

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN DANIEL 2:44

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It is a pleasure and a privilege to contribute an article to a volume honoring the late great scholar Gerhard F. Hasel, who was not only my *Doktorvater*, but also my friend.

The kingdom of God occupies a prominent place in the NT; it is also evident in the OT (Ps 45:6; Isa 9:7). This article surveys the various interpretations of the kingdom of God in Dan 2:44, particularly during the patristic period and the last two hundred years. It investigates the claim that the stone kingdom in Daniel 2 was not interpreted as the first advent of Christ until the fourth century. It also presents a definition of the major schools of interpretation during the last two centuries.

In Daniel 2 the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar sees in a dream the image of a man whose head is of gold, his breast and arms of silver, his abdomen and his thighs of bronze, his legs of iron, and his feet part iron and part clay. While viewing this picture the king sees a stone cut loose without hands smiting the statue upon its feet of iron and clay and demolishing the whole statue. The stone then becomes a huge mountain which fills the whole earth (Dan 2:32-35).

In his interpretation, Daniel identifies the four metal parts of the statue as four successive kingdoms. The stone is the kingdom of God, which will crush and bring to an end all the kingdoms of this world and then stand forever (Dan 2:44).

Jewish Authors

The earliest known interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's image appears in the writings of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus.¹ He does not actually name the kingdoms in his discussion of Dan 2; but in his comments on Dan 8, which he understood to refer to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, he says: "In the very same manner [as he had written concerning Antiochus IV Epiphanes] Daniel also wrote concerning the

¹Flavius Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* 10. 208-210 (LCL 6:273).

Roman government and that our country should be made desolate by them."² Thus, Josephus seems to identify the fourth kingdom as Rome as did other Jews.³ Concerning the stone kingdom Josephus states: "And Daniel also revealed to the king the meaning of the stone, but I have not thought it proper to relate this, since I am expected to write of what is past and done and not of what is to be."⁴ He obviously did not want to offend the Romans by intimating that their kingdom would be destroyed by the stone-kingdom of God.

In *4 Ezra* (late first century A.D.) Ezra has a dream in which he sees an eagle come up from the sea. He is told, "the eagle which you saw coming up from the sea is the fourth kingdom which appeared in a vision to your brother Daniel" (12:11). While there is no definite identification of the eagle, from the context it seems fairly certain that the fourth kingdom is understood to be Rome.⁵

The Church Fathers

No comments on the vision of Dan 2 appear in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. On the other hand, most of their successors, the Christian interpreters during the first few centuries, understood the four kingdoms in Dan 2 to be Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.⁶

²Ibid., 10. 276.

³Ralph Marcus, LCL 6:310-311, note c. *The Babylonian Talmud* consistently interprets the fourth kingdom as Rome; *Abodah Zarah* 2b quotes Daniel 7:23 and remarks: "R. Johanan says that this refers to Rome, whose power is known to the whole world." See also *Shevuoth* 6b.

⁴Josephus, 10. 210 (LCL 6:275).

⁵B. M. Metzger, "The Fourth Book of Ezra," *OTP*, 1:550, note b.

⁶Irenaeus (d. 195), the bishop of Lyons, identified the fourth kingdom as "the empire which now rules" (*Against Heresies* 5:26.1 [ANF 1:554]). Hippolytus (d. 236), presbyter and teacher in the church of Rome, interpreted the first three empires as Babylon, Persia and Greece. Of the fourth one he said: "The legs of iron, and the beast dreadful and terrible expressed the Romans, who hold the sovereignty at present" (*Treatise on Christ and Antichrist* 28 [ANF 5:210]). The same view was expressed by the great Alexandrian theologian Origen (185-254) in his *Commentary on Genesis* 3.37 (PG 12:59); by Eusebius of Caesarea (265-339), the father of church history, in his *Fragmentum Libri XV* (PG 22:793); and by Aphraates (d. 345), an ascetic from Mosul, who wrote in reference to the image in Daniel 2: "Its head is Nebuchadnezzar; its breasts and arms the king of Media and Persia; its belly and thighs the king of the Greeks; its legs and feet the kingdom of the children of Esau" (*Select Demonstrations* 5.14 [NPNF, 2d series. 13:357]). Aphraates, like the Jewish sages, believed that the Edomites were the first to accept the Nazarene's creed and that they brought the cult to Rome, where it later became the state religion (Hersh Goldwurm, *Daniel: A New Translation with a Commentary, Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic, and Rabbinic Sources*, The Art Scroll Tanach Series [New York:

Exceptions to this general consensus were the Neoplatonist, non-Christian philosopher Porphyry (233-304); Ephraem Syrus (306-373), the greatest light of the Syrian church; and Polychronius (d. 430), bishop of Apamea and brother of Theodore of Mopsuestia, who identified the fourth kingdom as Greece or the various Grecian kingdoms following the demise of the Alexandrian empire.⁷ This view, however, never won general acceptance in their time.

Thus Cyril of Jerusalem (301-386) could say: That this fourth kingdom "is that of the Romans has been the tradition of the Church's interpreters."⁸ This tradition was continued by John Chrysostom (344-407)⁹ and Jerome (345-413), who wrote in his commentary on Daniel: "Now the fourth empire, which clearly refers to the Romans, is the iron empire which breaks in pieces and overcomes all others."¹⁰

In regard to the interpretation of the stone-kingdom the picture, unfortunately, is not as straightforward. A study of the sources reveals that many of the early Christian writers and commentators believed that "the stone being cut without hands" symbolized Christ's incarnation.

For example, Justin Martyr (100-165), arguing for the virgin birth in his dialogue with Trypho, says:

For when Daniel speaks of "one like unto the Son of man" who received the everlasting kingdom, does he not hint at this very thing? For he declared that, in saying "like unto the Son of man," He appeared, and was man, but not of human seed. And the same thing he proclaimed in mystery when he speaks of this stone which was cut out without hands. For the expression "it was cut out without hands" signified that it is not a work of man, but [a work] of the will of the

Mesorah, 1980], 105).

⁷On Porphyry, see *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel*, trans. G. L. Archer, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 15; Ephraem Syrus *In Danielelem Prophetam*, in *Opera omnia quae extant graece, syriace, latine*, 6 vols. (Rome: Typographia Pontificia Vaticana, 1737-1743), 2:205-206; Polychronius *In Danielelem*, in *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio e vaticanis codicibus edita*, ed. Angelus Maius, 10 vols. (Rome: Typis Vaticanis, 1825-1831), 1:4 (The pagination begins with "one" for each book within each volume in this collection. Thus, 1:4 means volume one of the series by Angelus Maius but page 4 of the book by Polychronius).

⁸Cyril *The Catechetical Lectures* 15.13 (NPNF, 2d series, 7:108).

⁹John Chrysostom *Interpretation of the Prophet Daniel* 2. 214 (PG 56:206-207).

¹⁰Jerome, 32.

Father and God of all things, who brought Him forth.¹¹

This view, it seems, became the accepted, standard interpretation, for we find it also explicitly stated by Jerome (345-413) and Theodoret (ca. 390-458) in the fourth and fifth centuries.

Jerome, who wrote commentaries on almost all the books of the Bible, explains in his comments on the stone in Dan 2:34,35:

. . . at the final period of all these empires of gold and silver and bronze and iron, a rock (namely, the Lord and Savior) was cut off without hands, that is, without copulation of human seed and by birth from a virgin's womb; and after all the empires had been crushed, He became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.¹²

Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus in Syria, in his commentary on Daniel 2 writes:

Therefore we are taught both by the Old and the New Testament that our Lord Jesus Christ has been designated the stone. For He was cut out of the mountain without hands, being born of a virgin apart from any nuptial intercourse, and the divine scripture had always been accustomed to name him as having had his origin contrary to nature, the cutting out of a stone.¹³

However, while the view that "the stone cut out without hands" refers to Christ's incarnation seemed to be generally held, this does not mean that the stone smiting the image was therefore also understood to refer to the first advent of Christ. Some Church Fathers applied it to the first and others to the second advent.

There is no record of Justin's view concerning the stone smiting the image, but when discussing the ten kings in Rev 17:12, Irenaeus compares them with the ten toes in Dan 2: "The ten toes, therefore, are these ten kings, among whom the [Roman] kingdom shall be

¹¹Justin Martyr *Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew* 76 (ANF 1:236). The same argument was used by Irenaeus (d. 195), who also speaking about the virgin birth, states: "On this account also, Daniel, foreseeing His advent, said that a stone, cut out without hands, came into this world. For this is what 'without hands' means, that His coming into this world was not by the operation of human hands, that is, of those men who are accustomed to stone-cutting; that is, Joseph taking no part with regard to it, but Mary alone co-operating with the pre-arranged plan. For this stone from the earth derives existence from both the power and the wisdom of God. So, then, we understand that His advent in human nature was not by the will of man, but by the will of God" (Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 21.7 [ANF 1:453]).

¹²Jerome, 32.

¹³Theodoret *Commentary on the Visions of the Prophet Daniel* 2.34, 35 (PG 81: 1301).

partitioned."¹⁴ Then after quoting Dan 2:44, 45 he states that "Christ is the stone which is cut out without hands, who shall destroy temporal kingdoms, and introduce an eternal one, which is the resurrection of the just."¹⁵

Irenaeus obviously saw a long time period between the cutting out of the stone, i.e., Christ's incarnation, and the stone smiting the image which he placed in the future, after the division of the empire.

Two opinions in regard to the origin of the view which identifies the stone with the church beginning with Christ's first advent deserve mention. L. E. Froom in his monumental work *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* claims that not until the fourth century was there a shift from interpreting the stone-kingdom as the second advent to viewing it as a symbol of the church, beginning at the first advent of Christ.¹⁶ J. A. Montgomery and J. G. Gammie, on the other hand, believe that the identification of the stone with the church is much older. Montgomery finds the earliest instance of this interpretation in the shepherd of Hermas.¹⁷ But it is questionable whether Hermas is even alluding to

¹⁴Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 5.26.1 (ANF 1:555).

¹⁵Ibid., 5.26.2 (ANF 1:555).

¹⁶L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 4 volumes (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946-1954), 1:309. Froom sees three steps leading to this reversal in prophetic interpretation. "Origen's third-century spiritualization of the resurrection, blended with his allegorization of the prophetic Scriptures, constituted the first in a series of three fatal steps taken by the dominant church in departure from the earlier advent faith. These each occurred about a century apart, under Origen, Eusebius, and Augustine respectively. The second step, following upon the 'conversion' of Constantine, centered on the *revolutionary fourth-century concept of the kingdom of God as the newly established earthly church*. The third step, then as yet future, would be, as it unfolds, the fifth-century position that the thousand-year binding of the devil had begun with the first advent" (ibid., 349, emphasis mine). Douglas Bennett, following L. E. Froom, states that the literal interpretation of Scripture was superseded by the spiritual-allegorical method. "This type of biblical exegesis stood in contradiction to the literal-historical biblical interpretation of the first four centuries and succeeded in turning attention away from the Second Advent and directing focus upon the first advent" ("The Stone Kingdom of Daniel 2," in *Symposium on Daniel*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, ed. Frank B. Holbrook [Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1986], 337).

¹⁷J. A. Montgomery, *Daniel*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1926), 192. The text in Hermas, Parable 9, chap. 2 reads "In the middle of the plain he showed me a great white rock that had risen from the plain. The rock was higher than the mountains, square, so that it could hold the whole world. And the rock was old, and had a gateway carved out of it." In chapters 12 and 13 the explanation is given, "This rock and gateway . . . are the son of God," who builds a tower which "is the church," and "the tower has become one stone with the rock" (Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Apostolic Fathers* [London:

Daniel. J. G. Gammie believes that certainly Tertullian (160-220) identified the stone with the Church. He says, "similarly to Irenaeus, Tertullian taught that there would be two advents of Christ, except that the stone of Daniel 2:34 which would crush the image of the secular kingdom is now understood to be Christ's Church (*Against Marcion* 3.7)."¹⁸

The statement to which Gammie is referring appears in Tertullian's work *Against Marcion*, written early in the third century. In the passage under consideration he discusses the two kinds of prophecies concerning Christ. These two types of prophecies Tertullian sees presignifying the two advents of Christ.

Now these signs of degradation quite suit His first coming, just as the tokens of His majesty do His second advent, when He shall no longer remain "a stone of stumbling and rock of offence," but after His rejection become "the chief corner-stone," accepted and elevated to the top place of the temple, even His church, being that very stone in Daniel, cut out of the mountain, which was to smite and crush the image of the secular kingdom. Of this advent the same prophet says: "Behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days; and they brought Him before Him, and there was given Him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."¹⁹

The question is, what is the antecedent of "being that very stone in Daniel"? Is it the word "church" which in the translation and in the original Latin immediately precedes that phrase? Or is it "He" (Christ) mentioned earlier in the passage? A careful reading of the passage, I

Independent, 1950], 173, 184).

¹⁸John G. Gammie, "A Journey Through Danielic Spaces," *Interpretation* 39 (1985):146.

¹⁹Tertullian *Against Marcion* 3.7 (ANF 3:326). The Latin reads: "Quae ignobilitatis argumenta primo adventui competunt sicut sublimitatis secundo, cum fiet iam non lapis offensionis nec petra scandali, sed lapis summus angularis post reprobationem adsumptus et sublimatus in consummationem templi, ecclesiae scilicet, et petra sane illa apud Danihelem de monte praecisa, quae imaginem saecularium regnorum comminuet et conteret. De quo adventu idem propheta: Et ecce cum nubibus caeli tanquam filius hominis veniens, venit usque ad veterem dierum, aderat in conspectu eius, et qui adsistebant adduxerunt illum, et data est ei potestas regia, et omnes nationes terrae secundum genera, et omnis gloria famulabunda, et potestas eius usque in aevum, quae non auferetur, et regnum eius quod non vitiabitur" (Tertullian *Against Marcion* 3. 7. 3, *Corpus Christianorum*, Latin Series, part 1 [Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1954], 516).

believe, indicates that Gammie's interpretation is possible and that Tertullian may be referring to the church, though it must be admitted that the passage is ambiguous.²⁰

If Gammie's reading is correct, this passage would then be in harmony with another statement which Tertullian makes in connection with Isaiah's prophecy that in the last days the nations would say, "Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob" (Isa 2:3). "Of Jacob," says Tertullian, "that is of our 'people' whose 'mount' is Christ, 'praecised without concisors' hands, filling every land, shown in the book of Daniel."²¹ Christ "filling every land" can only refer to his church.

Cyprian (200-258), the converted rhetorician and martyred bishop of Carthage, argued for a christological and ecclesiological interpretation of the stone-kingdom in Dan 2 by suggesting that the stone which became a mountain is Christ the bridegroom who with his bride the church fills the earth with spiritual children.²²

The interpretation of the stone as the church which, as we have

²⁰Froom introduces this quotation with the words, "He specifically declares Christ to be the stone of Daniel 2 that will smite at His second coming the 'secular kingdom' image of Daniel 2 (Froom, 1:256). Froom obviously reads the passage differently from Gammie.

²¹Tertullian *An Answer to the Jews* 3 (ANF 3:154). This was also the position of Ephraem Syrus (2:206) and Polychronius (1:4) who following Porphyry interpreted the four empires as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Alexander's empire, and the Grecian kingdoms following Alexander. The stone-kingdom, therefore, was the church.

²²*The Treatise of Cyprian* 12.2.16-19 (ANF 5:515). That Cyprian is not referring to the second advent is made clear by the context in which propositions 16-19 appear. The earlier ones refer to Christ's birth and those immediately following to the cross: "11. That He was to be born of the seed of David after the flesh. 12. That He should be born in Bethlehem. 13. That He should come in lowly condition on His first advent. 14. That He was the righteous One whom the Jews should put to death. 15. That He was called a Sheep and a Lamb who would have to be slain, and concerning the sacrament of the passion. 16. That He is also called a Stone. 17. That subsequently that stone should become a mountain, and should fill the whole earth. 18. That in the last times the same mountain should be manifested, upon which the Gentiles should come, and on which the righteous should go up. 19. That He is the Bridegroom, having the Church as His bride, from whom children should be spiritually born. 20. That the Jews should fasten Him to the cross. 21. That in the passion and the sign of the cross is all virtue and power. 22. That in this sign of the cross is salvation for all who are marked on their foreheads." Only the last three propositions (28-30) clearly speak of the second advent when Jesus should come as judge and king. Froom spends six pages on Cyprian, but nowhere does he refer to the above-mentioned propositions. In fact he says that Cyprian "does not expound the time prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse, nor even the prophetic symbols of Daniel 2 and 7" (Froom, 1:334).

seen, did exist in the third century and was continued in the fourth century in *The Apostolic Constitution* (c. 380),²³ was taught as well as by Augustine (354-430), the most illustrious of the Latin fathers.²⁴ He, more than anyone before him, emphasized the idea of the kingdom of God as the church ruling on earth. In his magnum opus *The City of God* he writes, "Therefore, the Church even now is the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of heaven. Accordingly, even now his saints reign with Him."²⁵ In the history of theology, Augustine's thought on this subject was pivotal. He provided the materials which later writers used to build the medieval theory of the religio-political state church.

The fact that Augustine, long before the end of the Roman empire, could say that the stone (Christ) had filled the whole face of the earth with His kingdom (the Church) indicates that he, and those Church Fathers who held the same view, saw no conflict between the already-existing stone-kingdom and the picture of the stone shattering the image at the feet. They obviously interpreted the shattering of the kingdom not as a sudden event but rather as a gradual process in which the Church would finally—in the days of the feet of iron and clay—overcome all earthly powers.

However, not all Church Fathers agreed with this interpretation. As we have seen, Irenaeus saw the stone shattering the image as a picture of the second advent of Christ. His disciple Hippolytus (d. 236), author of the oldest surviving commentary on Daniel, after discussing the little horn in Dan 7, which he interprets as the coming Antichrist, says: "After a little space the stone will come from heaven which smites

²³*The Apostolic Constitution* (5.20) reads: "Him [Christ] Daniel describes as 'the Son of man coming to the Father,' and receiving all judgment and honour from Him; and as 'the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, and becoming a great mountain, and filling the whole earth,' dashing to pieces the many governments of the smaller countries, and the polytheism of gods, but preaching the one God, and ordaining the monarchy of the Romans" (ANF 7:448).

²⁴Augustine *Tractate 4 on the Gospel of John* 4.4 (NPNF, 1st series, 7:26) "Now then was the stone cut out without hands before the eyes of the Jews, but it was humble. Not without reason; because not yet had that stone increased and filled the whole earth that He showed in His kingdom, which is the Church, with which He has filled the whole face of the earth." As many before him, Augustine also interpreted the "cutting out without hands" as the virgin birth. "The prophet wishes that by the mountain should be understood the Jewish kingdom. But the kingdom of the Jews had not filled the whole face of the earth. The stone was cut out from thence, because from thence was the Lord born on His advent among men. And wherefore without hands? Because without the co-operation of man did the Virgin bear Christ" (ibid.).

²⁵Augustine *The City of God* 20.9 (NPNF, 1st series, 2:430).

the image and breaks it in pieces and subverts all the kingdoms, and gives the kingdom to the saints of the Most High. This is the stone which becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth."²⁶

Aphraates (d. 345) leaves us in no doubt that he saw the stone as the future coming of Jesus. He clearly states, "that stone when it comes will find the feet alone."²⁷ Further, "the stone, which smote the image and brake it, and with which the whole earth was filled, is the kingdom of King Messiah, who will bring to nought the kingdom of this world, and will rule for ever and ever."²⁸

Theodoret (393-485), a contemporary of Augustine, also repudiated the concept of the stone as the church. "Let them show," he says, "that the kingdom of the Romans passed away at the same time that the Saviour appeared."²⁹ Since the Roman empire still existed, he reasons:

If therefore the first coming of the Lord did not overthrow the empire of the Romans, it properly remains that we should understand [by this] His second advent. For the stone which was cut out before without hands, and which grew into a great mountain and covered the whole earth, this at the second advent shall smite the image upon the feet of clay. That is, He will come at the very end of the kingdom of iron, which already has been made weak, and having destroyed all kingdoms, He will consign them to oblivion, and will bestow His own eternal kingdom upon the worthy.³⁰

In general the view of the early interpreters concerning the four kingdoms was accepted in the church throughout the Middle Ages and the Reformation era.³¹ The stone-kingdom was applied by some to

²⁶Hippolytus *Fragments from Commentaries*, "On Daniel" 2.2 (ANF 5:178). In *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist* 2.26 (ANF 5:209) he expresses the same thought, "After a little space the stone will come from heaven which smites the image and breaks it in pieces, and gives the kingdom to the saints of the Most High." Hippolytus interpreted Daniel 2 and 7 from the historicist point of view. Daniel 8 and 11, however, he placed primarily in the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. In Daniel 11 he saw Antiochus only up to verse 35; verses 36-45 he applied to the future antichrist, as do many futurists.

²⁷Aphraates *Select Demonstrations* 5.14 (NPNF, 2d series, 13:357).

²⁸Ibid. This was also the view of Eusebius of Caesarea prior to the Constantinian conversion. After this event, it seems, he changed his mind (see Froom, 1:364, 382-385).

²⁹Theodoret *Commentary on the Vision of the Prophet Daniel* (PG 81:1309).

³⁰Ibid. (81:1310).

³¹Luther (1483-1546) in his exposition of Daniel wrote: "The first kingdom is that of the Assyrians or Babylonians; the second, that of the Medes and Persians; the third, that of Alexander the Great and the Greeks; the fourth, that of the Romans. Everyone agrees on this view and interpretation; subsequent events and the histories prove it conclusively"

Christ's second coming, as Theodoret had done;³² however, most interpreters, particularly during the time of the Reformation, saw it begin at Christ's first advent.³³

The Modern Period

The post-Reformation era saw an increase of interest in the prophecies of Daniel. Joseph Mede (1586-1638), one of the foremost theologians of his time, considered the four kingdoms in Daniel to be the "ABC of prophecy."³⁴ He interpreted them as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.³⁵ The stone-kingdom depicted for him the two states of the kingdom of Christ:

The First may be called, for distinction sake, the *Regnum Lapidis*, the Kingdom of the Stone; which is the State of Christ's Kingdom which hitherto hath been: The other, *Regnum Montis*, the Kingdom of the Mountain (that is the Stone grown into a Mountain etc.) which is the State of his kingdom which hereafter shall be.³⁶

Thus Mede, as some of the Church Fathers, identified the cutting out of the stone "without hands" as the virgin birth and the stone "filling the earth" as the future kingdom of God. Mede's work became a classic in the field of prophetic interpretation and most writers on Daniel in subsequent centuries referred to him in some way.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries interpretations and commentaries on Daniel proliferated. At the beginning of the nineteenth century we find in operation four-systems for interpreting the prophecies of Daniel. We will briefly describe the origin,

("Preface to the Prophet Daniel," LW. 35:295). An exception was Joachim of Floris (*Concordia novi ac Veteris Testamenti* [Venice, 1519; reprint, Frankfurt a. M.: Minerva, 1964], fol. 127 r.v.), who interpreted the golden head as the kingdom of the Chaldeans, Medes, and Persians; the silver as Greece; the third kingdom as the Roman Empire, and the Saracens who seized the territory of Rome were the fourth.

³²For example, Joachim of Floris, fol. 127 v.

³³For example, The Venerable Bede, *The Explanation of the Apocalypse by Venerable Bede*, trans. E. Marshall (Oxford: James Parker, 1878), 145; Luther, LW, 12:36; 35:296-297; John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 2 vols., trans. Th. Myers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 1:180; George Joye, *The Exposition of Daniel the Prophete Gathered Out of Philip Melancthon, Johan Ecolampadius, Chonrade Pellicane, and Out of Johan Draconite* (Geneva, 1545), 30.

³⁴Joseph Mede, "His Epistles," *The Works of the Pious and Profoundly Learned Joseph Mede* (London: Roger Norton, 1677), 743.

³⁵Mede, "Discourses on Divers Texts of Scripture," *Works*, 104.

³⁶Mede, "His Epistles," *Works*, 743.

development and basic premises of each and then indicate their respective understanding of the four empires and the stone-kingdom in Dan 2.

The Historicist School

The historicist school of interpretation is the oldest of the four schools. It can be traced back to the Church Fathers, was taught by men like Joachim of Floris (1130-1202), and became the standard interpretation until the time of the Counter Reformation in the sixteenth century.

Historicists believe in the divine inspiration of the book of Daniel, affirm that it was written in the sixth century B.C.,³⁷ and assert that its main prophecies cover the period from the Babylonian Empire to the second coming of Christ. Historicists generally agree that the four empires in Dan 2 and 7 represent the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome,³⁸ and that the little horn in Dan 7 is the papacy.³⁹ A third factor common to all is their use of the year-day principle in interpreting the time prophecies in Daniel.⁴⁰ This use of the year-day principle makes historicists different from other interpreters. Finally, there is also general agreement among historicists that Dan 9:24-27 refers to Jesus Christ and was fulfilled in the incarnation.⁴¹

³⁷Albert Barnes, *Daniel*, 2 vols. (1853; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950), 1:45; Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible*, 6 vols. (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, n.d.), 4:562; F. D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7 vols. (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1953-1957), 4:743; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, 2 vols. (Boise: Pacific Press, 1981), 1:11.

³⁸Barnes, 1:156-65; Clarke, 4:571, 572; Robert Nevin, *Studies in Prophecy* (Londonderry: James Montgomery, 1890), 23; Uriah Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation*, rev. ed. (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1944), 93-96; Joseph Tanner, *Daniel and the Revelation*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898), 160; Clarence H. Hewitt, *The Seer of Babylon*, (Boston: Advent Christian Herald, 1948), 47-58; Nichol, 4:772-774; George McCready Price, *The Greatest of the Prophets* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1955), 76-78; Desmond Ford, *Daniel* (Nashville: Southern Publishing, 1978), 97; Edmund Filmer, *Daniel's Predictions*, (London: Regency, 1979); Maxwell, 1:36; Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Daniel*, (Washington DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 2:158; Jacques B. Doukhan, *The Vision of the End: Daniel* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1987), 14.

³⁹Nevin, 82; Tanner, 167; Barnes, 2:86; Smith, 103; Hewitt, 107; Nichol, 4:826; Price, 139; Maxwell, 1:131; Ford, 151.

⁴⁰Barnes, 2:74; Smith, 129; Hewitt, 123; Nichol, 4:833; Price, 151; Maxwell, 1:130. The case for the year-day principle has been cogently argued by Ford in his *Daniel*, 300-305.

⁴¹For example, Nevin, 18; Clarke, 4:602; Smith, 195; Hewitt, 262; Nichol, 4:853;

All historicists agree that the stone represents Christ.⁴² The Messiah is the stone which the builders rejected and which became the chief cornerstone (Matt 21:42). He is the "tried stone," prophesied in Isaiah 28:16, the "precious cornerstone" that is laid in Zion as "a sure foundation."⁴³ But is it Christ at his first or at his second coming? We find both views among historicists.

Some believe that the striking of the image by the stone is a symbol of the first advent of Christ.⁴⁴ They contend (1) that at that time Christ established His spiritual kingdom; (2) that this kingdom is the church, which "became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (Dan 2:35); and (3) that this is in harmony with the manner of growth of the mustard seed in Christ's parable (Matt 13:31), symbolizing the growth of the Church through the centuries.⁴⁵ In addition, the vision seems to indicate that after the image has been broken in pieces there is a further process of crushing to powder the pieces which are then carried away by the wind (Dan 2:34, 35). This would imply, not only a single shock, but a continued destruction over a long time. Furthermore, if the stone refers to the second advent, the vision would completely ignore the most important event in history—the incarnation. Also, the phraseology in Daniel is similar to other texts predicting the birth of the Messiah (Isa 9:7).⁴⁶

Others believe that the stone-kingdom will be set up at the second coming of Christ.⁴⁷ They argue (1) that the stone strikes the image at the feet of iron and clay (Dan 2:34), which symbolize the kingdoms following the Roman Empire. The stone therefore cannot strike the image during the time of the Roman Empire when Christ was born; (2) that the picture of the stone striking the image and shattering it to pieces suggests a world shaking, catastrophic event rather than an event almost unnoticed by the world, and the slow beginnings and relatively slow progress of the Christian church; (3) that the stone-kingdom does not exist contemporaneously with earthly governments; but destroys all

Price, 239.

⁴²Barnes, 1:176; Hewitt, 71; Smith, 53; Nichol, 4:776; Price, 81; Ford, 99.

⁴³Hewitt, 70.

⁴⁴Nevin, 44; Clarke, 4:573; Barnes, 1:174-175.

⁴⁵Hewitt, 71.

⁴⁶Taylor, *Daniel the Beloved* (1878; reprint, New York: G. H. Doran, 1919), 46-47.

⁴⁷Tanner, 161; Smith, 53; Nichol, 4:776; Price, 81; Maxwell, 42-43.

the preceding kingdoms and takes their place.⁴⁸

While the first view certainly has some merit, the weight of exegetical evidence favors the view that the stone-kingdom represents the future kingdom of God to be established at Christ's second advent. Today, the historicist principles of prophetic interpretation are primarily espoused by Seventh-day Adventist scholars.

The Preterist School

Interpreters of the preterist school consider the book of Daniel as a revelation from God, but limit the fulfillment of its prophecies to the time period which runs from the time of Daniel in the sixth century B.C. to the first coming of Christ⁴⁹ or at most to the end of the Roman Empire.⁵⁰

The historical roots of modern preterism go back to the Counter Reformation. On the basis of the historicist principle of interpretation, the Reformers applied the biblical prophecies of the Antichrist to the papacy. Luther, for example, firmly believed that the willful king in Daniel 11:36, 37—the Antichrist—was the pope.⁵¹

Several Jesuit scholars undertook the task of refuting this attack on the papacy. Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), head of the Jesuit College in Rome, attempted to nullify the prophetic year-day principle

⁴⁸Hewitt, 71-72.

⁴⁹Nathaniel S. Folsom, *Critical and Historical Interpretation of the Prophecies of Daniel*, (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1842); Irah Chase, *Remarks on the Book of Daniel* (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1844); Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Boston: Crocker and Webster, 1850); Henry Cowles, *Ezekiel and Daniel* (New York: Appleton, 1868); William M. Taylor, *Daniel the Beloved* (1878; reprint, New York: G. H. Doran, 1919); J. E. Thomson, *Daniel*, Pulpit Commentary (London: Paul Kegan, Trench, Trübner, 1898); Otto Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*, Lange's Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915); Johannes Nickel, *Grundriß der Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Münster: Aschendorf, 1924); Johannes Goettsberger, *Das Buch Daniel*, Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1928); Philip Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation* (Swengel: Bible Truth Depot, 1944); Robert M. Gurney, *God in Control* (Worthington: H. E. Walter, 1980).

⁵⁰Samuel Lee, *An Inquiry Into the Nature, Progress, and End of Prophecy*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1849).

⁵¹In regard to changing the law of God, Luther says: "No one would dare to do that except Antichrist—namely, the papacy—who, as Daniel 12 [11:36] and St. Paul [2 Thess. 2:4] say, sets himself up against God." (LW, 41:212). In another place he says: "Listen to what St. Paul says to the Thessalonians [2 Thess. 2:4] 'The Antichrist takes his seat in the temple of God.' If now the pope is (and I cannot believe otherwise) the veritable Antichrist, he will not sit or reign in the devil's stall, but in the temple of God" (LW, 40:232).

as the main proof for the 1260 years of papal tyranny.⁵² Francisco Ribera (1537-91) projected the Antichrist prophecies into the future.⁵³ Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613) contended that these prophecies were already fulfilled in the time of the Roman Empire; thus, the papacy could not be the Antichrist.⁵⁴

Alcazar's interpretation was adopted by Hugo Grotius of Holland, H. Hammond in England, and others; in time it gained a strong foothold among Protestants. W. Bousset believes that "with Alcazar begins the scientific exposition of the Apocalypse."⁵⁵

Some preterists see the four kingdoms in Daniel 2 and 7 as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and the kingdoms of the successors of Alexander;⁵⁶ others have the sequence Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.⁵⁷ R. Gurney has adopted the scheme of Ephraem Syrus, with Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece.⁵⁸

General unanimity exists among preterists as to the identification of the stone-kingdom. They all agree that the stone refers to the spiritual kingdom of Christ, that is the church which he established at his first coming.⁵⁹ For example, Zöckler says: "The destroying stone represents the kingdom of Christ at the time of its introduction on the historical arena, while the growth of the stone until it fills the earth, indicates its gradual extension over all the countries of the earth."⁶⁰

Preterism must be distinguished from the historical-critical school. While some preterists have adopted the same interpretation of the four kingdoms as that held by many historical-critical scholars (Babylon,

⁵²L. R. Conradi, *The Impelling Force of Prophetic Truth* (London: Thynne, 1935), 346.

⁵³See "The Futurist-Dispensational School," below, esp. note 79.

⁵⁴A. Piper, "Johannesapokalypse," *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3d ed., 7 vols. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1959), 3:826. For an extended account of these developments, see Froom, 2:484-532.

⁵⁵Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1906), 94.

⁵⁶Folsom, 148-50; Chase, 19; Stuart, 173; Cowles, 305-08; Zöckler, 77-78.

⁵⁷Taylor, 41-43; Thomson, 70; Lee, 159; Mauro, 116.

⁵⁸Gurney, 30-33; cf. John H. Walton, "The Four Kingdoms of Daniel," *JETS* 29 (1986): 25-36.

⁵⁹Folsom, 154; Stuart, 67-68; Lee, 151; Taylor, 49; Cowles, 306; Thomson, 73; Gurney, 39.

⁶⁰Zöckler, 87.

Medo-Persia, Greece and the successors of Alexander),⁶¹ they clearly differ in regard to their presuppositions. Preterists believe that Daniel lived and wrote his book in the sixth century B.C.; historical-critical scholars do not. Preterists believe that the prophecies in Daniel are true prophecies; historical-critical scholars do not. They also differ in regard to the interpretation of the stone-kingdom. While preterists believe the stone to be a symbol of the Christian church, historical-critical scholars generally identify the stone with the expected OT Messianic kingdom, i.e., Israel's dominion over the nations, which, in fact, never materialized.

Today, preterism has virtually died out. As far as I know, only one commentary on Daniel published after 1945 espouses the principles of preterism.⁶² Unfortunately, it is frequently equated with the historical-critical school, because both schools apply the prophecies of Daniel to the distant past.

The Historical-Critical School

The history of the Christian church shows that for about 1700 years the church accepted the book of Daniel as a book of true prophecy written by Daniel, who lived in the sixth century B.C.

A new direction in scholarship was introduced by the deists and rationalists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,⁶³ who began to lay the groundwork for a study of Scripture that investigated and analyzed the Bible as the product of human ingenuity rather than divine inspiration. The humanistic insights which subjected Scripture to the same principles of criticism as were applied to secular writings led to a revival of Porphyry's arguments concerning the authenticity of the book of Daniel and its traditional age.⁶⁴

Predictive prophecy inspired by God did not fit into the picture which the Enlightenment had painted of this world. There really could

⁶¹See "The Historical Critical School," below.

⁶²Gurney (see above) seems to be the last preterist interpreter.

⁶³For an excellent review of the rise and development of biblical criticism and the forces that brought it into existence, see Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

⁶⁴Jerome, 15. Porphyry's main theses were: (1) The book was written by an unknown Jew living in the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (2d century B.C.) rather than by Daniel in the 6th century; (2) In the narration of events up to the time of Antiochus, we have true history, but anything beyond that time is false, since the writer could not know the future. The crux of the argument is the presupposition that predictive prophecy is impossible.

not be any prophecy in the book of Daniel. J. G. Eichhorn (1752-1827), one of the pioneers of higher criticism claimed, "The prophetic wording, therefore, should only be an embellished report of history."⁶⁵ Daniel, living in the second century B.C., had the idea "to place a prophetic cloak around past events."⁶⁶

One of the results of this kind of thinking was that the identification of Rome as the fourth empire in Dan 2 was rejected. The Romans as established rulers in Palestine were still future for a Jew living in the second century B.C. Hence, the view that Greece was the fourth empire—held by Ephraem Syrus, Polychronius, and a number of interpreters in church history⁶⁷—was revived.⁶⁸ Basically this is still the view accepted by mainstream historical-critical scholars today.⁶⁹

Historical-critical scholars generally agree on the interpretation of the stone-kingdom. It is the Messianic kingdom in the broad sense of the term; i.e., it refers to the people of God, not only to the person of the Messiah.⁷⁰ It is not an extraterrestrial kingdom,⁷¹ because "the sphere of that kingdom is that of its predecessors, only it possesses the everlasting endurance of the natural rock."⁷² The emphasis is on the

⁶⁵J. G. Eichhorn, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 3 vols., 3d ed. (Leipzig: Weidmänni, 1803), 3:419.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 3:417.

⁶⁷H. H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1959), 71.

⁶⁸Eichhorn, 3:419.

⁶⁹For example, S. R. Driver, *The Book of Daniel*, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: University Press, 1901), 28-29; Karl Marti, *Das Buch Daniel*, Kurzer Hand-Commentar Zum Alten Testament (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1901), 15; J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1927), 61; Aage Bentzen, *Daniel*, Handbuch zum Alten Testament (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1952), 31; Norman Porteous, *Daniel*, 2d rev. ed., Old Testament Library (London: SCM Press, 1979), 47; Otto Plöger, *Das Buch Daniel*, Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Gütersloh: Gert Mohn, 1965), 56; Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 147; A. Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 51; Jürgen-Christian Lebram, *Das Buch Daniel*, Zürcher Bibelkommentar (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1984), 56; W. Sibley Towner, *Daniel*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1984), 36; John J. Collins, *Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 166.

⁷⁰Driver, 30; Bentzen, 31; Porteous, 50; Plöger, 54; Montgomery, 191.

⁷¹Lacocque, 52; Hartman and Di Lella, 149; John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, WBC 30 (Dallas: Word, 1989), 59-60.

⁷²Montgomery, 191.

people of Israel.⁷³ "The Divine Kingdom itself," says Driver, "is in the hands of a people, viz. Israel."⁷⁴ And the time of its establishment was to be immediately after the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164).⁷⁵

Today, the historical-critical school dominates the interpretation of the book of Daniel. Scholarly debate is largely carried on based on the presuppositions of the historical-critical school which rule out true prophecy, miracles, and therefore salvation history.⁷⁶ Even some evangelical scholars have found it necessary to use the historical-critical presuppositions in their interpretation of the book of Daniel.⁷⁷

The Futurist-Dispensational School

This school of interpretation has its roots in the teachings of the Spanish Jesuit Francisco Ribera (1537-1591) who, in response to Luther, applied the Antichrist prophecies in Daniel and Revelation to a future personal Antichrist who would appear in the time of the end and continue in power for three and a half years.⁷⁸

For more than two centuries this view was confined to the Roman Catholic Church. Then, beginning in 1826, Samuel R. Maitland (1792-1866), an Anglican clergyman, published a series of pamphlets in which he denied the year-day principle of prophetic interpretation, placing the time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation into the future and claiming

⁷³For example: Driver, 30; Marti, 16; Lacocque, 52; Towner, 38; Plöger, 50. The exception are some Roman Catholic interpreters who identify the stone with the Christian church; for example Louis F. Hartman, "Daniel," *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1968), 451.

⁷⁴Driver, 30.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶In 1898 Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) formulated the principles of historical criticism in his programmatic essay "Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie," *Gesammelte Schriften* 2 (Tübingen, 1913): 729-753. According to Troeltsch the historical-critical method has three principles: (1) the principle of criticism, which implies that history only achieves probability; (2) the principle of analogy, which takes present experience as the criterion for the past; (3) the principle of correlation or mutual interdependence of all historical phenomena, which rules out any supernatural intervention as a principle of historical explanation.

⁷⁷Goldingay, for example, in spite of his claim to believe that God is capable of knowing future events and of revealing them, treats all the prophetic visions as *vaticinia ex eventu*, i.e., prophecies actually written after the events they portray (xxxix).

⁷⁸Francisco Ribera, *In Sacram Beati Ioannis Apostoli et Evangelistai Apocalypsin Commentarii* (Antwerp: Petrum Bellerum, 1593); see Froom, 2:489-93.

that the pope therefore could not be the Antichrist.⁷⁹ Others who followed Maitland's lead were William Burgh,⁸⁰ James H. Todd,⁸¹ John Darby,⁸² and John Henry Newman,⁸³ the famous High Church Anglican who converted to Roman Catholicism and was made a cardinal by Pope Leo XII in 1879.⁸⁴

A few years after Maitland had written his first "Enquiry," Heinrich A. C. Hävernich (1811-1845), a German Lutheran theologian, published his commentary on Daniel, in which he proposed that the division of the fourth empire in Dan 7 into ten kingdoms was still in the future.⁸⁵ He further suggested that the little horn in Dan 7 was a future Antichrist and that the little horn in Dan 8 represented Antiochus IV Epiphanes as a type of the future Antichrist.⁸⁶ Both of these views became trademarks of the futurist-dispensational interpretation, today predominant among conservative Protestants.

Futurist-dispensationalist interpreters, like historicists and preterists, accept Daniel's authorship of the book in the sixth century B.C.;⁸⁷ unlike

⁷⁹*An Enquiry Into the Grounds on Which the Prophetic Period of Daniel and St. John Has Been Supposed to Consist of 1260 Years* (London: Hatchard and Son, 1826); *A Second Enquiry into the Grounds . . .* (London: C. and J. Rivington, 1829); *An Attempt to Elucidate the Prophecies Concerning Antichrist* (London: C. and J. Rivington, 1830); see further, Froom, 3:542-543.

⁸⁰Irish Futurist who published a treatise on the second advent in which he rejected the identification of the Antichrist with the Pope. Like Maitland he expected a personal Antichrist in the future (*Lectures on the Second Advent of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, 2d ed., enlarged [Dublin: William Curry, 1835], 63, 65).

⁸¹Irish scholar and professor of Hebrew at the University of Dublin who declared that "the fourth kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar's vision is even yet to come," and therefore cannot be Rome (*Discourses on the Prophecies Relating to Antichrist in the Writings of Daniel and St. Paul* [Dublin: University Press, 1840], xii, 61-62).

⁸²Darby was the most prominent among the founders of the Plymouth Brethren and a voluminous writer on a wide range of subjects. His writings on prophecy propagated futurism. (*Studies on the Book of Daniel: A course of Lectures* [London: J. B. Bateman, 1864]).

⁸³Newman maintains that the Antichrist is yet to come ("The Protestant Idea of Antichrist," *The British Critic, and Quarterly Theological Review* 28 [1840]: 391-440).

⁸⁴For an extended treatment of all these authors, see Froom, 3:541, 658-669.

⁸⁵Heinrich A. Hävernich, *Commentar über das Buch Daniel* (Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes, 1832), 560-570.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 236, 251.

⁸⁷H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Wartburg, 1949; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker,

them, they generally do not apply the figure of the little horn to the papacy or another power in the past. Rather, they expect that in the future a personal Antichrist will appear to fulfill what is said of the little horn in Dan 7 and of the king of the north in Dan 11:36-45.⁸⁸

Adherents of this school can be divided into two groups. One believes that "Israel" in prophecy always refers to literal Israel. Therefore, they are forced to make a gap or parenthesis in the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecies from the first coming of Christ—when literal Israel rejected Jesus—to seven years before his second coming when literal Israel will accept Him. These are the dispensationalists.⁸⁹

The second group rejects the gap theory. They believe "that from the time of the destruction of the Roman Empire to the appearance of the little horn [in the future] there will be a number of kingdoms [the ten horns], which may truly be said to originate from the ancient Roman Empire."⁹⁰ These are the futurists.⁹¹

Most futurists and dispensationalists identify the four empires in Dan 2 with Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.⁹² Concerning the

1969), 8; G. Maier, *Der Prophet Daniel*, Wuppertaler Studienbibel (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1982), 62; John F. Walvoord, *Daniel* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 11; Gleason L. Archer, "Daniel," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 7:4; Stuart Olyott, *Dare to Stand Alone* (Durham, Engl.: Evangelical, 1982), 33; Sinclair Ferguson, *Daniel*, Mastering the Old Testament (Dallas: Word, 1988), 18.

⁸⁸Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 163; Archer, 93; Walvoord, 175; Olyott, 100; Ferguson, 162.

⁸⁹We already mentioned J. F. Walvoord and G. L. Archer. Others include: H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1920); A. C. Gaebelein, *The Prophet Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1955); Leon J. Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973); Merrill F. Unger, "Daniel," *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1981), vol. 2; John C. Whitcomb, *Daniel*, Everyman's Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1985); J. Vernon McGee, *Daniel*, Through the Bible Commentary Series (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991); Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994).

⁹⁰Young, 149.

⁹¹We already mentioned E. J. Young, G. Maier, H. C. Leupold, S. Olyott, and S. Ferguson. Others are: Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, David Brown, *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*, 6 vols. (1866; Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1945); Carl F. Keil, *The Book of Daniel*, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, trans. M. G. Easton (1867; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949); A. R. Millard, "Daniel," *The International Bible Commentary*, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986).

⁹²Keil, 262; Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, 4:392; Walvoord, 64-68; Wood, 67-68; Young, 76; Leupold, 287; Olyott, 33; Ferguson, 63.

stone-kingdom, however, the two groups hold different views. Futurists believe that the stone refers to the Messianic kingdom set up at Christ's first advent.⁹³ Dispensationalists, on the other hand, insist that the stone-kingdom has reference only to the second and not to the first advent.⁹⁴

Today, evangelical Christianity has adopted by and large the dispensationalist position concerning the exegesis of the book of Daniel. Only a few current evangelical commentaries are authored by futurists.

Summary

This review of the interpretation of Dan 2:44 has shown that the Church Fathers generally identified the four kingdoms of Dan 2 as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome and that "the stone being cut without hands" referred to Christ's incarnation. There was also a basic agreement among the early Church Fathers in regard to the view that the stone smiting the image symbolized the second advent of Christ. However, during the third century some writers applied the stone-kingdom to the church.

During the last 200 years four major schools of prophetic interpretation have dominated the understanding of the Book of Daniel: historicism, preterism, futurism/dispensationalism, and the historical-critical view.

Historical-critical scholars generally identify the stone kingdom with the OT Messianic kingdom, i.e., Israel's dominion over the nations, which was supposed to be established after the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, but which, in fact, never materialized.

Preterists interpret the stone-kingdom as a symbol of the Christian church, beginning with the first advent of Christ. This is also the view of futurists and some historicists. Most historicists today, however, and all dispensationalists identify the stone-kingdom with the second advent of Christ.

Thus, I conclude that the interpretation of the stone-kingdom does not depend primarily on the textual exegesis of Dan 2:44. Rather, to a large degree, it hangs on the overall understanding of the book and the presuppositions the interpreter brings to the text.

⁹³Keil, 269; Young, 78; Leupold, 123; Millard, 856; Olyott, 35; Ferguson, 65.

⁹⁴Gaebelein, 35; Wood, 72; Walvoord, 76; Miller, 100; McGee, 49.