflexively attaches to the concept of worship whenever he cites or alludes to this verse. As we saw earlier in the laws that govern the way in which the Kohathites are to handle the inner sancta (Num 4),

there is no real separation between those objects and the person of God.¹¹ Athanasius understands the relationship of God to the temple in a similar fashion. He observes the importance of going to Jerusalem to worship God and associates that command with the furniture that was located in the inner recesses of the temple. Because of the sanctity that adhered to those items (“where there was the ark and above it the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat”), one revered God when one prostrated oneself before the building.

The scriptural character of Athanasius’s argument should not be overlooked. John 1:14 for all of its power, was not a sufficient piece of evidence on its own to establish an orthodox Christology.¹² In order to thwart the claims of the Arian party, the theology of John 1:14 had to be fleshed out in light of its roots in the Old Testament. Because even the Arians commended the Israelites for “the reverence they offer to the temple,” Athanasius could extend this point of agreement to an exegesis of John 1:14. His usage of the Old Testament is not ornamental; it provides a needed clarification of a disputed point in this christological debate.

3.

It may be useful to consider how a proper grasp of the christological dimensions of the temple metaphor is related to Christ’s saving work. Oftentimes, in recent theology, a distinction is drawn between the role of the incarnation and the sacrificial dimension of the cross. Athanasius and the Eastern tradition are often singled out as theological voices that put more emphasis on the notion of deification that takes place through the incarnation. (Clearly Anselm’s construal of an atoning sacrifice is the

11. There is not room in this essay to go into the detail that it deserves, but the role of the architecture of the Greek church is certainly relevant here. See Maximos Constas, *The Art of Seeing: Paradox and Perception in Orthodox Iconography* (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian, 2014), 201–37. He has shown how productive the sanctuary veil of the tabernacle was in shaping the development of the iconostasis in the Greek church. It became an important site for Byzantine theologians to reflect on the character of the incarnation. The linkage of church architecture to Christology is not ordinarily made in the West, but it was a substantial feature of Orthodox thought. This is in no small part due to the influence of the tabernacle narrative in the Old Testament.

12. This point has been made by a number of modern commentators as well. See Anderson, *Christian Doctrine*, 99–102.

offending element.)¹³ In his *Epistula ad Adelphium*, Athanasius provides a classic proof text for such an assertion when he states that Christ

became a human being that we might be divinized in him; he came to be in a woman and was begotten of a virgin in order to transport our errant race into himself and in order that from then on we may become a holy race and “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). (*Ep. Adelph.* 4)

For Andrew Louth texts such as this one indicate that deification is a theological concept that, at least conceptually, should be evaluated independently from that of sacrificial redemption. He happily concedes that Christ “came to save us, and in our response to his saving action and word we are redeemed.” But deification, he contends,

belongs to a broader conception of the divine *oikonomia*: deification is the fulfillment of creation not just the rectification of the Fall. One way of putting this is to think in terms of an arch stretching from creation to deification, representing what is and remains God’s intention: the creation of the cosmos that, through humankind, is destined to share in the divine life, to be deified.¹⁴

Our consideration of the canonical shape of the tabernacle narrative allows us to confirm some parts of this claim but to correct others. As we noted, the indwelling of the tabernacle is the denouement of creation. The medieval Jewish commentator, Ibn Ezra, said the created order remained

13. See Andrew Louth, “The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology,” in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, ed. Michael J. Christensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), 35. He writes (emphasis added): “The loss of the notion of deification leads to lack of awareness of the greater arch from creation to deification, and thereby to concentration on the lower arch, from Fall to redemption; it is, *I think, not unfair to suggest that such a concentration on the lesser arch at the expense of the greater arch has been characteristic of much Western theology.* The consequences are evident: a loss of the sense of the cosmic dimension of theology, a tendency to see the created order as little more than a background for the great drama of redemption, with the result that the Incarnation is seen simply as a means of redemption, the putting right of the Fall of Adam: ... ‘O certainly necessary sin of Adam, which Christ has destroyed by death! O happy fault, which deserved to have such and so great a Redeemer.’”

14. Louth, “Place of *Theosis*,” 34–35.

unfinished until the tabernacle was erected.¹⁵ That is because the arc of creation in the Jewish Scriptures goes from creation to Sinai. God made the world in order to take up residence with human beings. This arc, which is paradigmatic for the Old Testament, has an obvious influence on the prologue of the Gospel of John. For in this text the “tabernacling” of the Word in the flesh (1:14) is traced back to the moment of creation itself (“In the beginning was the Word,” [1:1]).¹⁶ If we grant that the act of tabernacling is an act of deification, then the linkage of John 1:14 to creation would seem to confirm Louth’s claim that the “deification [of man] is the fulfillment of scripture.”

But as we saw in the Old Testament, the themes of indwelling and sacrifice cannot be pried apart. The temporal correlation of the appearance of the glory within the tabernacle (Exod 40) with the consumption of the first sacrifices on the newly consecrated altar (Lev 9) is constitutive of the final form of the pentateuchal text. The rabbinic decision to read these two narratives as describing a single historical act can be argued from Scripture. God’s desire to dwell among the Israelites includes, necessarily, both dimensions. This point, as Christopher Seitz has repeatedly argued, has weighty theological implications.¹⁷ If the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ was truly “in accordance with the scriptures,” then this fundamental Old Testament paradigm must bear some weight in shaping the way we think of the person of Christ. A disarticulation of the concepts of

15. H. Norman Strickman and Arthur M. Silver, *Ibn Ezra’s Commentary on the Pentateuch*, 5 vols. (New York: Menorah, 1988). See Ibn Ezra’s commentary to Exod 40:1. Modern commentators are agreed on this point as well. See the excellent discussion of Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 142–45.

16. See Raymond Brown, *Gospel according to John I–XII*, AB 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 30. He noted the structural similarity between John 1:1 and 1:14 (emphasis original): “Vs. 1 ‘The Word was’ match[es] vs. 14 ‘The Word became;’ Vs. 1 ‘The Word in God’s presence’ match[es] vs. 14 ‘The Word among us.’ Vs. 1 ‘The Word was God’ match[es] vs. 14 ‘The Word became flesh.’”

17. Seitz is not innovating here but retrieving. The important role of the Old Testament in shaping how we understand the New was a major contribution of Augustine in his *Contra Faustum* and provides the essential background to Thomas Aquinas’s interpretation of the “old law” in *Summa Theologica* I–II, Q. 98–102 (see the epigram to this essay).

incarnation and (redemptive-)sacrifice would be a gross misreading of the biblical record.¹⁸

18. It is also a misguided reading of Athanasius. For, in his thought, it is clear that incarnation is ordered to the sacrifice of his passion. Though Athanasius can sometimes sound as if he is making the incarnation, on its own terms, the locus of salvation, it is clear that a reading of his text as a whole does nothing of the sort. E.g., when he explains that Isa 7:14 is about the coming of Christ in the flesh (*Ep. Adolph.* 6) he immediately attaches to this observation two citations from the New Testament regarding the necessity of Christ's sacrifice, the latter of which correlates the appearance of divine glory with the self-donation of Christ to free us from sin. Then follows the most important question: "How [could] he give himself for us unless he put on the flesh?" For without the flesh, the passion would have been impossible. "He gave himself," Athanasius concludes, "by making an offering of his flesh, so that in it he may undergo death and destroy the devil who has the power of death." Here the soteriological focus of the incarnation comes into clearest focus. There can be no doubt that the incarnation is ordered to the self-offering of the Son which, in turn, leads to the vanquishing of sin and death.

“The God of the Spirits of All Flesh” (Numbers 16:22; 27:16)

Nathan MacDonald

The divine title “the God of the spirits of all flesh” (אלהי הרוחת לכל בשר) appears only twice in the Hebrew Bible, on both occasions in the book of Numbers. On the first occasion Moses and Aaron address God with the divine name El and question the justice of threatening the entire congregation with annihilation when only Korah has sinned (Num 16:22). On the second occasion Moses addresses God with the divine name YHWH and, in light of his imminent death, requests a new leader for the people (Num 27:16). Despite the fact that, as Martin Noth observed, “God is addressed in a very unusual way,”¹ the appellation has received little more than passing mention in the commentaries.² In this essay, I will examine the possible prehistory of the appellation, its use in the book of Numbers, and its subsequent development in early Jewish and Christian literature.

It is a pleasure to offer this essay to Chris Seitz, who was for a number of years my senior colleague at the University of Saint Andrews and from whom I learned a great deal.

1. Martin Noth, *Numbers*, OTL, trans. James D. Martin (London: SCM, 1968), 127.

2. A recent essay by Dana M. Pike is primarily concerned with whether the expression might support the Latter-day Saints belief in preexistence (Pike, “Exploring the Biblical Phrase ‘God of the Spirits of All Flesh,’” in *Bountiful Harvest: Essays in Honor of S. Kent Brown*, ed. Andrew C. Skinner, D. Morgan Davis, and Carl Griffin [Provo: Brigham Young University, 2011], 311–27).

Possible Precursors to the Appellation

The possibility that the appellation had a prehistory is suggested by its appearance with the divine name El in Num 16:22. As is well known, the deity El was worshiped as the high god by some West Semitic groups in the second millennium BCE, including the inhabitants of Ugarit, and the narratives in Gen 12–50 portray El as the deity worshiped by the Israelites' ancestors.³ Outside of the book of Genesis it does not appear often in narrative texts but is common in poetry. On the other hand, its use in theophoric names in the Second Temple period raises the possibility that its appearances in Numbers are examples of archaizing.

Frank Moore Cross speculated that the original epithet might have been אל אלהי רוחות ("El, god of spirits"), where the spirits are the members of the divine council. The appellation would be a near equivalent of יהוה צבאות ("YHWH of hosts").⁴ One difficulty with Cross's proposal is that רוח is rarely used of the members of the divine council. Cross points to 1 Kgs 22:19–23, where the host of heaven are portrayed standing around God's throne and a spirit comes forward offering to make the prophets lie so as to entice Ahab to his doom. It is debatable, however, whether the heavenly host are identified as spirits in this vision. Instead, one particular member of the divine council is identified as "the spirit" (הרוח), and it might be better to regard this as a particular role within God's council just as one of the council is identified as "the Satan" (השטן, e.g., Job 1).⁵ A further difficulty with this proposal is that there is no hint of the divine council in either text of the book of Numbers. Were "God of spirits" to be the original meaning of the epithet we would need to imagine the original epithet being appropriated by Numbers with a very different meaning.

A stronger case might be made that an original epithet אל אלהי רוחות be understood as "El, god of the winds." Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the plural רוחות is used of the winds, especially the winds of the four cardinal points.⁶ Similar epithets are found of other Near Eastern weather deities:

3. Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 135–48.

4. Frank Moore Cross, "אל," *TDOT* 1:242–61.

5. Esther J. Hamori, "The Spirit of Falsehood," *CBQ* 72 (2010): 15–30; Ellen White, *Yahweh's Council: Its Structure and Membership*, *FAT* 2/65 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 119–21.

6. Jer 49:36 (2x); Ezek 37:9; 42:20; Zech 2:6; 6:5; Ps 104:4; Dan 8:8; 11:4; 1 Chr

the Northwest Semitic deity Hadad is “lord of the wind and the heavenly lightening” (*bēl šāri u bereq šamê*).⁷ In the biblical texts YHWH is frequently represented as a storm deity, and the wind is represented as under his control and accompanying his appearance.⁸ Psalm 104, for example, opens with a description of YHWH’s majesty: “The one setting the clouds as his chariot, the one riding the wings of the wind [עַל כַּנְפֵי רוּחַ], making the winds [רוּחוֹת] his messengers, flaming fire his ministers” (104:3–4). One difficulty with this suggestion is the association of El with storm and wind imagery, since we do not normally think of El as a weather deity. A further difficulty is, again, that we need to envisage a process in which the original epithet is appropriated with a different meaning.

Another possibility is that an earlier form of the appellation was “the God of all flesh” (אֱלֹהֵי כָּל בָּשָׂר). This title does occur once in the Hebrew Bible in Jer 32:27, where it introduces the central theological affirmation of Jer 32: “Is anything too hard for YHWH?” (cf. 32:17 and Gen 18:14). William L. Holladay, on the other hand, sees “the God of all flesh” as an abbreviated form of “the God of the spirits of all flesh.”⁹ It is difficult to determine which text is earlier with any confidence, since the lexeme כָּל בָּשָׂר is at home in P and Jeremiah. It is perhaps better to consider the expression “the God of all flesh” alongside the examples from Numbers

9:24. The only example where רוּחוֹת clearly does not refer to the winds is Prov 16:2, where the human spirit is in view.

7. Daniel Schwemer, *Die Wettergottgestalten Mesopotamiens und Nordsyriens im Zeitalter der Keilschriftkulturen: Materialien und Studien nach den schriftlichen Quellen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001), 707. It is often claimed that the name of the Sumerian deity Enlil means “Lord Wind” (so, e.g., Thorkild Jacobsen, “The Líl of ^dEn-Líl,” in *DUMU-É-DUB-BA-A: Studies in Honor of Åke W. Sjöberg*, ed. Hermann Behrens, Darlene Loding, and Martha T. Roth, OPSNKF 11 [Philadelphia: Babylonian Section, University Museum, 1989], 267–76). The evidence for líl meaning “wind” is not secure. For a summary of the controversy around the interpretation of Enlil see Dietz Otto Edzard, “Enlil, Vater der Götter,” in *Semitic and Assyriological Studies: Presented to Pelio Fronzaroli* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003), 173–84.

8. For YHWH as a storm deity, see, inter alia, Reinhard Müller, *Jahwe als Wettergott: Studien zur althebräischen Kultlyrik anhand ausgewählter Psalmen*, BZAW 387 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008). The wind is a divine vehicle (e.g., Pss 18:11; 104:3) and accompanies the storm theophany (e.g., Ezek 1). The wind can be represented as a tool that YHWH wields, particularly in judgment (e.g., Isa 11:15; 27:8; Jer 10:13; 49:36; 51:16; Pss 104:3; 135:7).

9. William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah 26–52*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 207.

before seeking to determine whether it is a possible precursor of the appellation “the God of the spirits of all flesh.”

The Appellation in the Book of Numbers

The two appearances of **אלהי הרוחת לכל בשר** in the book of Numbers present no special text critical difficulties. In both cases the Samaritan Pentateuch reads **כל הבשר**, but there seems to be no particular significance for the addition of the definite article.¹⁰ In both verses the LXX reads *θεός τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός* (“God of spirits and all flesh”). This rendering presents its own interpretive challenges: does it refer to the denizens of the heavens (the spirits) and the earth (all flesh), or does it refer to humans as both spirit and flesh? In both cases the reading reflects a Hellenistic milieu and there is no reason for emending the Hebrew text on the basis of the Greek.

What does the expression “God of the spirits to all flesh” mean? There have been a number of different suggestions. First, Ibn Ezra takes the view that the epithet asserts God’s power to destroy human spirits: “He could wipe them out, for their spirits were in his hand.”¹¹ Ibn Ezra is followed by the majority of modern commentators. Eryl Davies, for example, writes: “The implication behind the expression is that the God who creates and sustains the physical life of every human being is equally capable of destroying it, if that is his wish.”¹² Jacob Milgrom points to texts such as Isa 42:5 and Zech 12:1 as evidence that God gives and withdraws the spirit of life.¹³ Second, the Jewish medieval commentators Rashi and Rashbam suggest that the implication is that God knows the spirits of all and is capable of distinguishing between the righteous and unrighteous. Rashi paraphrases as “O God who knows thoughts” and expands: “Your way is not that of a king of flesh and blood. When part of the land rebels against a flesh-and-blood king, he has no way of knowing just which of them are the

10. The same shift is also found in Gen 6:19, but in Gen 7:15 MT has **כל הבשר** and the Samaritan Pentateuch has **כל בשר**.

11. Michael Carasik, *Numbers*, Commentators’ Bible: JPS Miqra’ot Gedolot (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2011), 123.

12. Eryl W. Davies, *Numbers*, NCB (London: Marshall Pickering, 1995), 174.

13. Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 135.

sinner. So he angrily punishes them all. But all thoughts are open to you, and you know who the sinners are.”¹⁴ Among recent commentators, this interpretation has been followed by Ludwig Schmidt: “As the only parallel in Num 27:16 (P) shows, they want to express by this that God, who gives life to all flesh, can distinguish between the spirits.”¹⁵ Third, Jules de Vaulx argues that the spirits are the good and evil spirits that God sends upon people (cf. 1 Sam 10:10).¹⁶

In order to determine what interpretation seems most compelling I will examine the different lexemes that contribute to the expression before turning to the expression in its contexts.

I will turn, first, to the divine name **אל**. As we have seen, Cross speculates that the divine name El might point to the remnants of an early tradition. Its appearance in very late P strands and nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible makes this seem unlikely. The divine name El is attested very rarely in narrative contexts, and yet it appears in Numbers not only here but also in the rather unconventional expression “O God” (**אל נא**, Num 12:13). It seems more likely that we have an archaism that has, perhaps, been formulated on the basis of the mention of El in the Priestly patriarchal narratives. While the original Priestly document distinguished between two dispensations, the pre-Mosaic period when God was known by his name El Shaddai and the Mosaic period when God revealed himself as YHWH, the later Priestly strands in Numbers obscure this distinction.

The term **רוחות** is used in almost every other appearance in the Hebrew Bible for the four winds, a meaning that is not suited to Num 16:22 or 27:16, but **רוח** is a polysemous word: It can be used of a creature’s breath (Isa 42:5), and consequently the creature’s life (Gen 6:17); it can be used of the temperament or mind of humans (Num 14:24); it can also be used of God’s spirit (1 Sam 10:6) and the spirits that God sends, whether good or evil (1 Sam 16:15). Without an examination of the context, it is not immediately clear which of those senses is intended in our expression.

Finally, **כל בשר** appears on a number of occasions in the broad Priestly corpus of the Pentateuch. Almost all of these occurrences are to be found

14. Carasik, *Numbers*, 123.

15. Ludwig Schmidt, *Das Vierte Buch Mose, Numeri 10,11–36,13*, ATD 7.2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 71: “Damit wollen sie, wie die einzige Parallele in Num 27,16 (P) zeigt, ausdrücken, dass Gott, der allem Fleisch den Lebensgeist gibt, zwischen den Geistern unterscheiden kann.”

16. Jules de Vaulx, *Les Nombres*, Sources Bibliques (Paris: Gabalda, 1972), 194.

in the flood story, where it refers to all creatures, humans and animals (Gen 6:12–13, 17, 19; 7:16, 21; 8:17; 9:11, 15–17). The only other occurrence outside our expression in Numbers is in Lev 17:14 where it also refers to all creatures. Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, כל בשר seems to refer to all humans (Deut 5:26; Isa 40:5; 49:26; 66:16, 23–24; Jer 12:12; 25:31; Ezek 20:48; 21:4–5; Joel 3:1; Pss 65:3; 145:21; Job 34:15). Only rarely do all creatures appear to be in view (Ps 136:25; Dan 4:12). For my purposes the results of this survey of the biblical references is rather inconclusive. In many biblical texts כל בשר refers to humans. It is only in the flood story and Lev 17:14 that it means all creatures, and while these are P and H texts, it is not the case that these can determine the meaning for the late Priestly stratum in which Num 16:22 and 27:16 are found.

Numbers 16:22

Numbers 16 describes the rebellion by Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and the two hundred fifty leaders against Moses and Aaron. Since the work of Kuenen, historical-critical scholarship has identified three distinct strands that have been woven together. The first is the civil rebellion by Dathan and Abiram against Moses's leadership. The two Reubenites complain about Moses's failure to bring them into the promised land. They refuse to appear before Moses with words, "We will not go up," that play on the language used of appearing before a judge and the command a few chapters earlier to invade the Judahite foothills. The rebellion ends instead with them being swallowed down into the earth (16:12–15, 23–34*). The second strand is the cultic rebellion of the two hundred fifty men who contend that the holiness of the entire community precludes one tribe, the Levites, from solely enjoying the privileges of the priestly office. The rebellion leads to a trial by sacrifice between the community leaders and Aaron. All must present themselves before the tent of meeting with censers to offer incense. The trial ends with the leaders being consumed by fire, as Nadab and Abihu had been before them (Lev 10), and Aaron demonstrating the fitness of the tribe of Levi by offering incense himself and atoning for the people's sin (16:2–7*, 18, 35; 17:6–15). The third strand is the rebellion of Korah. According to the genealogy in Exod 6, Korah is a cousin of Moses and Aaron. He objects to the priesthood being restricted to Aaron and his family (16:1a, 7b, 8–11, 16, 19–22).

The nineteenth-century critics identified the Dathan and Abiram strand as a non-Priestly story that was once independent, as confirmed

by Deut 11:6 and Ps 106:17. The other two strands were Priestly with the Korah story usually seen as a later reworking of the story of the two hundred fifty men. In contemporary scholarship the three strands are still recognized, but there has been a lively discussion about the date of the Dathan and Abiram story and its place in the chapter's composition, and whether or not the story of the two hundred fifty men story was originally independent, or a reworking of the Dathan and Abiram story.¹⁷ For my purposes it is only important to observe that 16:22 is widely agreed to be part of the Korah material and that this is usually regarded as the latest strand within the chapter and a reworking of, at least, the story of the 250 men.

The combined Priestly strands present the reader with an ambiguity that comes to its head in God's instruction to Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from “this congregation” (הַעֲדָה הַזֹּאת, 16:21). To what body does this refer? In the story of the two hundred fifty men, “(all) the congregation” refers to the people of Israel as a whole. The two hundred fifty men are identified as the community's leaders (16:2) and speak on its behalf (16:3), but they alone are held accountable for the rebellion. When judgment is announced on the rebellious leaders, the congregation is instructed to move away from the leaders' tents so that God can destroy them without harm coming upon the entire community. In the Korah revision, the band that Korah gathers around him are identified as “his company” (עֲדָתוֹ, 16:5, 6; cf. 11, 16), but as Levites they are also separated “from the congregation of Israel” (מֵעֲדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, 16:9). At the height of the rebellion, Korah had “the entire congregation” assembled against Moses and Aaron (16:19). Thus, when God threatens “this congregation,” the reader is left uncertain as to whether just Korah's company will be destroyed or whether the entire Israelite nation is under threat.

It is in this context that Moses appeals to “the God of the spirits of all flesh” and complains that God should not allow the entire congregation (כָּל הָעֲדָה) to perish for the sin of one man. In light of this carefully constructed ambiguity around the referent of “congregation,” it seems best to understand the appeal to the “God of the spirits of all flesh” as an appeal to the one who can distinguish within the congregation. If the reader, and

17. For the most recent discussion with an extensive history of scholarship, see Katharina Pyschny, *Verhandelte Führung: Eine Analyse von Num 16–17 im Kontext der neueren Pentateuchforschung*, Herder biblische Studien 88 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2017).

even Moses and Aaron, cannot tell which congregation is in view, the “God of the spirits of all flesh” is able to discern who is the sinner and who is not.

Numbers 27:16

The second occurrence of “the God of the spirits of all flesh” is found in the story of Joshua’s appointment as Moses’s successor. In light of his impending death, Moses appeals to God to appoint a military successor who can lead the people into the promised land (27:16–17). Joshua’s qualification for the task is simply stated as “in whom there is spirit” (אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ בּוֹ). Quite what this means is unclear, but Deut 34:9 identifies Joshua as “full of the spirit of wisdom” as a result of this commissioning. Again, it seems most likely that the title “the God of the spirits of all flesh” concerns God’s ability to distinguish between human spirits and that this discernment is not something that humans possess. God alone is able to discern that Joshua has spirit.

“The God of the Spirits of All Flesh” in Numbers and “The God of All Flesh” in Jeremiah 32:27

The divine claim to be “YHWH, the God of all flesh,” occurs as part of the discourse about Jeremiah’s purchase of a field during the siege of Jerusalem. After receiving instructions to buy the field (32:1–15), Jeremiah expresses some confusion about God’s designs (32:16–25) and receives a further divine word in response (32:26–44). Among critical commentators, there is widespread agreement that the chapter has been subject to extensive revisions that develop various themes concerning Israel’s unfaithfulness and the future hope. Jeremiah’s prayer and God’s response open with very similar affirmations that emphasize God’s unconstrained power. Jeremiah acknowledges God as the creator of the heavens and the earth and draws out the consequence of this affirmation: “nothing is too hard for you” (32:17). Yet for Jeremiah this is understood to mean that God is able to bring the Babylonians against Jerusalem to execute his judgment on Israel. But Jeremiah cannot comprehend the purpose of buying a field when the city is besieged and its fall inevitable. God’s response is to return to Jeremiah’s theological affirmation. The divine self-introduction is followed by an affirmation that he is “God of all flesh,” and consequently, echoing Jeremiah’s words, nothing is impossible for him (32:26–28). This means not only that God can bring judgment upon his people but also

reverse it and bring the exiles back and restore them to the land (32:36–44).¹⁸ The parallels between Jeremiah’s prayer and God’s response suggest that the affirmation that YHWH is “the God of all flesh” is similar to claiming that God is the creator.¹⁹ “God of all flesh” means that YHWH is the one who has created all flesh. The deduction from this that nothing is too hard for God indicates that “the God of all flesh” is the one who has sovereign power over all flesh.

It would appear, then, that the expression “God of all flesh” in Jer 32 was understood in a different manner from the expression “God of the spirits of all flesh” in Num 16 and 27. In Jer 32 “the God of all flesh” concerns God’s creation of humans (and possibly animals) and his sovereign power over them. In Num 16 and 27 “the God of the spirits of all flesh” concerns God’s intimate knowledge of human beings and his discernment of their spirits. As we have seen, a number of interpreters have interpreted “God of the spirits of all flesh” in Num 16 as a reference to God’s sovereign power and ability to destroy his creatures should he wish. This would appear to be an inadvertent reading of Jer 32 back into the book of Numbers.

The different meanings implied by the two appellations does not provide us with an easy means of determining whether one is a development of the other and which was the original. In terms of how they are understood in Numbers and Jeremiah, we have two independent meanings. If one developed into the other, the altered collocation gave rise to a different set of understandings. Nevertheless, it is probably slightly easier to argue that “God of all flesh” gave rise to “God of the spirits of all flesh” than the reverse. First, as we shall see, the later developments of the epithet in early Jewish and Christian literature evidence “God of the spirits” or “lord of the spirits” as a common reception of the appellation. This suggests that a natural reduction of the appellation was to drop the final words “all flesh” rather than the intervening word “spirits.” Second, the book of Numbers does use “spirit” on a number of occasions to describe human interiority (5:14, 30; 14:24), but also in Num 11 there is a significant play on “flesh”

18. See Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 626, “the spelling out of this claim does not appear until vv. 37–41.”

19. See Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 21B (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 515, “Yahweh is speaking now, and he prefaces his first oracle with a self-asseveration echoing Jeremiah’s acclamation at the beginning of his prayer.”

and “spirit.”²⁰ It is conceivable that the authors of Numbers reworked the Jeremican appellation in light of this flesh-spirit dichotomy.

The Development of the Appellation in Early Jewish and Christian Literature

It has already been observed that the Septuagint rendered our appellation θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός (“God of spirits and all flesh”). It is uncertain whether the translator intended to distinguish between humans as both spirits and flesh or whether a distinction was being made between spiritual beings and physical beings. Similarly ambiguous is the parallel in 1QH^a XVIII, 8, “See you are the prince of gods, and king of the glorious ones, and lord to every spirit, and ruler of every creature” (הנה אתה שר אלים ומלך נכבדים ואדון לכול רוח ומושל בכל מעשה הנה).²¹ Whichever was the case, the identification of the spirits as heavenly beings becomes a very common way of understanding the reference to the spirits. Psalm 104:3 was probably an important influence in this interpretive trend. In a description of God’s heavenly majesty, the psalmist proclaims, “You made the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers” (עשה מלאכיו (רוחות משרתיו) אש להט). The plural רוחות provides an obvious link to our appellation and was understood to identify the spirits as angels.

The idea of God as the lord of the (angelic) spirits is an idea found in a number of Second Temple texts. According to 2 Macc 3:24 when Heliodorus attempted to invade the sanctuary and secure its treasure, he was prevented from doing so by a heavenly manifestation that God effects because he is “the ruler of the spirits and all authority” (ὁ τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης ἐξουσίας δυνάστης). The preferred title of God in the Book of Parables is “the Lord of Spirits” (ʿagzi manāfest), an epithet that occurs more than one hundred times. As George Nickelsburg observes, the spirits of this title are clearly angelic beings since in 1 En. 39:12 the *Trisagion* is

20. Thomas Römer, “Israel’s Sojourn in the Wilderness and the Construction of the Book of Numbers,” in *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld*, ed. Robert Rezetko, Timothy H. Lim, and W. Brian Aucker, VTSup 113 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 437.

21. Nickelsburg thinks that “spirit” here has angels in view. This is far from certain in light of the following clause. See George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 37–82*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 91.

rendered as “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Spirits, he fills the earth with spirits.”²² The spirits are Isaiah’s heavenly hosts. It would seem, then, that Cross’s speculation that the original epithet was *אל אלהי רוחות* is a retrojection of the appellation’s reception. Though the Book of Parables “the Lord of Spirits” is usually seen as a reference to angelic beings, we should not overlook the suggestiveness of the idea that the earth too is full of spirits, which suggests that the title may have more than angelic beings in view, even if they are the primary referent. The potential ambiguities in the word “spirit,” whether in Hebrew, Greek, or Ethiopic, are also in play in the book of Hebrews’ reference to God as “the father of spirits” (τῷ πατρὶ τῶν πνευμάτων, 12:9). God is here contrasted to human fathers who are identified as “fathers of flesh” (τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν πατέρας). The commentators are divided with some identifying the spirits as human, but others as angelic.²³ The fact that the book of Hebrews can use *πνεύματα* of both human and angelic beings heightens the uncertainty (1:14; 12:23).

Far closer to the use of our appellation in the book of Numbers is 1 Clem. 64.1. In a final prayer, Clement appeals to “the all-seeing God and master of spirits and lord of all flesh” (ὁ παντεπόπτης θεὸς καὶ δεσπότης τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ κύριος πάσης σαρκός). The allusion to the Septuagint’s rendering of Numbers is unmistakable, but it is also noticeable that the appellation is appended with the description of God as “all-seeing.” The same term is used in 1 Clem 55:6 of Esther’s “affliction of her soul” and seems to reference God’s ability to know human interiority in a way that is similar to that expressed in the book of Numbers.

22. Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 91.

23. Lane, for example, thinks they are supernatural, while Ellingworth thinks they are human (William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, WBC 47B [Dallas: Word, 1991], 424; and Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 654).

On Difficulty and Psalm 2

Daniel R. Driver

In his classic essay “On Difficulty,” George Steiner outlines a taxonomy of difficulty in poetry. He characterizes four main types: readers can face contingent, modal, tactical, and ontological difficulties. The *contingent* may be interminable in practice, but it can, in theory, be resolved. It is ultimately a matter of homework, of looking things up. The *modal* has to do with an experience of alienation from a work, and it cannot be overcome simply with reference to the right dictionary or handbook. Some aspect of a piece’s tone or mode or subject matter makes it illicit or repellent to readers in a different time and place. The *tactical* pushes readers beyond the conventions of sense-making—spelling and grammar and syntax and so on—for some deliberate purpose. The strategy might serve in what Martin Amis calls the war against cliché, or it could be part of a design to obstruct and unsettle. These first three kinds of difficulty are, according to Steiner, part of the standard contract between authors and readers. “Contingent difficulties aim to be looked up; modal difficulties challenge the inevitable parochialism of honest empathy; tactical difficulties endeavor to deepen our apprehension by dislocating and goading to new life the supine energies of word and grammar.”¹ The fourth risks a breach of contract. The *ontological* pertains especially to the radical work of some modern poets, such as Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Celan, who “express their sense of the inauthentic situation of man in an environment of eroded speech.”² While the first three categories reflect an array of established poetics, the last one

1. George Steiner, *On Difficulty and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 40.

2. Steiner, *On Difficulty*, 44. “At certain levels,” Steiner writes, “we are not meant to understand at all, and our interpretation, indeed our reading itself, is an intrusion (Celan himself often expressed a sense of violation in respect of the exegetic industry

appears to break with literary tradition. In that sense the development is distinctly modern.

Although ancient, Ps 2 presents a full array of difficulty as well. In what follows I will argue that all four of Steiner's categories apply to it, though in one case the sense of his term needs adjustment and in another redefinition. That the psalm has contingent and modal difficulties is uncontroversial. Stemming from the facts of its antique origins and continuous use in first Jewish and then Christian tradition, however, the psalm brings with it challenges that set it apart from Western poetry after the Renaissance. It belongs to a Psalter that defies analogy with any Norton anthology. That Psalter in turn belongs to the Scriptures of Israel, which are variously treasured and read as Tanak or Old Testament.³ For literary, historical, and theological reasons the Bible does not read like any other book. There is less controversy than there used to be, in critical studies of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, about the notion that the position of Ps 2 behind Ps 1 gives it a special function as part of the entryway to the canonical book of Psalms. The point is still occasionally disputed.⁴ My argument will be that the psalm's placement is tactical, more or less in Steiner's sense of the word, with major consequences for its interpretation. Finally, as part of Jewish and Christian Scripture, Ps 2 poses acute ontological questions. Here it is not that the psalmist threatens to break with literary tradition; rather, the psalm itself seems to threaten to break those who refuse its authority. It is, to echo Phyllis Tribble, a text of terror. As such it forces readers to consider the power and nature of the Lord it names. Within Christian Scripture, too, it speaks of a begotten son whose profile is hazy, but whom the New Testament identifies with Jesus Christ. How should this later extension of scriptural sense be understood? Taken

which began to gather around his poems). But again we ask: For whom, then, is the poet writing, let alone publishing?" (45).

3. In view of the "consumerist connotations" of Old Testament in English, the phrase "Elder Testament" (*l'Ancien Testament*) has recently been proposed as a reminder of historic Christian respect for a witness that is "venerable, original, and time-tested" (Christopher R. Seitz, *The Elder Testament: Canon, Theology, Trinity* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018], 13–19).

4. David Wilgren, "Why Psalms 1–2 Are Not to Be Considered a Preface to the 'Book' of Psalms," *ZAW* 130 (2018): 384–97, does not manage to dismantle the current consensus. His brief argument relies on fragmentary evidence (4Q174) and is constructed so narrowly as to deny even the slightest extension of the putative original sense.

together these factors make the interpretation of this psalm especially fraught. What the situation requires, among other things, is hermeneutical dexterity: Ps 2 needs to be read at multiple levels.

Text and Translation

To take a well-known example of the contingent variety, how should one understand the phrase נשקו בר in Ps 2:12, which the King James Version renders as “Kiss the Son”? Look up בר in the standard Hebrew lexicons, and you will find that most allow for the word here to be the Aramaic equivalent of בן, which appears in 2:7—although none advise rendering both in English as “Son” with a capital S. Some contemporary scholars, including David Clines and Susan Gillingham, have been content to leave the phrase as “Kiss the son,” which is roughly how the Masoretic Text vocalizes it. Then again, why is בר indefinite? And why should the psalmist switch to Aramaic for a common word that has just been used in Hebrew? Faced with several elaborate reconstructions of the phrase, Robert Alter makes the simplest emendation possible by repointing בר as בִּר. By pairing this change with an obscure but possible meaning of נשקו, he offers, “with purity be armed.”⁵ Ancient versions respond to the problem in their own ways. The Septuagint has δρᾶξασθε παιδείας (“seize on instruction”), which multiple Latin editions mirror with *adprehendite disciplinam*. These translations might reflect a Hebrew *Vorlage* that has since been lost to history; however, there is a case to be made that Jerome’s first and second translations of the Psalter either defer to the Old Latin or else reflect his general loyalty to the Greek text, which may in turn have been driven by its own tendency in the case at hand.⁶ The Gallican Psalter (*Psalmorum iuxta Septuaginta emendatus*) gave “accept instruction” to the Latin church for centuries to come, although Jerome’s third and final translation (*Psalmorum iuxta Hebraicum translatus*) reads *adore pure* (“worship purity”), which is not far from Alter’s solution. The Aramaic Targum, oddly enough, has קבילו אולפנא (“accept instruction”), which rather seems to agree with the Septuagint and the Vulgate. If its authors wondered what to do with

5. Robert Alter, *The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: Norton, 2007), 7.

6. For an account of issues in Old Greek and Latin translations of Ps 2 see Susan Gillingham, *A Journey of Two Psalms: The Reception of Psalms 1 and 2 in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 23–31, 61–66.

ושקו בר, then they evidently did not recognize בר as an Aramaic word. This choice, too, though, fits with the expansive tendency of Targum Psalms to emphasize law and instruction (torah, in a word).⁷

When Erasmus of Rotterdam takes stock of the situation in 1522, he arrives at a combination of two major possibilities. He rehearses Jerome's account of the textual details, and then, in a move that might well be inspired by Jerome's habit of drawing a surplus of spiritual and polemical meaning out of anything extant, paraphrases 2:12a as follows: "Those who attribute salvation to man's own works do not worship the Son in purity [*pure adorant Filium*]."⁸ It is a clever result, but it refuses the *crux interpretum* and must, in the end, be judged too ingenious. Erasmus also appears to surrender his ambition to master the Hebrew truth. It is precisely here, in a discussion of what *bar* means in Syriac and Hebrew, where he gives in, saying that "there is no need to cudgel our brains with the complexities of these barbaric languages!"⁹ Thus his exposition is not derailed.

In terms of a reconstruction, still today one might wish to capitulate. For all the homework one can do on Ps 2:12a α , the difficulty remains intractable. No fully satisfactory solution has ever emerged. It is possible, at least in theory, that the desired information could still be found. Then again, as has recently been argued, maybe the doubtful phrase is a late gloss, in which case there can be no more original form of it to uncover.¹⁰ Has the question reached an impasse? Stubborn contingent difficulties still want a resolution. Erasmus understands the basic problem in Ps 2:12 about as well as anyone who has ever looked into the matter, and although his exposition falls short of a solution, he understands something else as well, something that is implicit in many of the versions he considers: if a

7. David M. Stec, *The Targum of Psalms: Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes*, ArBib 16 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 4–5. See also Gillingham, *Journey of Two Psalms*, 70–76.

8. PL 26:875d–876a. Desiderius Erasmus, *Expositions of the Psalms*, trans. Michael J. Heath, Collected Works of Erasmus 63 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 142; Erasmus, *Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1985), 5.2:154 line 841. Commentary on Ps 2 runs to sixty-three pages in the Latin edition, and seventy-six pages in English translation.

9. Erasmus, *Expositions*, 142. See the discussion in Allan K. Jenkins, "Erasmus' Commentary on Psalm 2," *JHebS* 3 (2001), 1.5, 3.6, 5.2–5; <https://doi.org/10.5508/jhs.2000.v3.a3>.

10. So Sam Janse, "You are My Son": *The Reception History of Psalm 2 in Early Judaism and the Early Church*, CBET 51 (Leuven: Peeters, 2009).

verse is meant for religious instruction and edification, if, in other words, one is dealing with Scripture in the context of its use by the people of God, then one has a further reason to seek an intelligible resolution. The Bible is no locus of eroded speech and can be declared corrupt only as a last resort, if at all. Better to see textual difficulty as an occasion to open up Scripture's extended sense. In allegorical reading especially, and sometimes in textual criticism, too, Jerome and Erasmus deploy the same additive strategy found in many ancient versions.

In contrast, my own preliminary translation of Ps 2 (below) is governed by limiting principles. First, I restrict myself to a single sense for each word or phrase, at least in the first instance. I aim to give the plain sense of it, though I recognize that this can be difficult or impossible to establish in cases like 2:12a. Second, I try to reproduce the terse parallel cadences of the Hebrew.¹¹ Third, wherever possible, I avoid making nouns definite when no article appears in the Hebrew original, and vice versa. A curious feature of the history of the Psalter's translation is how seemingly crucial definite articles are inserted or removed. Already in Ps 1:1, for example, the Septuagint appears to read *אשרי האיש* ("Happy the man") as anarthrous (and, with *ἀνὴρ*, rather more specifically male). Conversely, in English translation Ps 2 meets with a surfeit of definiteness. Some of these changes may be appropriate. Different languages call for articles in different measure. However, additions of "the" do shift the meaning of Ps 2 in English, and they begin to look automatic. A surprising number of technical translations and commentaries take their presence for granted. Fourth, in a related move the word *אֶרֶץ* is construed as "land" instead of "earth." Both meanings are possible. Again, though, few commentators give credence to the more local, less global reading.¹² Lastly, I ignore the fact that Ps 2 is embedded in a singular collection of psalms, adjacent to Ps 1 and ahead of a long series of psalms that, unlike it, have superscrip-

11. Strikingly, for all his limitations as a Christian Hebraist, Erasmus anticipates Robert Lowth's discovery of parallelism in Hebrew poetry (Jenkins, "Erasmus' Psalm 2," 3.4).

12. Exceptions include T. K. Cheyne, *The Book of Psalms: Translated from a Revised Text with Notes and Introduction* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1904); Isaiah Sonne, "The Second Psalm," *HUCA* 19 (1945): 43–55. See David J. A. Clines, "Psalm 2 and the MLF (Moabite Liberation Front)," in *The Bible in Human Society: Essays in Honour of John Rogerson*, ed. M. Daniel Carroll R., David J. A. Clines, and Philip R. Davies, JSOTSUP 200 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 167.

tions.¹³ In the end I will argue that its position at the front of the Psalter has significance, as a kind of tactical extension, but it is also possible and useful to imagine the text shorn of that context.

- 1 Why do nations agitate, and peoples grumble empty?
- 2 Kings of the realm take their stand, and princes form an alliance,
against the LORD and against his anointed.
- 3 “Let us snap their fetters and shake ourselves free from their ropes.”
- 4 He who sits in heaven laughs. The Lord snorts at them.
- 5 Then he speaks to them in his anger, and his rage terrifies them.
- 6 “I have consecrated my king on Zion, my holy hill.”
- 7 I will recount the LORD’s decree. He said to me,
“You are my son. I myself have begotten you today.
- 8 Ask of me, and I will give nations as your inheritance,
the borderland as your territory.
- 9 You shall break them with an iron scepter,
shattering them like a potter’s jar.”
- 10 And now, O kings, be wise. Take instruction, rulers of the land.
- 11 Be subject to the LORD in fear: be glad to tremble.
- 12 Kiss an heir lest he fume, and you destroy yourself
because his temper runs short.
Happy they who flee to him.

Later I will present a revised translation of Ps 2 together with Ps 1, its nearest canonical neighbor.¹⁴ First, though, a more immediate difficulty must be considered.

Modal Affront

Nobody has given a better account of the modal difficulty of Ps 2 than Clines. Applying a hermeneutic of suspicion, he adopts the point of view

13. Except for Pss 10 and 33, all other psalms in book 1 of the MT Psalter have superscriptions. The LXX has no exceptions since Pss 9 and 10 are combined and Ps 33 (LXX 32) supplies the lack.

14. A careful intertextual study of Pss 1–3 nevertheless calls Ps 1–2 a “diptych”: Beat Weber, “‘HERR, wie viele sind geworden meine Bedränger...’ (Ps 3,2a): Psalm 1–3 als Overture des Psalters unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Psalm 3 und seinem Präskript,” in *Der Bibelkanon in der Bibelauslegung: Methodenreflexionen und Beispiele*, ed. Egbert Ballhorn and Georg Steins (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007), 239.

of “the position that is systematically repressed both within the text and within scholarly tradition.”¹⁵ Dignifying this perspective with a name, he calls the anonymous enemies of the psalm Moabite and then makes himself an advocate for both a “Moabite Liberation Front,” which he imagines to be hidden in the world of the text, and a “readers’ liberation movement,” which he calls for in the scholarly guild that almost invariably betrays “a complicity with the text.”¹⁶ The value judgments that fill his essay are instructive.

For Clines the text of Ps 2 is polemical, propagandistic, “unmistakably and smugly typical of an insensitive imperial despotism,” amoral, perverse in its appropriation of religious language for crass political ends, scornful, vengeful, repressive, ethnocentric, tyrannical, violent, and illegitimate.¹⁷ “What is so bad for me about Psalm 2’s ideology is ... not only that I do not approve of it but that it cannot sustain itself or justify itself in terms of Israel’s own self-awareness. And that is the ethical problem the text itself raises: the text is an act of bad faith.”¹⁸ The scholarly tradition, too, is “myopic” (blind “to the ‘Moabite’ point of view”), prone to “moralizing or theologizing,” susceptible to “universalizing” and “idealizing” tendencies, guilty of “softening the contours” by playing down “some remarkably astringent elements,” often with a Christianizing rhetoric of love, and, in some of the more pernicious cases, fully aligned “with the savagery of the psalm,” which interpreters use to promote their “totalitarian instincts” and jingoism.¹⁹ Clines recognizes that his own response to text and interpretation is culturally conditioned by his experience as a British man living in a postcolonial and post-Christian era, but he also owns it.²⁰ Readers, he concludes, must be “free from the authority of the text and of its professional interpreters”:

It is a sad day for theism if the only language its adherents can find to express their sense of the divine is the language of oriental despotism,

15. Clines, “Psalm 2,” 159.

16. Clines, “Psalm 2,” 184. “Like the freedom fighters of the Moabite Liberation Front, [modern readers] have nothing to lose but their chains, but unlike them they do not even need to unite to find their freedom—everyone can do it for themselves.”

17. Clines, “Psalm 2,” 161.

18. Clines, “Psalm 2,” 180. His point is that it is inconsistent for a formerly liberated Israel to aspire to become the oppressor, even if Ps 2 is merely the wishful projection of a marginalized community.

19. Clines, “Psalm 2,” 162, 165, 166, 168, 169, 172, 173–75.

20. Clines, “Psalm 2,” 180.

with its scornful deity who offers comfort to petty kings in their grandiose ambitions and authorizes state violence and a regime of terror against those who want nothing more gross than self-determination.²¹

He feels compelled to break the chain of authority as an act of political solidarity with those across the ages who have been oppressed by the same. Thus, in Steiner's language, the poem's argument has become illicit and repellent for a different audience.

Clines styles himself a renegade. If it was so in 1995, his position has since acquired an orthodoxy of its own. It is not often found in more technical literature, such as John Collins's investigation of the extent to which Ps 2 attaches to messianic understanding in Second Temple Judaism.²² However, the case is different in Collins's widely used *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*. David's kingdom, students are told, was a mere dot on a map. The Bible's account of God's promises to David are shaped by the royal ideology of Judah, as may be found in places like 2 Sam 7 and Pss 2, 45, 72, and 110:

What is striking in Ps 2 is the kind of authority the king is supposed to enjoy: the nations are his inheritance and the ends of the earth are his possession. No king in Jerusalem ever actually reigned over such an empire, even bearing in mind that the world known to the psalmist was smaller than ours. Of course, the claim is deliberately hyperbolic, but it shows that the Jerusalem monarchy had delusions of grandeur.²³

Psalms 2 comes up repeatedly in this connection, illustrating the presence of "political propaganda."²⁴ This unflattering feature helps show why the Psalter is subject to ethical critique. "The book of Psalms is not a book of moral instruction." The simple fact that it has been used that way for millennia does not mean that its contents are "edifying or that they can serve as moral guidelines."²⁵ In this example, the religiohistorical assessment of

21. Clines, "Psalm 2," 185.

22. John J. Collins, "The Interpretation of Psalm 2," in *Scriptures and Sectarianism: Essays on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, WUNT 332 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 87–101. Evidence for messianic understanding at this time is, he finds, "widespread" (101).

23. John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 236.

24. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 477.

25. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 480.

Hermann Gunkel has been combined with the open ethical critique of Clines.²⁶ Further, Collins is representative. For an increasing number of people, the modal dimension of this psalm provokes a feeling of revulsion that leads to its rejection. At present it can appear as if the text sets a snare for modern readers, many of whom respond by asserting their moral right to shake themselves free from its cords.

Natural as it is, gut-level reaction against the psalm tends, when embraced, to block sympathy for whatever instinct felt it to be worth preserving, collecting, and transmitting as Scripture in the first place. There are multiple reasons why some scholars, faced with an outpouring of constructive research on the shape and shaping of the Psalter, demur. In some cases, it is simply because an older paradigm prevails. One cannot insist on a strict form-critical handling of the royal enthronement psalms without devaluing their present distribution in the Psalter. There is a certain incompatibility of methods. In other cases, evidence of inner-biblical echoes and allusions is pressed too far, straining credulity. Samuel Sandmel's parallelomania abides. In still others, the new line of research seems unacceptable precisely because it serves to blunt the edge of Ps 2's modal affront. The closing word of blessing, which is rarely ever eliminated on literary grounds, is trivialized because it is judged a sham. Surely it is no coincidence that Clines and Collins are among those who dismiss current trends—and ancient ones, as will be seen—that allow the prospective final happiness of “all” (2:12c) to recontextualize the more troubling language of Ps 2.

Tactical Extension

Steiner's tactical difficulty pertains to a poetic strategy that pushes careful readers to stop and reconsider the meaning of a word or phrase. Its use in modern poetry may be to “obstruct and unsettle,” but the relocation of sense through dislocation can also be constructive. Most biblical scholars now agree that the Psalter provides many fine examples of the tactical extension of sense in ancient verse, especially through a network of secondary intertextual connections that arise through editorial shaping and strategic positioning in a canonical anthology. Even though the editorial objective in the book of Psalms is to guide rather than to block the reader,

26. Gunkel's view is summarized by Janse, *My Son*, 26: “Removed from all sense of reality, Israel's court poets imitated the court poetry of the great Egyptian and Mesopotamian empires to flatter their king.”

the tactical remains difficult because it introduces an additional layer of meaning without erasing aspects of a more original sense. Standing in signal position at the front of a collection of one hundred fifty psalms arranged in five books, Ps 2 is a case in point.

There are those who reject the significance of canonical shaping for the interpretation of the Bible's psalms. For Gunkel it was a methodological axiom. Working in a later day, when discussion of the shaping of the Psalter was still somewhat novel, Clines has the benefit of knowing Erich Zenger's characterization of Pss 1–2 as a prelude to the book of Psalms. He does not give the argument its due, however, because of his driving interest to show how the prominent "position of [Ps 2] makes the ethical problem it raises only more acute."²⁷ Discussion of several decades, in major journals, monographs, and commentaries, makes the new paradigm hard to dismiss today. Nancy deClaissé-Walford's *The Shape and Shaping of the Book of Psalms* (2014) provides a convenient snapshot of the state of the question.²⁸ Most contributors to her volume regard Gerald Wilson's *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (1985) as a watershed.²⁹ Erhard Gerstenberger is something of an outlier in the group thanks to his focus on hymnic speech forms in a comparative ancient Near Eastern framework, which consciously follows the tradition of Gunkel and Sigmund Mowinckel.³⁰ The older approach still yields insight, but in the current scholarly environment it is surprising to hear nothing about the Psalter as such. Also, the newer discussion in Europe, particularly in German literature, has placed more emphasis on the history of the anthology's formation (the shaping), in contrast to the focus on literary contours (the shape) that dominates in Anglo-American literature. Still, Rolf Jacobson has ample reason to say that canonical criticism of the psalms, as practiced by scholars like Wilson and Zenger, "has shown convincingly that there is an intentional canonical shape to the Psalter."³¹ There are edge cases, but Ps 2 is not among them. It

27. Clines, "Psalm 2," 182.

28. Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Book of Psalms: The Current State of Scholarship*, AIL 20 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014).

29. Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, SBLDS 76 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985).

30. Erhard S. Gerstenberger, "The Dynamic of Praise in the Ancient Near East, or Poetry and Politics," in deClaissé-Walford, *Shape and Shaping*, 27–39.

31. Rolf A. Jacobson, "Imagining the Future of Psalms Studies," in deClaissé-Walford, *Shape and Shaping*, 234.

is discussed by at least six of deClaissé-Walford's contributors (more than a third), including one who develops an account of substantial editorial links between Pss 2 and 149.³²

Just how new is this new approach to the psalms? Its modern form owes a debt to Brevard Childs, among others, and Wilson acknowledges more than the lone article on psalm titles that is customarily cited.³³ He is not breaking up untilled ground. Yet some have asked if contemporary assumptions about how the Bible ought to be read, supposedly, are not belied by a lack of regard for canonical contours in ancient readings of the psalms. In the Psalter's vast history of reception, in its various forms, it certainly would be a problem if no one had ever paid attention to the arrangement of psalms until 1970. Jacobson expresses his uncertainty on this point in 2014:

It seems to me that it is time to integrate and test what we know about how the communities were actually reading the psalms with theories about what the final form "means." Are there any congruencies or incongruences between how the New Testament, Qumran, and other first-century Jewish communities were actually interpreting the psalms and the canonical theories about what the Psalter's final form means? Were any of these readers who were approaching the Psalter as a "book" and interpreting in the psalms with anything like what we call "plot" or "characterization"? What theological questions did they seem to be bringing to the Psalter? Are these the same questions that canonical criticism has posited that narrative interpreters of the psalms should bring?³⁴

Happily, by 2013 Gillingham had already developed a robust answer to such questions, worked out in a major case study of Pss 1–2. Do the ancients have a feel for the Psalter's opening editorial framework? Her conclusion is: it depends. Sometimes early Jewish or Christian tradition senses a connection between Pss 1 and 2 or between that portal to the

32. Derek E. Wittman, "Let Us Cast Off Their Ropes from Us: The Editorial Significance of the Portrayal of Foreign Nations in Psalms 2 and 149," in deClaissé-Walford, *Shape and Shaping*, 53–69.

33. Brevard S. Childs, "Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis," *JSS* 16 (1971): 137–50; Wilson, *Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*. Note the dedication to Wilson's last teacher, Childs, "who taught me to respect the Canon."

34. Jacobson, "Future," 237.

Psalter and the psalms that follow. Sometimes it does not.³⁵ But a kind of appreciation for the Psalter's canonical shape clearly does exist in antiquity. On occasion it sounds out with clarity.

Gregory of Nyssa furnishes a superb example of the extent to which ancient and modern approaches can converge. From his study of the inscriptions of the psalms, which is informed by his knowledge of classical rhetoric, Gregory learns that the aim (*σκοπός*) of the Psalter is beatitude. This blessed state is realized as human creatures are brought into the praise of God. The whole book of Psalms facilitates that end: "The entire treatise of the Psalms has been separated into five sections, and there is a systematic arrangement and division in these sections. The circumscription of the sections is obvious, since they conclude in a similar manner with certain ascriptions of praise to God."³⁶

Gregory observes that all five sections conclude with refrains of praise. Further, the beginning of the Psalter opens up the way to spiritual transformation. How does it come about that "every breathing creature" can, in the end, "praise the Lord" (Ps 150:6)? It starts with Ps 1. "The first entrance to the good, therefore, is the departure from those things which are opposed to it. The participation in what is superior occurs by means of this entrance."³⁷ Again, the Psalter "opened a door ... to the blessed life in its first words in respect to the withdrawal from evil. For the first words of the Psalter teach this," and "the meaning of the last psalm" confirms its proper goal (*τέλος*).³⁸ In describing the broad parameters established by Pss 1 and 150, Gregory anticipates papers that have

35. Gillingham, *Journey of Two Psalms*. Her book's first goal is to show how "a focus on *reception history* can provide a wider perspective in testing, correcting, and adding to [recent] debates" about whether Pss 1 and 2 function together or separately (1, emphasis original). She adjudicates this issue in ancient Judaism (mostly separate: 36–37), early Christianity (increasingly together: 66–67), rabbinic and medieval Judaism (mostly together: 92–94), the early Middle Ages and the Reformation period (together but waning: 127–29), and on down through current debate. Reception historical study, she notes, "has the advantage of interacting with a full and often complex interpretative tradition, which literary critics and biblical theologians often fail to take into account" (1).

36. Ronald E. Heine, *Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise on the Inscriptions of the Psalms: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, OECS (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 95.

37. Heine, *Treatise on the Inscriptions*, 96.

38. Heine, *Treatise on the Inscriptions*, 122, cf. 15, 29–30, 52–53.

lately been given in the book of Psalms section at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature.

Having established the Psalter's scope in part 1 of his treatise, Gregory turns to the question of its inscriptions in part 2. Two interpretive moves are of interest at present. First, he illustrates the path to blessed praise through a sequential treatment of the first eleven psalms, which he finds to have a deliberate and productive flow (*ἀκολουθία*). Although he does not carry the exercise any further, he has a vocabulary that speaks to purposeful arrangement (*τάξις*) in the psalms. Some psalms appear in the wrong historical sequence, but only because they show the proper spiritual order:

So the psalms have been formed like a sculptor's tools for the true overseer who, like a craftsman, is carving our souls into the divine likeness.... For example, the first psalm removed humanity from its cohesion with evil. The second, having indicated the appearance of the Lord through the flesh in advance, showed to what we should cling, and that to *trust in him* is *blessed* [Ps 2:12]. The third predicts the temptation which rises up against you from the enemy, so that as soon as you have been anointed into the kingdom through faith, and rule with the true Christ, he attempts to cast you out of your honored position, having come not from without, but from you yourself.³⁹

In this way Ps 2 is framed with canonical reference points, including, along with the incarnate Christ made known in the New Testament, the Psalter's own guiding index of beatitude. Gregory pursues a canonically ordered reading strategy. Second, by conceiving of the five books of psalms as five stages in the spiritual ascent to God, he leaves himself room to make finer distinctions about the Psalter's shape and purpose. For example, at the head of book 4, Ps 90 (LXX 89) is the one and only prayer of Moses. The title provides him an occasion to reflect on that saint's virtuous example (cf. his *Life of Moses*). Or again, Pss 1 and 2 are the only two psalms that he allows to stand without a superscription.⁴⁰ In fact he concludes that "the first Psalm is an inscription of the second," which draws Ps 2 further into the orbit of the end of the Psalter and its first book.⁴¹ Psalm 41:14 (LXX

39. Heine, *Treatise on the Inscriptions*, 165.

40. The LXX includes fourteen psalm titles beyond what is known in the MT. Gregory appears to reckon with twelve. See the analysis in Heine, *Treatise on the Inscriptions*, 17–18.

41. Heine, *Treatise on the Inscriptions*, 144.

40) sounds a note of blessing at the end of book 1. This detail allows him to connect “the repetition of the pronouncement of blessedness” there to the opening benedictions, which it redefines. “For the first psalms”—note the plural—“to depart from evil was blessed, but here to know the good more fully is pronounced blessed.”⁴² The anointed king poised to smash his enemies with an iron scepter is now revealed in his truer nature as the only begotten one who emptied himself and became poor for our sake, taking on the form of a servant: “For in the opening words of the psalm the Word calls him *needy* and *poor* [LXX Ps 40:2]; at the end of the section he says, ‘*Blessed by the Lord God of Israel from eternity to eternity. So be it. So be it*’ [LXX Ps 40:14].”⁴³ In other words, Gregory responds to subtle details of the Psalter’s macrostructure and microstructure, as situated within a particular form of Christian Scripture. His idiom is not of plot or characterization, but he is well equipped with a stable of technical rhetorical terms like *σκοπός*, *τέλος*, *ἀκολουθία*, *τάξις*, and more.⁴⁴ One hardly needs to add that he achieves his result without access to Hebrew. Although the shape of the Psalter was not obvious to every ancient reader, its contours were sufficiently available to those with skill to study them.

For a modern reading equal to Gregory of Nyssa, one might look to Bernd Janowski’s synthesis of the theological architecture of the Psalter. After considering classic metaphors from Athanasius, Augustine, Jerome, and Luther—typically the Psalter is conceived of as a kind of house or mirror in Christian tradition—he decides that the work is best described as “a temple of words.” Like Gregory, he sees a framework of beatitude (“*Seligpreisung*”) established by Pss 1–2; 40:5; 41:2; and 146–150.⁴⁵ In

42. Heine, *Treatise on the Inscriptions*, 170.

43. Heine, *Treatise on the Inscriptions*, 171, with references to John 1:18; 2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:7; and Ps 41 (indicated in Heine’s italics). Gregory appears to see Ps 41:14 as an explicit for the Psalter’s first book, since he distinguishes between “the opening words of the psalm” and “the end of the section.” For a snapshot of Gregory’s scheme, see Heine’s outline of the “successive goods” delivered by each of the Psalter’s five sections (68).

44. For essential context see Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). She sees not “allegory, but a sort of biblical theology emerging from a kind of figural allegory which permits the two Testaments to cohere” (263).

45. Bernd Janowski, “Ein Tempel aus Worten: Zur theologischen Architektur des Psalters,” in *The Composition of the Book of Psalms*, ed. Erich Zenger, BETL 238 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 284.

borrowed language he speaks of “a theological itinerary” set forth in book 1.⁴⁶ With considerably more precision than Gregory, thanks to modern research, he describes a network of concatenated themes that begin with blessing, torah, the righteous and the wicked, the way of life, and divine judgment. Together they set a course that tends to pull in an eschatological direction as it leads supplicants from lament to praise, from grave to temple, from David to Zion.⁴⁷ It culminates in the universal praise of God on Zion, voiced at the last in “every breath” (150:6). Thus the keystone of the Psalter (146–150) holds up and elevates initial glimpses of an individual’s subvocal meditation “day and night” (1:2) and the rebel leaders who are exhorted to join “all who take refuge” in the Lord (2:12c).⁴⁸ The dual motifs of torah’s yoke and God’s king dilate across five books until they finally open up onto a “neue Skopos,” which is “the universal kingship of YHWH, who as Savior of the poor executes the eschatological judgment (Ps 149:5–9) and thus brings the new heaven and the new earth (Ps 150).”⁴⁹ Here again the scope of the Psalter is salvation itself.

What effect does canonical context have on Ps 2? In antiquity and modernity people have understood its unique placement to entail a rereading of certain elements, such as the scale of the blessing held up to one (Pss 1:1, 41:2) and all (Pss 2:12, 150:6). It pushes the potentially local (“land”) toward the universal (“earth”). At the same time, it seems to add a degree of concreteness, which might explain why so many translators add definite

46. Janowski, “Ein Tempel,” 286, and *passim*. The phrase “ein theologisches Itinerar” is drawn from Gianni Barbiero, *Das erste Psalmenbuch als Einheit: Eine synchrone Analyse von Psalm 1–41*, ÖBS 16 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1999), 62.

47. This point about eschatology was made already by Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 516, who notes that Ps 2 “has been given an eschatological ring, both by its position in the Psalter and by the attachment of new meaning to the older vocabulary through the influence of the prophetic message (cf. Jer 23:5; Ezek 34:23).” Ancient translations recognized this tendency in their own way, as Joachim Schaper and others have seen. For a survey of the issues see Gillingham, *Journey of Two Psalms*, 23–31; Joachim Schaper, “The Septuagint Psalter,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 173–84.

48. Janowski, “Ein Tempel,” 301–2.

49. Janowski, “Ein Tempel,” 304: “die universale Königsherrschaft JHWHs, der als Retter der Armen das eschatologische Gericht durchführt (Ps 149,5–9) und damit den neuen Himmel und die neue Erde bringt (Ps 150).”

articles.⁵⁰ The kings of 2:2 are no longer obscure regional tyrants of the Levant but now stand as associates, if not indicted coconspirators, of the wicked ones whose bad counsel puts the devout figure of Ps 1 in relief. In its present context—as part of a doorway to a temple built not with stone but with words, opening onto a theological itinerary aimed at the blessing and goodness of God as revealed in the salvation of God’s people—Ps 2 requires a different translation than the preliminary one I offered above. In its place I propose a more contextual translation of Pss 1 and 2 together.

- 1:1 Happy the one who does not walk under direction of the wicked,
or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of scoffers.
- 2 He delights instead in the law of the LORD,
murmuring in meditation on it day and night.
- 3 He is like a tree planted by headwaters,
giving its fruit in its season though its leaf does not fall:
in all that he does he flourishes.
- 4 The wicked are not so but are blown to the wind like chaff.
- 5 That is why the wicked will not stand under judgment
or sinners in company with the righteous.
- 6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will be lost.
- 2:1 Why do nations agitate, and peoples *murmur* emptily?
- 2 *The kings of the earth* take their stand, and princes form an alliance,
against the LORD and against his anointed.
- 3 “Let us snap their fetters and shake ourselves free from their ropes.”
- 4 He who sits in heaven laughs. The Lord snorts at them.
- 5 Then he speaks to them in his anger, and his rage terrifies them.
- 6 “I have consecrated my king on Zion, my holy hill.”
- 7 I will recount the LORD’s *statute*. He said to me,
“You are my son. I myself have begotten you today.
- 8 Ask of me, and I will give nations as your inheritance,
the *ends of the earth* as your territory.
- 9 You shall break them with an iron scepter,
shattering them like a potter’s jar.”
- 10 And now, O kings, be wise. Take instruction, rulers of the *earth*.
- 11 *Serve* the LORD *with* fear: be glad to tremble.
- 12 Kiss *the* heir lest he fume, and you *lose the way*
because his temper runs short.
Happy *all* who *trust* in him.

50. Janowski, “Ein Tempel,” 283.

Revisions to the first version appear in italics. I have added “the” and “earth” in some places to reflect the Psalter’s more universal arc. The word “heir” in 2:12a, which reflects a different underlying word for “son” in 2:7, is now “the heir” because, in context, it has rather less to do with Zerubbabel (perhaps, assuming the psalm is postexilic) and rather more with David (though David is first named only in Ps 3). If the difficult phrase is about a son, then it gestures toward the great king of God’s anointing (2 Sam 7) and not some forgotten sub-Persian governor of Yehud (cf. Acts 4:25). But the phrase remains obscure. I have also allowed verbal resonances with Ps 1 to pull other words in new directions. For example, “statute” for חק in 2:7 pairs better with “law” for תורה in 1:2, “murmur” in 2:1 underscores the fact that the same verb is used in 1:2, and a few elements of terror are reconditioned by the adjacent posture of prayer (“trust in” instead of “flee to” in 2:12c). There is also the shared image of travel on paths.

Part of the tactical difficulty of this text is the need to hold multiple layers of meaning in tension. At minimum it has two valences. Psalm 2 functions at the level of an individual psalm; it also functions within the framework of the book of Psalms. Further potential layers of meaning are held at bay in my translation, in deference to what is traditionally called the plain sense or *sensus literalis* of Scripture. That is just one of the reasons I do not follow the ESV translation committee in restoring the KJV’s “Kiss the Son” at verse 12. A question of christological reference persists, however. In a still broader canonical setting—namely, within Christian Scripture—is the plain sense of Ps 2 patient of further recontextualization?

Ontological Outlook

It has been said that “any explanation of the placement of psalms is speculative, and cannot bear much weight in an argument.”⁵¹ Adequate study of ancient and recent scholarship on Ps 2 reveals it to be, in fact, a stout counterexample. When a sense of its role in establishing canonical contours may be found in the history of its formation, in the history of its reception, and in recent biblical scholarship, then the case for finding a secondary layer of resonance in Ps 2 is strong indeed. Following an ancient tradition (Acts 13:33 var.; b. Ber. 9b–10a), some have even argued that the two were originally one psalm. Sam Janse’s verdict is more likely:

51. Collins, “Psalm 2,” 92.

After weighing the arguments I think that there must be, in one way or another, a connection between these two psalms. The thematic agreements are not convincing, but the idiomatic correspondences are too strong to be incidental. The *inclusio*, too, that is formed by Ps 1:1 and 2:12, weighs heavily. It is also important that Jewish and Christian traditions show that even at an early stage Pss 1 and 2 were already seen as a unity.⁵²

In whatever way it comes about, the present arrangement of the pair constitutes an introduction or entryway to the Psalter. Their unique placement leads to a more complex task of interpretation because the language of one psalm leans into the other, and both together place the meaning of subsequent psalms in new light. In short, to modify Steiner, the canonical situation of Ps 2 is tactical.

The book of Psalms is a rich field of association. Or, to borrow a phrase, it is an “achievement of association.”⁵³ This is not less true because of the complex traditions represented by the Great Psalms Scroll (11Q5) and the Septuagint Psalter, among other ancient versions. These only add to the depth of meaning—as well as the contingent difficulty. And yet the Psalter also carries a freight of authority that, for a great many readers over the ages, raises a difficulty beyond those already described. If, as Gregory and Janowski see, the Psalter presents an itinerary for salvation, then a person’s response to the modal difficulty of Ps 2 becomes still more fraught. It becomes existential. It is almost a question of conversion. Will we accept this difficult word or not? If so, on what terms? If no, why does it come to us in this overwhelming manner? Clines describes the predicament memorably:

The text is an ocean liner (the S.S. Authority) bearing down on me out of the fog, me in my leaky dinghy trying to navigate the chartless sea of meaning. This text has been chanted by millions of the faithful over two

52. Janse, *My Son*, 32. He finds “it probable that as an overture Ps 1 chronologically preceded Ps 2 and was the starting point for the composition of the second psalm.” Details of compositional history remain controversial. Quite a number of others, including Gillingham, still regard Ps 2 as the older psalm. I do not take a position on the issue here, even though my preliminary isolation of Ps 2 might seem to support the view that it shows traces of an older ritual use.

53. Christopher R. Seitz, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets: The Achievement of Association in Canon Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).

millennia, subliminally supporting, *inter alia*, papal authority, the divine right of kings and the British empire too—and its force will not abate even if the institutions it supports may change from time to time.⁵⁴

Various responses are possible, as we have seen. Erasmus seems to evade contingent and modal problems only to introduce another one by domesticating the text in the triumphal name of Christ. Collins seems to evade modal and ontological problems by making the psalm very small. Neither model is very satisfying. If, in the playground of interpretation, Erasmus represents the church's bad habit of stealing the ball from the synagogue, Collins embodies the late modern instinct to kick it over the fence so that nobody can play with it. Either way the full difficulty of Ps 2 has not been engaged.

Still other possibilities exist. For Christians who do not renounce Ps 2, what might a viable reading of it look like? If dialogue with the exegetical tradition is important, retreat to fourth century Antioch is no option. Even Diodore of Tarsus finds Christ there. What can the church now say about the identity of this "son," and how can it say it? With such questions in view, Christopher Seitz writes of "the capacity of the Psalter to allow a fusion of referents." What this means in the history of interpretation varies from Alexandria to Antioch, or across the expositions of Basil, Jerome, Augustine, Hilary, Aquinas, Erasmus, Luther, Calvin, and so on. Seitz argues for a "family resemblance" in Christian tradition, however, since the fusion "happens in such a way that the particularity of each [referent] is not lost, but through extended sense-making, is capable of greater integration and theological achievement."⁵⁵ How might one discern this extended sense? In another place Seitz commends the early church's pursuit of the "mind" of Scripture (*διάνοια*). This mode of interpretation engages the plain sense of Scripture even as it operates at a different level than the literary theorist's arena of intertextual play:

To speak of the mind of scripture will mean above all a grappling with the two-testament character of its presentation. The Bible is not a flat

54. Clines, "Psalm 2," 185, emphasis original.

55. Christopher R. Seitz, "Psalm 2 in the Entry Hall of the Psalter: Extended Sense in the History of Interpretation," in *Church, Society, and the Christian Common Good: Essays in Conversation with Philip Turner*, ed. Ephraim Radner (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 95.

surface of associative potential precisely because the first part gets recycled in the second in a particular kind of way. What is said of David man and king is said again, and finally, of Christ. What is said of Sophia is said again of Christ. The challenge for Christian interpretation is figuring out, or figuring in, how that “saying again” amalgamates and enriches for a clear sense-making: clear because competent to be defended as truly given *ad litteram* and also competent to defeat alternative readings in public testimony.⁵⁶

We have seen how Gregory of Nyssa speaks to the value of *τάξις* and *ἀκολουθία* in reading the Psalter. He is among those who know of Scripture’s *διάνοια* as well, which may contribute to his realization that Christ is more truly revealed in Ps 41 than Ps 2. If Seitz is correct, rediscovering the church’s search for the mind of Scripture could prove to have as much relevance as order and sequence do in Janowski’s account of Israel’s “temple of words.” In ontological outlook, then, the challenge in the church is to understand the specific witness of Scripture in forms Old and New, allowing each part full scope, on its own terms, to address the divine subject matter. This monumental task has rightly been called a struggle. It is one reason why so many Christian theologians turn to the Psalter again and again over their lifetimes. It is why some of the best and most influential exegetes among them, including Augustine and Luther, show an ability to change their minds as they contend with what individual psalms truly deliver.

Of Ps 2 in particular I want to add that this last difficulty is productive, too, not only or even especially in literary terms. Literary movement from the blessed one (הַאִישׁ) of Ps 1:1 to the happy company of “all [כָּל] who take refuge in him” in 2:12 is not always understood or appreciated. However, it does anticipate the intercessory work of one who is identified in the book of Psalms with God’s man Moses (אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים) in the pivotal Ps 90 and elsewhere with less definite figures of merciful beatitude (e.g. the אִשְׁרֵי אָדָם of Ps 84). Where the Psalter’s theological itinerary finally leads is not judgment but a festival of praise—a profound event in Christian Scripture that would be almost unintelligible in the New Testament without the independent, antecedent witness of the Old. Yes, Ps 2 sounds a stern warning among the nations. It threatens their destruction. For this it has lately become a scandal. At the same time, it frames an imperative

56. Seitz, *Elder Testament*, 213–14.

directed at and open to *omnes gentes*. It invites an extra-Israelite response that is echoed in lament and praise until it peaks in a jubilant crescendo. “Let all [כָּל] that has breath praise the Lord. Hallelujah” (Ps 150:6). Traces of its ascending career may be heard in a refrain that is somehow still widely known and sung in Latin, from Ps 117 (Vulg. 116): *Laudate omnes gentes, laudate Dominum*. The popular Taizé chant is a fitting reminder of all those outside ancient Israel who heed the warning, accept the yoke, and join the chorus. Eroded speech is always a danger in the community of faith, but in this case Steiner’s “energies of word and grammar” turn out not to be so supine.

The Psalter, Worship, and Worldview

Jamie A. Grant

Introduction

A few years ago, I was asked to speak at an academic conference on worldview in the Old Testament. This led to an interesting conversation with a colleague who asked me what topic I was speaking on at the event. “Worldview in the Psalms,” I replied. “Oh, that shouldn’t take long ... surely, there is no such thing as *a worldview* in the Psalms?,” came the reply, initiating an interesting discussion.

The surprising aspect of this conversation is that my colleague is a card-carrying Dooyeweerdian with strong Kuyperian tendencies.¹ His frame of reference thoroughly affirms the inescapable reality of a hermeneutical worldview that shapes our basic thinking about the most fundamental aspects of life and human experience. Why therefore the skepticism regarding the presence of worldview in the Psalms?²

I am grateful to Professor Seitz for his contribution to my PhD studies at the University of Gloucestershire as my second supervisor. While Chris may not remember this, I remain grateful for his always positively critical input.

1. The classic statement of Kuyper’s neo-Calvinist worldview would be found in his famous Stone Lectures delivered at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1898 (Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008]). Perhaps the best introduction to Dooyeweerd would be Roy Clouser, *The Myth of Religious Neutrality: An Essay on the Hidden Role of Religious Belief in Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005). In terms of the man himself, the classic statement of his view on worldview for life would be found in his four-volume magnum opus, Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, trans. David Hugh Freeman, 4 vols. (Toronto: Paideia, 1984).

2. Some modern commentators critique the idea of worldview, particularly in its Reformed theological expression, as being overly cerebral and insufficiently formative

Basic and Complex Worldview

I have to confess that my first thoughts on the topic assigned to me for that conference were, in some ways, similar. My initial reaction was to wonder whether we can legitimately talk about a worldview that is sourced in the Psalter alone. Or is worldview a reality that can only be constructed from the complex formulation of multiple principles drawn from the whole counsel of Scripture combined with those philosophical concepts that are frequently grouped together into the dogmatic category of prolegomena? In other words, is it at all legitimate to talk about a worldview *from* the Psalms or, by extension, from any other individual book of the Bible?

It is important to carefully define our terminology. Worldview can be either basic or complex. A complex worldview will seek to apply one's most basic presuppositions consistently across every aspect of life and societal interaction—from questions of personal integrity to perspectives on the arts, science, commerce, politics, and so on. A basic worldview is driven by a governing maxim or thought that, although broadly defined, has implications for every aspect of being, activity, and ethics.³ What we find in the Psalter may be described as a *basic* worldview but one with far-reaching consequences.

In terms of biblical example, the idea of covenant may be an appropriate allusion to illustrate the difference between complex and basic worldview. On one level, covenant is a complex concept that indicates a thoroughly structured relationship that is governed by a multilayered written code (e.g., suzerain-vassal treaties as exemplified in second-millennial Hittite formulas, seventh-century Assyrian texts, or in the book of Deuteronomy).⁴ On another level, however, covenant is nothing more

of character and behavior. See, e.g., James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009). I have much sympathy with Smith's perspective and would argue that a psalmic take on worldview actually addresses some of his central critiques.

3. The rise in the use of mission statements is indicative of the importance of this kind of basic worldview. Internet giant Google for many years operated, at least unofficially, under the most basic premise: "Don't be evil"—a simple, yet far-reaching idea.

4. See, e.g., Rolf Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation*, trans. Margaret Kohl, OTS (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), for discussion of some of the complexities of form; or see Kenneth A. Kitchen and Paul J. N. Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East*, 3 vols. (Wiesbaden:

than a promissory relationship (“I will be your God and you will be my people”).⁵ Just as the idea of covenant can refer to a construct of relationship that is either basic or complex, in the same way, it can be argued that the concept of worldview may be either basic or complex and that it is possible to formulate what might be described as a basic worldview from the Psalms.⁶

Further, I would want to suggest, that it is desirable to seek out and hear the voice of the Psalms as a theological and philosophical construct designed to shape the universal perspectives of its readers. Basic worldview statements are particularly powerful because of the need to apply them to every aspect of daily life. Google employees, at least in theory, are forced to ask themselves the question each and every day: “What does it mean not to be evil?” Projects are meant to be analyzed in these terms and profits are meant to be secondary to this primary motivation. It is the broad and generic nature of the maxim that forces a questioning attitude that seeks application in real terms. Equally, the contextless and indeterminate nature of psalmody (including its central worldview maxims) forces an enquiring attitude that seeks a process of thinking through avenues

Harrassowitz, 2012), for discussion of historical development and the particular characteristics of the various types of covenant formulation.

5. “That Yhwh is Israel’s God, and Israel Yhwh’s people is one of the central statements in the Old Testament. It is expressed in a variety of linguistic forms. Among these one characteristic phrase, almost formula-like in character, stands out clearly: ‘I will be God for you and you shall be a people for me’” (Rendtorff, *Covenant Formula*, 11).

6. This issue of the necessary descriptive extent of a worldview is one of the critiques often leveled against N. T. Wright’s presentation of the topic in *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress; London: SPCK, 1992), 121–44. Some suggest that his four questions are not sufficiently comprehensive and wide-ranging to describe a worldview (cf. Sire’s seven—or eight, depending on how you look at it—questions for worldview formulation in James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalogue*, 5th ed. [Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2010]). However, I would want to argue that greater detail is not necessarily the best way to secure the most wide-ranging understanding or application of worldview. For further discussion on worldviews complex and basic, see Naugle’s consideration of J. Edwin Orr’s and Kuyper’s early explanations of worldview as a concept. Orr sought a coherent “Christian view” of all things (complex) whereas the ramifications of Kuyper’s worldview are equally far-reaching, despite the fact that they were simply based in the claim of Christ’s lordship (“Mine!”) (David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 4–32).

of application to the current reader's setting.⁷ Hence, the desirability of basic worldviews. Codices—exhaustive statements in terms of extent and intended application—struggle to keep up with changing circumstances, whereas foundational maxims constantly drive new applications in an ever-changing world. There is an inclusive power to the “don't be evil” statement that outstrips the value of a dozen corporate policy documents.⁸

The Psalm's basic but profound worldview can be described in two words: יהוה מלך. Or, to be more precise, I suspect that the psalmists would want to formulate this basic worldview using two key terms expressed in four Hebrew words: יהוה מלך (“Yahweh reigns”) and לעולם חסדו (“his love endures forever”).⁹ This combination of beliefs—the absolute sovereignty of God and his relational goodness—results in a particular way of seeing and interacting with the world that is unique to the Hebrew experience in the ancient Near East. The message of the Psalms, in that typically terse manner associated with Hebrew poetry, formulates a way of seeing, understanding and interacting with the cosmos that is absolutely foundational to the thought world of the Old Testament believing community.¹⁰

7. Jamie A. Grant, “Determining the Indeterminate: Issues in Interpreting the Psalms,” *Southeastern Theological Review* 1 (2010): 3–14.

8. Speaking of the power of maxims, Hildebrandt writes, “The proverbial genre is paradoxical. Proverbs are simple, concrete, and mundane and, at the same time, profound, abstract, and transcendent. Their meanings are singular and particular, yet multifaceted and universal” (Ted A. Hildebrandt, “Proverb,” in *Cracking Old Testament Codes: A Guide to the Literary Genres of the Old Testament*, ed. D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese Jr. [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995], 233).

9. See W. Dennis Tucker Jr. and Jamie A. Grant, *Psalms*, vol. 2, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 373–74; and Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 448, for discussion of the translation options for יהוה מלך. Tucker helpfully describes the dynamic of לעולם חסדו in his consideration of Ps 136: “The speaker confesses the *work* of God and the people confess the *faithfulness* of God. The two cannot be easily separated, nor should they be. One informs the other. The faithfulness of God is made evident in his activity, and his activity demonstrates his faithfulness” (Tucker and Grant, *Psalms*, 889, emphasis original).

10. The question of a center to the Psalter is, of course, a tricky one. The themes of the Psalms are many and varied and any attempt to encompass the totality of the book in a single phrase (or even in these paired phrases) is entirely unrealistic. I make, below, an argument from canonical shape to emphasize the structural significance of these dual themes but it is not my intension either to universalize these premises or to suggest that their voice drowns out all others. Interestingly, I remember attending a

Foundational arguments are inevitably circular. Yahweh reigns and loves his people, so: (1) The ways of the universal King are properly basic and are ingrained in the cosmos;¹¹ (2) his revealed instruction (תורה) reflects his ways and provides *the* authoritative guide for his people; (3) Yahweh's people are to live torah-shaped lives because this instruction reflects his priorities and values (ingrained in the cosmos) and their desire is to live with the grain of the King's creational norms and expectations.¹² As James Mays points out, the ideology of Yahweh's divine sovereignty is not only a theological premise but is actually a construct of reality:

The coherence and reference of the psalmic language world is based on a sentence upon which all that is said in the psalms depends. Everything else is connected to what this one sentence says. It is a liturgical cry that is both a declaration of faith and a statement about reality.... Whatever else is said in the psalms about God and God's way with the world and human beings is rooted in the meaning and truth of this metaphor. It is systemic for psalmic language.... The declaration "the Lord reigns"

session on the Psalms at an Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, where the question of a theological center to the Psalms was discussed. The three Presbyterians on the panel all focused on "the Lord reigns" as the central theme, whereas the one (isolated, but apparently quite happy) Lutheran chose the theme of Yahweh's love enduring forever. Their opinions would probably be a fair reflection of the scholarly literature regarding the dominant theological themes of the Psalter.

11. See Ps 19:1–3 or Ps 96:6. This is emphasized in the language of the torah-synonym חק ("decree") with its connotations of the divine decree being "engraved" or "ingrained," sometimes into the created order as well as written texts (cf. Job 28:26; Prov 28:29). See *HALOT*, s.v. "חֻק."

12. Mays is helpful here: "As sovereign, Yhwh orders the lives of his people. The instrument of this ordering is named variously his law, decrees, statutes, precepts, commandments, ordinances, covenant, and word. By these various forms of the will of the LORD, his people learn and are directed into his ways and paths. Yhwh's dominion over the floods guarantees the certainty of his decrees (94:5). Like Yhwh's throne and the earth, his precepts are established forever and ever (111:7–8). The God whose word directs his people is the same God whose word brought forth the world (33:6–9) and directs what happens in it (147:15–19). Yhwh's law is sign and confirmation of his royal activity for and with his people. Exodus, wilderness, and settlement in the land have their consummation in a people who keep his statutes (105:45; 78:1–8). His ordinances are his unique gift to Israel, which distinguishes them from any other nation (147:19–20). His kingdom rules over all, and his steadfast love is from everlasting to everlasting on those who keep his covenant (103:17–19)" (James L. Mays, *The Lord Reigns* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994], 19–20).

involves a vision of reality that is the theological center of the Psalter. The cosmic and worldly action to which it refers is the aetiology of the psalmic situation. The psalmic understanding of the people of God, the city of God, the king of God and the law of God depends on its validity and implications. The psalmic functions of praise, prayer and instruction are responses to it.¹³

So the יהוה מלך (Yahweh-*malak*) maxim presents a basic but ultimately, via the broad significance of torah, wide-ranging worldview that both confronts and shapes the believer's perspective on everything. The arch example of the significance of this simple metaphor is, perhaps, best seen in Ps 2. Israel's historical experience seldom, if ever, reflected the geo-political realities communicated in this enthronement psalm. However, Ps 2 presents the believing community with a lens—a view of the world—through which they must always parse the surrounding national and international political realities. Regardless of how things appeared at any given point in history, the ultimate foundational reality that was to shape the Israelite perception of the world is that Yahweh reigns over it via his chosen king enthroned in Zion, just as he himself is enthroned in heaven. This is a worldview designed to impact every aspect of Israelite cognizance and praxis—"Because our God reigns we will see the world in a particular way and act accordingly, regardless of any and all contrary circumstances."¹⁴

The Yahweh-*Malak* Worldview

So, how might this Yahweh-*malak* worldview be described in more exegetical detail? Obviously, this is a theme so extensive in the Psalms that a comprehensive study is beyond the scope of a single article. The inadequate compromise proposed here is to take a brief look at the beginning, middle, and end of the Psalter to unpack this worldview encompassed by the combined maxims "Yahweh מלך" and "his love endures forever."

13. Mays, *Lord Reigns*, 6, 22.

14. This should not be seen as a simplistic fideism, however. This is, rather, a spiritual and eschatological long view of things recognizing that the divine hand in creation is often hidden (or at least deeply mysterious) to human eyes.

Psalms 1–2: The Introduction

Psalms 1 and 2 provide the reader with a construct of reality that encapsulates the psalmic worldview.¹⁵ Psalm 2 is typical of the many statements of divine kingship that are found in the Psalter. The world rebels but Yahweh rules from heaven and through his anointed/king/son, therefore, all of humanity should respond in obedient worship.¹⁶ This rule image is combined with Ps 1 through the *אשרי* *inclusio* and variety of lexical and thematic links.¹⁷ The first psalm calls on the reader to choose the way in which they will walk—the way of Yahweh via a reflective torah-shaped life or the way of the wicked that ultimately perishes.¹⁸ So the worldview of the introduction points to an absolute divine rule, regardless of appearances, that is met by a lifestyle of whole-life, torah-flavored worship.

Psalms 93–100: The Pivot

It is, indeed, a bit of a jump to move from Ps 2 to Ps 93, but a canonical approach to the Psalter provides some justification for this interpretative move.¹⁹ Book 4 is often described as the pivot of the Psalter, the perspective-bringing response to the escalating sense of crisis that runs throughout

15. See J. Clinton McCann, *A Theological Introduction to the Books of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993).

16. See David M. Howard Jr., “Divine and Human Kingship as Organizing Motifs in the Psalter,” in *The Psalms: Language for All the Seasons of the Soul*, ed. Andrew J. Schmutzer and David M. Howard Jr. (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 197–207.

17. See Jamie A. Grant, *The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy’s Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms*, AcBib 17 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 41–69.

18. Wenham comments: “Psalm 1 sets the agenda for the Psalter by dividing mankind into two categories: the righteous, who keep the law and inherit God’s blessing, and the wicked, who suffer destruction. These two groups of people keep reappearing in the subsequent psalms.... Also prominent in Psalm 1 is the joy of studying the Torah and its positive benefits for those who do. This emphasis on obeying the law appears elsewhere in Book 1 of the Psalter” (Gordon J. Wenham, *Psalms as Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically*, STI [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012], 34–35).

19. Gerald H. Wilson, “The Structure of the Psalter,” in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*, ed. Philip S. Johnston and David G. Firth (Leicester: Apollos, 2005), 229–46.

books 1–3.²⁰ The Yahweh-*malak* collection (Pss 93–100) lies at the heart of book 4, which is the interpretative heart of the book of Psalms.²¹ It is important, here, to note the (most likely) postexilic historical setting of book 4. A collection gathered in the period following Judah’s demise and underwhelming renewal focuses on this strong statement of divine rule regardless of all the evidence to the contrary. The trappings of covenant (land, city, temple, king) are all removed, “Yet Yahweh still reigns,” the psalmists declare. This is *the* fundamental perspective for the people of God regardless of any and all indications to the contrary.²² The behavioral response to that worldview is one of worship and covenant fealty (e.g., Ps 95) but it is also one that calls upon others to recognize the lordship of Yahweh and to join the community of worship (Pss 96–99). There are, it is clear, both worshipful and missional implications to be derived from a Yahweh-*malak* worldview.²³

Psalms 146–150: The Logical Conclusion

The imagery of the *Laudate Dominum* is thoroughly grounded in the inevitable creational response of praise to the kingship of Yahweh. Interestingly, this collection is replete with the height images of kingship (Pss 146:10; 147:5, 15–18; 148:5–12; etc.) but also with metaphors emphasizing the imminence, approach, and intimacy of Yahweh (146:6–9; 147:2–6; 149:4, etc.).²⁴ The combination of images in this closing doxology reminds

20. See, e.g., Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, SBLDS 76 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 214–15; and Michael G. McKelvey, *Moses, David and the High Kingship of Yahweh: A Canonical Study of Book IV of the Psalter*, Gorgias Dissertations Biblical Studies 55 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2010).

21. See David M. Howard Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93–100*, BJSUCSD 5 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997).

22. As indicated above by Mays.

23. See Jamie A. Grant, “Creation and Kingship: Environment and Witness in the Yahweh *Mālāk* Psalms,” in *As Long as Earth Endures: The Bible, Creation and the Environment*, ed. Jonathan Moo and Robin Routledge (Nottingham: Apollos, 2014), 92–106.

24. E.g., Zenger comments on Ps 148: “The theological concept of the psalm, according to which the whole creation is called to praise YHWH because of the order he has ordained ... rests primarily on ... the YHWH-is-king Psalms 93–100, especially the two closely related Psalms 96 and 98” (Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia

the reader both of Yahweh's rule (יהוה מלך) and of his great covenant love (לעולם הסדו). The scope of praise is all-creational, pointing the singer again to the ingrained order of the divine purpose in creation. There is a creational way of things and these psalms remind us that this is to be found in bowing the knee to the lordship of Yahweh the King who draws near to guarantee his love and justice on this earth.

So the content of the psalmic worldview is that Israel's God reigns absolutely and the ramifications of that rule should be outworked in a worshipful, missional, justice-seeking, whole-life response of torah-shaped praise.

The Psalms and Worldview Formation

One of the complex aspects of any discussion of worldview is the foundational nature of the entity itself.²⁵ For a worldview to be properly described as such it must be so ingrained that its holder is almost unaware of its existence and influence on his or her perspectives. Engaging with the work of Mary Douglas, Richard Fardon suggests that "we (regardless of who 'we' are) experience the world on the basis of already held categories."²⁶ Accordingly, there is an intellectual and moral challenge that every human must face: How consistent are we with our own worldview? Worldview is so basic to us that we seldom consciously consider it.²⁷ This can, of course,

[Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011], 632). Zenger, again, on Ps 146, "Vv. 7–9 ... show him ... as the good king who accomplishes the order of justice and life that he has bestowed on his world and keeps it in motion" (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 614). See also the helpful article from Walter Brueggemann, "Bounded by Obedience and Praise," *JSOT* 50 (1991): 63–92.

25. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines worldview as: "n. [after German *Weltanschauung* n.] a set of fundamental beliefs, values, etc., determining or constituting a comprehensive outlook on the world; a perspective on life" ("worldview, n.," *OED Online*). Wolters describes worldview as "the comprehensive framework of one's basic belief about things" (Al Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 2).

26. Richard Fardon, *Mary Douglas: An Intellectual Biography* (London: Routledge, 1999), 87.

27. As Sire points out, worldview is "a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) which we hold (*consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently*) about the basic construction of reality, and

lead to practical inconsistencies. It is possible for us *not to live* in accordance with our worldview. When challenged, we will defend it, but in daily reality we can often fail to allow our basic presuppositions to confront our life praxis.

Herein lies the power of the constant psalmic reminder that Yahweh is King and that his love endures forever. The songs sung, the poems recited, the metaphors considered actively remind the covenant community of their deepest underpinning beliefs and call on that community to live their lives in a manner that accords with their creed. Singing and reciting the Psalms is a practice of deep-seated worldview inculcation. Gordon Wenham, in fact, argues that “the Psalter is a sacred text that *is intended to be memorized*.”²⁸

Yahweh *malak*; therefore:

we will devote ourselves to living torah-informed lives (Ps 1);
 we will serve Yahweh regardless of the surrounding climate (Ps 2);
 we will respond in glad worship (Ps 97);
 we will call on the nations to join us in this worship (Pss 96, 98, 100);
 we will not stray as our fathers did (Ps 95);
 we will walk in prayerful holiness (Ps 99);
 we will uphold the cause of the needy (Ps 146);
 we will trust in his power not human ability (Ps 147);
 we will join with all of creation in singing his worthy praise (Pss 148–150).

The Psalms force the community of faith to confront the logical consequences of their basic presuppositions—if our God is King, then to that end psalmody provides us with a powerful reminder of the formative nature of worldview.²⁹ For a worldview to be worthy of its name, it must influence more than our cognition—it must influence our character and

that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being” (Sire, *Universe Next Door*, 15, emphasis added).

28. Wenham, *Psalms as Torah*, 41, emphasis added. Wenham goes on to argue that communal signing gives the psalms “even more power than when they are merely recited. But even mere recitation ... is ... a more powerful instructor than listening to stories, commands, or wisdom sayings. Listening is passive—indeed, the listener can ignore the message—but recitation and, especially, singing are activities that involve the whole person and cannot be honestly undertaken without real commitment to what is being said or sung” (55).

29. See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966); and Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*:

behavior.³⁰ The psalmic call to acknowledge that יהוה מלך reminds the people that there are character and behavioral consequences of their underlying beliefs—he reigns, therefore, his instruction is not notional. The Psalms’s refrain that לעולם חסדו reminds us that Yahweh’s rule is one of love not tyranny and that our response should be motivated by love not obligation.

So, in short, the constant poetic repetition of the basics of the Hebrew worldview foregrounds presuppositions and forces the people to incorporate their most foundational beliefs into every aspect of their life practice. This is the significance of basic worldview statements: they draw the adherent into a constant process of reflective recontextualization in every circumstance.

The Medium of Worldview Communication

Briefly, in conclusion, it would be remiss of me not to say something about the medium of worldview communication and lifestyle formation in the Psalms. In short, songs are powerful. Shared testimony shapes lives and attitudes in a way that a treatise cannot.³¹ There is something about sacrament that forms our being in a way that sermon simply cannot achieve (and I say that as a Scottish Presbyterian with a high view of preaching).

The challenge of the psalms with regard to worldview is also a pedagogical challenge for the contemporary church and academy. Is our teaching too closely linked to dry narrative? Do we fail to realize the power of poetry, song and ritual?³²

However, we cannot ignore the fact that, in the Psalter, ontology is presented in poetry, theology is shaped by song, creeds are recited in praise,

An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), for more on the shaping of individuals through shared worldviews.

30. See Wenham’s interesting chapter on “The Unique Claims of Prayed Ethics” in *Psalms as Torah*, 57–76. Excessive cognitivism is a critique that is frequently leveled against the classic descriptions of worldview. This is one of the key points that Smith makes in *Desiring the Kingdom*.

31. “The Psalter’s poetic form, musical directions, historical retellings, theological and ethical instructions—all of these suggest that it would have served the purpose of ‘enculturation’ very effectively” (Wenham, *Psalms as Torah*, 56).

32. I offer these rhetorical questions as a challenge to the reader, but you will note that I have chosen not to write this paper in epic verse, iambic pentameter, or sonnet form.

and worldview is formulated through the metaphors of ritual and worship. Modernism has done harm to our understanding of “teaching,” and we need to liberate our sense of artifice again if we are to shape worldview in the ways of the Psalms. For some of us, in our church settings, this will mean revisiting the role of song, sacrament, and ritual within our congregations to make sure that they have the place that they deserve. For others, it will mean revisiting the role of song, sacrament, and ritual to make sure that they have the meaning that they deserve.

Conclusion

In short, the Psalms provide us with a worldview that is basic in its formulation but all-encompassing in its scope—Yahweh is the true and loving King and that has consequences for all of humanity. For the people of God, these consequences impact our desires, our personal piety, our community worship, our mission. They should influence our view of politics, commerce, aesthetics, social justice, the arts, and so on. The combined fact that Yahweh is King and that his love endures forever has profound implications that should shape the way in which we think about and engage with the world around us.

Is this not the very essence of worldview?

Creation and Contingency in Qoheleth

Raymond C. Van Leeuwen

Following its title, Ecclesiastes opens with a multivalent *Leitwort*, the metaphor that everything is “breath,” a mere “mist,” or “vapor” (הבל), and states a consequent problem; in a world of הבל, what remains (מה יתרון) from human toil under the sun (1:3; cf. 5:14–15)?¹ The book then proceeds immediately to a poem about creation, an entity that does remain (1:4–7),

For Chris Seitz—late in life and gladly, a colleague and friend.

1. The literature on הבל is vast and viewpoints diverse. New Testament Jas 4:14 provides ἀτμός as a fine Greek equivalent within an appropriate context, but no equivalent metaphor exists in English. Gregory of Nyssa, however, borrowing from Homer’s *Iliad* (15.363–64), conjures the striking image of children building sandworks on the shore; see Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on Ecclesiastes: An English Version with Supporting Studies*, ed. Stuart G. Hall (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 41; for the Greek see, Gregorii Nysseni, “In Ecclesiasten Homiliae,” in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, ed. Werner Jaeger (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 5:289. Translations of הבל that attempt to replace an ancient metaphor with abstractions like “absurd” or “meaningless” (NIV), seem to me inadequate, because they cannot capture the multivalence of the original metaphor and because they import modern, quasi-philosophic concepts into the text. Among the various connotations of the metaphor הבל are these: a “mist” is something that cannot be grasped, neither by hand nor mind (the epistemic problem). A mist can be impenetrable, hiding reality from eye and understanding. Mist and breath are only for a moment—something here today, gone tomorrow. A mist may also be a foul miasma, like sin and evil; and mist is insubstantial—a “nothing” in comparison to “the real thing”—as when idols are compared to YHWH. One cannot rely on הבל. In each case, the reader must discern which and how the connotations of הבל fit the object to which it refers. For a full survey of the data and the basic argument that הבל functions metaphorically, see Douglas B. Miller, *Symbol and Rhetoric in Ecclesiastes: The Place of Hebel in Qoheleth’s Work*, AcBib 2 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002). For a more recent reading of הבל, which also emphasizes connections with Genesis, see Russell L. Meek, “The Meaning of הבל in Qoheleth: An Intertextual Suggestion,” in *The Words of the Wise Are Like Goats: Engaging Qoheleth in the Twenty-First Century*, ed.

while humans, their works and words do not (1:8–11).² It is not creation per se that is הבל but humanity. This הבל statement and question are thematic for the entire book, but what is the function of the opening poem on the abiding, cyclic nature of creation?

“A generation comes, and a generation goes, but the earth remains forever” (1:4).³ A contrast is drawn here between the transient cycles of human life and the constancy of the earth. Human generations are each historically unique, yet they are transitory and replaceable like the flowers of the field (see Job 14:1; Isa 40:6–7); their very existence and character are contingent.⁴ The earth also is unique—only one planet Earth exists—but it is uniquely stable, enduring, and irreplaceable, and its constancy is the ground and universal condition for all who come and go upon it.

Mark J. Boda, Tremper Longman III, and Cristian G. Rata (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 241–56.

2. The poem is correctly divided at 1:8, with 1:4–7 concerning the cosmos, and 1:8–11 concerning human existence in the cosmos, as seen in the LXX with its understanding here of דברים as human “words” and not as cosmic “things” (*pantes hoi logoi enkopoi*), so that the entirety of 1:8 refers to humans. This reading evades the false dilemma of the common attempt to confirm a negative reading of 1:4–7 based on a misreading of the *intransitive* adjective in 1:8 (“all things are *wearisome*,” יגיעים) versus Lohfink’s strained attempt to fit 1:8a into his positive reading of the cosmic cycles by translating, “all things are *constantly restless*” (Norbert Lohfink, *Qohelet: A Continental Commentary*, CC [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003], 39, 41, emphasis added). On 1:8, see esp. the comments of Thomas Krüger, *Qoheleth: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 51; and Choon-Leong Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, AB 18C (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 109–10, 115–16. It seems inconsistent that Seow nonetheless divides the poem between 1:3–8 and 1:9–11, as between “poetry” and “prose” commentary (113–17), in spite of seeing the transition between cosmos and humanity at the border of 1:7 and 1:8. If there is a distinction to be made between poetry and prose in 1:3/4–11 (most commentators do not), it would seem more likely to begin with 1:10, after the parallelism of 1:9.

3. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

4. For a profound philosophical analysis of the structure of the contingent, see H. G. Stoker, “On the Contingent and Present-Day Western Man,” *Philosophia Reformata* 38 (1973): 144–66. The biblical wisdom books all wrestle with the contingent aspect of life, as all human wisdom inevitably must, yet without reducing life to the contingent, as is common in our era. See Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, “Theology: Creation, Wisdom, and Covenant,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Wisdom and Wisdom Literature*, ed. Will Kynes (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming); also, Van Leeuwen, “Wisdom Literature,” *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 847–50.

As many have recognized, the cosmic poem describes reality in terms of the four ancient elements, earth, air, fire, and water. Although the earth is constant and the sea is never filled, all four elements embody cosmic cycles, and these cycles are basic exemplars of that constancy. As a recent article by Nili Samet makes clear, the earth also provides the stage for *human* cycles: a generation comes from the earth (cf. Ps 139:13, 15) and at its end becomes earth again. As the sun rises and sets (בָּא), so a generation comes and goes (בָּא), dust returning to the earth from whence it came (12:7; cf. 6:15–16; Job 7:21; 10:9, 21; and esp. Gen 3:19).⁵

In all this, Ecclesiastes is deeply consonant with the book of Genesis. Like Genesis, Ecclesiastes sets the human drama in the context of a creation that makes history possible. Human history is an offspring of the heavens and earth, as the cosmic תולדות of Gen 2:4 makes clear. The subsequent human תולדות in Genesis are part of cosmic life and history. Similarly, Eccl 1 sets the repetitive cycles of generational begetting and *death* in the context of cosmic cycles that make life possible: the daily rising and setting of the sun, the winds that bring dew and rain in their seasons, and the hydrological cycles of seas and rivers. The closest biblical parallel to the natural cycles portrayed in Eccl 1 is the wonderful poem of promise after the flood: “Through all the days of earth, / Seed and harvest, / Cold and hot, / Summer dry and winter wet, / Day and night shall not cease” (Gen 8:22; cf. Ps 104:5).

While the natural cycles of Eccl 1:4–7 are here a foil for Qoheleth’s sober wisdom for humanity, these natural constants are not something negative, nor anything less than good.⁶ For the Preacher, it is “good” and “sweet” to see the sunlight (11:7). Often in Scripture the regular cycles of nature are praised as God’s good and life-giving servants (e.g., Deut 8:7–10; Pss 65; 104; 147). The reliable round of the heavenly objects testify to God’s glory and justice (צדקו, Pss 19:1; 50:6; 97:6). Indeed nothing brings people joy in the Bible so much as the regularities of nature that produce from the earth bread and “wine that makes glad the heart of Adam” (Ps 104:15; cf. Eccl 10:19[!]; 9:7). Qoheleth’s repeated advice to enjoy food and drink are entirely of a piece with this ancient perspective on what is good

5. Nili Samet, “Qohelet 1,4 and the Structure of the Book’s Prologue,” *ZAW* 126 (2014): 92–100.

6. See Gregory’s argument that futility does not impugn God nor creation’s goodness, including the goodness of the cycles in Qoh 1:2–7 (Gregory, *Homilies on Ecclesiastes*, 36–37; Gregorii, “In Ecclesiasten Homiliae,” 283–85).

in life—even though the enjoyment of those goods is inevitably, in some sense, הבל (2:1, 3, 24; 3:12–13; 4:8; 5:17; 9:7; 11:7).⁷ While the followers of Baal worshiped the storm god that they believed made the earth fruitful and fertile (Hos 2:8–9), the followers of YHWH were no less happy when their barns were full and the children fed, seated like olive shoots around the family table (Ps 128:3; cf. Pss 126–127).

Already in 1981, in a profound, ground-breaking essay, Rolf Knierim pointed out that Israel's understanding of time was not simply linear, historical, and eschatological—a perspective that has long dominated biblical studies. Rather, Israel understood time first of all in terms of creation, as something cosmic and cyclical. Knierim rightly insisted that cyclical time (day and night, winter and summer—the yearly round of seasons and stars) was for Israel more fundamental than linear time, for the simple reason that cyclical, cosmic time patterns are what make history, with its unique and contingent events, possible.⁸ It is, after all, at the springtime turning of the year (תשובת השנה), that kings go to war, that David instead begets a child with a loyal soldier's wife, and that—as it happens—Bathsheba is the granddaughter of Ahitophel, David's infallible counselor, who thus has cause to join Absalom's rebellion against David. All these contingent, historical events are rooted in the permanent goods of creation, and—as it happens—they inevitably concern those cyclical goods: the making and birthing of children, and the fighting of enemies to possess the land/earth (הארץ) securely. Ultimately, then, what we call good and evil in history, are determined by human use or abuse of created goods.⁹

The old scholarly contrast between ancient Near Eastern mythic, cyclic time and Israel's supposedly historical, linear time was false, as Bertil Albrektson had shown decades ago.¹⁰ Not only was this dichotomy false, it also imposed a late modern, historicistic worldview on the Old Testament, a worldview that was radically alien to the texts it claimed to explain.¹¹ His-

7. See n. 1, above, on הבל.

8. Rolf P. Knierim, "Cosmos and History," in *The Task of Old Testament Theology: Substance, Method and Cases* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 171–224.

9. See ch. 2 of Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

10. Bertil Albrektson, *History and the Gods: An Essay on the Idea of Historical Events as Divine Manifestations in the Ancient Near East and Israel*, ConBOT 1 (Lund: Gleerup, 1967).

11. Knierim, "Cosmos and History," 179, sums up: "For all the emphasis on time and history over against space and cosmos, the aspect of *cyclic* time has suffered a fate

toricism dominated twentieth-century theology and biblical studies and, in spite of challenges, remains in the twenty-first. In this worldview, creation existed merely as a subordinate player in the drama of (salvation) history.¹²

Of course, it remains true that Israel developed a sense of history unsurpassed in its profound depiction of human striving, achievement, failure, and sin in relation to the creational purposes and covenantal promises of the Creator, YHWH. Moreover, the measure of those strivings was the creational norms of rightness and, in a sinful world, its restorative assistant, justice (צדקה ומשפט).¹³

A number of scholars have pointed to the rich ambiguities in Qoheleth's teachings in chapter 1 and that these are not defects but an artistic device to complexify the reader's task.¹⁴ After the introductory 1:4, which contrasts humans and the abiding earth, the poem on creation falls into two parts; verses 5–7 describe the world in toto: the four directions of the compass, the four elements (earth, air/wind, fire/sun, and water) and the patterns of time in which these life-sustaining entities make their daily and

even worse than that of space in Old Testament interpretation. Its theological significance has been either overlooked or ignored and, for the most part, rejected outright." (emphasis original).

12. In this essay, I cannot elaborate on historicism. See Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), 373. Suffice it to note his comment, "Wer sich einmal ans Werk begibt, die Spuren des Positivismus und Historismus in der alttestamentlichen Historiographie zu verfolgen, der wird aus dem Staunen nicht herauskommen." See also his index, s.v. "Historismus." For a convenient account of historicism in theology, see Sheila Greeve Devaney, *Historicism: The Once and Future Challenge for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006); also, Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, The Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993); Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "The Quest for the Historical Leviathan: Truth and Method in Biblical Studies," *JTI* 5 (2011): 145–57, all with further references. Christopher R. Seitz, *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), provides an extended critique of historicism in biblical studies; see esp. pp. 82–88.

13. H. H. Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit als Weltordnung*, BHT 40 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1968), remains essential. See also Knierim, *Task of Old Testament Theology*.

14. See E. M. Good, "The Unfilled Sea: Style and Meaning in Ecclesiastes 1:2–11," in *Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien*, ed. John G. Gammie et al. (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), 59–73; Lindsay Wilson, "Artful Ambiguity in Ecclesiastes 1,1–11: A Wisdom Technique?," in *Qohelet in the Context of Wisdom*, ed. Antoon Schoors, BETL 136 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 357–65; Doug Ingram, *Ambiguity in Ecclesiastes*, LHBOTS 431 (New York: T&T Clark, 2006).

seasonal rounds (שוב, סבב). Ecclesiastes 1:8–11, by contrast, returns to the human condition, whose generations are subject to cycles in which they, unlike the earth and its elements, do not abide.

Many readers of the cosmic section of the poem (1:4–7) simply assume that it portrays a grim and futile world where nothing changes, where there is nothing new. Anton Schoors may be quoted for many, when he reacts to the positive reading of the poem by Lohfink, “This picture is very impressive but with the best will in the world, I cannot see how this positive picture is supported by the text.”¹⁵

However, a close reading of our poem actually shows nothing negative, for the negatives in Qoheleth’s world only begin in this poem when we arrive at the human part thereof (1:8–11). Nothing new under the sun is, of course, hyperbole—Qoheleth would not deny newness absolutely. Rather, he seems to mean that of the things that matter in life, there is nothing truly new. For Qoheleth what seems to be new (think of a newborn baby) is not really new, for babies are as old as humanity. Or perhaps the type of things humans label as new (computers!) are just not significant enough to matter. For Qoheleth, the things that matter are life and death, the joys and pleasures of food and drink—which are always more than merely food and drink—of married love and family, of work and play. He despises and laments injustice, oppression, and cruelty. Yet he tips his hat at the splendid achievements of royal wisdom, wealth, and power. He sees that God has made all things beautiful in their time (3:11).

Qoheleth is committed to *experience* and *knowledge*, so he explores the gamut of human feelings from madness and joy to the depths of despair and grief. He knows that the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning rather than the house of feasting. He reverses wisdom over folly as light over darkness, and most of all he takes God seriously as the Master to whom we all are accountable, and whom we must remember, à la Deuteronomy, also in the carefree days of our youth (Eccl 12:1; cf. 11:8).¹⁶ These are the things

15. Antoon Schoors, *Ecclesiastes*, HCOT (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 50; Roger N. Whybray, “Qoheleth, Preacher of Joy,” *JSOT* 23 (1982): 87–98, however, provided an important, necessary countervoice to the prevailing negative modern readings of Ecclesiastes.

16. These are both warnings to remember. Qoheleth is profoundly aware of the human failure to remember, that is, to forget (1:11; 2:16; 5:19; 9:5; all told, six cases of the root זכר; and in 2:16; 8:10; 9:5; three of שכח). These antithetical roots (“Remember

that matter, for Qoheleth; these are the things that the wise take to heart, and none of them, not one, is new.

Both generations and the earth, however, encompass change, for generations are each unique, and, though they overlap for a time, they are ultimately exclusive.¹⁷ As Dennis Olson points out, when the Exodus generation dies, it is entirely replaced by the wilderness generation (Num 25), and only the new generation will enter the promised land, except for the temporary survivors, Joshua and Caleb.¹⁸ The changes in the earth, by contrast, are cyclical: the rounds of the sun, the seasonal winds, and the flowing waters. But also the human cycles of birth, growth, work, marriage, children and death, one generation after another, is a cyclical pattern, and these patterns of nature, including human nature, are not contingent. Dust to dust is not a contingency; it is a cycle of nature. While much is often made of Qoheleth's focus on death, as if this emphasis were something unique; little thought is given to how congruent this is with the linear genealogies in Genesis, in which the death of each generation is carefully marked. Humans also are part of the food chain—pushing up daisies and sweet peas—food for worms and food for thought (Eccl 7:2–4; see also Pss 37; 49). In this, Qoheleth and Genesis are entirely agreed (e.g., Gen 2:4; 5:1–32; 11:10–30).¹⁹

Cosmic and human cycles do not constitute linear history, and yet they are the stuff of linear history, the very conditions which make linear history possible, as the place within time where the relatively new, the relatively unique and *Einmalig* contingently occur. Dust to dust is not a contingency, but the manner, circumstances, timing, and place of death

... do not forget”) are of course thematic for Deuteronomy and function to organize its covenantal rhetoric; e.g., Deut 8:2, 11, 14, 18, 19.

17. Thus, as Stoker, “On the Contingent,” 152–53, points out, all change is not necessarily contingent, though the contingent is always changing as well as itself change. The good-bad distinction also intersects with both change and the contingent, so that not all change is good—contrary to what seems to be implied when people, without further specification or adequate thought, advocate for social change!

18. Dennis Olson, *The Death of the Old and the Birth of the New: The Framework of the Book of Numbers and the Pentateuch*, BJS 71 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985).

19. Genesis 2:4a is editorial P, which arises from, but does not look back, to the first creation story and introduces the J or non-P creation story. Like all תולדות, it looks forward to what is “born out of” the preceding situation or persons; cf. Prov 27:1b, מֵהַיּוֹם “what the day will give birth to.” For the Bible, humans and their history are “born out of” the creation.

are contingent indeed, and historically particular; thus we record them in obituaries and histories. The stable and cyclical aspects of life, and the contingent aspects of life interpenetrate, and Qoheleth explores this mystery to show that it remains beyond human grasp and mastery in every way. It is simply הבל, a chasing after wind. The timing, location, circumstances, the persons involved, the pain and joy, and finally the consequences of a particular birth, life, and death are all contingent, and it is a large part of Qoheleth's brief to relativize the human attempt to master contingency, while also asking, "On what is human life contingent; on what does human life depend?," all the while insisting that it is God who gives life and all its goods, including the times for human actions—every one of which is contingent, even though some of them are also among the constant, cyclical features of human existence, such as birth, death, and planting.²⁰

The fact that humans cannot master reality, cannot master the contingent, does not, however, mean that humans are not responsible for the contingent conditions that encompass their lives, as if the *carpe diem* sections in Qoheleth were an abdication of responsibility and an exhortation to hedonism, since, after all, all is הבל! Rather, Qoheleth, along with most ancient wisdom known to me, insists on the importance and necessity of work or "toil" (עמל) for a good human life, even to the extent that humans should find "joy" and "pleasure" in their labors.²¹

20. See the treatment of 3:1–15 in Michael V. Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build: A Rereading of Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 191–214, with his important discussion of biblical time. Fox rejects the strict determinism he had formerly held, while noting the tension between God's times and human times.

21. Stoker, "On the Contingent," 165. The root עמל appears thirty-five times in Qoheleth, nearly as frequently as הבל: the noun עָמַל ("toil," or "trouble," 4:6) twenty-two times, the noun עֹמֵל ("worker") five times, and the verb עָמַל eight times. Though the noun "toil" can also entail the *result* of toil, that is, "wages" or "wealth," I cannot follow the JPS translation's ragged attempt to render most occurrences of the noun "toil" as "wealth" or the like. A person's "toil" is part of the good "lot" (חֵלֶק), which is a gift of God to be received with "joy" (2:10–11, 24; 3:13; 4:4; 5:17–18 [a key passage, where עָמַל as "work" is *contrasted* with "wealth and possessions," וְעֵשֶׂר וְנִבְסִים, 9:9). On 4:4, contrast Hesiod's praise of the good "strife," which puts workers in competition with one another, in Hesiod, *Op.* ll. 11–27. On 8:15, see Krüger, *Qoheleth*, 162; and on 5:15–19 see pp. 122–24. When in 2:18, Qoheleth "hates" his toil under the sun, it is precisely because his "toil" (or even "wealth" as a result of toil) is not "something that remains" (יִתְרוֹן, cf. 1:3).

A fine example of human responsibility for the contingent in Qoheleth—that is, for the unpredictable, the unique, the “here and now” in our human life-circumstances—and for the fact that there are universal guiding principles even for the contingent, has been noted by the philosopher H. G. Stoker in Eccl 9:10, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.”

It seems, then, that when Qoheleth declares that there is nothing new under the sun, he is not denying a fact of reality, for instance, that this particular baby or that king have never before existed or ruled in the world. Rather, he is concerned to emphasize that every baby and every king, is part of this natural cycle of life and death and that we are superficial and shallow when we run around all agog about the next generation of iPhone.

There is another aspect of creation in Qoheleth that is also rooted in Gen 1 but is not generally noticed as such. Among the Hebrew words or phrases that connote or get translated with English words like “pleasure” and “enjoyment,” we have of course שמחה and שחוק. But among the Hebrew expressions in Qoheleth that end up in English suggesting “joy” or “pleasure,” we find the frequent phrase, “to see good” (ראות טוב). The verb “to see” here is a metonymy for experiences of all kinds, just as “eating and drinking” are metonymy for the use and enjoyment of earth’s goods. But the significant creation term in the phrase “to see good” is simply the word “good.” Genesis 1 states seven times that when God saw what he had made, it was simply “good” or “very good.” It appears that Qoheleth’s expression is an echo of this divine seeing and enjoying created goodness (cf. Exod 31:17). Now, to see or experience good naturally gives humans joy and delight. But to miss the affirmation of creation’s goodness in this phrase, or to restrict it to superficial pleasure (the too frequent, tendentious English translation of שמחה in Ecclesiastes), is to miss its orthodox point, both in Genesis and Ecclesiastes. Created good and the experience thereof by humans is not rendered ungood by the fact that our experience of such goods is also contingent and הבל.

Our modern, historicistic age tends to think everything is contingent, just as Qoheleth declares everything הבל. But clearly his הבל is not modernity’s contingent.²² Much of the difference between the two follows from Qoheleth’s exposition of הבל in the context of God’s wisely ordered and

22. See the wise, nuanced reflection on הבל in Daniel J. Treier, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, BTCB (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011), 122–26; see also Stoker, “On the Contingent,” *passim*.

faithfully regular creation. Indeed, it will be humanity's relation to the Creator (5:1–7; 12:1), and to the created goods of his creation, that determine the character and quality of their life of הַבָּל. The issue for Qoheleth, signaled by הַבָּל, is to emphasize the limits of even the richest and most successful human life (1:12–2:26), for even kings die.

Qoheleth's awareness of the contingent happenings that effect human life and history so deeply is obvious. But how does he view the divine mystery of contingency in life and history?²³ Dominic Rudman has argued that Qoheleth views human existence in a deterministic way. God is utterly in control and it is folly to think that humans actually have freedom of will or conduct—a view that would certainly place Qoheleth outside the biblical mainstream.²⁴ But it seems that Qoheleth is not different from the rest of the Old Testament in affirming both a relative human freedom (we cannot flap our arms and fly) and at the same time insisting that all things work together to fulfill God's purposes. In this line are also passages from the New Testament like Phil 2:12b–13, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and do.” This line of thought ought also to inform and temper theological discussions of predestination in passages like Rom 8:28–30.²⁵ In terms of practical Christianity, one may note that Rom 8:28 is too often quoted by pious folk, “ill comforters,” who speak the truth out of season, lacking the wisdom to know that “for every matter there is a [right and wrong] time.”²⁶

Scripture often simply posits a dual agency in which human agents are free to do what they wish to do, while at the same time insisting that God has done, does, and will do the good that God wills, according to God's

23. Meijer C. Smit, “The Divine Mystery in History,” in *Selected Studies 1951–1980*, vol. 1 of *Writings on God and History*, ed. Harry van Dyke, trans. Herbert Donald Morton (Jordan Station: Wedge, 1987), 67–96.

24. Dominic Rudman, *Determinism in the Book of Ecclesiastes*, JSOTSup 316 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001).

25. One wishes that some ardent followers of Augustine and Calvin gave heed to the latter's statements comparing predestination to a labyrinth from which the human mind cannot extricate itself. For quotations from Calvin with references and discussion, see conveniently, Wyatt Houtz, “John Calvin's Labyrinth,” *PostBarthian*, 12 November 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL03102a>.

26. On Eccl 3:1–15, see the commentaries. Schoors, *Ecclesiastes*, 227–82, provides a rich discussion and overview of the issues.

purposes.²⁷ Classic stories of this sort are Joseph and his brothers (chs. 45 and 50, esp. 45:1–8; and 50:19–20), and the tale of the human and divine hardening of pharaoh's heart, to the end that God may “get glory over pharaoh” and his name YHWH may be known in Israel, Egypt, and all the earth (cf. Rahab, Josh 2:8–11). With an amazing equanimity, the Exodus text repeatedly affirms both that God hardened pharaoh's heart, and that pharaoh has hardened his own heart. Indeed the text ascribes the same incident of hardening to both God and to pharaoh (Exod 9:34–10:1).²⁸ Pharaoh is clearly responsible; in Paul's language, he is “without excuse” for his sin of rebellion against the Creator (Rom 1:18–20).

Less explicit is a baffling story whose meaning became clear to me only after I chanced to read Shimon Bar-Efrat's incisive exposition of the passage in his commentary on 1 Samuel. As you will recall, in chapter 8, the people reject God as their sole king and covenant suzerain and insist on having a human king to lead them, like all the nations around them. Samuel's pride is injured because he believes the people are rejecting him. The Lord tells Samuel that he is to anoint a king for the people; he is to give the people “What they ask for” (שְׂאוֹל in Hebrew). The chapter ends with Samuel sending the people to their homes.

First Samuel 9 seems to present a total change of topic and theme from chapter 8. The problem of finding a king for sinful Israel is nowhere in sight. Instead, a landholder in the land of Benjamin has lost three jennies. He sends his son, Saul, off with a servant to find them. They wander through several regions without success. Finally, running out of food,

27. Following the great scholar Yehezkiel Kaufmann, Amit engages this aspect of biblical narrative under the heading “dual causality” (Yairah Amit, “The Dual Causality Principle and Its Effects on Biblical Literature,” *VT* 37 [1987]: 385–400). I prefer to speak instead of dual agency, because causality entails an intracosmic cause and effect nexus (or causes and effect/s), which are logically irreconcilable with freedom, as many philosophers have correctly argued. Dual causality also seems to me far too reductively mechanical. How God does what God does is not susceptible to rational or scientific explanation, anymore than a doctrine of bodily resurrection is. It is perhaps this incommensurability with human understanding of historical and other events that highlights the difference between God and humans (see Isa 55:8–11).

28. See the brilliant literary reading of the ten plagues by Moshe Greenberg, *Understanding Exodus* (New York: Behrman House, 1969), 151–92. William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 353–54, points out that there are three, not two, formulas for the hardening of pharaoh's heart.

Saul tells his servant that it is time to return home. The servant suggests one last ditch possibility. There is a town nearby that has a “man of God,” and everything he says comes true. Perhaps he can help us with the search. It’s a long shot, another apparently futile move, and Saul objects, “What can we give [מָה נִבְיָא] to the man?” As it happens, the servant has a quarter silver shekel left in his satchel, so Saul says “Why not?” and off they go to town. They run into a gaggle of girls going to draw water at the well. Now, this encounter is a red herring, because it begins as one of the type-scenes well described by Robert Alter, that is, one where the hero meets a girl or girls at the well.²⁹ Saul asks the young women where the seer is, and they tell him that, as it happens, the man has just come to town for a sacrifice, and if you hurry, you’ll run into him. So it comes to pass, just as the girls have said. They meet Samuel, the man of God, as he is coming out of the city gate. Still unaware, Saul asks the seer himself, “Where is the house of the seer?” The identity of the man of God is not yet revealed to the reader. Only in 9:15 does the narrator begin to explain what is actually going on:

[15] Now the day before Saul came, the Lord had revealed to Samuel:
 [16] “Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be ruler over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have seen the suffering of my people, because their outcry has come to me.” [17] When Samuel saw Saul, the Lord told him, “Here is the man of whom I spoke to you. He it is who shall rule over my people.” (NRSV)

Here is what Bar Efrat has to say about this remarkable passage:

The founding of the kingdom in Israel, the subject narrated in the preceding chapter [1 Sam 8], did not come to a conclusion there. Now, instead of narrating the ongoing development of the same topic, we are suddenly brought into the story of a young man who is sent by his father to find lost jennies. What does the story mean? What importance do the lost jennies of a single farmer have, and to what end does it portray the search party? Not until the middle of chapter 9 does the story’s true topic, and its relation to the founding of the kingdom, receive clarification. The lack of a name for “the man of God” (until 9:14), and even of the name of his city, generates mystery, and hinders any chance of guessing the

29. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (Boston: Basic Books, 1983), 47–62.

point of the story. Only in verse 16 does it become clear that the story is not about personal affairs, but about a matter of national significance.³⁰

This story could certainly have been constructed differently: one could begin with Samuel as a direct continuation of the previous chapter, and narrate how the Lord revealed to him that he was to anoint a man, who would be coming to him from the land of Benjamin. (Compare the construction of the story of David's anointing in ch. 16.) But instead, the story of the young man, who sets out in search of his father's donkeys, and "by chance" happens upon Samuel, illustrates how God, from behind the scenes, directs each natural human move to fit with his plan.

All the events are natural and understandable on the human level (only the prophet's information is supernatural). The directing hand of God is not perceptible except through the chain of linked happenstance. When Saul despairs of the prospect of finding the asses, and decides to turn back to his home, his servant suggests they first turn to the man of God in the town nearby. To their good fortune, the lad also happens to have a bit of silver in his pocket that they can use as a gift (תשורה). On the day that Saul and his servant arrive at the city, Samuel also arrives, and—thanks to the news provided by the girls drawing water whom they met on the way—Saul and his servant enter the city gate at exactly the instant that Samuel is passing on his way out. That all this is not merely contingent [chance] is made explicitly clear in God's words to Samuel one day before Saul arrives. "About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from Benjamin" (9:16).

In Ecclesiastes, as in 1 Sam 9, and in Genesis and Exodus, humans are depicted as free, constrained only by the generally acknowledged conditions of existence: hunger and thirst, weariness and limited cognition, injustice and sin, sickness and death; and in all these books, free men and women accomplish God's purposes, willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly. At this foundational level of tacit presuppositions and worldview, Genesis, Exodus, Samuel, and Ecclesiastes share a united commitment, despite all their surface differences of genre, authorship, historical-social location, emphasis, readership, and function.³¹ Con-

30. Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Shemuel 1*, Miqra leYisrael (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1996), 133–34 (my translation from the Hebrew).

31. I use the term *worldview* in a technical sense, meaning a sociocultural group's usually tacit presuppositions and commitments about reality. Worldview is the deepest level of a social group's view about things, the inevitably colored lenses through

cerning the conjoint mysteries of creation, human freedom, and God's governance of contingency, Qoheleth is not an outlier, a semiheretic or modern thinker of some sort. Rather, Qoheleth is a profound and pious Israelite who relentlessly foregrounds the radical monotheism and human limits that are often implicit in biblical stories, which also is the necessary presupposition or *chiaroscuro* behind the biblical laws, proverbs, and poetry—even when God is not mentioned, as famously in Esther, which book is redolent, nonetheless, with God's providential care.

In the typical, brilliant stories of Joseph, pharaoh, and Saul, the Old Testament rejects all determinism, as if humans are puppets tied to divinely hidden strings, and yet, all things come to pass, all things contingent come to pass, with the same certainty that the sun rises every morning and the seasons make their rounds. All things come to pass according to YHWH's word, and yet, God leaves us humans free to do, or to try to do, the things our hearts desire: Joseph's brothers to harm him, pharaoh to keep Israel enslaved, Saul to wander home or not. Yet all things work according to God's unfathomable plan.³²

For intracosmic human logic, this is not explicable; it makes no sense. But this is the basic biblical point that Qoheleth insists on holding before

which we view reality. Functionally, worldviews mean that we humans are generally unaware that we wear glasses shaped by our culture and commitment to that which we believe is ultimate. At this hidden, foundational level, a shared worldview enables contradiction and debate on more explicit levels. The standard work on worldview in English is David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); see also N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 12. On the relations among basic beliefs, Christian theology, and worldview, see pp. 130–39, esp. 130, 134. Wright notes that basic beliefs and theology “are held at a more conscious level than worldview itself” (134). A worldview answers the basic human questions, usually without becoming explicit: Where are we (in cosmos and history)? Who are we? What's the (basic) problem? What's the solution?

32. See the seminal article, Peter Machinist, “Fate, *miqreh*, and Reason: Some Reflections on Qohelet and Biblical Thought,” in *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield*, ed. Ziony Zevit, Seymour Gitin, and Michael Sokoloff (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 159–75. Machinist wrestles with the tension between Qoheleth's use of *miqreh* to refer to death, and his refusal to connect that fate with either a good moral life or a bad one (see esp. 9:2). For more recent discussions of fate with bibliography, see Brittany Melton, *Where Is God in the Megilloth? A Dialogue on the Ambiguity of Divine Presence and Absence*, OTS 73 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), esp. 137–44.

us, in the hope that we will get it. God is sovereign and we are not. Yet God's sovereignty is not coercion, and that makes it incomprehensible to us. Part of the biblical "fear of the Lord" is that we humans humble ourselves, know our limits, and learn to acknowledge the ever-present mystery of God in the course of our brief lives. We are destined for dust, but all things good and lawful are gifts of God to be enjoyed and savored as long as we are able. It is not a shallow thing to enjoy one's spouse, to raise kids together, to work hard at our craft and calling, to share a celebratory meal with family and friends, to make our own music and sing a song around the festive table, and to worship God in season (because most of our life is not spent in liturgical service, but in worldly service—as Martin Luther and Dietrich Bonhoeffer so clearly saw). Nor is it superficial to "toil" (עמל).³³ All depends upon how and why we do these things. Is accepting a gift from God the same as frantically chasing the wind? Is not the latter pursuit idolatry, and the former a robust life lived joyfully in the proper fear of the Lord?

We may sum up with three points. First, as noted in a footnote above, the meaning of הבל is not "futility" (JPS) or "meaningless" (NIV) or any other translation. The meaning of הבל is הבל and nothing else. I owe this observation to an anecdote told me in the 1980s at a Midwest Society of Biblical Literature–American Schools for Oriental Research Regional Meeting by the late Erica Reiner. It concerned Benno Landsberger's reply when he was asked how best to translate the difficult Akkadian term *parṣu*: Said the great man, "Someday we will translate *parṣu* with *parṣu*!" For such

33. The root עמל appears thirty-five times (5x7) in Qoheleth. Though the root can refer to both labor and, by extension, the result of that labor, the JPS preferred translation as "wealth" (and its acquisition) distorts Qoheleth's wise emphasis on the virtue of work, to which theme one may compare both biblical Proverbs (e.g., 6:6–11; 10:4–5) and Hesiod's *Opera et dies*. When Qoheleth wishes to name the monetary result of toil, he has available words like "wages" (שכר, 4:9), "wealth" (עשר, 4:8; 5:12–13, 18; 6:2; 9:11), and "possessions" (נכסים, 5:18; 6:2). The idea that one can find "joy" in labor and "toil" is common in Qoheleth. See 2:10 where the conjunction of "rejoice" (שמח) with great deeds (2:4–12) and עמל requires that the later noun be translated as "toil" or "work"; if it is rather the result of toil that is meant—it must refer to the great works of building undertaken by the king—whose wealth has been diminished by his building labors! Cf. 9:7–10 with its division between joys in domestic "life" (חיים) and in work-life (עמל, עשה, esp. 9:9b–10. In 8:15, the joy of domestic life appears to "stick with" (ליוה) the laborer even in his burdensome toil (עמל), perhaps as encouragement and goal at workday's end.

reasons also, we learn the Hebrew language! Moreover, הבל in Qoheleth clearly does not mean that God's creation is not טוב and יפה (e.g., 3:11). The whole of existence is הבל, but it is not evil (רעה) or ungood. Qoheleth is in line with Genesis in declaring creation good and making clear to humans what that good consists of, all in relation to God. A proper understanding of הבל requires that it be understood in dialectical (if that is the right word) relation to creation's goodness and beauty. The Priestly doctrine of a good creation is assumed by Qoheleth, as for instance, in 7:29 he insists also about humans: "God made humans right [ישר], but they have pursued many devices."³⁴

Second, Qoheleth's wisdom and teaching are orthodox and need not be contrasted with the epilogue of the book.³⁵ His apparent difference from orthodoxy lies only in his explicit rejection of any arrogant illusions that the pious might have, as if they (1) have some quasi-divine epistemological advantage over the wicked concerning God's work and purposes in history or (2) are themselves somehow free from the limits and troubles other humans seem subject to, as a result of humanity's creaturely status, sin, sufferings, and limited access to God and to reality as a temporal-cosmic whole, which we humans, unlike God, can only access from within.³⁶

34. On חשבנות, see Schoors, *Ecclesiastes*, 586–90, who quotes Jerome: "He [Qoheleth] says that we were created good by God, but ... that through our vice we lapse into worse, since we seek greater things and we have in view things that are beyond our strength" (588).

35. With most scholars, I take the epilogue/s of Ecclesiastes (12:9–14) as other than the speaker, Qoheleth, or the frame narrator in the rest of the book. But I question the view that his/their basic approach contrasts with the unorthodox Qoheleth. For an evangelical version of the contrary view, see Tremper Longman III, *The Fear of the Lord Is Wisdom: A Theological Introduction to Wisdom in Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 26–42. Longman believes that הבל should be translated "meaningless" and that the "attempt to turn Qohelet into an orthodox thinker" is mistaken (27 n. 3). Thus, "the bottom line for Qohelet is that everything is meaningless (12:8)." The true message is found only in the frame narrator who is also the Epilogist (30). Wiser, in my view, is the approach of Machinist, who writes, "It may be, then, that the traditional interpreters were correct after all, and that this concluding instruction, whether contributed by a later editor or by Koheleth himself, is in fact congruent with the views in the rest of the book" (*The Jewish Study Bible*, ed. Adele Berlin and Mark Zvi Brettler [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014], 1618).

36. Note Meir Sternberg's perspicuous analysis of Samuel as a "sightless seer" vis-à-vis God's purposes (1 Sam 9), in *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 94–99.

For God's world and its history are ultimately not subject to human pretensions concerning wealth, power, knowledge, coercion, domination, pleasure, pious wisdom, or, indeed, the contingent.³⁷

Third, as a whole, Ecclesiastes is an inspired wisdom book designed to remind godly and ungodly humans of their limits and their need humbly "to fear God and keep his commandments" (12:13; cf. 8:5; Mic 6:8). The epilogist reads Qoheleth correctly; he is not an "unreliable narrator," nor a "pious editor" haplessly trying to make the best of a bad job. Only that mode of being, described by the subtle Qoheleth and affirmed by the epilogist/s (who praise Qoheleth!), allows humans to partake of creation's goods as gifts from God, and to accept their "lot" (חֵלֶק) in life, even though that life is הַבָּל (cf. Pirke Avot 4.1). Life is הַבָּל, but it is also very good. Only God is absolute and ultimate. This world and our human lives are neither absolute nor ultimate. This reality makes for a good life even in the face of death and tears (7:1–4).

37. I have in mind here the view, common among evangelical Christians, that the words of Qoheleth (apart from the epilogues) somehow describe what life without God or Christ is like. E.g., "Life not centered on God is purposeless and meaningless.... The book contains the philosophical and theological reflections of an old man (12:1–7), most of whose life was meaningless because he had not himself relied on God" (Derek Kidner, "Ecclesiastes," in *The NIV Study Bible*, ed. Kenneth Barker [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985], 991).

Jezreel, the Day of Visitation, and Hosea: The Book of the Twelve as Character History

Don Collett

Hosea's modern reception history has largely been devoted to pursuing literary-critical or historical issues, for example, the identity of Hosea's wife, the specific nature of her adultery, the question whether she is the same woman being described in chapter 3, just how many children in chapter 1 were actually Hosea's children, what their names mean, and whether they are to be understood as "real people or merely literary constructs."¹ Most of the questions scholars were interested in had to do with the book itself, especially the prologue in chapters 1–3, rather than its function within the Twelve.

In recent years scholarly interest in the Book of the Twelve has begun to flourish. Yet even in this context Hosea's signal position in the Twelve continues to be marginalized to some extent. One does not have to read at length in this new realm of interest to discover that the book of Joel rather than Hosea tends to occupy center stage. With a handful of exceptions, the signal role of Hosea in the Twelve has not generated much interest, apart from the programmatic significance of the metaprophetic statement

I am indebted to my former *Doktorvater* Christopher R. Seitz for opening my eyes to the significance of the interplay between the Lord's character, providence, and Israel's repentance in the Book of the Twelve. His supervision of my PhD dissertation on the Twelve originally motivated me to read the Twelve as a divine character history aimed at disclosing the Lord's name through his providential visitations and ways with Israel in judgment and redemption. This essay is dedicated to him with much gratitude for his scholarship and continuing friendship.

1. Mary J. Evans, "Hosea, Book of," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 308.

at the close of Hos in 14:9.² Instead, scholars prefer to focus upon Joel as the “literary anchor” of the Twelve.³ Although this Joel-centered focus may be the result of more than one source of causality, Joel’s focus on the day of the Lord—a theological motif that shows promise for uniting the Twelve—surely accounts for much of this interest.⁴ Many also regard Joel as a latecomer to the Book of the Twelve, a historically deoccasionalized instance of *Schriftprophetie* deliberately positioned in front of Amos for the purpose of helping its readers understand the day of the Lord’s function in the Twelve. Once Joel has been assigned this role in the Twelve, the signal position of Hosea in the Twelve recedes into the background,

2. Exceptions are John D. W. Watts, “A Frame for the Book of the Twelve: Hosea 1–3 and Malachi,” in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, ed. James D. Nogalski and Marvin Sweeney, SymS 15 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 209–17; Laurie J. Braaten, “God Sows: Hosea’s Land Theme in the Book of the Twelve,” in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. Paul Redditt and Aaron Schart, BZAW 325 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 104–32; Gerlinde Baumann, “Connected by Marriage, Adultery and Violence: The Prophetic Marriage Metaphor in the Book of the Twelve and in the Major Prophets,” in *SBL Seminar Papers 1999*, SBLSP 38 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 552–69; cf. also George Toozé, “Framing the Book of the Twelve: Connections between Hosea and Malachi” (PhD diss., Illiff School of Theology, 2002), completed under David Petersen. For more recent examples, see Craig Bowman, “Reading the Twelve as One: Hosea 1–3 as an Introduction to the Book of the Twelve (The Minor Prophets),” *SCJ* 9 (2006): 41–59; and Jason T. LeCureux, *The Thematic Unity of the Book of the Twelve*, HBM 41 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2012). Except in those cases where it is necessary to call attention to the differences between the MT and English versions in Hosea, I will be using English numbering.

3. See James D. Nogalski, “Joel as ‘Literary Anchor’ for the Book of the Twelve,” in Nogalski and Sweeney, *Reading and Hearing*, 91–109. Though Jörg Jeremias does not use this language, he argues that Joel “serves as a kind of hermeneutical key to the Twelve” (Jeremias, “The Function of the Book of Joel for Reading the Twelve,” in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Twelve: Methodological Foundations—Redactional Processes—Historical Insights*, ed. Rainier Albertz, James Nogalski, and Jakob Wöhrle, BZAW 433 [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012], 77). For an exception to this general trend, see the recent commentary of Christopher R. Seitz, *Joel*, ITC (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016).

4. See Rolf Rendtorff, “Alas for the Day! The ‘Day of the LORD’ in the Book of the Twelve,” in *God in the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggeman*, ed. Tod Linafelt and Timothy K. Beal (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 186–97; see also David Petersen, “A Book of the Twelve?,” in Nogalski and Sweeney, *Reading and Hearing*, 9–10.

as does the theological framework and character history associated with Hosea's days of visitation.⁵

This essay will argue that marginalizing the significance of Hosea's witness to the Lord's visitation is misleading, especially since both the Lord's visitation in Hosea and Joel's day of the Lord take their theological bearings from the character and identity of the God of Israel disclosed in Exod 34:6–7. Put differently, Hosea establishes a theological context for helping readers understand the Lord whose identity is disclosed in the Twelve, and that context remains foundational for what it means to identify the *Lord* of the day in Joel's *day* of the Lord. By situating the Lord's providential visitations or ways with divided Israel in this context, Hosea also establishes a rule for reading Israel's division history as a penitential history rooted in the disclosure of the Lord's name and character. In support of this reading I will argue that Hosea's prologue makes use of an eschatological paradigm for the day of the Lord's visitation embedded within the theological movement of events portrayed in Exod 32–34, a paradigm that illumines the inner relations between the disclosure of the Lord's name and the significance of his judgment visitations for the divided and idolatrous Israel of Hosea's day. Like the Israel of Moses's day, the Lord's disciplinary visitations and ways with divided Israel ultimately aims at fostering her repentance and reunion, rather than finally consigning her to the theological death of divorce. The purpose of these visitations is to renew and restore the marriage covenant between himself and Israel through figural acts of death and resurrection, acts that find their basis in the life-giving name and character of the Lord disclosed in Exod 34:5–7. That Hosea's prologue locates this goal within a framework or rule for reading the Twelve as a whole is evident, not only from the temporal scope it envisions, but also from the figurally comprehensive ways in which the names of Jeroboam, Gomer, and Jezreel function, all of which suggests

5. For recent examples of skepticism regarding Hosea's signal place in the Twelve, see Jacob Wöhrle, "So Many Cross-References! Methodological Reflections on the Problem of Intertextual Relationships and Their Significance for Redaction Critical Analysis," in Albertz, *Perspectives on the Formation of the Twelve*, 3–20; and Roman Vielhauer, "Hosea in the Book of the Twelve," in Albertz, *Perspectives on the Formation of the Twelve*, 55–75. Visitation texts in Hosea occur near the outset of all three major sections of the book in chs. 1–3 (1:4), 4–11 (4:9), and 12–14 (12:3). See further n. 21 below.

that the signal character of Hosea in the Twelve is both appropriate and justified.

Divine Identity in Hosea and Exodus 32–34

Along with a number of others, Jacob Wöhrle argues that during the preexilic period Hosea was originally part of a “Book of Four” or “Deuteronomistic Corpus” consisting of Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah.⁶ For reasons I do not have time to enter into here, he then goes on to argue that Hosea was removed from this corpus, circulated independently until the late postexilic period, then reinserted in the Twelve’s evolving collection, with Joel rather than Amos now following it. By this time the Twelve’s theological outlook had already solidified into a more or less fixed form, the latter of which he construes in terms of a “grace corpus” centered upon the name and character attributes of the Lord, as disclosed in Exod 34:6–7. The effect of his argument is to suggest Hosea reentered the Twelve at some point after the crucial moves involved in shaping its theological outlook had already been made. Further support for the idea that Hosea entered the Twelve at a “very late stage” arises from the fact that, according to Wöhrle, the book lacks any clear references to Exod 34:6–7, the text that characterizes the grace corpus. However, in addition to forming intertextual links with Exod 32–34 in the naming of Hosea’s children, the book’s usage of the three Hebrew terms in the marriage betrothal of Hos 2:19–20 (steadfast love, mercy, and faithfulness) clearly invoke the character attributes of the Lord in Exod 34:6 as the theological basis for Israel’s marriage betrothal and new beginning with the Lord.⁷

Other important links between the book of Hosea and Exodus might be cited, for example, the way in which both books ground idolatrous Israel’s hope for a future in the name and character of the Lord. While many readers of Hos 1 easily recognize the conversation going on between Hos 1:9 and the disclosure of the Lord’s name in Exod 3 and 6, they are usually

6. See Paul L. Redditt, “The Formation of the Book of the Twelve: A Review of Research,” in Redditt, *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve*, 1–26, for bibliography.

7. For the naming of Hosea’s children and Exod 32–34, see Ray van Leeuwen, “Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve,” in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, ed. Leo G. Perdue, Bernard Brandon Scott, and William Johnston Wiesman (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 31–49.

less willing to recognize that this verse echoes the Lord's threat in Exod 32 to disown an idolatrous Israel as his people. As we learn from reading the golden calf narratives of Exod 32–34, the Israel that worshiped the golden calf in Moses's day had no hope for a future with the Lord apart from his character as one whose mercy and compassion triumphs, not over his judgments, but in the midst of and through his judgments. The Lord's revealed character in Exod 34 was Israel's sole hope for a future with the Lord as his people. Indeed, it would not be going too far to say that the entire book of Exodus and the ministry of Moses centers upon the disclosure of the Lord's name through simultaneous acts of judgment and redemption the Lord performs in Israel's midst.

As Israel's founding prophet and the mediator of the Lord's marriage covenant with Israel, Moses was the vehicle through which the Lord performed signs and wonders before pharaoh and the Egyptians (Exod 7:3), redemptive acts aimed at bringing Israel to a new knowledge and understanding of the name given to the patriarchs (Gen 15:5–7; cf. Exod 3:14–15; 6:2–3).⁸ The disclosure of the Lord's name in Exod 34:6–7 focuses upon the issue the prophetic office of Moses was commissioned to proclaim, and in many ways Exod 34 represents the climax of this concern in the book.⁹ For this reason it is simply impossible to separate it from the disclosure of the Lord's name in Exod 3 and 6. Hosea 1 invokes the name in Exod 3 and 6, and there are no compelling reasons for excluding Exod 34:6–7 from the book's purview, especially when both the withdrawal *and* bestowal of the attributes associated with his name in that text are found more than once in Hosea's prologue (1:6–7; 2:1, 4, 19–20, 23). Just as the

8. The predicate use of the Hebrew verb “to be” (היה) is often used in the Old Testament to describe a marriage relationship: (I will be ... for you). This idiom is invoked both for entering into a bond of marriage (Deut 24:2; Judg 14:20; 2 Sam 11:27; Hos 3:3; Ruth 4:13), as well as for entering a covenant (Gen 17:7; Exod 6:7, 19:5–6; Lev 11:45); see Nahum Sarna, *Exodus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 109; cf. also Cornelis den Hertog, *The Other Face of God: “I Am That I Am” Reconsidered*, HBM 32 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2012), 144–45. See Christopher R. Seitz, “The Call of Moses and the ‘Revelation’ of the Divine Name: Source-Critical Logic and Its Legacy,” in *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs*, ed. Christopher Seitz and Kathryn Greene-McCreight (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 145–61.

9. See the discussion of Exod 32–34 in W. Ross Blackburn, *The God Who Makes Himself Known: The Missionary Heart of the Book of Exodus*, NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012).

Lord's character formed the only hope for a new beginning beyond the idolatrous, tragically divided Israel of Moses's day (Exod 32:25–29), so also it offers the only way forward into the future for the idolatrous and divided Israel of Hosea's day. In the presentation of the prophet in Hosea, we meet with a theologian of the divine name who makes use of the eschatological paradigm Exod 32:34 establishes for the Lord's day of visitation upon a divided and idolatrous Israel, appropriating it as a theological lens for interpreting the division history and idolatry of Israel in his own day.¹⁰

I will, therefore, set aside Wöhrle's suggestion that Hosea's late entrance in the Book of the Twelve prevented it from coming under the editorial influence of a grace corpus that began with Joel and ended with Malachi.¹¹ While this strikes me as an editorial hypothesis that is paradigmatically rather than exegetically driven, Wöhrle should be given credit for recognizing that the identity description of the Lord's character in Exod 34 exerted a strong influence upon the Twelve's formation history. Given his focus upon the importance of Lord's character for the Twelve's unity, it would be wrong to suggest that he ignores a crucial theological pressure at work in its formation. At the same time, the editorial freight he assigns to a grace corpus in the Twelve's formation history threatens to marginalize, if not also erase, certain unifying motifs rooted in the providential "ways" of the Lord with Israel. At least one of these motifs, namely, the Lord's days of visitation, plays an important role in Hosea, as will be argued further below.

Disciplinary Providence, Resurrection, and Repentance in Hosea

Roman Vielhauer is also skeptical about the possibility of demonstrating any signal intentionality in Hosea aimed at constraining the interpretation of the Twelve as a whole. On his view, the lightly redacted character of Hosea in relation to other books in the Twelve suggests that it probably circulated in a discrete form far longer than typically assumed by earlier scholarship on the Twelve, except perhaps for Ehud Ben Zvi. While aware of the arguments of Jörg Jeremias for the early interrelationship of Hosea and Amos,

10. On the character of Exod 32:34 as eschatological paradigm, see Leslie Brisbane, "Sacred Butchery: Exodus 32:25–29," in Seitz, *Theological Exegesis*, 162–81.

11. For an extended critique of Wöhrle's position, see Aaron Schart, "The Jonah-Narrative within the Book of the Twelve," in Albertz, *Perspectives on the Formation of the Twelve*, 118–23.

Vielhauer argues that editorial moves such as those Jeremias envisions, if plausible, would have taken place at a very late date in the Twelve's formation—too late, in fact, to have exercised a major influence or significant editorial impact upon the intentionality of the Twelve as a whole. The last verse of Hosea, which some regard as providing a wisdom rule for reading prophecy in the Twelve, Vielhauer regards as constraining our interpretation of the book of Hosea, and no more. In the end, for Vielhauer only the superscription of Hos 1:1 can be said to have been added with an eye to the rest of the Twelve, and for him this is a loose connection at best.

On the surface of things, there are no obvious grammatical reasons for rejecting the argument that Hos 14:9 not only looks back to Hosea's prophecies, but also seeks to constrain our reading of the books that follow.¹² The "these things" of which the book of Hosea speaks, namely, the Lord's providential formation of a people for himself through simultaneous acts of judgment and mercy, constitute wisdom and knowledge for the people of Hosea's day, as well as the righteous and wicked of every generation. Indeed, the redemptive judgments of the Lord in the Twelve make visible the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, as the last book of the Twelve reiterates (Mal 3:16–18). One should also bear in mind that Hos 14:9 is not prophecy per se, but theological reflection on prophecy, or what might be called metaprophecy.¹³ Taken together, these observations strike me as a sufficient rejoinder to Vielhauer's arguments. However a more fruitful way forward, at least for my purposes, is to draw attention to Vielhauer's take on Hos 14.

Although Hos 14:1–3 focuses upon the issue of repentance, Vielhauer also recognizes, along with a number of others, that "the issue of repentance (שוב) is encountered throughout the book of Hosea."¹⁴ Indeed, he argues Hos 14:4–8 was probably added later to the original call to repentance in 14:1–3

12. The demonstrative pronoun we translate as "these things" in Hos 14:9 may refer to what precedes, as in 2 Sam 23:22, or to what follows, as with the תולדות formula of Genesis ("These are the generations").

13. According to Ehud Ben Zvi, metaprophecy "provides a key for and reflects an understanding of prophetic literature." He cites the book of Jonah as a case in point (Ben Zvi, "Jonah 4:11 and the Metaprophetic Character of the Book of Jonah," *JHebS* 9 [2009], 13).

14. Vielhauer, "Hosea," 63. The studies of Bowman, "Reading the Twelve as One," and LeCureux, *Thematic Unity*, also stress the importance of repentance for Hosea; cf. also the earlier study of Jeremiah Unterman, "Repentance and Redemption in Hosea," in 1982 *SBL Seminar Papers*, SBLSP 21 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 541–50.

in order to reinforce and expand upon the Deuteronomic truth that Israel's ability to repent is rooted in the Lord's mercy (Deut 4:30–31). In Hos 14 the Lord calls Israel to repentance because of its stumbling, and 14:4–8 expands upon the last phrase of 14:3 to provide a theological basis for repentance in God's mercy and love—precisely the point that Hosea's prologue also makes in regard to Gomer-Israel (2:1, 19, 23; 3:1). On Vielhauer's view this editorial move is in keeping with one of the lessons the book of Hosea aims to teach, namely, that repentance is rooted in God's mercy. Vielhauer might have proceeded further by raising a follow-up question at this juncture: Just how does the Lord teach this truth to an Israel that is presumptuous, an Israel whose "deeds do not permit them to return to their God" (Hos 5:4; cf. Zech 1:4), an Israel that apparently assumes repentance is fully within her power (Hos 5:5–6; 11:7; cf. 8:2), such that she may turn to the Lord at will?

One way Israel might be taught this is through the withdrawal of God's mercy (Hos 1:6; 2:4–7; 5:6, 14–15), that she might come to know her inability to repent and return to the Lord (Hos 7:10; cf. Amos 4:6–11).¹⁵ In this way Israel learns that repentance is rooted in the Lord's mercy, as the last chapter of Hosea makes clear (14:3–8) using the same term (רחם) chapter 1 uses to speak of Lord's withdrawal from Israel (1:6). In chapter 2 this withdrawal takes the form of a threefold series of providential judgments aimed at restoring an intimate and relational form of knowing proper to the marriage covenant and marital communion between the Lord and Israel (2:6–8, 9–13, 14–20).¹⁶ Through the withdrawal described in Hos 1–2, Israel has become an orphan (14:3) in order that she might come to learn her inability to repent apart from God's mercy and freely given love (14:4). The final reference to God's mercy in 14:2 (רחם) forms

15. Vielhauer notes that "Israel's repentance in Deut 4:30; 30:2 and Hos 14:2 is expressed through the rare phrase שוב עד, further attestations of which with Israel as the subject are only found in Isa 9:12; Lam 4:30; Joel 2:12; and Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, and 11" ("Hosea," 65).

16. According to Richtsje Abma, one of the main functions of Hos 2 and the thrust of 2:9–13 is "to point that the gifts are not there of themselves but are at the disposal of YHWH who 'gives and withdraws'" (Abma, *The Bonds of Love: Methodic Studies of Prophetic Texts with Marriage Imagery [Isaiah 50:1–3 and 54:1–10, Hosea 1–3, Jeremiah 2–3]*, SSN 40 [Assen: Van Gorcum, 1999], 179). The resulting desolation of the land prepares for the disclosure of the Lord as the true giver of grain, wine, and oil to the land of Israel, a disclosure that will ultimately take place in the wilderness (exile) and Israel's return from it (2:14–15; cf. also Hos 5:15–6:3). Cf. the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, §§5.5; 17.3; and 18.3–4.

an *inclusio* with the references to the Lord's mercy in Hosea's prologue, as Vielhauer himself notes (1:6–7; 2:1, 4, 19–20, and 23).¹⁷ That which calls for further elaboration is the Lord's providential mode of teaching this lesson in Hosea's prologue, the theological context in which that providence functions (the Lord's character), and the theological end to which it is has been appointed (Israel's reunion with the Lord *and* one another).

Hosea's prologue frames the history of the divided kingdom in the Twelve as a penitential history rooted in the Lord's providential ways with Israel.¹⁸ Judgment in the form of disciplinary providence or withdrawal will ultimately come upon both kingdoms, not for the sake of divorce, but for the sake of marriage renewal and new beginnings that bring forth a new creation where Sabbath-shalom (rest and peace) abide forever (2:18).¹⁹ Israel's repentance is *not* left out of this providential plan for Israel's recovery (2:6–7, 15–17) but brought about through an exodus-resurrection from death unto life, whereby the "children of Israel" rightly come to be called "children of the living God" (1:10), the God and Lord of Israel who not only lives, but imparts life to fallen Israel by the resurrection power

17. Vielhauer, "Hosea," 63–64, esp. 66, though he lists only 1:6; 2:4, 23 as references.

18. For a reading of Israel's history as penitential history, see Ephraim Radner, *The End of the Church: A Pneumatology of Christian Division in the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

19. The relevant Hebrew term in 2:2 refers to a controversy, quarrel, or dispute that may occur in a number of contexts, not simply legal ones. While the term clearly has legal overtones, here it functions in a familial rather than strictly legal context. See Dwight R. Daniels, *Hosea and Salvation History: The Early Traditions of Israel in the Prophecy of Hosea*, BZAW 191 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), 95, who concludes that in Hosea's prologue, "the matter has not yet reached the point of formal legal action. It is still a family matter." Reviewing comparative evidence, Abma concludes that the language of 2:2 "can best be regarded as a negated marriage formula rather than an official divorce formula" (Abma, *Bonds of Love*, 170–71; cf. also Gale Yee, *Composition and Tradition in the Book of Hosea: A Redaction Critical Investigation*, SBLDS 102 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987], 105–8). Arguing for a one-to-one correspondence between Hos 1:9, 2:2, and the legal language of divorce in Israel's ancient Near Eastern milieu flattens out the semantic differences between Hosea and its extrabiblical contexts, and it also denies the right of the canonical process to modify original meanings for theological ends. The threefold "therefore" in ch. 2 (2:6, 9, 14) is clearly expressive of the Lord's desire to win back his bride. This redirects the language of Hos 1:9 and 2:2 toward recovery, restoration, and renewal, not divorce; see James Luther Mays, *Hosea: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 30, 38.

inherent in his eternal life and name.²⁰ Only on these terms does Israel have hope for a future, in spite of her continuing propensity to identify with Achan's disobedience (2:15; cf. Josh 7:24–26; 24:19–24). In support of this reading I will argue for a figural reading of the names of Jeroboam, Gomer, and Jezreel in Hosea's prologue, suggest a principal reading of "beginning" in Hos 1:2, then close with a few theological reflections on the significance of the Lord's day of visitation in relation to Jezreel and the disclosure of his character.²¹

Jeroboam II: The Last King of Israel

Why is only one king from the Northern Kingdom referenced in the superscription of Hos 1:1 if Hosea was primarily a Northern Kingdom prophet? One of the standard evangelical explanations is that this is probably because of the comparative shortness of the reigns enjoyed by the kings of Israel who followed Jeroboam II, who himself reigned about forty-one years. By way of contrast, most of the kings of Israel who followed him reigned less than twenty years (Zechariah, Shallum, Menachem, Pekahiah, Pekah, Hoshea)—in some cases as little as six months (Zechariah) or even one month (Shallum). Moreover, with the exception of one king (Pekahiah), the kings who immediately followed the four-generation dynasty of Jehu gained the throne through regicide (Shallum, Menahem, Pekah, and Hoshea), and those who did not were corrupt (2 Kgs 15). For these reasons, Hosea's superscription simply omits any reference to reigning kings in Israel's history beyond Jeroboam II.²² Zechariah was the last bio-

20. In the context of Hosea's prologue, the adjective "living" in Hos 1:10 means more than that God is simply qualified as living rather than dead (an obvious point) (Abma, *Bonds of Love*, 162).

21. The relation between Jezreel and the Lord's days of visitation in Hosea is set up in 1:4–5. Visitation texts in Hosea also occur throughout the rest of the book (2:13; 4:9; 8:13; 9:7; 12:3) and later in the Twelve (Amos 3:14; Mic 7:4; Zeph 1:8–9, 12; 2:7; 3:7; Zech 10:3). The verbs in Hos 1:4; 2:13; and 4:9, as well as Amos 3:14; Zeph 1:8–9, 12, are identical to the form found in the eschatological paradigm provided for the day of visitation in Exod 32:34. In Hosea this connection is especially significant, since the Lord's judgment upon Israel's idolatry and internal division is clearly in view in Hosea.

22. Thomas McComiskey, "The Book of Hosea," in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. Thomas McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 1:10–11.

logical descendant of Jeroboam II. After his brief reign and assassination by Shallum, the dynasty of Jehu came to an end, according to the judgment pronounced in 2 Kgs 10 (10:29–31; cf. 15:12). The lack of reference to Jeroboam II's offspring in Hosea's superscription is thus a literary way of underscoring the fulfillment of the judgment that came upon Jehu's dynasty in the fourth generation.

The standard historical-critical account approaches the issue from a different angle, raising the question why reference is made to four Judean kings (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah) when Hosea was a northern prophet. The answer given is that the first edition of Hosea's prophecies were originally addressed to the Northern Kingdom, then made their way down to Judah after the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722/721 BCE, resulting in a second edition addressed to Judean readers.²³ This is why the superscription lists the reigning kings of Judah first: what we now have is a "Hosea for Judean readers."

Another option not often explored is to recognize that the references to Jeroboam and Jezreel not only find their proper sense within Hosea's prologue, but also link up with the judgment history of divided Israel in 1 and 2 Kings, encouraging the book's readers to interpret these figures with the help of the Former Prophets.²⁴ While we must give priority to the context in which these figures function in Hosea's prologue, in the case of Jeroboam II the link with 1–2 Kings is especially important. The only other references we find to Jeroboam II are found in Amos, a book whose editorial union with Hosea arguably forms the earliest stage of the canonical

23. See Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea*, trans. Gary Stansell, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 3–4.

24. On the canonical coordination of the Former and Latter Prophets, see Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 236–37, 425–26. Some ten years ago Seitz argued that "the superscriptions of the Three Major Prophets and the Twelve clearly intend us to read the witness of the individual prophetic works in light of the Prophetic History, and vice versa" (Christopher R. Seitz, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets: The Achievement of Association in Canon Formation* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009], 28; cf. 90–92). See also Seitz, *Joel*, 112–13. Seitz's observations are broadly compatible with the concerns of Christoph Levin, to wit, that the direction of tradition-historical influence in the prophetic corpus not only moves from the Deuteronomistic History to the prophetic books, i.e., from history to prophecy, but also moves in the reverse direction from prophecy to history (Levin, "Das 'Vierpropheten Buch': Ein exegetischer Nachruf," *ZAW* 123 [2011]: 221–35, esp. 223).

process by which the Twelve was formed.²⁵ In the context generated by the early union of Hosea and Amos, the significance of Jeroboam II in Hosea's superscription takes on fresh significance, teaching us that the history of prophecy presented in the earliest phase of the Twelve is to be coordinated with the history spanning Jeroboam I to Jeroboam II as a history that functions under the figure of Jeroboam.²⁶ The reference to Jeroboam II in Hos 1:1 offers a figural way of affirming the day of visitation and judgment that comes upon Israel for the history of idolatry set in motion by the kingship of Jeroboam I, continued by Jehu, and cut off in the fourth generation with Jeroboam II. The name "Jeroboam" in Hosea's superscription thus serves to abbreviate an entire history of the Lord's judgment upon the divided kingdom of Israel, with Jeroboam II functioning in terms of what Paul Beauchamp would call *l'homme-récit*, that is, a specific or concrete individual in whose person the story of a people is carried, in this case, the division history of Israel.²⁷

25. The references to Jeroboam in the Twelve outside Hosea are limited to the superscription of Amos and the account of Amaziah the priest's opposition to Amos's prophecies in Amos 7:10–13. See Jörg Jeremias, "The Interrelationship between Amos and Hosea," in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays in Honor of John D. W. Watts*, ed. James W. Watts and Paul R. House, JSOTSup 235 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 171–86. Reflecting on the significance of Jeremias's argument for the Twelve, Seitz writes: "By seeing evidence for this kind of mutual influencing early in the composition of the prophetic books, it has become much easier to account for it in medial and final stages as well, and to understand it as an effort, not to modify or correct, but to bring about a comprehensive view of prophecy as always consisting of interrelationship and association, a goodly fellowship, because one God was superintending and overseeing the work of 'all my servants the prophets'" (Christopher Seitz, "Scriptural Author and Canonical Prophet: The Theological Implications of Literary Association in the Canon," in *Biblical Interpretation and Method: Essays in Honour of John Barton*, ed. Katherine J. Dell and Paul M. Joyce [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013], 176–88).

26. In view of its intertextual relation in 2 Kgs 14:25, the judgment history spanning Jeroboam I to Jeroboam II may also be in view in the book of Jonah; see Hyun Chul Paul Kim, "Jonah Read Intertextually," *JBL* 126 (2007): 504–7; cf. also the remarks of Gregory Goswell, who notes that the date "suggested by the brief reference to Jonah in 2 Kgs 14:25 ... makes the chronological setting of Jonah similar to that of the prophets Hosea (Hos 1:1) and Amos (Amos 1:2; 7:10)" (Goswell, "Jonah among the Twelve Prophets," *JBL* 135 [2016]: 288).

27. *L'homme-récit* testifies to a surplus meaning in which an end (*telos*) is announced, but an end that opens up a new history or *novum*, the historical details of which lie in darkness and are not yet visible. As *L'homme-récit*, Jeroboam II thus testi-

Viewed in terms of its figural function, the name “Jeroboam” also helps shed light upon the meaning of “the blood of Jezreel” in Hos 1:4. Many interpreters attempt to find specific or even literal referents for this image, failing to appreciate its figural or metaphorical function.²⁸ While literal events are obviously in view (e.g., Naboth’s murder by Ahab, Jehu’s bloody purge of Ahab’s dynasty), which is the case with the use of any metaphor or figure, in Hosea’s prologue the blood of Jezreel functions as a multivalent and comprehensive figure for the judgment that ultimately comes upon both kingdoms for their idolatry.²⁹ The logic of Exod 20 and 32 makes it clear that idolatry brings a day of visitation from the Lord (20:5, cf. 32:34). In Moses’s day that judgment produced a tragic division within Israel (Exod 32:25–29), and in the judgment that came upon Solomon for his idolatry, that judgment also produced division (1 Kgs 11–12).³⁰ Indeed, idolatry produces a cascading series of judgments that proceed from internal division (1 Kgs 11:26–39; cf. 12:15, 22–24) through the violence of civil war (1 Kgs 12:19; 14:30; 15:6, 7, 16, 32; 2 Kgs 13:12; 14:8–16)

fies at one and the same time to the death of the old and the birth of the new; see Paul Beauchamp, *L’un et l’autre Testament* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), 2:397.

28. E.g., Thomas McComiskey argues that in 1:4–5, Jezreel represents “only the geographical site” or the “events” associated with this site (McComiskey, *Hosea*, 19). He says this while at the same time (ironically) recognizing that it was not the murders at Jezreel that caused the downfall of Israel, but rather its idolatry and the judgment of schism that was passed upon Solomon for that idolatry.

29. This interpretation of “the blood of Jezreel” is in keeping with modern literary theory’s recognition that metaphor has the power to bring together various levels of signification; see William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 8. Among recent commentators, Eugen Pentiuć’s commentary on Hosea is among the few to recognize that the blood of Jezreel is primarily a judgment on Israel’s idolatry, *comprehensively* enacted, rather than retribution for specific and more localized acts of bloodshed in 1–2 Kings (Pentiuć, *Long-Suffering Love: A Commentary on Hosea with Patristic Annotations* [Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2008], 53–55).

30. In Hosea, brother-against-brother civil war manifests itself in the Syro-Ephraimite crisis (5:8–6:6; cf. Isa 7:1, 6; 9:21). In order to lead them to repent of the sin of schism and the idolatry lying behind it, the Lord withdrew from them (5:6), becoming putrefaction and bone rot to both kingdoms (5:12), that Israel might repent and return to the Lord (5:14–15). Hosea 6:1–3 theologically frames this return by invoking the language of theophany and resurrection. In this way the end of ch. 5 (5:15) and beginning of ch. 6 (6:1–3) establish the same link between Israel’s resurrection and the Lord’s disciplinary providence (exile) we find in Hosea’s prologue (see Hos 2:6–15, esp. 2:14–15).

and regicide (1 Kgs 15:27; 16:8–11; 2 Kgs 12:19–21; 14:18–21; 15:8–15, 23–31; cf. Hos 7:7; 8:4), ultimately climaxing in the scattering of Israel (1 Kgs 14:15; 2 Kgs 17:6).³¹

This is the context presupposed by the image of the blood of Jezreel in Hos 1:4. In keeping with the judgment pronounced upon Jeroboam I for his idolatry (1 Kgs 14:15; cf. 2 Kgs 17:6), the blood of Jezreel presupposes a divided Israel about to become scattered Israel (Jezreel).³² The judgment pronounced upon Jeroboam I in 1 Kgs 14:15 finds fulfillment in the cutting off of Jehu's dynasty and the scattering of Israel that followed in the exile of both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. In figural mode, the name "Jeroboam" summarizes a division history that unfolds from Jeroboam I to Jeroboam II, styled the blood of Jezreel in Hos 1:4, a comprehensive image for Israel's history of violence in all its many facets—division, ongoing civil war, regicide, and scattering unto exile that comes upon all Israel for her idolatry.³³ Through the multivalent meaning of the name Jezreel in Hos 1–2, the Lord will put an end

31. It is worth noting that this last judgment prefigures the judgment of scattering evoked by the naming of Jezreel, which 2 Kgs directly connects with the idolatry and the worship of the golden calves set up by Jeroboam I (2 Kgs 17:12, 16–17; cf. Hos 8:5–6; 10:5).

32. The Aramaic targumim render Jezreel as "the scattered ones." See Pentti, *Long-Suffering Love*, 91 n. 5.

33. On the division history from Jeroboam I to Jeroboam II, see Abma, *Bonds of Love*, 136. Mays rightly comments that "these ruinous wars against one another were a tragic manifestation of the sin of schism to which they had committed themselves under their kings" (Mays, *Hosea*, 89). While Hosea does not directly reveal his stance on the war between Pekah and Ahaz, his ideal for Israel is clearly defined by the united Israel of the Davidic monarchy, or an "all Israel" perspective (1:11; 3:5). In keeping with this ideal, "returning" to the Lord and "seeking" the Lord require Israel to turn away from schism and the civil war it has fostered. A political solution to Israel's schism will not avail (cf. 7:11), for the problem is ultimately theological and rooted in the judgment of division upon Israel's idolatry. The Lord is Israel's only hope (14:8). As is often the case with Old Testament prophets, Hosea sees the judgment for Israel's idolatry in the figural shape of the blood of Jezreel as something the whole nation of Israel must bear (1 Kgs 13) and not simply the Northern or Southern Kingdom taken in isolation from the other. See Radner, *End of the Church*, 35–39. This reading also finds support in Andersen and Freedman's argument that the name of each child stands for the nation as a whole, rather than just one part of it (Francis I. Andersen and David N. Freedman, *Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 24 [New York: Doubleday, 1980], 213).

to the divided kingdom and its history, a history in which Jeroboam I was the first and prototypical king, and Jeroboam II the fulfillment and consummation.

Gomer the Daughter of Diblaim

This reading of the reference to Jeroboam II in Hosea's superscription also finds figural resonances in the name of Hosea's wife Gomer.³⁴ The book of Hosea is well known for name reversals and wordplays, and along with the name Jeroboam, Gomer's name also appears to be functioning as a figure of the Lord's judgment upon the divided kingdoms.³⁵ The Hebrew verb from which the nominal form of Gomer's name is probably derived (גמר) means "to put an end," "to cease," or "to complete" (Pss 12:1; 57:2; 77:8), a verb whose meaning functions as a virtual synonym for the Hebrew verb שבת invoked in the judgment of Jehu's dynasty and the legacy of Jeroboam in Hos 1:4.³⁶ While a number of attempts have been made to account for the meaning of Gomer's name, especially since names clearly have theological significance in Hosea, interpreting her name as a substantive participle derived from a verb meaning "to put an end" to things fits well with the context of Hos 1, since the first child born to Gomer prefigures the cessation of a particular order of things, namely, the end of Israel's division history. Putting an end to Israel through the breaking of the bow is an act of both judgment and restoration, because it not only implies a decisive breaking of Israel's military strength, but the cessation of war and the return of Sabbath-shalom (rest and peace) depicted in the eschatological vision of new creation in Hos 2:18.³⁷ Viewed in the larger context pro-

34. The nominal form of Gomer appears in Gen 10:2–3; 1 Chr 1:5–6; and Ezek 38:6.

35. For wordplays and name reversals, see Abma, *Bonds of Love*, 151; cf. also Gale Yee, *Composition*, 59–95. Although she is identified as the "daughter of Diblaim," the Hebrew Bible provides no other information that might help pin Gomer down to a particular tribe or geographical location. Abma suggests that the hiddenness of Gomer's familial and geographical origins may be a function of her figural role in the text (*Bonds of Love*, 142).

36. The description of Gomer's lineage (daughter of Diblaim) may also be an instance of a wordplay or pun, in this case a pun that makes use of words that sound the same (homophony). Diblaim is thus a pun on the name of Ephraim (Div-lye-eem/Ef-rye-eem). It is also likely that the name Jezreel in Hos 1–2 is a wordplay or pun upon the name Israel (Yiz-re-el/Yis-rah-ale) (Abma, *Bonds of Love*, 142).

37. As the "bending of the bow" signifies the onset or judgment of war upon a

vided by Hos 1–2, the putting of an end to Israel ultimately brings about the cessation of war between Israel and Judah, the judgment-outcome of their division (1 Kgs 12:19), and this hints at the restoration coming in 1:11–2:1 and 2:21–23. In this way the paradoxical relation of judgment and redemption associated with the naming of Hosea’s three children is already anticipated in the name of Gomer. In her name and the names of Hosea’s three children, the death of divided Israel and the birth of united Israel are already present in figural form. Interpreted within the larger frame of the Twelve, the canonical effect of this figure is to present the prophet Hosea as a prophet of the end of the divided kingdom, rather than a prophet of the end of the Northern Kingdom, as is commonly thought.³⁸

The Great Day of Jezreel

Just as the death of the old and birth of the new is already present in Gomer, so also the unmaking and remaking of divided Israel is already present in the figure of Jezreel.³⁹ The scattering of Israel in Hos 1:4–5 through the day of visitation also anticipates her regathering in the great day of Jezreel in 1:11, making it clear that in Hosea’s prologue, the image of Jezreel comprehends within itself simultaneous acts of judgment and redemption, an Old Testament figure of the cross-shaped logic inherent to the Lord’s name and character (Exod 34:5–7). In other words, the day of visitation associated with 1:4–5 is not the whole story but a down payment on a greater day of Jezreel (1:11) in which a united Israel will once again confess one another

people (Isa 21:15; Jer 46:9; 50:14, 29; 51:3; Zech 9:13), so also the “breaking of the bow” signifies the cessation of the judgment of war upon a people and the restoration of Sabbath-shalom (cf. also the anticipation of Hos 2:18 in Hos 1:7). In light of this, it would seem that the name Gomer in Hos 1 functions in a manner akin to Jezreel, describing both the unmaking (putting an end) and remaking of Israel (the exodus-resurrection of the great day of Jezreel), that Sabbath-shalom may return and a new creation may emerge.

38. The way in which the book makes use of the united kingdom of the Davidic monarchy as the ideal for Hosea’s concept of unity (3:5; cf. 1:11) tends to confirm this claim. This ideal also characterized the reign of Hezekiah in Hosea’s day (2 Chr 30; cf. Isa 11:11–13 with 9:21).

39. Abma suggests that in Hos 2:22–23, Jezreel functions *pars-pro-toto* for the names of Hosea’s three children (Jezreel, mercy, people). This also appears to be the case in 1:11–2:1 (Abma, *Bonds of Love*, 194).

as the Lord's people (2:1).⁴⁰ The great day of Jezreel in Hosea's prologue finds a counterpart in the great and fear-inspiring day of the Lord in Joel (Joel 2:11, 31; cf. Zeph 1:14), ultimately coming to rest at the close of the Twelve with Malachi's great day of the Lord (Mal 4:5), bringing in its wake godly fear, repentance, and the healing of family division within Israel through the eschatological ministry of the prophet Elijah (Mal 4:5–6).⁴¹

While it is true that visitation texts in the Twelve typically function in the context of judgment, these contexts are usually linked in some form or fashion with the Lord's character and his providential plan to redeem Israel. The impulse to divide Hosea's prophecies of judgment and redemption into authentic and inauthentic sayings or *logia* has a long history in historical criticism, finding late modern expression in works like Claus Westermann's *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, in which he argues that judgment oracles were the basic form of prophetic speech.⁴² Old Testament scholars trained in the form-critical ethos of the mid-twentieth century typically take such judgments as a theological rule for reading and recovering the original voice of the prophets, suggesting that for the prophets, "the entire historical process is read through the prism of the law court metaphor."⁴³ Such a view fails to reckon with the theological

40. For a list of the differing ways this verse has been interpreted, see Abma, *Bonds of Love*, 166 n. 128.

41. According to Abma, the great day of Jezreel plays upon the notion of the great day of the Lord in the Twelve, though the day of the Lord is usually not given the positive connotation registered by the great day of Jezreel in Hos 1:11 (Abma, *Bonds of Love*, 165). The early union of Hosea and Amos in the Twelve's formation history also has the canonical effect of uniting the signal motif of Hosea's days of visitation with the day of the Lord in Amos, underscoring their mutual linkage with the disclosure and establishment of the Lord's judgment (משפט) in Israel's midst, i.e., his ordering of things or ways (דרך). On the different senses for משפט in the Old Testament, see W. A. M. Beuken, "Mišpat: The First Servant Song and Its Context," VT (1972): 1–30. On דרך, see Markus P. Zehnder, *Wegmetaphorik im Alten Testament: Eine semantische Untersuchung der alttestamentlichen und altorientalischen Weg-Lexeme mit besonderer Berücksichtigung ihrer metaphorischen Verwendung*, BZAW 268 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999).

42. Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991).

43. Typical is the judgment of Barton that the preexilic prophets were prophets of doom whose original oracles were later softened by exilic and postexilic editors. See his interaction with Rolf Rendtorff's canonical reading of the Twelve in John Barton, "The Day of Yahweh in the Minor Prophets," in *Biblical and Near Eastern Essays: Stud-*

pressure God's revealed character and identity exercised upon prophecy in the Twelve. The alternation between judgment and redemption in Hosea's prologue is not to be interpreted solely in terms of editorial development, but as integral parts of a character history rooted in the Lord's identity and his providential dealings with the broken body of Israel in the divided kingdom. Thus it is not the case that "if we are to understand the structure of belief in the prophets, we must begin with the judgment speech."⁴⁴ Rather, if we are to understand the structure of belief in the Twelve, we must begin with the character and identity of God.

By linking the great day of Jezreel in Hos 1:11 with the Lord's day of visitation in Hos 1:4–5, as well as the eschatological day of Israel's restoration (2:16–17) and the new creation day of Sabbath-shalom (2:18–20, 21–23), Hosea's prologue provides a signal instance of this claim, especially given its position at the outset of the Twelve. Clothed in the Lord's righteousness, justice, steadfast love, mercy, and faithfulness, Israel is no longer naked, but adorned in the Lord's garments of marriage betrothal, thereby bringing about the restoration of the knowledge of God and the return of Ephraim's fruitfulness to the land, as 2:19–23 make clear.⁴⁵ Yet as the eschatological language in 2:16, 18, and 21 suggests, this renewal will not simply be a flat return to a previously existing state of affairs, but a new beginning that both renews and raises to a higher state of blessing, as indicated by the word "forever" in 2:19.⁴⁶ This eternal betrothal is made upon the basis of the steadfast love, mercy, and faithfulness of the Lord, qualities or attributes the Lord brings with himself, because they are inherent to his name, character, and identity (2:19–20; cf. Exod 34:6).

ies in Honour of Kevin J. Cathcart, ed. Carmel McCarthy and John F. Healey, JSOTSup 375 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 68–79. Quotation from Walter Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology: Essays on Structure, Theme, and Text*, ed. Patrick Miller (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 12.

44. Brueggemann, *Essays*, 12.

45. Given the stripping away of clothing in Hos 2 (2:3, 10) or the items that make clothing (2:9), the betrothal described in 2:19–20 may be understood as reclothing in the context of marriage renewal (rather than divorce per se); see n. 19 above. The name Ephraim in Hosea evokes the double fruitfulness of Joseph while in Egypt (Gen 41:50–52), a fruitfulness Ephraim ironically devoted to multiplying the sin of idolatry (Hos 10:1; cf. Gen 1:28). In the book of Hosea, idolatrous Ephraim finds the restoration of her fruitfulness in the Lord alone (Hos 14:8).

46. Abma, *Bonds of Love*, 191.

Hosea 1:2: The Beginning of (That Which) the Lord Spoke through Hosea

Before moving to a close, a brief word should be said about the grammar and structure of Hos 1:2. Literally translated, the sentence reads “The beginning of (that which) the Lord spoke through Hosea.”⁴⁷ The Hebrew term תְּחִלַּת is rendered in English as “beginning” and translated by the LXX as ἀρχή. Most commentators typically assume that the beginning in view is describing a temporal beginning, and so its significance as an architectural figure for prophecy in the Book of the Twelve receives little or no discussion in commentaries. The Masoretic Text of Hosea contains an open paragraph marker in the middle of 1:2 that marks the first sentence off as a separate grammatical unit, while also signaling that the following sentence should start on a new line.⁴⁸ For this reason the first sentence in Hosea (1:2a) should be grouped with the superscription that precedes it in 1:1, rather than with what follows (1:2b: “And the Lord said to Hosea, ‘Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry’”). In other words, Hosea 1:2a functions as a subunit within the superscription in 1:1 that introduces Hosea.

Because the unit formed by Hos 1:1–1:2a occurs at the outset of prologue of Hosea in chapters 1–3, when the significance of “beginning” in 1:2a is recognized, its introductory reach is typically understood in temporal terms and limited to Hosea’s prologue or the book of Hosea as a whole. However, given the temporal scope envisioned by the names in Hosea’s prologue (Gomer, Jeroboam, Jezreel), there are good reasons to question such restricted readings of the scope and function of Hos 1:2a. In light of the figurally comprehensive ways these names function in Hosea’s prologue, a theologically foundational reading of beginning in Hos 1:2 makes better sense. Just what does “beginning” in Hos 1:2a introduce? Hosea 1:2b–9, Hos 1–3, the entire book of Hosea, or the Book of the Twelve?⁴⁹ If beginning in Hos 1:2 is not merely a temporal beginning for

47. The LXX converts the *piel* verb in the MT to a noun, rendering the phrase as “The beginning of the word of the Lord through Hosea.”

48. For a discussion of paragraph markers placed in the middle of sentences, see Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 53–54.

49. Wolff, *Hosea*, 12, says Hos 1:2b–9. Since 1:2a properly belongs to 1:1, and since 4:1 marks the start of a new unit in Hosea after 1:1 (using the parallel construct

the Twelve, that is, the temporal starting point of the Twelve's history, but an ἀρχή that founds and constrains what follows, akin to the function of בראשית in Gen 1:1 and Prov 8:22, then Hosea's prologue is doing something more than just introducing the book of Hosea.⁵⁰ Adopting an archetypal reading of beginning in Hos 1:2 means that Hosea is not only the first prophet through whom the Lord spoke in the Twelve but also that the word the Lord speaks to Hosea is the founding agent or agency by which the witness of the Twelve is established.⁵¹ As ἀρχή, the word the Lord speaks to Hosea has foundation-laying significance for what follows in the Twelve. In this way, the archetypal reading of תחלה in Hos 1:2a suggests that Hosea's prologue provides a rule or authorizing frame for reading the Twelve as a whole.

Concluding Reflections

The threefold names of "Jezreel," "mercy," and "people" at the end of chapter 2 (2:22–23) clearly look back to 1:11–2:1, while the names "Jezreel," "people," and "mercy" in 1:11–2:1 presuppose the naming of Hosea's three children in 1:4–9.⁵² At the same time, the disciplinary separation of Israel from her lovers in chapter 2 (2:7), followed by the renewal of her marriage covenant with the Lord (2:16–20), looks forward to the marriage renewal of Hosea and Gomer in chapter 3 (3:1–2) and Gomer's enforced separation from her lovers (3:3).⁵³ The first three chapters of Hosea are thus

phrase "The word of the LORD"), Abma argues that the "beginning" in 1:2a introduces only Hos 1–3 (Abma, *Bonds of Love*, 125).

50. For a description of this way of reading בראשית, see Don Collett, "The Christomorphic Shaping of Time in Radner's *Time and the Word*," *ProEccl* 27 (2018), 277–79.

51. Whatever one decides regarding the meaning of ἀρχή in Hos 1:2, assigning a chronological sense to ἀρχή makes no sense, since in temporal terms, Amos's prophetic ministry began before Hosea's.

52. Hosea 1:11–2:1 closes the pattern of name reversals in 1:4–10 (note the כי clause at the end of 1:11, which ties it to 1:4, 6, and 9 in ch. 1). It also forms a link with the end of ch. 2 (2:21–23). As part of the total reversal envisioned by the great day of Jezreel, it forms a bridge or transition passage between chs. 1 and 2, rather than simply providing a prologue for the epilogue of ch. 2 (contra Yee, *Composition*, 74–75). For a useful discussion of the structural issues surrounding 1:11–2:1 (2:1–3 MT), see George Blankenbaker, "The Language of Hosea 1–3" (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1976), 117–24.

53. If a second marriage to a woman other than Gomer is in view in Hos 3:1,

tightly interwoven and presuppose one another, in large part because of the figural logic set up in 1:2. It is precisely because of this that the interpretive decisions one makes in one chapter tend to shape the interpretive decisions one makes in the other two chapters.

As an interpretive synopsis of the Twelve, Hosea's prologue makes use of the figures of Hosea and Gomer to frame the Lord's relation to Israel in terms of a marriage. By forming an interpretive frame or *inclusio* around chapter 2, the marriage relationship of Hosea and Gomer functions as a literary way of underscoring the figural message already set up in Hos 1:2, namely, that Hosea's marriage to Gomer is intended to be a living parable of the Lord's covenantal marriage with Israel. The reference to Jeroboam in Hosea's prologue, along with the figures of Gomer and Jezreel, serve to coordinate that marriage with the division history that unfolds from Jeroboam I to Jeroboam II in 1–2 Kings, a history summed up, interpreted, and comprehensively styled "Jeroboam." In light of the figurally comprehensive ways these names function in Hosea's prologue, a foundational or principal reading of "beginning" in Hos 1:2 also makes sense, suggesting that the word the Lord spoke to Hosea has foundation-laying significance for the Twelve.

The rule we adopt for reading Israel's division history must illumine the whole shape of God's providential ordering of things and the fullness of his communicative intention in the Twelve, rather than merely one part of it. As images of the body of Israel, the figures of Jeroboam, Gomer, and Jezreel function as theological lenses through which the entire movement of judgment and redemption in the Twelve may be comprehended. They carry within their bosom the whole sweep of the Twelve, opening a way into Israel's future through their association with the revelation of the Lord's character at work in Hosea's day of visitation. As argued earlier, that day is historically rooted in the judgment-division and eschatological force of the day of visitation that comes upon Israel for her idolatry

one would expect the imperative for "take" rather than "love." For the use of לָקַח as an expression for marrying, see Lev 21:13–14; Deut 25:5, 7–8; Judg 14:3, 8; 2 Chr 11:18, 20; cf. also "take you to me for a people" in Exod 6:7 with "take to you a wife of harlotry" in Hos 1:2. Yee argues that Hosea 1–2 originally followed chs. 4–14. A later redactor inserted 3:1–5 as an interpretive commentary on chs. 1 and 2, the canonical effect of which was to frame the Lord's relationship with Israel in ch. 2 in terms of the marriage relationship between Hosea and Gomer described in chs. 1 and 3 (Yee, *Composition*, 57–64, esp. her closing comments on 62–64).

at Sinai (Exod 32:27, 34) and the later judgment-division that comes up Israel for Solomon's idolatry (1 Kgs 11:3–12, 26–39), a history of division and idolatry characterized by “the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat” (1 Kgs 12:25–30; cf. Hos 8:5–6; 10:5; 13:2). As both the husband of Israel by marriage covenant and the Lord of the land, God deals with his errant marriage partner by withdrawing from her, in order to bring about her penance and restoration through a new exodus-resurrection.⁵⁴ Such a move on the Lord's part clearly invokes his identity as the Lord of creation and history, that is, the Lord of providence who orders creation and Israel's salvation history according to the kind of Lord he is.

54. See n. 30 above. On the link between Israel's resurrection and the third day in Hos 6:1–3, see Lidija Novakovic, *Raised from the Dead according to Scripture: The Role of Israel's Scripture in the Early Christian Interpretations of Jesus' Resurrection*, JCTCRS 12 (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 73–74, 124–33, 143–44.

With Hosea at Penuel: The Interface of Ontology and Tropology

Mark Gignilliat

Introduction

Augustine reminds Christian readers of the Bible that textual difficulties exist to keep us humble before the divine word (*Doctr. chr.* 2.7). Hosea 12 provides ample opportunities for interpretive humility. In Jörg Jeremias's commentary on Hosea, he describes chapter 12 as the most difficult chapter of Hosea's prophecy.¹ There are textual difficulties across the whole of Hosea, yet the textual difficulties of chapter 12 do appear more pronounced. It is difficult, for example, to track the basic syntactical features of the text that allow us to make some progress towards textual sense-making—basic features such as who is the subject of this verb? These textual and syntactical hurdles make Hos 12 both inviting and challenging at the same time.

This essay presses into Hos 12 in a two-fold way, following the scope set out in the title. First, the focus turns to the ontological dimensions of this text, by which I mean in a rather untechnical way, the claims this text makes about the being and character of Israel's God. How does biblical language yield a semantics of metaphysical significance? From here, I will examine the tropological sense of Hos 12:2–6 focusing on its appeal to human agency. Admittedly, the textual challenges of Hos 12 are most acute in this pericope, though I hope to show how the ontological claims of the preceding section may help adjudicate these textual challenges. In other words, the appeal to human agency within this frame of reference demands the ontological claims about Israel's God via the text's insistence

1. Jörg Jeremias, *Der Prophet Hosea*, ATD 24.1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 149.

on the centrality of YHWH's name. Otherwise the appeal to human agency has no governing force or proper motivation.

YHWH's Name, Angelic Wrestling, and Moses's Big Question.

To inquire after the character of God as triune and the Old Testament's role in this conceptuality is by the nature of the thing itself to engage in a theological task. The labors involved from beginning to end remain theological, in congruence with and despite the varied hermeneutical methodologies deployed. Inherent in such a claim is a metaphysical framework for our understanding and use of language, even, and most especially, biblical language.

If scriptural texts like Hos 12 are reduced to the particularity of their historical moment or textual history, hemmed in by the epistemic constraints of author, editor, and initial audience(s) then we have run into the historicist danger of collapsing metaphysics and epistemology into each other. This particular theological danger relates specifically to how we understand biblical language and its referential character. Speaking of Scripture's ontology, John Webster claims: "In Christian theological usage, Scripture is an ontological category; to speak of the Bible as Holy Scripture is to indicate what it *is*."² Webster presses the matter further: "To say 'Scripture' is to say 'revelation'—not just in the sense that these texts are to be handled *as if* they were bearers of divine revelation, but in the sense that revelation is fundamental to the texts' *being*."³ If such a formal claim is made about Scripture's ontology, it follows naturally to speak of the ontological or metaphysical dimension attendant to the material of Scripture, namely, language as shaped canonically in our two-testament canon.⁴

2. John Webster, "Resurrection and Scripture," in *Christology and Scripture: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Andrew T. Lincoln and Angus Paddison, LNTS 348 (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 144, emphasis original.

3. Webster, "Resurrection and Scripture," 144, emphasis original.

4. The reciprocal relationship between literary semantics and Scripture's Trinitarian subject matter is especially evident in Luther's Old Testament exegesis. In her insightful examination of Luther's Trinitarian hermeneutic, Christine Helmer shows how Luther tethers himself to the Hebrew text and language itself as the "vehicle for trinitarian knowledge" (Helmer, "Luther's Trinitarian Hermeneutic and the Old Testament," *MoTh* 18 [2002]: 55). The Holy Spirit as teaching and authorial agent of Israel's Scriptures opens up the tangible and fixed character of the Hebrew text to the divine mystery. In Helmer's terms, "Hebrew is the language the Spirit uses to refer to

So what then about language? Rowan Williams's Gifford Lectures remind us of the metaphysical implications of language: "We are always saying more than we entirely grasp."⁵ His lectures provide a stunning and beautiful account of the ability of our language to describe and represent, while remaining fully aware that these activities of language are never sealed off from the potential for re-presentation or description via new modes and tropes of discourse. Williams speaks of the "unfinished character of language." We represent with our words and the task of representation is never once-for-all. Maurice Merleau-Ponty makes a similar claim about painting: "For painters, if any remain, the world will always be yet to be painted; even if it lasts millions of years ... it will all end without having been complete."⁶

Williams reflects on our normal modes of discourse in the language games we play in communicating and sense making in our world. If we speak this way about human language and discourse in "ordinary language," to borrow from Stanley Cavell, how much more so do we understand the potential of biblical language to say more. Why? Because with Aquinas, we appeal to Scripture's authorial intentionality quickly clarifying who the Author of Scripture is.

Similarly, George Steiner in his *Real Presences* claims that a "sentence always means more." He explains: "The informing matrix or context of even a rudimentary, literal proposition ... moves outward from specific utterance or notation in ever-widening concentric and overlapping circles. These comprise the individual, subconsciously quickened language habits and *associative field-mappings* of the particular speaker or writer."⁷ This

a theological subject matter" (55). Of significance here is Luther's close attention to the Hebrew text and the peculiarities of its syntactical/lexical idiom as "a first step in grasping the trinitarian reality" (55). She concludes, "With respect to the Trinity, the only material is the letter that points beyond itself, to a subject matter in eternity" (65).

5. Rowan Williams, *The Edge of Words: God and the Habits of Language* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2014), 167. Williams speaks of the "hinterland of significance" attendant to human language that ranges beyond immediate and ostensive referentiality.

6. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, ed. Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 148.

7. George Steiner, *Real Presences: Is There Anything in What We Say?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 82, emphasis original.

expansive character of language reveals, in Steiner's felicitous phrase, "the incommensurability of the semantic."⁸

Much more could and should be said here about language and theological metaphysics. One point from Steiner worth conscripting for the sake of my particular concern has to do with the Old Testament and its Trinitarian subject matter. For Steiner, a sentence always means more because of the generative potential of associative-field mapping. The verbal character of the Old Testament, a verbal character worthy of respect in the idiom of the Old Testament's material form, is in associative relationship with the whole of the Christian Bible, Old and New Testaments. Its sentences mean more—if by "meaning more" we mean go beyond the epistemic horizons of the authors and tradents—because of the associative-field mapping of a two-testament witness centered on a single subject matter and single authorial voice. The triune identity of God emerging from Scripture's total witness pressures Christian readers to yield to the hermeneutical significance of Paul's claim in Colossians: "And he is before all things" (Col 1:17).⁹ Such a claim about God's being as triune, self-communicative, and self-revealing resists the reduction of Holy Scripture's semantic reach to the epistemic horizons of those involved in the compositional and textual history of the Old Testament canon: whether with abstract categories or descriptors like "God" apart from triune identification of that God or in seemingly faithful approaches like "Christotelism" where the ontological character of Israel's Scripture is beholden to the epistemic horizon of these sacred texts and their coming to be. There is a beyondness to these texts in the communicative and reconciling activities of our triune God.

When Isaiah utters a prophetic word or Moses or Jeremiah, do not their language and verbal expressions say more than they could grasp? Are the patterns of their poetic and linguistic choices in the givenness of their literary form also linked with the "incommensurability of the semantic"? Does the whole of the Christian canon as a two-testament witness pressure us to see the Old Testament's subject matter as our triune God: The Tetragrammaton, for example, as best predicated on the essence of God revealed in the tripersonal naming of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Does such a claim allow the Old Testament to remain a Christian witness even beyond the ways the New Testament hears it because "He is before all

8. Steiner, *Real Presences*, 83.

9. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

things”? Or are we working, again, with an overly historicist account of the Old Testament that reduces the Old Testament’s theological witness to the epistemic constraints of its moment in the time?

When Jean-Luc Marion claimed, “The body of the text does not belong to the text, but to the One who is embodied in it,” he was speaking of theological writing that moves from Word to words.¹⁰ How much more so does his claim ring true in our hermeneutical approaches that move from Word to words for the sake of rereading (or perhaps better, “reencountering”) the Word embodied in the language of the Old Testament witness.

Hosea 12 as Test Case

The preceding paragraphs may seem to be a good bit of hermeneutical throat-clearing without much engagement with our text. But I think the conceptual apparatus of what was just said allows us to see some interpretive instincts on the ground in our reading of Hos 12. With whom is Jacob actually wrestling in Hos 12?¹¹

The wrestling match at the River Jabbok continues to bewilder and capture the imagination of readers because the Genesis text itself is fraught with enigmatic elements (Gen 32:22–32). Jacob sends his family and servants across the southern banks of the river to its northern side. “And

10. Jean Luc-Marion, *God without Being: Hors-Texte*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson, Religion and Postmodernism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 1.

11. While it is possible that Hosea is drawing on a Jacob tradition that differs in some respects from the Genesis account, I am not persuaded that he/the book is. Holladay’s statement that “there is no patriarchal tradition different from that in Genesis upon which Hosea has drawn” is compelling (William L. Holladay, “Chiasmus, the Key to Hosea XII 3–6,” *VT* 16 [1966]: 55). The intertextual link with Genesis is linguistic in nature: שוב, שמר, דבר. The major themes of Jacob’s life are present—from the womb and struggle with Esau, to the life and nation-altering episode by the Jabbok River. Yet, Hosea is providing for us an associative reading of the Jacob narrative in light of Moses’s burning bush encounter, drawing attention to a theological claim worthy of continued investigation, namely, Hos 12:6—“And the Lord God Sabaoth, YHWH is his name/memorial.” The use of זכר here alludes with intention, I would argue, to the divine name in Exod 3:15 where there too the term זכר is deployed—“God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and this my title (זכר) for all generations.” Hosea is bringing together the Jacob narrative at the Jabbok River with the revelation of the divine name in Exod 3.

Jacob was left alone.” Why? One practical reason is the thwarting effect such a herd of folks may have had on Esau’s violent anger. From a narrative standpoint, Jacob’s remaining behind and alone provides the opportunity for this providential sparring match with “a man.”¹² Gerhard Von Rad makes much of the mental strain Jacob suffered because of his unavoidable future engagement with Esau.¹³ Yet out of nowhere on the riverbanks of the Jabbok a man appears, and this unplanned event proves far more dangerous than the forthcoming Esau encounter.

The two men begin to wrestle. Again, the narrative bewilders. Why did they begin to wrestle? We are not told. Nevertheless, Jacob (יעקב) wrestles (ויאבק) with a man by the River Jabbok (יבק) until the break of dawn. The assonance of the Hebrew words has the poetic effect of emphasizing the centrality of this episode as it pertains to Jacob’s name and its alteration. For Jacob, the defining moment of his life was going to happen the next day when he met Esau. For YHWH, however, the defining moment of Jacob’s life will take place in this encounter by the Jabbok. Here Jacob strives with a man, prevails/perseveres, and receives a blessing forever altering his identity and his gait. No longer is he the “heel-grabber”; now he is Israel, one who has striven with God. Jacob has a limp for the rest of his life to memorialize this momentous encounter.

The details of this text necessitate critical and creative inquiry. For example, how can Jacob strive with God and prevail? Certain Jewish interpreters identify this man as the protective angel of Esau for obvious theological reasons. Prevailing over God is inconceivable and theologically offensive. Other interpretive questions emerge: Why does the man need to depart before the breaking of the dawn? Why does the man refuse to give his name? Interpretive questions such as these remain the material of scholarly discussion and disagreement. Despite these uncertain interpretive elements, the reception of the Genesis narrative in Hos 12:4–6 is of some consequence for Trinitarian thought.

Hosea 12:4 identifies the man with whom Jacob wrestles as a מלאך. The near consensus of current critical scholarship, supported by the suggestion in the apparatus of the *BHS*, is to emend the text by dropping מלאך because it is a later interpolation meant to soften the offense of Jacob wres-

12. Luther understands Jacob desire to be alone as indicative of his pressing need to pray.

13. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 320.

ting with God and prevailing. However, the identification comes as no surprise because it is not out of the ordinary for an angel to be predicated with the term שׂאִי (“man”).¹⁴ In other words, Hosea’s identification of the “man” of Gen 32 as an “angel” is a legitimate gloss of the Genesis narrative.

The confusion arises in Hos 12:6, when the prophet also identifies the figure with whom Jacob wrestled as YHWH. As Sommer clarifies: “The reason for the apparent confusion between God and angel in these verses from Hosea is simply that both passages, Hos 12 and Gen 32, reflect a belief that the selves of an angel and the God YHWH could overlap or that a small-scale fragment of YHWH can be termed a *mal’āk*.”¹⁵ He continues: “In other words, in Hos 12 the being who wrestled with Jacob was not a *mal’āk* who also could be called *’ēlōhîm*; rather, it was the God YHWH, who can also be termed a *mal’āk*.”¹⁶ The Hosea text understands the figure of Gen 32 as both an angel and YHWH, equally and at the same time, while reading Genesis’s “man” as an “angel.”¹⁷ Whether the figure is identified as a “man” or “angel,” the larger matter is the embodiment of Israel’s God.

Perhaps Hosea’s interpretation of Jacob at the Jabbok hovers in the material world of speculative, Christian theology with its distinction between person and essence. I am not claiming Hosea or the tradents of the book were thinking in these terms and am not, therefore, basing the argument on human intentionality. For ontology and epistemology or the being of God and our understanding of God’s being are related but distinct matters. One should not expect Hosea, Moses, or David, for example, to be conceptually aware of the full ontological implications of their prophetic words regarding the divine being. Who could ever be so fully aware? Put

14. Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 41.

15. Sommer, *Bodies of God*, 41.

16. Sommer, *Bodies of God*, 41.

17. The incommunicability of the Tetragrammaton to creatures became a matter of some consequence in Protestant orthodoxy’s reaction to Socinianism. If the Tetragrammaton is predicated on the *mal’āk* of the Old Testament, then by necessary conclusion the angel must be an uncreated angel and not a created one, a “prelude to [Christ’s] incarnation.” (Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr., trans. George M. Giger, 3 vols. [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992], 1:185). See also Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 3:259–60, 264.

positively, the ontological dimension of Scripture's witness allows the *signa* to be fitted properly to Scripture's *res significata*, a subject matter made available by the full and total witness of a two-testament canon. Moreover, the distinctions made within the speculative, theological traditions of the church are made for the sake of coming to terms with the claims of Scripture's total witness, a point Lewis Ayres and others have made persuasively.¹⁸ Distinguishing between *person* and *essence* remains at the heart of Trinitarian theology and biblical interpretation.

The relation between YHWH and his מְלֵאךְ—and by extension his Spirit and Word/Wisdom—indicates an overlap of identities and a distinction between persons both and at the same time.¹⁹ This particular biblical description reinforces the tendency of classical Trinitarian thought to identify YHWH with the divine essence or being rather than with a particular *hypostasis* or *persona* of the Godhead, that is, YHWH is not identified as the Father *simpliciter*. Richard Muller describes the Protestant orthodox view in the following: "Given, moreover, that the name 'Jehovah' belongs to God *essentialiter*, *absoluté*, and *indistincté* apart from an identification or determination of the persons of the Godhead, Scripture can also apply the name and the texts in which it occurs to individual persons, namely, to Christ. The threefold glory of Isa 6:3 is, thus, applied to Christ by the evangelist John."²⁰ YHWH as God's personal name refers to the divine Godhead in its fullness, the divine essence equally shared by the three persons. As such, YHWH can be predicated on any of the divine persons without remainder. At the same time, the name YHWH is not the sole possession or indicator of any one particular person. YHWH is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in their coequal sharing of the divine essence in its fullness.²¹

18. Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 31–40; see also David Yeago, "The New Testament and Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis," *ProEccl* 3 (1994): 152–64.

19. Well worth pursuing is YHWH's special provenance as it pertains to creation and redemption and the fittingness of the Word and the Spirit as agents of YHWH's single will to create and redeem. I thank my colleague Carl Beckwith for making this point clear. On this point, see Boris Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Trinity: Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition*, trans. Anthony Gythiel (Crestwood, NY: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999), 31–49.

20. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:303.

21. The danger of identifying YHWH as the divine essence is the introduction of fourth member into the Trinity, to wit, the essence as an independent transcendent

The distinction between essence and person arises in speculative theology for the sake of allowing Scripture's total witness regarding the divine being to have its say.²² Hermeneutical assumptions governed by the anteriority of faith's confession and commitments are present from beginning to end. Such a claim need not be denied in a feigned effort at hermeneutical neutrality. At the same time, the verbal character of the Old Testament itself is fertile soil for a Trinitarian hermeneutic where the unity of the divine essence and diversity of the divine personae are affirmed, as Gen 32:22–32 and Hos 12:1–6 suggest. In fact, the Old Testament's own self-presentation regarding YHWH's singularity and diversity of personae constrain the faithful reader toward this interpretive conclusion.

Concluding Reflections on Section One

One final thought is in order. What seems to have escaped commentators (or at least has escaped my reading of the commentators) is the interpretive significance of the linking of Exod 3:15 with the Jacob narrative of Gen 32. William Holladay's rather helpful article on the chiasm of Hos 12:4–5 (MT)—more on this article below—concludes by claiming the following: “Hos. xii 3–6 turns out, then, to be about *names*, the inner significance of names: ‘Jacob’, ‘Israel’, ‘Bethel’, ‘Yahweh’—each of these names come into the life of the people, and the incidents connected with names form the context of the great indictment.”²³ Hosea's narrative construal of the Jacob cycle—the birth of Jacob (Gen 25), his struggle with the מלאך (Gen 32), Jacob's reunion with Esau (Gen 33), his meeting God at Bethel (Gen 35),

agent. Paul Hinlicky identifies this danger and rightly steers clear of it when he claims, “I would argue that there is no divine essence existing apart transcendently causing things in general, which may or may not be connected to its own real presence in the Son and blessing in the Spirit as the eternal Father. If that is so, the divine essence *is* the Father of the Son and breather of the Spirit.” To speak of YHWH as the divine essence *is* to speak of the divine essence as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in their eternal processions (Hinlicky, “Quaternity or Patrology,” *ProEccl* 23 [2014]: 52, emphasis original). Aquinas's understanding of the persons of the Trinity as “subsisting relations” avoids the danger of isolating the divine essence from the personal relations in their distinction. Relation in God *is* the divine essence; see Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I Q. 29, A. 4.

22. See Gilles Emery, “Essentialism or Personalism in the Treatise on God in St. Thomas Aquinas?,” in *Trinity in Aquinas* (Ypsilanti, MI: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria College, 2003), 165–208.

23. Holladay, “Chiasmus,” 63, emphasis original.

to the theophany of God to Moses (Exod 3)—all focus on the centrality of naming. For naming is crucial to knowing and knowledge is central to Hosea's prophetic concern, providing the leverage for his indictment against the people—"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos 4:6).

So to clarify, it is not that commentators do not recognize the intertextual link of Hos 12:5 with Exod 3:15. What seems lacking is a sufficient explanation for the significance of the intertextual and cross-associative reading of these two texts. Why bring the Jacob narrative and the theophany to Moses into this kind of textual relation? Again, Holladay's identification of "names" and "naming" appears somewhere near the heart of the interpretive answer.

After Jacob appears to recognize the divine status of his adversary in the Genesis narrative, he then asks, "What is your name?" Jacob's name has already been changed as he raised the question of the divine name. Yet, Jacob only meets the refusal of God to answer the question: "Why do you ask me my name?" Within the horizon of the Pentateuch, the question concerning the divine name is not again raised until Exod 3 when Moses asks the same question: "What is your name?" But now, as we have learned from Christopher Seitz and others, the moment of divine self-unveiling has arrived as this pertains to the revelation of the divine name within this particular episode of Israel's life before God. In Seitz's reading of Exod 6, as well as Benno Jacob's reading in his classic commentary on Exodus, the force of this text does not trade on source-critical logic.²⁴ As Seitz claims: "The issue is not knowledge of the name per se but how God most fully makes himself known as YHWH."²⁵ Rather, the kind of knowledge on offer in Exod 3 and 6 is knowledge that "turns on the events of the Exodus"—events yet unknown to the patriarchs including Jacob.²⁶ Seitz continues: "God has not been truly known as YHWH because this involves the mighty deliverance yet to be accomplished."²⁷

Hosea does not refer to Jacob's unanswered question—"What is your name?"—but the question is present even in its absence for those familiar

24. Benno Jacob, *Das Buch Exodus* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1997).

25. Christopher R. Seitz, "The Call of Moses and the 'Revelation' of the Divine Name: Source-Critical Logic and Its Legacy," in *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs*, ed. Christopher R. Seitz and Kathryn Greene-McCreight (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 158.

26. Seitz, "Call of Moses," 158.

27. Seitz, "Call of Moses," 158.

with the Genesis narrative. Hosea's linking of the Moses theophany with the Jacob narrative suggests as much. Hosea provides the answer to Jacob's question in the same way the Pentateuch does, namely, with the theophany to Moses and the continued unveiling of the name's redemptive significance in Exodus as this culminates in the *middot* of Exod 34:6–7. In large measure, Hosea's indictment against Israel trades on the narrational discontinuity between Jacob, the nation's eponym, and Jacob the nation under prophetic address in Hosea. Why? Because on analogy to what Jesus says to his disciples, the prophets yearned to see the redemptive day of Christ's inaugurating kingdom.²⁸ Put in Hoseanic terms, Jacob yearned to have the divine name revealed to him in its redemptive fullness, yet Jacob and the narratives that deliver him to us had to await the Exodus. From the perspective of Hosea's moment in the divine economy, however, his audience knew something of the Mosaic traditions and the narratives of Israel's redemption from Egypt. Jacob provides a model for repentance. Herein lies the continuity between Jacob and his eponymous people. Yet Jacob's knowledge of the divine name/being was limited in comparison to what is available to Hosea's prophetic audience. Yet they still suffer for lack of knowledge.

The Tropological Meets the Ontological

The interpretive and textual difficulties of the Jacob narrative in Hos 12 are primarily with verses 4–5 (12:3–4 ET). The subject of the verbs is left unclear in 12:5, along with what appears to be the possibility of some scribal corruption along the way: the ל of 12:5a as either a preposition, the subject of the striving (God), or a scribal error requiring emendation to אה. As mentioned above, the editors of *BHS* suggest removing מלאך as

28. Describing Origen's understanding of the present occurrences of past event or vice versa, Dawson clarifies, "Although the prophets know as much as the apostles do concerning what will be revealed (namely, that the gentiles will become co-heirs with the patriarchs and prophets), the prophets do not see it actually revealed; therefore, they do not grasp it as a fulfilled promise. This is not a deficiency in the prophets but simply a consequence of their historical situation. They cannot grasp the realization of a promise (even though they know what has been promised) because they are not present when the promise is realized. Although they have enjoyed what Augustine called the 'present of things future,' they themselves are not present for the occurrence of those future things" (John David Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002], 131).

a later gloss. The result of the textual confusion is a panoply of interpretive suggestions. One theory that has gained some traction over the years is as follows: Verse 5 presents the divine counter to 12:4 with God striving and prevailing over Jacob, eliciting Jacob's weeping and seeking for favor. On this account, the ancient Canaanite god Bethel is the one who finds Jacob weeping and is also the subject of the verb in 12:5b—Bethel not as a place name but as the name of the deity who found Jacob (H. S. Nyberg, H. L. Ginsburg, Hans Walter Wolff, and even Benjamin Sommer offer this reading of Bethel in Hos 12:5b). If this reading is correct, then Hosea is borrowing from a different tradition of the Jacob narrative that shares features in common with Genesis but diverges in particular ways, perhaps under the influence of traditions in Exodus. The divergence manifests itself especially in the identification of the God who found Jacob and wrestled with him.

Others will argue that it is the angel who is the subject of the “weeping” and “seeking favor” in 12:5a. The מלאך cannot prevail, therefore he weeps and seeks favor from Jacob (so Marvin Sweeney). Holladay offers another reading based on the chiasmic structure of the verses: A—in the womb he grabbed his brother's heel; B—in adulthood he strove with God; B'—he strove with the angel and prevailed (emending אל to תא); A'—he wept and sought *his* favor with *his* understood as Jacob's brother Esau because of the first hemistich. Holladay's reading has garnered wide support (e.g., Gale Yee, J. Andrew Dearman). In fairness to Holladay, his reading lives up to the promise of Ockham's Razor by providing one of the simplest explanations of the textual conundrum. Therefore, it is on Esau's shoulders that Jacob is weeping and seeking favor. The narratives of Genesis offer support for this reading as Jacob and Esau weep together in Gen 33.

The one interpretive factor, however, that has broad appeal and is often appealed to in order to falsify the traditional reading of “weeping” and “seeking favor”—namely, Jacob is weeping to God—is the following logic: it makes no sense for Jacob to weep and seek the favor of the divine being when the previous colon identifies him as victorious over his divine adversary.²⁹ It is quite astonishing to see how much traction this logic has as a defeater for the traditional reading. Yet perhaps this is precisely the

29. Holladay's “Chiasmus” refers to this logic as do most modern commentators, e.g., Macintosh (ICC).

point where the ontological matters of the previous section bear materially on the interpretation of an admittedly difficult text.

Jacob's name is changed because he strove with God, and this striving is viewed positively in the narrative of Genesis and in Hos 12. In fact, it is at 12:7 where the moral force of the whole text is made plain: "and you must turn to your God." Jacob's narrative provides a figural account of Israel's basic instinct as "heel-grabbers." At the same time the Jacob narrative survives as an icon of Israel's best self—striving with God, weeping and seeking the divine favor. Little wonder that Luther, Calvin, and even von Rad all understand the Gen 32 narrative and Hosea's rendering of it as figural presentation of the life of repentance, namely, an intractable holding on to the promises of God despite current circumstances—even if such circumstances include wrestling with the self-same God who gave the promises. Calvin cannot make sense of this kind of life of repentance without reference to the necessity of a mediator, a *mal'āk* to make such hopeful striving possible. The figural participation of Israel with their patronym is even present in the second line of 12:5 and the oddity of the pronominal suffixes there: at Bethel, he found him; and there he spoke with *us*.³⁰

30. Dawson speaks of the present reality of biblical narratives in the figural reading tradition. Augustine provides an account of memory as that which produces not the actual events themselves but words conceived from images that pass through the senses. The "presence of things past" is not a presence of the thing itself "but of their traces in the memory." (Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading*, 120). Aspects of these "traces in the memory" and our experience of time are found in William Faulkner's novels. See esp. the use of "as" "is" "was" in *As I Lay Dying*. Erich Auerbach, according to Dawson, closes the gap between event and text by speaking of a single entity, *littera-historica*: "In effect, Auerbach understands ancient figural readers of Scripture to be denying any absolute difference between event and text: 'Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first'" (Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading*, 122). "The key point is that the figure, in addition to signifying a future person or event (the fulfillment), also 'signifies itself'" (122). In other words, biblical figures are signs, signs of themselves that require textual mediation. For Origen, the preservation of the historicity of an occurrence takes places precisely by enabling its occurrence in the present (137). "There is, then, despite Auerbach's charge against Origen of a dehistoricizing mode of reading, a strong convergence between the two on the ethical import of figural reading. Auerbach relates the reader's attitude toward the past text to the reader's stance toward other people in the reader's own present. For Auerbach, the ethical moment of figural reading is in the

Why would Hosea gloss Jacob's request, "I will not let you go unless you bless me" with "he wept and sought his favor"? For the seeking of divine favor, the refusal to let go of God until he blesses us, the Christian confession that we doggedly affirm—I look to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come—can only exist and be made effective and affective in our lives because of Hos 12:6: "The Lord God Sabaoth, the Lord is his name." The ontological reality of God's being as that which he gives to us in self-disclosure, in the revealing of his divine name, provides for us the very character of God whose proclivity is always to have mercy on those who repent. Precisely at this point, the ontological and tropological levels of the text meet in mutual relation and clarification.

present, although its character is a function of the present reader's stance toward the material reality of past persons and events represented by the texts. For Origen, what is historical is an occurrence, and the ethical task to read in a way that allows or enables that occurrence to 'happen' again for the present-day reader. The reader's stance is above all in the present, and it is not the material reality of past persons and events towards which that stance is taken, but rather their dynamic occurrence-character, which can persist in the reader's own present. Despite their very different conceptions of what counts as 'historical,' both Auerbach and Origen are anxious to 'preserve it,' in so far as both of them are concerned about the contemporary reader's ongoing ethical self-disposition" (137).

“In Time of Tumult You Remembered to Have Compassion”: Form-Critical Treatments of Habakkuk 3

Leslie Demson

This essay is dedicated to Professor Seitz in gratitude for not only his unfailing patience and encouragement as a mentor but also for his stimulating seminars in which I was fortunate to take part. In these seminars, students had not only the pleasure of observing that rare and happy combination of biblical erudition mingled with theological attentiveness, they were also challenged by Professor Seitz to become both serious readers of the Old Testament and fair and generous hearers of biblical commentators, old and new. He often likened these biblical scholars to a riverine current, in which we students were invited to see ourselves now standing. In the following article, inspired by one of his seminars on the Twelve, Professor Seitz's influence will be apparent throughout.

The psalm of Habakkuk presents unusual challenges to the modern interpreter: not only does it constitute part of an already notoriously difficult book, but it itself contains numerous textual difficulties.¹ Bishop Lowth, remarking on the psalm's "high sublimity," notes that "hardly anything of this kind would be more beautiful or more perfect than this poem, were it not for one or two spots of obscurity which are to be found in it, occasioned, as it seems, by its ancientness."²

1. Gert T. M. Prinsloo, "Reading Habakkuk as a Literary Unit: Exploring the Possibilities," *OTE* 12 (1999): 515. Prinsloo dubs Habakkuk one of the "problem children" of the prophetic corpus: "The book presents numerous problems to the exegete. In spite of a magnitude of publications, no satisfactory answer can be given to even one of the problem areas."

2. Quoted by Rev. John Owen in his preface to Calvin's commentary on the Twelve Minor Prophets (John Calvin, *Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai*, vol. 4 of *Com-*

Lowth has identified two features that have attracted interpreters to the psalm: Its striking poetic language and imagery and its many intriguing textual puzzles (Lowth's "spots of obscurity"). Another draw is surely the unusual and conspicuous way the psalm in Hab 3 is formally set off from its literary context within the book of Habakkuk (and within the remaining books of the Twelve) by means of distinctive rubrics and terminology borrowed from the Psalter.³ While psalms do appear in prophetic books (e.g., Jon 2, Isa 38:9–20) and can be introduced formally as such, Hab 3 is exceptional in its almost emphatic use of psalmic musical notations. Hedged about with features that are manifested elsewhere only in the Psalter, it gives every appearance of having strayed from that book in another part of the canon and latched itself limpet-like onto this prophet book.

With the reader's attention being thus drawn not only to the striking language and imagery of the psalm, but now also to those intriguing features that highlight its distinctive form, we should not be surprised that Hab 3 has attracted the attention of form-critics. Notwithstanding their considerable efforts, however, the identification of the chapter's form has remained elusive.⁴ The urgency of a "form-critical reassessment" for Habakkuk identified by Marvin Sweeney also, and perhaps particularly, obtains for Hab 3.⁵ The focus of this paper, then, is to trace the trajectory and career of form-critical treatments of Hab 3, to explore how this approach has changed over time, where it has contributed to a better understanding of the psalm, and where it has hindered that understanding. In particular, the paper will examine the frequent modern classification of this psalm as a lament.

mentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets, trans. John Owen [Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1848], vi).

3. E.g., על שגיונות (3:1), למנצח בגינותי (3:19), סלה (3:3, 9, 13). The term תפלה ("prayer") is used as a title only in the Psalms and here in Hab 3. See John E. Anderson, "Awaiting an Answered Prayer: The Development and Reinterpretation of Habakkuk 3 in Its Contexts," *ZAW* 122 (2010): 63.

4. In fact, all of Habakkuk has been heavily subjected to form- and genre-critical investigations. See Oskar Dangl, "Habakkuk in Recent Research," *CurBS* 9 (2001): 151. Dangl notes this type of criticism forms "the central theme of both earlier and more recent Habakkuk research." In spite of these efforts, however, little consensus has been reached in determining the genre of this book.

5. Marvin Sweeney, "Structure, Genre and Intent in the Book of Habakkuk," *VT* 41 (1991): 65.

Before proceeding, a few comments on the basic structure of the psalm are in order. The psalm is headed by what Sweeney observes is “generically identified as a superscription.”⁶ The superscription identifies what follows as *תפלה לחבקוק הנביא* (“a ‘prayer’ of Habakkuk the prophet”).⁷ It is similar to Hab 1:1, an introduction that subsumes the contents of Hab 1–2 under the heading *המשא אשר חזה חבקוק הנביא* (“the ‘oracle’ that Habakkuk the prophet saw”). The two superscriptions, then, establish a two-part structure for the book as a whole: one part identified as an “oracle,” the other identified as a “prayer.” The generic markers separate the two sections, but the attachment of the name “Habakkuk” to both of these headings indicates that they are intended to be read together.⁸ In addition to the superscription, introductory musical rubrics are attached, unusually, both at the outset of the poem in 3:1 and *also* at the end in 3:19.⁹ These two psalm rubrics thus form a parenthesis, or *inclusio*, around the entire psalm. An *inclusio* works to set apart a literary unit from its surroundings and to highlight what lies within the *inclusio*.

Francis I. Andersen suggests the *inclusio* frames a chiasmic structure: Title (3:1), Invocation (3:2), First Deliverance (3:3–7), Creation (3:8–11), Second Deliverance (3:12–15), Response (3:16–19a), Colophon (3:19b).¹⁰ Andersen’s suggested chiasmic structure is not the only way to divide the chapter; however, his division is one of the few that takes seriously the *inclusio* effect of the first and last verses in the overall structure of the psalm.¹¹ His analysis brings out very clearly the fact that a definite literary shaping

6. Sweeney, “Structure,” 65.

7. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical translations follow the RSV.

8. Prinsloo, “Habakkuk as a Literary Unit,” 520. Space does not permit a review of the voluminous discussion devoted to whether the superscription in Hab 3 means the chapter was secondarily attached to the prophet’s book, or whether the superscription was added to Hab 3 at a late stage in the editing process. For the purposes of this paper, I am treating the text as it stands in its final redacted form. For an overview of the problem, see Dangl, “Habakkuk in Recent Research,” 144–47.

9. The type of psalm rubric used only appears at the end of a psalm here in Hab 3. See James W. Watts, “Psalmody in Prophecy: Habakkuk 3 in Context,” in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts*, ed. James W. Watts and Paul House, JSOTSup 235 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 212. He notes that it is an unparalleled use of a psalm rubric used as a colophon.

10. Francis I. Andersen, *Habakkuk: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 25 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 261.

11. Many exegetes simply omit 3:1 and 19 in their analysis, regarding them as mere secondary add-ons. See, e.g., J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: A*

is at work with the psalmic generic elements and that a framing effect is aimed at. Furthermore, an additional frame—3:2 and 3:16–19a—obtains *within* the outer frame. These verses, both cast in distinctive first-person address, create—with the outer frame—an overall nesting effect around the epiphany at the center (3:8–11). (These features will be discussed more thoroughly later in the paper.)

To what degree were early readers of Habakkuk alert to the interpretive possibilities suggested by the unique structure and form of Hab 3? The absence of this chapter in the extant *Pesher Habakkuk* from Qumran could suggest, not that the sectaries were unaware of the psalm's existence, but that its form and content were not felt to be "of a piece" with the rest of the prophetic book they wished to comment on.¹² The evidence from the Greek tradition would indicate that Greek readers, at least, did register the psalm rubrics and understood them to sanction the detachment of chapter 3 from its literary setting for liturgical use.¹³ What is not clear, however, is whether or in what way possible liturgical uses of the psalm affected the way the psalm and the book of Habakkuk were read or if the liturgical reading exhausted the possible frameworks for understanding the psalm within its prophetic literary setting.

In early Jewish rabbinic tradition, the psalm of Habakkuk appears to have been employed liturgically, not as a function of its liturgical rubrics, but because of the particular way the psalm was read within the book of

Commentary, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 148. He is not untypical: "Once the rubrics are removed as secondary insertions, the text actually begins in v. 2."

12. Roberts, *Habakkuk*, 148, writes: "The absence of the chapter in the Qumran commentary may have many explanations, but it is extremely doubtful that it bears witness to a Hebrew manuscript tradition lacking the chapter. Habakkuk 3 is included in the Murabba'at text and in the Greek scroll found at Qumran in 1952." Dangel, "Habakkuk in Recent Research," 145, writes, "Its absence from Qumran may best be explained ... by noting that ch. 3 had no relevance for the Qumran community." Avishur suspects that, as a psalm, it was not regarded as prophetic discourse at all (Yitzhak Avishur, *Studies in Hebrew and Ugaritic Psalms* [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1994], 124). According to John Barton, however, "it is hopelessly anachronistic to think that [early Jewish readers] had any sort of idea that the different genres within the books of the prophets should be read in different ways" (Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile* [London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1986], 147).

13. This is suggested by its inclusion as a distinct psalm unit in LXX's Odes attached to the Psalter and by the existence of a second variant Greek translation just of Hab 3 in the Barbarini manuscript.

Habakkuk. The epiphany unfolding within the psalm was understood as a description of the giving of the torah on Mount Sinai.¹⁴ The association with torah had already been prompted by earlier references in Habakkuk: תורה (“law”; 1:4), הלחות (“the tablets”; 2:2), and באר (“express clearly”; 2:2).¹⁵ Habakkuk 3, then, became a *haftarah* reading at Pentecost/Shavuot, the “season of the giving of our torah.”¹⁶ Early Jewish witnesses do not indicate Jewish readers were associating the genre of Hab 3 per se with the epiphanies in the pentateuchal books and making linkages that way; rather, isolated verses, phrases, and words seem to have provided the connecting links.

Theodore of Mopsuestia (350–428 CE), an early Christian reader of Hab 3, was keenly sensitive in his commentary on Habakkuk to the change in genre occurring between chapters 1 and 2 and chapter 3.¹⁷ “At this point,” he writes, “[the prophet] directs his attention to a prayer, disclosing under the form of a prayer the good things that would come to the people from God.”¹⁸ The prayer genre spurs Theodore to associate Habakkuk’s psalm with the psalms of David (i.e., the Psalter), which Theodore includes together as prophetic predictions. In fact, in his view, prophets like Habakkuk simply pick up in their predictive work where

14. The geographic references to Teman and Mount Paran (3:3), e.g., suggested to Jewish readers the region of Sinai; the references to “light” and “horn” in God’s hand (3:4) suggested the torah itself; the trembling (חרד) at the “voice” (קול) (3:16) evoked Israel’s reaction at the foot of Sinai to God’s speaking, and so on. Within this understanding, הליכות (“paths”) (3:6) became read as הלכות (“laws”), פעלך (“your work”) (3:2) was “the study of torah,” and the “drawing together of two” (3:2) was a reference to students of torah; see Shalom Coleman, “The Dialogue of Habakkuk in Rabbinic Doctrine,” *AbrN* 5 (1964–1965): 57–85.

15. “And I was answered from the Lord, and he said, ‘The prophecy is written and expressed clearly in the book of the law, so that whoever reads it may hasten to be wise’” (targum to Habakkuk 2:2 in Kevin J. Cathcart and Robert P. Gordon, *The Targum of the Minor Prophets: Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes*, ArBib 14 [Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1989], 150). See 150 n. 9 for the association of the root באר with “books of the law,” notably in Deuteronomy (where it appears twice in the frame around that book) and in Neh. 8:8.

16. Note an additional possible connection between 3:17 and references to a drought, and the Shavuot theme of “judgment with respect to fruits,” and prayers for rain.

17. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*, trans. Robert C. Hill, FOC 108 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 18.

18. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*, 279.

David left off.¹⁹ Prompted by Hab 3's psalm rubrics, Theodore finds in the Psalter a psalm (Ps 9; MT 9/10) that he feels resembles Habakkuk's psalm. Just as David divides in this psalm (he is aware of MT's division) his censure between first, the people and second, the Babylonians, so, too, does Habakkuk; they are of the same mind. Habakkuk's psalm form, then, provides a cross-referencing potential for Theodore's reading of the whole of the prophet's book, as well as a solution to the identification of "the wicked" in Hab 1.

From Bede, a Christian commentator of the early Middle Ages (672–735), comes a discrete treatment of Habakkuk's psalm. It is detached from the rest of the book in his commentary, not because the psalm rubrics suggested to him a warrant for a treatment separate from the rest of Habakkuk, but because a nun had especially requested Bede's expert commentary on this specific passage of Scripture that was being read every Friday as part of the monastic morning office.²⁰ Bede reads the psalm within the larger literary context of the Old and New Testaments: "The canticle of the prophet Habakkuk ... my dearly beloved sister in Christ, is mainly a proclamation of the mysteries of the Lord's passion."²¹ It is difficult to fix precisely what type of text Bede imagined he was reading. On the one hand, the psalm, in Bede's hands, reads like a prophetic vision of not just the Lord's passion but, more precisely, of the effect that the revelation of that event of God's judgment and mercy has upon those who hear of it. The "mountains sinking low" in 3:6 are, in fact, melting before the news of God's drawing near (in Christ); they are a figure for every proud spirit that must be humbled upon hearing of this startlingly merciful event. But the psalm is not only a reported vision of the epiphanic central event and proclamation of the gospel; Bede's figural reading of the prophet's psalm—with its embedded epiphany—suggests that the scriptural psalm text itself mysteriously participates in the event of God's self-revealing; the psalm's description of the effect upon both the prophet and creation of God's drawing near in radiant glory, is mirrored in the reaction of the reader/hearer of the psalm itself. The reader, upon taking up the prophet's book, finds him or herself—with

19. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*, 37–39.

20. The psalm of Habakkuk was read in the liturgy after the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1–15) with which it was evidently associated. See Andrew Breeze, "The Book of Habakkuk and Old English 'Exodus,'" *English Studies* 75 (1994): 210.

21. Bede, *On Tobit and the Canticle of Habakkuk*, trans. Séan Connolly (Portland, OR: Four Courts, 1997), 65.

the prophet—included in the event of divine judgment, humbled like the proud mountains, and drawn in love and awe toward the Merciful One drawing near in the divine self-revelatory event of the cross through the vehicle of Holy Scripture. Habakkuk's psalm variously models, mirrors, and mysteriously becomes the instrument for, the reader's own penitence and trustful turning to God.

In John Calvin's commentary on the Book of the Twelve, the exegetical treatment is more calibrated to anchor the book of Habakkuk within its own historical timeframe. Calvin reads Hab 3 as a prayer bequeathed by the prophet to Israel on the very eve of the Babylonian exile. Although written in the first-person singular, says Calvin, Habakkuk "speaks as though he were the collective body of the people."²² As the Babylonian catastrophe looms ahead as God's righteous judgment on the "contumacy" of the people, the prophet "connects here the mercy of God with his wrath" (3:2) and exhorts the people, on the basis of this mercy, to repent and confess their sins.²³ This calm submission to God's judgment and humble trust in his mercy is what it truly means to "rest" in (or, "wait upon") the Lord (3:16).²⁴ Habakkuk's prayer serves as a model for the believer's proper attitude of contrition and trust.

We do not find in these early interpreters of Hab 3 an overt or self-conscious awareness of form or genre as a determining factor in understanding the text. Nevertheless, most appear to be registering at some level the identification of the psalm as a תפלה ("a prayer"; 3:1), and although cast in the first-person singular, are assuming that a prophet's prayer will never be purely personal but will be intended as edification or exhortation for the whole community. Intriguingly, in light of later form-critical treatments, none of these early readers read Habakkuk's psalm as a lament or even a complaint against God. On the contrary, God's judgment upon the people is acknowledged to be just, although hard. In their reading, generally, a proper response to the crisis situation is not demanded of God, but rather of the one who sees that the divine judgment is indeed just and rendered by the one who is merciful and who wills to save.

22. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve*, 170.

23. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve*, 139.

24. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve*, 169. He maintains Habakkuk's object in the psalm "was to humble the faithful, that they might suppliantly acknowledge to God their sins and solicit his forgiveness."

The application of modern form-critical methods to Hab 3 has formed part of a much wider project dealing with the book as a whole.²⁵ These methods, building on the pioneering work of Hermann Gunkel, sought to identify and tease out units of prophetic speech forms embedded in the written prophetic text. The prophetic forms, or *Gattungen*, were thought to have originated in an oral setting (*Sitz im Leben*) and to have followed fixed conventions with respect to form and content. While their original oral occasions were socially and historically contingent, the prophetic units' formal contours, ideational content, and conventional functions were thought to remain essentially unchanged in their transition from orality to later textualization and inclusion in prophetic literary compositions. Generic features enabled form-critics to both classify and isolate individual units for discrete treatment, and also, for the sake of reconstructing the text's historical growth, to separate the prophet's "original words" from later secondary layers. Genre analysis thus shed helpful light on possible levels of meaning signaled by particular genres in prophetic compositions and helped to ground prophetic speech in social and historical situatedness. Notwithstanding the method's evident usefulness, the unity of the prophetic text tended to be lost or undermined in the form-critical fragmentation of units and redactional layers. In the case of Habakkuk, however, a form-critical solution to this problem presented itself: the various individual prophetic forms scattered throughout the book, it was proposed, could be read *together* across the book as constituting a single liturgical work serving a possible ritual function in a cultic setting.²⁶ That is, the book was small enough, and the genre markers clear and compatible enough, to suggest the prophetic units had been literarily fused to fashion a single composite genre of sorts—a liturgy: generic variety subserved a larger, unifying literary

25. For an overview of this endeavor, see Michael H. Floyd, "Prophecy and Writing in Habakkuk 2,1–5," *ZAW* 105 (1993): 462–81.

26. See, e.g., Georg Fohrer, "Das 'Gebet des Propheten Habakuk' (Hab 3,1–16)," in *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Mathias Delcor*, ed. André Caquot, Simon Léfasse, and Michel Tardieu, AOAT 215 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1985), 159–67. Childs, however, argues against this sort of cultic reading: "Although the book of Habakkuk is filled with liturgical material, in my judgment, the present shape of the composition is not to be attributed to the influence of the cult. The autobiographical shaping moves in quite the opposite direction" (Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 452).

and liturgical vision.²⁷ The psalm rubrics of Hab 3 would only have reinforced this notion.

As Gert Prinsloo has noted, the form-critics Gunkel and Sigmund Mowinckel were apt to emphasize a connection between a “prophetic liturgy” in the cult and a lament.²⁸ Mowinckel believed Hab 3, for example, was composed as a “cultic song at a feast of lamenting.”²⁹ An almost unshakeable association of Hab 3 with the idea of lamentation has persisted in Hab 3 research, with most or many scholars classifying the psalm as a lament, or sometimes a complaint.³⁰ Since Hab 3 does not easily fit the lament *Gattung*, some scholars, determined to maintain Hab 3 firmly under the rubric “lament,” have proposed that Habakkuk *as a whole* represents an extended lament, with the psalm of Hab 3 forming the final part of it.³¹

Not all are convinced that Hab 3 is a lament, however.³² Claus Westermann, for example, places psalms that include epiphanies solidly within his *Gattung* category of “psalms of declarative praise.”³³ He does not include them in his “psalms of lament” which, he argues, must feature some ele-

27. Childs, *Introduction*, 450.

28. Prinsloo, “Reading Habakkuk as a Literary Unit,” 532 n. 6.

29. Prinsloo, “Reading Habakkuk as a Literary Unit,” 532 n. 6.

30. Supporting Mowinckel’s original classification of lament (either of the individual or the community), see Watts, “Psalmody in Prophecy,” 214; and Sweeney, “Structure,” 78. Supporting the classification of complaint, see Anderson, “Awaiting,” 64; and Michael Floyd, “The מַסָּא’ (maśśā’) as a Type of Prophetic Book,” *JBL* 121 (2002): 414. For a discussion on the reading of the term שְׁגִיבוֹת (3:1) as a lament *Gattung* indicator rather than a musical notation, see Sweeney, “Structure,” 78; and Roberts, *Habakkuk*, 130.

31. So R. D. Haak, *Habakkuk*, VTSup 44 (Leiden: Brill, 1992). Mark Allen Hahlen cites approvingly Bernard Anderson’s similar position and formal-critical breakdown of the book and psalm (Hahlen, “The Literary Design of Habakkuk” [PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1992], 150).

32. See Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 20. He writes: “I would argue ... that there is very little similarity between Hab. 3 and the templates for laments that have been recognized in the classical studies of Gunkel and Mowinckel.” See also Roberts, *Habakkuk*, 130, and Gert T. M. Prinsloo, “Reading Habakkuk 3 in Its Literary Context: A Worthwhile Exercise or Futile Attempt?,” *JSem* 11 (2002): 93.

33. Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 101. He writes, “The epiphanies belong to the context of the declarative praise of Israel.” He specifically includes Hab 3 and Ps 77 (closely associated with Hab 3) in this group.

ment of clear lament or complaint: “There are no laments of the people in which they [accusatory questions and statements directed at God] are totally absent. Indeed, the phenomenon of lamentation is concentrated in this one motif.”³⁴ Even the “lament of the individual” is “still wholly dependent upon the complaint against God and is closely tied to it.”³⁵ Pivotal for the case of Hab 3 will be deciding whether Hab 3:2 conveys the idea of a plea—“Help!” or “Save!” (Westermann’s minimum for a lament)—or the idea of praise—“He has helped!” or “He has saved!” (a confessed reality ingredient in Westermann’s “psalms of declarative praise”).

The period following Gunkel and Mowinckel witnessed a general move away from the search for the origins and meaning of prophetic speech in an oral situation separate from the written environment of the prophetic book. Cultic locations for prophetic speech forms were difficult to establish with certainty and concern grew that the separation of prophetic speech units from their literary matrix meant the loss of crucial literary contextual information.³⁶ Moreover, it could not be established with certainty that prophetic speech had not always existed in written form, and even sophisticated literary form, from the very beginning. A literary-critical turn in prophetic research has resulted in a gradual move away from diachronic to more synchronic approaches. Scholars did not abandon form-criticism, Michael Floyd notes, but began to apply it to “genres of prophetic literature per se rather than genres of prophetic speech.”³⁷ Genre analysis was now recalibrated to describe “the rhetorical pattern that informs the structure of a text,” as well as to establish a “comparison with other texts whose structures are similarly informed by the same rhetorical pattern.”³⁸ Prophetic books are increasingly recognized as well-wrought works of literary art, and terminology such as “chiasmus,” “*inclusio*,” and “stanza” is taking its place alongside the traditional technical terminology of the *Gattungen*.³⁹

34. Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 178.

35. Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 178. It is clear from Westermann’s comments why some scholars are obliged to cast their net a little wider in the book to find the requisite lament element for the psalm. One might wonder, however, whether the special superscription and rubrics in 3:1 do not operate formally to separate Hab 3 from any larger umbrella *Gattung*.

36. The theophany *Gattung* in particular could not be firmly attached to a specific *Sitz im Leben*, though some have tried; see, e.g., Haak, *Habakkuk*, 20.

37. Floyd, “מַשָּׁא (maššā) as a Type of Prophetic Book,” 405.

38. Floyd, “מַשָּׁא (maššā) as a Type of Prophetic Book,” 406.

39. See Childs, *Introduction*, 451. He notes that the “traditional individual parts

A good example of how form-critical approaches have been successfully married to literary-synchronic approaches may be seen in recent treatments of the epiphany at the center of Hab 3 (vv. 3–15). Following up Gunkel's observation that generic parallels exist between biblical creation stories and ancient Near Eastern theophanies depicting battles involving storm gods, scholars have attempted to delineate points of contact between the two literatures. Most exegetes, according to Prinsloo, have determined on the basis of this comparative work, that Hab 3:3–15 may be generically classified as an "archaic theophany," whether composed in an archaizing style, or comprising an assemblage of bits of theophanic poems, or as a borrowing of a complete poem.⁴⁰ Debate has raged over whether the epiphany in Hab 3 is more dependent upon Ugaritic or Babylonian hymnic forms, but most agree that a depiction of YHWH as a triumphant heavenly warrior remains the psalm's central focus.⁴¹

Attempts to establish the epiphany's unity by identifying a dramatic movement following the pattern of ancient Near Eastern hymnic forms were not successful. Literary methods, however, proved more fruitful. Theodore Hiebert, for example, persuasively argued for the epiphany's literary unity by identifying several *inclusio* patterns.⁴² Not only does this literary device frame the psalm as a whole, it works within the epiphany itself by dividing 3:3–15 into two sections (3:3a–7 and 3:8–15), each framed by its own *inclusio*. In 3:3a, for example, two geographic notices, "God came from *Teman*, and the Holy One from *Mount Paran*," are matched in 3:7 by two more geographic references, "I saw the tents of *Cushan* in affliction; the curtains of the land of *Midian* did tremble." All four references speak of the same geographical region, and all share the same ending, לְ-

of oral speech ... [now] fashioned into a larger literary composition" have produced a profound effect on the reading of the book of Habakkuk.

40. Gert T. M. Prinsloo, "Yahweh the Warrior: An Intertextual Reading of Habakkuk 3," *OTE* 14 (2001): 478. For a brief summary of the different hypotheses, see Watts, "Psalmody in Prophecy," 220.

41. The struggle between the different camps seems not to have been to establish the form per se (victory hymn) but rather to solve lexical difficulties and determine contours of versets and cola. Most scholars now seem to think that Hab 3 represents a mixture of two traditions. See, e.g., Avishur, *Studies*, 125, 132; Anderson, "Awaiting," 60–61.

42. Theodore Hiebert, "The Use of Inclusion in Habakkuk 3," in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. Elaine R. Follis, JSOTSup 40 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 119–40.

(-ān), thus reinforcing their linkages and cementing the framing effect. The geographical references shift the perspective of the reader to the region of Sinai where God makes his appearance, radiant with blinding light. This imagery, notes Prinsloo, “reminds one of depictions of Shamash rising triumphantly between two mountains with rays radiating from both shoulders.”⁴³

Linkages thus established through the identification of hymnic forms are helpful, but closer parallels can also be established through a literary analysis highlighting textual allusions and even citations that appear to be operative between Hab 3 and such texts as Deut 33:2–3. The latter passage utilizes sun imagery combined with geographical references in a way similar to that of Habakkuk’s psalm:

The Lord came [בא]⁴⁴ from Sinai,
and dawned [זרח] from Seir upon us;
he shone forth [הופיע] from Mount Paran,
he came from the ten thousands of holy ones [Kadesh = קִדְשׁ?],
with flaming fire (?) at his right hand [מימינו].

Lexical and thematic intertextual associations thus link Hab 3 to another epiphanic text that is explicitly identified with the event of the giving of the torah on Sinai.⁴⁵ The reaction of the earth that shakes before YHWH’s advent in the first part of the Hab 3 epiphany also evokes other biblical texts associated with the Exodus/Sinai event, such as Ps 114:1, 3–4, 7:

When Israel went forth from Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of strange language ...
The sea looked back and fled,
Jordan turned back.
The mountains skipped like rams,
the hills like lambs ...
Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord,
at the presence of the God of Jacob.

43. Prinsloo, “Yahweh the Warrior,” 479.

44. Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 289–91, notes that this root, which also appears in Hab 3:3, can convey the sense of “rising,” as in Isa 60:1: “Your sun [אור] has risen [בא], and YHWH’s glory [כבוד] has dawned [זרח] upon you.”

45. Avishur, *Studies*, 134–36, believes Hab 3:3 is literarily dependent upon Deut 33:2 and is an abbreviated version of it. See also Roberts, *Habakkuk*, 149.

The agitated waters of Ps 114 have their correlate in the second section of the epiphany (3:8–15), where Hiebert detects a second *inclusio* formed through the repetition of references to “sea” and “horses”:

Was thy wrath against *the rivers*, O Lord?
 Was thy anger against *the rivers*,
 or thy indignation against *the sea*,
 when thou didst ride upon *thy horses*,
 upon thy chariot of victory? (3:8)
 Thou didst trample *the sea* with *thy horses*,
 the surging of *mighty waters*. (3:15)

The section thus framed by this material (3:9–14) signals a narrative shift from God’s marching forth and surveying the battlefield (3:3–7), to his actual engagement with the foe. Weapons are described in detail, but the greatest emphasis here, much like the first section, falls upon the reaction of the enemy to YHWH’s activity. Both earth and sea are convulsed, but so too is the heavenly host above (3:11). Yitzhak Avishur and Shmuel Ahituv have both noted the remarkable similarities between this verse and Josh 10:12–14.⁴⁶ Avishur argues, furthermore, that Hab 3:11a, when read with the lines immediately preceding and following it, would line up with Josh 10:12–14 (above) framed by Deut 32:40 and Deut 32:41–43.⁴⁷ The Hab 3 epiphany in his view is a “collection”—a pastiche—of other biblical texts declaring YHWH’s victorious, saving work for Israel.⁴⁸ It is not just recognizable genres that are being activated for the reader but specific biblical passages: The psalm is presented as situated within and belonging to a wider textual world. More specifically, the psalm’s perspective—and hence that of the prophet and of the reader—is one of looking back in time to Israel’s earlier experience of YHWH.

46. Avishur, *Studies*, 138. See his list of verbal similarities between the passages there. Ahituv insists the solemn raising of hands cannot be referring to the “deep” (3:10c), but can only be predicated of God, as it is in Deut 32:40, which he links, along with Avishur, to this text in Hab 3 (Shmuel Ahituv, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah: A Commentary, Part II*, Miqra leYisrael [Jerusalem: Magnes, 2006], 63).

47. Avishur, *Studies*, 138–39. Lexical items in Habakkuk corresponding to the Deuteronomy verses appear in inverted order, a scribal technique often found in biblical citation. For Avishur’s links between Hab 3 and Ps 77, see pp. 139–42.

48. Avishur, *Studies*, 142. Roberts, *Habakkuk*, 149, believes a number of ancient songs are referred to: Deut 33:2–5; Judg 5:4–5; Ps 68:8–9 [7–8 MT]; Exod 15:14–16.

The careful literary shaping of Habakkuk's psalm extends beyond the epiphany. As we have seen, the epiphany itself is enclosed within a double *inclusio* made up of an outer ring formed by the title (3:1) and colophon (3:19b) and an inner ring of first-person singular speech (3:2 and 3:19a). The inner *inclusio* (the autobiographical framework) has been crucial in the form-critical analysis of the psalm. It is here that scholars claim to see what is not visible in the epiphany, namely, a complaint, petition, or lament directed at God. According to John E. Anderson, it is the psalmic frame that "transforms the original core theophany into a complaint psalm."⁴⁹ For Sweeney, the "petitionary character of this psalm is established by its framework ... [in which the] psalmist petitions YHWH to manifest divine acts in the world by referring to YHWH's reputation for performing great works."⁵⁰

Undoubtedly, the autobiographical character of the frame lends itself to connecting the entire prayer to the genuine lament pericopes of the prophet in the earlier part of the book (1:2–4, 13).⁵¹ But is it established that, in the context of the book's final form, the prophet has continued to lament or remonstrate with God after God has vouchsafed him the vision in 2:2–5? Might not the vision have so radically changed the prophet's thinking that he makes an entirely new beginning in his outlook that the double boundary of the second superscription and the psalm rubric in 3:1 now formally signal?

The assumption that a lament is intended in Hab 3 has influenced the way 3:2 has been translated (as a petition), and the way 3:16–17 have been understood (as a lamentation). One must first note, however, the strong correspondences between 3:2 and 3:16–17 established by their use as an *inclusio*. Lexical items and roots are repeated: שמעתי ("I heard") is used at the beginning of 3:2 and 3:6, and רגז ("tremble") is used once in 3:2 and twice in 3:16. The same theme of hearing and reacting in fear is repeated, both times as a report. There may also be a correspondence between ברגז ("in time of wrath/turmoil," 3:2) and יום צרה ("day of distress," 3:16). Andersen insists that the mood in 3:2 (established by the report context of the epiphany and the *inclusio* parallel in 3:16) must be

49. Anderson, "Awaiting," 64. See also Watts, "Psalmody in Prophecy," 219. He observes: "Form-critical analysis usually produces a (victory) hymn set within a lament—an odd combination which interpreters struggle to explain."

50. Sweeney, "Structure," 78–79.

51. Childs, *Introduction*, 451, 455.

indicative.⁵² There is no request here, he insists, unless one vocalize the difficult ח״ה as an imperative. Hiebert, too, reads this verse as a report:⁵³

YHWH, I heard the account of you,
I am in awe, YHWH, of your work.
Through the years you sustained life,
Through the years you made yourself known,
in turmoil you remembered to have compassion.⁵⁴

Key to Hiebert's reading is the recognition that the prophet is not complaining or asking God to fix the situation; rather he is acknowledging—based on earlier reports—that God acts as righteous judge and that his judging work, though terrible, will be ultimately redemptive. This is what is likely also expressed in 3:16, where the prophet affirms he will trustingly wait in the face of divine judgment.⁵⁵ This is very similar to Calvin's understanding of the psalm.

How do the epiphany and its autobiographical *inclusio* establish that the prophet is speaking of a divine judgment falling upon Israel, and not simply on the Babylonians? First, the possibility that this is the case may be inferred when the psalm is read within the wider context of Hab 1–2, where reference is made to Israel's sin and injustice in 1:2–4 and where the prophet affirms the Babylonians are God's means to punish Israel (1:6, 12). Second, the epiphany—with its attendant report of the prophet's reaction

52. Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 280.

53. Hiebert, "Inclusion in Habakkuk 3," 120.

54. Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 283, translates the last line: "You declared (your name) 'Compassionate.'" Verse 2 might also be functioning as a summary of the report comprising the rest of the psalm: In 3:2a the prophet announces he has heard a report of YHWH's mighty deeds. The report referred to would be the epiphany itself (3:3–15). The prophet's reaction of fear (3:2a) would correspond to the report of his body's collapse upon hearing the epiphany (3:16a). The confession of trust in the mercy of God in the midst of wrath/turmoil (3:2b) would parallel the expression of trust and praise in the midst of suffering (3:16b–19a).

55. The temporal translation of the infinitive was suggested by Hiebert, "Inclusion in Habakkuk," 121. The "day of distress" is always associated with the people of Israel, never the enemies of God (see Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 345). Roberts, *Habakkuk*, 157, understands that patient waiting is implied here, and also sees 3:17–18 as an expansion on this idea of waiting. If so, it would provide a crucial connection to the vision and command to wait in 2:3. An alternative translation of the last line of the verse: "I will patiently wait in the day of distress, *when* the people who attack us come up."

of terror—signals an ironic twist on the conventions of the epiphany *Gattung* found in earlier Old Testament texts where it is typically the nations, Israel's enemies, who quake in fear.⁵⁶ In Exod 15:1–18, for example, a divine judgment (involving the sea) falls upon the Egyptian enemy, but the effect of this terrifying manifestation of divine wrath is registered by the nations who are next in line to suffer God's ferocious punishment. When the peoples have heard the report of God's mighty work, "they tremble; pangs have seized on the inhabitants of Philistia ... the leaders of Moab, trembling seizes them ... terror and dread fall upon them" (Exod 15:14–16). Terror is precisely the response of the one who recognizes that divine judgment is descending on him or her. Habakkuk, in emphasizing his quivering reaction to the divine approach, marks himself united in solidarity with doomed sinners. He does this as Israel's representative.

That the psalm speaks of Israel's judgment is also suggested by Hab 3:17–18. These verses, which match neither the epiphany *Gattung* nor the theme and vocabulary of the literary frame (3:2, 16), appear to constitute a redactional expansion on the themes of judgment and patient waiting adumbrated in 3:16. They resemble thematically the numerous references to locusts and drought woven redactorially throughout the Book of the Twelve.⁵⁷ Avishur notes the similarities, for example, between Hab 3:17 and Joel 1:7, 10, 18:⁵⁸

Though the fig tree [תאנה] does not bud
And no yield is on the vine [בגפנים],
Though the olive [זית] crop has failed
And the fields [ושדמות] produce no grain,
Though sheep [צאן] have vanished from the fold
And no cattle [בקר] are in the pen. (Hab 3:17)

They have laid my vines [גפני] waste
And splintered my fig trees [ותאנתי] ...
The fields [שדה] are ravished, the ground must mourn, for the new grain
is ravaged.

56. Habakkuk's reaction recorded in 3:16 also parallels the reaction of judged elements within the epiphany.

57. James D. Nogalski, "Joel as 'Literary Anchor' for the Book of the Twelve," in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, ed. James D. Nogalski and Marvin Sweeney, SymS 15 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 100–104.

58. Avishur, *Studies*, 197.

The new wine is dried up, the new oil [יצהר] has failed ...
 How the beasts groan! The herds of the cattle [בקר] are bewildered
 Because they have no pasture, and the flocks of sheep [הצאן] are dazed.
 (Joel 1:7, 10, 18)

The image of agricultural devastation (which in Joel is caused by both locusts and an invading army) functions in the Twelve as an index of God's judgment upon sinning Israel. The redactional addition in 3:17 reinforces the idea that Habakkuk understands God's judgment to be falling upon Israel for its arrogance and ruinous behavior. The addition also effectively stitches Habakkuk editorially into the wider Book of the Twelve where calls for Israel's acknowledgement of sin and its repentance in the face of the impending day of the Lord are sounded frequently.

The depth of Habakkuk's registered horror at the implications of this judgment is not to be explained by concerns for theodicy as is often claimed. Habakkuk is not asking whether God is still in charge or is just. He takes all this for granted. His trembling, rather, reflects a more profound theological concern articulated in Ps 77, a brother to the psalm of Habakkuk:⁵⁹

I consider the days of old,
 I remember the years long ago ...
 Has his steadfast love forever ceased?
 Are his promises at an end for all time?
 Has God forgotten to be gracious?
 Has he in anger shut up his compassion [רחמי]? (Ps 77:5, 8, 9)

Habakkuk answers the question raised in Ps 77 regarding the unthinkable possibility of God's abandonment of his covenant people with a resounding, "No!" He not only affirms God as merciful (רחם, 3:2), his evocation of Sinai in his psalm is a charged reminder of Moses on the mountain when the Lord drew near in epiphanic glory and revealed himself as the one who is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Exod 34:6).⁶⁰ Moreover, the redactional conjoining

59. Avishur outlines the many striking parallels between the two psalms throughout his study of Hab 3.

60. The reading of the psalm in the context of the earlier image of the prophet standing on a promontory possibly holding tablets (Hab 2:1, 2) might reinforce these Sinai associations in Hab 3.

of Hab 3 with another psalm of the epiphany *Gattung* in Nahum (1:3b–8) establishes an additional connective to the *Gnadenformel* of the epiphany of Exod 34.⁶¹ If the two psalms function as a bracket around Nahum/Habakkuk, then the *Gnadenformel* in Nah 1:2, 3a, operates as a thematic introduction to the whole unit. This formula, as Raymond Van Leeuwen has ably demonstrated, is another theme threaded by a redactorial hand through the Book of the Twelve.⁶² The prophet Habakkuk rests himself on the hope of this steadfast mercy as judgment draws near and the Babylonian night falls.

This survey of form-critical treatments of Hab 3 has shown that genre awareness, while richly illuminating the prophetic text, needs to be supplemented by approaches attending to compositional literary devices and redactional joins and adjustments. In the case of Hab 3, attention to literary artistry and editorial shaping has supported form-critical arguments that Habakkuk's psalm does not belong in the lament genre category, but rather should be seen as a confession or declaration of hope in the mercy of God as that has been made known and confessed in Israel's historic witness. Textual allusion and citation, in addition to genre connectives (e.g., epiphany, *Gnadenformel*), indicate that a wider textual world is being deliberately evoked and drawn into the prophet's vision of the divine encounter.

Finally, there are interesting aspects of Hab 3 that suggest a further genre designator might be applied to it: that of metafiction, or self-referentiality.⁶³ Here we return to the observations of Bede, who seemed to sense

61. Childs, *Introduction*, 454, remarks on the bracketing effect of these two psalms, noting "there is a similarity in the important interpretive role which a psalm had in providing a framework by which to refocus the older material. However, in Nahum the psalm introduced the book, in Habakkuk it concluded it."

62. Raymond Van Leeuwen, "Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve," in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, ed. Leo G. Perdue, Bernard Brandon Scott, and William Johnston Wiseman (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 31–49.

63. Metafiction draws attention to the (antimimetic) artifactual or constructed nature of the text. The scribal and literary devices at work in the psalm (e.g., chiasmic or palistrophic structures, *inclusios*, psalm rubrics) help to draw attention to its literary constructedness. It is unclear whether the term "metafiction" ought to be applied to a literary device or to a genre of prophetic literature. Robert Alter, e.g., understands conscious self-referentiality in fiction literature to constitute a subgenre of the novel (Alter, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-conscious Genre* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975]).

that he was reading in the prophet's canticle something more than just a report on the past deeds of YHWH, or a paradigmatic prayer for the faithful. Bede reads his text as if it not only describes the truly humbling effects within the prophet's world of the good news of God's drawing near in mercy, but also that the scriptural text participates in its turn in God's work of efficacious self-revealing upon the reader outside the book.⁶⁴ The psalm reports how God's "word" going forth before him levels "mountains," but the psalm, as a prophetic text, is itself a participant in and servant of that same word, and the reader encounters the revelation or epiphany of the Merciful Judge exactly here, in the prophet's book.⁶⁵ Notes Bede:

Before the Lord came in the flesh the words of the prophets went before him to bear witness to him who was to come; and these same words went out into the fields when by the preaching of the apostles they were proclaimed throughout the whole world.... And this is indicated typologically in the gospel when the Lord himself sent his disciples to preach *in every town and place he himself was to come to*. And this we observe happening to this day in the same order, for the Lord follows his preachers, because it is first necessary that the word of the teacher be heard, and that the light of truth be thus firmly fixed in the heart of the hearer. (*Canticle of Habakkuk*, §3.5)

In other words, the biblical text (of prophet and apostle) not only reports an epiphany—the drawing near of God in power and glory—it itself heralds that drawing near and shares instrumentally in its revealing of the One who elects to speak through it: the text is the locus, or at least threshold, of genuine epiphany.⁶⁶

64. Bede, *Canticle of Habakkuk*, §3.6: "Saul and Matthew were mountains, the former raised up from the wisdom of the human word, the latter from the mammon of iniquity; but when each of them had been converted to the tutorship of humility, and became a disciple of Christ, the mountains were indeed violently shattered."

65. Bede, following LXX, is reading דָּבָר (3:5) as דְּבָר ("word").

66. The literary phenomenon being suggested here is that of *mise en abyme*, or the impression of an infinite regression through a mirror text: the prophet reads or hears read the report of an epiphany ("I have heard the report of you ... how the curtains of Midian trembled") and, in so doing, experiences himself the epiphanic presence of God ("I tremble ... my steps totter beneath me!"). The reader/hearer of Hab 3 in turn reads of (or hears read) the prophet's experience of his epiphanic encounter with God while reading of epiphanies and is likewise startled and discomposed to find him- or herself confronted thereby by the address of the living God out of the epiphany text.

Is Bede right to see a mirroring within the text of an event outside the text? Is there, in fact, in Habakkuk's psalm such a metafictional transgression of textual boundaries—a drawing attention by the text to itself as revelatory object or artifact before the reader/hearer? Francis Watson has noted the way the book of Habakkuk earlier draws attention to itself as revelation in a written form: “Unlike other prophets, Habakkuk is called not to speak but to write. In its literary context, the command to ‘write the vision’ [2:2] is self-referential: in it, the book of Habakkuk speaks of its own origin and basis.”⁶⁷ Habakkuk 2 thematizes “the significance of prophetic writing” such that the reader (now clearly implied by the text's emphasis on its own writtenness) sees that revelation of God comes, in fact, by the vision written in the prophet's book and that she or he may live in the light of its witness, “enabled to do so by the written text in which the vision is to be enshrined.”⁶⁸

Recent scholarship has uncovered many additional instances of self-referentiality in the prophetic books and has explored the possible hermeneutical significance of the self-referential mode in prophetic writings.⁶⁹ But is self-referentiality at work in Hab 3? As noted earlier, the literary structure of the psalm's epiphany incorporates a first-person autobiographical framework *inclusio* at 3:2 and 3:16. The repetition of “I heard”/“I hear” and “tremble” in the bracketing verses sets up a parallel between the creation that trembles at YHWH's approach (3:2–7), and the prophet who trembles at the news or report of that approach (3:16). The careful bricolage of recognizable biblical citations of, and/or allusions to earlier epiphanies (from *Exodus, *Deuteronomy, *Joshua, and *Psalms), makes it clear that Habakkuk is reading (or hearing read) scriptural texts of divine epiphanies. It is his reading of Scripture that causes him to trem-

67. Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 143–44.

68. Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 147, 146.

69. See, e.g., Chad L. Eggleston, “See and Read All These Words”: *The Concept of the Written in the Book of Jeremiah*, Siphut 18 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), on self-referentiality in Jeremiah; Ellen F. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamics of Discourse in Ezekiel's Prophecy*, JSOTSup 78 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), on Ezekiel; Hindy Najman, “The Symbolic Significance of Writing in Ancient Judaism,” in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, ed. Hindy Najman and Judith Newman, JSJSup 83 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 139–73, on Ezekiel and Zechariah; and James Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Micah-Malachi*, SHBC (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 1062–64, on Malachi and the Twelve.

ble as if God were drawing near to him in epiphanic glory *as he read*. In Bede's figural reading, the reaction reported within the prophet's psalm did indeed have its precise correlate in the hearer of Scripture read and proclaimed.

Further work on metafiction/self-referentiality, and its hermeneutical significance, in the prophetic collection is needed to determine whether a prophetic book's drawing attention to itself as an authoritative written mode of divine revelation, and as a locus of encounter with God's living presence and address, constitutes merely a literary device or a distinct genre or subgenre of prophetic writing. I am especially grateful for Professor Seitz's encouragement to listen to the insights of the precritical readers of Scripture (such as Calvin and Bede), from whose deep well I continue to draw.

From Anointed to Anointing Ones: Joshua, Zerubbabel, and the Function of Zechariah 4:6b–10a in the Visions of Zechariah

Robert C. Kashow

Introduction: Supplementation of the Hebrew Bible and the Case of Zechariah 4:6b–10a

Recently there has been a renewed interest in textual supplementation among scholars of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. In 2018, for instance, Saul Olyan and Jacob Wright published the proceedings from their conference on supplementation, which addressed issues ranging from “minor additions to aid pronunciation, to fill in abbreviations, or to clarify ambiguous syntax to far more elaborate changes, such as interpolations within a work of prose, in a prophetic text, or in a legal text ... [to] the addition of an introduction, a conclusion, or an introductory and concluding framework to a particular lyrical, legal, prophetic, or narrative text.”¹ What originally drew me to this topic, however, was my appreciation of Professor Seitz’s work, which attends to the editing and arranging of texts of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament in an effort to arrive at a richer understanding of the achievement of a text’s final form. For instance, in *Theology in Conflict* Seitz gives special attention to the “significance of the placement” of Jer 45:1–5 for the book of Jeremiah, as well as how the views reflected in the words of the prophet Jeremiah, the Scribal Chronicle, and the Exilic Redaction (i.e., Ezekiel; 2 Kgs 24–25) developed gradually and were brought into coordination with one another.²

1. Saul Olyan and Jacob Wright, eds., *Supplementation and the Study of the Hebrew Bible*, BJS 361 (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018).

2. Christopher R. Seitz, *Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah*, BZAW 176 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989).

Similarly in *Zion's Final Destiny* he considers the role of the placement of Isa 36–39, its “foreword influence” on Second Isaiah and its significance for the evolving traditions of First Isaiah.³ Recently Seitz does the same in his work on the Book of the Twelve, as seen in *Goodly Fellowship* and now *Joel*.⁴ Here I follow suit with a case study from the book of Zechariah but on a much smaller scale due to space constraints.

In Zech 4 the prophet has a vision of a golden lampstand with seven flames in between two olive trees (Zech 4:1–3). After the prophet sees the vision, he asks the accompanying angel its meaning (Zech 4:4–5). But before the angel can answer, the text of Zech 4 is interrupted by a set of oracles that concern Zerubbabel, as seen below:

[4] Then I answered, saying to the angel who was speaking with me: “What are these, my lord?” [5] The angel who was speaking with me answered, saying to me, “Do you not know what these are?” I replied, “No, my lord.” [6] He answered, saying to me:

This is the word of YHWH to Zerubbabel: “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit,” said YHWH of hosts. [7] “Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel, you will become a plain. He will bring out the stone, the chief stone, with shouts of ‘grace, grace,’ to it.”

[8] The word of YHWH came to me: [9] “The hands of Zerubbabel laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish [it]. Then you will know that YHWH of hosts sent me to you.” [10] For who has despised the day of small things? They will rejoice when they see the tin stone in the hand of Zerubbabel.

These are the eyes of YHWH that range throughout the whole earth.⁵

Several data points support the claim that Zech 4:6b–10a was inserted into the text at a later time. First, there is incongruity in the use of the demonstrative pronoun with reference to the prophet asking the angel, “What are *these* things?” in Zech 4:4 and the response in Zech 4:6b which

3. Christopher R. Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah, A Reassessment of Isaiah 36–39* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

4. Christopher R. Seitz, *Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets: The Achievement of Association in Canon Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009); Seitz, *Joel*, ITC (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016). See also parts of Seitz, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics: Towards a New Introduction to the Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

5. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

begins, “*This* is the word of YHWH to Zerubbabel.” If one removes Zech 4:6b–10a from the oracle, an immediate answer to the question in Zech 4:3 is found in Zech 4:10b: “*These* seven things are the eyes of YHWH.” As the text stands, the angel does not answer the question of Zech 4:4 (as is typical—see below) until Zech 4:10. Second, the phrase, “This is the word of YHWH,” in Zech 4:6a appears abrupt, as if it were the heading of its own oracle at one time—Zech 4:6b–10a probably constituting its contents, or just Zech 4:6b–7, if one understands Zech 4:8–10a as a separate oracle added at an even later time.⁶ Third, Zech 4:6b–10a implies the impatience or discouragement of at least some Judeans on account of the fact that the rebuilding of the temple was lingering. But, if the oracles were original to the text, only five months passed since some of the Judeans recommitted to rebuilding the temple, assuming the veracity or semiveracity of the dates in the superscriptions (cf. Zech 1:7 with Hag 1:15). Such impatience and/or discouragement in this short amount of time seems out of place. However, since the building of the temple was not complete until the sixth year of Darius (see Ezra 6:15), one could certainly imagine that such restlessness would have emerged a few years later if the rebuilding of the temple had stalled.

Certain contemporary scholars have contested the claim that Zech 4:6b–10a is a supplementation.⁷ These scholars share the common belief that Zech 4 can be read sensibly as a whole, but this point does not contravene the claim that Zech 4:6b–10a is an addition, because a supplementation can cohere with the surrounding text. Moreover, in addition to the three reasons given above supporting the secondary nature of the text, it is important to note that on the five other occasions in the night visions, when the angel is asked, “What are these?” the angel addresses the question right away (Zech 1:9–10, 19, 21; 4:11–14; 6:4–5; additionally, cf. Zech 2:2). One therefore wonders if these scholars would view any passage in

6. See, e.g., Martin Hallaschka, *Haggai und Sacharja 1–8: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, BZAW 411 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 238; H. Graf Reventlow, *Die Propheten Haggai, Sacharja und Maleachi*, ATD 25.2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 62.

7. See, e.g., Eugene H. Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 158–59; George L. Klein, *Zechariah*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2008), 139; Carol Meyers and Eric Meyers, *Haggai-Zechariah 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 25B (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 269.

the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament as a supplementation, especially given that a passage as choppy as this one is not considered an addition. Here is one area in particular where I have always admired Seitz's work over others who focus on a text's final form, for he advocates taking the final form of the text seriously while still possessing keen redactional-critical sensibilities.

It is hard to deny the secondary status of Zech 4:6b–10a, but more must be explored. For instance, one must ask what effect the supplementation had on Zech 4, the visions of Zechariah, and Zechariah as a whole. Moreover, how does the insertion affect the way the final form presents the role of key figures in the visions of Zechariah, namely, Joshua, Šemaḥ, Zerubbabel, and the “two sons of oil”? Some scholars have attempted to address these questions, but, for reasons outlined below, I have found their explanations to be either unpersuasive or incomplete. I will argue that the major point of the insertion was to downgrade the roles of Zerubbabel and Joshua as would-be restorative leaders, to ones who serve as a sign of the restoration and point to future restorative leaders, namely, Šemaḥ and his priest. This argument not only says more about the function of the supplementation in Zech 4:6b–10a than has been previously said, but also sheds more light on the identity of Šemaḥ in Zech 3:8 and 6:12. Specifically, it will lend further support to the view that Šemaḥ was originally identified as Zerubbabel but later as a future figure, after the text was later reworked as prophetic understandings of YHWH's plan of restoration were being gradually worked out and coordinated by the editor(s) of Zechariah.

Zerubbabel and Šemaḥ in Haggai and Zechariah

I begin with an analysis of Hag 2:20–23, for one's interpretation of the Šemaḥ oracles—and thus the role of Šemaḥ and Zerubbabel, respectively—in Zechariah often hinges on one's understanding of this passage, so it is essential to parse out what exactly is being communicated through this prophecy. I then turn briefly to an assessment of the Šemaḥ passages of Zech 3:8 and 6:12–15, before finally reconsidering the function of the supplementation in Zech 4:6b–10a.

In Hag 2:20–23, the prophet Haggai receives an oracle from YHWH specifically for Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah and son of Shealtiel (Hag 2:20, 23). YHWH—perhaps an allusion to exodus imagery—vows to “shake the heavens and the earth” and overthrow all political giants (“throne of the kingdoms”) preventing Judah from achieving restoration

to its former glory (Hag 2:1–22; cf. Hag. 2:1–9).⁸ Moreover, YHWH promises to “take” the “son of Shealtiel,” whom YHWH characterizes as “my servant,” and make him “like a signet ring” because YHWH has “chosen” him. All of these terms are richly Davidic in language and boldly communicate an expectation of the ascendancy of Zerubbabel as a restorative ruler (phraseology I prefer in lieu of “messiah,” to avoid anachronism) once Judah reemerges as an autonomous political entity.

Wolter Rose has argued that scholars overstate the case when they suggest the language in Hag 2:23 connotes the idea that Zerubbabel would be the restorative ruler.⁹ He argues that the term עֶבֶד (“servant”) can refer not only to kings but to a variety of different people throughout the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament.¹⁰ This is also the case for the object of YHWH’s choosing (בַּחֵר).¹¹ He further states that לָקַח (“to take”) does not have to indicate YHWH’s selecting an individual for a special mission but may indicate his intention to protect the person in question.¹² This idea stands out even further if one considers the use of חֶתֶם (“signet ring”) in Hag 2:23 in light of Song 8:6, where חֶתֶם is spoken of as a precious item which is to be valued and safeguarded.¹³

Rose is correct that individually these terms are not required to carry any Davidic connotations; however, a collocation of the key terms used in Hag 2:23 makes quite clear that a reactivation of the Davidic promise (2 Sam 7) is in view (see 1 Kgs 11:34; Isa 41:8, 9; 43:10; 44:1, 2). Rose dismisses the relevance of the kindred language used in Isaiah, however, because they do not specifically refer to David.¹⁴ But such a view overlooks

8. For possible allusions to exodus imagery, see, e.g., Exod 14–15; Judg 5. Such phrasing is associated with YHWH’s anger and symbolizes divine judgment, especially in day of YHWH contexts, which speak of an imminent overthrowing of the nations by YHWH. Cf., e.g., Judg 5:4; 2 Sam 22:8; Pss 18:8; 60:4; 68:9; 77:18; Isa 13:13; 24:18; Jer 4:24; 10:10; 51:29; Ezek 31:16; 38:20; Joel 2:10; 4:16; Nah 1:5 (same as Ezek 38:20); Hag 2:6, 7, 21. Here I draw on my earlier work on Hag 2:20–23; see Robert C. Kashow, “Zechariah 1–8 as a Theological Explanation for the Failure of Prophecy in Haggai 2:20–23,” *JTS* 64 (2013): 385–403.

9. Wolter H. Rose, *Zemah and Zerubbabel: Messianic Expectations in the Early Postexilic Period*, JSOTSup 304 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 215.

10. Rose, *Zemah and Zerubbabel*, 209–15.

11. Rose, *Zemah and Zerubbabel*, 212–15.

12. Rose, *Zemah and Zerubbabel*, 216–18.

13. Rose, *Zemah and Zerubbabel*, 218–36.

14. Rose, *Zemah and Zerubbabel*, 215.

the significance of YHWH speaking of the people of Israel in general as “my servant.” The kingly promise to David, which clearly surfaces in chapters 1–39, disappears in 40–66. For Isaiah and his editor, diachronic issues notwithstanding, this does not mean YHWH has forsaken his promise to David. Rather in the absence of the Davidic king the promises are applied to the people—explicit mention of this made in Isa 55:3. The aforementioned Isaianic passages, then, are no less Davidic than 1 Kgs 11:34.

On different grounds, Anthony Petterson has argued that “Haggai is not saying that Zerubbabel is the Messiah,” for “clearly, he was not, and if Haggai is saying this, it is difficult to account for the preservation of his book since he got it so wrong.”¹⁵ Rather, the prophecy only amounts to a “statement that Zerubbabel will re-establish the Davidic line in Jerusalem.”¹⁶ The rest of the prophecy “looks to a time when Yahweh will act dramatically on the world stage,” and that action is “set in an eschatological context,” because the events are said to occur “on that day.”¹⁷

The problem with this reading of the text, however, is that the prophecy about Zerubbabel in Hag 2:23 explicitly states it will be fulfilled “on that day.” Thus, if Petterson wants to see YHWH’s intervention on “the world stage” as an eschatological promise, he would also have to view the promise to Zerubbabel as an eschatological promise. And if Haggai was promising that Zerubbabel would be present during the day of YHWH, he would have again “got it so wrong,” because the day of YHWH, as described in Hag 2:20–23 did not happen during Zerubbabel’s lifetime.

A further problem with Petterson’s interpretation is the time frame the prophet seems to have expected the prophecy to be fulfilled. The employment of the personal pronoun plus participle in Hag 2:21 seems to denote that he envisioned these events happening in the near future, especially when compared with Hag 2:6, where the prophet states that the events explicated in Hag 2:6–9—events kindred to Hag 2:20–23—would occur “in a little while” (עוד אחת מעט היא). The *waw* consecutive plus perfect in Hag 2:22, which piggybacks on the verbal force of Hag 2:21, has the same time frame in view. So also for Hag 2:23, as the time frame of Hag 2:21–22 is the antecedent to which the demonstrative (“in ‘that’ day”) anaphorically points. In short, Haggai spoke of what he thought would happen during

15. Anthony Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, ApOTC 25 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 86.

16. Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, 86.

17. Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, 84.

his lifetime, namely, that Zerubbabel would become restorative ruler and YHWH would overthrow Persia and any other competing kingdoms.

It is true that Haggai the prophet appears to have “got it so wrong,” but this apparently was not an issue for those who preserved Haggai’s work. I have elsewhere argued that as Judeans began to reflect on Haggai’s prophecy, they understood it conditionally. This is seen especially in Zech 6:15b, which very clearly indicates that the fulfillment of the oracle recorded in Zech 6:9–15a—and perhaps even the fulfillment of all the events recorded in the sequence of visions—is contingent upon obedience: “And it will come to fruition, *if you all genuinely obey* the voice of YHWH your God.” Later interpreters thus had no issue with Haggai’s prophecy.

Petterson rejects my interpretation here, arguing the following: “The suggestion of Kashow (2013) that Haggai’s promise is to be understood as conditional is unlikely as it is too important a point to be only implicit (cf. Zech 4:9; 6:15).”¹⁸ Yet he misunderstands and misrepresents my view. I am not arguing for a way that the Haggai prophecy “is to be understood,” because I am not making any normative claim about the prophecy, which was understood in different ways at different times. But let me be clear on what I am claiming: a historian should understand that (1) Haggai the prophet was predicting that the events recorded in Hag 2:20–23 would occur during Zerubbabel’s lifetime; (2) later interpreters (read: Zechariah’s editors) had no issue with Haggai’s prophecy, because they understood it to be contingent upon the obedience of the people. Although I leave to theologians the question of how people of faith today should understand Haggai’s prophecy, I do not think my view is incompatible with the theological interpretation of Scripture. In his recent commentary on Joel, for example, Seitz argues that “‘book’ and ‘author’ go separate ways.” The same argument can easily be made for the book of Haggai.¹⁹ Haggai’s earliest readers appreciated the literal (ontological) sense of his prophecy, even if the prophet himself intended something else. People of faith in the present can just as easily follow suit, and here Seitz’s work is instructive.

Turning to Zechariah, the major question for our purposes is whether the person named Šemaḥ in Zech 3:8 and 6:12 is Zerubbabel. Three data points suggest that he is.²⁰ First, in Zech 3:8, YHWH refers to Šemaḥ as

18. Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, 86; Kashow, “Zechariah 1–8.”

19. Seitz, *Joel*, 14 n. 3.

20. Mark J. Boda, “Oil, Crowns, and Thrones: Prophet, Priest and King in Zechariah 1:7–6:15,” *JHS* 3 (2001), doi:10.5508/jhs.2001.v3.a10.

“my servant” (עֶבֶד), a term that *can* refer to a Davidic heir and, as seen in Hag 2:23, was a designation given specifically to Zerubbabel by YHWH. Second, when the Hebrew term *Ṣemaḥ* is applied to a person, it always refers to a forthcoming Davidic heir, and Zerubbabel is the only known Davidic heir at the time of Zechariah.²¹ Third, the oracle in Zech 6:13 specifies *Ṣemaḥ* will be the person to build the temple (וְהוּא יִבְנֶה אֶת־הַיְכָל). Although different phraseology is used, Zech 4:9 is quite clear that Zerubbabel—this is the only place where he is mentioned in Zechariah—will be the person to build the temple: יְדֵי זְרֻבְבָל יִסְדּוּ הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה וְיָדָיו תִּבְצַעֶנָה (“The hands of Zerubbabel will lay the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish [it]”). Taken together, the evidence seems to suggest that when the prophet speaks about *Ṣemaḥ*, he is speaking about Zerubbabel.²²

Objections have been raised against this view, leading some to conclude that *Ṣemaḥ* is not to be identified with Zerubbabel but either Joshua or some unidentified future figure. It has been argued that *Ṣemaḥ* must be a future figure because the passages in which he is mentioned are all future-oriented.²³ But while the prophet predicts *Ṣemaḥ* will perform these acts in the future, Zech 6:12 indicates that he was already in Jerusalem. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, הִנֵּה אִישׁ צֶמַח שְׁמוֹ is an independent nominal clause headed by the particle הִנֵּה, which, syntactically, is typically understood by grammarians to be a presentative, thus indicating that *Ṣemaḥ* was on the scene at the prophet’s uttering of the particle הִנֵּה.²⁴

21. There are only two other instances of the Hebrew term *Ṣemaḥ* as a person in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament outside of Zechariah, both found in Jeremiah, where *Ṣemaḥ* is viewed as coming from Davidic lineage (Jer 23:5–6; 33:15–16). That the phrase “my servant” (עֶבֶדִי) also occurs in Jer 33:21 further reinforces this point.

22. Meyers/Meyers argue that Zerubbabel is not *Ṣemaḥ*, because Persia, well aware of Zerubbabel’s Davidic ancestry, would not have consented to Yehud’s autonomy (*Haggai–Zechariah* 1–8, 203). Such argumentation, however, is based solely on a Persian perspective. The Judean perspective was likely much different, because they were influenced by their religious texts that promised that YHWH would politically intervene for them. Other arguments against identifying *Ṣemaḥ* with Zerubbabel will be dealt with in the main body of the essay.

23. So, e.g., Wolter H. Rose, “Messianic Expectations in the Early Postexilic Period,” in *Yahwism after the Exile: Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Era*, ed. Rainer Albertz and Bob Becking, STAR 5 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2003), 174. See also Rose, *Zemah and Zerubbabel*.

24. Robert C. Kashow, “Two Philological Notes on Zechariah 6:12–13 Relevant for the Identification of the *Ṣemaḥ*,” ZAW 128 (2016): 472–77.

It has been also argued that Şemaḥ is someone other than Zerubbabel because each is said to build different parts of the temple or different temples altogether. For instance, Rose sees the prophet saying that Şemaḥ will build an addition onto Zerubbabel's temple, while Petterson sees Şemaḥ building an eschatological temple.²⁵ I do not think this view is tenable, however, because the crown—or at least one of the crowns (if one holds that more than one crown is in view)—mentioned in Zech 6:12 is supposed to be kept in the temple. How can this crown be kept in the temple if the temple is not yet built? Petterson attempts to resolve this exegetical issue by arguing that the temple in Zech 6:14 is a reference to Zerubbabel's temple while the reference to the temple in Zech 6:12–13 is eschatological. Similarly, Petterson sees the reference to the removal of the “sin of the land” in Zech 3:10 as an eschatological event, which leads him to conclude that the priest mentioned in Zech 6:13 is Şemaḥ. Thus, he argues it is Şemaḥ who will remove the sin of the land.²⁶ That seems far-reaching to me, as it overlooks the seriousness of problem of the sin of the land for Judean religion. Moreover, there is no good reason to see Şemaḥ as a priest in Zech 6:13.²⁷ The priest is a second person in the oracle, whom the prophet envisions ruling beside Şemaḥ. The term “priest” (כֹּהֵן) functions as a new subject introduced by הִיָּה as it does elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament in prophetic speech (see, e.g., Zeph 1:13; Zech 12:8), which makes sense since Zech 6:13 makes reference to the “two of them” being in peaceful relations.

Petterson is forced to interpret the events of Zech 3:9 and 6:12–13 as eschatological because he cannot account for why Zechariah's prophecy would have been copied and transmitted. He writes,

If Zechariah understood Zerubbabel to be the Shoot, his prophecy here clearly failed. Given the way that false prophecy is criticized elsewhere in the book of Zechariah (e.g. 10:2; 13:2–6), why then did Zechariah's prophecy continue to be treated as authoritative within the community?

25. Rose, *Zemah and Zerubbabel*, 138; Anthony R. Petterson, *Behold Your King: The Hope for the House of David in the Book of Zechariah*, LHBOTS 513 (New York: T&T Clark), 118–19.

26. Petterson, *Behold Your King*, 97–99.

27. Kashow, “Two Philological Notes,” 476–77, arguing against Marko Jauhiainen, “Turban and Crown Lost and Regained: Ezekiel 21:29–32 and Zechariah's Zemah,” *JBL* 127 (2008): 501–11.

This point has not been given due consideration by those who consider Zerubbabel to be the Shoot.²⁸

In short, Petterson here makes his exegetical decisions based on the same logic behind his interpretation of Haggai: a given interpretation is excluded as a possibility because it would mean that the prophet “got it so wrong.”

As already discussed above, however, I have taken up the very question Petterson has raised and have argued that the Haggai and Zechariah’s prophecies about Zerubbabel and Šemaḥ were understood as conditional prophecies by the editor(s) of Zechariah. I regret using the phrase “the failure of prophecy” in the title of my article, as history-of-religions speak sounds adverse to the concerns of more theological interpreters, but unnecessarily so. My point was only to demonstrate on form-critical grounds that Zechariah’s editor was recalibrating expectations for the restored Davidic monarchy; the oracle recorded in Zech 6:10–15 concludes with the following statement, which nearly quotes word for word from Deut 28:1: “And it will come to fruition, *if you all genuinely obey* the voice of YHWH your God.”²⁹ Nearly every commentator glosses over this important statement, but it is crucial because it concludes both the oracle and the entire visionary sequence. Everything that the prophet promises YHWH will do proves contingent upon the obedience of the people of Judah. Moreover, Zechariah is arranged so that the reader of the book sees in the very next chapter that the “people of the land and priests” are portrayed as disobedient (Zech 7:5–6, 9–10), which likely is an attempt to explain why the events predicted in the visions and oracles were stalled.

Petterson has responded to and disagreed with my essay for three reasons.³⁰ First, he argues that conditionality in Zech 6:15b attaches only to “the temple completion and function to authenticate Zechariah and indicate that other elements of his prophecy (such as the coming of Shoot) will be fulfilled.”³¹ This proposed antecedent, however, is too narrow.

28. Petterson, *Behold Your King*, 115.

29. The only difference is that here the pronominal suffix (“your”) is singular and not plural.

30. Anthony Petterson, “A New Form-Critical Approach to Zechariah’s Crowning of the High Priest Joshua and the Identity of ‘Shoot,’” in *The Book of the Twelve and the New Form Criticism*, ed. Mark J. Boda, Michael H. Floyd, and Colin M. Toffelmire, ANEM 10 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 285–304.

31. Petterson, “New Form-Critical Approach,” 297–98.

Zechariah 6:15b is a Deuteronomistic formulaic, and its conditionality is attached to Israel becoming the dominant world power (cf. Deut 28:1–2). For this reason, I do not think contingency only applies to Zech 6:9–15, but the entire sequence of visions, which implies repeatedly that YHWH will restore Judah and Jerusalem as the center of the world.

A second sticking point for Petterson is as follows:

Kashow's proposal creates the impression that Zechariah is saying that the kingdom of Yahweh will not be inaugurated until the people obey—it is all up to them. Yet there is a sense from passages like Jer 30–33 that “the full restoration” including the coming of the Shoot (cf. Jer 30:9; 33:15), will be accomplished by God in spite of ongoing covenantal disobedience—God will ultimately do for his people what they are unable to do for themselves and circumcise their hearts so that they will obey in the new kingdom (Jer 31:33; cf. Deut 30:6). Certainly in the final form of the book, Zech 9–14 indicates that the work of Yahweh in “the full restoration” is primary.³²

Here I think Petterson falls into a common problem in biblical scholarship that Brevard Childs once identified: confusing the historical task and the theological task.³³ This is evidenced by two problematic assertions. First, Zech 9–14 is almost certainly written at a time later than Zech 1–8 and perhaps even by someone other than Zechariah, so Zech 9–14 does not have any relevance for historical inquiry of Judah at the very beginning of the Second Temple period. Second, one should not assume that theology found in Zechariah's visions agrees one-to-one with Jeremiah. Zechariah and his editors were dealing with the imminent reality of restoration, and its delay produced anxieties that the prophet or his editor(s) had to address. Of course, theologically, if Petterson wants to make normative claims about how people of faith today should read Zechariah or the Bible as a whole, I take no issue. But it seems to me he is making historical claims about a particular people at a particular time. These claims I contest.

32. Petterson, “New Form-Critical Approach,” 298. See now, Petterson, “Messianic Expectations in Zechariah and Theological Interpretation,” in *Interpreting the Old Testament Theologically: Essays in Honor of Willem A. VanGemeren*, ed. Andrew T. Abernethy (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 208, where he makes similar claims.

33. See Brevard S. Childs, “The Old Testament as the Scripture of the Church,” *CTM* 43 (1972): 709–22, in addition to Childs's major works.

Third, Petterson asks how my reading is possible since the prophet “stakes his prophetic credentials on it coming to pass” (Zech 2:13 [2:9 ET], 15 [11 ET]; 4:9; 6:15; here Petterson is specifically speaking about Zech 6:15).³⁴ This problem is not as much of an issue for Zech 2:13 (2:9 ET) and 2:15 (2:11 ET), since the prophecies preceding this statement are not bound to a specific time period. It is indeed an issue, however, for the statement in Zech 6:15, since there the prophet links his reputation to a prophecy that states a specific person will perform a number of tasks, and only one of those tasks (the rebuilding of the temple) was accomplished. I will deal with this more in a moment. In contrast, the same statement made in Zech 4:9, as part of the oracle of Zech 4:6b–10a inserted into Zech 4, actually authenticates the prophet’s credentials because the oracle predicted the rebuilding of the temple, and that happened. This observation is crucial for dealing with the problem of the prophet staking his reputation on the fulfillment of Zech 6:10–15 and understanding why Zech 4:6b–10a was inserted into Zech 4.

The Oracular Insertion of Zech 4:6b–10a Reconsidered

Now that I have argued for why I think Zech 4.6b–10a should be seen as a later insertion and discussed the meaning of relevant and crucial passages (Hag 2:20–23; Zech 3:8–10; 6:9–15), I want to return to the question of the insertion’s function. Three main theories exist that attempt to explain why Zech 4:6b–10a was inserted into the vision of Zech 4 that I have found either unpersuasive or incomplete.³⁵ Lars Rignell argues the insertion clarifies the object of God’s gaze, namely, Zerubbabel and the temple rebuilding project.³⁶ But why insert something about Zerubbabel and the temple building project here? For Rignell, this oracle provides more comfort to the people than the previous episode.³⁷ This explanation seems

34. Petterson, “New Form Critical Approach,” 297.

35. Other scholars think the oracular insertion does not accomplish much, i.e., the oracular message is wholly in accord with the message of the vision, or simply complements it. See Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, *Zechariah’s Vision Report and Its Earliest Interpreters: A Redaction-Critical Study of Zechariah 1–8*, LHBOTS 626 (New York: T&T Clark, 2016), 162–64 for discussion.

36. Lars G. Rignell, *Die Nachtgesichte des Sacharja: Eine exegetische Studie* (Lund: Gleerup, 1950), 164–65.

37. Rignell, *Die Nachtgesichte des Sacharja*, 164–65.

arbitrary, however, because comfort is never an issue addressed in the text preinsertion. Further, there is no need to clarify the object upon which God's eyes fall, because Zech 4:10 states that his eyes scan the whole earth.

Michael Floyd argues that the insertion "attempted to discern and express the cumulative significance" of the prophet's earlier work or that an attempt was made "to reinterpret the significance of revelations reported by Zechariah for a new and different situation."³⁸ But what was the "cumulative significance" the redactor attempted to express? And how did the redactor seek to reinterpret the preexisting text? Floyd is unclear on this point, but his statement is not at odds with what I will argue here.

Jakob Wöhrle and others view the insertion as reinterpreting the vision by naming one of the "sons of oil" in Zech 4:14.³⁹ They argue that before the addition of the oracles the identity of the "two olive trees" in Zech 4:3, 11 (later "two branches [Zech 4:12]) and the "sons of oil" in Zech 4:14 is unclear. But now, the text of Zech 3, along with the supplementation in Zech 4:6–10a, names Joshua and Zerubbabel as the figures in question. (With Paul Redditt and Thomas Pola among others, some might argue here that Zech 3, or part of it, also constitutes an addition—although I myself am not certain that Zech 3 is secondary.) One could contest this view by arguing that portraying Zerubbabel as temple-builder is tantamount to portraying Zerubbabel as king, since temple building was a royal activity.⁴⁰ Sufficient inscriptional evidence, however, indicates that temple building was not just an activity performed by kings. For instance, priestesses, a queen, daughters of the king, a proleptic king, and an average citizen are said to have been active in such building projects.⁴¹ The description of Zerubbabel as temple builder is thus ambiguous.

38. Michael H. Floyd, "Cosmos and History in Zechariah's View of the Restoration (Zech 1:7–6:15)," in *Problems in Biblical Theology: Essays in Honor of Rolf Knierim*, ed. Henry Sun and Keith L. Eades (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 125–44, esp. 140–41.

39. See, e.g., Jacob Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Entstehung und Komposition*, BZAW 360 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 338; James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Micah–Malachi*, SHBC (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 852–58; Ina Willi-Plein, *Haggai, Sacharja, Maleachi*, ZBAT 24.4 (Zurich: TVZ, 2007), 95; Tiemeyer, *Zechariah's Vision Report*, 166.

40. So, e.g., David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984).

41. See Madeleine Fitzgerald, "Temple Building in the Old Babylonian Period," in *From the Foundations to the Crenellations: Essays on Temple Building in the Ancient*

This last interpretation on the purpose of the insertion is promising but in my view incomplete, because it does not account for a key interpretive problem. Specifically, how can Joshua and Zerubbabel be the “sons of oil,” when the “two olive trees” and their “two branches” are the sources, not recipients, of the oil? Noting this, Mark Boda has argued that the two sons of oil should be understood as Haggai and Zechariah, not Joshua and Zerubbabel, because prophets are those that anoint (i.e., those from whom the oil flows), whereas Joshua and Zerubbabel are the anointed ones (i.e., those that receive the anointing).⁴²

I do not think the views of Wöhrle and Boda are mutually exclusive. Boda is correct insofar as his interpretation holds for an earlier time in the tradition history of the text of Zechariah, namely, before Zech 4 was supplemented. After Zech 4:6b–10a is inserted into the text, Boda’s observation that the sons of oil anoint and are not the anointed still stands, but this point does not mean that the view of Wöhrle and the others—that the redactor intended to identify Joshua and Zerubbabel as the sons of oil—is incorrect. If there are two of any beings who can stand before YHWH in Judah during the early Persian period, the two interpretive options discussed above (Haggai/Zechariah or Joshua/Zerubbabel) are the most sensible options.⁴³ But since Haggai and Zechariah are nowhere named in the text and postinsertion Zerubbabel is an immediate antecedent—along with Joshua as a prior antecedent—it appears that an editor shaped the text in order to identify Joshua and Zerubbabel as the two people in question. The resultant effect is that Haggai and Zechariah, the original sons of oil, are no longer the ones prophetically anointing Joshua and Zerubbabel. Rather, Joshua and Zerubbabel, the new sons of oil, are prophetically anointing Šemaḥ and a future priest, in that they have paved the way for and point toward them.

Near East and Hebrew Bible, ed. Mark J. Boda and Jamie Novotny, AOAT 366 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2010), 45–47.

42. Boda, “Oil, Crowns, and Thrones,” §3.3.1.3. In his recent commentary, Boda suggests that the “two sons of oil” symbolically refer to the “prophetic words” of Haggai and Zechariah rather than the prophets themselves (Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016], 285, 313–19).

43. A few scholars have interpreted angels, or YHWH’s heavenly host, as the sons of oil, but this view seems unlikely, as we are dealing specifically with *two* beings, and there is no mention of two angels in the immediate context (one would have to make the argument that the two angels in Zech 2:7 [2:6 ET] are in view).

The reason for this emendation is because post-Zerubbabel an editor of Zechariah's visions wished to recalibrate the high expectations originally placed upon the Davidide. This adjustment explains some of the "cracks and fissures"—as Rex Mason put it—one encounters in the text of Zech 6:9–15.⁴⁴ Most prominently, how is it that a crown is kept in the temple (היכל), presumably for Šemaḥ's coming, when it is Šemaḥ who is supposed to build the temple (היכל) in the first place? It is because the oracle originally spoke about Zerubbabel as Šemaḥ, as demonstrated above, but the oracle needed to be reworked post-Zerubbabel. The prophet may have originally included Zerubbabel's name in the oracle, only for the name to be switched to Šemaḥ, or the oracle may have read Šemaḥ all along if we should understand Šemaḥ to be Zerubbabel's Judean name. Once Zech 4:6b–10a was inserted into Zech 4, however, Zerubbabel and Šemaḥ became distinct individuals. Šemaḥ "1.0" (i.e., Zerubbabel) is now understood as one of the two sons of oil who, with Joshua, pointed toward Šemaḥ "2.0" and his priest (the priest was perhaps originally thought to be Joshua but then a future priest post-Joshua). The result is that the statement, "Then you will know YHWH sent me to you," in Zech 6:15 was no longer a problem because the text was reworked. Moreover, the same statement in Zech 4:9 authenticated the prophets' predictions elsewhere because the temple was actually rebuilt as predicted in Zech 4:6b–10a.⁴⁵ That is, tying the prophet's credentials to the fulfillment of Zech 4:6b–10a resulted in Zech 4:9 serving as an anchor for the same statements made in Zech 2:13 (2:9 ET), 15 (11 ET), and 6:15.⁴⁶ The prophecies to which they refer were expected to be fulfilled just like Zech 4:6b–10a was fulfilled. Because of the editorial activity, the final form of the text is somewhat bumpy, but this simply attests to the "Bible's historicity," as Childs would call it.⁴⁷ It is because of the historically conditioned nature of the biblical

44. Rex Mason, "The Messiah in the Postexilic Old Testament Literature," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day, JSOTSup 270 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 349.

45. This statement may not have been problematic in the first place if it was added after the editing of the oracle.

46. This point is what I think Floyd is arguing when he states that Zech 4:6b–10a is the "redactional starting point, around which the prophetic materials of various kinds and from various times were arranged into their present compositional form" ("Cosmos and History," 141).

47. See, e.g., Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 79. Psalm 72:20 is another prominent example of the

texts that I have always preferred analyses of the final form of the text that are willing to appropriate the findings of critical scholarship when relevant (e.g., source criticism, form criticism, redactional criticism). Seitz—and Childs before him—has repeatedly shown how such an approach sharpens one's appreciation a text's final arrangement, and as I hope to have demonstrated here, the same holds true for Zechariah.⁴⁸

I met Professor Seitz more than a decade ago in Dallas, Texas, where he was serving as Canon Theologian for the Episcopal Diocese of Dallas while working remotely for the University of Toronto, Wycliffe College. Then a seminary student seeking training in the methods of critical scholarship, I had the good fortune of meeting Professor Seitz regularly over lunch—the delectable food of Eatzi's, Kuby's, and Jimmy's—and those conversations proved to be an inestimable supplement to my education. As his research assistant, Professor Seitz taught me the value of the history of interpretation for biblical scholarship, and the many facets of writing a book or essay from start to completion—the process of publishing “Prophecy in the Nineteenth Century Reception,” *Character of Christian Scripture*, and the Childs memorial volume was especially enriching.⁴⁹ I thank Professor Seitz for being generous with his time, a true mentor, and a model of productivity without compromise in quality, and offer this essay in honor of his sixty-fifth birthday with great appreciation.

Bible's historicity. Psalm 72 is recorded as the last Davidic psalm in the Psalter (Ps 72:20), but numerous Davidic psalms occur thereafter. At one time Ps 72 likely ended an early collection of David's psalms, but now the reader of the Psalter is left only with the remnants of what once was; see Childs, *Introduction*, 511.

48. Childs, *Introduction*, 76. See esp. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), where he speaks numerous times of how the literary-developmental investigation sharpens one's appreciation for the final form.

49. Christopher R. Seitz, “Prophecy in Nineteenth Century Reception,” in *The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament III/1: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Magne Sæbø (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 556–81; Seitz, *Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible*, STI (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011); Christopher R. Seitz and Kent H. Richards, eds., *The Bible as Christian Scripture: The Work of Brevard S. Childs*, BSNA 25 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013).

Theo-Logie aus Textbausteinen: Das prophetische Profil der chronistischen Gottesrede

Georg Steins

1. Kanon und Theo-Logie—von Gott überlieferungsbezogen sprechen

Biblische Rede von Gott ist immer „kanonisch“ in einem elementaren Sinn des Begriffs, sie ist *schriftgestützt*, also *gebunden und geleitet*. Wie sollte anders „biblisch“ von Gott gesprochen werden, der kein empirisches Faktum ist und in der „Welt“ keinen Referenten besitzt. Gott-Rede ist deutende Rede *über* Welt, nicht Rede von Welt. Aus dieser kanonischen Qualität der Gott-Rede ergibt sich folgerichtig ein gesteigertes Interesse an der Bibel als Kanon. *Der Bibelkanon* ist kein lästiges Zufallsprodukt der Überlieferung und kirchlicher Machtansprüche, sondern *die formale Seite biblischer Theo-Logie*. Die moderne Exegese hat u.a. aufgrund ihrer gesteigerten Sensibilität gegenüber der nicht selten fatalen Verbindung von Gott und (politischer) Macht lange gebraucht, um diesen elementaren Zusammenhang anzuerkennen und als Zentrum, nicht als Nebenschauplatz des exegetischen Geschäfts zu begreifen.¹

Wer das Phänomen „Kanon“ und dessen theo-logische Funktion von innen heraus verstehen will, sollte nicht mit den ältesten Texten der Bibel, sondern mit einer Untersuchung der jüngsten Bücher, der Bücher 1 und 2 Chronik, beginnen. Die Existenz der Chronikbücher in der Hebräischen Bibel muss als Glückfall der Kanongeschichte bezeichnet werden, denn hier kommt der Kanon der Bibel gewissermaßen zu sich selbst.² Das ist nicht immer so gesehen worden. In der modernen Exegese galten die

1. Der geschätzte Kollege Christopher Seitz hat sein Forscherleben der Erkundung dieser Zusammenhänge gewidmet; ich verdanke ihm viele Einsichten und freue mich, ihn mit dieser kleinen Studie ehren zu dürfen.

2. Vgl. Georg Steins, *Die „Bindung Isaaks“ im Kanon (Gen 22): Grundlagen und*

Chronikbücher eher als Problemfall, als ein veritabler Betriebsunfall der Überlieferung, eine schlecht gemachte Wiederholung mit zweifelhaftem historischen Auskunftswert. Die vornehmste Aufgabe der Exegese bestand in der Schadensbegrenzung durch Marginalisierung und Depotenzierung dieser Bücher.³

Seit dem Aufschwung der Chronikforschung in den 1970er Jahren ist diese Wissenschaftstradition glücklicherweise von einem intensiven Ringen um eine angemessene hermeneutische Position gegenüber der Chronik abgelöst worden.⁴ In den letzten Jahrzehnten hat sich die Bewertung der „neu-geschriebenen“ Literatur, zu der die Chronikbücher zweifellos gehören, grundlegend gewandelt; diese steht nicht hinter den „Vorlagen“ zurück, sondern beide—Vorlage wie *rewritten text*—stehen in einem komplexen Bedingungs- und (Be-)Deutungszusammenhang.

Das Gegenüber des Chronisten ist nicht die Geschichte, sondern eine verbindliche Überlieferung, die auf die Eigeninteressen des Chronisten trifft. Das ist nichts anderes als die Konstellation des *Midrasch*. Bereits Julius Wellhausen hatte das Anliegen sehr präzise (wenn auch abwertend) beschrieben: es geht der Chronik um „Modernisierung(!)“.⁵ Vielleicht ist der Ausdruck „Midrasch“ immer noch der beste, um *die Funktion der Chronikbücher* zu erfassen.⁶ Der überlieferte Text ist nicht so fest mit seinem historischen Kontext verbunden, dass er „gestrig“ wird und mit der Vergangenheit gleichsam untergeht. Vielmehr löst sich ein Teil der schriftlichen Überlieferung von seinem Ursprungskontext ab und wird Teil eines literarischen Kosmos als Basis einer eignen Sprach- und Sinn-Welt.

Programm einer kanonisch-intertextuellen Lektüre, Herder biblische Studien 20 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1999).

3. Vgl. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1981), 165–223; Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien: Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1967), 110–80; Othmar Keel, *Die Geschichte Jerusalems und die Entstehung des Monotheismus*, 2 Teile, Orte und Landschaften der Bibel 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: 2007), 2:1092–93.

4. Verwiesen sei neben vielen anderen auf die zahlreichen wegweisenden Studien von Peter R. Ackroyd, Thomas Willi, Peter Welten und Hugh G. M. Williamson.

5. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 223.

6. Vgl. Gary G. Porton, „Rabbinic Literature: Midrashim,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 889–90.

Literarisch-technisch betrachtet handelt es sich bei der Chronik um eine Form der „rewritten bible.“ Ich verwende diesen Terminus, auch wenn er seit einiger Zeit umstritten ist, weil man für diesen Abschnitt der Epoche des Zweiten Tempels noch keinen fest umschriebenen Bibelkanon voraussetzen kann.⁷ Der Terminus hält zwei wichtige Aspekte fest, den Vorgang der „schriftgelehrten“ Neufassung überlieferter Literatur und den Bezug auf anerkannte und bedeutsame Texte, die zur sich formierenden Bibel gehören. Bruce N. Fisk nennt vier grundlegende Merkmale des *Rewritings* von biblischer Literatur, die allesamt auf die Bücher der Chronik zutreffen:⁸

1. *“Literary framework: An Extended Biblical Narrative:* Works of rewritten Bible offer a coherent and sustained retelling of substantial portions of OT narrative, generally in chronological sequence and in accord with the narrative framework of Scripture itself.”
2. *“Composition: An Integration of Biblical Episodes and Extrabiblical Traditions:* Works of rewritten Bible construct a coherent narrative by weaving into the laconic biblical storyline extrabiblical traditions.” Dieser „compositional use“ der Schrift ist zu unterscheiden vom „expositional use,“ der expliziten Kommentierung in den großen Sammelwerken.
3. *“Relation to Scripture: Implicit, Rather Than Explicit, Exegesis”:* “narrative additions function as implicit biblical exegesis.... They arouse from a meticulous reading of the biblical story, informed by a profound familiarity with the rest of Scripture.”
4. *“Function: Companion to, Rather Than Replacement of, Scripture”:* “works of rewritten Bible do not seek to displace Scripture but rather offer a fuller, smoother version of the sacred story.... [Readers] would be expected to recognize and recall the underlying biblical narrative.”

Rewriting und die Phänomene des „ Prophetischen“ in den Chronikbüchern

Die formalen, inhaltlichen und funktionalen Aspekte des *Rewriting* in den Chronikbüchern treffen sich in einer Besonderheit der Chronik,

7. Vgl. George J. Brooke, “Between Authority and Canon: The Significance of Reworking the Bible for Understanding the Canonical Process,” in *Reworking the Bible. Apocryphal and Related Texts at Qumran*, ed. Esther G. Ghazou, Devorah Dimant, and Ruth A. Clements. STDJ 58 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 85–104.

8. Vgl. Bruce N. Fisk, “Rewritten Bible,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 947–48.

im Phänomen der überaus häufigen und auffälligen Bezugnahme auf „das Prophetische“ in einem umfassenden Sinn.⁹ Oft schon wurde herausgestellt, wie sehr „die chronistische Darstellung der Vergangenheit von prophetischen Gestalten durchsetzt“¹⁰ ist. Wer nach der Rolle der „Prophetie“ in den Büchern der Chronik fragt, kann sich zunächst an den expliziten Bezugnahmen auf Propheten orientieren, wie es üblicherweise geschieht. Zu den aus den Prophetenbüchern und aus den Samuel- und Königebüchern bekannten Namen kommen zahlreiche neue hinzu. Damit ist jedoch nur *ein* Teil des Phänomens erfasst. Für eine Bewertung des Stellenwerts und der Funktion des Prophetischen in der Chronik muss man versuchen, *alle* Aspekte einzubeziehen.¹¹

Zur Funktion von Propheten

Tabelle 1 – direkte Erwähnung von Propheten¹²

Phänomen	Belege	Bemerkungen
Propheten in Quellenangaben (Prophetengestalten auch in Sam/Kön erwähnt)	1 Chr 29:29; 2 Chr 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 20:34; 26:22; 32:32; 33:19	- die Prophetengestalten sind auch in Sam/Kön erwähnt, jedoch nicht als „Autoren“ - Quellenangaben im Anschluss an die Entsprechungen in Sam/Kön (bis auf 1 Chr 29:29)

9. Um die ganze Breite des Phänomens in den Blick zu nehmen verwende ich den Terminus „das Prophetische.“

10. Vgl. Erhard, S. Gerstenberger, „Prophetie in den Chronikbüchern: Jahwes Wort in zweierlei Gestalt,“ in *Schriftprophetie*, hg. F. Hartenstein u.a. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2004), 351; Thomas Willi, „Da kleidete sich der Geist in Amasaj...: Prophetischer Geist in 1 Chr 12,17–19?“ in *Israel und die Völker: Studien zur Literatur und Geschichte Israels in der Perserzeit*, Th. Willi, SBAB 55 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2012), 153–66.

11. Vgl. Alexander Hanspach, *Inspirierte Interpreten: Das Prophetenverständnis der Chronikbücher und sein Ort in der Religion und Literatur zur Zeit des Zweiten Tempels*, ATSAT 64 (St. Ottilien: EOS-Verlag, 2000).

12. Zur Gruppierung vgl. die hilfreiche Zusammenstellung bei Steven L. McKenzie, 1–2 *Chronicles*, AOTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 53; McKenzie's Differenzierung von mir ergänzt.

aus Sam/Kön übernommene Prophetenerzählungen	(Samuel: 1 Chr 11:3) Natan: 1 Chr 17 Gad: 1 Chr 21 Ahija: 2 Chr 10:15 Schemaja: 2 Chr 11:2 Micha: 2 Chr 18 Jesaja: 2 Chr 32:20 Hulda: 2 Chr 34	
Prophetenerzählungen im Sondergut, aber von Propheten, die in Sam/ Kön erwähnt werden	Schemaja: 2 Chr 12:5, 7 Jehu: 2 Chr 19:2 Elija (per Brief!): 2 Chr 21:12	
Prophet im Sondergut, ohne Anhalt in Sam/ Kön—dennoch bekannt	Jeremia: 2 Chr 35:25; 36:12, 21, 22	
„neue“ Propheten: Prophetenerzählungen im Sondergut ohne Anhalt in Sam/Kön	Amasai: 1 Chr 12:19 Asarja: 2 Chr 15:1 (Oded: 2 Chr 15:8: Textkritik?) Hanani: 2 Chr 16:7 Jehasiel: 2 Chr 20:14 Eliezer: 2 Chr 20:37 Sacharja: 2 Chr 24:20 „Mann Gottes“: 2 Chr 25:7 „Prophet“: 2 Chr 25:15 Sacharja (Nr. 2!): 2 Chr 26:5 Oded: 2 Chr 28:9 „Seher“ (Pl.): 2 Chr 33:18 und 19(?)! Necho: 2 Chr 35:22	- Redekompositionen im Stil einer Bibel-Zitat-Col- lage („Musivstil/Mosaik“)
Zusammenfassende Beschreibung: Propheten als Umkehrprediger	2 Chr 24:19 2 Chr 36:15f.	

Zunächst richtet sich der Blick auf die namentlich erwähnten Propheten und die wenigen anonymen Gestalten, die nur mit der Funktion „Prophet“ oder „Seher“ bezeichnet werden. Schon diese Übersicht belegt das Interesse des Chronisten an einer deutlichen Vermehrung der

prophetischen Erzählfiguren. Mit einer unbedeutenden Ausnahme treten die „neuen“ Propheten nur in den Königserzählungen *nach* Salomo auf. Wie ist das zu erklären? Es bedeutet nicht, dass das Prophetische *vor* König Rehabeam, dem Nachfolger Salomos, keine Rolle spielte. 2 Chronik 36:15–16. beschreibt Gottes ultimative Anstrengung zur Rettung Judas vor dem Untergang und charakterisiert die Prophetenrolle insgesamt:

„Und es sandte JHWH, der Gott ihrer Väter durch seine Boten—
und sandte immer wieder—,
denn er hatte Mitleid mit seinem Volk und seiner Wohnung.“

Das gehäufte Vorkommen von Propheten als Mahner zur Gottestreue und als Deuter des Schicksal von König und Volk hängt zusammen mit der Gesamtkonstruktion der Chronikbücher: Die Narratio läuft ganz auf die Errichtung des Tempels zu (2 Chr 3:1–5:1); danach entscheidet sich das Schicksal von Königen und Volk an der Treue zu JHWH, die sich vor allem in der Sorge für den Tempel und die exklusive Bindung an den dort verehrten Gott ausdrückt. Ein signifikantes Beispiel ist die Ansprache des Propheten Asarja an König Asa in 2 Chr 15:1–7:

„Und Asarja, der Sohn Odeds – über ihm war Geist Gottes.
Und er ging hinaus vor Asa und sprach zu ihm:
Hört, Asa und ganz Juda und Benjamin.
JHWH ist mit euch, wenn ihr mit ihm seid.
Und wenn ihr ihn sucht, lässt er sich von euch finden.
Und wenn ihr ihn verlasst, wird er euch verlassen.
Viele Tage (gab es) für Israel keinen Gott der Treue/Wahrheit
und keinen lehrenden Priester und keine Tora.
Aber es kehrte um in seiner Bedrängnis zu JHWH, dem Gott Israels,
und sie suchten ihn und er ließ sich von ihnen finden.
Und in jenen Zeiten gab es keinen Frieden für Ausgehenden und
Kommenden,
denn große Verwirrungen (waren) auf allen Bewohnern der Länder.
Und es setzten sich gegenseitig zu Volk gegen Volk und Stadt gegen
Stadt,
denn Gott verwirrte sie mit aller Art Bedrängnis.
Ihr aber, seid stark und lass eure Hände nicht sinken,
denn es wird Lohn geben für eure Taten.“

Die prophetische Ansprache fügt collageartig kleine „Textbauteile“ aus zahlreichen Prophetenschriften (z. B. Jes 19:2; 55:6, Jer 29:13–14; 31:16;

Ez, Hos 3:4; 5:15; Am 3:9; Zepf 1:6; 3:16; Hag und Sach 8:10; 14:13¹³) und weiteren Büchern (z.B. Num 24:2; Ri 3:10; 11:29; 1 Sam 19:20, 23) zusammen, rahmt die Rede durch einen Lehrsatz über Erfolg oder Misserfolg in der Gottsuche am Anfang (aufgenommen in einem Kurzreferat in der Textmitte) und eine direkte Aufforderung der Adressaten am Ende. Das Muster wiederholt sich in den anderen Ansprachen. *Diese Propheten verkünden keine Orakel, sondern „predigen“ unter souveräner Verwendung autoritativer Schriften und gebunden an überliefertes Formelgut den Glauben an JHWH. 2 Chr 24:19 fasst die Rolle solcher Prediger-Propheten nach chronistischem Verständnis zusammen:*¹⁴

„Er (JHWH) sandte zu Ihnen Propheten, um sie umkehren zu lassen zu JHWH;
sie traten als Zeugen gegen sie auf, aber man schenkte ihnen kein Gehör.“

König Asas Antwort auf die Ermahnung durch den Propheten Asarja erfolgt unmittelbar; die Antwort ist konkret und praktisch: Beseitigung der Götzenbilder und Erneuerung des Brandopferaltars (2 Chr 15:8). Auf König Asa trifft also—ausnahmsweise—die Problemanzeige von 2 Chr 24:19 nicht zu.

Im ersten Teil der Chronik gibt es keine Prediger-Propheten, aber dennoch findet sich ein Mahner, der König und Volk zur Gottsuche auffordert. Es ist König David selbst, der sich wie die Propheten an den künftigen König, seinen Sohn Salomo, *und* an ganz Israel richtet. Im Lichte der Prophetentexte aus 2 Chronik betrachtet, übt also *König David* in den Ansprachen 1 Chr 22 und 28 eine prophetische Rolle (s. *Tabelle 2*) aus. Davids Rolle passt zu seinen sonstigen prophetischen Funktionen und zum prophetische Kolorit, mit dem er gezeichnet wird (s.u.). An dieser Stelle ist noch eine andere Beobachtung wichtig: In den prophetischen

13. Vgl. Ehud Ben Zvi, „Who Knew What? The Construction of the Monarchic Past in Chronicles and Implications for the Intellectual Setting of Chronicles,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century BCE*, ed. Oded Lipschits, Gary Knoppers, and Rainer Albertz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 355–56; Pancratius C. Beentjes, „Prophets in the Book of Chronicles,” in *The Elusive Prophet: The Prophet as a Historical Person, Literary Character and Anonymous Artist*, ed. Johannes C. de Moor, OTS 45 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 45–53.

14. Sara Japhet, *I and II Chronicles*, OTL (London: SCM, 1993), 848: „It is difficult to overestimate the significance of this verse for understanding a major facet in the Chronicler’s concept of prophecy. Its task as ‘warning.’”

Mahnreden geht es nicht einfach um Frömmigkeit oder das Hauptgebot oder ähnliches. Im Fokus liegt vielmehr *immer* das Zentralanliegen des Chronisten, und das ist *der Tempel* als Mittelpunkt Israels, als Ort von Opfer, Gebet und göttlicher Zuwendung (vgl. 2 Chr 7:12–16). Der Chronist arrangiert die gesamte Geschichtsüberlieferung nach seiner „Zentralperspektive“ auf den Tempel in Jerusalem neu.¹⁵

Propheten in den chronistischen „Quellenangaben“

In der Erwähnung von Propheten in den „Quellenangaben“ (vgl. *Tabelle 1*) am Ende der einzelnen chronistischen Königsgeschichten wurde immer wieder ein Hinweis auf „nicht biblisches“ Quellenmaterial zusätzlich zu Sam/Kön vermutet. Thomas Willi konnte dagegen zeigen, wie eng diese Angaben mit den Quellenhinweisen der Sam-Kön-Vorlage verbunden sind, also keine zusätzlichen Quellen belegen. Reinhard Gregor Kratz hat spekulativ aus den Prophetenerwähnungen geschlossen, der Chronist wolle den Eindruck eines prophetisch vermittelten und daher autoritativen großen Geschichtswerkes erwecken, aus der bereits seine Quellen so geschöpft hätten, wie er selbst es getan habe.¹⁶

Die Rolle der Prophetenangaben in den Quellenvermerken lässt sich wenigstens in einigen Fälle noch präziser bestimmen: Wenn man die nicht durch eine Vorlage in Sam/Kön angeregte Erwähnung von Samuel, Natan und Gad in 1 Chr 29:29 betrachtet, fällt auf, dass die drei Genannten mit den drei wichtigsten Ereignissen der chronistischen Daviderzählung zusammenhängen: *Samuel* ist mit der Salbung Davids zum König verbunden (1 Chr 11:3); der Prophet *Natan* vermittelt in 1 Chr 17 die göttliche Stiftung des Tempels, das Kernanliegen der Chronik. Der Prophet *Gad* schließlich befiehlt nach 1 Chr 21 David, auf der Tenne des

15. Georg Steins, „Noch einmal von vorn...“, *Die Bücher der Chronik als Rezyklat*, in *Figuren der Offenbarung: Biblisch—Religionstheologisch—Politisch*, hg. J. Negel u. M. Gruber, *Jerusalem Theologisches Forum* 24 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2012), 61–81.

16. Vgl. Thomas Willi, *Die Chronik als Auslegung. Untersuchungen zur literarischen Gestaltung der historischen Überlieferung Israels*, FRLANT 106 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), 229–41; Reinhard Gregor Kratz, „Die Suche nach Identität in der nachexilischen Theologiegeschichte: Zur Hermeneutik des chronistischen Geschichtswerkes und ihrer Bedeutung für das Verständnis des Alten Testaments“, in *Pluralismus und Identität*, hg. J. Mehlhausen, *VWGTh* 8 (Gütersloh: Kaiser, 1995), 279–303, bes. 294.

Arauna einen Brandopferaltar zu errichten; dabei entdeckt David, dass Gott diesen Ort für den Tempelbau bestimmt hat. Anders als die Vorlage in 2 Sam 24:18 betont der Chronist in diesem Zusammenhang, dass Gad auf Anweisung des „Boten Gottes“ handelt, die Entdeckung des Tempelplatzes also „himmlisch“ determiniert erscheint.

Es spricht folglich viel für die Annahme, dass sich mit den Prophetennamen in den Quellenangaben ganz spezifische Aussageabsichten verbinden. Die Chronik scheint mit allem erdenklichen Nachdruck betonen zu wollen, dass das Unternehmen „Tempelbau“ in den entscheidenden Aspekten göttlich *initiiert* und legitimiert ist. Dass mit den Prophetennennungen in den Quellenhinweisen diese Quellen auch *theologisch* aufgewertet werden, ihr Authentizitäts- und Wahrheitsanspruch unterstrichen werden,¹⁷ kommt hinzu: Die Geschichtsüberlieferung wird als *Offenbarung* verstanden.¹⁸ Der Aspekt der theologischen Aufwertung der Quellen als Offenbarungszeugnisse und die Bindung an das ganz auf den Tempel ausgerichtete Interesse des Chronisten lassen sich nicht trennen.

Ein umfassender Blick auf das Prophetische

Gewöhnlich richtet sich das Forschungsinteresse auf die Prophetengestalten; genauso wichtig sind aber die in *Tabelle 2* zusammengefassten *Phänomene des Prophetischen*. Die Rolle „Prophet“ darf in den Chronikbüchern nicht mehr eng gefasst und nur einer bestimmten Berufsgruppe zugeschrieben werden, wie gesehen, fällt auch König David darunter.

Tabelle 2 – weitere Phänomene des Prophetischen in 1 und 2 Chronik

Phänomen	Belege	Bemerkungen
David als Mahner zu Gottsuche und Tempelunterstützung	1 Chr 22:11–19; 28:8–10, 20f.	

17. Japhet, *I and II Chronicles*, 517: “By describing his sources as composed by prophets, and as written contemporaneously to the events in question, the Chronicler declares their ultimate validity.”

18. Bei Josephus, CA 1.8 ist dann die Vorstellung der Propheten als Chronisten der Geschichte Israels eindeutig belegt.

prophetische Vermittlung des Tempelbaus und der Tempelausstattung	1 Chr 17; 22; 28 1 Chr 21 1 Chr 28:11–19	1 Chr 28:19: „Hand Gottes“ auf David; zum auffälligen Gebrauch der 1. Pers. Sg. in Bezug auf David in 1 Chr 28:19 vgl. 1 Chr 23:5
autoritative Regelung des Tempelkultes/ Toraauslegung	2 Chr 8:14 2 Chr 29:25–26 2 Chr 35:4	zu David als „Mann Gottes“ vgl. Neh 12:24, 36
Prophetisierung der Tempelmusiker	1 Chr 25:1, 2, 3, (4), 5 2 Chr 20:14 2 Chr 29:30 2 Chr 35:15	
Einsetzung der Tempel- wächter durch Samuel	1 Chr 9:22	
„Hand Gottes“	2 Chr 20:12	vgl. 1 Chr 28:19; Parr 2 Chr 15:1; 20:14
Prophet/Prophetie und Buch/ „Schrift“	1 Chr 28:19 2 Chr 21:12 2 Chr 32:32 2 Chr 35:25	
„Glaubensregel“	2 Chr 20:20b	Rewriting von Ex 14:31 und Jes 7:9: „glaubt an seine Propheten!“

Alle unterschiedlichen Phänomene in *Tabelle 2* stehen im Zusammenhang mit dem zentralen Thema der Chronik, dem Tempel; die vielen Facetten des Phänomens treffen sich in dem Punkt, der dem Chronisten am wichtigsten ist. Dazu einige ausgewählte Beobachtungen:

Das *Natanorakel* (vgl. 2 Sam 7) wird in der Chronik nicht nur einmal mitgeteilt, sondern mehrfach aufgegriffen und ausgelegt. Im Gegensatz zu den Samuel- und Königebüchern, wo das ebenfalls geschieht, geht der Chronist aber ganz eigene Wege, denn ihm geht es vorrangig *nicht* um die Begründung der Daviddynastie.¹⁹ Vielmehr ist das Natanorakel nach der Erhebung Davids zum König ganz Israels ein weiterer wesentlicher

19. Vgl. Michael Pietsch, „*Dieser ist der Sproß Davids*“: Studien zur Rezeptionsgeschichte der Nathanverheißung im alttestamentlichen, zwischentestamentlichen und neu-

Schritt in der langen Reihe der göttlichen Stiftungsakte des Tempels.²⁰ Der Chronist findet in 2 Sam 7 (aufgenommen 1 Chr 17) offenbar so etwas wie die Gründungsurkunde des Jerusalemer Tempels vor. Dieses Orakel wird dann in 1 Chr 22 von David selbst seinem Sohn Salomo mitgeteilt und in 1 Chr 28 vor der ganzen Volksversammlung wiederholt. Immer geht es um die göttliche Begründung des Tempels und die Könige als Tempelkuratoren. Dass die Prophetenrezeption der Chronik ganz im Dienst des zentralen chronistischen Anliegens steht, zeigt sich auch an der von Chronisten besonders beachteten Gestaltung des Tempelkultes. Der Chronist stößt auf eine empfindliche Lücke in der Tora, denn die Tempelmusik ist darin nicht geregelt. In der Chronik werden einige gesetzliche Bestimmungen der Tora über die Leviten zur Begründung und Entfaltung der Kultmusik herangezogen. Nun lassen sich weitreichende *Neuerungen* nicht ohne besondere Verfahren aus den heiligen Texte ableiten. Diese kultrechtlichen Innovationen werden—so die Lösung der Chronik—als *inspirierte* Auslegungen der Tora verstanden. 2 Chronik 8:13–15 nennt mehrere entsprechende *mizwot* (= rechtsverbindliche Auslegungen) des Königs David, der hier den Prophetentitel „Mann Gottes“ trägt (vgl. Neh 12:24, 36), der sonst Mose (vgl. 1 Chr 23:14; 30:16; Esra 3:2) oder zwei Mal ausdrücklich gekennzeichneten Propheten (vgl. 2 Chr 11:2; 25:7, 9) zukommt. Nach 2 Chr 29:25 wird die „*mizwah* von David und von Gad, dem Seher des Königs, und von Natan, dem Propheten“ erteilt; zur Verdeutlichung der Autorität ist hinzugesetzt: „die *mizwah* (ergeht) von JHWH durch seine Propheten“. Die halachischen Innovationen der Chronik, die den Status und die Funktionen der Leviten betreffen, ergehen also in inspirierten *mizwot*.²¹

Auch hinsichtlich der Details der Tempelgestaltung lässt der Chronist Inspirationsterminologie anklingen. Nach 1 Chr 28:12 übergibt David

testamentlichen Schrifttum, WMANT 100 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2003).

20. Vgl. Steins, *Rezyklat*, 70–71.

21. Ich verwende hier bewusst einen „rabbinischen“ Terminus, denn an den genannten Stellen zeigt sich die sachliche Nähe der Chronik zur nachbiblischen jüdischen Literatur. Auffälligerweise spielen diese Besonderheiten der Chronik in der Datierungsdiskussion keine Rolle. Aus Mangel an guten Argumenten wird das Datierungsproblem meistens resignativ „gelöst“, indem man die Chronik in der späten Perserzeit ansetzt, so jüngst erneut Louis C. Jonker, *Defining All-Israel in Chronicles. Multi-levelled Identity Negotiation in Late Persian-Period Yehud*, FAT 106 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2016), 66–67.

seinem Sohn Salomo die Baupläne für den Tempel (hebr. *tabnit*, wie Ex 25:9). Nach der Auflistung der Baudetails wird aber in 28:19 präzisiert:

„Das alles (steht) in einer Schrift aus der Hand JHWHs über *mir*, durch die er Einsicht vermittelt in alle Arbeiten des Planes.“²²

Mit dem zunächst störenden Wechsel zur 1. Person Singular in einer Erzählung *über* David wird möglicherweise ein markantes Textsignal gesetzt: Der Wechsel zur 1. Person ist zwar syntaktisch auffällig, aber man findet ihn in einem parallelen Kontext in der Chronik noch einmal, und zwar in 1 Chr 23:5. Dort geht es um

„4000 JHWH Lobsingende (Leviten) mit Instrumenten, die *ich* (= David) gemacht habe zum Lobsingen.“

Auch hier fällt die Wahl der 1. Person aus dem erzählenden Kontext heraus.²³ Wohin könnte die Auffälligkeit weisen? Im Kontext von 1 Chr 23 finden wir noch eine Formulierung: 23:27 könnte als Link gemeint sein: „Die letzten Worten Davids“ (*dibre David ha'acharonim*) verweisen auf die programmatischen „letzten Worte Davids“ in 2 Sam 23:1–7, in denen David sich selbst als göttlich inspiriert vorstellt (vgl. 2 Sam 23:2). Es bleibt notgedrungen bei dieser Vermutung, die prophetische Zeichnung Davids ist nicht zu übersehen. Sie wird durch eine externe Parallele bestätigt: In dem berühmten Prosaabschnitt aus der Psalmenrolle 11Q5 Kol. 27.2–11 = „David's Compositions“ wird David als mit einem „verständigen Geist und Erleuchtung“ (Col 27.4) begabt vorgestellt. So konnte er nicht nur 3600 Psalmen schreiben, sondern auch hunderte von weiteren Kultliedern für die regelmäßigen Opfer und die Opfer an besonderen Tagen (vgl.

22. Der Text ist syntaktisch schwierig, besser: sehr locker gefügt, vgl. die Darstellung der Lösungsvorschläge bei Japhet, *I and II Chronicles*, 498; Japhets eigener Übersetzungsvorschlag überzeugt nicht, denn er holt die unbestreitbare Anspielung auf die göttliche Vermittlung des Heiligtums in Ex 25 nicht ein, vgl. dagegen Steven L. McKenzie, *1–2 Chronicles*, 215, „the Chronicler seems to be claiming that the temple plan is not just divinely inspired or even dictated, but is divinely written.“

23. Allein schon die Wiederholung dieses auffälligen Phänomens in verwandten thematischen Kontexten sollte zur Vorsicht gegenüber den üblichen raschen textkritischen „Bereinigungen“ mahnen.

2 Chr 8:13). Zeile 11 hält dann abschließend fest, dass das alles „durch Prophetie“²⁴ geschah.

An mehreren Stellen wird in den Chronikbüchern angedeutet, dass die prophetischen Weisungen in schriftlicher Form vorliegen und so über große Zeiträume hinweg kommuniziert werden. Auf die „Untreue“ (2 Chr 21:11, 13) König Jorams antwortet der Prophet Elija mit einem „Schreiben“ (*michtab*) aus dem Jenseits (2 Chr 21:12; vgl. 2 Chr 35:4), das sich in Stil und Inhalt nicht von den Reden der Prediger-Propheten unterscheidet. Außerdem kennt der Chronist eine geschriebene „Schauung des Propheten Jesaja“ (2 Chr 32:32) und „Klagegesänge des Propheten Jeremia“ (2 Chr 35:25). Für die Stellung der Prophetie in der Chronik ist es wichtig, dass die aus Schriftziten komponierten Reden und die autoritativ erstellten Torauslegungen verschriftlicht werden und damit die Zeiten überdauern. Der Gotteswille hat folglich nicht nur in der Gestalt der in der Chronik vielfach erwähnten Tora des Mose²⁵ und den verschriftlichen Worten der Propheten, sondern in der erzählten Welt auch in den Interpretationen Schriftform angenommen.

Die enge Verbindung von Kultmusik und Prophetie ist ein Charakteristikum der Chronik. In 2 Chr 20:14 kommt der Geist über Jehasiel, einen Leviten aus der Sippe der Asafiten, der dann eine ermutigende Ansprache an die Gemeinde und König Joschafat hält. Das scheint ein punktuell Ereignis zu sein. Anders steht es mit den Titulaturen, die die drei Stammväter der levitischen Tempelmusikergruppen in 1 Chr 25:1–5 erhalten: Sie werden als „Propheten“ (*nabi*) bezeichnet, die Tätigkeit von Asaf und Jedutun „JHWH zu danken und zu loben“ wird als „prophezeien“ (*nb' nif*) beschrieben. Und an dieser Stelle erhält Heman zusätzlich den Titel „Seher des Königs“. In 2 Chr 29:30 wird auch Asaf als „Seher“ und in 2 Chr 35:15 Jedutun als „Seher des Königs“ titulierte. Wenn man in 1 Chr 25:1 nicht dem *ketib*, sondern dem *qere* folgt, gilt die Aussage, dass die Kultmusiker sich „prophetisch betätigen“, sogar explizit von allen Nachfahren der drei Musikhäupter.²⁶

24. Johann Maier, *Die Qumran-Essener: Die Texte vom Toten Meer, 1: Die Texte der Höhlen 1–3 und 5–11* (München: Reinhardt, 1995), 340f.

25. Vgl. Georg Steins, „Torah-Binding and Canon Closure: On the Origin and Canonical Function of the Book of Chronicles“, in *The Shape of the Writings*, ed. Julius Steinberg and Timothy J. Stone, Siphut 16 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 237–80.

26. Vielleicht enthält der Abschnitt noch einen weiteren kunstvollen Hinweis auf

Gegen die einfache Erklärung, in den Musikern lebe die Tradition der Kultprophetie fort, hat sich bereits Sara Japhet ausgesprochen.²⁷ Der Kontext der Chronik weist in eine andere Richtung: Das „Prophezeien“ geschieht nach 1 Chr 25:3 „zum Danken und Loben JHWHs“; was der Chronist darunter versteht, geht aus der Stiftung der Kultmusik im Zuge der Ladeüberführung in 1 Chr 16 hervor. Es ist das von Standleiern, Tragleiern und Zimbeln begleitete Vortragen von Gesängen, die das universale Königtum des Gottes Israels „vor den Völkern“ (das ist Leitwort in 1 Chr 16:7–36) proklamieren. „Prophezeien“ beschreibt also keine spezielle und zusätzliche Aufgabe der Kultmusiker, sondern ist ein Interpretament ihrer Tätigkeit. Die Jerusalemer Kultmusiker verkünden in Instrumentalspiel und Gesang die Präsenz des universalen Königs in seinem Heiligtum.

Der Befund lässt weitere Überlegungen zu: Es besteht eine auffällige Entsprechung zwischen der Collage aus Bibelzitaten in den prophetischen Ansprachen und der Collage von Psalmenstücken in 1 Chr 16. Auch diese Musiker tragen autoritativ vorgegebene Texte vor und ihr Tun wird als „Prophetie“ verstanden. In allen diesen Fällen wird aus Sprachmaterial, das eventuell nur leicht verändert wird, ein neuer sinnvoller Text mit einer eigenen Aussage hergestellt. Mit andern Worten: Nach dem Bild, das die Chronik vermittelt, ist auch das Tun der Musiker schriftgestützt, nichts anderes als ein *rewriting* älterer biblischer Texte.

Besondere Aufmerksamkeit verdient die „Glaubensregel“ des König Joschafat in 2 Chr 20:20, die die Rolle der Propheten auf den Punkt bringt. Joschafats Ansprache in der Wüste Tekoa, eine der Schlüsselszenen in der Chronik, besteht nur aus einem Aufruf zum Hören und der Aufforderung:

Macht euch fest in JHWH, eurem Gott, und ihr werdet fest sein,
macht euch fest in seinen Propheten, und es wird euch gelingen.

Hier werden zwei bekannte Bibeltexte kombiniert, Ex 14:31b und Jes 7:9b. Formal wird eine Verbindung zwischen der Tora und dem *Corpus propheticum* aufgegriffen und akzentuiert, inhaltlich werden auf diese

das prophetische Tun der Musiker, und zwar am Schluss der Namenliste in V. 2 Der letzte dieser Name (*machzi'ot*) könnte „Visionen“ bedeuten.

27. Vgl. Japhet, *I and II Chronicles*, 441; zum Zusammenhang von Prophetie und Kultmusik vgl. Hans-Peter Mathys, „Prophetie, Psalmengesang und Kultmusik in der Chronik,“ in *Prophetie und Psalmen: Festschrift für Klaus Seybold zum 65. Geburtstag*, hg. B. Huwylar u.a., AOAT 280 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2001), 281–96.

Weise die Propheten aufgewertet.²⁸ Die Einspielung von Ex 14:31 in der Kurzansprache des Königs Joschafat unmittelbar vor der Schlacht geschieht nicht zufällig; sie ist in der vorangehenden Ansprache des *ad hoc* mit Geist begabtem Jehasiel vorbereitet. Diese ebenfalls für den Chronisten typische Textcollage variiert die theologischen Kernsätze aus Ex 14:13f.; auch der Schluss des Geschehens lässt das Meerwunder anklingen:

Ex 14:13–14		2 Chr 20:15–17	
A	Fürchtet euch nicht.	A	... ihr sollt euch nicht fürchten...
B	Stellt euch hin und seht die Rettungstat JHWHs	C	denn nicht für euch (ist) der Kampf, sondern für Gott.
...		...	
C	JHWH wird für euch kämpfen, ihr aber könnt ruhig sein.		Nicht für euch (gilt es) zu kämpfen in diesem.
		B	Stellt euch hin, ..., und seht die Rettungstat JHWHs mit euch...fürchtet euch nicht.
Ex 14:30b		2 Chr 20:24b	
Und es sah Israel Ägypten tot am Saum des Meeres.		Siehe, sie waren Leichen, gefallen auf die Erde, und kein Entrinnen.	

Der Chronist bewegt sich ganz auf der Ebene eines völlig synchron wahrgenommenen Textes und kombiniert aus verschiedenen biblischen Schriften allgemeingültige theologische Einsichten (die in den Quellen-texten schon satzenhaft verdichtet sind), ohne Rücksicht darauf, dass in historischer Betrachtung die Einspielung eines Jesajawortes durch Joschafat anachronistisch ist.²⁹

Gegenüber den Vorlagen aus Ex 14 und Jes 9 hat in 2 Chr 20:20 die Sprachform gewechselt. Ex 14:31 ist Erzählung, Jes 9:7 eine bedingte Warnung, in der Chronik wird daraus eine weisheitliche Aufforderung:

28. Vgl. Pancratius Coernelis Beentjes, „Die Freude war groß in Jerusalem“: Eine Einführung in die Chronikbücher (Münster: LIT, 2008), 23–27; Japhet, *I and II Chronicles*, 795.

29. Vgl. Beentjes, *Freude*, 26.

„Hört! – Glaubt!“ Ich bezeichne Umformung von Texten mit Wechsel des Genus als Allotextualität. Welche Propheten sind in der Glaubensregel 2 Chr 20:20 gemeint? Es sind nicht die exzeptionellen Gestalten der Vergangenheit, um die es geht. Die Prophetie, die hier am Beispiel des Asafiten Jehasiel vorgeführt wird, ist selbst schon eine, die ihr Wort aus den Schriften förmlich „entwickelt“. Es sind *die autoritativen Texte*, die durch ihre je aktuelle Auslegung „weetersprechen“, Gottes Wort so vermitteln, dass ihnen je neu geglaubt werden kann: Die Propheten der Chronik sind Sprachrohre der (Heiligen) Schrift.

Das Medium der Feindvernichtung ist in 2 Chr 20 der Gesang der Leviten; das erinnert nicht zufällig an den syntaktisch und inhaltlich schwierigen Text Ps 149:6.³⁰ Hier wie dort wird im Kultgesang und *durch* das Singen die Welt ins Rechte gebracht: Die Proklamation des rettenden Gottes schafft eine neue Wirklichkeit. Der Musterpsalm in 1 Chr 16 schließt in Vers 35 mit dem Appell, Gott möge „vor den Völkern retten“; hier besteht eine Brücke zu 2 Chr 20, denn der Ort der göttlichen Rettung ist der Tempel. In 2 Chr 20 muss die Wüste Tekoa, in der die Überwindung der Feinde geschieht, der erweiterter Tempel verstanden werden: Die gesamte Aktion beginnt im Tempel und endet dort, und die Hauptrolle spielen die Kultmusiker in ihrem Ornat (vgl. 20:5 und 28 als Rahmen). Dieser „Krieg“ wird als Liturgie inszeniert, oder treffender: die Tempelliturgie wird gedeutet als Medium der Rettung Israels. Die Proklamation der rettenden Macht des universal wirkenden Gottes – das ist nach chronistischem Verständnis der Inhalt der Prophetie.

Zurück zum Anfang: Der Bibelkanon als Fortführung göttlichen Sprechens

Die Chronik ist nicht nur das umfangreichste innerbiblische Zeugnis für die impliziter Kommentierung durch *Rewriting*, das also solches schon bemerkenswert ist.³¹ Die vielen Phänomen des „Prophetischen“ spielen

30. Der schwierige Vers Ps 149:6 erhellt im Licht von 2 Chr 20 eine klare Deutung: v. 6b ist explikativ zu v. 6a zu verstehen: Die Loblieder selbst sind das Schwert, das den Sieg herbeiführt. Ps 149:6 ist kein verwerflicher Aufruf, im Namen Gottes zu den Waffen zu greifen!

31. Vgl. Moshe. J. Bernstein, „Interpretation of Scripture,” in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1:379: „All rewriting is commentary, and the metho-

dabei neben anderen Aspekten eine wichtige Rolle.³² Aber damit ist die Bedeutung des Interesses an Prophetie noch nicht hinreichend erfasst. Durch die „Prophetisierung“ wird gewissermaßen eine *zweite Ebene* in den Text eingezogen, die uns nicht nur einen exzellenten Einblick in bestimmte Techniken des *Rewriting* gewährt, über die sich vielmehr auch ein Zugang zur Hermeneutik dieser Vorgänge öffnet.

Mit Hilfe der Phänomene des Prophetischen *inszeniert* der Chronist den Umgang mit anerkannten überlieferten Schriften, also die semantische Öffnung des Tradierten für seine neuen Zwecke. Propheten stehen für Kreativität, Authentizität und Aktualität des Redens von Gott. Es geht also um die *Bindung* an die verschriftlichte Tradition *und zugleich* um deren *Öffnung*, so dass die Identität aus dem Ursprung und die Relevanz für die Gegenwart zugleich gewährleistet sind. Die Aktivierung der Überlieferung betrifft, wie wir gesehen haben, sowohl deren erzählenden Teile, die Aggada, wie die gesetzlichen, die Halacha.³³

In der Chronik wiederholt sich ein Vorgang, der auch schon für die Konstitution des Ur-Kanons³⁴ aus *Tora* und *Nebi'im* maßgeblich war, das Nebeneinander von Vorgabe und Aktualisierung. In den chronistischen Reden werden Textstücke aus verschiedenen biblischen Büchern zu einer neuen Aussage verbunden. Und diese neu geschaffenen Texte werden in Zusammenhänge eingesetzt, die in den Samuel- und Königsbüchern vorgegeben sind. Die „Auflösung“, ja, die „Atomisierung“ von tradier-

dology of selection, rearrangement, supplementation, and omission in the process of rewriting is a form of commentary, even if the interpretive aspect is not always overt at first glance to the reader who is not closely attentive to the original text being rewritten.”

32. Vgl. McKenzie, *1–2 Chronicles*, 52, “Prophets are accorded an exalted role in Chronicles.” Das gilt in der Chronik nicht nur für die Propheten, sondern für das Prophetische überhaupt.

33. Vgl. Matthias Jendrek, *Hinwendung zu Gott: Funktionen der Gebetssprache im Erzählverlauf der Chronikbücher*, FRLANT 269 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 238: „Es ist aufgrund bisheriger Forschungsergebnisse nicht unwahrscheinlich, dass die Funktionen der übrigen zu wörtlicher Rede stilisierten Passagen der Chronikbücher denen der Gebete und der Gebetssprache ähnlich sind.“ Diese vorsichtig formulierte Annahme hat sich auch durch diese Untersuchung voll bestätigt; Schriftauslegung durch Schriftverwendung ist das Konstruktionsprinzip der Chronikbücher.

34. Vgl. Zu diesem Kanonkonzept Georg Steins, „Zwei Konzepte—ein Kanon: Neue Theorien zur Entstehung und Eigenart der Hebräischen Bibel,“ in *Kanonisierung—die Hebräische Bibel im Werden*, hg. Georg Steins und Johannes Taschner, BThSt 110 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2010), 8–45.

ten Texten in Textbausteine, die sich neu kombinieren lassen, setzt ein Bewusstsein vom gleichen theologischen Wert des gesamten „Ausgangsmaterials“ voraus. Es muss mit der Auffassung gerechnet werden, dass alle Schriften sich ein und demselben „Ursprung“ verdanken, alle überlieferten Worte das Wort des einen Gottes sind. Kurz gesagt: Ohne ein Kanon-Bewusstsein in einem ursprünglichen Sinn wäre ein solches Vorgehen unverständlich.³⁵ In der Chronik lässt sich fast wie in einem Labor beobachten, wie aus vielen autoritativen Schriften *eine* Heilige Schrift wird. Das geschieht nicht durch die Entwicklung einer Theorie des Kanons, sondern durch die beschriebenen Praxen des *Rewriting*, die sich in einem Kosmos autoritativer Texte bewegen, sich daraus regelrecht bedienen und so zum Wachstum eines Bewusstseins einer besonderen Überlieferung beitragen.

Parallel dazu lassen sich in der Chronik aber auch schon deutliche *reflexe* Spuren einer großen Bedeutung von Verschriftlichung maßgeblicher Auslegung finden. Sowohl das Herausgreifen von Texten unterschiedlicher Herkunft und ursprünglicher Einbindung wie auch das gesteigerte Bewusstsein der Schriftlichkeit sind meiner Meinung nach Belege eines *stark entwickelten* Kanonbewusstseins, natürlich nicht im Sinne eines engen dogmatisch-juridischen Kanonbegriffs der späteren Zeit. Auch das spricht für eine Spätdatierung der Chronik etwa im 2. Jahrhundert v. Chr.

Diese formalen Beschreibungen der Prozesse lassen sich durch inhaltliche Beobachtungen ergänzen: Die Bearbeitung des Materials in der Chronik wird erstens völlig dominiert von dem, was ich die Zentralperspektive nenne: die Ausrichtung auf den Tempel, seine Gründung, Ausstattung und sein Funktionieren. Der Tempel steht für die Chronik im Zentrum der Identität Israels; der Rekurs auf die Vergangenheit dient diesem Gegenwartsinteresse. Wir haben es also nicht mit musealer Erinnerungspflege zu tun, vielmehr wird Vergangenheit „praktisch“. Das gilt auch für den zweiten Aspekt: die in der Chronik immer wieder (und fast etwas penetrant) zu beobachtende Elementarisierung der Überlieferung, die zu Exempeln für das richtige Verhalten (oder die Warnung vor dem Falschen) umgestaltet wird. In den Königsgeschichten wiederholt sich stets

35. Vgl. William M. Schniedewind, “The Chronicler as an Interpreter of Scripture,” in *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture*, ed. M. Patrick Graham and Steven L. McKenzie, JSOTSup 263 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 158: “Already in the book of Chronicles some notion of authoritative Literature—of Scripture develops.” Das hat sich in dieser Studie nachdrücklich bestätigt.

dasselbe Muster: Die Gottsuche in Gestalt des Engagements für den Jerusalemer Tempel führt zum Gelingen, die Abwendung vom Tempel zum Scheitern.

Beide Prozesse—die Fokussierung in der Zentralperspektive und die Elementarisierung—haben die gleiche Funktion: Sie dienen der Transformierung der Vergangenheit. Diese Vergangenheit wird zur mythischen Gründungszeit, sie wird aus dem Strom der Zeit herausgenommen, das Wesentliche wird verstetigt: Nicht was war, ist erzählenswert, sondern was immer gilt. Und diese Einsicht werden didaktisch aufbereitet. Die Geschichte ist nicht mehr als solche interessant, sondern als Kleid des Ewigen. Die beschriebenen Vorgänge sind genau die Leistungen, die ein Kanon erbringen soll: Zeugnis des immer und überall Gültigen, die Herausstellung des „Übergreifend-Bleibenden“ verbunden mit einer der „Vorwärts-Orientierung.“³⁶ Beides beschreibt auch das Interesse der Chronik an der Überlieferung in formal gültiger Weise. Der Inhalt der Botschaft heißt: Der Gott Israels hat mit dem von ihm gestifteten Tempel und durch den Kult einen Ort der Rettung in der Welt geschaffen.

An der Chronik wird ablesbar, wie das veränderte Verständnis von Prophetie, die nun immer mehr zur Schriftauslegung wird, zusammenfällt mit dem Weg, den die jüdischen Schriften in der späten Zeit des Zweiten Tempels „from authority to canon“³⁷ zurücklegen. Es liegt nahe, dass auch die Verfasser dieser Bücher ihr Tun als Prophetie verstanden haben, konkret als ein Weiter-sprechen-lassen der Stimme, die sie selbst in den Schriften vernommen haben.³⁸ Mit der Chronik stehen wir nicht

36. Zu diesen Termini vgl. Oswald Loretz, *Die Wahrheit der Bibel* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder 1964), 106–7; zur Bedeutung für die Kanontheologie vgl. Georg Steins, „Oswald Loretz—ein Kanontheologe? Kanonische Bibellektüre in der Kritik,“ in *Zwischen Zion und Zaphon: Studien im Gedenken an den Theologen Oswald Loretz (14.01.1928–12.04.2014)*, hg. Ludger Hiepel und Marie-Theres Wacker, AOAT 438 (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2016), 63–84.

37. Brooke, *Between Authority and Canon*, 87 u.ö.; vgl. Peter Welten, „Kriegsbericht und Friedens Erwartung: Spätnachexilische Schriftauslegung am Beispiel von 2 Chr 20,“ in „*Sieben Augen auf einem Stein*“ (Sach 3,9): *Studien zur Literatur des Zweiten Tempels; Festschrift für Ina Willi-Plein zum 65. Geburtstag*, hg. Friedhelm Hartenstein und Michael Pietsch (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2007), 402–3. mit Hinweisen, die eine Spätdatierung der Chronik nahelegen.

38. Vgl. William M. Schniedewind, „Prophets and Prophecy in the Books of Chronicles,“ in *The Chronicler as Historian: Studies in Text and Texture*, ed. M. Patrick Graham and Steven L. McKenzie, JSOTSup 238 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997),

am Anfang des Prozesses, in dem aus vielen Schriften das (eine) WORT GOTTES wird, sondern gleichsam mittendrin: In den Büchern der Chronik spiegelt sich der Prozess der Kanonwerdung wie in keinem anderen „biblischen“ Buch wider. Für eine Identifizierung der Trägerkreise dieser Prozesse bietet die Chronik bemerkenswerte Hinweise, denn möglicherweise haben diese Kreise am Ende von Salomos Weihegebet in 2 Chr 6,41 mit einem Zitat aus Ps 132,9 ihre „Unterschrift“ hinterlassen und sind daher als *chassidim* zu bezeichnen.³⁹

204–24. Schniedewinds Beobachtungen zu den Ansprachen der von der Chronik neu eingeführten „inspired messengers“ treffen nicht nur auf diese zu, sondern sind ein Phänomen aller Reden in der Chronik und letztlich des ganzen Werkes, wie Schniedewind S. 224 andeutet; Thomas Willi, „Innovation aus Tradition: Die chronistischen Bürgerlisten Israels 1 Chr 1–9 im Focus von 1 Chr 9,“ in *Israel und die Völker: Studien zur Literatur und Geschichte Israels in der Perserzeit*, SBAB 55 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2012), 167–82, plädiert S. 181 ebenfalls für die Verwendung von Begriffen aus der mündlichen Kommunikation zur Beschreibung dieses (gleichwohl verschriftlichen) Auslegungsprozesses.

39. Vgl. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon: A Contribution to the Study of Jewish Origins* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1977), 136, 186n51.

The Per Se Voice of the Old Testament and the Gospel according to Matthew: Abiding Witness and Recontextualization of Torah in the New Covenant

Jonathan T. Pennington

Does Jesus of Nazareth—the one proclaimed in the new assembly to be the divine Christ raised from the dead and worthy of worship—expect his disciples to honor the teachings and commands of the Hebrew Scriptures? Does it matter if the disciple is a Jew by birth or a gentile?

It is difficult to identify a more complex and contentious problem in the earliest days of the Christian movement. The relationship of Jesus's message and actions to God's preceding revelation was the primary source of conflict during Jesus's own ambulatory adulthood, and this continued and even intensified in the early church after his resurrection and ascension. This is understandable. Both theologically and pragmatically it was difficult for the first Christians to articulate how God's revealed word that abides forever (Isa 40:8) could now be modified or even ignored by the teachings of Jesus and the apostles who "declared all foods clean" (Mark 7:19) and suggested that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value" (Gal 5:6).

Fast forward through twenty centuries of Christian worshipers and scholars and we find the same core question being debated, albeit with a recontextualized vocabulary and a long contrail of turbulent *Wirkungsgeschichte*. In the second-half of the twentieth century the biblical and theological relationship of the New Testament to the Old Testament and of Christianity to Judaism continued unabated, indeed intensified in the wake of the horrors of the Holocaust, itself built upon decades of implicitly anti-Semitic biblical scholarship.¹

1. Let alone disagreements regarding the proper terminology—"Hebrew Bible,"

Brevard Childs and Christopher Seitz both take up this issue, rooted in their own educational *Sitz im Leben*. Over against the hegemony of the historical-critical approach, both Childs and Seitz argue that we need more than the horizontal stream of tradition of how the Old Testament has been read. Instead, we must recover the vertical, ontological, and kerygmatic dimension of the Old Testament, which “as scripture of the church continues to bear its own witness within the context of the Christian Bible.”² Even Christian readers today, often unaware of their adoption of a historical-critical mindset, have come to read the Old Testament only through its reception in the New. Rather, as Seitz argues, we need to return to “typological and figural senses”—ways of reading the Old Testament that the earlier church was able to do before the “literal sense” was conflated with the “historical sense.”³ These typological and figural ways of reading were able to maintain both the abiding witness of the Old Testament and the Christian reading of the two-testament canon. The early church did not struggle with what to do with the Old Testament or whether it was authoritative; this was everywhere acknowledged. The struggle was “what was one to make of a crucified messiah and a parting of the ways” in light of Jesus.⁴

As a member of the next, overlapping generation of scholars who have been happily influenced by Seitz and count him a friend, I am aware of Chris’s abiding influence on me, particularly his concern about flat-footed supersessionism and his repeated trumpeting of the per se voice of the Old Testament as part of the two-part Christian canon of Holy Scripture. While I am more sympathetic than Chris to some other voices and approaches to the relationship of the Old Testament and New Testament such as Richard Hays and Walter Moberly, I am deeply appreciative of his

“Hebrew Scriptures”? See Christopher Seitz’s chapter, “Old Testament or Hebrew Bible? Some Theological Considerations,” in Seitz, *Word without End: The Old Testament as Abiding Theological Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). Recently, Seitz has also used the expression “the Elder Testament” to emphasize a canonical reading (Seitz, *The Elder Testament: Canon, Theology, Trinity* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018]).

2. Christopher Seitz, *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 45, quoting Childs.

3. Seitz, *Figured Out*, 47. Cf. Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980).

4. Seitz, *Figured Out*, 47.

influence as well as the prophetic (lower case) role he has played in my own theological development.

From within my own area of study as a student of the Gospel of Matthew, fifteen years after first hearing Chris's clarion call and concerns, I want to briefly and incompletely address this question of the per se voice of the Old Testament within the two-part Christian canon by exploring what the First Gospel has to contribute to the discussion. We will see, I believe, that much of what motivates Matthew's particular theological biography of Jesus the Christ overlaps with the important theological question that the church of Christ has long debated, a debate that Chris has spent much of his career pondering as well.

Matthew's contribution to the question of how Christianity understands and relates to the Old Testament can be summed up in one word, "fulfillment"—though we cannot say "*simply* summed up" because it is precisely the complex and nuanced function of the idea of fulfillment for Matthew wherein lies his contribution to the discussion, a contribution that will take an entire biographical narrative for him to explicate.

Fulfillment in the Gospel according to Matthew

Beginning with sheer statistics we see that Matthew is quite keen to speak in terms of fulfillment. Forms of the weighty verb *πληρόω* occur sixteen times in Matthew as compared to Mark's two occurrences and Luke's nine.⁵ Most of these are found in Matthew's well-known fulfillment quotations, wherein Matthew describes some event in Jesus's life as happening "in order to fulfill" some text from the Jewish Scriptures, the connection of which is not always immediately apparent to modern readers.⁶ These

5. Of the eighty-six total occurrences in the New Testament, the only other books that are in the same range of frequency are John (fifteen times) and Acts (sixteen times), though in both cases these books often use the word in a more general sense of "fill" as compared to Matthew's consistent more technical sense.

6. There is some debate about exactly how many of Matthew's references to Scripture being fulfilled should be classified as the formula quotations because of some slight variations in his terminology. What is clear is that Matthew regularly quotes Old Testament texts and explains and interprets some event from Jesus's life as fulfilling or happening to fulfill that Old Testament text. The debates about Matthew's utilization of Old Testament texts is deep and wide, especially among some evangelicals who are anxious to prove that Matthew's usage aligns fully with the intent of the Old Testament author. See R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*,

fulfillment quotations not only appear at crucial points throughout the narrative of the First Gospel, they are also the means by which Matthew chooses to introduce his entire account. Matthew 1–2, which serve as the introduction to the book (and the New Testament canon), are designed to show that the frame by which to interpret Jesus is “fulfillment”—that all that he is, says, and does should be understood as fulfilling what God has said in the past. This begins with the Genesis-to-Chronicles-evoking genealogy (Matt 1:1–17) and continues through a series of five stories that each hang on a reference to the Jewish Scriptures as fulfilled in Jesus (1:22–23; 2:5–6, 15, 17–18, 23). This sets the timbre for the entire tone of Matthew’s biography, inviting readers to interpret all of the gospel through this construal of fulfillment. This has led Matthean scholars such as R. T. France to observe that fulfillment is the most central idea for the whole of the Gospel of Matthew.⁷

We have not yet attempted to define, however, what Matthew means by “fulfill” and “fulfillment.” This is not an easy task. Dale Allison offers nine different ways to understand the word “fulfillment” and what it might mean in Matthew’s usage. He helpfully opts for a view that understands Jesus’s fulfillment to be eschatological and a transcending of the Mosaic law, not simply explaining it or enabling others to do it.⁸ William Dumbrell, following Rudolf Schnackenburg, describes this idea as mean-

NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 45. I have found France’s explanation very seasoned and sagacious, worth quoting in full: “While Matthew’s way of interpreting Old Testament texts is not the same as ours, and sometimes leaves us puzzled because we do not share his cultural background, it is very far from haphazard or unprincipled. These chapters show a remarkably detailed knowledge of the Old Testament text and a subtlety of thought which perceives and exploits verbal and thematic connections. And the author seems to assume that at least some of the original readers of the book would have been able to follow such sophisticated patterns of thought, and would delight as much as he did in tracing the fulfillment of God’s purpose through the details as well as in the essential events of the Messiah’s coming. What we have in these chapters, in other words, is not a random gathering of embarrassingly inappropriate texts, but the product of a sophisticated and probably lengthy engagement with Scripture in a way which goes beyond our concepts of ‘scientific exegesis’ precisely because it believes in God’s purposeful control of both the words and events of the Old Testament, so that it is only in the light of their ultimate fulfillment in the Messiah that their significance can be appreciated by Christian hindsight.”

7. France, *Matthew*, 10.

8. W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on*

ing “bringing to fulfillment a prior scriptural pronouncement or body of teaching by giving to it full validity.... The law finds its prophetic centre in Jesus but not necessarily its end.”⁹

The above quotations refer specifically to Matthew’s important use of “fulfill” in 5:17, to which we will return shortly. But speaking more broadly, beginning with Matt 1–2 and going throughout his gospel, it is easy to see from Matthew’s usage that the biblical idea of fulfillment does not mean simply the completion of a previous *prediction*, even though this is what the English word often means and probably what the average Bible reader today assumes about the term. Rather, the kind of fulfillment in view throughout Matthew is that of *figuration* or *typological interconnectivity*. To say that the assorted events of Jesus’s early life fulfill previous words and events from Israel’s past means for Matthew that these events figure each other; they rhyme; they model or imitate each other mimetically, with an added edge of consummation and completion. Fulfillment is a powerful biblical idea that does not depend on prediction per se, while it still leans forward to a time when God will bring to full consummation all his good redemptive plans. We may think about the relationship of figurality to linear, historical prediction as the latter being one particular version of the former. Prediction is really a subset of the bigger, figural idea of fulfillment.

When Matthew offers a Christ-fulfillment of an Old Testament text, he does not engage in an exegesis or explanation of what the text meant but rather he offers “a far-reaching theological argument which takes the Old Testament text and locates it within an overarching scheme of fulfillment which finds in Jesus the end point of numerous prophetic trajectories.”¹⁰ This is a kind of typology or figuration, which depends not only on predictions “but on transferable ‘models’ from the Old Testament story.”¹¹ This way of rereading the Jewish Scriptures continues seamlessly in the early church, as can be observed in the patristic habit of reading with Christ as the hypothesis that unlocks and explains the

the Gospel according to Saint Matthew: Matthew 1–7, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 1988), 485–86.

9. William J. Dumbrell, “The Logic of the Role of the Law in Matthew 5:1–20,” *NovT* 23 (1981): 19. See also Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament*, trans. J. Holland-Smith and W. J. O’Hara (London: Seabury, 1965), 56–59.

10. France, *Matthew*, 81.

11. France, *Matthew*, 80.

economy of God's saving work, as John O'Keefe and R. R. Reno describe it.¹²

Operative, then, for understanding Matthew's idea of fulfillment is learning to read not only forward but also backward. The typical modern approach has focused on looking ahead in a predictive prophecy way. But for early Christians the wondrous thing was looking back from their experience of Christ and, in rereading the Scriptures, seeing God repeatedly saying words that now fit Jesus so well. It is the post-Christ-experience hindsight that makes sense of the whole. As Frederick Bruner recommends, "When we read a fulfilled-prophecy text we should not so much think, 'How precisely the *prophets* predicted this,' a view that could apotheosize wizard prophets; rather, we should think 'How perfectly *Jesus* fulfilled ancient intimations,' which honors both the Son's fulfillings and the Spirit's promptings."¹³ There are forward-looking hopes and predictions, to be sure, but we also need a backward-looking approach to make full sense of Matthew's notion of fulfillment.

Matthew 5:17–20: A Canonical and Theological Hot Spot

The preceding argument about what Matthew means by fulfillment is absolutely crucial to (though often absent from) our interpretation of the hot-spot text that is Matt 5:17–20. There is no text over the last nineteen centuries that has been more important or more debated regarding the relationship of the Christian to torah than these few verses. Coming to us in the setting of the already famous Sermon on the Mount, 5:17–20 addresses most directly Jesus's own view on the meaning of torah in the Christian understanding:

[17] Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish but to fulfill. [18] Truly I say to you that until heaven and earth pass away not an iota or one pen stroke of the Law will pass away, until all is accomplished. [19] Whoever, therefore, lessens one of the least of the commandments and teaches others in this way,

12. See the discussion of Irenaeus in John J. O'Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 33–44.

13. Frederick D. Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 1:33.

that person will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does these commandments and teaches others will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. [20] For I tell you that if your righteousness does not surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees then you will never enter into the kingdom of heaven.¹⁴

These rich and thick words serve as the thesis statement for the whole christological wisdom paraenesis that is the Sermon.¹⁵ They also serve as the introduction to the first part of the central section of the Sermon, 5:17–48, in which Jesus presents six examples of what the Christian reading of torah looks like on the issues of murder-hate, adultery-lust, divorce, vows, retaliation, and love for neighbor and enemies.

Traditionally these six examples have been titled “antitheses,” meaning that in them Jesus overturns or transforms torah. I suggest instead that they should be interpreted as “exegeses”—Jesus’s own reading of torah that is both continuous and discontinuous with the law in the Mosaic covenant. The continuity consists in Jesus’s prophetic reading of torah, focusing on the heart or inner person in covenantal relationship to God, ultimately depicted as an ethic of divine imitative virtue (5:48, based on Lev 19–20). The discontinuity is found in the fact that Jesus presents himself now as the sole arbiter of God’s will on the earth—“anyone who hears these words of mine” (7:24, 26; see also 11:25–27)—who is also transforming humanity’s relationship with God by making a new covenant through his blood (26:27–28) that includes both Jews and gentiles, whoever responds with faithfulness to him.

This simultaneous continuity and discontinuity is described by Matthew as Jesus not coming “to abolish but to fulfill.” Herein lies the heart of the Matthean understanding of the relationship of Christianity to torah—not abolishment but fulfillment. The Jewish Scriptures, including the revelation that is the Mosaic covenant, have not been abolished; Christians have a two-testament, non-Marcionite canon; the per se voice of the Old Testament continues to be a speaking testament. At the same

14. My own translation, as published in Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

15. For an explanation of the wisdom paraenetical nature of the Sermon and its rhetorical structure, see ch. 5 in Pennington, *Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*.

time, this voice, this testament, these writings, now fly under the banner of fulfilled. As Matthew has already been at pains to show in the four chapters preceding the Sermon, fulfill does not mean abolish or regard as old news or irrelevant. Rather, fulfilled means that Christians now reread what God has said in the Jewish Scriptures both (1) for what they reveal about God the Father and his work in the world (which is not abolished) and (2) with a Christ-focused hypothesis that enables a figural and metaphorical forward-looking reinterpretation of the same (fulfilled).

On the pragmatic question of what this means for the abiding witness of the teachings and commandments of torah for Christians, we may again hear the thoughtful articulation of France. To affirm the continuing validity of torah as authoritative “is not necessarily to imply that [the commands] will continue to function in the same way.” As the word of God they remain and are not to be discarded and disparaged, but this does not mean they will all be understood and obeyed in the same way after the coming of Jesus. This is to fail to distinguish between the authority and function of the law:

The law remains a permanent and crucial revelation of the will of God, but its application can no longer be by the simple observance of all its precepts as literal regulations for Christian conduct. The key to its interpretation is in Jesus and in his teaching, with its sovereign declaration of the will of God as a far deeper level than mere rule-keeping.¹⁶

Allison comes to similar conclusions, emphasizing especially Jesus’s role as the promised eschatological prophet (cf. Deut 18:15–20). This means Jesus speaks with God’s authority and that fulfillment means that the law cannot be merely set aside as irrelevant (“abolished”). “Fulfillment can only confirm the Torah’s truth, not cast doubt upon it. And while Jesus’s new demands may surpass the demands of the Old Testament, the two are not contradictory.”¹⁷ This is an important point and makes sense of 5:19, which maintains the abiding witness of torah, even if it has undergone a necessary eschatological transformation.

16. R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 196–97.

17. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1–7*, 487.

Matthean Explications and Extensions of Jesus's Fulfillment of Torah

This complex "fulfillment not abolishment" Christian approach to torah is unpacked throughout the entirety of the Sermon, but Matthew does not leave it there. He revisits the same idea several times in his gospel account, explicating and extending it through narrative examples. I will briefly highlight two such examples.

Matthew 12:1–20 and the Sabbath Controversies

The first example is the double conflict story of Matt 12:1–20. At this point in the narrative the opposition of the Jewish leadership to Jesus has been intensifying. In this chapter the tension brings the Pharisees to a crossroads that will lead them down the path of decided animosity and a plan to kill Jesus (12:14). The stories that Matthew uses to describe this turning point in his story sit directly on an important aspect of the torah, one of the Ten Commandments and a strong Jewish cultural identity marker (especially in the subjugated status among gentiles)—observance of the Sabbath.

First through the disciples' plucking of heads of grain to eat and then via a healing in the synagogue, Jesus and his disciples perform two actions that were arguably violations of the Sabbath. The Pharisees are keen to point this out (12:2, 10), certain that he was breaking God's commands. Was he? Some later interpreters might suggest that Jesus was not in fact transgressing the Sabbath laws here but only the traditions of the Pharisees. However, this supposition is insufficient to explain what is happening in these crucial stories and how this Sabbath controversy narrative functions in Matthew's theological argument. Elsewhere Jesus does make arguments that distinguish rabbinic traditions from God's own commands (15:1–11), but he makes no such case here. Instead, Jesus's logic and argumentation are much more nuanced and complex and provides a real-life case study of what the Christian "not abolished but fulfilled" view of torah is.

If one were to identify and articulate the myriad of arguments Jesus makes here about why it is allowable for him and his disciples to break the Sabbath, it becomes clear that the arguments can be classified into two distinct columns—arguments of both continuity and discontinuity. In the first instance, Jesus offers several reasons why his actions, while technically violating the Sabbath commands in one sense, are rooted in the complex virtue ethic reality of torah and are not disobeying God. Jesus's and his dis-

ciples' actions are continuous with the kind of complex embodied wisdom application of the Sabbath laws already occurring during the Mosaic era: (1) David and his companions ate the priestly show bread when in desperate need (12:3–4); (2) priests violate the Sabbath when their duties on holy days conflict with their Sabbath duties (12:5); (3) the prophets teach that mercy/compassion supersedes a strict adherence to the cultic system (12:7); (4) human experience shows that rescuing a sheep in danger is acceptable on the Sabbath, how much more a person (12:11–12).

On the discontinuity side of the analysis we also see Jesus make several arguments for his Sabbath breaking that are rooted in his own person and the new covenant era he is bringing: (1) something greater than the temple is here (himself, 12:6; cf. 12:41–42); (2) the Son of Man (himself, cf. 8:20) is the Lord over the Sabbath (12:8); (3) Jesus is the Spirit-imbued Servant who is bringing the new era of justice for the gentiles that was promised by Isaiah (12:17–21).

This combination of continuity and discontinuity arguments manifests and explicates the vision of Jesus coming to fulfill torah, not abolish it, with the Sabbath being a prime and practical example of how this Christian vision is worked out. The voice or inner heart of torah matters and continues to speak—it is not disregarded flippantly or sophomorically—but (1) it must be understood within a wisdom/virtue framework where its outworking is applied in the complexity of real life situations, and (2) someone and something new has come in Jesus that results in a necessary transformation of the same torah. In short, Matt 12 manifests the Christian torah (“the law of Christ”; cf. Gal 6:2; 1 Cor 9:21) teaching of Matt 5:17–20—not abolished but fulfilled.

Matthew 19:16–30 and the Wholeness Required for Entering Life

Another well-known story that is found in all three of the Synoptic Gospels is Jesus's interaction with a pious young Jewish leader. In Matthew's version of this story particularly we see yet another embodied explication of Jesus's teaching that he has not come to abolish or disregard God's preceding revelation but that he is fulfilling and thereby transforming it.

This young Jewish man approaches Jesus, who by this time is well-known as a teacher and prophet, and seeks Jesus's answer to a sincere religious question—what good way of being in the world will ensure entering into life in the age to come (19:16). In our post-sixteenth century embeddedness many Protestants can only see this question through the

lens of legalism and Luther's heavy-handed "law versus gospel" paradigm. But I suggest this reading is an unhelpful imposition on what is occurring in this narrative. Jesus does not accuse this pious Jew of legalism or rebuke him for obeying God's commands or connecting this obedience to entering into eternal life. Indeed, Jesus's answer to the man's question is, "If you want to enter life, keep the commandments" (19:17).

For most readers this is an odd and seemingly unchristian statement and one whose implications are rarely pondered. Few interpreters would want to argue that Jesus is lying or avoiding the man's question with an untrue or snarky answer. So what is Jesus saying with this response to the man's sincere question? I suggest the best way to understand Jesus connecting commandment-keeping and entering life is to situate this statement within the rest of what Matthew has already been explaining—Jesus is not anticommands; he has not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. When the man asks which commands he should keep Jesus does not respond by saying, "You fool! Obeying God has nothing to do with eternal life!" Rather, Jesus proceeds to rattle off five or six of the instructions from the Decalogue (19:18–19).

This faithful covenant member Jew had done these things and there is no reason to doubt his piety or sincerity. But he senses that he yet lacks something (19:20). And herein lies the key to the story. Now, in 19:21, Jesus explains what *he* means by "if you want to enter life, keep the commandments": "If you desire to be whole [τέλειος], go and sell your possessions and give them to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. And come follow me" (19:21). With language that is intentionally overlapping with the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus once again explains torah observance as being ultimately about "teleiosis"—wholeness, virtue, obedience that is rooted not just in the externals but in the inner person/heart. This reading of the law is rooted in the imitative virtue ethic of Lev 19–20 and the prophets' way of preaching the covenant commands as being about the inner person. And thus it is no accident that Jesus's response that what the young man lacks and needs—τέλειος—is precisely what Jesus taught in 5:48 as the culminating conclusion to the instructions begun in 5:17–20. All of this is the same continuity reading of torah that we have seen in the Sermon and in Matt 12: Jesus has not come to abolish the law.

At the same time, however, he does fulfill it and transform it, rooted in his own person and work. Jesus's instructions to the pious young Jew are not only that his torah obedience be whole-person in nature. He also calls the man to follow him, to become a disciple; and this is precisely what

the man, despite his torah-piety, is unwilling to do. In his particular case, wealth has too strong of a grip on his heart, thus making it difficult for him (and any other rich person, according to Jesus) to enter into life and the kingdom (19:23–24). In the subsequent conversation (and throughout all of Matthew’s Gospel) Jesus makes very clear that regardless of ethnicity, or past moral success or failure, eternal life is only found through forsaking all else and following Jesus as a disciple. Thus, once again we see the trajectory set by 5:17–20—“not abolishment but fulfillment”—is worked out with a narrative example. Jesus is not antitorah or antiobedience, as long as this is understood in the heart-full way that Moses and the prophets understood it. At the same time, this reality is transformed through Jesus’s fulfilling work—to do the will of God is to follow Jesus (cf. 12:46–50).

Abiding Witness and Recontextualization

So what does this mean for the important emphasis that Seitz has long put on the abiding and per se witness of the Old Testament? Matthew’s contribution to this complex question does not clear away all of the thorny issues, but the First Gospel is very important in this discussion, sitting as it does at the canonical hitch-point between the two parts of the Christian canon. For Matthew, the best way to describe the abiding yet transformed reality of Christianity in relationship to Israel is with the profound concept of fulfillment.

This Christ fulfillment of torah means that we must learn to read the whole Christian Bible in a bidirectional way.¹⁸ To use a modern illustration, much of the Christian tradition has emphasized that the Christian reading of the Old Testament has functioned like a front-wheel drive vehicle. The New Testament drives the whole Bible and pulls along the Old Testament where it is going. Neil MacDonald has helpfully pushed back against this and suggested instead a rear-wheel drive understanding, where a plain-sense reading of the Old Testament advances us along and we understand the New Testament in light of what the Old Testament is

18. I hope what I am suggesting would be a fair illustration of Childs’s description of his canonical approach: a dialogical and intertextual approach “from the perspective of theological reflection on both testaments” (Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 344).

already doing.¹⁹ I think this latter view is probably more akin to Seitz's desire. In contrast to either a front-wheel or rear-wheel analogy only, I suggest a four-wheel-drive mode where both the Old Testament and New Testament alternate in taking the lead depending on the terrain, while often both axles are fully powered. In the "not abolished but fulfilled" two-testament canon, the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and the writings of the apostles (New Testament) form something new and authoritative. By being read together, the two parts of the Christian Bible inform each other in a bidirectional way. The Old Testament sets the foundation, reveals God's character and actions in the world, and points toward the restoration of humanity under his good reign. This continues as fundamental to the witness of who God is in the world. The New Testament completes this story, enabling a more thorough and particularly Trinitarian and Christ-centered rereading of the whole Bible. This is a narrative whole but it is also more than a story; together the Old Testament and New Testament provide an abiding witness to who the Triune God is and how he relates to his creation. You can read the Old Testament without the New Testament and understand a lot about God, though to be part of the people of God now requires embracing the Messiah he has finally sent. You can read the New Testament without the Old Testament but it will be a thin and decontextualized reading of the whole story. But both of these readings—Old Testament without the New Testament or New Testament without the Old Testament—are less than a *Christian* reading of Scripture.

In his fascinating and insightful book, *Matthew's Theological Grammar*, Joshua Leim wrestles with the question of how it is that Matthew regularly presents Jesus as worshiped and worthy of this divine obeisance, while also having Jesus himself emphasize that only the God of Israel should be given this ultimate physical and spiritual genuflection (cf. 2:11 and esp. 14:22–33, contrasted with 4:10).²⁰ Leim shows that Matthew does not solve the question of who is the *κύριος* of Israel (Jesus or God the Father) via a *Vermischung* (blending, amalgamation) of the paternal and filial beings, through presenting a rivalry between Father and Son, nor does he relativize or dismiss the worship the Son receives. Rather,

19. This metaphor of front-wheel drive versus rear-wheel drive comes from Neil B. MacDonald, *Metaphysics and the God of Israel: Systematic Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006).

20. Joshua E. Leim, *Matthew's Theological Grammar: The Father and the Son*, WUNT 2/402 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

Matthew “(re)narrates the identity of Israel’s God around the Father-Son relationship.”²¹ In Matthew (and all of Christianity), God’s identity is now explained as Father-Son; this “divine-filial identity reshapes the identity of Israel’s κύριος.”²² I am bringing Leim’s arguments into this discussion not only because of their sophisticated, narratively discerned christological insights, but also because they serve as a helpful analog to the way that torah functions in Matthew. Even as the identity of God is renarrated to be centered in the Father-Son relationship, so too we might say that torah is renarrated or recontextualized in light of who Jesus is revealed to be, the affirmer, arbiter, and transformer of the law, rooted in his own divine nature. Matthew renarrates God’s will for his people through Jesus.

Whether Seitz would agree with my interpretation and articulation of this complex canonical and theological issue, I do not know. I suspect the answer may be, “yes and no” or “somewhat.” Regardless, I am glad to offer to Chris these reflections on Matthew, along with my gratitude for his mentorship, friendship, and stimulating intellectual work that has helped refine my own thoughts as I wrestle with the two-testament canon of Holy Scripture.

21. Leim, *Matthew’s Theological Grammar*, 28.

22. Leim, *Matthew’s Theological Grammar*, 176.

The Risen Jesus's Sovereignty over Time and the Logos Conceptuality: Origin, Identity, and Time in John 20:24–29

Neil B. MacDonald

Introduction

Here is a statement about the story of Thomas's encounter with the risen Jesus (John 20:24–28).¹ It is to be understood in terms of the disciple demanding of Jesus that he show wounds absolutely identical to the ones originating at the time of the crucifixion. Thomas's stipulation is that Jesus is to show the past wounds—the wounds-at-origin—in the present. Only then can he be certain the physical tangibility the disciples encountered (cf. Luke 24:36–43)—“the appearing of the very appearance of Jesus's”—is *Jesus's* physical tangibility (nothing without x's origins could be x; anything with x's origins must be x). Only *these* wounds indubitably identify Jesus and no other. Mere marks or signs of the passion would not—any more than physical tangibility per se (handling the body, Luke 24:38–39) or witnessing the eating of food (Luke 24:41–43)—satisfy Thomas's demand that Jesus indubitably identify this physical tangibility as his physical tangibility. The disciples could have encountered a δαίμων (a marker for an “other”) in the physical form of Jesus (they could have been victim of a kind of Cartesian-demonic deception).² In response to Thomas, Jesus

1. I make an argument for this in a forthcoming publication, Neil B. MacDonald, *The Problem of the Indubitable Identification of the Risen Jesus: Origin, Identity, and Time in John 20:24–28*. This introduction is a very basic outline of it.

2. I compare the Lukan scenes depicting the risen Jesus with the deeply unsettling scenes in Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Solaris* regarding the hero's “resurrected” wife (which are after all about identity). It brilliantly demonstrates what might have been the utter shock of encountering the risen Jesus in the context of the tradition in Luke

satisfies the demand to the letter: The wounds he shows Thomas are the wounds-at-origin. In particular, in the case of the wound in his side he shows Thomas the wound just as John 19:34 has it.

To reiterate: in showing wounds only he and no other could show, Jesus indubitably, uniquely, identified himself. But in doing so he simultaneously enacted an action that only YHWH could do, an action that itself testified to YHWH's identity as the greatest god, true God, and therefore: God. In showing the very wounds-at-origin in the present, Jesus had enacted nothing less than sovereignty over time itself.

But this very action, Jesus's enactment of sovereignty over time, was itself nontransferably the "very action of YHWH." It was the very action of YHWH just as Gen 1:3–5's narration of YHWH's creation of time had been the very action of YHWH. And since the latter necessarily identified YHWH as God in the history of the tradition of Jewish monotheism, then so it seemed to an ardent monotheist that the former identified YHWH too.³

Nevertheless, John affirmed another constraint of Second Temple Judaism, namely that YHWH was invisible and unincarnatable. Since it could not be YHWH per se incarnate, John posited that Jesus's action had manifested what it is YHWH is in his action of creating time, that is, God.⁴

24:36–43. The literary source of Tarkovsky's film, Stanislaw Lem's novel *Solaris*, is equally disturbing in its presentation of these encounters. The reference to Descartes is to the skeptical device the philosopher employs in his famous *Meditations* to identify a proposition impossible to doubt such that a demon could not have deceived one into believing it true when it was in fact false.

3. John's preferential option is to seek a solution that solves the theological equivalent of two simultaneous equations. He seeks to satisfy the maximization of the truth of Jesus's divinity (originating in Jesus's enacted sovereignty over time) and the maximization of the truth of traditional Jewish monotheism (e.g., that the action of the creation of time is the very action of YHWH and identifies YHWH as the one true God). That he is an ardent Jewish monotheist who believes in the YHWH-esque incarnational divinity of Jesus speaks to the historical evidence for the latter.

4. The Jesus who shows Thomas the wounds-at-origin has already been affirmed by John as the (eternal) heavenly Son of Man—the heavenly agent, "the man from heaven," who reveals the Father. The preexistent person in this sense is Jesus rather than an abstract *Logos asarkos*. This tradition is indeed presupposed in 20:24–28 (and most proximately at 20:17). On the heavenly Son of Man Christology itself the classic work on this can be found in Rudolf Bultmann, "Die Bedeutung der neuerschlossenen mandäischen und manichäischen Quellen für das Verständnis des Johannesevangeliums," *ZNW* 24 (1925), 100–46; Peder Borgen, "God's Agent in the Fourth Gospel," in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. Jacob

This is the astounding denouement of the Thomas narrative and the rationale behind Thomas's confession at 20:28. One identity-resolution (this physical tangibility is Jesus's physical tangibility) is simultaneously an even greater one (this action manifests what it is YHWH is in the creation of time). Here we have what may be the final testimony to John's genius. His seminal insight is to see in Jesus's crucifixion the very vehicle of sovereignty over time. This means that the very event or fact that fatally undermined Jesus's claim to messiahship in the eyes of Second-Temple Judaism was at the center of an action that was YHWH's alone to do. It could not but be what it is YHWH is in his action of creating time.⁵

The Action of the Creation of Time Is Nontransferably YHWH's Action
(It Is the Action That "Makes" or Identifies YHWH as God)

Jesus enacts an action that posits a relation of numerical identity between, on the one hand, time present and, on the other, time before or time past. This means that time is no barrier to Jesus reaching across it and showing the very wounds of the past. Time is subject to Jesus and not Jesus to time. That Jesus can do this to the most intractable creature—a being

Neusner, *SHR* 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 137–48; Wayne Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, *NovTSup* 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1967); James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); Larry Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*, 3rd ed. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015); Hurtado, *The Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel: New Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Though in no way repudiated by what I term Logos patrology—a Logos conceptuality corresponding to YHWH's nature, "what it is YHWH is"—the latter is discontinuous with the heavenly Son of Man Christology's focus on the persons. James McGrath provides a conceptual model of two-stage high Christology anticipating the appropriate distinctions I make in this essay (McGrath, *John's Apologetic Christology: Legitimation and Development in Johannine Christology*, *SNTSMS* 111 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 218–27). See also Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 248, for a more modest historical precedent and analogy.

5. John's response in the late first century is a historic example of abstractive concept-formation. In order to avoid the incarnation of YHWH, John undertook a species of second-order conceptual ascent in the face of categorically the same actions (YHWH's actions). Out of these singular actions he abstracted the second-order "what it is YHWH is" in his action of creating time.

whose power of resistance defies even the gods and may therefore even be a form of deity (whose “mysterious implacable sovereignty” makes it the subject of veneration akin to worship)—puts Jesus on a different plane from one who is merely authorized to do actions originally the unique prerogative of YHWH.⁶ For it really is nonnegotiable in the sense of non-transferable that it is YHWH alone who has the remit over time.⁷ This is precisely because YHWH, and no one else (the battles with the Marduks of this world have already been won) is the creator of time. YHWH alone has the keys to unlock time because YHWH alone is time’s creator. To repeat: for John this is not merely a prerogative, it is an absolutely nonnegotiable, nontransferable truth about YHWH, and it is this because the creation of time is above all else what makes YHWH God. Here we have John’s bed-rock commitment to traditional Jewish monotheism.⁸

6. See, e.g., Sean M. McDonough, *YHWH at Patmos: Rev 1:4 in Its Hellenistic and Early Jewish Setting*, WUNT 2/107 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 48–55; Doro Levi, “Aion,” *Hesperia* 13 (1944): 269–314. An example of this would be Jesus healing the paralyzed man in Mark 2:2–12. Eugene Boring writes: “In this pericope Jesus forgives, heals, knows people’s hearts as only God can, yet at the end his actions do not detract from praise to God (2:12). The scribes rightly recognize that Jesus *acts in the place of the one God* (2:7). The charge on which Jesus is ultimately condemned emerges early in the narrative, in a claim that seems to his opponents to infringe on God’s prerogative” (M. Eugene Boring, “Markan Christology: God-Language for Jesus?” *NTS* 45 [1999]: 466, emphasis added).

7. On historical and biblical background to the concept of nontransferability/transferability see Paul Rainbow, “Monotheism and Christology in 1 Corinthians 8:4–6” (MPhil diss., Oxford University, 1987). See also Larry W. Hurtado, “First-Century Jewish Monotheism,” *JSNT* 21 (1998), 3–26; Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 379–81; Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God? Historical Questions about Earliest Devotions to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

8. Hence I wonder about this statement from Martin Hengel: “Once the idea of pre-existence had been introduced, it was obvious that the exalted Son of God would also attach to himself the functions of Jewish Wisdom as a mediator of creation and salvation. Even Wisdom, which was associated with God in a unique way from before time, could no longer be regarded as an independent entity over and against the risen and exalted Jesus and superior to him. Rather all the functions of Wisdom were transferred to Jesus for ‘in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ (Col 2:3). Only in this was the *unsurpassability and finality of God’s self-revelation* in Jesus of Nazareth expressed in a last, conclusive way. The exalted Jesus is not only pre-existent, but also shares the *opus proprium Dei*, creation. Indeed he accomplishes the work of creation at the behest of and with the authority of God, just as he determines events at the end of time. No revelation, no speech, and no action of God can take place

On the one hand, John perceived that Jesus's action of showing numerically the same wounds in time—across the chasm of death—manifested unassailable sovereignty over time. On the other hand, John's bedrock commitment to traditional Jewish monotheism dictated that YHWH is nontransferably the creator of time. It is the act of creation that makes YHWH God as Gen 1 has it (it is, as Claus Westermann said, action that makes a god in the first place); and it is the creation of time at Gen 1:3–5 that above all other creation-actions identifies YHWH as God.⁹ John's Jewish monotheism compelled him to believe YHWH's actions just were God's actions since YHWH was God—*ha Elohim*—the greatest god and therefore God. (Let us assume that the Priestly writer employed *Elohim* as a proper name just as many understand God today, and just as we might say: *the* God, the greatest god, is God so that the latter presupposes the former.)¹⁰ This is the central import of Gen 1. John shared the Priestly writer's high view of YHWH as expressed in Gen 1. In doing so he

without him or beside him. So it is the pre-existent Christ who must accompany Israel on its journey through the wilderness as the 'spiritual rock' (1 Cor 10:4)" (Hengel, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion*, trans. John Bowden [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976], 70, emphasis original). On the one hand, I applaud the distinction Hengel makes between the preexistent person and creation; on the other hand I agree with Hurtado's critique regarding an account in *historical* terms how theological convictions such as Jesus's relation to creation arose (Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God*, 23). To be sure, preexistence was a necessary condition but something else happened (or needed to happen) in the actual formation of the tradition, namely the risen Jesus enacting sovereignty over time. See my *Problem of the Indubitable Identification of the Risen Jesus*.

9. See later in this essay. The key reference is Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 112–22.

10. See Albert de Pury, "Gottesname, Gottesbezeichnung und Gottesbegriff: 'Elohim als Indiz zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Pentateuch,'" in *Abschied vom Jahwisten: Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion*, ed. Jan C. Gertz, Konrad Schmidt, and Markus Witte, BZAW 315 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 25–47. De Pury argues that the Priestly *Grundeschrift* (P^g) is responsible for pioneering the employment of Elohim as a divine name: "Pg is ... the author who seems to have 'invented' the linguistic convention to use the appellative 'god' as a divine name (i.e., without article or determinative), that is, to designate the universal god as אֱלֹהִים or to call 'the god' 'God' (with a majuscule initial)." See also de Pury, "The Jacob Story and the Beginning of the Formation of the Pentateuch," in *A Farewell to the Yahwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid, SymS 34 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 51–72.

endorsed a history of tradition very much akin to the one I outline in the next section. It is a history culminating in the conclusion that YHWH is true God because YHWH is the creator of all that is, and above all, is the creator of time.

Traditional Jewish Monotheism: It Is Action That Makes a God
(Makes YHWH God)

The central contention of this section is to follow through Westermann's assertion that it is action that makes God in the Jewish monotheistic tradition of a biblical kind.¹¹ The meaning of monotheism in Israel's earliest monotheistic traditions concerns the people Israel worshiping one god only, namely YHWH. This is essentially monotheism as monolatry. Putting it more broadly: The people Israel are in relationship with one god only. The Shema exclaims: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Deut 6:4), or perhaps more transparently, "YHWH is *our God*, YHWH *alone*."¹²

In the context of Second Temple Judaism, it may have come to mean, *God* is our god, God alone (at this later point in their history Israel now believed YHWH was the true god, therefore God) but Exod 20:3—recapitulated in Deut 5:7—points to the underlying tradition: "I am YHWH your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods besides me" (Exod 20:2–3). In other words, the divine exclamation, "I am YHWH your God" is met with Israel's response, "YHWH is our God, YHWH alone."¹³ Note the identifying reference to YHWH's liberating action.

This most primal conception of the relationship between YHWH and the people Israel retains its force and truth throughout the formation of the Jewish monotheistic tradition. We find it in the later Priestly tradition: "I will be your god and you will be my people" (Lev 6:7). But, conspicuously, the tradition in itself says nothing about whether YHWH is God.

11. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 100.

12. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

13. According to Nathan MacDonald, the "primary significance of the Shema is the relationship between YHWH and Israel. YHWH is to be Israel's one and only" (MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of "Monotheism,"* FAT 2/1 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003], 151).

One of the hallmarks of the Deuteronomistic tradition (and the Deuteronomistic history) is its claim that this god—YHWH—is in fact the true God because he is the most powerful god. YHWH is (uniquely) Elohim because he is the most powerful of all the gods: “For the Lord [YHWH] your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome” (Deut 10:17).¹⁴ First Kings 18:24–39 is a pivotal illustration of this truth. In the encounter with the god Baal, the question is: Who is *ha Elohim*: YHWH or Baal? “You call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire—he is God [*ha Elohim*]” (1 Kgs 18:24). Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried: “The LORD—he is God [*ha Elohim*]! The LORD—he is God [*ha Elohim*]!” (1 Kgs 18:38–39). It is action that makes YHWH God.

The Deuteronomistic tradition never claims YHWH is the greatest god because YHWH is the creator of all that is (see, e.g., Deut 4:32; 26:19; 32:6; nevertheless they too can be understood as actions uniquely identifying YHWH). This seems to be the remit of later traditions, principally the Priestly tradition but also Deutero-Isaiah and Psalms. YHWH is (uniquely) Elohim because YHWH, not any other god, for example, Marduk, is the creator of all that is. Genesis 1 famously begins: “In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1)—Elohim, the greatest god who turns out to be YHWH (YHWH Elohim of Gen 2). YHWH is the greatest god and therefore true God.¹⁵ Deutero-Isaiah makes the same claim: “I am YHWH and there is no other” because “I form the light and create darkness” (Isa 45:7, 12; see also Isa 45:5; 46:10; 47:8, 19). To repeat, as Westermann put it, it is action that makes a god, God. YHWH is the one who created the heavens and the earth; therefore, it is YHWH who is God.

14. Richard Bauckham's analysis of Deut 4:32–35, 39, provides further evidence of the pervasiveness of the thesis that action identifies YHWH as God (Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 68).

15. See Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 245–50, on Elohim as “the pluralization of magnitude”: the grammatical pluralization is meant to convey magnitude (plural being greater than singular) and is employed metaphorically to say that YHWH is the god of the greatest magnitude: God.

Traditional Jewish Monotheism: Above All, YHWH Is God because
YHWH is the Creator of Time, Genesis 1:3–5 (and Space, 6–10)

But preeminently YHWH is Elohim because he is the creator of the very dimensions in which the world has its life. This claim is found nowhere but Gen 1. YHWH is the greatest god and therefore “God” because he is the creator of time (and space). Had YHWH not created time then time would not have come into being (cf. the longer version of John 1:3) because only YHWH (God) can create it. To be the greatest god—God—is to be greater than (superior to) the closest natural reality gets to divinity (time is the first thing YHWH created: Gen 1:3–5). The first act of creation is the creation of time, which means that the first act of the whole Bible is the creation of time. The second act is the creation of space. P narrates this in Gen 1:6–10.

The order of creation indicates that the Priestly writer privileged time over space.¹⁶ What makes a particular god God—what makes YHWH God—is preeminently the creation of time. Philo will countenance the cocreation of humankind but he cannot and would not compromise YHWH’s creation of time in such a way.¹⁷

The relevance of all this is: it is by no means implausible that John—closer in time as he is to the Priestly writer than we are—affirmed the Priestly narrative of creation precisely in the way that Westermann tells us that it was intended.¹⁸ This was how it was understood in the Priestly writer’s own time, and this was how John, continuing the tradition, understood and affirmed it in his, the late first-century CE.¹⁹ The actions of creating

16. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 116.

17. To be sure, Philo posits YHWH’s copartnership of the creation of humankind because of the ambivalent moral nature of the human condition: The absolute uncompromised goodness of God cannot be the sole source of humankind. But no other being can possibly be involved in the creation of time (Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* [New York: Crossroad, 1982], 78).

18. Indeed as Peder Borgen argued, “The Prologue of John is meant to be an exposition of Genesis 1:1ff.” (Borgen, “Observations on the Targumic Character of the Prologue of John,” *NTS* 16 [1970]: 288–95). This seems to me to be undoubtedly true though the key interpretative lens is Jesus’s sovereignty over time.

19. Time is the first fruits of creation in this narrative. According to Gen 1, YHWH creates time then space then fills it up with events (change) and objects (things that change). Divine and human agents can causally affect these events and have an impact on its objects. But these same agents—and here we bring to mind most pointedly the

time and space continued to be nontransferrably YHWH's actions because they had defined him as God in the first place. This is what made Israel's god God among the gods (who turn out not to be gods at all but creatures, part of the "all that is" created by YHWH). In other words, as we will see: John's breakthrough that Jesus's action of sovereignty over time manifests what it is YHWH is in acting to create time has an obvious presupposition at its heart. This is that YHWH himself acted to create time.²⁰

But YHWH's Action Is in "Geographical" Space ... in Jerusalem

If it is nontransferably YHWH's action then, where the action is, so must be YHWH (it must be YHWH acting). Yet simultaneously, what is equally obvious is the following: Jesus's action is in space, that is, it is a fleshly

Roman Empire and its gods—are powerless to effect what Kant called "the conditions of the possibility" of events and objects or what Origen referred to as "the forms of creation." They are powerless to affect time and space. Objects could be destroyed or generated; events could be brought about—this too by divine and human machination; but time and space eluded this kind of manipulation. Mere physical puissance could have no impact on them. John may have been only too well aware that the greatest empire the world had ever seen may (appear to) have sovereign impact over events and objects, defined for all practical purposes as history and the human beings that comprise that history. But sovereignty over time and space—the very forms of creation supervening over events and objects respectively, is strictly—always—the remit of YHWH.

20. The complexity of this issue requires analysis beyond the scope of this essay. Suffice it to say that the person who wrote John 1:3 and 1:10 can be interpreted in terms of the position taken in this essay (YHWH creates through his nature, i.e., what he is: God). See the section "The Logos Conceptuality." See also Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 241–42. Moreover, the fact that when it has the opportunity the Johannine book of Revelation never says the person of Jesus was the creator of all that is, but seems to make it a truth about God (the Father) is at the very least Popperian corroboration of this viewpoint. It would take just one explicit falsifying claim in Revelation, but such is not forthcoming. Reading Rev 3:14; 4:8–11; 10:6; and 14:7 in the context of 1:1 seems to all but entail this conclusion. See Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), for relevant exegesis though one does not have to follow him on 3:14 to reject the claim that it affirms Jesus as creator given the translation of ἀρχή as "ruler" (cf. NIV; see also James McGrath, *The Only True God: Early Christian Monotheism in Its Jewish Context* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009], 122 n. 14). The bottom-line is of course the action of the creation of time (and space) and in this regard there is no evidence that YHWH countenanced delegating this to some other agent.

action. In the Thomas narrative it is one of Jesus's fleshly actions that has enacted a numerically identical corresponding equivalent action from his earlier existence (conversely, it is an ordinary fleshly action of the pre-Easter Jesus that has irrupted into the present in the form of its equivalent appearance-action). In other words, it is an ordinary fleshly action that has enacted YHWH's nonnegotiable and nontransferable remit and action of sovereignty over time. It is what is visible that has enacted the very action of YHWH. It is what is visible and fleshly that is numerically identical across the chasm of death; it is what is spatial that is numerically identical (Jesus does the action in Jerusalem).

But John did not conclude in these momentous circumstances that the person of Jesus was the person of YHWH.²¹ On the one hand, only an intentionality that avoided generic action avoided the two gods charge, and ditheism (unless one eliminated heavenly preexistence). On the other hand, an intentionality identifying Jesus's enacted sovereignty over time with the very action of YHWH (seemed to have) posited something akin to the incarnation of YHWH. Jesus's action was the very action of YHWH; Jesus's action was in space; ergo was not YHWH's action in space? Is this not tantamount to YHWH acting (in space)? And is this not equivalent to YHWH incarnate? Is this not to attribute to John a species of Sabellian heresy? Did in fact YHWH the creator become incarnate?

How John reconciled these two truths reveals yet another instance of his genius (in facing one dialectic after another John is almost miraculously sure-footed—divinely inspired—in his decisions). Just as he observed the nonnegotiability of the creation of time then so he observed the Second Temple constraint that YHWH is invisible (see John 1:18; 6:46) and YHWH is unincarnatable.²² Since Jesus's action is in space, that is, it

21. For this kind of view see Christoph Barina Kaiser, *Seeing the Lord's Glory: Kyriocentric Visions and the Dilemma of Early Christology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014). I concur with Kaiser on the relevance of the term "deity christology" but clearly understand the scope and historical realization of this differently. Jesus is not straightforwardly YHWH even as he embodies what identifies the latter as God. John Ronning holds that "John's decision to call Jesus 'the Word', the Logos was influenced by the Targums" (Ronning, *The Jewish Targums and John's Logos Theology* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010], 1). It is indeed "a way of identifying Jesus with the God of Israel" (1) but this was not the route John took, in my view. It is YHWH's action (and by extension his nature) rather than his person that is key here.

22. Dunn writes that the "conviction of God's un-image-ableness ('invisible') is late and Hellenistic in origin" (James D. G. Dunn, "Was Jesus a Monotheist? A Con-

is a fleshly action, it cannot be YHWH attached to it (it cannot be YHWH acting though it is YHWH's action).²³

tribution to the Discussion of Christian Monotheism," in *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism*, ed. Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy North, JSNTSup 263 [London: T&T Clark, 2004], 105). He continues: "ἀόρατος ('invisible') appears only in the New Testament (Rom 1:20; Col 1:15; 1 Tim 1:17; Heb 11:27) and nowhere else in biblical Greek (but note *Ps-Philo* 35.3 and *Test. Abr* 16:3–4). However it is common in Philo, and especially of God (e.g., *Sacr.* 133; *Mut.* 14; *Somn.* 1.72)" (105). Nevertheless, it is built into the fabric of John's own traditions (e.g. Exod 33:17–23; Deut 4:12; Ps 97:2) from which Dunn concludes: "That YHWH the Father cannot be seen, even by Moses, is a theologoumenon that runs through the whole Jewish and Christian tradition" (105–6). A related though not conclusive issue is the matter of the second commandment: "You shall not make for yourself an idol" (Exod 20:4–5a; Deut 5:8–9a). McGrath holds that with regard to Jewish monotheism, "sacrificial worship of the one God without images was the make or break issue" (McGrath, *Only True God*, 35–36).

23. I cannot in the space available give a full treatment of this complex theological issue. It is anachronistic to project Aquinas's distinction between incarnation "taking place in the nature" and "incarnation taking place in the person" (Thomas, *Summa Theologica* 3.2.1–3) onto John. To be sure, as Richard Cross observes, the medievals generally rejected incarnation of the divine nature (Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002], 147–51). Given "numerically the same nature" they thought it would imply the incarnation of the Father. The fact of the monotheistic problematic and the invisibility and unincarnatability of YHWH means that John does not think himself compelled to make this inference (and he is not bound by other theological constraints). The distinction between YHWH's action (participle) and YHWH acting (gerund) holds fast. As regards the patristics: Hilary of Poitiers speaks of the "Father's nature working" in the Son (*Trinity* 9.43) but this itself does not imply the incarnation of the nature. It is really only Cyril of Alexandria and his followers, speaking of "one incarnate nature" of the Logos (as opposed to "the incarnation of the Logos") who may have established something like a theological grammar appropriate to a proper interpretation of John. In John the person is sent by the Father (in a manner not unlike Barth's theology), but it is not the complete picture: it has to be augmented with the claim that it is "what it (is) YHWH is"—something akin to nature, quiddity—that is incarnate. A further refinement, something like "the way of being numerically the same divine nature"—as in "three ways of being numerically the same divine nature"—was deemed necessary in the course of classical Trinitarian reflection—and was consistent with what John had to say. Andrew Louth on the seventh-century theologian Maximus the Confessor is exactly right: "At the level of being, we find natures defined by their principles, meanings or definitions (all of which can be represented in Greek by the term *logos*)—*ousia*, *physis*, and *logos* belong together; whereas at the level of person we find 'modes of existence'—*hyparxis*, *hypostasis*, and *tropos* belong together." (Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, ECF [New York: Routledge, 1996], 51).

The Logos Conceptuality

Therefore, it is not YHWH who is incarnate or visible; it is what YHWH is in his action, that is, God, that is incarnate and visible. On the one hand, John is adamant that Jesus satisfies traditional Jewish monotheism. His action enacting sovereignty over time is the very action of YHWH. On the other hand, since YHWH is unincarnatable and invisible this action manifests what YHWH is in his action of creating time: Jesus's action of numerically the same action in time enacting his sovereignty over time manifests what it is YHWH is in his action of creating time. (Jesus's action in the Thomas narrative—showing numerically the same wounds borne from the crucifixion—manifests what it is YHWH is in his action of creating time.)

This is the revolutionary move that John is constrained to make when he assesses all the relevant evidence regarding Jesus in the light of his very traditional Jewish monotheism. To be sure, the Logos was called upon to account for an action associated with creation (specifically the creation of time), but it is introduced because the risen Jesus's action is the very action of YHWH (it is not introduced in order to find another route to “generically the same action”).²⁴ The primitive concept in John is the Logos incarnate not the Logos per se (the rationale behind 1:14 is historically prior to 1:1–3 in the history of the trajectory of Johannine thought).²⁵ It had the potential to intimate the subtle yet necessary discrimination between, on the one hand, YHWH and, on the other hand,

24. Bauckham asserts that the Logos is there simply to refer “to God’s Word as portrayed in Jewish creation accounts, and this is why it does not appear in John’s Gospel after the Prologue” (Richard Bauckham, “Monotheism and Christology in the Gospel of John,” in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*, ed. Richard Longenecker [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 151). But this is compatible with the view that the Logos conceptuality extends the reach of a generic-agency Christology such as the heavenly Son of Man Christology into the realm of creation. I argue there was no such extension. Instead a Logos patrology took over and articulated the incarnation in the wake of the breakthrough represented by the Thomas narrative. Such a history of origin would answer Hurtado’s critique regarding an account in historical terms how theological convictions such as Jesus’s relation to creation arose (Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God*, 23).

25. “As C. H. Dodd observed in his magisterial study of John, in at least two particular and central affirmations the Johannine prologue does what was previously affirmed in the Word, Wisdom, or divine name traditions: (1) the statement in 1:1 that

what identified YHWH as God—namely, action—without being a “significant modification” of traditional Jewish monotheism.²⁶ It could be understood as the conduit between YHWH and his actions without being understood as an independent hypostatization.²⁷ Marian Hillar writes

‘the Word was God,’ and (2) the audacious claim that ‘the Word became flesh’ in 1:14” (Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 367).

26. “Even in the instance of Philo, the case has not been made successfully for the view that his employment of categories such as ‘Logos’ or the ‘powers’ (*dynameis*) really amounted to anything more than an attempt to uphold the reality of God’s actions in the world and maintain that God is far greater than any of his actions indicate. In short, I do not share the view of some that the Jewish interest in personified divine attributes reflected or amounted to a significant modification of Jewish monotheistic practice and belief” (Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 38). But neither can it be said that Chester’s view of the matter is a “significant modification” of monotheism: “Certainly it seems scarcely adequate to describe Wisdom and Logos (at least in the fully developed form of the Wisdom traditions) as merely speaking of God’s immanent activity in the world; equally, it seems difficult to avoid designating them as hypostatizations, although the misleading implications and false claims often associated with the use of this term are of course rejected. Thus, for example, I would not want this term (or the term ‘intermediary’ either) to be taken to imply that there is by this stage in Judaism a doctrine of God as remote from the world and unable to be active directly within it (although the question of exactly how God comes into contact with the world is certainly involved). One important issue is how these developed concepts, as also the elevated and angelic figures, stand in relation to God; whether, for example, any of them are to be seen as identical, in being, role or function; whether they represent a challenge or complement to God’s sole rule and supreme position, and how precisely we are to conceive of the situation in the heavenly world, with the coexistence of exalted beings alongside God” (Andrew Chester, “Jewish Messianic Expectations and Mediatorial Figures and Pauline Christology,” in *Paulus und das antike Judentum: Symposium in Gedenken an Den 50. Todestag Adolf Schlatters* [19. Mai 1938], ed. Ulrich Heckel and Martin Hengel, WUNT 58 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991], 63). See also Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*, AGAJU 42 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 44–45. He defines a hypostasis as “an aspect of the deity that is depicted with independent personhood of varying degrees” (45). The quiddity of YHWH would count as long as we understand that if we are to use such language here the hypostasis is YHWH.

27. James D. G. Dunn and James McGrath hold that the Logos in Philo is not a distinct hypostatization apart from YHWH (Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 220–30; McGrath, *Only True God*, 56–58). To use Cristina Termini’s language, it represented “the culmination of metaphorical language employed to express in a vivid fashion the action of God, in a kind of literary hypostatization” (Termini, “Philo’s Thought within the Context of Middle Judaism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, ed. Adam

that there is a constellation of ideas in Philo around the notion that God's Logos is his act or deed (*Sacr.* 65; *Mos.* 1.283).²⁸ But no one other than YHWH is creator. Another feature evident in Philo is the notion that the Logos is YHWH's action visible, revealed.²⁹ Both would be conducive to John's objectives in the context of traditional Jewish monotheism. But John employs the Logos tradition not merely because he wants to refer to YHWH in his deeds; rather he wants to refer to what it is YHWH is in his deeds—what (it is) YHWH is in his deeds (YHWH acts through his Logos in this sense); and, in virtue of the rationale behind the Thomas narrative, he wants finally to refer to “what YHWH is” incarnate.³⁰

What it is YHWH is “in” his action is “in” YHWH's action of creating time; and the same—numerically the same—is “in” Jesus's action enacting sovereignty over time. This is *in nuce* what John perceived in the risen Jesus's action. This is the intentionality behind Thomas's confession “My Lord and my God,” the climax to the risen Jesus's appearance-action in the upper room. It is no coincidence that John uses ὁ θεός μου; he is in effect continuing the legacy of traditional Jewish monotheism: what makes a god, God, is action; what makes YHWH *ha Elohim* (and therefore *Elohim*) is action, and specifically the actions of creation. What we have here, so John asserts, is “what YHWH is in his action” of creating time. What

Kamesar [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 98). Hence, were it to become incarnate, it would not be YHWH but it would not be not-YHWH. It would not be the face of YHWH but it would be of YHWH himself (his “back” or “behind”) (cf. Exod 33:18–23). Truth and grace (a reference to Exod 34:6, and therefore uniquely and unsubstitutionably designating YHWH) become incarnate—what YHWH is (cf. John 1:14, 17).

28. See Marian Hillar, *From Logos to Trinity: The Evolution of Religious Beliefs from Pythagoras to Tertullian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 53.

29. In Philo the Logos is implicated in the visibility of YHWH, revealing what is essentially invisible (Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 224–28).

30. Both go beyond Philo and the Logos tradition in Jewish thought of the era relevant to John (see C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953], 275); nevertheless, the Word of God tradition in the LXX and the Old Testament may have played some role in the choice of the Logos conceptuality. “We have to observe that for the Hebrew the word once spoken has a kind of substantive existence of its own.... Still more [is this true] of the Word of God” (264). See also Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 217–20. God's Word (once spoken) leaves God to accomplish its intention in the world through divine action. In this sense it has (metaphorical) independent existence. See Pss 33:6; 107:20; 147:15, 18; Isa 9:8; 55:10–11.

YHWH is—specifically in his action—is what makes or rather identifies him as true God. What YHWH is is what is incarnate; it is what designates Jesus's action of numerically the same action in time. Since Jesus's action was identical with an action that made YHWH God, it revealed him to be God. But not two *gods*; rather, two *beings*, one God.

Christianity's incarnational essence owes its origins to the second moment of John's seminal insight, effectively a second and final stage of Johannine christological development (1 John 4:2 and 2 John 7 are responses to those who held that the heavenly Son of Man Christology implied that a Jesus elevated to heavenly preexistence could not have "come in the flesh").³¹ To be sure, without the first moment—Jesus enacts sovereignty over time—John would never have made this second breakthrough. Counterfactually, had John not perceived Jesus's action of showing numerically the same wounds to be simultaneously enacting sovereignty over time he would not have seen in Jesus's action the very manifestation of "what it is YHWH is in his action." He would not have been in conceptual touching-distance with a concept of divine nature that should have augmented that articulated by the church fathers (e.g., Hilary of Poitiers and most especially Gregory of Nyssa notwithstanding ineffability).³²

31. First John 4:2 and 2 John 7, in contrast to John 1:14, are *not* about the incarnation. They reflect the heavenly Son of Man christology and hence belong to the first stage of John's sui generis christological development focused on the preexistence of the person of Jesus. This is what initially distinguishes John from the Synoptic tradition (see John Painter's enduring argument in *The Quest for the Messiah: The History, Literature, and Theology of the Johannine Community*, 2nd ed. [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993]). The actual doctrine of incarnation follows in the wake of the implications of the Thomas narrative and is John's decisive refutation of the gnosticization or docetization of the heavenly Son of Man Christology. It is also a startling realignment with traditional Jewish monotheism, emphasizing solely the motif of unity (distinction is ultimately the decisive implication of the heavenly Son of Man Christology). For a view consistent with the claim that the Johannine Epistles were written between the heavenly Son of Man Christology and the breakthrough of "what YHWH is in his action of creating time," see, e.g., Paul N. Anderson, "Epistemological Origins of John's Christological Tensions," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 311–45.

32. The historical thesis affirmed by J. Louis Martyn's *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* augmented by Raymond Brown's *Community of the Beloved Disciple* casts a plausible light on John's circumstances (Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 3rd ed., NTL [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003]; and Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* [New York: Paulist, 1979]). The heavenly Son

What is even more historic: John would not have written the Thomas narrative (of course)—what Raymond Brown described as “a secondary elaboration” to the tradition of the appearance to the Twelve; and he would not then have inscribed 1:1–3 in the form that we have in the Prologue. For behind both we can discern a single Johannine intentionality—the actual and true cause of the *inclusio* scholars discern between 20:28 and 1:1. This is encapsulated in the equation already cited: Jesus’s enactment of sovereignty over time manifests “what it is—what—YHWH is in his action” of creating time.

How John came to claim that the right-hand side designated the risen Jesus’s appearance-action is explicable, paradoxically, in terms of his bedrock commitment to traditional Jewish monotheism in the form of YHWH as the creator of time (the right-hand side presupposes that YHWH is the creator of time). But how John got from the left-hand side of the equation to the right-hand side explains the employment of the Logos conceptuality in 1:1–2, its reference in 1:3, and 1:14. Whatever else is true of 1:1–18 source-wise—and there is no doubt that some of it is related to

of Man Christology was instrumental in elevating Jesus’s ordinary (Mosaic) messiahship to a heavenly status signaling time everlasting. True, it had precipitated expulsion from the synagogue on account of a charge akin to what was to be defined as the “Two Powers in Heaven” heresy. But in retrospect it can now be seen that simultaneously this elevation of Jesus’s person—by implication the equalization of the persons—was the necessary first stage leading to participation in numerically the same nature in the final stage of John’s christological development. From this vantage-point we are better able to assess Dunn’s statement regarding John: “This does not necessarily mean of course that with one bound we have reached the language and thought-forms of the later creeds. We have not yet reached the concept of an ontological union between Father and Son, of a oneness of essence and substance. In John divine sonship is still conceived in terms of relationship to the Father, a relationship of love (John 3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 17:23–26)—questions of ontology and essence have not yet entered upon the scene” (Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 58). I submit that John did make headway on the question of ontological union. In the face of the constraint of the nontransferability of the creation of time John ontically ascended to what it is YHWH is in his action of creating time. The decision to invoke the conceptual discrimination what it is YHWH is augmenting who YHWH is (Israel’s god and true God) may be the earliest anticipation of the distinction between person and nature characteristic of fourth-century Nicene theology. For the origins of this in Latin theology’s dialectic with Monarchianism, see Michel René Barnes, “Latin Trinitarian Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity*, ed. Peter C. Phan, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 70–84, esp. 70–75.

the heavenly Son of Man Christology as this latter is presented in the substance of the text—I would argue that John inscribed these verses precisely as an implication of the intentionality behind the Thomas narrative and its culmination in 20:28. There is an intimate relation, as Bultmann himself observed, between, on the one hand, ὁ θεός μου, and, on the other hand, the Logos conceptuality of John 1:1.

John 1:1c: “What YHWH Is
(in His Action of Creating Time), the Logos Was”

Just as John holds *Elohim* to be identical with YHWH in Gen 1, he holds that θεός is a reference to YHWH in John 1:1c (and indeed YHWH is identical with ὁ θεός in John 1:1b). This is the Johannine (New Testament) counterpart to the Priestly writer's (Old Testament) precedent. John holds them to be identical, with exactly the same sense and hence with exactly the same ramifications (the is of identity, in other words). YHWH and *Elohim* are the same and YHWH and (ὁ) θεός are the same. This should not be surprising since *Elohim* and (ὁ) θεός are Hebrew and Greek counterparts for God, translatable one to the other in a way foreign to YHWH that, as something akin to a proper name, is comparatively speaking essentially untranslatable, notwithstanding onomatological origins. Accordingly, when John writes θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος he cannot in fact mean “the Logos is (predicatively) God” (and hence “the Word was God” in this sense) because this would mean that “the Logos is YHWH” (“the Word was YHWH”) in this sense.³³ In other words, we have something like a necessary condition constitutive of a bulwark against the presumption that the “is” of predication is operative here.³⁴ In fact, it is only the

33. As Dunn claims, a pre-Johannine Logos poem “did not necessarily intend the Logos in vv. 1–3 to be thought of as a personal being” (Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 243). This is imposed on the translator having “to translate the masculine Logos as ‘he’ throughout the poem” (243). Since the Logos poem's rendering of 1:1 and its final form in the Gospel are textually the same, it seems to follow that *prima facie* a nonpersonal interpretation of the Johannine intentionality behind 1:1 is valid.

34. Raymond Brown's claim that we should not excise “The Word was God” from our English translation is well taken as long as we recognize John's intention here. The same point should be made about his observation that the translation is correct “for a modern Christian reader whose trinitarian background has accustomed him to thinking of ‘God’ as a larger concept than ‘God the Father’” (Brown, *The Gospel according to John I–XII*, AB 29 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966], 5). It is not in fact a matter

is of identity that makes sense of the claim that John superimposed this Logos conceptuality on to his heavenly Son of Man Christology, thus augmenting the persons symmetrically in terms of a rudimentary conception of “numerically the same nature.”³⁵ This makes for a final, balanced, symmetrical relation of the Father and the Son to the Logos.

Philip Harner argued a number of years back that the anarthrous nominative singular θεός of 1:1c preceding the verb semantically signified the qualitative force of θεός: It spoke of the nature or character of θεός rather than referring to the θεός whose nature this was.³⁶ This is consistent

of a “larger concept” but of the implications of what YHWH is coupled with numerical identity. John 1:1b does not stop being true because 1:14 is (the imperfect tense is consistent with this). That John in historical time may have consciously worked out this implication is supported by his affirmation of YHWH giving his divine name to Jesus (John 17:11, 12). When YHWH did this John did not understand YHWH as ceasing to have it. Gerhard von Rad’s assertion that “it was, so to speak, a double of [YHWH’s] being,” may provide the means of saying that they had numerically not generically the same name (von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker [Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962], 1:183). Jarl Fossum takes the indwelling of the divine name in YHWH’s principal angel as meaning that this figure shared in “the divine nature,” or the divine “mode of being” (Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism*, WUNT 36 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985], 310, 333). Whatever this means—and in particular what it would mean were it true—it does mutatis mutandis convey the pertinent point, namely that YHWH would not cease to have his divine nature if it became incarnate such that Jesus does actions manifesting what it is YHWH is (YHWH’s action-centered quiddity, constraining this concept to John’s first-century intentionality).

35. When I claim that the intentionality behind 1:1c is best rendered by something like “what God (YHWH) was, the Logos was,” I am not thereby committed to the historical thesis that John was thinking explicitly in terms of the language of physis and hypostasis. For 1:1c does not preclude the possibility that John is operating in the mode of what philosophers call opaque reference. He is constrained to make a conceptual distinction that is at least inchoately or rudimentarily that of physis and hypostasis (person) since he is making transparent reference to something akin to action and given this is compelled to a strategy of semantic ascent to avoid the affirmation of the incarnation of YHWH.

36. Philip Harner, “Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1,” *JBL* 92 (1973): 75–87; Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 257–69. Wright and Ricchuiti have provided what may be additional historical evidence of this intentionality though it depends ultimately on whether the understanding evidenced in the Sahidic Coptic version of the New Testament is valid (Brian J. Wright and Tim

with the kind of constraint imposed by John's traditional Jewish monotheism as long as one does not anachronistically endorse the *is* of predication as Harner appeared to do.³⁷ The NEB translates 1:1c, "What God was, the Word was." The referent here is YHWH: hence, "what YHWH was, the Word was." But the *inclusio* that John 20:28 enacts with 1:1 originates in what YHWH is in his action, and specifically in what YHWH is in his of action of creating time. The most conservative construal of Johannine intentionality may be: "What YHWH is (in his action of creating time), the Logos was."

What is my purpose in going over this ground? It is that the central claims of this essay put us in a position where we can now understand why John inscribed 1:1c the way he did. He believed that Jesus enacting sovereignty over time manifested what it is YHWH is in his action of creating time. He believed this is what he had encountered in the risen Jesus's showing of his hands and side in the upper room. John 1:1c is an expression of this seminal insight. Beyond this, the key to the Prologue, as Ernst Käsemann insisted, is in fact 1:14.³⁸ I believe that there is a detailed intentionality behind 1:14 that unites, on the one hand, John's heavenly Son of Man Christology with its implicit focus on the persons of the Father and the Son, and on the other, a logos conceptuality that began life as a logos patrology and intimates a rudimentary concept of nature. What it is YHWH is in his action (specifically in his action of creating time) became flesh. The logos patrology was a thought-form Second-Temple Judaism would have recognized. What was without precedent is the claim that what Jesus was in his action in the upper room is what YHWH was in his action: a species of incarnational Jewish monotheism. John 1:14's remit is this. The question then is how "Jesus is (predica-

Ricchuiti, "From 'God' [ΘΕΟΣ] to 'God' [ΝΟΥΤΕ]: A New Discussion and Proposal regarding John 1:1c and the Sahidic Coptic Version of the New Testament," *JTS* 62 [2011]: 494–512).

37. Harner, in common with others, continued to read the qualitative force of the anarthrous nominative through "christological-binitarian" spectacles. This is why he affirmed "The Father is predicatively what God is and the Logos is predicatively what God is" instead of "The Logos is what YHWH is" such that "The Father is predicatively what YHWH is and Jesus is predicatively what YHWH is," where "the Logos" designates "what YHWH is" rather than "the Son/Jesus" per se. In my judgment this means he interpreted reception history rather than John's original intentionality.

38. Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, trans. W. J. Montague (London: SCM, 1969), 159.

tively) the Logos incarnate” became “Jesus is (identical with) the Logos incarnate.” I suspect the answer lies in a reception history that subsumed the original Johannine intentionality executed in a text that came to be prefixed to the Gospel as a whole.³⁹ But that is another essay.

39. An obvious condition of providing evidence for this would be to delineate in detail—independent of subsequent reception-history—the original Johannine intentionality behind such verses as 1:1–5 and 1:14–18. One form this is likely to take is understanding John in terms of his close reading of the Priestly creation narrative. I have referred to Borgen’s work in this respect.

On Reading with Stereoptic Vision: Figural Exegesis and History in John 9

Joseph L. Mangina

Introduction

Few scholars have contributed as much as Chris Seitz has to the recovery of a robustly theological approach to reading the Bible. Seitz has helped us to a better apprehension of the two-part canon—in particular, underscoring the indispensable witness of the “Elder” Testament for the church. His writing belies the notion that attentiveness to church doctrine causes one to lose sight of the text. On the contrary, doctrine takes us deeper into the text, a point borne out in his commentaries on Isaiah, Colossians, and Joel. Seitz is, quite simply, a very good reader of Scripture.

Part of what it means to read theologically is to read figurally. But figural exegesis is a contested realm. One of the perennial issues that arises in this area is the relation of figural reading to historical criticism. For some in the biblical studies guild, a devotion to historical methods means placing figural exegesis on the margins, or even excluding it altogether. For others, history plays a kind of gatekeeper role in filtering out bad typology. This was the view of Robert Jenson, who developed an appreciation for the church’s tradition of figural reading fairly late in his career, but who continued to insist on the disciplining role of history. Thus Jenson writes that the ideal theological interpreter “would be as devoted as any medieval homilist to finding a christological and eschatological and moral sense in every last event or testimony of Scripture but would be constrained by historical consciousness from finding them by ahistorical associations.”¹ But there

1. Robert Jenson, *The Works of God*, vol. 2 of *Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 284.

are also interpreters who are not terribly bothered by “ahistorical associations,” seeing Scripture as generating multiple figures and meanings out of its christological center, encouraging a kind of interpretive *jouissance*. Peter Leithart might be cited as an example of this hermeneutical left wing. His stimulating *Deep Exegesis* reads like an exuberant throwing-off of the chains imposed by three centuries of historical criticism.²

Where does Seitz fall along this spectrum? On the one hand, in his commentary on Colossians as elsewhere he expresses his frustration at what he calls the “industry of historical-critical evaluation.”³ For this industry it was important to distinguish authentic from inauthentic Pauline letters, to focus on individual letters as opposed to a more synthetic reading, and to keep theological considerations at a safe distance. For Seitz, such strictures are artificial and prevent our engaging with the subject matter of the texts. On the other hand, in his own practice of exegesis Seitz makes effective ad hoc use of historical tools, simply drawing on these when the text at hand seems to call for it. His pragmatic attitude is reminiscent of Karl Barth, who, when asked about the role played by reason in his theology, responded emphatically “I use it!”⁴ To bring the discussion back to figuralism specifically, there seems no reason why the figural exegete should not likewise use historical methods to draw out Scripture’s witness to God in Jesus Christ.

In the present essay I wish to focus on one possible way in which history and figure might interact. Specifically, I want to consider whether a determined historical reading might itself function as figural reading. The example I will explore is drawn from the Fourth Gospel. In recent decades, the interpretation of John has been deeply shaped by the theory that the gospel’s origins are to be found in the parting of the ways between the church and the synagogue. This is a historical thesis. But might it also be, quite counterintuitively, at the same time a figure or allegory? To see how this might be so, we must first consider the groundbreaking research of J. Louis Martyn.

2. Peter Leithart, *Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005).

3. Christopher Seitz, *Colossians*, BTCB (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2014), 47.

4. Karl Barth, *Letters 1961–68*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 294.

Expulsion from the Synagogue: The Rise of an Exegetical Theory

In the ancient church the gospel of John was known as the spiritual gospel, symbolized by the eagle who soars high above the earth to view the glory of the eternal Word. In modernity, by contrast, John has more frequently been seen as a puzzle. While some conservative exegetes still continued to affirm authorship by John the son of Zebedee, most scholars came to see it as written for a later, hellenized audience—a metaphysical gospel for the Greeks. By the time of the Second World War the tide of opinion had shifted to an emphasis on the Jewishness of John. Still, the text remained a historical enigma. It is telling that while Rudolf Bultmann's influential 1941 commentary had much to say concerning the gospel's history-of-religions background, he had virtually nothing to say about the circumstances of its composition.⁵ His existential interpretation stressed the book's universal and timeless aspects. The author and his community were matters of secondary importance.

Enter Martyn, whose 1968 *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* marked a sea change in modern Johannine studies.⁶ Martyn argued that the gospel, although preserving some oral traditions about Jesus, had its origins in the expulsion of the Johannine Christians from the synagogue. The book reads like a mystery story, with some of the more important clues being found in the episode of the man born blind in John 9. The narrative opens with a typical healing story, of the sort that Mark or Luke would have dealt with in a few deft strokes before moving on. But this is the Fourth Gospel, and here things unfold differently. In John the healing story expands into a complex narrative involving multiple scenes and a wide cast of characters, including Jesus, the disciples, the blind man, the man's parents and neighbors, and not least the Pharisees, who play the role of interrogators and prosecutors. The story is marked by various comings and goings and complex, irony-laden dialogues among the principals. Jesus himself is curiously absent for long stretches, while other characters take center stage. It is one of the most elaborate set pieces in all the gospels.

What is going on here? Martyn suggests that the story begins to make sense when we read it with "stereoptic vision," an epistemological category

5. Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, KEK 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1941).

6. J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, NTL, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003)

he connects with apocalyptic literature.⁷ In an apocalypse, we are invited to read at two levels: heavenly and earthly. The heavenly visions are a clue to things that will shortly happen upon earth. John's two-level drama unfolds rather differently. Here both levels are earthly. The first level is the story of Jesus in early first-century Jerusalem—Martyn calls this the *einmalig* or once-upon-a-time level—while the second is that of John and his community some decades later. Everything is, in a way, doubled: Hence the miracle-working figure is both Jesus and an unnamed Christian teacher and healer in John's own day. Another difference between John and Jewish apocalyptic writers is that while the latter call attention to their stages or levels, John recounts but a single drama; it is we, the interpreters, who discern the two levels by noticing various incongruities or seams in the text. Thus Martyn writes:

[The evangelist] presents his two-level drama in a way which is obviously intended to say with emphasis: "*This* is the drama of life." Only the reflective scholar intent on *analyzing* the Gospel will discover the seams which the evangelist sewed together so deftly. True exegesis demands, therefore, that we recognize a certain tension between our analysis and John's intentions.⁸

Among the chief seams Martyn discovers in the text are the passages that allude to people being cast out of the synagogue. The narrator tells us that the blind man's parents "feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue" (9:22; cf. 12:42, 16:2). For Martyn, this seems plainly anachronistic: no one was likely to have been expelled from the synagogue for being a follower of Jesus in Jesus's own day. The language must, then, refer to the Johannine Christians, whose confession of Jesus—especially in the form of a high christology—was stirring up opposition from their Jewish neighbors. Martyn famously relates this development to the *birkat ha-minim*, the "blessing [i.e., cursing] of the heretics," a kind of anathema pronounced in the course of Jewish liturgy. He argued that in the late first

7. Martyn, *History and Theology*, 130. The connection between apocalyptic and stereoptic vision plays a major role in Martyn's great commentary on Galatians: *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997).

8. Martyn, *History and Theology*, 131, emphasis original.

century a formal rabbinic council met at Jamnia and decreed that the formula be expanded to include the “Nazarenes.” The purpose of this clause was to out Jewish Christians, who must now either leave the synagogue or abandon their confession of Christ. For those who read with stereoptic vision, this drama can be seen unfolding in John’s text. Hence the formerly blind man, representing the Johannine community, is cast out by the Pharisees, while Jesus, representing the Christian healer, is found guilty of leading the people astray (7:12), and so put to death. Suddenly it becomes clear why the Fourth Gospel employs such scathing language concerning “the Jews”: it reflects the Johannine community’s own experience of persecution by the rival group.

Martyn’s book constitutes one of those rare paradigm-creating events in the history of scholarship. His theory instantly became the accepted account of Johannine origins, at least within mainstream New Testament studies. Like any good theory, Martyn’s synthesized a variety of data that no one had previously accounted for into a single, satisfying picture. It also did not hurt that Martyn wrote well. His drama reads like a drama, with chapter-titles that could easily be the synopsis of a five-act play:

- Part I. A Synagogue-Church Drama: Erecting the Wall of Separation
 - 1. A Blind Beggar Receives His Sight
 - 2. He Is Excluded from the Synagogue and Enters the Church
- Part II. After the Wall Is Erected: the Drama Continues
 - 3. The Jewish-Christian Beguiler Must Be Identified
 - 4. He Must Be Arrested and Tried by the Court
 - 5. Yet the Conversation Continues

In brief, the synagogue-expulsion hypothesis had taken the enigma that is the Fourth Gospel and bestowed on it a local habitation and a name. Robert Kysar notes that by the 1970s scholars were already tending to treat the theory as established fact.⁹

The Demise of the Thesis, and Its Rebirth as Figural Interpretation

Research paradigms, however, are made to be broken. By the end of the twentieth century, cracks had begun to appear in the edifice. One of the

9. Robert Kysar, “The Expulsion from the Synagogue: The Tale of a Theory,” in *Voyages with John* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 237–45.

first stones to fall was Martyn's hypothesis concerning the *birkat ha-minim*. Persuasive arguments were advanced that even if there was such a blessing it was not promulgated by any rabbinic council and was certainly not aimed at Christians. Martyn had simply pressed the evidence too far.¹⁰ Adele Reinhartz, a prominent Canadian Jewish scholar and a former student of Martyn's, pointed out that the theory also fails to account for the overall picture of Jews and Judaism in John.¹¹ Some Jews are viewed in a positive light, such as those who comfort Mary and Martha on their brother's death (11:45). There is also talk of Jews deserting to believe in Jesus, language that suggests they left the synagogue of their own volition (12:10–11). Reinhartz argues that the Fourth Gospel is simply more complex than the theory suggests—a judgment that is no doubt true. Moreover, by the 1990s broader methodological objections were being raised to the circular procedure whereby the text is used to reconstruct the Johannine community, and the Johannine community is used to explain the text. An especially harsh form of this critique has been voiced by Richard Bauckham, who questions the whole idea that the gospels were written for specific audiences. For Bauckham and his students, the gospels are examples of the ancient genre of biography, not coded messages concerning the communities where they originated. Bauckham even dares to suggest that the Fourth Gospel offers accurate historical information about Jesus, embodying traditions of eyewitness testimony going back to the beloved disciple himself, a Jerusalem disciple with his own unique perspective on Jesus's life and death.¹²

None of this is to say that the hypothesis has simply been disproved. It would be fair to say, however, that over time it has been forced to become more modest—which is probably a good thing. Reading the scholarly literature on this subject, the systematic theologian gets the impression that most New Testament scholars still think there is something in it but that it is more difficult to know what was going on in the Johannine community than Martyn was inclined to believe. The Fourth Gospel does reflect a Jewish-Christian milieu, and there are traces of communal conflict in it; hence the harsh language concerning the Jews. Perhaps some of the Evan-

10. See Kysar, "Expulsion from the Synagogue," 239–40.

11. Adele Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John* (New York: Continuum, 2001).

12. Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

gelist's contemporaries had been expelled from the synagogue—or was it that they felt they had been expelled?—and this experience is reflected in passages like 9:22.¹³ But to say much more than this would be unwise.

All of this makes a great deal of sense. However, it also seems somewhat anticlimactic, given the imagination and power of the original proposal. It places all the emphasis behind the text, as if detailed reconstruction of Johannine Christianity had been Martyn's primary goal. Perhaps this is true for many historical scholars who embraced the theory. Martyn's own interest, however, was primarily theological, as the very title of his book suggests: *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*. So the question arises, is there a way of reframing his reading of John so as to bring out this theological dimension even more clearly?

One possibility would be to view the synagogue-expulsion theory as a kind of figural or allegorical exegesis. This idea comes up occasionally in the work of Bauckham and his students, where it is cited as a reason to reject a hermeneutic focused on gospel communities. Hence Bauckham complains that in such approaches "the narrative, ostensibly about Jesus, has to be understood as an allegory in which the community actually tells its own story."¹⁴ Thus while the Fourth Gospel may purport to be about one thing—the incarnation, say, or the promise of eternal life to those who believe—it is really about something quite different: a crisis in the Johannine church.

A more sympathetic account is offered by William Wright IV in his book *Rhetoric and Theology: Figural Reading of John 9*.¹⁵ Wright understands figure or allegory to mean "any manner of reading in which a text is read as having a meaning beyond the ostensive one."¹⁶ As his prime example from the ancient church he cites Augustine's *In Evangelium Johannis tractatus*. Thus, Augustine finds in the blind beggar a type of fallen humanity, while Jesus's use of spittle and mud to heal him signifies the incarnation:

13. Thus Kysar, "One need not be an unrepentant skeptic to wonder if 'expulsion' identifies a historical action or an emotion" ("Expulsion from the Synagogue," 240, emphasis original).

14. Richard Bauckham, "For Whom Were the Gospels Written?," in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 20.

15. William Wright IV, *Rhetoric and Theology: Figural Reading of John 9*, BZNW 165 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009).

16. Wright, *Rhetoric and Theology*, 75, emphasis original.

“From his saliva he made mud because the Word was made flesh.” As Christ sends the man to wash himself in the pool of Siloam, so Augustine’s hearers will soon be sent to wash themselves in the waters of baptism. In this way a text that, at the level of the *sensus literalis*, is firmly located in first-century Jerusalem comes directly into the world of fifth-century North Africa.

Surprisingly, Wright is open to seeing Martyn’s hermeneutic of the two-level drama as an instance of figural interpretation, formally parallel to what Augustine is doing in his *In Evangelium Johannis tractatus*. Both men find a significance in the text beyond the ostensive sense. Both see the discovered realities as being genuinely present in the text itself, and not something imposed by the reader. Both seek to account for narrative movement within the passage. Both seek to relate the story of the blind man to a specific audience, Augustine to his catechumens preparing for baptism, Martyn to the Johannine community in its struggle with the synagogue.

For Wright, the problem with Martyn’s exegesis of John 9 is not that it is figural, but that it is a failed figuralism. It goes wrong—and here Wright sounds very much like Bauckham—by focusing on the Johannine community at the expense of Jesus. Wright’s own constructive exegesis focuses on Jesus’s self-identification “I am the light of the world” near the beginning of the passage (9:5). He shows how the Evangelist employs a variety of ancient rhetorical devices to persuade us of this fact. Rather than a two-level drama between Jesus and the community, he argues, the narrative “more plainly reflects a dynamic between the literal/physical and the figural/spiritual.... The figurative use of language invites the reader to draw out an implied similarity between Jesus and light.”¹⁷ In effect, Wright offers a tropological or moral reading of John 9, focused on the reader’s own walking in the light of Christ.

It is not clear to me, however, why we need to choose between these alternatives. Wright, it seems to me, is correct in what he affirms and wrong in what he denies. He is correct to see a strong tropological thrust in the passage, a summons to walk in the light as Christ is in the light (1 John 1:7). But he too hasty in assuming that a two-level drama involving the Johannine community must detract from a proper christological focus. Must this be the case? I would like to argue that historical-critical reading can at times function in a properly figural way. To see how this is

17. Wright, *Rhetoric and Theology*, 204.

so, it will be useful to explore some examples that may serve as analogues and precedents.

History and/as Figural Reading

Consider, for instance, the venerable tradition of reading the book of Revelation in directly referential terms: as a series of one-to-one correspondences between its symbols and particular historical events and persons. In their useful reception-history commentary on Revelation, Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland call this approach to the text decoding interpretation: “For example, the Spiritual Franciscans saw Saint Francis as the angel with the living seal of Rev 7:2, and Hal Lindsey sees in Rev 9 a description of an all-out attack of ballistic missiles on the cities of the world.”¹⁸ But it is not only Franciscans friars and dispensationalists who read this way. The procedure reflects an attitude toward the text in which its true meaning is discovered in the history behind it or to which it gestures. In that respect, a modern historical-critical or sociological reading of Revelation could be seen as but another form of decoding exegesis.

A closely related example would be the recent proliferation of empire studies within New Testament scholarship. It has become commonplace in many quarters to argue that the authors of the New Testament were, consciously or otherwise, mounting a critique of Roman imperial power. Jesus is Lord, and Caesar is not.¹⁹ In a Mediterranean world marked by emperor worship, military display, and the oppression of peoples, the church with its gospel stood out as an alternative to the Roman status quo. Note that this is different from simply treating the imperial context as crucial historical background to the New Testament. Rather, in this paradigm the context itself is an essential aspect of what the texts are referring to. In some important sense they are *about* anti-imperial politics.

A third, rather different instance is furnished by the various modern quests for the historical Jesus. They vary wildly, of course, in their particulars: from the humane teacher of the Fatherhood of God and the infinite value of the human soul—so Adolf von Harnack in his *What Is Christianity*—to the eschatological prophet who proclaimed the kingdom and was

18. Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland, *Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ*, Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

19. See Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica, eds., *Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not: Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013).

the very agent of that kingdom's coming, according to scholars engaged in the post-Bultmannian New Quest of the 1950s and 1960s.²⁰ There is the Cynic or gnostic Jesus of the Jesus Seminar, and the more orthodox Jesus propounded by scholars like N. T. Wright. The project as a whole inevitably tends to drive a wedge between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith; one needs hermeneutics to hold the two together. We might say that the rendering of Jesus's identity in Scripture has spun off two avatars, a historical person behind the text and a spiritual or existential person in front of it.

Now what do decoding readings of the Apocalypse, empire studies, and quests of the historical Jesus all have in common? Just this, that all can fruitfully be seen as forms of figural interpretation. This may at first seem highly counterintuitive. After all, we are accustomed to drawing a distinction between historical reading on the one hand and figure or allegory on the other, as if these were clearly delineated categories. But these terms are in fact rather fluid and difficult to pin down. What do we mean by literal and historical, for instance, given that the literal meaning of some texts so clearly has a figural element?—one thinks of the many tropes, parables, and allegories in Scripture. Likewise, despite the frequent accusation that figural reading seeks an escape from history, David Dawson has argued that classic Christian reading of Scripture, as exemplified in a thinker like Origen, actually preserves historicity on both poles of the figural relation.²¹ The literal and the figural are not defined by binary opposition to one another, but interact in complex and often surprising ways. This complexity is not simply a function of the ways readers and texts conspire to make meaning together. Rather, it reflects the truth that the most important agent in the interpretive act is the LORD God. It is God, finally, who gives Scripture to us so that it may bear fruit in human life, very often in the form of the figures it generates. Where Scripture is concerned, theological considerations proper always trump abstractly hermeneutical ones.²²

Thus, we can see that the histories referenced in the three cases above each has the character of a figure, reflecting the classic “this is that” logic

20. Adolf von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1957), 51.

21. David Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

22. One of the most fundamental themes in the writings of Hans Frei; here Frei's debt to Barth is patent.

of figuralism.²³ The angel with the living seal is a particular member of the heavenly host, but he also is Francis of Assisi. The various historical Jesuses are figures spun out (with varying degrees of plausibility) from the narratively rendered Jesus of the gospels. The picture of imperial Rome in empire studies draws on aspects of Scripture, from Revelation's account of Babylon to the undoubted historical fact that Jesus was crucified by the Romans. At the same time, interpreters in this school draw out meanings that are simply not evident on the surface of the text, and that may indeed stretch the text beyond what it can bear. As John Barclay has argued, in a memorable riposte to N. T. Wright, it is extremely unlikely that Paul gave much thought at all to the empire.²⁴ While the gospel is indeed subversive of Caesar's claims, it subverts them mainly through its refusal to acknowledge that Caesar is all that interesting or important.

As the preceding discussion will indicate, not all figural readings are equally persuasive or valid. While it may strain credulity to see Francis as the angel with the living seal, how much more so to see the plagues of Rev 9 as Soviet and American missiles! Likewise, the various quests of the historical Jesus have frequently stretched the gospel portraits almost beyond recognition. This does not mean, however, that there is no basis whatsoever even for questionable figural readings. For a spiritual Franciscan, Francis's gospel proclamation and practice could well be seen as performing a function similar to the angel's command to delay the judgment of the earth in Rev 7. So too, depictions of the historical Jesus generally have some basis in the text: Harnack's construal of Jesus's message may be constricted, but it is not entirely wrong. The picture of Jesus as Jewish eschatological prophet in the post-Bultmann quest is far more consonant with the gospel narratives; that is what makes it theologically useful even today. It is nevertheless a figure, in the sense of being a selection or abstraction from the gospels made on the basis of historical research. It is selective in its use of the Synoptics and largely ignores the Fourth Gospel. The figure has been constructed for the purposes of a particular modern form of theological reading, one that stresses the horizontally eschatological dimensions of Jesus's identity and mission.

23. The phrase, taken from Peter's sermon where he identifies the events of Pentecost with Joel's visions (Acts 2:16), is central to Pentecostalism's understanding of Scripture, but is also a useful motto for understanding figural reading more generally.

24. John Barclay, "Why the Roman Empire Was Insignificant to Paul," in *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 363–87.

An aside: the modest proposal outlined above changes the way we think about historical criticism. History is often invoked as a needed check on the excesses of figure and allegory: the fact that chastens the latter's fancy. But if historical reconstructions function as figures, it is *they* that require disciplining. For what the figures are figures of is Scripture's inexhaustible subject matter, its divine allness as Ephraim Radner puts it, ultimately identical with God's own Word Jesus Christ.²⁵ To the extent that historical work can help to elucidate this Word, then it can be welcomed into the church's reading. But this will not always be so. Determining whether and how to apply historical tools will depend on the particular character and contours of the text at hand. As so often, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Returning now to John 9, it is worth noting that one does not have to be a determined historical critic to find an ecclesial meaning in the passage. Leithart, for example, who employs a sophisticated array of literary tools in reading Scripture, thinks the passage is in fact ultimately about the church—but only because it is about Christ first. He notes that the most obvious figural connection to be drawn is between the formerly blind man and Jesus himself. The man replicates Jesus's own conflict with the Jews/Pharisees, is put on trial by the Pharisees, and is finally expelled from the community. But if we apply the Augustinian rule of the *totus Christus*, according to which the things said about Christ may also be said about his body the church, then the passage opens up to an ecclesial dimension also. As Christ was crucified outside the gate, so the church (like the blind man) cannot expect other than rejection at the hands of the world, as represented in Johannine terms by "the Jews." As Leithart puts it, "We follow the example of the suffering disciple because he is himself a type of the suffering Messiah, who then in turn becomes a type of the suffering church."²⁶

This is a complex chain of theological reasoning, but one that makes a great deal of sense of our passage, read in the ensemble of Scripture as a whole. The question, however, is whether such exegesis might be enriched by invoking something like Martyn's two-level drama. I will conclude this essay by suggesting three ways in which this might be so.

First, Martyn's imagined drama lends a kind of specificity and social density to the text that might otherwise be missed. The old charge that

25. Ephraim Radner, *Time and the Word: Figural Reading of Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 210.

26. Leithart, *Deep Exegesis*, 175.

figural exegesis seeks escape from history does not have to be true, but it *can* be true. The imaginative exercise of reconstructing the Johannine community in its first-century setting can serve as a corrective. It reminds us of the church's own timeful, imperfect, and contested character. It is not an ideal church that "follows the Lamb wherever he goes" (Rev 14:4) but a very real church. The figure of the Christian teacher/healer and his particular fate may be a fiction, and yet for all that it is a highly plausible one. Martyn's reconstruction poses the question of what it might have been like to be the suffering church in a particular time and place—Syrian Antioch, say, in the late first century—and what the cost of discipleship might have been in such a setting. This is the drama of life, whether in first-century Antioch or twenty-first century Toronto.

Second, Martyn does not simply render the drama vivid, he shows it to be at its core a drama that involves a division within Israel. One cannot read the Fourth Gospel without engaging the question of the schism between church and synagogue. In this regard, the passages where the Evangelist speaks of expulsion from the synagogue really do function as seams in the text, drawing the reader's attention to something odd going on. It is odd, surely, that a gospel whose main character (a divine person, no less!) is a Jew, whose followers are Jews, and who is known to say things like "salvation is from the Jews," should nevertheless be marked by such a strong anti-Jewish polemic. The tension between the Jewishness of John and its notorious rhetoric concerning οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι demands to be accounted for, and not only at the level of ideas, but of actual historical communities. Martyn's historical figuralism challenges us to do just that, even if his particular way of telling the Johannine story turns out to be inadequate.

Third, and related to the previous point, Martyn's work brings us into the realm of divine election and predestination, which is where much historic Christian figuralism has its home.²⁷ This is in fact an important Johannine theme, as signaled near the beginning of our passage: "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might

27. Frei notes how Karl Barth's retrieval of figural exegesis was closely tied to his doctrine of election. It is precisely because God stands utterly beyond history that he can act sovereignly and freely in history, in ways that are reflected in the Bible's figures and types. All figures converge on Jesus Christ, who is the very reality of God's electing grace (Hans Frei, "Karl Barth: Theologian," in *Theology and Narrative*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher [New York: Oxford University Press, 1990], 167–76).

be displayed in him” (John 9:3).²⁸ Now to say “election” is precisely not to affirm some kind of determinism. Far from it! Divine election is the very ground and possibility of human freedom. The Lord utters his word in the expectation that his people will respond to it, in whatever form that takes. It is rather telling that the final section of Martyn’s outline cited above is titled “Yet the Conversation Continues.” In context, he is referring to the ongoing debate over Jesus’s identity between John’s church and synagogue in the late first century. But it could equally well mean the conversation between God and his elect people(s).

What this means, concretely, is that even if the two-level drama of the Fourth Gospel is as Martyn describes it—the harassment of Christians by a socially more powerful Jewish group—this is not an unchanging archetype of Jewish-Christian relations. Obviously it was not, in a historical sense: During the centuries of Christendom the power relations were reversed, and it was Christians who were in a position to persecute Jews. Nor does that experience have to function as fate for our time. We can read the historical figure, in other words, as a salutary warning—this is after all a venerable use of figural exegesis, going back to Paul’s use of Israel’s wilderness wanderings as an object lesson for the church in Corinth (1 Cor 10:1–13). Christians could stand to be reminded (and not only on Good Friday) that historically speaking it is all too often they who have played the role of the Johannine Jews, and that Jews have been the ones rendered *ἀποσυνάγωγος* and worse by Christians.

This essay has not been intended to suggest that, when applied to the Bible, all uses of historical research or even all historical reconstructions have a figural character. In relation to the Fourth Gospel as to the rest of Scripture, relations such as those of literal to figural or history to theology remain fluid. There is no set method to resolve questions like these; rather, we find ourselves thrown back on the skill and theological insight of the interpreter. What matters in the end is the interpreter’s deference to the text of Holy Writ and his or her sensitivity in reading it as the Word of God for the *ἐκκλησία*.

Chris Seitz is just such an exemplary interpreter of Scripture. He is an ecclesial reader par excellence, bringing to the task just the right balance of theology, history, and textual savvy. He truly helps us figure out the letter

28. Jenson calls the Fourth Gospel “the chief predestinarian book in the New Testament,” rightly noting that John “knows election only as the creation of the church” (Jenson, *Systematic Theology* 2:177).

of the Bible, in the sense of coming to discern how our own uncertain history is spelled in its pages, as the God of Israel draws both church and world into his gracious purpose. Seitz's gifts of wisdom and theological sensitivity—also his keen sense of humor!—have been gifts to the church. We look forward to being further instructed by him in the years ahead.

The Voice of John in the Canonical Edition of the New Testament

David Trobisch

Prologue

Every publication combines at least three narratives: the publisher's narrative, the editors' narrative, and the author's narrative. These three narratives with their different characters, settings, and plot lines provide a complex set of challenges for interpreters of literature who are interested in better understanding a text in its published form.¹

Gospel according to John

In the conclusion of the Gospel according to John, editors addressed readers with the words, "This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true" (John 21:24). They explained that a disciple had written a manuscript and that his report sheds light on what truly happened.² The editors used the first-

1. In the following, present tense will be used to describe the narrative world of readers, independent of which voice is telling the story. When the implied author, editors, or publisher spoke with their discernable voices, past tense is used. The term *canonical edition* assumes that the manuscript evidence of the New Testament is best understood as deriving from one archetype, an edited collection published during the middle of the second century. This edition achieved canonical status in the developing catholic movement. See David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

2. Although all other writings of the New Testament use a genitive in the titles, the four gospel books do not. The title in the Greek manuscripts is "Gospel according to John" and not "The Gospel of John." The writings of the New Testament are publications and not documents; publications only exist in copies, a document only exists in

person plural form “we know” to identify their voice, they referred to the author in the third-person as “this disciple,” and their remark was followed by a note from the publisher who wrote in the first-person singular, “I suppose” (John 21:21–25):

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them.* When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about him?” Jesus said to him, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!”**

* **He was the one who** had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?”

** So, the rumor spread in the community that **this disciple** would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?” This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true.

But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, **I suppose** that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

Modern conventions separate the voice of the source from the voice of editors. In the above and the following quotes, editorial notes are represented as notes, with asterisks (*) marking the points of reference. Ancient and medieval manuscripts typically show critical notes in the margins.³ When scribes copied annotated manuscripts, however, they sometimes moved notes from the margins into the main text body. Such manuscripts look like the published form of the Gospel according to John.

Editors could have used the author’s voice, “I, the disciple whom Jesus loved wrote these things down, and I testify that everything I wrote is true”—which is the narrative perspective used in the Gospel accord-

one exemplar, the original. The implied publisher made this distinction. Quotations from the Christian Bible are taken from the NRSV (all emphasis is added); Greek quotations follow NA²⁸.

3. E.g., Readers add notes, scribes list corrections, editors include references, or publishers add titles (David Trobisch, “Structural Markers in New Testament Manuscripts with Special Attention to Observations in Codex Boernerianus [G 012] and Papyrus 46 of the Letters of Paul,” in *Layout Markers in Biblical Manuscripts and Ugaritic Tablets*, ed. Marjo C. A. Korpel and Josef M. Oesch, Pericope 5 [Assen: Van Gorcum, 2005], 177–90).

ing to Luke.⁴ The Fourth Gospel, however, lived up to what the publisher suggested in the title. It was entitled “Gospel according to John” and not “Gospel of John.” Readers are expected to distinguish between John’s voice and other voices.

In their first remark (*), editors referenced an earlier passage in John’s manuscript, “One of his disciples [The one whom Jesus loved] was reclining next to him; Simon Peter, therefore, motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking.⁵ So, while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, ‘Lord, who is it?’” (John 13:23–25). By quoting “Lord who is it?” in their editorial remark, the editors identified the author as one of the twelve disciples.⁶ Through the title Gospel according to John, the publisher identified this disciple as John. The second editorial remark (***) also quoted from the manuscript of the beloved disciple, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?” (John 21:22). The editors reminded readers that in John’s manuscript Jesus did not say that John would still be alive, he said, “If it is my will that he remain.” It had not been Jesus’s will.

By adding remarks instead of changing the wording, the editors demonstrated respect for the manuscript of the beloved disciple. They wanted readers to distinguish the voice of the editors from the voice of the author. And by referring to books in the plural and using the first-person singular, the publisher referenced the Gospel according to John as part of the four-gospel volume of the canonical edition and differentiated his or her voice from the voice of the editors.

Once readers recognize the strategy of the editors to explain a difficult expression by pointing to other passages in John’s manuscript, they will discover many more editorial comments. The story of Mary anointing Jesus’s feet (John 12:4–8) may serve as an example:

4. “I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus” (Luke 1:3).

5. “The one whom Jesus loved” is another editorial note, possibly moved from the margin into the text body.

6. The editors used the same technique to identify Lazarus, Caiaphas, and Judas Iscariot. For Lazarus, John 11:1–3 references John 12:1–2; for Caiaphas, John 18:13 references John 11:49–50; for Judas Iscariot, John 6:68–71 references John 18:2–3 (David Trobisch, “The Gospel according to John in the Light of Marcion’s Gospel-book,” in *Das Neue Testament und sein Text im 2. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jan Heilmann and Matthias Klinghardt, TANZ 61 [Tübingen: Francke, 2018], 174–75).

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples*, said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?"** Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

* The one who was about to betray him.

** He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.

The first editorial remark (*) distinguished between Judas the betrayer and another disciple with the same name.⁷ The second remark (**) referred readers to a detail in the narrative that would come up later in John's manuscript, the common purse.⁸

In the episode about Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4:1–9), however, the editors also provided information that was not taken from John's manuscript:

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, "Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John,"* he left Judea and started back to Galilee. But he had to go through Samaria.... A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."** The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?"***

* Although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized.

** His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.

*** Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.

With their first remark (*), the editors informed readers that Jesus did not perform baptisms but Jesus's disciples did. This information was not taken from John's manuscript.⁹ The editors could have changed the word-

7. See "Judas (not Iscariot) said to him" (John 14:22).

8. "Jesus said to him, 'Do quickly what you are going to do.' Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because *Judas had the common purse*, Jesus was telling him, 'Buy what we need for the festival'; or, that he should give something to the poor" (John 13:27–29).

9. John's manuscript implied that Jesus performed baptisms: "After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he spent some time there with them and baptized. They came to John and said to him, 'Rabbi, the one who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you testified, here he is baptizing, and all are going to him'" (John 3:23–26). In their final editorial remark, "the rumor spread in the com-

ing to “and *the disciples* baptized” (John 3:23) but chose not to do so. The second remark (**) added an explanation for why Jesus was alone with the woman. From the information provided later in the manuscript, the editors concluded that the disciples were gone to buy food.¹⁰ In the third remark (***) the editors provided cultural background information. They told readers that in Jesus’s time Judeans did not mingle with Samaritans.

The publisher of the four-gospel volume presented the Gospel according to John following three other gospels. The editors of the Fourth Gospel assumed that readers would remember central characters from the previous accounts, for example, John the Baptist: “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light” (John 1:6–8). From the description, “not being the light but testifying to the light,” readers of the three preceding gospel books recognize that this reference pertains to John the Baptist and not to the disciple John who is mentioned in the title (cf. Matt 3; Mark 1; Luke 1).

In the following sentence, the editors alluded to other stories as well: “The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him” (John 1:9–11). With the expression “coming into the world” editors referred to the stories of Jesus’s birth, and the phrase “his own people did not accept him” pertained to the rejection of Jesus in his hometown Nazareth.¹¹ Of the three Synoptic Gospels, however, only the Gospel according to Luke mentions John the Baptist before giving an account of Jesus’s birth, and only Luke narrates the rejection in Nazareth at the very beginning of Jesus’s ministry. The suspicion arises that the editors of the Gospel according to John expected their readers to prioritize the Gospel according to Luke.

The implied author of the Third Gospel, Luke, explains that he had used sources based on “eyewitnesses” and sources based on “servants of

munity that this disciple would not die” (John 21:23), the “rumor in the community” also was information independent of John’s manuscript.

10. “Just then his disciples came.... The disciples were urging him, ‘Rabbi, eat something’” (John 4:27, 31).

11. See Matt 1 and Luke 2 for Jesus’s birth, and Matt 13:53–58; Mark 6:1–6; and Luke 4:16–30 for the rejection in Nazareth.

the word.”¹² The publisher of the canonical edition represented the first category by the Gospel according to Matthew who is an eyewitness and the second category by the Gospel according to Mark who is a companion of Peter and Paul, suggesting to readers that Luke used the writings of Matthew and Mark.¹³

In the Gospel according to Luke, an unnamed woman anoints Jesus’s feet during Jesus’s early ministry in Galilee.¹⁴ John’s manuscript refers to this story:

Luke 7:36–38: “One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee’s house [2] and took his place at the table. And a woman [3] in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment.

John 12:1–3: Six days before the Passover [1] Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus [2], whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary [3] took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus’s feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

The disciple John insisted (12:1) that the anointing did not happen at the beginning of Jesus’s public activity but that it took place on the last Sabbath before Jesus’s death. He also testified (12:2) that the place of the event was not the home of a Pharisee in Galilee but the home of Lazarus in Bethany, just outside Jerusalem. Most strikingly, (12:3) the woman who anointed Jesus was not “a woman in the city who was a sinner,” it was Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha. John’s manuscript corrected the Gospel according to Luke when it came to historical detail with the authority of an eyewitness.

12. Luke 1:2, “As they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses [αὐτόπται] and servants of the word [ὑπηρέται τοῦ λόγου].”

13. Matthew is one of the twelve disciples of Jesus and an eyewitness. Mark, in the context of the canonical edition is an associate of Paul and an associate of Peter. He is not an eyewitness of events concerning Jesus (Trobisch, *First Edition*, 46–49).

14. The context places Jesus in Capernaum (Luke 7:1) and Nain (Luke 7:11) in Galilee.

ness. John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, was there, and he wrote it down, and as the editors put it, “We know that his testimony is true” (John 21:24).

Also, the story of a miraculous catch of fish, which happens in the Gospel according to Luke early in Jesus’s ministry, was placed by the manuscript of the beloved disciple after Jesus’s death (cf. Luke 5:1–3, 9–10 with John 12:1–2, 14). John supported his version by adding four eyewitnesses to the three mentioned in Luke’s account: Thomas the Twin, Nathanael of Cana, and two unnamed disciples.¹⁵ The story of the woman anointing Jesus’s feet and the story of the miraculous catch of fish are both found in the Gospel according to Luke but not in Matthew’s and Mark’s accounts.

According to Luke, after his resurrection, Jesus shows himself to two disciples on their way to Emmaus, then to all disciples in Jerusalem on Easter Sunday, and he ascends to heaven the same evening (Luke 24). According to the manuscript of the beloved disciple, however, this is not what happened. In addition to Jesus’s appearance in Jerusalem on Easter Sunday, Jesus also appeared to the disciples in Jerusalem the following Sunday and again at the Lake of Galilee.¹⁶

Even the most casual readers of the Gospel according to John will notice several long monologues of Jesus. One example is loosely connected to a discussion between Jesus and the “Jews” regarding Jesus’s healing of a man on the Sabbath (John 5:19–47):

Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you have been made well! Do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.” The man went away and told the *Jews* that it was Jesus who had made him well. Therefore, the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the *sabbath*. But Jesus answered them, “*My Father* is still working, and I also am working.”*

* For this reason, the *Jews* were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the *sabbath*, but was also calling God his own *Father*, thereby making himself equal to God.

The editorial remark (*) referred to the words “Jews,” “Sabbath,” and “my father” in the manuscript of the beloved disciple. Then the conversation

15. From the perspective of John’s manuscript, John was one of the two unnamed disciples.

16. David Trobisch, “The Authorized Version of His Birth and Death,” in *Sources of the Jesus Tradition: Separating History from Myth*, ed. R. Joseph Hoffmann (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2010), 131–39.

shifts. The following section is neither a typical story told from the perspective of the disciple John nor an editorial commentary. The expression, “Jesus said to them” introduces direct speech:

Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for **whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise**. The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. Indeed, just **as the Father raises the dead and gives them life**, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes. The Father judges no one but has **given all judgment to the Son**, so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.... Very truly, I tell you, **the hour is coming**, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.... **You sent messengers to John**, and he testified to the truth.... But I have a testimony greater than John’s.... **You search the scriptures** because you think that in them you have eternal life.... If you believed **Moses**, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?”

This monologue of Jesus connects to the narrative only superficially. If this speech were removed, readers would not miss it. It addresses timeless theological topics like Jesus as Son of God, resurrection from the dead, judgment day, the impending end of the world, the prophetic significance of John the Baptist’s testimony, the authority of Jewish Scriptures, and Moses’s predicting Jesus.

Another example is the speech following John’s account of Jesus’s last visit to Jerusalem. Whereas the Gospel according to Luke reports that Jesus sent two disciples to fetch a donkey and that the disciples made Jesus sit on it, the manuscript of the beloved disciple insists that Jesus himself picked the donkey and mounted it.¹⁷ In the Gospel according to Luke, the voice of God was heard during Jesus’s baptism and his transfiguration (Luke 3:21–22 and 9:34–39). The beloved disciple’s manuscript insisted that the voice of God also came from heaven when Jesus entered Jerusalem

17. See Luke 19:29–35. The reaction of the Pharisees is different as well: “Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, order your disciples to stop.’ He answered, ‘I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out’” (Luke 19:39–40). The manuscript of the beloved disciple has, “The Pharisees then said to one another, ‘You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!’” (John 12:19).

on the colt. In typical fashion, John's manuscript corrected some historical details in Luke's narrative. Jesus's exchange with the crowd is followed by a monologue (John 12:44–50):

Then Jesus cried aloud: **"Whoever believes in me** believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. **I have come as light** into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness. I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for **I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.** The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge, for **I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak.** And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, **I speak just as the Father has told me.**"

Again, the monologue is introduced as direct speech, "Then Jesus cried aloud." The narrative setting in the first century is abandoned, and in a detached and timeless fashion the monologue picks up recurring themes: believing in Jesus, light in the world, and judgment day. One new topic, however, is introduced. Readers now learn that Jesus channeled what God commanded him to say, "I speak just as the Father has told me." Jesus's speeches are the word of God.

In the third example, Jesus's monologue again follows a passage from the manuscript of the beloved disciple.¹⁸ The eyewitness account reports from John's perspective the last shared meal with Jesus. In the following, however, Jesus talks to readers of the Gospel according to John, removed in time and place from the narrated events. Toward the middle of the very lengthy monologue (John 14–17), which is interrupted only by short questions from the disciples, John's manuscript identified the source of these speeches, the Spirit of truth: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come" (John 16:12–13).

The monologues are speeches of Jesus, Son of God. Whereas the editors tried to smooth out difficulties in the narrative of John's eyewitness

18. "So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night" (John 13:30).

account, the monologues explain what neither John nor the editors could have expressed persuasively in their own voices. The monologues record the voice of God through Jesus of Nazareth, who was present when his father created the world.

In summary, the publisher expected readers to believe that the editors had prepared for publication a manuscript written by Jesus's disciple John and that they had restricted their work to adding remarks. In their remarks, the editors always referenced an expression found in the implied manuscript of John. They sometimes cross-referenced other passages in John's manuscript; sometimes they provided information from outside the text; sometimes they wrote in the first-person plural; and sometimes their comments expressed timeless and general ideas. In the context of book publishing in antiquity, this strategy suggested to readers that the editors had used an autograph.¹⁹

By placing the Gospel according to John as the last gospel book of the four-gospel volume, the publisher of the canonical edition expected readers to be familiar with the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke when they started to read the Gospel according to John. According to the publisher's narrative, John's eyewitness account corrected details reported by the Gospel according to Luke, who had used the gospel books ascribed to Matthew and Mark and similar publications. Furthermore, the editors implied that the monologues of Jesus were spiritual revelations to John, the beloved disciple, who wrote them down. They were understood as speeches of God transcending the time and place of the narrative setting.

The publisher expected readers to distinguish three voices: (1) John's voice in the eyewitness account of the beloved disciple, (2) the voice of God in the monologues of Jesus, and (3) the voice of the editors.

19. In a fragment attributed to Peter of Alexandria who died ca. 311, the bishop writes that the autograph of the Gospel according to John was still on display in the church of Ephesus, "And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the third hour, as the correct books render it, and the copy itself that was written by the hand of the evangelist, which, by the divine grace, has been preserved in the most holy church of Ephesus, and is there adored by the faithful" ("Fragments from the Writings of Peter," 5.7, *ANF* 6:282). Peter's argument is introduced to show how the reference to an autograph of John was used to argue the authenticity of one variant (Jesus died at 9:00 am, the third hour of the day) over another (Jesus died at noon, the sixth hour). Both readings are attested in Greek manuscripts of John 19:14.

Revelation of John

The canonical edition includes four other writings ascribed to a certain John: the Revelation of John and three letters of John. Because their titles mention John without any distinction, the publisher's narrative suggested that these writings were authored by the same person. Therefore, readers were encouraged to apply the publisher's reading instructions for the Gospel according to John to the letters of John and the Revelation of John as well.

Readers of the Revelation of John who follow the reading instructions will recognize the same three voices: the voice of John, the voice of God, communicated through Jesus Christ to John with the help of an angel, and the voice of the editors: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place; he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw" (Rev 1:1–2). The editors introduced John as someone "who testified to the word of God" and who testified to "what he saw of Jesus Christ," reminding readers of the two distinct parts of the manuscript of the beloved disciple: the monologues containing the voice of God and the eyewitness account of the beloved disciple. The implied publisher expected readers who encountered the Gospel according to John and the Revelation of John as integral parts of the canonical edition, to conclude that the same editors prepared for publication two different manuscripts authored by John.²⁰

Furthermore, as with the Gospel according to John, the editors of the Revelation of John indicated where their prologue ended and where John's autographed manuscript began. The editors talked about John in the third-person ("all that he saw"), whereas John wrote his manuscript in the first-person ("I, John"):

I, John,... was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus, to Smyrna,

20. In John 16:13 the Spirit proclaims, "things that are to come," which corresponds to Jesus Christ's revelation to John about "what must soon take place" (Rev 1:1–3).

to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea” (Rev 1:9–11).

John heard a voice that commanded him to “write in a book what you see,” and it is this manuscript that the editors presented to their readers. As with the Gospel according to John, the publisher asserted the existence of an autograph, a manuscript written in John’s hand.

Editorial comments seem to have been added to John’s manuscript the same way they were in the Gospel according to John (Rev 2:5–7):

Remember then from what you have fallen; repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Yet this is to your credit: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.* To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.
* Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

The editorial voice can be distinguished because it talked about the Spirit, whereas in John’s manuscript the Spirit was speaking. The same admonition appears in slight variations at the end of every letter to the seven congregations but in one instance also outside of this section (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; and 13:9). Maybe the editors wanted a liturgist to speak this sentence.

The narrative episodes of John’s visions almost always begin with a passage written by John in the first-person, and then they transcend into general descriptions with no mention of John (Rev 13:1–10):

And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads; and on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads were blasphemous names. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear’s, and its mouth was like a lion’s mouth. And the dragon gave it his power and his throne and great authority. One of its heads seemed to have received a death-blow, but its mortal wound had been healed.

In amazement the whole earth followed the beast. They worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?” Also, it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. It was given authority over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all the inhabitants of the earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been

*written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slaughtered.**

* Let anyone who has an ear listen: If you are to be taken captive, into captivity you go; if you kill with the sword, with the sword you must be killed. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

Whereas the passage written in the first-person complies with the perspective of an eyewitness report, the following descriptive section describes events from an omniscient and omnipresent perspective that a human being like John could not have experienced. These passages compare to the “Word of God” monologues in the Gospel according to John. Using an expression of the editors of the Revelation of John, these passages “show his servants what must soon take place” (Rev 1:3).

In the editorial remark (*), the narrative setting describing the global threat of the beast is abandoned. The editors addressed the readers directly, and they applied the passage from John’s manuscript to the experience of being persecuted. The editors suggested not to respond with violence.

A dramatization of the script could assign the sections to three voices. One actor could perform the passages in the first-person singular representing John on Patmos, another one could be the voice of an angel and proclaim the predictions, and a third voice could recite the editorial remark, which professes the moral of the story. These three voices are distinguishable in many visionary episodes of the Revelation of John.

At the end of his manuscript (Rev 22:10–17), John recorded dialogue with the angel who had shown him what would happen:

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!”

And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy. See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone’s work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”***

* Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

** The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let everyone who hears say, "Come." And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes, take the water of life as a gift.

John's eyewitness testimony is followed by a monologue of Jesus, introduced again as direct speech, "And he said to me." In their first comment (*) editors interrupted the voice of Jesus and spoke directly to readers. The second comment (**) was a liturgical remark.²¹ It reminded readers that the book was produced to be read aloud to an audience.²² The shift between Jesus's voice in the first-person singular and the voice of the editors is apparent.

Then the voice of the narrator changes back to the first-person:

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book; if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

The shift to the first-person singular with its clear reference to "the book" has a direct parallel in the last sentence of the Gospel according to John: "But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25). In the Gospel according to John, this was the voice of the publisher. The observation suggested that the same person who published the four-gospel volume also published the Revelation of John.

The book ends with another liturgical remark that brings the public reading of the Revelation of John to a closure: "The one who testifies to

21. Like the invitation to "come and eat" and break bread with the resurrected Jesus (John 21:12), the invitation of the Spirit to "come and drink the water of life" (Rev 22:17) can easily be understood as a reference to the Eucharist, the liturgical setting in which John's manuscripts were performed.

22. "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it; for the time is near" (Rev 1:3).

these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen." The voice of Jesus promises his imminent return. The congregants reply. Like many letters of Paul, designed for public reading, the last words are a wish of grace.²³

The publisher of the canonical edition presented the Revelation of John the same way as the Gospel according to John: editors had prepared for publication a manuscript written by John, the beloved disciple of Jesus. Both manuscripts of John contained an eyewitness account and visions. In both, John the beloved disciple of Jesus had written down what he had "heard and seen."

Letters of John

The publisher of the canonical edition presented three more writings of John, numbered them and gave them the title "Letters of John."

The First Letter of John does not provide a formal letter opening. The name of the letter-writer, the addressee, and a salutation are missing. Instead the writing opens in the first-person plural, "We declare to you what was from the beginning." In the Gospel according to John, passages in the first-person plural would signal that they were written by editors and not by the beloved disciple. The title First Letter of John, however, identified the author as John. The suspicion that, again, editors had prepared a manuscript of John for publication, is confirmed by passages written in the first-person singular, such as "I am writing these things to you."

Seen from this perspective, the publisher presented an autograph of John, to which editors added a prologue and an epilogue and five remarks:

Prologue:²⁴

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. (*1)

Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning. (*2)

Yet I am writing you a new commandment that is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. (*3)

23. See 1 Thess 5:27, "I solemnly command you by the Lord that this letter be read to all of them. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

24. Prologue 1:1–18; (*1) 2:1b–6; (*2) 2:7b "the old commandment is the word that you have heard"; (*3) 2:9–11; (*4) 2:15–25; (*5) 2:27–5:12; Epilogue 5:14–21.

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven on account of his name.

I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you, young people, because you have conquered the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father.

I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young people, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. (*4)

I write these things to you concerning those who would deceive you. (*5)

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Epilogue

To begin an autograph with the words “I write,” fits the genre well.²⁵ In the context of the canonical edition a remark written by John in his own hand, presented in a clearly distinguishable editorial framework, would have endorsed the editions of the Gospel according to John, the Second and Third Letter of John, and the Revelation of John.²⁶

In the Second Letter of John, one editorial comment may have been included (2 John 6–11):

I was overjoyed to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we have been commanded by the Father. But now, dear lady, I ask you, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but one we have had from the beginning, let us love one another.*

* And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment just as you have heard it from the beginning—you must walk in it. Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist! Be on your guard, so that you do not lose what we have worked for but may receive a full reward. Everyone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ, but goes beyond it, does not have God; whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. Do not receive into the house or welcome anyone who comes to

25. See Gal 6:11, “See how large letters I write when I write with my own hand.”

26. David Trobisch, “The New Testament in the Light of Book Publishing in Antiquity,” in *Editing the Bible: Assessing the Task Past and Present*, ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Judith H. Newman, RBS 69 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 161–70.

you and does not bring this teaching; for to welcome is to participate in the evil deeds of such a person.

Following reading instructions from the other Johannine writings, the editorial nature of the comment was discernable by the shift to the first-person plural “we walk.” The reference point to John’s letter was the word “love,” clearly marked in the opening words “this is love.” The formula “from the beginning” was a favorite term of the editors used in the prologue to the Gospel according to John and in the prologue to the First Letter of John (John 1:1; 1 John 1:1).

The ending of the Second Letter of John suggested to readers that the whole letter was written by John’s hand and that the publisher may have had access to it: “Although I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink; instead I hope to come to you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete” (2 John 12). The letter concluded with a greeting from the congregation where John was staying: “The children of your elect sister send you their greetings” (13). In the implied original letter, the one that was sent, the salutation from the congregation, written by another hand, would have authenticated John’s autograph.²⁷

The confidential character of the Third Letter of John indicated that it was not meant to be read to the congregation. The negative remarks about Diotrephes would hardly have gone over well with Diotrephes sitting in the audience.²⁸ The letter was addressed to a certain Gaius. In the provenance narrative of the canonical edition, the character Gaius plays a significant role. He is the host of Paul in Corinth, when Paul wrote the Letter to Romans, and he is mentioned in 1 Corinthians as one of the few who were baptized by Paul (Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 1:14). In the context of the canonical edition, mentioning Gaius allowed readers to determine Corinth as the address of the Second and Third Letters of John. The greeting (2 John 13) that authenticated John’s hand came from Corinth, making Corinth the guarantor of good provenance; and for lack of an alternative, Patmos becomes the place where John wrote these two letters.²⁹

27. See Rom 16:22. In his autographic subscription, literary Paul authenticates the hand of Tertius who had copied Rom 1–15.

28. “Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority” (3 John 9).

29. Rev 1:9, “I, John, . . . was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”

The autographs used to create the First Letter of John supported the publisher's claim to have used first-century documents when the second-century the canonical edition was prepared.³⁰

Epilogue

The publisher of the canonical edition gave John a prominent voice. A publisher's narrative, however, does not necessarily represent historical fact. Even when the publisher claimed to preserve historical documents written by the hand of John the beloved disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, this claim would have been a literary claim and poetic license was customary. The writings assigned to John describe what a second-century publisher believed had happened a century earlier. They are a valuable source to assess controversies among Jewish, Marcionite, gnostic, catholic, and other faith-communities with ties to the Jesus tradition.

To understand the voice of John as an integral part of the canonical edition of the New Testament is, of course, not the only perspective one can take. Trying to understand a second-century text in its oldest published form, however, is a noble charge for any exegete.

30. Autographic subscriptions are discernable for the Letters to Romans, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, and Hebrews (David Trobisch, *Paul's Collection of Letters: Exploring the Origins* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994], 29–33).

Paul and the Torah: Framing the Question Christianly

Grant Macaskill

Introduction

What does it mean to think Christianly about Paul's representation of the law? This is a particular articulation of a perennial question in both historical theology and contemporary biblical studies, one that is in turn pivotal to a range of further issues. It is important to recognize the particularity with which it is here asked and the implications that this has for what we understand ourselves to consider. We are not asking, as have most biblical scholars who have written on the topic, "What did Paul think of the law?" That would be to frame the question in simple historical terms, and it would invite an answer attentive to the historically located meaning of Paul's writings, considered on their own terms. It is entirely defensible and appropriate to ask such a question (even if the inquiry is often made somewhat naively), since Paul was a historical figure who has left a body of historically particular writings, but it is not the one that we are here asking. Neither are we asking, "How do we think theologically about Paul's representation of the law?" The task of theology has itself been fragmented and complicated by ideological developments throughout the modern period and to apply the adverb *theologically* does not necessarily qualify the question in a way that is particularly helpful. We would need to say much more about the theology at work to explain how it relates to our inquiry. In fact, some of the scholars who engage with the historical question of Paul's view of the law consider their answers to be theologically informed or theologically significant but in ways that reflect this basic vagueness and that are emblematic of the fragmentation of the modern disciplines. We ask the question here in a different way: what does it mean to think Christianly about Paul's representation of the law?

To ask the question in this way still leaves a measure of openness, since the Christian tradition is diverse, but it also positions it with respect to the elements that the tradition considers to be normative, to set the parameters of discussion. Most obviously, the Christian tradition has seen itself to be regulated by the canon of Scripture: the resolution of debate is always attempted with reference to Scripture, and this itself is ruled by a principle that resists the temptation to allow one particular part of the Bible to stand in interpretive isolation. I say this without naïveté about the depth of the fault lines that exist within the Christian traditions but in recognition that even those fault lines are generated by a common commitment to the normativity of the biblical canon, even if arguments then arise about how this bears on specific points of interpretation.

As Walter Moberly has put it, the canon functioned as the context in which each individual Scripture was read and debated by the church.¹ This contextualization may have been undertaken tacitly, but it was vital nonetheless. There may have been peripheral debates about the status of individual books, but there was still substantive agreement on the body of literature that was perceived to be the word of God. The canon controlled orthodox Christian interpretation up until the modern period and still does outside of the academic circles that reidentified the biblical texts simply as historical artifacts and the canon simply as an articulation of power; churches still consider the Bible to be their rule of faith and life.

But, in many cases, even the churches that maintain the notion of canon as key to proper interpretation operate with a distinctively modern way of thinking about the coherence of the canon, one that can itself be traced to deficient academic responses to modern historical reductionism. Canonical coherence is asserted, but now as a function of an underlying storyline that binds the parts together, rather than as a function of the church's response to the perceived relationship of texts to God.

To ask our question in these terms, then—what does it mean to think Christianly about Paul's representation of the law?—presses us to frame it in terms of the Christian tradition's collective and sustained commitment to canon, while also reflecting upon the differences between this traditional framework and the modern one with which it has been replaced,

1. See R. W. L. Moberly, *Old Testament Theology: Reading the Hebrew Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 11.

both in the academy and in parts of the church that, usually without their recognizing it, have been distinctively influenced by academic responses.

Before I turn to consider this question in relation to one of the significant current debates in New Testament studies, that concerning the apocalyptic Paul and his view of the law, let me add some personal comments about the work of Christopher Seitz and its impact on my own approach to these issues. As with some of the other contributors to this volume, I was involved as a doctoral student in the Theological Interpretation/Scripture and Theology seminars that Chris led in Saint Andrews. They were an important part of my own theological development, interrogating as they did some of the theological assumptions that underpinned the hermeneutics and exegetical method that I had learned as an evangelical seminarian, which were often heavily determined by the idea of an unfolding salvation history. Interestingly, and surprisingly, as they challenged the methodologies that had been instilled by exegetical textbooks, they affirmed some of the traditional approaches that marked the interpretive culture of my ecclesial background. Where I had been trained out of allegorical or figurative readings of Old Testament passages that were not demonstrably about Christ (i.e., ones that contained prophetic or typological foreshadowings), now I encountered a critical approach to reading those same passages that affirmed their figural significance.

Importantly, too, I grasped elements of what we discussed (although much of it took years to sink in) because I could map it onto the way that we read and sang the psalms in my ecclesial tradition. Because I had grown up in a tradition that practiced exclusive psalmody, I was accustomed to a kind of assumed figuration that sang the psalms as Christian worship, understanding them as articulations of Christian faith and experience. This was never done naively to the Old Testament context of the psalmists; there was always an implicit qualification of the Christian significance of their words as *mutatis mutandis*. But it was also done naturally and tacitly: no defense was required and frequently no explanation. We knew that when we sang Ps 133, we were singing of the fellowship of believers in the unity of the gospel, even as we shared in the words of someone who did not know the name Jesus to be the one at which every knee should bow. We knew that when we sang Pss 24 or 118, we were singing of Christ's ascension into heaven, even as we were singing of the pilgrim's ascent into Jerusalem. Crucially, of course, we knew that a Christian whose righteousness was not their own, from the law, but was by faith in Jesus Christ could

still sing Ps 119, in all its parts: “How I love your law; I meditate upon it all the day.”²

In key ways, this frames what will follow, for any Christian reflection on Paul’s representation of the law must, in a similar way, be prepared to affirm the significance of the Old Testament Scriptures, including the law or torah, as part of the Christian Bible by which God renders himself to us. Through the generations of the church, whenever the gospel crossed a linguistic boundary, it was often most quickly followed by the translation of the book of Psalms, with its affirmation of the goodness of the law thereby becoming central to Christian liturgy and culture. This can never be allowed to soften the force of Paul’s rhetoric, but it must always be allowed to control our interpretation of it. It sets limits on how we understand his apparent negativities, forces us to be precise about how far we allow that negativity to extend, or to what, specifically, we allow it to be attached. At the same time, it demands that a truly Christian affirmation of the law is properly conditioned by the gospel. I have raised similar matters elsewhere, in relation to the doctrinal concept of providence; here, I am grateful for the opportunity to do so in relation to the concept of canon.³

The Apocalyptic Paul: Mapping the Debate

For many, the academic arguments about how Paul understands the gospel to relate to the story of Israel and to the function of the law will be emblemized by the public debates between N. T. Wright and Douglas Campbell.⁴ In one sense, this is unfortunate, since both represent very particular forms of the positions that they represent; in another sense, it is helpful, since their differences throw the points of distinction into such sharp relief that they are easy to trace. It is important to stress, though, that any criticisms leveled here at either scholar cannot simply be mapped onto the work of other scholars whose claims might overlap with them or who might often be categorized on a particular side of the debate. John Barclay and Beverly Gaventa, for example, are positioned on Campbell’s

2. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

3. See Grant Macaskill, “History, Providence, and the Apocalyptic Paul,” *SJT* 70 (2017): 409–26.

4. There have been several public debates between the two, including one that took place at Duke Divinity School and one at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in San Diego, both in 2014.

side of the central issues, but their accounts of Paul's gospel are quite different from his and are often articulated in sharp criticism of him. My own work, meanwhile, is generally supportive of Wright's affirmation of the abiding importance of covenant and torah for Paul but, as will be seen from the discussion below, understands this in quite different terms to his. The comments I make here, then, are not intended to resolve the debate by taking one side over another, but to establish some framing considerations that are important as we discuss, at ever more finely grained levels, Paul's gospel and its relationship to the law.

Campbell's account of Paul's gospel is a particular development of the approach typically traced back through J. Louis Martyn to Ernst Käsemann, which emphasizes the disruptive or disjunctive effects of the disclosure—the apocalypse—of Jesus Christ.⁵ The revelation of Christ demands a fundamental reevaluation of everything, including the history of Israel and the law. This is the case because the revelation itself constitutes an inbreaking of divine life into a world ruled by sin and death, in which the story of Israel and the law participated; the gospel is in no sense conditioned by those stories but represents a distinctively new reality. That inbreaking may pierce through the whole of history, its significance impacting on the times before as well as the times after it, but it is itself something entirely separate from them and unconditioned by them. No lines can be traced through the law to the gospel.⁶ For Martyn, Paul's participation in the death Christ puts an end to the law's instructive role in the apostle's life: "In this event, Paul was torn away from the cosmos in which he had lived, and it was torn away from him. For, in dying with Christ on

5. Esp. Ernst Käsemann, "Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie," *ZTK* 57 (1960): 162–85 (translated by James Waterson as "The Beginnings of Christian Theology," *JTC* 6 [1969]: 17–46).

6. See J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 342. As Martyn put the matter, commenting on Gal 3:19–20: "We can see, then, that the Law and its curse constitute an angelic parenthesis lodged between and differentiated from two punctiliar acts of God himself, the uttering of the promise to Abraham and to Abraham's singular seed, and the sending of that seed, Christ. This again indicates that the Law does not stand in a redemptive-historical line between the promise and the coming of the seed. Precisely the opposite." See also his comments on p. 326, that no lines can be drawn through the law.

Christ's cross, this zealous Pharisee suffered the loss of the law, surely his earlier guide to the whole of the cosmos."⁷

This, of course, is a serious attempt to understand Paul's language of cocrucifixion and his statement that he has died to the law (Gal 2:19–20). It understands the gospel in participatory terms that define the relationships involved, with God, with the law, with the world. What has been revealed in Jesus has at once torn the mask off the cosmos, unveiling the evil powers at work, and united Paul to the hope constituted by the Christ event.

In Campbell's case, this apocalyptic emphasis is linked not only to an affirmation of the essentially dramatic character of the gospel, in which Christ brings about deliverance from a condition of powerlessness and lostness, lived under the rule of sin, but also to a particular account of grace, in which any expectation of reciprocity is considered to be contrary to a proper understanding of the gracious character of God's dealings with people. Any notion that our relationship with God is conditioned by our actions, including our obedience to the law, is entirely at odds with Paul's gospel, as Campbell understands it, which identifies salvation to be the result of a divine grace that is entirely unconditioned by our actions or by any demand of return.⁸ This means that the logic of law, especially its apparently conditional association of blessing with obedience and cursing with disobedience, is entirely irreconcilable with the gospel, as Campbell understands it; it is noteworthy, in fact, that the condition statements of Deut 28 are unmentioned in his massive *The Deliverance of God*. This is not to say that Campbell considers the human response to grace to be unimportant, but he cannot allow it to have any conditioning significance upon salvation. Those condition statements of Deut 28 cannot be made to align with this and neither, for that matter, can any account of faith or

7. Martyn, *Galatians*, 280.

8. See Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009). The claim underpins the work as a whole, but surfaces particularly clearly in the discussion on 109–32. See also Campbell, "The Current Crisis: The Capture of Paul's Gospel by Methodological Arianism," in *Beyond Old and New Perspectives on Paul: Reflections on the Work of Douglas Campbell*, ed. Chris Tilling (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014), 37–48. Campbell's arguments, including his attempt to map all Pauline scholarship onto the Athanasian-Arian debate, have been heavily criticized, with patristic specialists included among the voices that have considered his claims to be distortive. See, e.g., J. Warren Smith, "'Arian' Foundationalism or 'Athanasian' Apocalypticism: A Patristic Assessment," in Tilling, *Beyond Old and New Perspectives*, 78–92.

faithfulness that appears to make their exercise a necessity to salvation. This requires Campbell to give a creative explanation of why Paul seems to make such heavy use of the Old Testament in Rom 1:18–3:20, as he builds a case against humanity that all have fallen short of the glory of God and deserve only divine wrath. Campbell's explanation for this is that Paul is actually quoting the argumentation of his ideological opponents, using the device of "speech in character" before he then knocks their claims down with the logic of the gospel. The problem is that much of what is recounted in these verses is actually quotation from the Old Testament, so that Campbell's explanation really amounts to a rejection, not just of legalism but of every element in the Old Testament that appears to involve some kind of condition. Parallels to this dismissal of the actual content of the Old Testament are seen also in the rhetoric of Martyn, as we have noted already. Richard Hays and Gaventa, by contrast, who are also seen as representatives of an apocalyptic approach to Paul, recognize Paul's positive relationship to Old Testament Scripture and his more complicated relationship to the law.⁹

Barclay has traced the problems in Campbell's thought to a perfected concept of grace, which stretches the significance of the word beyond its natural meaning and redefines it in a way that excludes the kind of reciprocity that has actually always been considered an acceptable part of the concept.¹⁰ Interestingly, Barclay notes that the same perfected definition of grace is seen in Marcion, and this brings us to the key observation: for all that he accuses other scholars of being functionally Arian, Campbell's own account of the gospel is functionally Marcionite. That is, it cannot accommodate the Old Testament within its account of grace and salvation and effectively (or functionally) excludes it from the true word of God.

I hasten to add—and this is vital for readers to grasp—that Campbell does this as part of a serious attempt to read Paul on his own terms. While his perfecting of the concept of grace deserves to be critiqued, as Barclay has done, and while the details of his exegesis deserve to be scrutinized, as

9. See Richard Hays's famous studies *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016); and Beverly R. Gaventa, "The Shape of the 'I': The Psalter, the Gospel and the Speaker in Romans 7," in *Apocalyptic Paul: Cosmos and Anthropos in Romans 5–8*, ed. Beverly R. Gaventa (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 77–92.

10. John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 173.

many others have done, it remains an important contribution to the study of Paul. The point that I make here does not necessarily involve a rejection of his exegesis, but an interrogation of how this is framed with respect to Christian theology. In a sense, even if he were (or is!) correct in his exegesis of Paul, he cannot stake a claim that his account is an appropriately Christian understanding of the law, for that requires the exegesis of Paul to be ruled and related to the canon.

Wright's understanding of the law in Paul's thought maintains, over against the apocalyptic approach, an emphasis on the continuity of the story of Israel and the covenant with the story of Jesus and the church.¹¹ This is reflected most obviously in the title of his early work, *The Climax of the Covenant*, which highlights the place that the covenant continues to play in Paul's thought, but it has continued to be a characteristic feature of his work since, not just in his reading of Paul, but also his reading of the New Testament generally.¹²

Wright has become increasingly sensitive to the accusation leveled against his work that it is not sufficiently attentive to the disjunctive dimension of Paul's understanding of the gospel. In his more recent work, he has highlighted that the continuity of the story reflected in the New Testament is not that of a neatly linear narrative, moving forward at a consistent rate with each element inevitably giving rise to the next. Rather, it is a complex story, involving what appear to be stops and starts, disasters and repairs, and multiple plot lines, running at different speeds.¹³ Nevertheless, there is a sense that the story is unified—its parts cohere—and that the story of Israel and the covenant is part of the story of creation and redemption, shaping in important ways the story of Jesus, and the gospel of salvation that Paul proclaimed.

For Wright, there are none of the fundamental problems with the law, and its necessarily conditional logic, that Campbell finds so difficult. In fact, Wright sees Paul continuing to maintain certain elements of conditionality in his new understanding of the gospel. There will still be a judgment,

11. This has become an explicit point of differentiation in N. T. Wright's more recent work, particularly his massive study *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013).

12. N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991).

13. See the chapter entitled "The Plot, the Plan and the Storied Worldview," in Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 457–537.

and we will be judged according to what we have done in the body (Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10). The law continues to have a validity as an expression of God's moral standards, for Wright, and the problem that Paul condemns is not, in any simple sense, an attempt to secure credit with God by keeping the law meticulously. Rather, and more precisely, it is about the use of specific works of the law to create boundaries between covenant insiders and covenant outsiders, a practice that is at odds with the purpose of the law ultimately to bring blessing to the whole world. Temple and torah had been dislocated from their true place in God's scheme and it was this that stood under judgment. Now, the people of God are defined in relation to Jesus, and the significance of temple and torah has been taken up into his identity and vocation. This allows Wright to see elements of each continuing to be maintained, even if remapped in relation to the good news of Jesus Christ.

What is important to grasp in Wright's account is the controlling significance of the notion of story. The coherence of the Old and New Testaments, of the Mosaic covenant and the new covenant in the blood of Jesus, is to be found in their participation in an overarching story, an unfolding salvation-history.¹⁴ In fact, much of Wright's reading of the Bible is reminiscent of the biblical theology movement of the mid-twentieth century and has similar emphases: on salvation-history, on Hebrew patterns of thought and language, and on the perceived problem with later theological abstractions from biblical narrative, under the influence of Greek philosophy. A canonical approach, as we will see, invites reflection on a number of elements within this, but most importantly it demands that we acknowledge one of the problems with a storied approach, namely, that it ascribes value to the parts of the story only inasmuch as they contribute to its developing trajectory. Elements of the story are fulfilled or replaced by the fullness of what they point to, when it comes. Potentially, at least, this reduces the space for the Old Testament to remain a distinctive articulation of the word of God, with its own abiding significance. Further, it leaves no room for true figuration, which can move in all directions, and not merely from type to fulfillment. These are points to which we will return, in our final section, below.

14. Wright, "The Plot, the Plan and the Storied Worldview," 457–537; the same ideas can be traced in the previous volumes of Wright's series on Christian origins.

The Law as Canonical

What effect does it have on this discussion to frame it as we did at the beginning of this essay, in terms of the consistent Christian commitment to the canon of Scripture?

Most obviously, it commits us to sustaining an affirmation of the law's goodness and its participation in divine self-disclosure, even while we read Paul's negative language about the problem that is associated with the law. This immediately demands something more nuanced than a simplistic decision to regard the law as problematic or bad in itself, for this would be to miscall something that is traced to the divine act of self-disclosure, to call cursed something that must be called blessed. This, in turn, may determine certain interpretive decisions. The law is good, as Paul himself indicates in Rom 7; our affirmation of its canonical status invites us to understand this affirmation as one that Paul would continue to maintain, even after his conversion, so that we do not need to read the statement simply as an expression of Paul's old way of thinking. Beyond such interpretive decisions, however, it also demands that we render whatever distinctively Pauline views are isolated by our careful exegesis within such a Christian theological frame: However negatively any given text appears to speak of the law, we are required to qualify it with an affirmation of the law's place in the canon. This goes against the grain of the way that we have been taught to think about exegesis in the modern period, as an act that excavates the thought of the author, in isolation from all later constructs. The point here is that excavation alone does not bring us to the terminus of the act of Christian reading; what we excavate locally must, in turn, be interpreted in relation to supervening truths and commitments. Paul never gives us the last word in Christian theology, even if we take each and all of his words as vital to the definitions of that theology. The law cannot be regarded merely as an angelic parenthesis, as Martyn labels it. It must retain its status as part of the word of God.

More subtly, an affirmation of the canonical status of the law commits us to exploring positively the conditions that are part of its substance: "And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, *if you obey the voice of the LORD your God*" (Deut 28:2 NRSV, emphasis added). The plain sense of these words is one that suggests that blessing is conditional on obedience. This, indeed, is woven into the whole structure of the chapter and, in turn, into the whole structure of Deuteronomy, considered as a whole. The responsibility that falls upon us, as Christian interpreters,

is to reflect on how the intrinsic conditionality of such structures relates to the gospel, with its particular representation of the righteousness we enjoy, which is *τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει* (Phil 3:9). What we cannot do, if we are committed to the canonical status of the law, is to suggest that conditionality per se is inadmissible to our account of God's dealings with his people, which is what Campbell does by labeling any conditionality as something that compromises divine grace. Instead, we are bound to consider alternative approaches that might accommodate conditionality within their own structures. Classic covenantal accounts, for example, of the kind that Campbell rejects, actually sought to incorporate the conditionality of the law into their rendering of the gospel, understanding God, in Christ, to take upon himself all of the conditions of the covenant, fulfilling its obligations perfectly so that it might be maintained, and the fullness of blessing come to those who are its members. This is not the place to ask whether such approaches were (and are) successful, as accounts of salvation; rather, the point is to note that they were occasioned by an appropriate commitment to the status of the law. Whether or not we agree with their conclusions, the federal theologians of the Reformed tradition considered themselves bound to understand the unconditional quality of the gospel in terms that made sense of the law's internal conditions.

It is worth noting that others within the apocalyptic Paul school offer accounts of the gospel that are more readily able to accommodate this affirmation of the law's canonical status. Gaventa's reading of Rom 7, for example, highlights the extent to which Paul's language is reminiscent of that used by the Psalmists of their love for the law; Paul can affirm and employ that language, even while grappling with the awful awareness that he is helpless to meet the law's conditions in himself.¹⁵ This assertion cannot, then, be taken as grounds for a sweeping dismissal of the apocalyptic approach as a viable Christian theological reading. Rather, it demands that we develop an appropriately nuanced reading of Paul that, in its attentiveness to his negative language about the problem of sin and its relationship to the law, does not lose sight of the canonical significance of the torah. It is the word of God, and our theological account of its significance must not diminish the value of its own discrete testimony to Jesus Christ and its own distinctive participation in the gospel.

15. Gaventa, "Shape of the 'I,'" 77–92.

Canon Is Not Story

The last observation might seem to be aimed at Campbell rather than Wright, but its implications bear upon both scholars. For Wright in particular, it bears upon the question of how, precisely, one is to understand the law's durative significance. Because Wright finds the coherence of the biblical material in the overarching story that binds it parts together, the law is effectively considered to be something of an older era, the ongoing significance of which is constituted by its anticipation of the kingdom reality associated with Jesus Christ. Wright's account is not easily categorized as supercessionist—certainly not as easily as some of his critics seem to think—and one of its most important characteristics is its insistence on the coherence of the various acts within the developing drama of salvation. The story of salvation looks forward to a new creation, which is an out-working of the story of Jesus, which is linked to the story of Israel, which is linked to the story of Adam, which is part of the story of creation. To accuse Wright of replacement or supersession is problematic here, because of the coherence, or even coinherence, of the various stories and their various levels within his account. Furthermore, where Wright recognizes the oldness of certain parts of the story—the fact that they would appear to be positioned within act 1 and not act 2 of his dramatic account—he can claim warrant from Paul's writing for doing so. The covenant has reached its climax in a new thing.

But precisely because the category of story does so much of the work in Wright's theology, and effectively takes the place of a traditional category like canon, that identification of oldness cannot meaningfully retain a sense of continuing significance, at least not in a way that would see the torah as continuing to have some kind of communicative value in its own right. To put it in the categories so richly developed by Seitz and Moberly, it cannot accommodate the notion that the torah can still be read as Christian Scripture. The Old Testament, including the law, is now background.

This is reflected most obviously in the directionality of Wright's linking of concepts. Essentially, older concepts or events or narrative elements always condition later ones: the story of Adam conditions the meaning of the story of Israel, which conditions the meaning of the story of Jesus. We understand the vocation of Jesus by considering it against the background of the vocations of Adam and Israel. Wright's model has no room to accommodate the possibility that the story of Jesus might figuratively

condition the meaning of the stories that preceded it temporally, when those stories are reread by Christians in the context of a canon that now includes the gospels. This is, in part, because both the story and its meaning have a fixed significance that is actually identified somewhere behind the text, in the historical events that are brokered to us by the scriptural text itself.¹⁶ The possibility that one would read Leviticus or Song of Songs in a thoroughly christological way is simply inadmissible as bad exegesis; only in very limited senses do passages, or the elements they contain, point forward to Jesus. To be sure, Wright sees the New Testament authors as drawing on the Old Testament in their representation of Jesus and the new covenant, often by rereading those sacred scriptures in radically new ways, but this continues to be bound by the perception that these elements point forward, at least when seen in the light of the gospel.¹⁷ This is quite different from the kind of figural reading developed by Hays, who sees the New Testament authors as willing to invest an entirely new significance in the elements of the Old Testament, through their figural connections to the rendering of God's identity in the gospel.

16. Much of Wright's project is given over to the reconstruction of something behind the text of the New Testament, notably the psychology or intentions of Jesus and Paul, which are storied in character, shaped by the narrative of God's dealings with Israel. This is wrapped up with his commitment to critical realism, which he outlines in *New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992). For an analysis of the theological issues with this feature of Wright's approach, see Samuel V. Adams, *The Reality of God and Historical Method: Apocalyptic Theology in Conversation with N. T. Wright* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015).

17. This point was illustrated by Wright's appropriation of Richard Hays's study, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014) in his recent Gifford Lectures in Aberdeen, 2018. Wright used Hays's language of "reading backwards" but of various ways in which the New Testament writers now saw Jesus, the gospel, and the age to come to be anticipated by elements of the Old Testament. These elements point forward, but only once they are properly read in the light of the story of Jesus. Hays's account is rather different, though, and allows the story of Jesus to invest, for example, the story of David with a fresh messianic significance, because the two have a figural correspondence that allows them to be mutually enriching, without having to be lined up in a schema of promise/type and fulfillment. Wright's lectures are available at "2018 Lecture Series: NT Wright"; <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/sdhp/events/gifford-lectures/2018-lecture-series-n-t-wright-1089.php>, and his reference to Hays is found in lecture 7, "Broken Signposts: New Answers for the Right Questions."

Canon, Divine Identity, and Presence

This last observation takes us to the key theological point that is at stake in this discussion, which I develop here by way of conclusion. As a Christian identification, canon labels the scriptural collection to be, in a distinctive sense, the word of God. This closely identifies Scripture with God himself, without confusing the two: The genitive construction (“word *of* God”) is essential to the nature of the identification. This is necessarily correlated to the faithful act of listening to God’s voice, in a way that expects him to be present, and to render himself to us through the communicative reality of Scripture, whenever it is read. This can never be understood mechanistically, since Scripture can be read by those with hard hearts, those without eyes to see or ears to hear; it can be read by Pharisees and idolaters who will misidentify the God whom it renders. There are those who will hold the truth in unrighteousness.

Instead, we must insist that Scripture’s rendering of God’s identity to us is always a participation in his personal presence. Scripture renders God’s identity to us, when God himself is with us to illuminate our acts of listening to his word. Without such presence, we cannot see the kingdom of God. Importantly, the enjoyment of divine presence in relation to the reading of Scripture and the rendering of divine identity is not associated with the excavation of a meaning that lies behind the text, but with the reading of the text itself, in the presence of the illuminating God.

What the affirmation of canon brings to this is an insistence that this personal presence and continual self-rendering is associated with the whole of the Bible. It is not simply that God has made himself known in the past through the torah; he continues to render himself to us through it. This is precisely the logic that underpins the Epistle to the Hebrews: The fact that in these last days, God has spoken to us ἐν υἱῷ does not nullify or make obsolete all that he spoke through the prophets, but rather invests those speakings with fresh significance. That is why Hebrews reads the Old Testament so extensively and in ways that are difficult for modern exegetes to explain: it reads the Old Testament figuratively, as something that renders God and his will to us in a way that coheres with the Christ event. It is, in fact, interesting that the same pejorative label is often attached to the exegetical approach of Hebrews that has been attached to patristic interpretations of Scripture: it is seen to be Platonic, dislocating the Old Testament texts from their historical moorings.

Moving back to the discussion of Paul, Moberly has repeatedly highlighted the extent to which the divine identification of the Shema continues to be significant in Paul's theology, reconceived in relation to the persons of Jesus and the Spirit in 1 Cor 8:6 and the chapters that follow, but continuing to function with its traditional value, over and against idolatry.¹⁸ Moberly, indeed, sees the principle of *herem* as continuing to obtain as a responsibility for those reconciled to God through the gospel: the refusal to participate in idol feasts is an outworking of the principle that false worship is to be entirely excluded from the covenant community. That is to say, the God who is rendered fully to us in Jesus Christ is not different in identity from the one who commands the destruction of cities and all their idolatrous contents in Deut 20. How we relate these two points of disclosure is something that requires care (and, dare I say it, prayer), but it is something that we are committed to doing, if we are to think Christianly.

While this invites us to reflect on the broad range of ways in which the covenant principles of the Old Testament continue to be seen at work in the New, it takes us particularly to the question of how we understand grace. The same God who has rendered himself to us in Jesus Christ, makes himself known in Deut 28. Each time we read that chapter in his presence, we are summoned to reflect on what it means that his blessings are represented as conditional upon our obedience. That constrains how we define the concept of grace that we consider to characterize him, and it demands that we explain the unconditionality of the gospel in terms that accommodate this. Whatever faults they may have had, the accounts of federal theology were serious attempts to do precisely this. They took seriously the canonical principle that we cannot approach the Old Testament as if it were a document from which God is absent but must approach it as the word of God. And we cannot approach Paul in exclusion from that word, if we are to read him Christianly.

We also, though, cannot attenuate the sheer force of God's self-rendering in the torah by considering it a stage of disclosure that has been surpassed and superseded. When we read the torah as part of the canon, considering it to be the word of God, we acknowledge that it continues to render God to us meaningfully, as we read its words by divine illumination. The rendering of divine identity is not something that happened in a

18. R. Walter Moberly, "Toward an Interpretation of the Shema," in *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs*, ed. Christopher R. Seitz and Kathryn Greene-McCreight (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 124–44.

story behind the text, but is something that happens *through* the text, as it is read in the divine presence.

Figured In: Nonliteral Reading, the Rule of Faith, and Galatians 4

Kathryn Greene-McCreight

In his introduction to *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture*, Professor Seitz offers a double-edged assertion about the figural interpretation of Scripture: “Figural reading is not an exegetical technique. It is an effort to hear the two-testament witness to God in Christ, taking seriously its plain sense, in conjunction with apostolic teaching.”¹ But these two sentences in fact do not make mutually exclusive claims. Embracing figural interpretation specifically as exegetical technique does aid our reading in accordance with apostolic teaching. This happens through the reading of Scripture’s plain sense disciplined by the rule of faith. Seitz makes a parallel observation with regard to Isaiah that can be made about other biblical texts as well. He states that the trajectory of Isaiah’s depiction of Israel “goes two ways. One is Christological ... the other is ecclesial.”²

One example of this is in our earliest Christian writer, Paul. His bidirectional vision is particularly clear in Gal 4:21–31. There he mines the stories of Sarah and Hagar in Gen 16–21 through an exegetical technique (“behold, this is an allegory,” 4:24).³ By this figural reading, Paul leads the Galatians into the christological/ecclesial scope of the stories. This brings into focus the major themes of his letter: seed, inheritance, and Christian identity.

To state the obvious, the theological terms *Christology* and *ecclesiology* are later formulations, but the concepts to which they point are not. In Gal 4 we find *in nuce* their substance in Paul’s preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the reality of the church that the Galatians

1. Christopher R. Seitz, *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 10.

2. Seitz, *Figured Out*, 156–57.

3. Unless otherwise stated, all biblical translations follow the NRSV.

have abandoned. The trajectories here are framed against two axes: seed/inheritance and motherhood/adoption. The first axis is primarily, but not exclusively, christological, while the second axis is primarily, but not exclusively, ecclesiological. At the crossing of these axes we find our own identity as a people adopted into the promises by the one who “hangs on a tree” (Gal 3:13; Deut 21:23; cf. Gal 2:21; 5:11). Paul’s figural reading bears the good news to the Galatian churches about their adoption into the promises to Abraham through his seed, the Christ, apart from legal observance of circumcision.

I turn now to three main concerns, in a somewhat counterintuitive order: (1) Paul’s own inheritance of figural reading within the larger context of Scripture; (2) Gal 4 in service of later Christian figural reading; and (3) Paul’s ruled reading of Gen 16–21. I will attempt to show how Paul’s interpretation in Gal 4 proclaims the substance of the gospel: we are figured in.

Paul, Allegory, and Scripture

While what Paul means by his term *allegory* (4:24) is not entirely clear, I take it to refer to his announcement of his preaching of the cross and resurrection via exegetical method and theological substance. But this question is not only about interpretation; it is a question about use. In the fourth century, Chrysostom worries that Paul’s use of the word *allegory* may be taken by his own rivals as ammunition in the battle over the proper interpretation of Scripture. Chrysostom claims that Paul’s choice of the word *allegory* must be a mistake, a slip of the tongue (or maybe of the scribe). He claims that Paul improperly called the τύπος “allegory”: “For here is what he wished to say: ‘This narrative not only speaks about what has appeared, but it also declares other things.’ Thus why it has been labeled ‘allegory’. Now what has it declared? None other than the historical realities present” (PG 16:662).⁴

The struggle between the Antiochenes and Alexandrians has to do not only with interpretation and with its attendant surface problems (ἀλληγορία versus ιστορία) but more with the urgent underlying struggles over Christology. Here, use is to a doctrinal end. Because of this Chrysos-

4. Cf. Theodore of Mopsuestia on Gal 4:24. See Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 180–85, 191, and her term *typological/iconic* to describe this effect.

tom is bothered specifically by the use of the text of Gal 4. A century later, John Cassian's use of this allegory influences Benedict and the monastic tradition. Indeed, Cassian's use of Gal 4 shapes the entire medieval interpretive program up to the Reformation in the West (and beyond). Here, use is to a liturgical and spiritual formative end.

While the term ἀλληγορούμενα in Gal 4:24 appears only once in the entire New Testament, figural readings abound throughout Scripture, and Paul is not alone in using figural-exegetical techniques. His use of allegorical interpretation is usually credited to the influence of ancient Graeco-Roman literature, Near Eastern and ancient Mesopotamian writings, and Egyptian texts.⁵ Figural readings also feature within Jewish literature: Josephus, Qumran, and ancient rabbinic texts.⁶ But to reduce our consideration of Paul's interpretation to these influences would be constraining. One thing is clear: Paul himself is formed by and yet at times stands opposed to the traditions of his own religious context.⁷

Paul is not the only biblical writer to use nonliteral interpretation to rework older material for preaching, teaching, and reproof. Among the various genres of figural readings within Scripture itself are parable, riddle, vision, proverb, allegory, typology, and more. The prophet Nathan's parable of the ewe lamb leads David to indict himself for his crime against Uriah (2 Sam 12:1–4). Ezekiel's visions of the eagles and the vine (Ezek 17) and of the boiling pot (Ezek 24) are instances of prophetic figural teaching.

5. For Greco-Roman influences, see Robert Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 9 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); for Egyptian texts, see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 357 n. 106.

6. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 350 nn. 91–93.

7. The extent to which Paul's depiction of righteousness and the Mosaic law in his letters either corresponds to or distorts the actual understanding of righteousness and the law in Second Temple Judaism has been a hot topic for over forty years. E. P. Sanders opened the question in his *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). This spawned a literary school with continual updates on the *status quaestionis*. Only one example is the vast opus of N. T. Wright. For a step back and different view, see Francis Watson's *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007). Time and space do not allow examination here.

Within the Old Testament itself, we find inner-biblical interpretation: earlier material is taken up in figural readings that reinterpret later moments in Israel's life before God. These readings reframe later times of joy and/or catastrophe via figures in light of the experience of earlier times. The Psalms are a treasure trove of this kind of inner-biblical reinterpretation. Just one example is Ps 67:1, "May God be gracious to us, and bless us, make his face to shine upon us." Here the congregation itself takes on the role of Aaron, blessing themselves in words that recall his own (cf. Ps 4:6; Num 6:22–26). The story of Elkanah's two wives, Hannah and Peninah, in 1 Sam 1–2 patterns itself on the story of Sarah and Hagar in Genesis. Figural reading of the Old Testament is thus an ecclesial practice within the Scriptures of Israel.

Jesus's own nonliteral teaching often follows the tradition of former parable-tellers, typology-builders, and allegory-makers. His parables of the sower (Mark 4:14–20; cf. Matt 13:1–23; Luke 8:4–15), the weeds and the wheat (Matt 13:36–43), and the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32) are among some of his most familiar. But Jesus's figural teachings do not always adhere to the clear-cut boundaries of any one genre. Often they combine typology, allegory, dialogical teaching, plus others. For example, in the broader story, Jesus gives his own interpretation of his parable of the sower with a one-to-one correspondence broaching allegory (Mark 4:13–20; Matt 13:18–23). Jesus also gives this kind of an allegorical interpretation to his parable of the weeds and the wheat (Matt 13:36–43; Luke 8:11–15). In his parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus answers a question with an allegory, and the scene becomes a dialogical parabolic teaching (Luke 10:29, 36–37).

Jesus traditions come into Paul's letters. In 1 Cor 9:14, Paul authorizes his teaching from a Jesus tradition: "The Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (cf. Matt 10:10; Luke 10:7; Mark 6:7; Deut 25:4). In 1 Cor 7:10, Paul refers obliquely to a command of the Lord from which he distinguishes his own teaching authority ("to the married I give this command—not I but the Lord"). In 1 Cor 7:12, he indicates that he is aware of a command of the Lord, but he replaces it with his own opinion: "To the rest I say—I and not the Lord." In 1 Cor 7:25, he says that in the matter of virgins and marriage he has no command of the Lord, but he offers his own opinion on the basis of his apostolic authority.

Paul would have learned these Jesus traditions from the disciples or possibly even from the risen Jesus himself. Paul's own figural interpretations are

not limited to Gal 4, but we find them also in Rom 5–6, 1 Cor 10, 2 Cor 5, and Eph 1, and could purposefully follow Jesus's manner of nonliteral teaching.⁸

Cassian, Galatians 4, and the Rule of Faith

Paul's figural reading in Gal 4 itself later serves as the foundation for Christian biblical interpretation throughout the Middle Ages and up to the Reformation. Levels of interpretation are spun out from Gal 4: literal, tropological, allegorical, and anagogical. While they are indeed exegetical techniques, they are also understood to be of the substance and reality of the biblical texts. They are not externally imposed on the texts. Classically attributed to John Cassian's Conference with Abbot Nesteros (fifth century), the structure of these fourfold senses in turn draws on Paul's allegory in Gal 4. It is not so much the word *allegory* in Gal 4 that attracts Cassian to figural interpretation. Rather, more strikingly, it is the role of the two Jerusalems in Paul's reading of Gen 16–21 in Gal 4 that funds Cassian's spiritual reading. Even more stunning than this is the fact that Cassian builds an interpretive framework out of an allegory in the New Testament, a Christian reading of the Old Testament.

Cassian speaks of two different types of knowledge: practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge. The first, practical knowledge (*πρακτική*), Cassian says, is varied in subject matter and value. But more important for the reader of Scripture is theoretical knowledge (*θεωρητική*). It is theoretical knowledge, or higher knowledge, that is cast as fourfold. And it is important to note: this is itself knowledge, not merely creative appropriation of the Old Testament. Knowledge implies a knower and a known, a reader and a reality encountered. The divine subject matter is present to the reader in spiritual interpretation of Scripture.

Cassian first says that his prooftext for dividing this knowledge into two parts derives from Solomon, who "when he had summed up the manifold grace of the Church, added: 'for all who are with her are clothed with double garments.'⁹ Theoretical knowledge itself is thus divided into two lopsided parts. The first part (literal sense) is unitary, while the second part

8. Paul is, of course, not the only writer of the New Testament to use nonliteral reading, whether interpreting Scripture via figure or by creating figures in the course of interpretation. Some examples of this are in Eph 1; Heb 9:24, indeed throughout the letter; Phlm 3:17; and 1 Pet 3:20–21.

9. It is sometimes difficult to pin down exactly where Cassian's quotes are to be

(spiritual sense) is threefold. Cassian's prooftext for this is from Proverbs: "But you describe those things for yourself in threefold fashion according to the largeness of your heart."¹⁰ It is by the trope of Jerusalem from Gal 4 that Cassian illustrates this schema: "the four figures coalesce ... into one subject."¹¹ According to the literal sense, then, Jerusalem is a city in Israel; according to the tropological sense, Jerusalem is the seat of human affections and moral action; according to the allegorical sense, Jerusalem is the earthly church; according to the anagogical sense, Jerusalem is the heavenly city.¹² Of these four kinds of interpretation the blessed apostle speaks as follows: "But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation or by knowledge or by prophecy or by doctrine?"¹³

found within the books he names. It may be, as with other patristic writers, that his knowledge of Scripture comes not from reading but from praying.

10. John Cassian, *The Conferences* 14.8 (ACW 57; trans. B. Ramsey, O.P. [New York: Paulist, 1997]): "And so history embraces the knowledge of past and visible things, which is repeated by the Apostle thus: 'It is written that Abraham had two sons, one from a slave and the other from a free woman. The one from the slave was born according to the flesh, but the one from the free woman by promise.' The things that follow belong to allegory, however, because what really occurred is said to have prefigured the form of another mystery. 'For these,' it says, 'are two covenants, one from Mount Sinai, begetting unto slavery, which is Hagar. For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia, which is compared to the Jerusalem that now is, and which is enslaved with her children.' 3. But anagogy, which mounts from spiritual mysteries to certain more sublime and sacred heavenly secrets, is added by the Apostle: 'But the Jerusalem from above, which is our mother, is free. For it is written: Rejoice, you barren one who do not bear, break out and shout, you who are not in labor, for the children of the desolate one are many more than of her who has a husband.' Tropology is moral explanation pertaining to correction of life and to practical instruction, as if we understood these same two covenants as *πρακτική* and as theoretical discipline, or at least as if we wished to take Jerusalem or Zion as the soul of the human being, according to the words: 'Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion.'"

11. What this one subject may be is not clear from Cassian's exposition itself here, but we can safely assume that it is the Godhead. So each of the "four kinds of interpretation the blessed Apostle speaks" are four as we discern them, but ultimately they lead us to the one God.

12. On the heavenly Jerusalem, see also Phil 3:20; Heb 11:10, 14–16; Rev 3:12; 21:1–2; Isa 65:17; 66:22.

13. Cassian is quoting 1 Cor 14:6 at the end here in the context of the three theological virtues (faith, hope and love). In that text, Paul then turns to the spiritual gifts

But as Cassian speaks of the structure regarding the larger allegory in Gal 4, implicitly all four senses are gathered under what was the second: tropology, or moral formation. This corresponds to Cassian's quotation of 1 Cor 14:6, where Paul's broader concern in the chapter is orderliness in communal worship: "God is not a God of disorder but of peace" (1 Cor 14:33). Spiritual/moral/communal formation is Cassian's take-away from Gal 4 in his construction of both literal and spiritual reading. While the ordering of the spiritual senses varies, it is always the literal sense that grounds the spiritual, as is key in Aquinas's use of the fourfold schema. This is not only exegetical technique at work (though it is that) but reaches to the heart of Christian spirituality: faith seeking love (Gal 5:6).¹⁴ Form and content are happily married in spiritual reading.

It is clear from the fourfold structure itself that Cassian's methods are not randomly malleable or without guide and boundaries. The schema is disciplined, and those who will teach and interpret Scripture by this medieval schema "sit on the shoulders" of their predecessors.¹⁵ These earlier generations discipline their own interpretation according to the rule of faith. Its logic gestates long before Cassian, and his own method implicitly relies on ruled reading, scriptural interpretation that honors the rule of faith.

Taking a step back, then, we find the rule of faith implicitly taught in the second century with Ignatius and Polycarp, more openly later in the second century with Irenaeus, and explicitly in the early third century with Tertullian.¹⁶ The rule of faith can be described as a precreedal creed-like oral tradition. It functions doctrinally to link the confession of God the Father with the confession of Jesus Christ the Son. It also functions hermeneutically to hold together Old and New Testaments, without one silencing the voice of the other. As such, the rule has an antiheretical function and authorizes a basic take on the subject matter and plot of

and prophecy. The power of tongues and prophecy comes only through their interpretation.

14. This will become a key verse in Reformation debates between Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians over the doctrine of justification as well as over the differing spiritualities.

15. This is itself a stock medieval phrase for how each generation sees further than their teachers. They are "dwarves sitting on the shoulders of giants."

16. Ignatius, *To the Trallians*; Polycarp, *To the Philippians*; Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*; and Tertullian, *De virginibus velandis* and *De praescriptione haereticorum*.

the gospel. There is a mutual application and correction: the substance of Christian confession is drawn from Scripture and is the norm by which Scripture is interpreted.¹⁷

Honoring the rule of faith disciplines Christian reading of Scripture but does not settle the matter or close questions. It allows for freedom while placing an outer limit through a close reading of the verbal sense.¹⁸ Here is an example from Tertullian that illustrates this precreedal creed-like shape:

The rule of faith, indeed, is altogether one, alone immovable and irreformable; the rule, to wit, of believing in one only God omnipotent, Creator of the universe, and His Son Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised again the third day from the dead, received in the heavens, sitting now at the right [hand] of the Father, destined to come to judge the quick and the dead through resurrection of the flesh as well [as of spirit.] The law of faith being constant, the other succeeding points of discipline and conversation admit the novelty of correction. (*Virg.* 1 [ANF 4:27])

Soon after sketching this outline of the rule, Tertullian points out that the faith that saves has been deposited in this rule, and that use of the rule is evidence of those who truly possess the Scriptures. Tertullian claims that this rule was taught by Christ himself, and that Christians should neither discuss nor argue over the meaning of the Scriptures with those who do not honor the rule of faith.¹⁹

17. The rule is, as I see it, the unarticulated foundation for the Reformation slogan for its own interpretation: *Scriptura sui ipsius interpret est*.

18. Hans Frei may not have intentionally made a link to ruled reading, but I find his use of the term *breathing space* to be helpful here: "In the period of modernity interpreters have been so ardent, so hot in pursuit of the truth of the text, that texts were often left little 'breathing space.' And I would suggest that a good interpretation of a text is one that has 'breathing space,' that is to say, one in which no hermeneutic finally allows you to resolve the text—there is something left to bother, something that is wrong, something that is not yet interpreted" (Hans W. Frei, "Conflicts of Interpretation: Resolution, Armistice, or Co-existence?," in *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993], 162; quoted in Garrett Green, *Theology, Hermeneutics, and the Imagination: The Crisis of Interpretation at the End of Modernity* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 183).

19. I wonder if Tertullian had in mind Paul's arguing with the Galatians? Possibly. But Paul had already taught on a previous visit the underlying logic of the rule to the

While there are many lenses through which the reading in Gal 4 is interpreted in the contemporary period, few if any take the rule of faith as one such lens. Paul's reading is seen sometimes as an example of ancient allegorical interpretation, or as an instance of Paul's distorting the theology of Second Temple Judaism, or as a legitimization of Christian anti-Semitism, or as a window on the status of women and slaves in the ancient Near East, or some such. But few if any look at Paul's allegory in Gal 4 as an example of reading of Scripture through the constraints and freedoms of the rule of faith. However, it is precisely this lens that is critical for discerning the one reality in two trajectories of christology and ecclesiology. It is to this that I now turn.

Genesis 16–21 and the Galatians

Paul's implicit use of a rule-like logic permits him to discern the subject matter of the gospel in his reading of Gen 16–21. For him, the stories in Gen 16–21 are not about Abram/Abraham and Sarai/Sarah. The larger narrative of these chapters turns on the word "seed." This is not only the hinge of Galatians; it is also the nexus of the incarnation. Abram and Sarai are promised a seed, an heir.²⁰ But Sarai proves barren (a key detail for Paul in Gal 4), and Hagar bears the primogeniture. This, of course, complicates the identity of the seed and the promises of the covenant itself.²¹

Galatians—the gospel (1:8, 11–12), which they then abandoned for a different gospel (1:6, 9). Paul was trying to correct them and win them back, not debate with heretics over hermeneutics. Perhaps Tertullian has in mind Matt 10:13.

20. The fact that the word *seed* is singular in the Hebrew (in Greek and Latin as well) is key to Paul's argument. However, the NRSV and RSV end up eliminating the verbal link entirely in translating the word "seed" (Gen 13:15; 15:3; 17:19; Heb. זרע; LXX σπέρμα; Vulg. *semen*; 17:19: *semeni*, dative sg.) as "offspring." Their translations could easily give the impression of a plural. The KJV gives us the closest translation with a singular noun, "seed." However one chooses to translate, and whatever seed meant in the Abram/Abraham stories (if we could actually know the mind of the writer/editor/compiler), for Paul it is clear: the seed of the promises to Abraham in Genesis is singular. It is the Christ.

21. This mutual opposition foreshadows that of Israel from and against its pagan neighbors throughout the Bible, and itself becomes a major theme throughout the ministry of Paul, figuring prominently in Galatians.

As J. Louis Martyn has shown, apocalyptic thought saturates Galatians.²² Both the Old and New Testaments bear the apocalyptic framework of the association between the anguish of childbirth and God's recreation. In the Septuagint, the prophets describe the coming of the day of the Lord with the cluster of words denoting labor pains: $\acute{\omega}\delta\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ and $\acute{\omega}\delta\acute{\iota}\nu$ (Mic 4:10; Isa 13:6, 8; Jer 6:24). These point to the anguish of the community and not simply to that of an individual.²³

But these themes specifically in Galatians have less to do with apocalyptic and more to do with Christian identity before God. For example, Paul's "pain of childbirth" is linked specifically with his work among the Galatians until "Christ is formed" in them (Gal 4:19). Paul quotes Isaiah's vision of the day when no birth pangs will attend the mother of the one with numerous children (4:26–27; Isa 54:1; cf. Isa 51:1–3): "Rejoice, O Barren one that does not bear; break forth and shout, you who are not in labor [$\acute{\omega}\delta\acute{\iota}\nu\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha$]!" The apocalyptic labor pains of the end time are bookends of the labor pains at the beginning (*Bereshit*, Genesis). These first labor pains are the result of the disobedience of our first parents in the garden (Gen 3:16), Eve's own curse. As Paul's labor pains participate in the agony of Eve, so also will his own labor pains be removed in Christ.

While Paul refers to the stories of Gen 16–21 in the allegory, he does not quote directly from them until the very end of the allegory: "Drive out the slave and her child, for the child of the slave will not share the inheritance with the child of the free woman" (Gen 21:10). The quotation points backward to the narrative context of the rejection of Hagar and points forward to the theological nexus of inheritance, the seed.

The driving quotation within the body of the allegory, however, is Isa 54:1. It nests within Paul's recounting of the relationship between the two wives. In the allegory, Paul names specifically Abraham (4:22), Hagar (4:24, 25), and Isaac (4:28). Strikingly, Paul does not name Sarah

22. J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997).

23. Similarly, see 1 En. 62:4; Bar 56:6; 4 Ezra 4:42, and at Qumran: 1QH^a III, 7–10. In the New Testament this imagery appears in Mark 13:8 // Matt 24:8; Rom 8:22; 1 Thess 5:3; and Rev 12:2. See also Beverly R. Gaventa, "The Maternity of Paul: An Exegetical Study of Galatians 4:19," in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, ed. Richard T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 193–94.

or Ishmael. He refers to each of them in veiled form throughout the reading, even though they are in many respects the key characters of his allegory.

While the Galatians as gentiles are ethnically children of Hagar, they are ecclesially children of Sarah.²⁴ This is in many ways the problem that generates the letter: Paul's first stay in Galatia when he founded (birthed) the new churches without linking law observance to the acceptance of the gospel. After having planted the churches, he left to preach elsewhere. In his absence, other missionaries came and imposed the Mosaic observance of circumcision as a requirement for gentile conversion to Christ.

Paul learns about this communal upset, and passionately underscores that the legal code of circumcision, necessary for pagan conversion to Jewish identity, is not necessary for pagan conversion to Christian identity. Indeed, the gentiles are, surprisingly, of the line of Isaac (4:28), and even as gentile Christians, are figured in to the body of Christ and heirs of the promises to Abraham apart from observance of the precepts of the law. To take on Christ, the Galatians need not observe circumcision. In fact, they must not (5:1–12; 6:15).

The characters in the figure come in this surprising order: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Hagar, and Sarah. The father and mother of the promise bracket the other characters. The heir according to the promise, Isaac, stands at the center of the sequence. He and his seed are precisely at the center also of controversy among the Galatians, and at the center both christologically and ecclesially.

24. Who were these gentile Christians? One of the convincing pieces of evidence in support of the North Galatia hypothesis is the identification of the Galatians with pagan tribes such as those of Caesar's Gallic Wars. The Galatians are as such the peoples known in the ancient world as Celts (so Livy, Pliny, Strabo) (Brigitte Kahl, *Galatians Re-imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished*, Paul in Critical Contexts [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010], 50–51). The Celts were tribal peoples from central Europe who migrated both eastward into Macedonia and Asia Minor, and westward into what is now France, Britain, and Spain. They were known for their warlike practices and ruthless brutality. As Celts, the Galatians would have been well acquainted with the practices of slavery and slave-trading. The significance of the Celts rested not in the ancient world alone, but extends to our day: from economic practices of slave-holding/-trading to salt mining. Their cultural artifacts are the living Celtic languages in Ireland, northern France, and northern Spain. Just one example of the Celtic loan words still in use today is the iconic French brand of cigarettes, "Les Gauloises."

Paul's quotation of Isa 54:1 verbally links his allegory to the Genesis stories through the detail of Sarah's barrenness.²⁵ The children of the one who had been barren (Gal 4:27; Isa 54:1) will rejoice and will "enlarge the site of [her] tent ... and possess the nations" (54:1–3). This fits Paul's concern to remind his congregations of the divine purpose in the inclusion of the gentiles in the identity of the promised seed. The previous chapter set the stage for Paul's aligning the "seed" (τὸ σπέρμα) with the promises (ἡ ἐπαγγελία) specifically in 3:14–16, 18, 19, 21, 29. These verses look ahead to 4:23, 28.

This is significant from a canonical basis. The word *seed* and its promise first appear in Scripture in the creation story in Genesis (1:11, 29) when God brings forth vegetation. There the goal and purpose of the seed is to produce descendants or heirs for the continued generation of plants to nourish the animals and humans. These details of generation and nourishment anticipate Paul's self-presentation as a laboring mother, along with his preaching the new creation (Gal 6:15; cf. 4:27).

Another context in which we find the word *seed* is Gen 3:15, in the garden of Eden. Strikingly, the seed here has nothing to do with healthy nourishment but with the serpent who convinces the woman to eat of the fruit. Now, food has become poison. Genesis 3:15 is known in the history of Christian interpretation of Scripture as the *protoevangelium*, or "first

25. Paul's linking these specific texts may indicate an awareness on his part of the Palestinian triennial liturgical cycle of Torah/Haftarah reading (Steven DiMattei, "Paul's Allegory of the Two Covenants [Gal 4:21–31] in Light of First-Century Hellenistic Rhetoric and Jewish Hermeneutics," *NTS* 52 [2006]: 114). DiMattei points to Lawrence Schiffman, "The Early History of Public Reading of the Torah," in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction during the Greco-Roman Period*, ed. Steven Fine, Baltimore Studies in the History of Judaism (London: Routledge, 1999), 44–55, "[who] suggests that even post-70 texts, notably Acts 13.13–15 and Luke 4.16–21, lend themselves to the conclusion that a Torah-Prophet reading was practiced prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE (47–48)." Cf. Michael Fishbane, "Introduction," in *The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarat* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2002), xxi; and Renée Bloch who notes that such midrashic interpretations as the technique of *gezerah shawah*, as we find here in Paul, largely originate from liturgical reading practices (cited by Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism*, *Studia Post-biblica* 4 [Leiden: Brill, 1961], 7). If this is the case, Paul's reliance on his liturgical background is significant evidence of his own ecclesial concern in Galatians. Here in Gal 4:21–31, Paul is keen to offer not merely an allegorical reading but also a tropological and anagogical interpretation to build up the church among the Galatians.

gospel.”²⁶ The clause “he will strike your head and you will strike his heel” is taken to speak of Christ who is the seed (Heb, singular) of Eve. The curse over the serpent is that its seed is to fight eternally with the seed of Eve, who is the Christ, but eternally to lose.

Eve is called “woman” (האשה) only up until her curse. After that point, at 3:20 she is named “the mother of all living” (אם כל־חי). As such, Eve is the type of Mary, the mother of the one to come. Mary is thus the mother of all life in the seed that brings forth life, the Christ. Eve is the promissory type of Mary who is Eve’s fulfilled antitype.

The word *seed* next appears explicitly in the stories of the promises to Abram, before the episodes of Hagar and Sarah. We encounter the promises in this order: (1) land; (2) progeny; and (3) blessing to the nations. The LORD calls to Abram: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the *land* that I will show you.... I will make of you a *great nation* ... in you all the families of the earth shall be *blessed*” (Gen 12:1–3, emphasis added). In 13:15–17, we read the promise specifically in terms of the seed: “The LORD said to Abram, raise your eyes now and look ... all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring [זרע, sg.] forever. I will make your offspring [זרע, sg.] like dust of the earth.” Then the Lord tells Abram that this seed will be like the dust of the earth, beyond counting. This promise is sandwiched by yet another promise of land (Gen 13:17).

Later, in Gen 15, Abram complains to the Lord God that, despite these promises, he continues without an heir (בן, 15:2). Because Hebrew narrative is loathe to jettison material, the story now continues with Abram’s repeated complaint but in new vocabulary: “You have given me no offspring [זרע, sg.], and so a slave born in my house [בן־ביתי] is to be my heir [יורש]” (15:3). God responds that Abram will indeed have an heir (יורש) of his own body (Gen 15:4). The Lord God brings Abram outside and tells him to count the stars (כוכבים) if he is able and says that Abram’s

26. One of the most spiritually powerful illustrations of the *protoevangelium* that I have encountered was in one of the pilgrimage churches along the Camino de Santiago in the north of Spain. At the entrance to the nave, where one would expect to find a baptismal font, stood a large, flat, shallow stoop. Carved in relief at the bottom of the bowl’s sloped sides lay a stone snake, coiled as though ready to strike, half-submerged in the holy water. Dipping my fingers into the basin to cross myself, I inadvertently touched the stone snake. The waters of baptism in which we die and rise with Christ (Rom 6) have drowned our ancient foe, yet not utterly destroying him. The serpent coiled at the bottom and covered by holy water touched my fingers, yet did not strike.

descendants (זרע) will be like this starry band. Finally, the upshot of this dialogue: “And [Abram] believed the LORD, and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Gen 15:6; cf. Gal 3:6–9; Heb 11:8–12).

The narrative delay of the promised inheritance is caused by Hagar’s fecundity and Sarah’s barrenness. This is mirrored in Paul’s situation among the Galatian churches. Paul first presented the gospel to the Galatians, preaching and working among them with apparent success, probably for some eighteen months. His leaving to preach elsewhere creates a narrative caesura analogous to the delay of the heirs born of the fertile mother and the barren mother between Gen 16 and 21.²⁷

In Paul’s figural reading in Gal 4, as well as in Cassian’s later use of it, the broader logic of the interpretation of Scripture according to the rule of faith holds up against tired caricature. Paul’s reading employs exegetical technique through disciplined figural interpretation within the generous boundaries of the emerging ruled reading. This does not permit random or undisciplined imaginings. Paul’s reading is ultimately bound on two sides: on one by the law (torah) and its verbal sense and on the other by freedom in Christ the seed. Paul is neither reading into the story, nor is he figuring out: we are, along with the patriarchs and matriarchs, astoundingly and grace-fully figured in.

27. A caesura like this also lies between this narrative of the promise and what we witness in the present day. The nations have not yet streamed to Jerusalem. Not every tongue has yet confessed the name of Jesus. Christ the seed is with us only in the shadows of our earthly Jerusalem. The church as the present earthly Jerusalem is as yet divided, Christ’s broken body. For Paul, the reality of the divided body of Christ is manifest in the hostility between gentile and Jew, marked by slavery (Hagar) versus freedom (Sarah).

James and Jude as Bookends to the Catholic Epistles Collection

Darian Lockett

The goal of this essay is to consider the parallels between James and Jude that stem from their connection as the first and last letters of the canonical subcollection called the Catholic Epistles. The historical development of the New Testament canon in general was characterized by the formation of such subcollections.¹ Jens Schröter notes that whereas the “two most important collections, which stand at the beginning of the emergence of the New Testament” are “the four gospels and the Letters of Paul,” and at a later time “Acts and the Catholic Letters, which are closely connected with Acts in terms of the history of the canon,” eventually developed.² Though perhaps the least recognized canonical subcollection of the New Testament, there is a growing body of literature that argues James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, and Jude should be viewed as a coherent letter collection that formed toward the latter part of the canonical process.³

1. See David Trobisch’s discussion of the various “collection units” of the New Testament and their canonical significance (*First Edition of the New Testament* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000]).

2. Jens Schröter, *From Jesus to the New Testament: Early Christian Theology and the Origin of the New Testament Canon*, trans. Wayne Coppins, BMSSEC 1 (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 273.

3. See esp., Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “Exegese im kanonischen Zusammenhang: Überlegungen zur theologischen Relevanz der Gestalt des neutestamentlichen Kanons,” in *The Biblical Canons*, ed. J.-M. Auwers and H. J. de Jong, BETL 163 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 557–84; Jacques Schlosser, “Le Corpus Épîtres des Catholiques,” in *The Catholic Epistles and the Tradition*, ed. Jacques Schlosser, BETL 176 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 3–41; David R. Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone: The Formation of the Catholic Epistle Collection and the Christian Canon* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007); Enrico Norelli, “Sulle origini della raccolta

The earliest reception of the texts finally known as the Catholic Epistles is obscure because there is limited evidence from which to draw conclusions. Yet, though these letters did have a past where they circulated individually, during the process of canonization they were associated with one another—either in part or as a seven-letter whole—and they finally entered the canon as a collection.⁴ This is true at the very latest by the time of Eusebius. Following an elaborate record of the martyrdom of James, the Lord's brother, Eusebius notes:

Such is the story of James, whose is said to be the first of the Epistles called Catholic [ἡ πρώτη τῶν ὀνομαζομένων καθολικῶν ἐπιστολῶν]. It is to be observed that its authenticity is denied, since few of the ancients quote it, as is also the case with the Epistle called Jude's, which is itself one of the seven called Catholic [τῶν ἑπτὰ λεγομένων καθολικῶν]; nevertheless we know that these letters have been used publicly with the rest [μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν] in most churches. (*Hist. eccl.* 2.23.24–25, LCL)

Though not individually named, there is little doubt that Eusebius has all seven Catholic Epistles in mind. The fact that he only mentions James and Jude is significant. John Painter notes that, “James and Jude ... form ... the bookends of this collection.”⁵ He argues: “That would explain why Eusebius, when he names James as the first of the seven CE [Catholic Epistles], also names Jude, and no other from the collection. To name the first and the last was to identify this collection.”⁶ If Painter is correct, then it seems likely that the tradition of a Catholic Epistle collection was a received unit recognizable to Eusebius's audience with only reference to the first and last of its letters. It is worth noting that rather than the familial relationship between James and Jude, Eusebius clearly stresses the association between the two letters.

delle Lettere Cattoliche,” *RivB* 4 (2011): 453–521; and Darian R. Lockett, *Letters from the Pillar Apostles: The Formation of the Catholic Epistles as a Canonical Collection* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017).

4. See the discussion in Lockett, *Pillar Apostles*, chs. 3 and 4, and Nienhuis, *Not By Paul Alone*, chs. 1 and 2.

5. John Painter, “The Johannine Epistles as Catholic Epistles,” in *The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition*, ed. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr and Robert W. Wall (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 248–49.

6. Painter, “Johannine Epistles as Catholic Epistles,” 258 n. 11.

Furthermore, Eusebius indicates that “the seven called Catholic” were used publicly along “with the remaining [letters].” The “remaining [letters]” most likely refer to the other apostolic letters of the New Testament, namely, the Pauline Corpus. This suggests not only that James and Jude were the first and last members of a discrete letter collection but also that this collection was received alongside the Pauline corpus as a canonical collection.

With Eusebius’s comments in mind, this essay will consider the relationship between James and Jude as the opening and closing members of the Catholic Epistles collection. To be clear the argument is not that James and Jude exhibit literary dependence or genealogical relationships.⁷ Rather, the argument is that within the canonical process the seven Catholic Epistles, like the four gospels or Pauline corpus, came to be collected and associated together as a discrete canonical collection. This association was supported by textual features of James and Jude read and received by later recipients within the canonical process. This paper argues that James and Jude share several key textual features or connections that together indicate the presence of a framing device that defines the opening and closing boundaries of the Catholic Epistle collection. In the important work of James Nogalski, a framing device indicates textual coherence across an entire set of associated texts.⁸ With respect to the Book of the Twelve, Nogalski notes five types of framing devices: “superscriptions, genre similarities, structural parallels, juxtaposition of catchwords, and canonical allusions.”⁹

Relying upon Nogalski’s types of framing devices, the essay will first consider the specific genre similarities between James and Jude. Beyond being examples of early Christian epistolography with general addressees, both fit within the subgenre of Christian diaspora letter. Second, we will highlight how the letter superscriptions (or letter openings) are joined

7. J. Daryl Charles has argued that James and Jude share both a literary milieu and several literary connections (*Literary Strategy in the Epistle of Jude* [Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 1993]), which Bemmerl and Grünstäudl have found unconvincing (Christian Bemmerl and Wolfgang Grünstäudl, “Wahlverwandschaften: Notizen zum Verhältnis von Jakobus- und Judasbrief,” *SNTSU* 38 [2013]: 5–22).

8. See James Nogalski, “Intertextuality and the Twelve,” in *The Book of the Twelve and Beyond: Collected Essays of James D. Nogalski*, ed. James D. Nogalski, AIL 29 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 118–24.

9. Nogalski, “Intertextuality,” 119.

together via repeated words and phrases. Here, the shared phrase “servant of Jesus Christ” and reference to the “brother of James” in Jude 1 will feature prominently. Third, the essay will draw attention to the significant number of structural parallels and shared themes between the letter closings of James and Jude, specifically arguing that both letters draw the conclusion that mercy must triumph over judgment (Jas 5:19–20 and Jude 22–23). Finally, the conclusion suggests not only that these shared features form a framing device that indicates James be placed first and Jude last in the collection, but also that their particular function of introducing and concluding the collection signals the concern for mercy and purity before God.

Genre Similarities

Of course, James and Jude are both examples of early Christian letters. However, they are unlike Paul’s letters in that they address a general rather than a specific audience and eventually received titles naming the sender (Epistle of James, ΙΑΚΩΒΟΥ ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ) rather than recipient (To the Romans, ΠΡΟΣ ΡΩΜΑΙΟΥΣ).¹⁰ Furthermore, according to Lutz Doering’s analysis of ancient Jewish and Christian epistles both James and Jude bear characteristics of early Christian diaspora letters.¹¹ Because of its reference to the “twelve tribes in the diaspora,” the strong trial motif to which the author responds with teaching “geared toward strengthening the addressee’s identity, profiling their ethics, and providing eschatological motivation,” Doering considers James a prime example of the diaspora letter genre. Similarly, the fact that Jude signals a connection to James in its prescript and its general address both suggest that Jude too is at least related to the Christian diaspora letter genre. Doering notes specifically that

10. For a detailed discussion regarding the relevance of the titles of the Catholic Epistles to their early collection see Lockett, *Pillar Apostles*, 105–15.

11. Doering lists the shared features of diaspora letter as: (1) an attribution to an authoritative author; (2) communication with Judeans, Israelites, or Jews as living far away from Jerusalem who are addressed in a quasi-official way as “all”; (3) an emphasis upon cohesion between members abroad and those in the homeland; (4) an imbalance in authority toward the addressor such that the authorial consciousness provides an orientation for the addressee’s situation (Lutz Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters and the Beginnings of Christian Epistolography*, WUNT 298 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012], 431).

Jude has close connections with the Letter of James: first, in the *intitulatio* ... resembles that of James...; second, in the presentation of the addressor as 'brother of James'.... It is possible that Jude, by aligning itself with the James tradition and therefore indirectly with Jerusalem, betrays actual knowledge of the Letter of James.¹²

It must be said that Jude does not use the term (or metaphor) diaspora, which makes final classification of Jude as a diaspora letter tentative. What is clear is that James and Jude are both examples of early Christian letters that do not address a specific named individual or congregation, were eventually entitled with the sender's name, and share at least some elements of the genre of Christian diaspora letter.

Connections between Superscriptions (or Letter Openings)

The letter openings of James and Jude are connected in four specific ways. The first two connections are unique features that both James and Jude leave out yet might otherwise have been expected to include. First, neither author draws attention to his fraternal relationship with Jesus. This was an extremely unique feature that would have been well known by readers of these letters and to which both authors might have drawn attention. In fact, drawing upon this fraternal connection might even have been expected. Rather, both authors establish authority by taking on the title of "servant of Jesus Christ" (more on this below). Avoiding a claim to authority via family relationship with Jesus, in Richard Bauckham's perspective, was not an appeal to modesty. Rather, it was "a recognition that natural relationship to Jesus [was] not a basis for authority in the church. 'Servant' goes better than 'brother' with 'Lord.'"¹³ Second, neither author uses the title of "apostle," which might be otherwise expected. Paying special attention to the letter openings in the Catholic Epistles, one observes that James, 2 Peter, and Jude all take on the label "servant," yet among these only 2 Peter adds the title "apostle." The absence of the title apostle stresses the unique connection between James and Jude. Thus, both James and Jude leave out reference to their familial relation to Jesus and both intentionally do not refer to themselves as an apostle.

12. Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters*, 477–78.

13. Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 129.

The letter openings of James and Jude are positively connected in two ways. First, the letter openings are directly connected by means of their self-description as “a servant of Jesus Christ,” both using the identical phrase Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος. The title itself is one of honor and authority most likely taken up from the Old Testament.¹⁴ To be a servant was an indication that one’s authority came from the call to serve Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, a second positive connection is signaled in Jude 1 by the phrase “brother of James [ἀδελφὸς δὲ Ἰακώβου].” That the name “James” here needs no further identification is likely due to the fact that, after the death of James the son of Zebedee, the only James widely known in the early church merely by name would have been James the brother of Jesus and leader of the church in Jerusalem. Bauckham notes that there was just one pair of brothers known as James and Jude in the New Testament (Mark 6:3) and adds, “Jude therefore uses this phrase to identify himself by reference to his more famous brother.”¹⁵ But here Christian Bemmerl and Wolfgang Grünstäudl find this evidence less than convincing, arguing

it should be noted that Jude 1 refers to the *person* of James ... but not to the *text* assigned to him. This becomes a kinship relationship between the fictional authors of Jude and James which however does not require a literary relationship between both texts, indeed it says nothing about such a thing, for Jude “lacks ... any reference, explicit or implicit, to a *letter* of James.”¹⁶

However, as with Eusebius, the reference back to James in Jude 1 was taken as a reference to the Letter of James in some streams of reception.

Though it is possible that Jude knew of the Letter of James, the argument here is that in the canonical process later recipients of these texts recognized textual phenomena that lead to their association. Later readers no doubt would have recognized the familial connection noted by Jude; however, the reference to James in Jude 1 would have suggested at a later time in the reception history of these texts a connection between

14. Abraham (Ps 105:42), Moses (Neh 9:14; Rev 15:3), David (Ps 89:3), and Daniel (Dan 6:20) were all called “servant of the Lord.”

15. Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, WBC 50 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 24.

16. Bemmerl and Grünstäudl, “Wahlverwandschaften,” 19, emphasis original.

the letters themselves. Therefore, the letter openings of James and Jude are drawn together in their common reference to being a “servant of Jesus Christ” and by Jude’s self-identification as “brother of James.” Thus, both in what is left out and in what is included, the letter openings of James and Jude bear clear marks of connection.

Structural Parallels between the Letter Endings

In addition to the associations between the letter openings, there are a significant number of parallels between the endings of James and Jude, including shared themes and parallel sequence.¹⁷ First, before their conclusions both letters contain an eschatological section (Jas 5:7–11; Jude 14–19), where the term κύριος is used referring to Jesus Christ as the returning judge. James draws his letter to a close encouraging his readers to wait patiently for “the Lord’s coming [τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου]” (5:7), because “the Lord’s coming [ἡ παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου] is near” (5:8). In this context, James warns his readers against complaining about one another “so that you will not be judged. Look, the judge stands at the door!” (5:9).¹⁸ Likewise, Jude draws his letter to a close with an eschatological warning that “The Lord comes ... to execute judgment [ἦλθεν κύριος ... ποιῆσαι κρίσιν]” (14). In 1 En. 1:9, the text which Jude is citing, “God” (θεός) is the subject of the sentence. However, in Jude’s citation he

17. The ingenious suggestion that the beginning of James is connected to the ending of Jude to form an *inclusio* structure bracketing the Catholic Epistles put forward by Carey Newman is unlikely. Newman argues that the verb διακρίνω in Jas 1:6 and Jude 22 serves as a connection between the two texts. “It has often been noted,” Newman remarks, “that the participle διακρινομένους at Jude 22 echoes the διακρινόμενος of Jude 9.” “What has *not* been noticed,” he continues, “is that διακρινομένους equally forms an *inclusio* with the διακρινόμενος of Jas 1:6, thereby explicitly linking at the literary level the beginning and ending of the collection of the CE” (Newman, “Jude 22, Apostolic Theology, and the Canonical Role of the Catholic Epistles,” *PRS* 41 [2014]: 377). Though Newman’s lexical connection interestingly draws together James and Jude, it is highly unlikely that the meaning of διακρινόμενος in Jas 1:6 directly influenced the reader’s interpretation of the participle διακρινομένους in Jude 22. See Darian R. Lockett, “Objects of Mercy in Jude: The Prophetic Background of Jude 22–23,” *CBQ* 77 (2015): 325–28.

18. The Lord’s coming could refer to the return of Christ (most commentators) or the impending judgment of God. Because James describes the judge as “standing at the door” (5:9) and that 5:7 uses the term “coming” (παρουσίας), which in the New Testament is a technical term for Christ’s return, the “judge” is most likely Jesus Christ.

has changed θεός to κύριος making it the “Lord” who comes in judgment rather than “God.” This reflects a christological interpretation of the passage that stresses hope for the return of Christ and is quite similar to the widespread practice in early Christianity of applying passages in the Old Testament where God appears to his people as referring to Jesus’s coming.¹⁹ Jude understands 1 En. 1:9 as a prophetic announcement of Jesus’s judgment at his coming. Thus, both texts include an eschatological section just before their conclusions, referring to the coming judgment of Jesus using the key term κύριος.²⁰

Second, both texts move from a warning of eschatological judgment rendered by the Lord himself, to an exhortation to effective prayer (Jas 5:13–18; Jude 20–21). Though James inserts a brief saying about speech ethics in between these two passages (5:12), he quickly moves on to an implicit contrast between effective and ineffective prayer (5:13–18). Structurally, the section is marked by rhetorical questions, each of which address different situations in a public worship context: “Is any among you suffering?” “Is anyone cheerful?” “Is anyone among you sick?” After each question the author supplies a call to action: “pray” [προσευχέσθω], “sing praise” [ψαλλέτω], and “call the elders . . . and pray” (5:13). These commands suggest that the section is concerned, first, with the proper context of prayer, namely, the public worship (13–14a) and, second, correct procedure (14b) and effectiveness of “the prayer of faith” (15–16). In a similar way, after the carefully constructed announcement of the Lord’s judgment upon the intruders (Jude 14–18), Jude instructs his readers to pray “in the Holy Spirit” (20). The preposition “in” (ἐν) likely indicates prayer “in the control of the Spirit” or “under the guidance of the Spirit,” which is to stress, at least implicitly, a kind of effective prayer. Thus, both James and Jude stress effective prayer in the midst of an eschatological context.²¹

19. E.g., Isa 40:10 in Rev 22:12; Isa 63:1–6 in Rev 19:13, 15; Isa 66:15 in 2 Thess 1:7; and Zech 14:5 in 1 Thess 3:13.

20. Charles stresses that in both eschatological contexts it is Jesus who is or does the judging (*Literary Strategy*, 79).

21. Fred O. Francis notes, “Jude 20 makes an absolute recommendation of prayer and then proceeds to enjoin convincing and saving others. Thus, again prayer is conjoined to the need of the sinner—the doubter in danger of fire. The concluding remarks on prayer in Jude, like James and 1 John, have an eschatological context!” (Francis, “The Form and Function of the Opening and Closing Paragraphs of James and 1 John,” *ZNW* 61 [1970]: 125).

Finally, both letters conclude with an appeal to mercy in the midst of Christ's final judgment (Jas 5:19–20; Jude 22–23).²² Bemmerl and Grünstäudl find this parallel unlikely first because it is not surprising that two parenthetic letters might share a corresponding final reminder.²³ Second, though both speak of “saving” one who is at risk (“a sinner” Jas 5:20; “others/them ... from the fire” Jude 23), the two texts speak about different forms of salvation. They argue: “the $\pi\tilde{\upsilon}\rho$ -motif as well as Jude’s emphasis upon mercy is missing from the passage in James, while conversely the (possible) reflexivity of salvation in Jas 5:20 is without correspondence in Jude.”²⁴

It is true that whereas Jude mentions saving those in danger from the eschatological fire, James contains no such reference to fire; however, James does share Jude’s eschatological context. As already argued, both letters contain an eschatological section just prior to the ending exhortation (Jas 5:7–11; Jude 14–19), but furthermore, the final exhortation to “turn a sinner from the error of his way” in Jas 5:20 contains an implicit eschatological context as well. Though at home in Jewish wisdom writing, the motif of the two ways is taken up in James and placed within an eschatological framework.²⁵

The term “way” appears in the final appeal to James readers: “let that person know that whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way [$\delta\delta\omicron\upsilon$] will save his soul from death [$\sigma\acute{\omega}\sigma\epsilon\iota$ $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta\tilde{\nu}$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa$ $\theta\alpha\nu\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\upsilon$]” (5:20). Not only does James speak of a way of error, the textual tradition of 5:19 suggests some copyists read “way of truth” as well.²⁶ This indicates that some early scribes understood “the truth” as a “way” one follows—a clear parallel to the “way of error.”²⁷ So James’s final exhortation implic-

22. In Charles’s list of literary affinities, he notes this parallel between their hortatory conclusions both of which “close ... the body of exhortation with the admonition to turn a sinner from his way (5:20 || 23).” (Charles, *Literary Strategy*, 75).

23. Bemmerl and Grünstäudl, “Wahlverwandschaften,” 11.

24. Bemmerl and Grünstäudl, “Wahlverwandschaften,” 11 n. 30.

25. Darian R. Lockett, “Structure or Communicative Strategy? The ‘Two Ways’ Motif in James’ Theological Instruction,” *Neot* 42 (2008): 269–87.

26. Some manuscripts supply $\delta\delta\omicron\upsilon$ (P⁷⁴) or $\delta\delta\omicron\upsilon$ $\tau\eta\varsigma$ (\aleph , 33, 81, 623, 1846, 2426) (“way”) as a modifier to the noun “truth” ($\acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$)—thus, “way of truth” in 5:19.

27. Matt Jackson-McCabe asserts in this regard that “even if [this is] the work of later editors ... these readings only make explicit what is clearly implicit in any case: the author envisions two opposing ‘ways’ which humans can travel, one characterized by ‘truth’ ($\acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$) and the other by ‘deception’ ($\pi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta$)” (Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and*

itly contrasts “[the way of] truth,” which leads to eschatological life, and “the way of error,” which leads to eschatological death (θάνατος). If this is correct, then one must note earlier in the letter James has warned his audience about those on the path of error led along by “one’s own desire [ἐπιθυμία]” (1:14), which ultimately ends in eschatological death (“when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death [θάνατον],” 1:15). All of this suggests, though James lacks reference to fire, his final exhortation is implicitly set within an eschatological context similar to Jude’s πῦρ-motif.

As noted above, Bemmerl and Grünstäudl are suspicious of the connections between James and Jude here also because James lacks any concern for mercy in his final appeal. However, in the larger context of James, a concern for mercy in the midst of judgment becomes clear. As already noted, Jas 5:7–11 announces the Lord’s coming in judgment (5:8–9), and with this in view, the final exhortation in James must be read in light of his previous discussion of judgment and mercy in Jas 2:1–13.

In Jas 2, those showing partiality toward the rich fail to love the neighbor and thus are worthy of “judgment without mercy” (2:13). Most agree that the judgment here does in fact warn of the final eschatological judgment. Jesus’s teaching, echoed here in James, insists that those who fail to enact mercy will themselves be denied mercy in due course.²⁸ Commenting on Jas 2:13, Robert Wall argues that

since love of one’s neighbor is the rule of God’s coming kingdom, it seems theological [*sic*] that “mercy” is given by God to those who “show mercy”—that is, who love their (poor) neighbors—while divine “judgment” (*krisis*) is reserved for “the one who has been merciless.”²⁹

For James, this is what it means to be judged by the “law of freedom” (2:12). Therefore, justice demands unmerciful judgment on the unmerciful; however, James goes on in the next verse to argue that “mercy triumphs over judgment” (2:13). Doug Moo notes that the

Law in the Letter of James: The Law of Nature, the Law of Moses, and the Law of Freedom, NovTSup 100 [Leiden: Brill, 2001], 208 n. 68).

28. James restates the principle conclusion of Matt 18 and 25: those who fail to enact mercy will also be denied mercy in due course.

29. Robert W. Wall, *Community of the Wise: The Letter of James*, New Testament in Context (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 128.

“mercy”... James has been referring to in this context is human mercy, not God’s (v. 12). We therefore think it more likely that he is making a point about the way in which the mercy we show toward others shows our desire to obey the law of the kingdom and, indirectly therefore, of a heart made right by the work of God’s grace.³⁰

Even though judgment in 2:13–14 is the imminent judgment executed by God at the eschaton, the “mercy” is clearly human mercy, not divine. The obedient response to God’s judgment is to show mercy to others. In keeping with this observation in Jas 2, the concluding exhortation (5:19–20) calls to mind averting judgment for the sake of mercy.

Receiving mercy and extending mercy captures the logic of Jude as well. Jude exhorts his audience to “keep yourselves [ἐαυτοὺς ... τηρήσατε] in the love God as you wait for the mercy [ἔλεος] of our Lord Jesus Christ” (21). Then the author extends the double command “be merciful to those who dispute [ἐλεᾶτε διακρινόμενους]” (22) and “show mercy in fear [ἐλεᾶτε ἐν φόβῳ].” The stubborn problem is identifying the “others” upon whom Jude’s readers are to have mercy. Though the textual and exegetical issues are legion, this final passage just before Jude’s closing doxology could be taken as an exhortation to show mercy to the intruders who have been upsetting the faith of the community. If one understands the meaning of the participle διακρινόμενους as referring to those who “dispute” rather than those who “doubt” or “waver,” and if the syntactical significance of the three relative pronouns (οὓς μὲν ... οὓς δὲ ... οὓς δέ; 22–23) is understood as anaphoric (referring to one group) rather than distributive (identifying three separate groups), then Jude’s final call to mercy may have the intruders themselves in mind.³¹ That mercy is to be offered with “fear, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh” might indicate the caution one must take as she extends mercy to those who dispute. Finally, these observations are strengthened by noting that not only does Jude allude to Zech 3:1–4 (Jude 22–23) and cites 1 En. 1:9 (Jude 14–15), but both of these prophetic allusions place future judgment within the context

30. Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, PTNC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 118.

31. Lockett, “Objects of Mercy,” 325–26, and the bibliography cited there; see also Peter Davids, *II Peter and Jude: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, BHGNT (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 70–72.

of mercy.³² Whether or not the objects of mercy are the intruders, the fact remains that Jude closes his letter with a command to show mercy in the midst of (or perhaps over) judgment.

In this climatic parallel, James challenges those who are tempted to take up the world's version of judgment (especially against the poor, 2:5) to live as those who will be judged by the "the law of freedom" (2:12), where finally "mercy triumphs over judgment." Echoing the principle of mercy triumphing over judgment, James brings his letter to a conclusion by instructing Christians to "turn a sinner from the error of his way" so as to "save his soul from death" (or judgment). Similarly, the final command in Jude echoes the concern for mercy over judgment. Though Jude has announced the condemnation of the intruders, his message concludes with a call for those who are "waiting expectantly for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ" to show mercy to others. This, it seems, parallels the kind of reflexivity Bemmerl and Grünstäudl find in James, but fail to see in Jude.

It is noteworthy that in his recent commentary on Jude Jörg Frey notes: "The admonition [to have mercy in Jude] in some way picks up on the admonition formulated at the end of James (5:19f.), which calls for bringing those in error around in order to save them."³³ Therefore, strikingly, James and Jude share a very similar structure and both end with a call for mercy to triumph over judgment or that rescuing/offering mercy to the wayward covers a multitude of sin.

Conclusion: The Canonical Opening and Closing of the Catholic Epistles

James and Jude bear genre similarities, share key terms in their letter openings (superscriptions), and bear structural parallels in their letter closings. These shared characteristics function as a framing device that indicates textual coherence across the entire set of associated texts of the Catholic Epistles. It might be that this framing device was recognized such that later in the tradition, Eusebius could name only James and Jude as Catholic Epistles and with this reference allude to the beginning and ending of this received collection. In conclusion I would like to focus on two features that suggest that Jude specifically functions as the conclusion of the collection.

32. Lockett, "Objects of Mercy," 329–36.

33. Jörg Frey, *Der Brief des Judas und der zweite Brief des Petrus*, THKNT 15.2 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2015), 131.

First, Jude 1 refers to the “brother of James” which we have argued suggests a relationship not only between the brothers, but perhaps more importantly in the history of reception, between the letters themselves. Implicitly this reference to James assumes the reader either knows of the Letter of James, or even more, the reference expects the reader to be able to reference back to James as a previous letter in the collection. It seems this is implicitly how Eusebius understands the relationship. If this is correct it might suggest a textual marker that was read by later readers in the canonical process that suggested reading Jude in light of a previous text, namely James.

Second, Jude’s closing doxology breaks the succession of parallels between the conclusions of James and Jude and thus signals a unique function. The final doxology of Jude could function as a benediction drawing the entire Catholic Epistles collection to a close. Wall has argued:

It should be noted ... [that] the memorable benediction that concludes Jude (Jude 24–25) ... is also a suitable ending to the entire collection, not because of its doxological argot but because of its practical interest in safeguarding those who might “stumble” into false teaching or immoral lifestyle (cf. Jude 4).... Jude’s benediction, when reconsidered in the context of the final redaction of the CE, is apropos to the collection’s motive and role within the biblical canon.³⁴

The twofold benediction that God would “keep you from stumbling” and “to make you stand in his presence without blemish with joy” in a general way summarizes themes running throughout the Catholic Epistles. Frey similarly concludes: “Jude offers a conclusion to the corpus.... The solemn doxology then redirects one’s gaze toward the goal of communion for those who blamelessly come before his face, thus providing the canonical transition to the last book of the New Testament canon.”³⁵

If Jude functions as the conclusion to the Catholic Epistles, James, listed first by Eusebius, functions as the collection’s opening. Perhaps James’s opening function is especially marked by its terse and introductory first chapter.³⁶ Here, rather like a table of contents or an epitome,

34. Robert W. Wall, “A Unifying Theology of the Catholic Epistles,” in *The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition*, ed. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr and Robert W. Wall (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 18.

35. Frey, *Der Brief des Judas und der zweite Brief des Petrus*, 46–47.

36. See Darian R. Lockett, *Purity and Worldview in the Epistle of James*, LNTS 366 (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 87–105, and the bibliography cited there.

James lists a variety of topics to be unpacked not only in the rest of James (chs. 2–5) but also developed in the rest of the Catholic Epistles.

If the epitome-like character of Jas 1 functions as in introduction or beginning to the Catholic Epistles collection and Jude's doxology functions as a closing there might be an interesting shared concern for wholeness or purity signaled in both. The concern for wholeness ("perfection," *τέλειος*) in Jas 1:2–4 is paralleled with the associated concern for "purity" in 1:26–27. Thus, the interrelated concerns for perfection and purity draw together Jas 1. Significantly then, the language contrasting "worthless" (*μάταιος*) piety and "undefiled" (*ἀμίαντος*) piety in Jas 1:26–27 draws this important first chapter to a close. Here specifically "undefiled" piety must be such "before God the Father [*παρὰ τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί*]." This finds a striking parallel with Jude's doxology. Jude concludes with the assurance that God is able to make believers stand "in the presence of his glory [*κατενώπιον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ*]" without blemish [*ἀμώμους*]." Though there are no repeated catchwords, there is a significant repetition of a central theme of standing before God in "purity" or "without blemish." This insight strengthens Wall's observation that Jude's doxology signals a "practical interest in safeguarding those who might 'stumble' into false teaching or immoral lifestyle" and yet extends it by noting the similar concern articulated at the beginning of the collection in Jas 1:27.

Marking the common genre, associations between the letter openings and endings of James and Jude open the way for reflection on how these two texts function as appropriate bookends to the Catholic Epistle collection. In addition to providing supporting evidence for Eusebius's association of James and Jude, these connections suggest reading and reflecting upon James and Jude as opening and closing a discrete canonical collection. From this perspective in addition to mercy's triumph over judgment, the shared concern for purity in the presence of God signaled by James's opening epitome and Jude's closing doxology suggest the particular function each plays as opening and closing the Catholic Epistle collection. The framing device thus invites a particular way of reading the Catholic Epistles as a canonical unit.

Searching for Christ in All the Scriptures: Preaching Backward and Forward

Annette Brownlee

For over forty years Christopher Seitz has served the church and academy as a scholar, priest, and preacher. Like the books of the biblical canon about which he writes, each of these multiple roles has a distinct integrity, but over time they have been gathered together and opened to one another. His preaching informs his scholarship; his scholarship his preaching.¹ His vows to bind himself to God's word and God's church serve both. In recognition of this family resemblance, between a scholar and the object of his devoted study, this essay explores homiletical implications of a theological interpretation of the canon, reading backward and forward between the elder testament and its younger sibling for the sake of the church's proclamation.

My reflections begin, however, with a visual argument about the nature of God's word that calls the church to read in a particular manner, what Seitz has recently described as reading in light of "the ontological truth about God."² My argument is set forth visually through the set of fifteen stained-glass windows in Founder's Chapel at Wycliffe College at the University of Toronto, where Seitz is on the faculty.³ He has prayed and preached in this chapel many times. The windows set forth the relationship of the Scriptures—and the crucified and risen Christ at their center—to

1. Christopher R. Seitz, *Seven Lasting Words: Jesus Speaks from the Cross* (Louisville: John Knox, 2001).

2. Christopher R. Seitz, *The Elder Testament: Canon, Theology, Trinity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2018), 28.

3. For an overview of the five windows on the east wall of Founder's Chapel see, Frederick D. Coggan, *The Story of the English Bible Illustrated in the Memorial Windows of Wycliffe College Chapel, Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1942).

the “One God’s economic and ontological life with Israel and the church and all creation.”⁴ As these windows depict, Christ’s command to search for him in all of Scripture opens the church to the world of what God is doing with Scripture (John 5:46; Acts 17:11; Luke 24:44–45).

The story begins with the five windows at the north end of the chapel, behind the lectern and communion table. There the crucified and risen Christ is flanked by John, Paul, Timothy, and Andrew, marking the missional orientation of the gospel and Wycliffe College’s commitments. From there the living word goes out. The windows on the east wall depict the word acting in history, particularly in the translation of the Bible into English during the English Reformation. It begins with Wycliffe sending out his preachers, moves on to the authorization of the first legal translation of the Bible into English by Henry VIII, and the 1538 Royal Injunction that a copy of that Bible, known as the *Great Bible*, be chained in the eleven thousand parish churches of England.⁵ The windows continue with Tyndale, who ends his life in the martyr’s flames in 1536; the publication of the Authorized Version or King James Bible in 1611; and in the last window on the east wall, to 1804, with the translation of the Gospel of Saint John into Mohawk by the British and Foreign Bible Society. This window contains the text of the central reformation principle, that the very pure word of God should not be bound but read and heard in the vernacular.⁶ The rose window in the back of the chapel is a circle of Reformers with Wycliffe in the center and the Holy Bible at its pinnacle; surrounding Wycliffe are Wesley, Calvin, Luther, Jewell, Tyndale, Cranmer, Ridley, Knox, martyrs among them.

The story of the nature of God’s word continues on the west wall of the chapel. These windows tell of the gospel’s outward movement into the wilderness of Canada and then beyond its frontiers. From the first Anglican cathedral outside of England, in Halifax, to the gospel’s movement into northwestern Canada via canoe and into the Arctic among the Inuit people, via dogsled, to its further movement to Japan, Chile, and China. This final window on the west wall has emblazoned in its center Christ’s own words, “into all the world,” returning the movement of the word to the one who stands at and is the center of this movement, the crucified and risen Christ.

4. Seitz, *The Elder Testament*, 48.

5. Coggan, *Memorial Windows*, 33.

6. I have often thought that Wycliffe students could do fairly well on their church history exams if they actually read the text in those windows and studied their figures.

Yet there is still more depicted in the windows. All of this movement of the word in history and church, among peoples and nations, is bordered abundantly with images of the created world: giraffe, walrus, bears, bishops, dogsleds, canoes, fishing vessels, steam boats, dogsleds, orchids, pyramids, all in brilliant jewel tones of red and blue.

What can be missed—but must not be—in the movement of the fifteen windows around the chapel, is the character and activity of the Scriptures they depict. It is the function or activity of Scripture in the Spirit's hands, the purposes for which it was sent (Isa 55:11). This is what undergirds the movement of the windows from north, east, south, and west. It is also what undergirds the church's searching for Christ in all of Scripture as it maintains the integrity of its books' distinctive witnesses. Scripture both depicts and orders all of this as a single movement across time and beyond the immediate referents of its pages: flowers, elk, nations, tribes, translations, churches, martyrs, missionaries, reformers, women and men, across generations and continents. As generations and nations listen to Scripture read in the vernacular and respond in obedience, it is the Scripture itself that brings all these disparate creatures together in the order in which we view them. Here is a single world, authored and redeemed by its single creator, the triune God. This God, in his Trinitarian complexity, has a name, Jesus, Son of the God of Israel, who stands resurrected at the center of it all. He is flanked by those, who, when faced with Christ's cross and resurrection, turned to their own Scripture to make sense of God's new act. The activity of Scripture the windows depict has to do with how God uses this living and active two-edged word. God in fact uses Scripture so that, in the church's listening to and searching of it, we might behold the truth of God himself: the single author and the crucified and risen redeemer of creation, history, and the church. Scripture tells us who God is in Christ, but who God is is just the one who uses the Scriptures to reveal himself as Jesus.

My argument, then, is this: searching for the crucified and risen Christ *in* all of Scripture is divinely linked to an understanding of what God is doing *with* Scripture. The conjunction of "in" and "with" is important: Scripture is what God does for the world, which—to us—is given in the form of the crucified and risen Son, Jesus Christ. Hence, it is Jesus himself who is the content of the whole of Scripture. What God does with Scripture is what is actually in Scripture.

This is good news for the preacher. It is also an enormous challenge. I have listened to the preaching of many students, and of many pastors, as well as struggled with my own preaching for over thirty years. I have two

observations. First, for all the lip service to the Scriptures themselves, evangelicals do not preach very much on them. Most have favorite doctrines and their sermons tend to follow texts that lay these doctrines out. Most of these texts are from the New Testament. And when the Old Testament is preached on, which is rare, it is treated in a way that is theologically thin, and often christologically inept: God creates; God demands; God judges. All true, but these are often side notes, at best to a set of limited gospel themes, and at worst only apologetically admitted. My observation is that evangelicals do not often even preach all the Scriptures, whether Christ is in them or not.

The second observation is this: all too readily, even among evangelicals, Christ drops out of sermons. Here is a straightforward example. I have heard many sermons on Christ's temptations in the wilderness (Matt 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13). Few focus on Jesus Christ and his suffering and temptations; instead, they have focused on how his temptations are about something else. I have heard pastoral sermons that interpret Christ's temptations in terms of a kinship with our own. The preacher encourages the congregation: Christ's temptations show us that God is always with us when we are tempted. I have also heard moralistic sermons in which the preacher interprets the particularities of Christ's temptations in terms of a generalized teaching about obedience. The preacher then applies this teaching on obedience to everyday situations his or her congregation confronts in the wildernesses of their own lives. Both pastoral and moralistic sermons could have been preached without the specific text about Christ's temptations. The specific details of Christ's temptations, the uncomfortable statement that the Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness, the angels ministering to Jesus at the end, and the promise of the devil to come again at an opportune time are skipped over. In a desire to preach a sermon that speaks to his or her congregations these preachers have interpreted it as about someone or something other than the crucified Christ. They have gone outside of the text in order to find meaning in it.

If, in a desire to be relevant or accessible, preachers have difficulty preaching on the identity of Christ in a passage specifically about him, how much more difficult will it be to search for him—and recognize him and preach on him—in *all* the Scriptures! Thus, to restate my argument: searching for the crucified and risen Christ *in* all of Scripture is divinely linked to an understanding of what God is doing *with* Scripture. What God does with Scripture is what is actually in Scripture.

A brief exploration of passages in which Christ calls the church to read in this way lays forth what is at stake in what is, in fact, a command he gives. What is at stake is our ability to see Jesus Christ as the crucified and risen son of the God of Israel. We recover from Augustine the idea that hermeneutics is soteriology, in the sense that understanding the Scripture and what it is is itself a means by which God grants us his saving grace. Throughout the New Testament the life, death, and resurrection of Christ is linked to the witness of Moses, the prophets, and the apostles. And this link comes in the form of a specific divine command to search for Christ in all the Scriptures: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and it is they which testify of me" (John 5:39 KJV).

In both Luke 16 (the story of the rich man and Lazarus) and Luke 24 (the story of the road to Emmaus), Christ makes the connection between our ability to see and receive the sacrificed and risen Christ and searching for him in all the Scriptures: "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 15:27).⁷ In both gospel stories, knowledge of the truth of Jesus in his death and resurrection is inextricably connected to knowledge of the Scriptures. In both there is the unity of the event of the cross and its double attestation in the prophets and apostles. David Yeago has argued that the testimonies to Christ's death and resurrection are not something secondary to Scripture, added on after the fact. They come from within the event. The testimony of the prophets and apostles are in a real sense a part of the cross and resurrection-event itself. After Christ's suffering and resurrection Peter and the other disciples of Jesus turn to their Scripture to make sense of this new act of God. It is knowledge of his death and resurrection that enable them to read it in a new light. As Yeago states, "Peter does not simply turn to the scriptures in a spasm of ethnic loyalty, as 'his tradition'; he turns to them because he believes that they embody the word and will of the one who by raising the Lord Jesus from the dead has disclosed the ultimate *skopos* of all his words and purposes."⁸

Thus, to search for Christ in all of Scripture gives us the eyes to see who Christ is, in his death and resurrection, and to see God's use of his

7. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations are from the NRSV.

8. David S. Yeago, "The Spirit, the Church and the Scriptures: Biblical Inspiration and Interpretation Revisited," in *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church*, ed. James J. Buckley and David S. Yeago (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 49.

own Scripture in the ordering of all the world to this end of drawing all things together in his risen Son. This is not a tidy answer to the question of how to know God. Nor is it a simple command, as if searching for Christ in all the Scriptures, as Jesus commands us in John 5, were a straightforward task. In the second century Irenaeus likened this kind of reading to digging in a field (Matt 13:44). The law is the field, in which we dig by means of types and parables. The treasure we search for is the risen Christ (*Haer.* 4.26.1).⁹ In the preface to his German translation of the Pentateuch Martin Luther describes the Old Testament as “the riches of mines which can never be sufficiently explored. Here you will find the swaddling clothes and the manger in which Christ lies.”¹⁰ Searching for Christ in the Scriptures is to look for what is already there by divine design but can be found in no other way than by the often laborious and lengthy exercise of seeking out.

But perhaps, as Augustine described, this is precisely medicine adapted to our weak eyes (*Doctr. chr.* 1.14.13).¹¹ There is a long tradition in the church—brought to a point in Luther’s sometime friend and then opponent Erasmus—that a good bit of the Bible is hard to understand because it is aimed at our humility; that is, at our willingness to stoop, be patient, take time, explore, be challenged, admit ignorance, pray over and over, persevere in exploration, in order to understand it. Even though Luther worried that Erasmus was selling short the clarity of the Bible with this kind of claim, Luther himself recognized that reading Scripture with understanding was above all to engage in a struggle of almost agonizing breadth.¹² One thinks of Peter, who was himself led even to abject tears in his pursuit of understanding his Lord. But this is to be expected. If in fact the Scriptures are the word of the Lord who creates, enters, suffers within, judges, re-creates, and redeems the breadth of the world’s history,

9. “For Christ is the treasure which was hid in the field, that is, in this world ... but the treasure hid in the Scriptures is Christ, since He was pointed out by means of types and parables.”

10. Martin Luther, “Preface to the Old Testament,” in: *Word and Sacrament 1*, ed. E. Theodore Bachmann, trans. Charles M. Jacobs, LW 35 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1960), 236.

11. He writes, “Wisdom adapted its healing arts to our wounds by taking on a human being and becoming itself both the physician [*medicus*] and the medicine [*Medicina*].”

12. Martin Luther, *De servo arbitrio*, in *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Albert Freitag (Weimar: Böhlau, 1908), 18:609.

how could one escape such struggle? To find *that* God in *that* Scripture, to search for that God in Scripture, one must be thrust into a marvelously dizzying space, as wonderful and temporally vast and intricate as its Creator's ordering mind.

To search for Christ in all the Scriptures is to read backward and forward between the testaments; it is to explore how one story—God's in Christ—gives rise to and is given in all stories. Such a search means discovering how any one story, figure, or image within a text must necessarily lead to another, back and forth, beyond the limits of a historical-critical reading and their immediate referents, just as the Scriptures themselves take Christ—or Christ takes the Scriptures—in their proclamation across ages and continents and cultures, back and forth, as Wycliffe College's chapel windows indicate. That is God's history of the Bible, after all; it is what God does with Scripture, because it is God who is in fact in it.

Reading back and forth in this way, one that traces the movement of the gospel across lands and cultures over time, has traditionally involved a cluster of interpretative practices, which have only recently received new attention in evangelical circles.¹³ These include reading intertextually and figurally, following echoes, images, figures, and types across biblical books. These ways of reading have, in fact, been practiced by evangelicals from the beginning of the movement—from Luther through Calvin through Puritanism and all the way to contemporary Pentecostalism. But for some reason, especially with the rise of the modern liberal-fundamentalist hostilities, they have proven suspect in academic circles for the past one hundred-fifty years.

Their retrieval will only strengthen the church's preaching, including evangelical preaching, even as such traditional forms of reading challenge our preaching. This range of reading practices, back and forth between the testaments, gives preachers ways to linger in Scripture's room, which is a vast and intricate space.¹⁴ This range of interpretative practices gives

13. See, e.g., Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008); and Daniel J. Treier and Uche Anizor, "Theological Interpretation of Scripture and Evangelical Systematic Theology: Iron Sharpening Iron?," *SBTJ* 14.2 (2010): 4–17.

14. To linger in scripture's room is a phrase from my book, *Preaching Jesus Christ Today: Six Questions to Move from Scripture to Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017). In it I address the cluster of reading practices that privileges the theological nature of Scripture and its message.

preachers ways to move about in the vast world of Scripture and to know what to do with what we see and whom we search for among its furniture and shadows. Knowing how to linger in Scripture's room and what to do with what one sees in it is exactly what many students and preachers lack. L. Gregory Jones notes just this. He writes that the rise in arguments about various methods of reading and interpreting Scripture is, in part, due to the declining practice of actually reading it: "Even evangelicals, who have a very high view of the Bible's authority, often have a rather low competence in reading and embodying Scripture."¹⁵

Here I turn to two examples of trying to search for Christ in all the Scriptures in the task of preaching. In doing so, I also take up two of the central approaches in this cluster of traditional reading practices, reading intertextually and figurally. There is an element of experiment in this cluster of interpretative practices. That is, this kind of reading is an act of both humility and struggle, and it teaches us to trust that God is opening up the Scripture to us, and, most importantly, us to it—as Erasmus and Luther, each in their own way, both acknowledged. We are invited to read in a way that is less worried about what Scripture means exactly, so that we might be open to what Scripture does to us concretely. As our lives and our congregations are drawn into it, God uses his word to create a coherent, integrated world where his truth is clearly seen, not obscured.

In my first example I read two passages side by side, both backward and forward. The passages are Eph 2, on the resurrected life the church has in its crucified savior Jesus Christ, and Ezek 37, on the valley of dry bones. In both texts, the character of resurrected life given in Jesus Christ is described in a four-fold pattern. To read the two texts together does several things: It invites the church to see that it is the scattered bones of Israel—not some set of individualized hopes—that are given resurrected life in Christ, which has a specific shape through his cross. To read them together and preach on them together is to put our congregations in a position to be drawn into the shape of Christ's resurrected life now. We do not need to apply it across time to our congregations. God's use of Scripture to draw all things together in Christ extends beyond its historical referents. Our congregations are already in these stories.

15. L. Gregory Jones, "Embodying Scripture in the Community of Faith," in *The Art of Reading Scripture*, ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 145.

In the Ezekiel text, the Spirit of God leads Ezekiel out to a valley full of scattered dry bones. These bones have been picked clean by carrion birds and littered among the valley. Israel is unrecognizable. Ezekiel is commanded to preach and four times God breathes life into the bones through the word of his prophet. First, Ezekiel preaches to the bones and from the dust God connects the knee bone to the thigh bone and the bones come back together. Second, Ezekiel preaches to the four winds and God puts breath into the reconnected bones and the scattered bones, now resurrected, stand as a multitude. At this point God identifies these bones as “the whole house of Israel.” Only now do they speak, and what they say surprises us. We might expect repentance or thanksgiving; instead we hear a cry of lament: “Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely” (Ezek 37:11). God hears their cries and promises hope and a future: “Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel.... I will place you on your own soil” (Ezek 37:13). The fourth stage is described in the oracle that follows this passage. It is the last action prophecy in the book. At God’s command Ezekiel takes two sticks, one for the Southern Kingdom and the other for the Northern Kingdom, and God declares that when he brings them back to their land they never will be divided. David will be set over them as their shepherd. God will dwell with them and he will be their God and they will be his people.

If this all sounds familiar, it should; it echoes through the Old Testament. The resurrection of the dry bones is a recapitulation of God’s history with creation and then with Israel, including the exodus. But there is now a twist. Ezekiel speaks, not of creation out of mere dust, as in Gen 2:7, but of creation out of the nothingness of a dead people, who have died because of their disobedience. The liberation Ezekiel speaks of is not an exodus of a people trapped in slavery in Egypt, their hope cut off, but an exodus of a people trapped in slavery to their own sinfulness, hard heartedness, and divinely just condemnation. Ambrose has said that it is the prerogative of God to raise the dead (*Spir.* 3.149).¹⁶ Each act of resurrection here:

16. “It is a prerogative of God to raise the dead. For as the Father raises the dead and quickens them, so the Son also quickens whom He will. But the Spirit also (by Whom God raises) raises them, for it is written: He shall quicken also your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwells in you. But that you may not think this a trivial grace, learn that the Spirit also raises, for the prophet Ezekiel says: Come, O Spirit, and breathe upon these dead, and they shall live. And I prophesied as He commanded me,

bones, breath, land, unity, and covenant is God's act. Each is a matter of divine initiative and nothing else. Ezekiel states clearly and repeatedly the reason for God's action: "Thus says the Lord, when I do these things, then you shall know that I am the Lord. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act. When I open your graves, when I return you to the land" (Ezek 37:14).¹⁷ To read this intertextually with Eph 2 is to hear echoes of Ezek 37, or better, to be given the divine threads of truth in Christ that the word has shot through history. To read them together is to take up those threads and finger them as real. The new life God gives us in Jesus Christ, through our union with him in his own death in sinful flesh (Rom 8:3), is contained in the history of God's action with creation and Israel. Life in Jesus Christ is not something other, not some free-floating new life untethered to the story of creation and God's history with Israel. Indeed, his story is their story, and Scripture itself makes it so as it shows us how it is so.

Turning to Eph 2 we see and hear the same four-fold character of Christ's resurrected life. First, Paul declares that we were dead in our trespasses and sin. The church is Israel's dry scattered bones. Second, Israel's lament is echoed here: we are cut off, without hope. Third, it is God's act, God's merciful prerogative, which had "made us alive together with Christ." Fourth, Paul then describes the new life God gives us together in Jesus Christ. Ezekiel has described it for us already. It is life together, joined from previously separated parts, in a resurrected body. In Jesus Christ God connects the knee bone of his Son's body to the hip bone, and it becomes the place God dwells with his people, a place where the two sticks of Jew and gentile become one new humanity in Jesus Christ. The reason for this marvelous divine initiative? "So that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." This is the same purpose announced and embodied in Ezekiel. "Thus says the Lord, when I do these things,

and the Spirit of life entered into them, and they lived, and stood up on their feet an exceeding great company. And farther on God says: You shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall open your graves, that I may bring My people out of their graves, and I will give you My Spirit, and you shall live" (NPNF 2/10:156).

17. The formula of divine recognition occurs over seventy times in the Book of Ezekiel, more than in any other book of the Old Testament. See John F. Evans, *You Shall Know That I Am Yahweh: An Inner Biblical Interpretation of Ezekiel's Recognition Formula*, BBRSup 25 (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2019).

then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act” (Ezek 37:14). Divine recognition.

Here is the beginning of a sermon. As we stand with Ezekiel, among these scattered bones, and look backward to God’s history with Israel and forward to God’s history with Jesus and the church the same singular truth is apparent, which we must reckon with. All of it is God’s action, coherent, integrated, yet complexly offered across time and space. Maybe it takes a pile of dried bones resurrected into a people to preserve the primacy of God’s initiative in this human-centric world. While this story is for us, it is not about us: it is about God’s actions, the ways God gives his church to know him and the reasons for the gift of divine recognition. As the church evangelizes and forms disciples, and as it is drawn deeper into Christ’s life, that life has a distinct shape and pattern. To search for Christ in Ezekiel, then, is, in part, to unveil to the world to whom we proclaim the good news, the way their own lives are wrapped within the gracious initiative of God.

Let me take a second example to searching for Christ in all the Scriptures in the task of preaching, here exploring the homiletical possibilities of a figural reading of Scripture.¹⁸

An intertextual reading opens the reader to similarities, echoes, or thematic connections between diverse texts while respecting their distinctive integrity. A figural reading goes further and attributes these connections to a divine intentionality: A given text actually means more than one thing, and that is because God determines this multiple range of meanings. In fact, a specific text might mean or refer to other texts quite explicitly because this is what God intends that text to mean. Thus, to say that scriptural texts can have multiple referents is to say that they speak to each other back and forth across and beyond the testaments based on images, themes, patterns, and echoes, and they do so on the basis of a divine purpose. That purpose is tied to the fact that Christ Jesus, in his death and resurrection, is both the Lord and goal of creation, but also the author and content of the word written that constitutes Scripture.

In reading the story of Jesus and the rich young man (Matt 19:15–26) many readers are struck by the young man’s silence in response to Jesus’s command to sell and give his possessions to the poor (19:21–22). There are echoes of such silence elsewhere in Scripture. There is the silence of the ill-

18. See Brownlee, *Preaching Jesus Christ Today*.

clothed wedding guest a few chapters later in Matthew's Gospel (22:1–14). In that parable the king asks the lonely guest, "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?" Matthew writes that the guest "was speechless" (22:12). Repeatedly in Isaiah God describes Israel's iniquity in terms of their silence in response to his call: "Why, when I called, was there no one to answer?" (Isa 50:2b; cf. 65:12; 66:4; Jer 7:13, 27).

A figural reading of the story of the rich young ruler would take his silence as a textually deliberate opening to truths disclosed or referred to in other parts of Scripture. Hence, we can interpret the silence of the young ruler, the wedding guest, and Israel based on Scripture's internal logic: to make all things one in Christ. The preacher turns to the suffering servant, who did not open his mouth as he was led to slaughter (Isa 53:7), and to Christ, who refuses to give an answer to "even a single charge" made against him (Matt 27:13). Four times Jesus kept silent during his trial: before the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:60–62), before Pilate (Mark 15:4–5), before Herod (Luke 23:9), and before Pilate a second time (John 19:9). What is the relationship between the silence of the wedding guest and the rich young man, and the silence of Christ and the suffering servant? Here the preacher thinks figurally, remembering that Christ's silence has more than one referent. Christ's silence refers to his posture at his trial. Could it also refer to the silence of the wedding guest and young ruler? That is, could Christ's silence before Pilate embody a form of our inability or unwillingness to respond to God? Could Christ's silence carry within it our own inability or unwillingness to ask for help, mercy, forgiveness, or repentance, just as his crucified body carries within it our own bodily sins? Here the preacher is invited to see that Christ's silence before Pilate is one of the ways Christ becomes our sin (2 Cor 5:21). Christ is the original form—what was traditionally called the antitype—of our unwillingness or inability to respond to God's call. Not because Christ somehow refused God first, but because Christ was, from the beginning, the God who is willing to bear our disobedience. God did not *become* merciful; it is *who* God is and *how* God acts. Christ, in his mercy then, is the original form of Israel, among whom, as Isaiah said, when God called there was no one to answer. Christ takes on our silence, our inability to ask for mercy, for help, for forgiveness. Christ takes on our unwillingness to commend others to God and to speak out against injustice. Christ is the wedding guest, Israel, the rich young man, the church and you and me in our inability to repent, to seek mercy, to praise God, or to speak prophetically. He becomes our silence, carries it with him to his grave, and rises from the dead so that we

are not left alone in it, so that our silence can be redeemed. Hence, to follow the traditional Christian figural approach, the young ruler's silence in the form of incapacity and perhaps sin turns out to be the type of Christ's own redemptive silence.

Here is the beginning of a sermon. The goal of this kind of reading, which connects the silences of Scripture, even in the Old Testament, with Christ, is to draw one's congregation into Scripture's descriptions of silence as our own inability or unwillingness to respond to God. After this, it is to move and draw the congregation into Scripture's description of Christ's own contrasting redemptive response. In doing so the preacher draws the congregation toward Christ as the one who calls and addresses us and redeems our inability and unwillingness to respond. The preacher invites his or her community (and herself) to see their own silence (and the church's) through the lens of Christ's actions. The focus could be our participation in Christ's redemption of our silence. "Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name" (Heb 13:15). A preacher could take the sermon in different directions, depending on his or her congregation and context, but always helping the congregation to recognize what it looks like to participate in Christ's redemption of our silence, as a congregation and as individuals.

The approaches of intertextual or figural reading are not interpretive gimmicks. Seitz himself has shown, over and over again in his work, how these approaches to reading derive from the deeper reality of who Christ is and how he uses the Scriptures that linguistically present his being within the world, "the Word written," as Anglicans used to say. Reading back and forth between Old and New Testaments, between their diverse stories and referents, and searching for their connections in the figure of Christ is itself a kind of confession of who Jesus is; it is itself a kind of vision unconstrained by the limitations of worldly anxieties; it is itself an entry into the sphere of divine grace.

Asking what a sermon based on an intertextual and figural reading of Scripture might look like in the church in the twenty-first century is thus not simply a technical question, nor is it a question that will have a straightforward answer any time soon. By definition, it never could, for the question itself involves giving ourselves over in confidence to what God is doing with Scripture even in our day. And the question's answer is found only as we allow Scripture to become the lens through which we grasp the One who in Scripture draws together and orders the whole world. We

ourselves are creatures of such ordering. To open up Scripture in this way is to trust that in doing so, God will continue to open us up along with our congregations, so that we may know ourselves, the church, history, and creation, and our many worlds as places of such divine ordering.

It is this very confidence in Scripture's power to draw the church, history, and all creation into a single ordering in Jesus Christ that is witnessed to by the writing, but also the preaching of Christopher Seitz. His own work, we now gratefully recognize, is part of a long current of conviction at work in Israel and the church, one that gave rise, not simply to the fifteen stained glass windows of Founder's Chapel at Wycliffe College, but more importantly to the scriptural work of God that these windows recognize. Wycliffe and Tyndale, as well as countless other translators, many of whom died in the course of their work, struggled to turn the Bible into the languages of peoples and cultures separated by time and space from their own. Even more were these peoples, given the Scripture's words in their own tongue, separated from the forms of ancient Israelite society, from Jacob and Rachel, from Saul and his crazed self-destruction, from David and his self-delusions and repentance, or from Esther and her bravery in a harem. Nonetheless, Tyndale and his followers did labor to translate the Bible for the English, for the Mohawk, and for the Inuit. They believed that these texts were not about the past alone, nor about some obscure cultural corner of the world. These texts were the word at work in and through their enunciation and reception.

One may well wonder why the question of Christ in all the Scriptures, of reading backward and forward within the canon, is so baffling in our day, and why it has taken scholars of the acuity and courage of Seitz to remind us of this again. Having said that, it took a marvelous act of the Holy Spirit to bring Philip before an Ethiopian eunuch in the desert just to turn something obscure into a shining truth. Perhaps the Spirit—in all our debates now over texts and intertextuality, over figure and figuration, over canon and its threads and embrace, debates among scholars and preachers, peoples and churches—is doing something similar today, and with a similar blessing to come.

The Theological Roots of Modern Conservatism

R. R. Reno

Throughout the modern era, the Old Testament has been a problem. Immanuel Kant was troubled by the particularity of God's covenant with Israel. Friedrich Schleiermacher quietly edited it out, giving the New Testament alone authority for Christians. In our own time the wars and conquests depicted in the Old Testament seem shameful to many, not edifying. Its moral strictures run against today's more permissive sexual ethic. Well-meaning Christian theologians insist that a christological reading of the Old Testament is supersessionist in its logic and contributes to anti-Judaism. Modern biblical scholarship decomposes the text into earlier strands and historical contexts. In these and other ways, the narratives, legal codes, prophecies and poetry of the Old Testament become remote and inaccessible to those who are taught that it is the word of God, but no longer know how to read it as Holy Scripture.

Christopher Seitz has spent a lifetime trying to reknit the fabric of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture. His many books both theorize and perform an integrated hermeneutic, a canonical way of reading, as his great teacher and colleague, Brevard Childs, described it. Forthrightly historical in the modern sense of that word, this way of reading is theological as well, not in juxtaposition, but in partnership, even mutual implications. Seitz, more than Childs, attended to the internal, literary-historical dynamism of the Old Testament that bridged the gap between what the text says and what the churches have taught over the ages. In his words, that dynamism is found in the "extended sense-making" of the Old Testament. The paradigmatic vehicle of that extension is figure, which is to say, typology. Those people, events, laws, and proclamation about which the Old Testament speaks have a reality-creating power. They reach forward to find their further embodiment, not just in the New Testament, but in the life of the church and indeed in the life of the world.

The strange interplay of remoteness and immediacy, silence and fecundity, has always characterized the Old Testament in Christian civilization. In the early modern era, the new science relied upon a mathematical literalism that had no need for extended sense-making of any sort. The Old Testament account of our origins became an embarrassment, and the biblical vision of history was felt to be less and less tenable. By the eighteenth century, the pole of the Old Testament's remoteness and silence predominated.

This was felt as more than a theological loss. The Old Testament's historical particularity has an extraordinary density, and it creates a rooted cultural identity for those who live under its extended sense-making power. When the Old Testament cannot speak, Western culture becomes thin, cosmopolitan, and inhumanly angelic. German thinkers sought to restore fecundity to the Old Testament by inventing the notion of myth, something more powerful than mere facts. Some English theologians, called by their adversaries Hutchinsonians, went in a different direction, one more in accord with the premodern Christian tradition, and more in accord with the distinctive, culture-making potency of the Old Testament. The Hutchinsonians deserve renewed attention in our own day. They offer both resources and perhaps monitory lessons to the necessary project Seitz and others are now so helpfully pursuing.

The Hutchinsonians got their name from John Hutchinson (1674–1737), an odd, self-educated, cantankerous Yorkshireman who is known to history as an anti-Newtonian. He put forward an idiosyncratic theory of planetary motion based on a symbolic interpretation of the Hebrew of the Old Testament. It was a quixotic endeavor that seemed foredoomed to obscurity. Yet in the decades after his death Hutchinson's name came to be associated with an influential theological movement in late eighteenth-century England. The two leading Hutchinsonians, George Horne (1730–1792) and William Jones (1726–1800), were prominent in English university life and church affairs. They were influential establishment voices and participated in the religious, political, and cultural debates of the late-eighteenth century.

Some contemporary scholars have turned their attention to the Hutchinsonians. In the main, however, modern historians are ill equipped to interpret this interesting episode in English intellectual history. Today's academic culture provides little training in theology, and therefore the biblical and dogmatic preoccupations of the Hutchinsonians are hard to fathom. This is a shame, for Horne and Jones are important because they

recovered the traditional practice of figural interpretation of the Bible. They did so with a theoretical self-consciousness that accentuated the historical and linguistic character of Christian truth. For them, the authority of revelation is felt in rhetoric and narrative and requires immersion in the language of faith. This approach laid the foundations for modern conservatism's loyalties to tradition and national cultures.

The story of the Hutchinsonians has peculiar twists and turns unique to their time. But in its main outlines we can see more clearly the import of our own efforts to hear again the Bible as a living voice, efforts to which Seitz has contributed a great deal. In this story of restored figural interpretation, we can gain a margin of insight into the cultural-political implications of life under the Old Testament's extended sense-making power.

1. A Hebrew Enlightenment

John Hutchinson was born in Yorkshire to a yeoman family and trained as a land surveyor in the service of the Duke of Somerset. His natural curiosity and intellectual aptitude led to a friendship with Dr. John Woodward, a prominent gentleman scientist who amassed the collection of fossils that forms the nucleus of the Woodwardian Museum at Cambridge. Although Hutchinson eventually quarreled with Woodward over who should take credit for the fossil collection, with Woodward's encouragement the Duke of Somerset provided Hutchinson with the support that allowed him to engage in full-time research and writing.

In 1724, Hutchinson published the first part of *Moses's Principia*. In it he set about to refute the theory of gravity as presented in Newton's *Principia Mathematica*.¹ He rejects the theory of gravity as an empty abstraction. The very idea that the sun can cause the motion of the earth without

1. For an account of Hutchinson's anti-Newtonianism, see Albert J. Kuhn, "Glory or Gravity: Hutchinson vs. Newton," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22 (1961): 303–22. Recent scholarship has done a good job placing the scientific controversies of the eighteenth century in a religious context. See C. B. Wilde, "Hutchinsonianism, Natural Philosophy and Religious Controversy," *History of Science* 18 (1980): 1–24; as well as a larger study of the religious tenor of eighteenth century English debates about science, B. W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England: Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). The fullest theological and intellectual account of the Hutchinsonians is David Ney, "Scripture and Providence: The Hutchinsonian Quest to Save the Old Testament" (ThD diss., University of Toronto, 2016).

any physical intermediaries in a chain of causation struck Hutchinson as absurd (as it did many others at the time). Against Newton, he proposed a theory of planetary motion based on swirling ethereal fluids emanating from the sun. Harvey's circulatory theory of blood served as the basis for depicting the solar system as a giant circulatory system of ethereal fluids (2:517).² This countertheory served Hutchinson's larger interest, which was to vindicate the authority of the Bible, especially the Old Testament. The inspired writers of the Bible, "The Divine Penmen," have provided us with a master code for all reality. The books of Scripture convey the mysteries of natural philosophy in hidden, symbolic form. Thus the main problem with Newton's theory of gravity: it is not based in the single most reliable source of truth, the revealed word of God.

In order to make the Old Testament a source of scientific authority, Hutchinson developed a complicated theory of ancient Hebrew as the perfect language. As he puts the matter, "The *Hebrew* Language was form'd by God, and was adapted to express material Things by Words, which described the Things by the Condition each of them were in" and thus "convey'd to us the most perfect Ideas we could have of Things and Actions we could not otherwise understand" (2:29). Science cannot progress by experimentation or observation of the natural world. It requires analysis of Hebrew, which is what Hutchinson provides in *Moses's Principia*. There, he seeks to show that the first chapter of Genesis gives us the verbal clues about how the universe works. True science begins with an accurate, detailed, and scientifically warranted philology.

Hutchinson's rejection of the experimental method in favor of a privileged role for biblical revelation is at odds with the way we approach science today. But in his own day it was less scandalous. David Hume famously despaired of linking the concept of causality to our actual experience of sequential events. It was not until Kant that modern science's concept-driven, theoretical generalizations found convincing philosophical justification. Hutchinson solved the problem of the relation of concepts to experience in a different way. He urged us to "give up Metaphysics, or abstracted Notions, pretended to be form'd in the Mind without outward, or reveal'd by outward Helps" (3:8). The concepts necessary for a bold, comprehensive synthesis of human knowledge are only available by way of

2. See the end of Newton's *Principia*. Newton is also worried about the problem of action within a medium and hypothesizes a "subtle spirit" throughout the universe.

the divinely orchestrated pedagogy of Scripture, which he believed to be linked to the sacred character of the Hebrew language.

Hutchinson (and many others at that time) believed that God taught Adam the original language of Hebrew. This made it the perfect language. "As Man could come to the Knowledge of Things within his Senses," he writes, "so we suppose that God taught him by emblematical Representations to frame the Ideas of Things and Actions which were necessary for him to know." (3:76). God knows that the human mental machinery has a limited range, and the Hebrew language—God's language—provides the perfect concepts for accurate theoretical knowledge of the natural world. But this poses a problem for those living in later eras. Hutchinson was modern in the sense that he was aware that history distances us from our origins. He assumed that we have lost true knowledge of Hebrew. But there is hope. Hebrew can be subjected to rigorous philological study. He proposes to undertake exactly this mode of study in order to recover the original, universal potency of Hebrew's verbal forms.

The central role Hutchinson gives to Hebrew philology was part of a larger trend in the eighteenth century. Late Medieval and Reformation scholars had turned their attention to Hebrew. Interactions with Jewish scholars made them aware of the peculiar history of the Pentateuch, which is preserved without vowel markings as a sacred text in the Jewish tradition. The Masoretic Text, the standard Jewish version with vowels, was produced many centuries after the time of Christ. Like many Christian scholars of his day, Hutchinson assumed a gap between the older textual tradition of Hebrew without vowels and the later rabbinic versions with vowels. This gap allowed him to develop a theory of later textual corruption. The ancient rabbis, reasoned Hutchinson, had "lost the Knowledge of the Service of their Religion, and so in a great Measure of their Philosophy" (2:16). Because the rabbis lacked the correct philosophy, they did not read the Hebrew properly. They inserted incorrect vowels in the Masoretic Text. This distorts the true meaning of the Old Testament. That true meaning can only be recovered by a new science of language.

Hutchinson views himself as a pioneer of this new science: "I am the first who has dared to shew the Excellencies and Beauties of the *Hebrew Tongue*, and the Imperfections of the rest" (4:107). His heroic scholarly labors will, he promises, provide the scientific grounding for truths that have long been degraded and hidden by habits of deference and blind obedience. This is the typical posture of the Enlightenment intellectual, still very much with us.

As a consequence, it is a mistake to label Hutchinson a “traditionalist” or “anti-Enlightenment” figure. One of the most important strands of the Enlightenment sought to reestablish the authority of the inherited Christian worldview. This was especially true for the English Enlightenment for which scientific and theological topics remained thoroughly intertwined through the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth. It was widely thought that scientific, theological, political, and moral truths must constitute a comprehensive, interlocking, harmonious system. Newton, for example, wrote biblical commentaries as well as scientific treatises. Hutchinson clearly falls into this tradition. He wanted to marry evidence-driven scholarly inquiry (in his case, Hebrew philology) to a theologically defensible account of the supreme authority of the Bible.³

A great deal of the Bible, Hutchinson claims, was written according to what he calls “Hieroglyphical,” “Emblematical,” and “Typical” principles. Hutchinson ranges widely across the biblical text, adducing examples of word-use and applying them to a range of topics. In his polemics against Newton’s theory of gravity, Hutchinson reads “light,” “heaven,” and “spirit” from Gen 1:1–3 as the ethereal substances that both guide the motion of the planets and function as an emblem of the Trinity. With this interpretation, he moves to the vision of the glory of the Lord in Ezekiel (see Ezek 1:1–28):

Action of the Heavens at each Globe [are] occasioned by the Interruption of the Light, and driving in of the Spirit, which constantly attends and pushes each of those Globes, and so in Progression of each Globe about the Sun, makes a *Vortex* in each Part of each Sphere, but only where the Globe is at the Time: Besides the Earth has its rotular Motion, represented by Wheels, which are Emblems of the Power which turns the

3. See Nigel Aston, “From Personality to Party: The Creation and Transmission of Hutchinsonianism, c. 1725–1750,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 35 (2004): 626. He observes, “Like Newtonianism, Hutchinsonianism emerged in an intellectual world in which determining the relationship of the created order to scriptural accounts of the same was a task that could not be shirked by scholars; any such omission drew attention to itself and was likely to result in the loss of academic credibility rather than a reputation for originality. Familiarity with the Bible was therefore a *sine qua non* for all scientific schematisers, and it was no more untoward for Hutchinson to make the correct reading of the Hebrew language and the Pentateuch the lynchpin for his work than it was for Newton to engross himself in the prophetic books of the Old Testament and the contemplation of apocalyptic scenarios.”

Earth; and the Service of this Power, as has been shewed, was running, and so turning of Wheels as the Earth is in its present Course: Thence Wheel-Work in the Temple, as Chariots were an Emblem carrying it in progressive Motion, and so brought into the Temple. (2:518–19)

The application of key words—heavens, light, and spirit—to the memorable image from Ezekiel of the wheels turning within wheels provides Hutchinson with a scriptural confirmation of his fluid theory of planetary motion. A few pages later he turns to the book of Ecclesiastes. He reads a circular image from the first chapter as another confirmation of his view: “The wind blows to the south, and goes round to the north; and round and round goes the wind, and on its circuit the wind returns” (Eccl 1:6). The key emblematical words are present, as well as the circular motion of a cosmic fluid that he theorizes as the cause for planetary orbits.

Hutchinson does not limit his emblematical interpretations to questions of physical science. He plots the story of Elijah on Mount Horeb (1 Kgs 19:11–12) onto the history of salvation. The wind that Elijah experiences symbolizes creation. The earthquake indicates the flood. The fire is the torah, and the small voice is the gospel. In another extended application of symbolic interpretation, Hutchinson reads the laws of ritual cleanliness in the Pentateuch as signifying spiritual truths. Cleanliness of the body, he writes, is an “Emblem of the Cleanliness of the Soul,” and he provides a detailed exposition of the ways in which the image of clothing signifies a spiritual renewal, citing Isa 4:10 as warrant: “He hath clothed me with the Garments of Salvation” (3:210).

Hutchinson used his symbolic method to interpret human history as well. Idolatry, according to Hutchinson, involves taking the symbols literally. By Hutchinson’s reading, Gen 3 depicts the primal act of idolatry. Adam and Eve mistake the emblem for the thing, imagining the fruit to have the power of knowledge within itself rather than a symbol of it (3:145). With this approach, Hutchinson interprets events of his own day. Newton follows in a long line of idolatrous thinkers, Hutchinson reasons, because he thinks that the universe operates in accord with principles internal to itself, that is to say, by virtue of a power “within itself.” And why has this come to pass? In the prehistory of humanity, the original purity of Hebrew was lost. The literary device of written language, though useful, leads to a fall from linguistic purity. The conventional visual image of the letters became separated from the pronounced perfection of the words, and human beings slowly lost contact with the heavenly sounds of the original

language. “In the Length of Time they came to settle Sounds differently, compound Words, and formed different Languages” (4:55). Separated from the translucent, divine purity of Hebrew, mankind is unable to gain a true understanding of reality and falls into worshipping this or that power within the world.

If we set aside his claims to have recovered the true knowledge of Hebrew, Hutchinson’s emblematical method of reading the Bible accords with the classical Christian (and Jewish) allegorical interpretation. In a characteristic passage, Hutchinson writes:

As the Parts of the Tabernacle, and afterwards those of the Temple were to represent the Parts of, and Powers in this Machine of the Heavens, and could not do it by Motions, or real Operations in Miniature, there was no other Way but to do it emblematically; and if so, we must show what these Emblems were, what they represented, and what the End of Design of these Representations were. (2:83)

Here, Hutchinson is treating the architecture of the tabernacle and temple as a symbolic representation of the cosmos. That he imagined it possible to derive a physical theory of motion for this symbolic representation reflects his Enlightenment mentality and its impulse to formulate a universal knowledge that brings scientific theories and theological truths into a snug fit. But the interpretive move itself is figural or typological. This emblematic or figural way of reading struck many of his contemporaries as whimsical and dangerous (though, interestingly, it is vindicated by the modern historical-critical ascription of Gen 1 to “P,” the priestly, temple-oriented tradition). It was precisely this aspect of his work—not his anti-Newtonian theories or crackpot philology—that exerted the most lasting influence. The Hutchinsonians were called Hutchinsonians because they interpreted the Bible figurally.

2. Hutchinsonian Figuralism

Hutchinson was not influential in his own lifetime. Duncan Forbes (1685–1747), a Scottish lawyer and Whig politician wrote defenses of some of Hutchinson’s ideas: *A Letter to a Bishop, concerning Some Important Discoveries in Philosophy and Theology* (1732) and *Some Thoughts concerning Religion, Natural and Revealed* (1735). The Rev. Benjamin Holloway (1691–1759), who lived near Oxford, introduced some of Hutchinson’s

ideas into university circles. Julius Bate (1710–1771) was a close disciple of Hutchinson, and he joined forces with Robert Spearman (1703–1761) to gather and publish Hutchinson's collected works in 1748. The collected works stimulated the publication of some pamphlets denouncing the Hutchinsonian system. Those denunciations focused on the arbitrary nature of Hutchinson's symbolic interpretations, not his anti-Newton polemics. It was the debate about figural interpretation that attracted the attention of two young Oxford undergraduates, Horne and Jones. In the 1750s they read Hutchinson. Smitten by the possibilities of emblematical interpretation, they accepted and defended the epithet "Hutchinsonian."

Recent scholarship has reconstructed the linkages of friendship, college affiliation, and ecclesiastical patronage that contributed to the fascinating ebb and flow of Hutchinson's influence at Oxford. But historians tend to be baffled by a singular fact: Horne and Jones jettisoned nearly all the distinctive ideas and theories developed by Hutchinson. As Nigel Aston observes: "In the next generation of Hutchinsonians, there was an attempt to repackage the master's message, to incorporate it within a wider range of orthodox theological references, and to moderate and, from preference, omit the anti-Newtonian rhetoric altogether."⁴ The same holds for Hutchinson's claims about ancient Hebrew. As comparative philology advanced in the later decades of the eighteenth century, Jones and Horne abandoned Hutchinson's theories about ancient Hebrew as untenable.⁵ Yet at the end of his life, when he wrote a memorial for his close friend Horne, Jones insisted on the central influence of Hutchinson.

The solution to this mystery is simple: Horne and Jones were Hutchinsonians in a very specific sense. Like Hutchinson, they defended the supreme authority of the Bible. In the eighteenth century, two developments challenged this traditional view. The natural sciences were gaining cultural authority keyed to experimental data rather than scriptural truths. As Hutchinson sensed, scientific projects operating independently of theological analysis and biblical interpretation end up as rivals to the traditional authority of Christianity. The second development came from within eighteenth-century Anglicanism. For complex reasons, classical

4. Aston, "From Personality to Party," 641.

5. See Derya Gurses, "The Hutchinsonian Defence of an Old Testament Trinitarian Christianity: The Controversy over Elahim, 1735–1773," *History of European Ideas* 29 (2003): 408, who reports, "By 1780s, Hebraic studies ceased to be the main tool for the Hutchinsonian defense of the Trinity."

Christian doctrines no longer compelled universal assent. Powerful figures within the ecclesiastical and political establishments began to call for a relaxation of creedal affirmations of the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity. Again, Hutchinson seems to have had put his finger on the problem. Without an emblematic method of biblical interpretation—especially figural interpretation of the Old Testament—the fabric of Christian doctrine is easily torn.

Hutchinson met the challenge of natural science by proposing a Bible-based counterscience not unlike forms of creationism in our own time. The Hutchinsonians did not pursue this approach. By the 1750s, the Newtonian system was triumphant, and a strictly biblical science was not plausible. This led the Hutchinsonians to develop a strategy different from Hutchinson's own. It conceded the possibility of independent scientific practice, but carefully limited science's cultural significance. In *A Fair, Candid, and Impartial Case between Sir Isaac Newton and Mr. Hutchinson* (1753), the young Horne affirmed the particular genius of Newton's theory of planetary motion. But Horne drew a distinction between physics and mathematics.⁶ By this way of thinking, physics is the science of the powers and properties of reality, while mathematics sets out its proportions and regularities. He gives the example of a clock. A mathematical account will provide a precise theory of *how* the gears move, but this is not the same as an ultimate explanation of *why* it moves.

This distinction allowed Horne to parse Newton and Hutchinson. Newton's highly mathematical theory gives a powerful account of *how* the planets move, while Hutchinson's theologically saturated speculations point toward the ultimate explanation of *why*. Horne has little to say about Hutchinson's theories, and he leaves the *why* question largely unanswered. Almost all his attention is directed toward defining Newton's scientific authority narrowly. Horne characterizes Newton's achievement: "The LAWS then, not the CAUSES of motion and gravity, are what he *discovered*."⁷ The new science of the modern era can explain the laws of nature. Yet, as Horne's distinction implies, this new science cannot convey the deep sources and ultimate purposes of nature. As Horne reiterated decades later in a broad criticism of the tendency of scientific and syllogistic methods to claim universal authority, "Mathematical analogies

6. George Horne, *A Fair, Candid, and Impartial Case between Sir Isaac Newton and Mr. Hutchinson* (Oxford: Parker, 1753), 8.

7. Horne, *Fair, Candid, and Impartial Case*, 39–40.

are not transferable to morality, theology, politics.”⁸ Therefore, we should regard modern scientific theories as subordinate truths, while affirming the larger, overarching truth of classical Christian claims about God, creation, and the purposes of life.

The Hutchinsonians took the same approach to the emerging science of comparative philology. In his “Preface to the Second Edition of Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Horne, 1799,” William Jones offers a summary of Hutchinsonian principles. They include the affirmation “that Hebrew is the primeval and original language; that its structure is divine; and that a comparison with other languages shows its priority.”⁹ Yet Hutchinson’s intense preoccupation with Hebrew philology has no real role to play in their work. Jones reports that Horne saw the limited value of the “endless chase of verbal criticism.” A reader of Horne (and Jones as well) cannot help but be struck by the contrast with Hutchinson. Neither author gives much attention to Hebrew.

No doubt this lack of emphasis stemmed at least in part from a sound rhetorical and practical judgment. Both wished to influence popular opinion, and close analysis of an ancient language few recognize or understand hardly advances their cause. It seems, however, that there was more than prudence involved in the Horne’s withdrawal from philological controversy. Just as Hutchinson’s attempt to provide a counterscience failed to forestall the advance of Newtonian cosmology, so also his elaborate philological scheme crumbled in the face of developments in modern philology. Benjamin Kennicott pioneered comparative study of ancient manuscripts and explained obscure Hebrew roots by looking at cognates in other Semitic language such as Arabic. This exploded Hutchinson’s philological speculations.

Biblical philology was a controversial topic in the eighteenth century. Broadides were written against Kennicott. Horne intervened with pamphlets of his own. But he did not question Kennicott’s scholarly competence. Instead, Horne drew attention to the larger theological and sociological context of the debates. In England, the Authorized Version intermingled scholarly, religious, and secular authority. Kennicott

8. George Horne, *A Charge, Intended to Have Been Delivered to the Clergy of Norwich*, 2nd ed. (London: Robinson, 1792), 11.

9. William Jones, “Preface to the Second Edition of Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Horne, 1799,” in *The Works of the Late Right Reverend George Horne*, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (London: Longman, Rees, 1831), 1:x.

proposed to correct the received Hebrew text, and therefore to provide a more reliable basis for new English translations. Horne recognized (as did the translators who produced the Authorized Version during the Caroline era) that theological and political parties invariably seek to twist the scholarly task of translation to serve their own theological interests. As Jones recalls in his "Memoir," Horne was of the opinion (which Jones clearly shared) that the forces behind Kennicott's enterprise were persons "with an ill intention," and "such persons, being not well affected to the church of England or its doctrines, would probably interfere with all their heart and interest, to turn the design to their own purposes."¹⁰

The decision of Horne and Jones not to question the scholarly legitimacy of Kennicott's expertise turned out to be as important for the future influence of Hutchinsonianism as their accommodation of Newtonian science. The cultural authority of the university eventually swung strongly behind the comparative methods pioneered by Kennicott. With the distinction between technical, scientific knowledge and a larger view of the subject matter, however, Horne and Jones could concede a narrow authority to Kennicott's methods while denying the new philology's authority to shape and determine ecclesiastical policy and theological orthodoxy.

Once you get rid of the anti-Newtonian polemics and its quirky Hebrew philology, all that is left of *Moses's Principia* is Hutchinson's emblematical approach to biblical exegesis. This is exactly what Horne and Jones emphasized. Figural interpretation made the Hutchinsonians Hutchinsonian. It is also what made them extraordinarily effective defenders of the ecclesiastical, cultural, and political status quo in England.

The typological or figurative mode of biblical interpretation provided them with a historical mode of synthetic reasoning. "The nature of man," Horne writes, "can be known only from the history of man, of which the heathens preserved a tradition, but the original is in the Bible."¹¹ Jones's *Lectures on the Figurative Language of the Holy Scriptures* outlines this approach. "There is a certain obscurity in the language of the Bible," writes Jones.¹² In a direct break with Hutchinson, Jones asserts, "This obscurity then in the word of God doth not arise from the language or the

10. William Jones, "Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Dr. Horne," in *Works*, 1:lxiv.

11. Horne, *Charge*, 12.

12. William Jones, *Lectures on the Figurative Language of the Holy Scripture, and the Interpretation of It from the Scripture Itself*, 2nd ed. (London: Hamilton, 1808), 3.

grammar.”¹³ Instead, the difficulties come from the fact that the Old Testament is tensed with a divinely encoded anticipation of Christ, and “the nature of man doth not know these things till God reveals them.”¹⁴ Reading Scripture does not require a specialist’s knowledge of Hebrew roots. What we need is an intimate knowledge of the “language of revelation.”¹⁵ A mind immersed in the churchly language of faith possesses the most profound resources for reading the Bible.

This conviction is theological, but it anticipates the historicism of the nineteenth century. Of its nature, the figural method works within the cultural and linguistic domain of human experience. It finds figures—patterns of significance—that form a vast, complex web of meaning. Neither Horne nor Jones would have used or perhaps even recognized later formulations, but we can see a Hegelian insight developing in their work. Sound judgment and a deep view of reality comes from historical, linguistic, and culturally informed reasoning rather than the Enlightenment’s deracinated methods. Loyalty to an authoritative tradition illumines our darkened minds, not a universal standpoint or view from nowhere. In different terms: truth is rhetorical, not syllogistic. The proper leaders of church and society are good readers, not scientists. They are men saturated by their culture, warm with loyalty to its figures, not invested in cold analysis.

A linguistic or rhetorical turn characterizes the Hutchinsonians. In his *Lectures*, Jones gathers together different spheres of life. The body of the first man “is a pattern and shadow of his spiritual life.”¹⁶ He illuminates the natural symbols in the Bible that represent the “social, civil, or political life, as a citizen, subject, and member of society,” showing how animals in the Bible suggest moral virtues and vices, plants symbolize intellectual and moral development, and even minerals point toward the historical triumph of Christianity over pagan Rome.¹⁷ His goal is to synthesize a complete picture of reality, and this synthesis follows the emblematic manner of Scripture. The implicit argument is multilayered but simple. Orthodox Christianity and traditional forms of social authority properly

13. Jones, *Lectures*, 4.

14. Jones, *Lectures*, 6.

15. Jones, *Lectures*, 7.

16. Jones, *Lectures*, 48.

17. Jones, *Lectures*, 48.

govern our lives because they constellate into compelling linguistic and historical patterns.

The "Preface" to Horne's *Commentary on the Book of Psalms* offers another example of figural and narrative argument. Horne reminds his readers that God uses history, and christological interpretations of the Psalms presuppose "that the Psalms are written upon a divine, preconcerted, prophetic plan."¹⁸ Horne read the Psalms within "the great scheme of redemption," one orchestrated by "the great Disposer of events."¹⁹ Discerning this plan does not require a specialized, philological competence. As Horne points out, "the primitive fathers" of the church were not experts in Hebrew.²⁰ They were, however, immersed in the larger patterns of Scripture. And they applied those figural patterns to nature, history, and the spiritual life. The church fathers speak with authority because they speak from within the divinely saturated narrative depicted in the Bible.

3. Modern Conservatism

The final decades of the eighteenth century in England present a puzzle. At the forefront of Enlightenment innovation in science, politics, and manners, Voltaire and other continental *philosophes* looked to England as the most progressive nation in Europe. Decisive social change seemed immanent in the 1750s. A furor over the Jew Bill of 1753 reflected a deep and fundamental contest over the role of religious authority in national life. High-ranking church officials floated the possibility of eliminating doctrinal requirements and suggested the need for revising forms of prayer and worship. When the Hutchinsonians emerged as youthful defenders of orthodoxy in the 1750s, they saw themselves as a remnant standing against the gathering forces of infidelity. Yet the changes were delayed. The Catholic Relief Act came in 1829; Jewish emancipation in 1845. Some changes did not come to pass. Anglicanism never tackled the question of doctrinal standards, at least not directly, but instead argued endlessly about the authority of creeds in ecclesiastical trials that continue to this day. In short, as the Hutchinsonians rose to prominence, the wheels of history seemed to slow. Old cultural forms—monarchy, gentry,

18. George Horne, *A Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (New York: Carter & Bros., 1849), 17.

19. Horne, *Book of Psalms*, 23.

20. Horne, *Book of Psalms*, 17.

and the established church—retained a large measure of cultural authority throughout Jones and Horne's lifetimes, and beyond, a far larger measure than many imagined possible in the mid-eighteenth century.²¹

This swing of the pendulum away from the full realization of the Enlightenment project, which had seemed foredoomed, stalled because the second half of the eighteenth century saw the emergence of new voices and new methods of argument. The Hutchinsonians led the way. Viewed at a distance, they had a fairly conventional, establishment view of the authority of Scripture and the prerogatives of the church. That is a superficial take on their role, however. Horne, Jones, and their loosely organized party of theological orthodoxy developed new arguments and rhetorical strategies that added up to a distinctively modern response to Enlightenment rationalism. This was especially true of the figural or emblematical method.

The Hutchinsonians presumed that the literal sense of the Bible contains rich layers of meaning—the “extended sense-making” Seitz identifies. This struck the majority of mid-eighteenth century thinkers as dangerous and at odds with Enlightenment commitments to universal reason and objective rational procedures.²² Their critics were right. Hutchinsonian figuralism runs against Enlightenment ideals. It seeks a very different kind of knowledge, one that arises out of a complex web of cultural and literary associations. Figural patterns and links must be recognized rather than deduced. Therefore, the success of the method depends upon the cultural and literary competence of the interpreter. Authority flows from cultural virtuosity rather than scientific expertise. The truths that matter are living truths; they arise from within a community of interpretation.

The Hutchinsonians never stepped outside the cultural and religious frame of Christianity. Their goal was to reestablish the authority of Anglican orthodoxy in English society. But their figural methods had wider implications. The Hutchinsonians outlined a way of thinking about authority that focuses on a richly elaborated cultural identity, and they illuminated

21. J. G. A. Pocock advanced the thesis that the English Enlightenment did not so much fail as take on a more conservative and moderate form. As Cadoc D. A. Leighton points out, however, this interpretive approach makes it difficult to account for the fact that figures such as Horne and Jones felt that inherited religious, social, and political institutions were under assault (Leighton, “Hutchinsonianism: A Counter-Enlightenment Reform Movement,” *JRH* 23 [1999]: 175).

22. See Leighton, “Hutchinsonianism,” 178.

the fact that this cultural identity cannot be renewed and deepened by the cold, rationalistic methods that gained favor during the Enlightenment.

As the eighteenth century drew to a close, the cold, rationalistic methods exploded into the French Revolution. An adversarial posture emerged to resist this transformative political and cultural project in England, just as a generation earlier the Hutchinsonians formulated powerful counters to Enlightenment transformations of Christian orthodoxy. At this juncture, however, the Hutchinsonian project lost its distinctively theological framework and expanded into a full-blown cultural sentiment. A conservative romanticism emerged in the nineteenth century. It nourished a renewed interest in tradition and national identity. This conservatism had many sources, but it is at least in part a legacy of Horne and Jones's transformation of the eccentric theo-philology of Hutchinson into a broad, figural interpretation of reality.

Michael Oakeshott often observed that conservatism is a habit of mind, not a political creed. It does not resist the changes history brings, but rather seeks to humanize them by weaving back into what has come before. This is what figuralism does, which is why one can rightly say that modern conservatism, at its best, has a distinctively Old Testament cast. It generalizes biblical figuralism, investing the particularity of our cultural inheritance with the same extended sense-making power that Seitz ascribes to the sacred history of the people of Israel. Martin Luther King Jr. practiced this political figuralism in ways not unlike what we find in the Hutchinsonians, however different his purposes were from theirs. This figuralism of public life is worthy of our imitation. It opens up the future as the past deepened rather than superseded. It allows us to enter into what is to come with the spirit of coming home.

Theology, Reality, and Israel's God: A Reflection on the Calling of a Biblical Theologian

W. Ross Blackburn

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

—Prov 3:5–6

Since these essays are written to honor Christopher Seitz, let me begin with a vignette. As a young Episcopal clergyman thinking about further education, while I knew little about PhD work, I knew enough to know that not all biblical scholarship served the church well, and therefore was concerned to find a supervisor whose scholarship sought to do so. During that time, I came across an essay Professor Seitz wrote concerning God's particular identity as Israel's God, and the effect God's identity had on what we might call him—then a matter of vigorous discussion and contention in the Episcopal church. Unwilling to detach God from the revelation of the Old Testament and New, in two lines he cut through the fog of our modern tendency to speak of God theoretically, in what one might call an academic manner of meddling: "What is at stake in modern debates is not whether God is father or can be addressed as 'he.' *Rather, what it is at stake is whether we are entitled to call God anything at all.*"¹ At that point I decided that I had much to learn from him, and I am thankful he took me on.

Seitz's concern for theology, particularly theological reading of the Scriptures, has marked his work and teaching, which brings me to this essay, suggested by an early working title of this collection, *The Identity of*

1. Christopher R. Seitz, *Word without End: The Old Testament as Abiding Theological Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 252 (emphasis original).

Israel's God: Theology, Reality, and the Scope of the Christian Bible. The title raised several questions: What is the relationship between theology and reality, what does that relationship have to do with the identity of Israel's God, and what does all this have to do with the Bible, particularly in regard to the discipline we call biblical studies? While I do not presume that Professor Seitz would agree with the following reflections, I am certain that these questions are near to the heart of his scholarly concerns.

The relationship between theology, understood for this essay as the study of God, and reality, understood as things as they truly are and which can therefore be relied upon, goes back as far as the garden of Eden. In effect, the serpent sought to pit reality against theology by suggesting to Eve that what God had revealed of himself—his power and generosity demonstrated in the abundant life of Eden—was not in the end real. According to the serpent, Adam and Eve were deceived, for God was untrustworthy, a miser intent to keep them from their best life, which would be found in eating the fruit, and apart from God and his commandments. The serpent's claim was simple—what Adam and Eve believed about God wasn't true. He claimed that their theology was at odds with reality.

The apparent tension between theology and reality pervades the Scriptures and is found on practically every page. Gideon's challenge is theological—to believe God's word that he would be with Gideon to defeat the Midianites, despite an unrealistically small army of three hundred men. Hezekiah, under threat of destruction by Assyria, is confronted with the Rabshakeh's claim about reality—"Have the gods of the nations delivered them, the nations that my fathers destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar?" (2 Kgs 19:12)—forcing him to lean upon his theology and pray to the God he knew.² Elisha's servant needed to have a vision of the reality—the horses and chariots of the Lord's army—that lay behind what he could see. Even Jesus was confronted with the tension between theology and reality. Peter's claim concerning the cross—"this will never happen to you"—was in effect a claim about reality, a tempting claim that Jesus would not have to endure suffering and death. Nevertheless, Jesus knew God, and the work God had given him to do. His response—"Get thee behind me Satan!"—suggests that the tactics of the ancient serpent have not changed much. He still pits theology against reality.

2. Biblical quotations are from the English Standard Version.

To one degree or another, this tension between theology and reality pervades all of life, and no less so (and perhaps to a greater extent at times) in the arena of biblical studies, and more particularly, biblical theology.³ A good example is found in the work of John Collins, who asked the question “Is a Critical Biblical Theology Possible?” in an essay by the same title.⁴ In a sentence that directly answers his question, Collins writes: “Historical criticism, consistently understood, is not compatible with a confessional theology that is committed to specific doctrines on the basis of faith. It is, however, quite compatible with theology, understood as an open-ended and critical inquiry into the meaning and function of God language.”⁵

In order to make the claim that historical criticism and theology are somehow compatible, Collins carefully defines theology as “the meaning and function of God-language.” God-language, of course, may or may not have anything to do with God as he is, just as talking about Winston Churchill may or may not faithfully reflect the wartime prime minister. It does, however, have much to do with the religious conceptions of those who speak of God. What Collins has done is move the conversation from theology to religious studies. Concerning theology classically understood—which has everything to do with commitment, doctrine, and faith—Collins is clear that there is no compatibility with historical criticism.

On one level, Collins’s contention that historical criticism and theology are incompatible is consistent with the general and long-standing commitment that historical criticism (broadly understood) be an autonomous discipline free from the influence of church and tradition. But Collins’s concern reaches beyond a desire for independent inquiry. For Collins, theology conflicts with reality. Having rightly acknowledged that

3. The character of biblical theology, and even its validity as a legitimate theological endeavor, has been widely contested, and much has been published. For a skeptical yet thorough treatment of biblical theology as a theological discipline, see James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999). For a collection of essays of those working in the field of biblical theology, see Scott J. Hafemann, ed., *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

4. John J. Collins, *Encounters with Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 11–23. This essay was originally published as “Is a Critical Biblical Theology Possible?” in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters*, ed. William H. Propp, Baruch Halpern, and David Noel Freedman, BJSUCSD 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 1–18.

5. Collins, *Encounters*, 22.

“the modern theologian ... is heir to more than one tradition,” Collins explains: “We are shaped by the rational humanism that underlies our technological culture and political institutions, no less than by the Bible (usually far more so). It is possible to have critical dialogue between our modern world view and the Bible, but we cannot simply abandon the modern context for the ancient world.”⁶

Note how Collins sets the terms for any potential dialogue. When he refers to the “modern context,” he is not principally concerned with a period of time but with a viewpoint controlled by rational humanism. So, while Collins acknowledges that both rational humanism and the biblical worldview often simultaneously influence the interpreter of the Bible, he insists that the biblical worldview must give way—after all, he does not similarly insist that we cannot simply abandon the ancient world for the modern context. Collins’s contention is clear—biblical theology must conform to reality, the world as (we now know) it really is.

The problem for Collins is that his view of reality—one controlled by rational humanism—is likewise beholden to a dogmatic framework with specific doctrines. Whatever differing understandings of rational humanism may exist, it is clearly a framework of thought that rules out God as either nonexistent or irrelevant. In other words, by definition rational humanism is atheological or antitheological. Furthermore, while Collins might not see his commitment to rational humanism as a theological position, it is certainly a metaphysical one and one as faith-based as any theological claim. It is difficult to see how Collins’s claim that “critical method is incompatible with confessional faith insofar as the latter requires us to accept conclusions on dogmatic grounds” applies to a Catholic or Baptist theologian more than to a rational humanist, who likewise must accept conclusions that are consistent with his humanistic faith.⁷ Jon Levenson insightfully challenged Collins on similar lines, observing that modern historical criticism is likewise a tradition. Collins’s response, that all traditions are not alike and that historical (i.e., rationalistic) criticism is free from an a priori acceptance of certain conclusions, fails to appreciate the weight of Levenson’s challenge, and is essentially a restatement of the original point to which Levenson object-

6. Collins, *Encounters*, 17. In revising the essay for republication in 2003, Collins substitutes “twentieth century” with “modern context,” presumably because the essay was republished in the twenty-first century.

7. Collins, *Encounters*, 17.

ed.⁸ One can appreciate Collins's concern not to be controlled by prior commitments, but he has not demonstrated how he is free from them.

Curiously, in his critique of Collins, Levenson himself implies that there is a neutral place from which to approach the Scriptures. In commending the willingness of historical critics to interpret the Bible in a manner that conflicts with their personal beliefs, Levenson writes:

Historical critics rightly insist that the tribunal before which interpretations are argued cannot be confessional or dogmatic: the arguments offered must be historically valid, able, that is, to compel the assent of historians, whatever their religion or lack thereof, whatever their backgrounds, spiritual experiences, or personal beliefs, and without privileging any claim of revelation.⁹

Levenson's call for historians to be self-critical and not ideologically driven is appropriate and important, for it is easy to be so driven by our own understandings of the world (formed by our backgrounds, spiritual experiences, and personal beliefs) that we fail to see or acknowledge those things that would challenge them. However, to suggest that historians can operate apart from their backgrounds, experiences, or beliefs presumes that there is a neutral place from which to see the world objectively and fails to acknowledge how one's beliefs influence what one will accept as history. The problem, of course, is not limited to religious or biblical history but to any kind of history. One need only to tune into two politically diverse news networks to see how one's background, experience, and personal beliefs affect the story a historian decides to tell.

Examples of how theological questions influence the historian's task are easy to come by. For example, assigning dates to biblical texts often includes, at least in part, theological questions, such as the dating of the gospels in relation to the destruction of the temple or discerning how many prophets contributed to the book of Isaiah. But some questions become more fundamental. Consider, for example, Peter's claim that Jesus was raised from the dead (Acts 2:24, 32). In claiming that God raised Jesus from the dead, Peter makes a historical claim that is thoroughly theological, because it has everything to do with God. It is not enough to turn

8. Collins, *Encounters*, 3.

9. Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 109.

Peter's claim into a religious studies question by observing that Peter (or the disciples, or the early church) believed that God raised Jesus from the dead. While undoubtedly true, to leave the matter there fails to take Peter's claim seriously as a historical claim, and therefore as a theological claim. In the end, the historian, whatever his theological sensibilities or lack thereof, may investigate Peter's claim in a number of different ways, but he cannot help but adjudicate Peter's claim in light of his own background, experiences, and beliefs, even if he allows that claim to challenge his background and beliefs. A historian will not believe something happened unless he or she believes that it *can* happen.¹⁰ It is therefore unlikely that a historian will make a historical claim, even a claim that involves God, that conflicts with his understanding of reality.

The tension between theology and reality is not limited to historical questions but extends to moral questions as well. In other words, for some there is a tension not just between theology and how things are, but between theology and how things should be. This type of concern can be readily seen in some liberation or feminist theologies that interpret the Bible with a particular notion of how things *ought* to be. For instance, Kathleen M. O'Connor, who comes to the biblical text principally concerned with sexism, is very much concerned with reality: "Sexism is a way of thinking and acting, as well as a set of social and economic arrangements, that benefit one sex and harm the other. Because we are all embedded in the way things are—that is, our worldviews seem like absolute truths rather than socially formed ideas—most people accepted the way things were before the women's movement brought them to light."¹¹ O'Connor is describing a conflict between visions of reality, between the sexist thinking and structures once thought to reflect reality (now exposed as socially formed ideas), and reality as it ought to be. As she writes later, feminism "called us to conversion, to spiritual transformation, by shaking up what we thought to be true."¹²

10. For an insightful discussion on the historical import concerning testimony of unique or unlikely events, see Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 472–508.

11. Kathleen M. O'Connor, "The Feminist Movement Meets the Old Testament: One Woman's Perspective," in *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World: An Introduction to Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Honor of Katharine Doob Sakenfeld*, ed. Linda Day and Carol Pressler (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 7.

12. O'Connor, "Feminist Movement," 8.

O'Connor describes how this applies to biblical interpretation: reading the Bible with a feminist consciousness means reading it with "an awareness of women's subordination as unnatural, wrong, and largely determined by society rather than written into our bodies by biology alone."¹³ Now, of course, the statement begs many questions, such as what is meant by women's subordination (to whom? in what respects?), or what, if any, are the social implications of our biology? But note what is happening: theology is now judged by a certain conception of reality, in this case reality as its practitioner believes it should be. For O'Connor, the task of feminist hermeneutics of the Old Testament, then, is "both to discover meaning in texts and to create meaning from texts for the benefit of women."¹⁴ To do so, she argues, requires repudiating the patriarchal character of Israel in the Old Testament, with its attendant sexist language and perspective, and seeking either to discard such texts or to interpret them in other ways: "Because a text is patriarchal, sexist, and androcentric does not mean that it cannot also be a word of God for us when studied from other angles."¹⁵

Can the theological essence of a text be extracted from the particulars of that same text? In this case, can the Bible's understanding of the relationship between men and women be extracted from the general patriarchal character of the Bible's testimony? For instance, is the husband's or father's prerogative to annul a vow made by his wife or his daughter (Num 30) a reflection of ancient Israelite sexism, or does it somehow reflect how God ordered relationships within the home? To ask it differently, is the husband's prerogative a license to oppress his wife or a call to protect her? I realize the suggestion that the text might benefit women will raise objections (at least among some, but not all, women), such as that the text demeans women by suggesting they are not as capable as men or that the text is simply an effort to legitimize the interests of men in controlling women. Nevertheless, the question raises the difficulty of discerning whether or not a text actually benefits women, the answer to which depends in large part upon one's vision of the way things ought to be. This is not to deny either O'Connor's contention that some texts need to be read with greater subtlety and critical awareness or her warning against reducing texts to ideology. Nevertheless, O'Connor comes to the

13. O'Connor, "Feminist Movement," 11.

14. O'Connor, "Feminist Movement," 15.

15. O'Connor, "Feminist Movement," 21.

text with a vision of reality to which the Old Testament must conform if it is to speak a theological word (particularly to women but presumably to all).

To cite Collins or O'Connor as examples of insisting the Scriptures conform to one's understanding of reality in order to speak theologically is not meant to belittle the difficulty of the problem, or somehow to suggest that others, including myself, are not subject to letting our understanding of reality control how we read the Bible. It can be very difficult to read the Bible, or anything for that matter, apart from the lenses of rational humanism that are subtly and increasingly pervasive in Western culture. There are very real abuses of women on the part of men, some of which have been justified by an appeal to the Scriptures, and there are verses in the Bible wherein the benefit to women is admittedly difficult to discern. In the end, there is no such thing as reading the Bible apart from some understanding of reality, or apart from certain metaphysical commitments, whether or not they can be neatly classified as atheist or Christian or whatever. Further, these metaphysical commitments are not simply commitments arrived at by an objective and impartial search for truth but are often products of our backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences; and, perhaps most of all, our desires.

Aldous Huxley, himself a humanist, made a quite insightful (and oft-quoted) comment concerning epistemology. Reflecting on the question of meaning in the universe, he writes:

Like so many of my contemporaries, I took it for granted that there was no meaning. This was partly due to the fact that I shared the common belief that the scientific picture of an abstraction from reality was a true picture of reality as a whole; partly also to other, non-intellectual reasons. I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; consequently assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption.... Most ignorance is vincible ignorance. We don't know because we don't want to know.¹⁶

Huxley's point is simple—our heads often follow our hearts, and what we believe we know often reflects not how things are but how we wish things would be. This is essentially Paul's argument in Romans 1—unrighteous-

16. Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means: An Inquiry into the Nature of Ideals* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 312.

ness leads to the suppression of truth, the futility of our thinking due to the prior refusal to acknowledge God as God and be thankful (Rom 1:18–23). For both Huxley and Paul, our thinking is controlled not by an impartial search for truth, but rather by our desires, and therefore we are prone to believe what we want to believe, and to disbelieve what we would rather not acknowledge.

No one is immune from the temptation to hesitate in following truth where it leads. A particularly poignant example can be found in the realm of the natural sciences, a discipline that has (whether deserved or not) the reputation of impartially seeking the truth. No one will deny the brilliance of Albert Einstein and yet even Einstein hesitated to follow the truth where it led, adding what he called a cosmological constant into his equation of relativity because he believed that the universe must be static and not expanding. In other words, because his theory challenged his vision of reality, he altered his theory, making what he later admitted was his greatest mistake as a scientist.

If real in the natural sciences, this temptation can be particularly strong in the realm of theology, for theology makes personal claims in a way science does not. Consider, for example, the command, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” It is generally acceptable to speak of how adultery was understood in the mind of the Old Testament writers and even acceptable to say that they believed adultery to be wrong. As a religious studies matter, such claims raise little difficulty, because they only purport to describe what Israel (or some within Israel) believed. But to claim that adultery is universally wrong is to move into theology, and therefore into normative judgments concerning the nature and character of sexual relationships. Religious studies seeks to learn *about* the Bible; theology seeks to learn *from* it. Theology speaks of sin and righteousness, and makes judgments concerning what is beautiful and what is ugly, what is just and unjust. In so doing, theology presumes to tell me who I am and who I should be. In short, theology presumes to speak to what is real—both reality as it is and reality as it should be. This is why theology used to be considered “the queen of the sciences,” a designation that seems archaic and largely naive today in a world that has accorded modern science the status of knowledge, while consigning religion to belief and values. But it is not difficult to see why theology was once so honored. If theology speaks truly about God, then it therefore speaks truly about everything else, including the natural sciences, mathematics, the arts, and ethics. With characteristic eloquence, C. S. Lewis wrote: “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the

sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”¹⁷ For Lewis, who believed Christianity revealed God truly, theology was not just about God, but about understanding the world. Theology illuminated reality.

So understood, theology is a calling to see things as they are, based upon understanding who God is. This is why the Scriptures, Old Testament and New, speak stern judgment to false prophets, because bearing a false word about God and the world can never lead to flourishing, only to death. This is evident in other realms of life. A father, for instance, takes care to teach his toddler daughter about reality, and particularly things that can hurt her, like falls from high places, electrical sockets, the fireplace, or the medicine cabinet. As she gets older, he will speak to her about different matters, but he does so for the same reason—there is so much at stake. Her failure to understand things as they really are will, in the end, lead to her harm. It is precisely this kind of concern that lies behind James’s warning that not many should become professional theologians, for “we who teach will be judged with greater strictness” (Jas 3:1). There is much at stake.

One way of speaking about the theological task, then, is to heal the apparent rift between theology and reality. Such an understanding does not imply that theology is the answer for all questions (I would not call a theologian to fix an engine or build a road), nor that we cannot find truth apart from the Scriptures (if the heavens declare the glory of God, then I have much to learn from the natural world, and the sciences that explore it). Neither does it imply a confident assurance that the theologian is above correction. A true theologian has the humility to realize that there is much we do not understand and that one is never entirely free from the temptation to understand the world, and the Bible, according to our own lights and desires.

But acknowledging human fallibility does not preclude theology from providing a reliable framework, or lens, through which to see the world. For example, is my neighbor the image of God, or another animal who exists by virtue of an undirected material process and therefore of no more intrinsic value than a squirrel? The question is a theological question, and the answer to it informs my understanding of reality. That understanding of reality has very practical implications, in this case informing how I treat

17. C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (New York: Collier, 1956), 92. Here Lewis uses the terms *Christianity* and “theology” interchangeably.

my neighbors, and my sense of obligation to them. If they are the image of God, I treat them one way; if animals, I treat them another. Although a theological question, it is not however a theoretical question. One only has to look at the efforts to dehumanize that always accompany genocide. In Nazi Germany, the Jews were called "swine"; in Rwanda the Tutsis were called "cockroaches"; in the United States the unborn are called "fetuses." It is always easier to kill that which is not human. Other questions of significant practical import could be asked. Is the fundamental distinction between male and female given by God, or is gender a social construction? Is death final?

The question these reflections beg, of course, is whether or not the Bible bears faithful witness to reality, for there will never be any agreement concerning the Bible's value for theology apart from some common understanding of what it actually is. For Collins, "the biblical texts must also be recognized as proposals about metaphysical truth, as attempts to explain the workings of reality."¹⁸ His characterization of the Bible as offering "proposals" and "attempts" suggests that he sees little value in the Bible as a reliable witness to reality, which is unsurprising given his earlier assertion that the biblical worldview must yield to that of rational humanism. Yet Collins has left himself with no place to turn. By what criteria does he judge the value of these proposals and attempts? What of other proposals and attempts? He admits, "the problem is that we lack any acceptable yardstick by which to assess metaphysical truth."¹⁹ In the end, we are left to figure it all out for ourselves. What may superficially appear to be freedom turns out to be a council of despair.

While a belief that the Bible is the word of God may be dismissed as simple-minded fundamentalism, it does offer a yardstick or a foundation from which theology may proceed. This does not mean that there are not real interpretive issues that must be addressed, issues that will provoke disagreement and debate. Even characterizing the Bible as the word of God raises a whole host of questions concerning what that actually means. But to take seriously the task of theology—to seek to know God—we must have some kind of confidence that God has revealed himself in some way, and that we are therefore not left to ourselves to figure out who God might be. The all-important question behind Collins's claim that

18. Collins, *Encounters*, 22.

19. Collins, *Encounters*, 22.

there is no reliable yardstick is *why* he does not see one. It may be there is no yardstick. It may be there is one, but he does not see it. My failure to see may lie in external matters, such as darkness, the size of the object, the distance between me and what I am straining to see, or perhaps the absence of the object altogether. Or the problem may lie internally. The problem may be in my own eyes. I may not be looking in the right place, I may be looking at something else, or I may not be looking at all. It is the most basic of logical fallacies to assume that because I don't see something, it therefore does not exist.

In the end, the divorce between theology and reality is simply the result—or the cause or both—of what Christian theologians have called the fall. In other words, the divorce is the fruit of sin, creating our reality according to our own desires rather than conforming to reality as God has created it. But a reality of our own making can never approach the “very good” of the world that God created, because it is ultimately based upon an illusion. Learning to live well demands, before anything else, that I live according to the way things are. A young boy may want to fly, but he will run headlong into the law of gravity, and then the ground, should he attempt to do so. As he grows, he may discover parachutes, hang gliders, and airplanes, devices that allow flight precisely because they are engineered to respect reality, in this case the law of gravity. But to ignore that law is to perish. What is obvious concerning physical laws is equally true for moral laws. For example, a people that makes peace with murder, adultery, stealing, lying, or covetousness is a people who will not live well, or for very long. A society that flourishes will be a society that honors life, is sexually faithful, respects the property of others, is honest, and seeks to be content.

It is one thing to acknowledge reality as God has created it. It is quite another to embrace it. Augustine, arguably (barely) the most influential theologian since Paul, wrote of his struggle to come to God not primarily as a battle of the mind but of the will. Much like Paul in Rom 7, which he cites as descriptive of his own inner turmoil, Augustine found himself unable to be free from reality as he had known it:

I was held back by mere trifles, the most paltry inanities, all my old attachments. They plucked at my garment of flesh and whispered, “Are you going to dismiss us? From this moment we shall never be with you again, forever and ever. From this moment you will never again be allowed to do this thing or that, forevermore.” What was it, my God, that

they meant when they whispered “this thing or that?” Things so sordid and so shameful that I beg you in your mercy to keep the soul of your servant free from them! These voices, as I hear them, seemed less than half as loud as they had been before. They no longer barred my way, blatantly contradictory, but their mutterings seemed to reach me from behind, as though they were stealthily plucking at my back, trying to make me turn my head when I wanted to go forward. Yet, in my state of indecision, they kept me from tearing myself away, from shaking myself free of them and leaping across the barrier to the other side, where you were calling me. (*Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin, 175–76)

For Augustine, his difficulty was rooted in his desires, his competing wills—one will pulling him back from where the other beckoned him to come. As Paul testified in Rom 7, so for Augustine: for him to know God, he needed a savior. Which brings us to the identity of Israel's God.

In what is one of the cardinal texts of the Old Testament, the prophet Jeremiah speaks exactly to this dilemma. The people having broken the Lord's covenant given at the exodus from Egypt, the Lord promises a new covenant:

This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jer 31:33–34)

Although an awkward way of describing the new covenant, the Lord promises that all Israel would become theologians, for they will all know God. In order for that to happen, two things must take place. They must be forgiven of their sins, for one will not confess his or her sin apart from confidence of being forgiven, and their hearts must be restored, meaning that the inclination to sin must be removed. They will need new eyes to see reality as God has given it and new hearts to desire it. In other words, they need to learn both to trust and to desire God. Apart from the promise of forgiveness and restoration of the heart, Israel will never come to him or acknowledge their need. They can only do that if they know who God has revealed himself to be. Theology and reality begin and end with the question of Israel's God: “Who do you say that I am?,” a question Jesus answers implicitly as he declares “this is my blood of the new covenant,” picking up Jeremiah's words and applying them to himself.

In the end, sin is deciding that I can determine reality, seeking to create a world according to my own desires, rather than submitting my understanding of reality to what God has revealed. So it was for Adam and Eve, and so it is today. This has several important implications for theology. The call of the biblical theologian is a call to repentance, a turn from insisting I can understand or determine reality on my own to submitting my understanding of reality to what God has revealed. For the Scriptures to be read theologically, they must be read with the expectation that they speak faithfully about God, and therefore about what is real. The call of the theologian is a call to humility, understanding that there is much I do not see. Will I trust myself to apprehend reality, or will I seek to trust what God has revealed? The call of the theologian is a call to courage, for the vision of reality given in the Scriptures is not one shared by the world, which will always prefer the words of those who speak what it wants to hear. Most of all, the call of the theologian is a call to God. What is said of the prophets is true of the theologian: "But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds" (Jer 23:22). Again, recognizing these things does not mean that there are not difficult hermeneutical issues to be sorted through, both historically and theologically. But prior to decisions concerning hermeneutical methods, the first step is faith, for theology is ultimately about hearing and responding to God. Jesus's words concerning his own teaching likewise apply to the Scriptures as a whole: "If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority" (John 7:17).

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