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EDITORIAL

Dear readers, we are happy to provide you with our Fall 2021 issue of *Andrews University Seminary Studies (AUSS)* which presents articles that explore new, refreshing, and faithful avenues for interpreting Biblical texts. In addition, this issue marks a new milestone for our publication strategy. We have been silently launching a digital version of our journal with our last issue (Spring 2021). After some testing and feedback, we are now ready to officially launch the digital version of *AUSS* in tandem with the in-print version.

From now on, you have three subscription options: digital, in-print, or digital & in-print. When subscribing to our digital version, you will receive each issue in two formats. With the ePub format, you can read our journal on modern reading devices like Kindle, iPad, or other tablet versions that support this format. We also offer the popular PDF format which has the practical advantage that it can be used like digital paper, as the reader can add handwritten notes with digital pencils (if you have that hardware).

With the digital version of our journal, we also hope to reduce our shipping costs. Before the pandemic, and certainly with the Covid crisis, costs have increased dramatically, particularly for international shipping. We, therefore, must transfer these costs to international subscribers, beginning in July, 2022. We encourage you to transfer to our digital subscription, as this is more cost-efficient and allows you to get instant access to our journal once it is published. At the same time, we will continue to print our journal for those who prefer that option. Please see our updated pricing and subscription models on our website: tinyurl.com/AUSS-Store.

In this Fall, 2021 issue of *AUSS*, our first two articles engage with surprising statements in Old Testament texts. First, Ian Reyes contributes a study on “Nebuchadnezzar, My Servant’: A Reexamination of the Honorific Title ‘Servant of the LORD.’” While this title is used for Moses, Joshua, and David, Jeremiah uses it to refer to the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar who caused the fall of Jerusalem and the Davidic Monarchy (Jer 25:9; 27:6; 43:10). Ian discusses the limits and problems of the latest interpretative approaches to this subject and does a fresh analysis. He proposes that the use of the title is not a scribal error or a careless expression. Rather, it is an intentional and theologically significant designation for Nebuchadnezzar.

Second, Jonatas Leal and Oliver Glanz explore the unexpected expression: “And the Lord obeyed the voice of Elijah.” Their article, “‘God’s Obedience’: A Linguistic and Narrative Exploration of the Hebrew Idiom in 1 Kings

17:22 and Its Theological Implications,” uses linguistic methods to explore the valence of שמע. They document that the Old Testament describes YHWH as Israel’s obedient God in a few important cases. With the help of narrative analysis, they suggest that the unexpected expression is one of several narrative strategies to show Elijah as a new Joshua and a prophetic prototype. It also enables the typological reference to the prophet in Mal 4:5-6 and Matt 4:5-6.

The third and fourth articles involve New Testament studies. In the third article, “On God’s Side of History: Time and Apocalyptic History in Paul’s Speech at the Areopagus,” Keldie Paroschi investigates how far Paul’s speech at the Areopagus (Acts 17:16-34) agrees with Stoic philosophy. While some scholars argue that Paul’s address is, to a great extent, Stoic in nature, others have argued that Paul uses Stoic vocabulary only to disagree with its worldview. Keldie contributes to this discussion by analyzing Paul’s reference to time in terms of Jewish apocalyptic historiography. She shows how Paul’s call to repentance receives its urgency from his references to apocalyptic linear time and stands, therefore, in contrast to Stoic moral philosophy.

In our fourth article, “Application of the Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency [TF-IDF] Weighting Scheme to the Pauline Corpus,” Brandon van der Ventel and Richard Newman apply an algorithmic model (TF-IDF) to the 13 letters that are traditionally associated with the apostle Paul. The cosine similarity method quantifies the similarity found among seven of the undisputed Pauline letters (1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Phillipians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon). For their calculations, the authors use open-source python tools well known to the digital humanities (natural language toolkit, genism, etc.) to calculate the similarity between the disputed Pauline epistles and the undisputed corpus. They show that computational methods can be used to test the findings of theological and literary studies. With their permission, we make their Jupyter Notebook available so that their work can be used to inform your text-critical research.

In addition to these articles, our book reviews section brings fourteen recent and important books, among which you may find resources that are helpful for your continuing education and research. In addition, we share two abstracts of dissertations recently defended at Andrews University. In July 2021, Elmer Guzman completed his Ph.D. in systematic theology. His research compared the missional doctrinal hermeneutic of Vanhoozer and Kärkkäinen to gain deeper insight in the co-dependence of the concepts of God, eschatology, and mission. In October 2021, Michael Christian Orellana Mendez defended his dissertation in the field of Archeology. As an expert on pottery, he developed the historical and geographical context for the Iron Age IIa-c for pottery found in a courthouse excavated in field G4 at the Andrews University excavation site at Tall Jalul, Jordan.

Please note that the editors of *AUSS* hereby retract the following book review by Panayotis Coutsoumpos because of plagiarism: “The Second Letter

to the Corinthians [review] / Seifrid, Mark A.” *AUSS* 53.1 (2015): 235–237. This review is retracted because Coutsoumpos plagiarized substantial portions from a review written by another author. This retraction has no bearing on the academic validity of the original review. *AUSS* is using current technology for examining articles and book reviews prior to publication to prevent plagiarism.

Finally, we ask you to consider our call for articles on Truth and Information Warfare. See the inside back cover. We hope that you find this issue of our journal to be a blessing as you “grow in . . . grace and knowledge” (2 Pet 3:18).

MFH and OMG

“NEBUCHADNEZZAR, MY SERVANT”:
A REEXAMINATION OF THE HONORIFIC TITLE
“SERVANT OF THE LORD”

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Abstract

Moses, David, and Joshua are all designated the honorific title “servant of YHWH” in the HB. Even a cursory reading of the HB texts involving these figures would leave little surprise as to why they are bestowed this exclusive moniker. There are only ten individuals who are given this title in the MT, and of these ten, the majority of them do not raise questions, except one—the sixth-century Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. Some have argued that his inclusion in this list is a result of a scribal error or that it is limited in scope, as only a description of function. In this article, I have proposed that the biblical writers intended to communicate that Nebuchadnezzar is a full-fledged “servant of YHWH,” both in his function and in his unique relationship to YHWH. I support my conclusion in three ways. First, I discuss my research on the full list of those who are given the title “servant of YHWH” in the MT, finding that almost all not only function on behalf of YHWH but also possess a unique relationship with him. Next, I analyze the depiction of Nebuchadnezzar in the MT of the book of Daniel, arguing that differing conclusions can be made regarding his character. Finally, I analyze the episodic similarities between Nebuchadnezzar and two others deemed “servant(s) of the YHWH”—namely, David and Moses. I conclude by discussing some potential theological implications of my proposed solution.

Keywords: Nebuchadnezzar, servant of the YHWH, Jeremiah, Daniel

Introduction

In the HB, a “servant of YHWH” is someone who carries out tasks on behalf of YHWH and also has a unique relationship with him.¹ I have found that

¹ William B. Nelson Jr., “Servant of the Lord,” *EDB* 1189–1190. William B. Nelson Jr. has defined the HB term “servant of the LORD” as “one who belongs to Yahweh and seeks to do his will” (*EDB*, “Servant of the Lord”). This definition is

there are only ten such individuals who receive this honorific title in the MT.² The patriarch Abraham is the first to receive this title (Gen 26:24).³ Moses, the charismatic leader of the exodus, has the distinction of being the one most referred to by this title.⁴ The often-mentioned Joshua and David, as well as the prophet Isaiah, also feature on this list.⁵ At first glance, this list of “servant(s) of YHWH” appears to be rather straightforward—it seems to be a term reserved for the faithful legends of Israel’s history. These are the individuals around whom many of the HB writings revolve. Yet, upon closer inspection, one name appears that seems to threaten this initial hypothesis—the sixth-century BC Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. He is referred to as “my servant” in YHWH’s direct speeches three times in the MT of the book of Jeremiah (Jer 25:9; 27:6; 43:10 MT). His inclusion in this list of “servant(s) of YHWH” creates an obvious problem for determining the meaning and scope of this HB title.

Some have argued that Nebuchadnezzar’s inclusion in this list is accidental, coming about as a result of a “scribal error.”⁶ Others have allowed for Nebuchadnezzar’s inclusion in their examination of the “servant of the YHWH” title, concluding that, while Nebuchadnezzar is a “servant of the YHWH” in that he conducts certain actions on YHWH’s behalf, he should not be thought of as being bestowed the honorific portion of that

too broad in its scope when one considers the exclusivity of the names of those who are explicitly said to be a “servant of YHWH” in the HB. Narrowing down Nelson’s definition, in this article, the term “servant of YHWH” will refer to those who carry out tasks on YHWH’s behalf and have a unique relationship with him. To clarify, consider three of those deemed “servants of YHWH”—namely, Moses, David, and Nebuchadnezzar. In terms of function, each carry out a specific task on behalf of YHWH. David conquers much of the land of Canaan (2 Sam 10:19), Moses delivers the people of Israel from slavery, and Nebuchadnezzar brings judgement upon Judah and the surrounding nations (Jer 25:9). In terms of sharing a unique relationship with YHWH, Moses speaks to YHWH directly several times (cf. Exod 33:11), David inquires of YHWH and receives guidance (2 Sam 5:23), and Nebuchadnezzar receives visions concerning the future (Dan 2:28; 4:24 MT) and is spoken to directly by God (Dan 4:31–32 MT).

² “My Servant,” SHEBANQ.ancient-data.org, <https://shebanq.ancient-data.org/hebrew/query?version=2017&cid=4475>. Executed: 24 March 2021.

³ Gen 26:24.

⁴ Num 12:7–8; Josh 1:2. If one combines the “servant of the YHWH” title with the occurrences of “my servant” in YHWH’s direct speeches, Moses and David come out tied for the most designations of these titles in the HB (twenty-four each).

⁵ For example, Joshua (Judg 2:8), David (Ps 36:1), Isaiah (Isa 20:3).

⁶ Werner E. Lemke, “Nebuchadnezzar, My Servant,” *CBQ* 28.1 (1996): 45–50.

title as Joshua or Abraham are.⁷ In this article, I will explore whether or not Nebuchadnezzar should be seen as only a functional “servant of the YHWH,” or if he should be seen as a “servant of YHWH” in the same way that Moses, David, and others are.⁸

The Tension

As discussed in the introduction, a “servant of YHWH” has both a functional and relational interaction with YHWH. To make a more like-kind comparison with Nebuchadnezzar, in this article, I am only analyzing the specific individuals who are named “servant of YHWH” or “my servant.” Thus, I have left out instances of these titles which refer to people groups, such as “Jacob” (e.g., Isa 44:1), or to unidentified individuals (e.g., Isa 52:13). In the entire HB, there are only nine individuals explicitly referred to as “my servant” in YHWH’s direct speeches.⁹ See Table 1 below.

Table 1. “My servant” as specified by YHWH in direct speech¹⁰

Reference	Text-Hebrew	English	Spec. Individ.	# of Occ.
2 Sam 3:18	דָּוִד עַבְדִּי	“David my servant”	David	22
Num 12:7	עַבְדִּי מֹשֶׁה	“my servant Moses”	Moses	6
Job 1:8	עַבְדִּי אֵיִב	“my servant Job”	Job	6
Jer 25:9	וְאֶל־ נְבוּכַדְרֶצְאֶצַּר מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל עַבְדִּי	“and to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, my servant”	Nebuchadnezzar	3
Gen 26:24	אַבְרָהָם עַבְדִּי	“Abraham my servant”	Abraham	1
Num 14:24	וְעַבְדִּי קָלֵב	“but my servant Caleb”	Caleb	1
Isa 20:3	עַבְדִּי יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ	“my servant Isaiah”	Isaiah	1

⁷ Klaas A. D. Smelik, “My Servant Nebuchadnezzar: The Use of the Epithet ‘My Servant’ for the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Jeremiah,” *VT* 64.1 (2014): 109–134.

⁸ In this article, I use the constructions “servant of YHWH” and “my servant” interchangeably, unless stated otherwise.

⁹ Namely, Abraham (Gen 26:24), Moses (Num 12:14; Josh 1:2, etc.), Caleb (Num 14:24), David (2 Sam 7:5, 8), Isaiah (Isa 20:3), Eliakim son of Hilkiah (Isa 22:20), Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 25:9; 27:6; 43:10), Job (1:8), Zerubbabel (Hag 2:23). Table 1 illustrates those who are designated “my servant” by YHWH in direct speech. For a more detailed version of this table, see the appendix.

¹⁰ The full table with all occurrences and references is found in the appendix.

Isa 22:20	לְעַבְדִּי לְאֵלִיָּקִים	“to my servant to Eliakim”	Eliakim	1
Hag 2:23	זְרַבְבָּל בְּנוֹ-שַׁאֲלִי־אֵל עַבְדִּי	“Zerubbabel, son of Shieliel, my servant”	Zerubbabel	1

Many of these individuals are those whom even a casual reader of the HB would expect, such as Abraham, Moses, and David. Though there are less notable exceptions, such as the rarely mentioned Eliakim son of Hilkiah and Caleb son of Jephunneh, the majority of those referred to as “my servant” by YHWH are those who could be considered the most significant figures in the HB. In addition to this list—in order to provide a more complete picture of YHWH’s servants—it is essential to mention those referred to by the construction “servant of God,” and “servant of YHWH.”¹¹ See table 2 below.

Table 2. “Servant of YHWH”¹²

Reference	Text-Hebrew	English	Spec. Individ.	# of Occ.
Deut 34:5	מֹשֶׁה עַבְד־ יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses	18
Josh 24:29	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן-נֹון עַבְד־יְהוָה	“Joshua, son of Nun, servant of YHWH”	Joshua	2
Ps 18:1	לְעַבְד־יְהוָה דָּוִד	“of servant of YHWH of David”	David	2

Those referred to in this list were in even more exclusive company. The only individuals referred to by this title were Moses, Joshua, and David.¹³ Thus, when combining these two constructions, only one member was added to the exclusive list of “servant(s)” —namely, Joshua. As stated before, many of these names would be expected to be on this list. Of course, Abraham, David, and the prophet Isaiah would meet the criteria of those who “[belong] to Yahweh

¹¹ Individuals mentioned: Moses (many), Joshua (Josh 24:29; Judg 2:8), David (Ps 18:1). This table refers to those individuals titled “servant of God” or “servant of YHWH.”

¹² The full table with all occurrences and references is found in the appendix.

¹³ As an aside, I found that both Moses and David are referred to by the “my servant” or the “servant of YHWH” title a combined twenty-four times in the MT.

and [seek] to do his will.”¹⁴ Even the foreigner Job would presumably meet the criteria because of his excellent character.¹⁵ However, of all this group, one notable exception to this trend exists: the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. He is referred to by YHWH as “my servant” three times in the MT of the book of Jeremiah. Thus, a problem emerges: How could this Gentile king who conquered the city of Jerusalem and deported God’s chosen people receive the title equivalent to “servant of YHWH”?

Proposed Solutions

Thus far, two primary attempts have been made to resolve this tension. One of them is represented by W. E. Lemke, who seeks to answer the question of Nebuchadnezzar’s status as a “servant of YHWH” by arguing that this title was given to the Babylonian king mistakenly through an “accidental error in the textual transmission of the book [of Jeremiah].”¹⁶ Lemke begins his argument by defining a “servant of YHWH,” saying, “Everywhere else in the OT this title implies a conscious and mutual relationship which is characterized by humble submission, obedience, and dedication to Yahweh on the part of the servant.”¹⁷ In other words, Lemke argues that, beyond accomplishing tasks on behalf of YHWH, a “servant of YHWH” in the HB is also defined by his character and right relationship with YHWH. Thus, Lemke goes on to say, “Obviously, this cannot be said of Nebuchadnezzar, who, in all probability, was not even aware that he was being used by Yahweh; nor does Jeremiah ever imply anywhere that Nebuchadnezzar understood his mission in this light.”¹⁸

Put another way, Lemke argues that the portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar’s character and relationship to YHWH in the HB is incongruent with every other “servant of YHWH.” As a result, Lemke then makes his case that this honorific title was bestowed upon Nebuchadnezzar mistakenly, basing his argument on the Greek text of Jeremiah, in which the title “my servant”

¹⁴ William B. Nelson Jr., “Servant of the Lord,” *EDB* 1189–1190.

¹⁵ See Lemke, “Nebuchadnezzar, My Servant,” 46, n4.

¹⁶ Lemke, “Nebuchadnezzar, My Servant,” 47. Lemke argues that the three occurrences of the title “my servant” in connection to Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Jeremiah were mistakenly added by scribes and then passed down over centuries of transmission. He bases his argument on the fact that the title “my servant” is not included in the Greek text of the book of Jeremiah. Holladay similarly considers “my servant” to be a later addition, which intended to elevate the status of Nebuchadnezzar. In regard to this he says, “It is evidently the fruit of later theological speculation which exalted the station of Nebuchadnezzar” (William Lee Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 26–52*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989], 121).

¹⁷ Lemke, “Nebuchadnezzar, My Servant,” 46.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

is not mentioned in connection with Nebuchadnezzar.¹⁹ Thus, Lemke's solution to Nebuchadnezzar's inclusion in the elite list of "servant(s) of YHWH" is to argue that Nebuchadnezzar is not legitimately a part of this group in the first place.²⁰

Another attempt to resolve the tension of Nebuchadnezzar's title has been contributed by Klaas A. D. Smelik, who breaks with Lemke by setting aside the text-critical issues and instead explores the implications of Nebuchadnezzar's title as included in the MT.²¹ Smelik concludes that, "Nebuchadnezzar is...elected by the LORD to fulfill a task in God's universal plan. Therefore we find the designation [my servant] only in those passages dealing with Nebuchadnezzar's special mission in the LORD's service."²² In other words, Smelik argues that, while Nebuchadnezzar's distinction as being a "servant of YHWH" is legitimate, he is only YHWH's servant when doing specific tasks.²³ Part of his argument are the descriptions of Nebuchadnezzar found in the book Daniel, in which he concludes that the "ambiguous two-faced representation of Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel does not support Lemke's view that the occurrence of the honorific title [my servant] for the king in the book of Jeremiah can be compared to the characterization of Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel."²⁴

Put another way, Smelik does not see a development of character and devotion to YHWH in Nebuchadnezzar as compared to others who receive the distinction "servant of YHWH," thus implying that Nebuchadnezzar should not be thought of as receiving the same honorific title as David,

¹⁹ Commenting on Lemke's view, Jack R. Lundbom says, "This view does not carry conviction. The LXX, as we have seen, cannot be assumed to be the better or more original text." Lundbom goes on to say that "the expression, 'Nebuchadnezzar...my servant,' is eminently worthy of Jeremiah, whose discourse teems with robust and even shocking images" (*Jeremiah 21–36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 21B [New York, NY: Doubleday, 2004], 315). In other words, Lundbom does not see this expression as being unexpected or out of place in the book of Jeremiah.

²⁰ Lemke, "Nebuchadnezzar, My Servant," 46–47. "The three-fold designation of Nebuchadnezzar as *'ebed Yhwh* does not derive from Jeremiah at all but owes its existence to an accidental error in the textual transmission of the book which bears the Prophet's name. This explanation is suggested by the witness of the old Greek version of Jer, in which the designation *'abdi* does not appear in any of the three passages under consideration" (47).

²¹ Smelik, "My Servant Nebuchadnezzar," 109–134.

²² *Ibid.*, 133.

²³ Lundbom, citing Hyatt, arrives at a similar position, viewing Nebuchadnezzar as an unknowing, functional servant of YHWH, carrying out "the bidding of the One who has created the world and controls the history of all nations" (*Jeremiah 21–36*, 315).

²⁴ Smelik, "My Servant Nebuchadnezzar," 128–129.

Moses, Joshua, and others. Overall, Smelik analyzes the actions and descriptions of Nebuchadnezzar in the HB and concludes that his designation as a “servant of YHWH” in the book of Jeremiah is a description of his function rather than the honorific title given to others in the HB who are described by the title “servant of YHWH.”²⁵

Do these current explanations make the best sense of the biblical data presented in the MT? Lemke presents a plausible case that the “my servant” construction should not be in the text in connection to Nebuchadnezzar by arguing on a text-critical level.²⁶ However, in his discussion, Lemke, though entitled to his results due to the methodology he employs, does not allow the MT text to speak for itself. Rather than grapple with the tensions that are raised by the “my servant” Nebuchadnezzar construction, he seeks to make the problem disappear.²⁷

On the other hand, Smelik enters the tension of Nebuchadnezzar’s title as presented in the MT, concluding that Nebuchadnezzar is only a “servant of YHWH” when performing certain tasks.²⁸ However, I argue that though this conclusion could be made when analyzing the HB texts about Nebuchadnezzar, Smelik’s argument is based on value judgements concerning Nebuchadnezzar’s character. He would be the most notable break from the rest of the list of those

²⁵ Ibid. “The ambiguous two-faced representation of Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel does not support Lemke’s view that the occurrence of the honorific title [my servant] for the king in the book of Jeremiah can be compared to the characterization of Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel” (128–129).

²⁶ Lemke criticizes the MT version of the book of Jeremiah, arguing that the Greek version is more accurate in its omission of the “my servant” construction in connection to Nebuchadnezzar (“Nebuchadnezzar, My Servant”).

²⁷ Lemke, “Nebuchadnezzar, My Servant,” 46–47. This dismissal of Nebuchadnezzar’s honorific title in the book of Jeremiah through means of text-criticism, as seen in Lemke’s argument, remains present in modern scholarship. One example of this is Philip D. Stern when he, drawing from Bright, comments regarding Jer 25:9 MT, “The reference to Nebuchadnezzar is, as Bright noted, syntactically awkward and most likely to be a later addition” (“The Literary Prophets,” in *The Biblical Herem: A Window in Israel’s Religious Experience*, BJS 211 [Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2020], 189–208).

²⁸ Similar to Smelik, Brueggemann explores the theological implications of the MT’s designation of Nebuchadnezzar as “my servant.” He sees the designation of the honorific title to Nebuchadnezzar as communicating that “even alien rulers are utilized to bring about Yahweh’s purposes” (*Jeremiah 1–25: To Pluck Up, to Tear Down*, ITC [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989], 213). In other words, Brueggemann views Nebuchadnezzar as being described as a vessel used by God. He also brings out the insight that Nebuchadnezzar being called “my servant” implies that God rules over gentile history as well as Israelite history.

who are designated “servant of YHWH.”²⁹ In this regard, I agree with Lemke when he says, “To be an instrument of God’s activity in history is one thing; to be his servant is quite another.”³⁰ Being a “servant of YHWH” is a distinction so reserved that it goes beyond the function of doing something on YHWH’s behalf. I assert that there is an alternative explanation for Nebuchadnezzar’s distinction as a “servant of YHWH” in the MT. I propose that the explanation that is best supported by the MT for Nebuchadnezzar’s honorific designation is that he, in fact, is deemed by the biblical writers to be a “servant of YHWH” on par with David, Moses, and others.³¹ I will support this claim in three ways.

²⁹ While released in 2014, Smelik’s work represents the farthest the discussion regarding the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s designation as a servant of YHWH in the MT has progressed (“My Servant Nebuchadnezzar”). Put another way, the conversation regarding Nebuchadnezzar’s status has not been significantly advanced in the last seven years. The purpose of this article is to create possibilities for a reexamination of this question in light of the biblical data.

³⁰ Lemke, “Nebuchadnezzar, My Servant,” 46.

³¹ Nebuchadnezzar is not the only foreign ruler who is esteemed in the HB—Cyrus the king of Persia comes to mind (e.g., Isa 45:1). His title as “anointed one” or “messiah” also puts him in exclusive company in the HB, connecting him with the Israelite kings Saul and David (Moshe Reiss, “Cyrus as Messiah,” *JBQ* 40.3 [2012]: 159–162.). Much debate has taken place regarding the meaning of Cyrus’s honorific designation. There are three primary positions, as summarized by Lisbet S. Fried (“Cyrus the Messiah?: The Historical Background to Isaiah 45:1,” *HTR* 95.4 [2002]: 373–393). First, there are those who say that Cyrus’s designation as an “anointed one” is simply a later addition and should not be considered. Second, there are some who argue that Cyrus’s designation was intended by the author but should not be taken to mean anything more than Cyrus being an instrument on behalf of YHWH. Third, as proposed by Asher Eder, there is a position which considers Cyrus’s designation as having significant meaning, concluding that he is an “anointed one” on par with David—one who prepares the way for the temple through righteous warfare (“King Cyrus, Anointed (Messiah) of the Lord.” *JBQ* 23.3 [1995]: 188–192.). Fried herself proposes one additional view worth mentioning. She argues that the author of this section of Isaiah was a contemporary of Cyrus who was seeking to legitimize him as the true king over Israel in the eyes of his readers. She proposes that it was due to this motivation that the author associates the title “anointed one” or “messiah” with Cyrus. In light of the argument I present in this article, being that one should allow the HB data to inform one’s opinion of the implications of Nebuchadnezzar’s “my servant” designation rather than dismissing the title as limited due to Nebuchadnezzar’s background, I am inclined to side with Eder’s position, being that Cyrus is an “anointed one” on par with David. However, while it is not within the scope of this article to conduct a full analysis, there are two reasons I find the argument in favor of Nebuchadnezzar as a legitimate, as opposed to only a functional, “servant of YHWH” more convincing than the arguments in favor of viewing Cyrus’s “messiah” designation as honorific, at least on the basis of the MT. First, in addition to the exclusive nature of the “my servant” title, accounts of Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel imply

Exclusivity of the "Servants"

First, the title "servant of YHWH" is too exclusive in the HB for one of these "servant(s)" to be considered a servant of YHWH only in his function. As previously stated, there are only ten individuals deemed worthy of the title—namely, Abraham, Moses, David, Caleb, Isaiah, Eliakim, Joshua, Job, Zerubabel, and Nebuchadnezzar. There are no other members of this list of whom it could be argued from the MT that they are merely employees of YHWH, in that they only function as his servants but do not also have a unique relationship with YHWH.³² Thus, though Smelik claims that Nebuchadnezzar is a functional "servant of YHWH" and is not worthy of the honorific title, he has not identified a specific pattern to support this conclusion. Rather, he is primarily making his argument based on value judgments of Nebuchadnezzar's character in the book of Daniel and other parts of the HB. In this way, his argument is that Nebuchadnezzar is the one exception to the list of those whom the HB refers to as "servant(s) of YHWH."³³

Reanalysis of Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Daniel

Second, even if I employ a part of Smelik's methodology, analyzing the descriptions of Nebuchadnezzar and his words and actions in the HB, a convincing argument can be made that the HB data supports the position that Nebuchadnezzar is a "servant of YHWH" on par with the others called by that name—namely, in function and in relationship to YHWH.³⁴

that he, over time, came to have a dynamic relationship with YHWH, something characteristic of those named "servant(s) of YHWH." Second, as shown in the narratives in the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar shares episodic ties with others deemed "servants of YHWH." I expand on these arguments in the rest of this article. These are two elements that I do not find to be as discernable in relation to Cyrus.

³² The possible exception to this is Eliakim son of Hilkiyah, a servant in the household of King Hezekiah. There is not enough data about him in the HB to make a conclusive judgement regarding his comparison to others deemed "servants of YHWH," or "my servant." For details about Eliakim, see: Michael L. Ruffin, "Eliakim," *EDB* 393.

³³ As Lundbom points out, "Never in the Bible except here is an enemy of Israel given this title" (*Jeremiah* 21–36, 247). Put another way, Nebuchadnezzar's designation as a servant of YHWH is an anomaly. I concur with Smelik (as described by Lundbom) that "the term means to be provocative," challenging readers to reconsider their theological presuppositions (*Jeremiah* 21–36, 247). However, because of other factors described in this article (the exclusivity of the title, evidence from the book of Daniel, and episodic ties with others deemed "servants of YHWH"), I conclude that Nebuchadnezzar is not simply a "servant of YHWH" in his function but rather is a recipient of the full honorific title.

³⁴ There are three reasons why the book of Daniel is a legitimate source for clarifying what is meant by Nebuchadnezzar's "my servant" description in the book

Wendy L. Widder analyzes the direct speeches attributed to Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 4 and comes to the conclusion that through the speech, the writer of Daniel “vindicates the God of Israel before the whole world and transforms the king who embodied opposition to God into the paradigm of what a gentile king ought to be.”³⁵ In the process of supporting this claim, Widder argues that the book of Daniel portrays Nebuchadnezzar as having a transformation of character, coming to the point where he acknowledges YHWH as the true God. Widder quotes Newsom when she writes,

The first four chapters ‘have been carefully edited together to provide an extended account of the gradual transformation of Nebuchadnezzar’s consciousness from a king who considers himself to be the most powerful figure in his kingdom to one who recognizes that his extraordinary greatness is but a gift from the Most High God.’³⁶

In other words, supported by Newsom, Widder comes to a conclusion opposite of Smelik, who writes that the book of Daniel portrays an “ambiguous two-faced representation of Nebuchadnezzar.”³⁷

An analysis of Daniel 1–4 in the MT is as follows. King Nebuchadnezzar acts as a pagan. Even in chapter 4, he mentions his “god.” However, he praises the God of Israel three separate times (Dan 2:47; 3:28; 4:37 MT). Furthermore, in analyzing YHWH’s relationship with Nebuchadnezzar,

of Jeremiah (MT). First, the book of Daniel portrays the defeat of Jehoiakim, and the book of Jeremiah describes the demise of Zedekiah, in a similar manner: It had been YHWH who had given (“*natan*”) them over to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 44:30 MT; Dan 1:2). This implies that there are theological parallels between the books, parallels that justify an examination of Nebuchadnezzar’s character development in the book of Daniel as a clue to what is implied by his designation of the honorific title in the book of Jeremiah. Another literary and theological tie between the books of Daniel and Jeremiah is the seventy weeks prophecy (Jer 29:10 MT; Dan 9:2). The author of Daniel shows an awareness of the prophecy in the book of Jeremiah, which stated that seventy years would pass before the Israelite exiles would return to Jerusalem (Jer 29:10 MT). In this way, the book of Daniel again shows a theological similarity with the book of Jeremiah. Together, these theological connections between the books of Daniel and Jeremiah give warrant to utilizing the book of Daniel to provide further insight regarding the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s designation as a servant of YHWH in the book of Jeremiah (MT).

³⁵ Wendy L. Widder, “Letting Nebuchadnezzar Speak: The Purpose of the First-Person Narrative in Daniel 4,” *OTE* 32.1 (2019): 197–214.

³⁶ *Ibid.* Put another way, Newsom views Nebuchadnezzar as, in her words, the “protagonist” of Dan 1–4, an argument supported by “the placement of Dan 3 amid a series of stories that trace the gradual and at times painful education of the king” (Carol A. Newsom and Brennan W. Breed, *Daniel: A Commentary*, OTL [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014], 100–101).

³⁷ Smelik, “My Servant Nebuchadnezzar,” 128–129.

YHWH gives (*natan*) him Judah, and he also goes so far as to humble him for his pride, leading to Nebuchadnezzar's "praise and exalt[ing] and glorify[ing]" of God (Dan 4:37 MT). Furthermore, God reveals the future to him on two separate occasions (Dan 2:28; 4:24–25 MT). Nebuchadnezzar is also rebuked, as are other notable servants of God (Num 20:12; 2 Sam 12:9–12; Dan 4:31–32 MT). Overall, though Nebuchadnezzar is of a different cultural background from the other "servant(s)," I do not find a reason to disqualify Nebuchadnezzar as being a "servant of YHWH," in terms of what is meant by the term when applied to the other nine cases.³⁸ Ultimately, Widder's argument demonstrates that there are contrasting value judgments that can be made regarding Nebuchadnezzar's character transformation, or lack of it, in the book of Daniel.³⁹

This brings me to the third reason why I believe Nebuchadnezzar is a worthy recipient of the honorific title: a more convincing conclusion regarding the meaning of "servant of YHWH" when applied to Nebuchadnezzar in the MT can be arrived at by focusing on the data—namely, on the exclusivity of the title and on those individuals who are bestowed the constructions "servant of the YHWH" and/or "my servant" in YHWH's direct speeches.

Episodic Ties with Moses and David

In the narratives of the HB, Nebuchadnezzar has episodic ties with others deemed a "servant(s) of YHWH." Moses and David provide adequate examples. The three

³⁸ Though making her argument based on an analysis of Dan 1–4, Newsom arrives at a conclusion regarding Nebuchadnezzar's character that is complementary to the one that I describe here. After referring to Jer 27:6–7 MT—one of the passages in which Nebuchadnezzar is designated "my servant" in YHWH's direct speeches—Newsom writes, "In contrast to Jeremiah, however, which takes no interest in his character, Dan 4 humanizes Nebuchadnezzar and indeed presents him in the positive role of the redeemed sinner, completing the development of his character begun in ch. 1" (Newsom and Breed, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 149). In other words, it can be argued that the way Newsom presents Dan 4 is demonstrable support for the legitimacy of Nebuchadnezzar's designation as "my servant" in the book of Jeremiah's MT tradition. Newsom describes qualities in Nebuchadnezzar's transformed character that align well with other servants of YHWH (for more on these similarities, see the next section).

³⁹ While approaching Dan 4 as a postscripted story regarding Nabonidus rather than Nebuchadnezzar, John J. Collins comments, "Daniel 4, however, differs from these [Daniel 8 and 11] in one crucial respect: it ends with the repentance of and virtual conversion of the pagan king. . . . Nebuchadnezzar in this story is not ultimately a prefiguration of Antiochus Epiphanes, still less of the devil. Rather, the story expresses a stubborn hope for the reclamation of even the most arrogant tyrant and for universal recognition of the Most High God" (John J. Collins, and Adela Yarbro Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993], 234). Put another way, Collin's view is that the figure depicted as Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 4 is shown to have a stark transformation of character.

figures exhibit a strong duality in their characters—they display cases of intense anger or rage, and they display acts of mercy. I will examine instances of each.

Moses, David, and Nebuchadnezzar are all described as partaking in unexpected acts of mercy. After being persecuted for several years by King Saul, David is finally crowned king of Israel (2 Sam 5). As seen in other HB narratives, in order to avoid problematic claims to power, a new ruler would often eliminate the descendants of the one formerly in authority (cf. Judg 9:1–5). However, rather than seeking to secure his own rulership by eliminating the house of Saul, David shows remarkable kindness (*hesed*) to Saul's lame grandson, Mephibosheth, making him a regular at his own table (2 Sam 9:1–7). In this way, David shows unexpected mercy.

Moses also is shown as displaying unexpected mercy, except his act occurs on a national scale (Exod 32:7–14; Num 14:11–20). In spite of his own frustrations with the people of Israel (Exod 16:8; Num 11:10–15), on two occasions when YHWH threatens to destroy all of Israel and establish Moses and his descendants as a new nation, Moses intercedes on behalf of his people. Moses is depicted as having the audacity to argue with YHWH, and he successfully manages to subvert YHWH's wrath on both occasions. In this way, he also is portrayed in the HB narrative texts as displaying unexpected mercy.

Nebuchadnezzar's act of mercy occurs as a surprising aside in his conquering of Jerusalem, as depicted in Jer 39 of the MT. After multiple years of besieging Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar's armies succeeded in subduing the city. Judah, led by their king Zedekiah, had been a rebellious vassal and was treated as such when the Babylonian army captured the city (Jer 39 MT). However, the book of Jeremiah records that Nebuchadnezzar had given orders to his captain of the guard to take care of the prophet, even implicitly giving Jeremiah a choice as to where he would reside (Jer 39:11–12 MT). In other words, one called a “servant of YHWH,” in the middle of a military campaign, ensures that another “servant of YHWH” is taken care of.⁴⁰ This description of Nebuchadnezzar's act in this HB narrative connects him with David and Moses, who also participated in unexpected acts of mercy on behalf of a member(s) of the people of Israel.

David, Moses, and Nebuchadnezzar are also tied in HB narratives through their episodes of anger and/or rage. Before David is king of Israel, while he is wandering about with his 600 men, he seeks provisions from a man named Nabal (1 Sam 25). When David finds that his request has been denied, he decides to arm himself and his men with the purpose of killing Nabal and every male in his household (1 Sam 25:12–13, 21–22). Though it is not recorded in the text that he had been commanded by YHWH to carry this out—as one

⁴⁰ Though not explicitly called a “servant of YHWH,” Jeremiah functions as a servant of YHWH as a prophet.

might expect from one with the title “servant of YHWH”—in his wrath, David decides that Nabal’s lack of hospitality warrants the killing of his entire house.

Moses is also no stranger to fits of anger. When Moses sees that an Egyptian is oppressing one of his kin, he scans the area—implying he at least had a few moments to consider his action—and decides to murder the Egyptian and bury his body in the sand (Exod 2:12). Unlike David, who comes up short of fulfilling his violent fantasy, Moses carries out his act of homicide. In other words, the one most recorded in the HB as being entitled the “servant of YHWH” was prone to acting impulsively in his anger.⁴¹

Like David and Moses, Nebuchadnezzar is also depicted in HB narratives as acting in rage. In the book of Daniel, when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego first decide not to bow before Nebuchadnezzar’s statue, he, though angry, decides to give them a second chance to comply with his order (Dan 3:15 MT). However, whenever they persist in their noncompliance, Nebuchadnezzar loses restraint and orders his men to raise the temperature of his furnace sevenfold, leading to the death of his guards (Dan 3:22 MT). HB narrative texts depict David, Moses, and Nebuchadnezzar as losing regard for human life during fits of anger.

In addition to these three narrational connections, Nebuchadnezzar shares an additional kingly episodic tie with David. Both receive ethical instruction by a prophet of YHWH, an often seen occurrence for kings of Israel and/or Judah (cf. 1 Sam 13:13–14; 2 Kgs 20:14–18; 2 Chr 20:37). For example, following David’s moral downfall with Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan rebukes David for his unethical actions and foretells his coming judgment (2 Sam 12:1–14). Later in the narrative, this judgment comes to pass, when David’s child dies soon after birth (2 Sam 12:18). Similarly, when King Nebuchadnezzar is depicted as being troubled by a dream, the prophet Daniel not only interprets the dream but also provides Nebuchadnezzar ethical instruction (Dan 4:19–27 MT). Daniel tells him to “break off” his sins “by practicing righteousness” and to show regard for the “oppressed,” in an attempt to prolong his “prosperity” (Dan 4:27 ESV). As with David, the foretold judgment comes to pass, and Nebuchadnezzar is described as acting like a wild animal for a time (Dan 4:33 MT). In this way, YHWH is depicted in the book of Daniel as dealing with Nebuchadnezzar in a manner similar to how he dealt with the covenant king David, by providing him with ethical rebuke and instruction through one of his prophets.

Because of these and other episodic ties which can be seen in HB narratives, I disagree with Smelik when he argues that, in part because of Nebuchadnezzar’s “ambiguous two-faced representation ... in the book of

⁴¹ As mentioned previously, when combining the instances of “my servant” and “servant of YHWH” in the HB, Moses and David come out even at twenty-four mentions each.

Daniel,” he cannot be understood to be a “servant of YHWH” outside of when he is executing a “special mission in the LORD’s service.”⁴² Using this logic, many of the servant(s) of YHWH are “fickle” and “two-faced” (borrowing Smelik’s language). As we have seen, Moses, particularly early on, seems to be more of a coward than a liberator.⁴³ David certainly is the most two-faced of all.⁴⁴ In addition, this distinction between function and identity does not seem to be present in any of the other cases of those whom YHWH calls “my servant.”⁴⁵ David is remembered as a “servant of YHWH” even though he transgresses. Moses is a “servant of YHWH” in spite of his failure to obey YHWH.⁴⁶ Job and Caleb are “servant(s) of YHWH” though they are not ethnic Israelites.⁴⁷ In order for Smelik’s argument to carry, Nebuchadnezzar would need to be the one case in which someone titled “servant of YHWH” in the MT would be merely a functional servant of YHWH, carrying out tasks on his behalf without any unique connection to YHWH.⁴⁸ Thus, in light of this and the episodic ties to other “servant(s) of YHWH,” I argue that this is further evidence that the gentile king Nebuchadnezzar is a “servant of YHWH” on par with Moses, David, Joshua, and others.

Conclusion

In the MT there are only ten individuals who are regarded as “my servant” in YHWH’s direct speeches and/or as a “servant of YHWH” otherwise. Of these ten, the most perplexing figure mentioned is Nebuchadnezzar, the ruler of Babylon in the sixth century. Some have argued that his inclusion in this list is a result of a “scribal error.”⁴⁹ Others have regarded this title to be intentional, but limited in scope—a description of function but not of honor as designated for the other biblical figures who receive the title “servant of YHWH.”⁵⁰ In this article, I have proposed that the biblical writers intended to communicate that Nebuchadnezzar is a full-fledged “servant of YHWH,” both in his function and in his unique relationship to YHWH.

⁴² Smelik, “My Servant Nebuchadnezzar,” 128–129; 133.

⁴³ See Exod 2:12.

⁴⁴ Murdering Uriah and taking his wife (2 Sam 11).

⁴⁵ For a possible exception, see footnote 27.

⁴⁶ Num 20:10–13; Josh 1:2.

⁴⁷ Josh 14:6; Job 1:1; Caleb’s father is called a “Kenizzite.”

⁴⁸ Again, the possible exception to this is Eliakim son of Hilkiyah, a servant in the household of King Hezekiah. There is not enough data in the HB about him to make a conclusive judgment regarding his comparison to other “servants of the LORD.” For details about Eliakim, see: Ruffin, “Eliakim,” *EDB* 393.

⁴⁹ Lemke, “Nebuchadnezzar, My Servant,” 50.

⁵⁰ Smelik, “My Servant Nebuchadnezzar,” 133.

I find there to be two primary theological implications to this conclusion. First, it appears that YHWH does not select his servants based on ethnicity. There are three foreigners⁵¹ and multiple tribes of Israel represented in this exclusive list. In addition, there is no dynasty of “servant(s) of YHWH.” For example, while David is a “servant of YHWH,” his sons are not bestowed that title. Instead, the honorific title is bestowed upon those who act on behalf of YHWH and who have a unique relationship with him, regardless of other factors.

The second theological implication I find is that moral perfection is not a requirement to be deemed a “servant of YHWH.” As discussed earlier, many of YHWH’s explicitly named servants were far from morally perfect. David has his many flaws. Moses has his moments. Isaiah admitted that he was a “man of unclean lips.”⁵² Overall, it is not moral perfection but rather other factors that qualify one to be a “servant of YHWH.”

⁵¹ Job, Caleb, Nebuchadnezzar.

⁵² Isa 6:5.

*Appendix***Table 3.** “My servant” as specified by YHWH in direct speech

Reference	Hebrew	English	Spec. indiv.
2 Sam 3:18	דָּוִד עַבְדִּי	“David my servant”	David
2 Sam 7:5	אֶל-עַבְדִּי אֶל-דָּוִד	“to my servant to David”	David
2 Sam 7:8	לְעַבְדִּי לְדָוִד	“to my servant to David”	David
1 Kgs 11:13	דָּוִד עַבְדִּי	“David my servant”	David
1 Kgs 11:32	עַבְדִּי דָוִד	“my servant David”	David
1 Kgs 11:34	דָּוִד עַבְדִּי	“David my servant”	David
1 Kgs 11:36	לְדָוִד-עַבְדִּי	“to David my servant”	David
1 Kgs 11:38	דָּוִד עַבְדִּי	“David my servant”	David
1 Kgs 14:8	כַּעַבְדִּי דָוִד	“like my servant David”	David
2 Kgs 19:34	דָּוִד עַבְדִּי	“David my servant”	David
2 Kgs 20:6	דָּוִד עַבְדִּי	“David my servant”	David
1 Chr 17:4	אֶל-דָּוִד עַבְדִּי	“to David my servant”	David
1 Chr 17:7	לְעַבְדִּי לְדָוִד	“to my servant to David”	David
Ps 89:4	לְדָוִד עַבְדִּי	“to David my servant”	David
Ps 89:21	דָּוִד עַבְדִּי	“David my servant”	David
Jer 33:21	דָּוִד עַבְדִּי	“David my servant”	David
Jer 33:22	דָּוִד עַבְדִּי	“David my servant”	David
Jer 33:26	וְדָוִד עַבְדִּי	“and David my servant”	David
Ezek 34:23	עַבְדִּי דָוִד	“my servant David”	David
Ezek 34:24	וְעַבְדִּי דָוִד	“and my servant David”	David
Ezek 37:24	וְעַבְדִּי דָוִד	“and my servant David”	David

Ezek 37:25	וְדָוִד עַבְדִּי	“and David my servant”	David
Num 12:7	עַבְדִּי מֹשֶׁה	“my servant Moses”	Moses
Num 12:8	בְּעַבְדִּי בְּמֹשֶׁה	“in my servant in Moses”	Moses
Josh 1:2	מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי	“Moses my servant”	Moses
Josh 1:7	מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי	“Moses my servant”	Moses
2 Kgs 21:8	עַבְדִּי מֹשֶׁה	“my servant Moses”	Moses
Mal 3:22	מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי	“Moses my servant”	Moses
Job 1:8	עַבְדִּי אֵיזֵב	“my servant Job”	Job
Job 2:3	אֶל-עַבְדִּי אֵיזֵב	“to my servant Job”	Job
Job 42:7	כְּעַבְדִּי אֵיזֵב	“like my servant Job”	Job
Job 42:8	אֶל-עַבְדִּי אֵיזֵב	“to my servant Job”	Job
Job 42:8	וְאֵיזֵב עַבְדִּי	“and Job my servant”	Job
Job 42:8	כְּעַבְדִּי אֵיזֵב	“like my servant Job”	Job
Jer 25:9	וְאֶל-נְבוּכַדְרֶאֱצַר מֶלֶךְ-בָּבֶל עַבְדִּי	“and to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, my servant”	Nebuchad- nezzar
Jer 27:6	נְבוּכַדְרֶאֱצַר מֶלֶךְ- בָּבֶל עַבְדִּי	“Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, my servant”	Nebuchad- nezzar
Jer 43:10	נְבוּכַדְרֶאֱצַר מֶלֶךְ- בָּבֶל עַבְדִּי	“Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, my servant”	Nebuchad- nezzar
Gen 26:24	אַבְרָהָם עַבְדִּי	“Abraham my servant”	Abraham
Num 14:24	וְעַבְדִּי כָלֵב	“but my servant Caleb”	Caleb
Isa 20:3	עַבְדִּי יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ	“my servant Isaiah”	Isaiah
Isa 22:20	לְעַבְדִּי לְאֵלִיָּקִים	“to my servant to Eliakim”	Eliakim
Hag 2:23	זְרֻבָּבֶל בֶּן- שַׁאֲלִיתְיָאֵל עַבְדִּי	“Zerubbabel, son of Shiel- tiel, my servant”	Zerub- babel

Table 4. “Servant of YHWH”

Reference	Hebrew	English	Spec. Indiv
Deut 34:5	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד־יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
Josh 1:1	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
Josh 1:13	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד־יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
Josh 1:15	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
Josh 8:31	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד־יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
Josh 8:33	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד־יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
Josh 11:12	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
Josh 12:6	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד־יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
Josh 12:6	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד־יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
Josh 13:8	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
Josh 14:7	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד־יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
Josh 18:7	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
Josh 22:2	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
Josh 22:4	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
Josh 22:5	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד־יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
2 Kgs 18:12	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
2 Chr 1:3	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד־יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
2 Chr 24:6	מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד־יְהוָה	“Moses servant of YHWH”	Moses
Josh 24:29	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹון עֶבֶד יְהוָה	“Joshua, son of Nun, servant of YHWH”	Joshua
Judg 2:8	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹון עֶבֶד יְהוָה	“Joshua, son of Nun, servant of YHWH”	Joshua
Ps 18:1	לְעַבְדֵי יְהוָה לְדָוִד	“of servant of YHWH of David”	David
Ps 36:1	לְעַבְדֵי־יְהוָה לְדָוִד	“of servant of YHWH of David”	David

“GOD’S OBEDIENCE”: A LINGUISTIC AND NARRATIVE
EXPLORATION OF THE HEBREW IDIOM IN 1 KINGS 17:22
AND ITS THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

This article explores a particular sentence in the first resurrection narrative of the Bible: “And the LORD obeyed Elijah” (1 Kgs 17:22a). Before the widow’s son returns to life, the prophet calls YHWH to perform a miracle. Subsequently, and surprisingly, the narration reports that the LORD *obeyed*. We argue that, in contrast to the Hebrew of the source text, modern Bible translations do not render 1 Kgs 17:22a (וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֵלְיָהוּ) correctly. Instead of translating “The LORD listened to the voice of Elijah” (NRSV), “The LORD heard Elijah’s cry” (NIV), or “The LORD answered Elijah’s prayer” (GNB), one should instead render the Hebrew valence of שמע by translating “And the LORD obeyed Elijah.” We utilize the latest tools for text corpus analysis (Text-Fabric, SHEBANQ)¹ to analyze the Hebrew verbal valence of שמע. Our argument is, however, not only of a linguistic nature. We also engage in a literary analysis of 1 Kgs 17. We seek to demonstrate that when both linguistic and literary studies are combined, the correct rendering of v.22b becomes the theological climax of the opening chapter of the so-called Elijah cycle. This theological climax reveals what Lunn has described as “human-theophany.” The prophet embodies YHWH’s presence. At the end of our article, we explore the intertextual and typological aspects of such a theological climax.

Keywords: 1 Kgs 17, Elijah cycle, resurrection, valence, typology, intertextuality, narrative studies, linguistics, digital humanities

¹ This article will refer to queries that have been published with persistent identifiers (PID) on the web. Due to the nature of PIDs no access-date information will be provided. The reader can investigate our published queries with their results when following the PID address (a mouse-click away).

Introduction

With three episodes, 1 Kgs 17 opens the Elijah cycle (1 Kgs 17–19).² The chapter stands out from the preceding chapters because of its exceptional literary design and unexpected formulations.³ One can argue that the climax of this chapter is found in its final episode, when a dead boy is resurrected. It is the first resurrection account of the HB. In addition to Elijah, only his disciple and successor, Elisha, can bring the dead back to life (cf. 2 Kgs 4:32–37, 13:21). The titling of the prophet as “man of God” (v.18: אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים; v.24: אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים) further marks the pivotal character of this episode. Only at the very end of the Elijah cycle (1 Kgs 17–2 Kgs 2) will the prophet again be called a “man of God” (2 Kgs 1:9, 11, 12, 13). Through narrative art, this chapter develops the prophet into a *dramatis personae*. Elijah enjoys a unique relationship with Yahweh, who provides him with unrivaled author-

² Würthwein has argued that the Elijah cycle (1 Kgs 17–19) was composed and inserted by Deuteronomistic circles that were prophetically influenced (DtrP). These circles tried to combine the drought composition (1 Kgs 17–18) with the Horeb composition (1 Kgs 19). According to Würthwein, however, the linking of these two compositions, lacks coherence and necessity (“doch es fehlt an einem ‘ursprünglichen und notwendigen Zusammenhang’”). After at least two Deuteronomistic redactions, a post post-Deuteronomistic redaction added the material of the resurrection of the boy (1 Kgs 7:17–24). He argues that the secondary nature of the latter is recognizable because (1) the unspecific formula “now it happened after these things” (וַיְהִי אַחֲרָיֶהּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה) connects only loosely with the former episode about the Sidonite widow; (2) the woman in vv.8–16 is a poor widow (v.10: אִלְמָנָה), while the woman in vv.17–24 is a wealthy head of a household (v.17: בְּעֵלַת הַבַּיִת), possessing a larger house with a second floor. According to Würthwein, the post-Deuteronomistic redactors tried to connect these two women as being one and the same person only at a later stage of the narration (after v.10—it is v.20 that uses אִלְמָנָה again). The redaction, therefore, did not merge the two independent episodes perfectly. See Ernst Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige: 1. Kön. 17–2. Kön. 25*, eds. Otto Kaiser and Lothar Peritt, ATD 11 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 205, 222, 226–227. The argument for a secondary insertion of 1 Kgs 17:17–24 is also accepted by Rendtorff. See Rolf Rendtorff, *Das Alte Testament: Eine Einführung*, vol. 1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2001). Interestingly, the apparent incoherencies are not recognized or commented on by Waltke. See Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 717. Our research results, however, should raise questions about Würthwein’s take. As we suggest, there is a well-crafted command-and-compliance pattern contained in the entire chapter. This pattern is developed in such a way that a climax is reached in v.22. This article seeks to demonstrate that one can achieve such a climax only if one can build upon the episode of the poor widow in vv.8–16 with its own command-and-compliance structure.

³ This article will explore some of those literary features and formulations. Particularly, the command-and-compliance pattern and awkward formulations like כִּי אִם-לִפִּי דְבָרִי (v.1) and וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֱלִיָּהוּ (v.22) will receive attention.

ity. This finds its ultimate climax when the narration reports in v.22a, “And YHWH obeyed Elijah” (וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֱלִיָּהוּ).

Only a few scholars have taken note of this particular use of language in v.22a. Although Jesse C. Long and Jerome Walsh have pointed at this surprising formulation in their commentaries on 1 Kings, they do not elaborate on the interpretative implications of God’s “obedience” in the context of the interplay between YHWH and Elijah in ch. 17.⁴ However, a precise translation triggers two questions: (a) In what sense can God be obedient to a human being? and (b) What are the theological implications of such a use of language? To address both questions, this article will (1) frame the general literary context of 1 Kgs 17, and (2) analyze the valence of שמע to establish a proper rendering for the construction of בקול + שמע. After the linguistic analysis, this article will (3) show how God’s “obedience” is part of the chapter’s literary “command-and-compliance” pattern. Finally, (4) we will explore how far the formulation in v.22a invites theological reflections upon the God-man relationship.

General Outline of the Literary Context

1 Kings 17 contains three narrative blocks that all take place in the context of a severe drought. This drought is announced in the opening of the chapter (1 Kgs 17:1). The first two blocks have several similarities by which the third block is offset. Herewith, the third episode achieves a climactic level and contributes surprising theological insights.

After the uncommon introduction of the Elijah cycle in 1 Kgs 17:1, each of the three narrative blocks is introduced by a—typical for the genre—וַיְהִי clause (vv.2, 8, 17). In the first episode (1 Kgs 17:2–7), the prophet retreats to Wadi Cherith, where ravens care (כול [v.4]) for him. In the second episode (1 Kgs 17:8–16), he moves to Zarephath, where he is cared for (כול [v.9]) by a Sidonian widow (אַלְמָנָה). In both cases, he follows the directions of YHWH. The *Wortereignisformel* (וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו [vv.2, 8]) introduces each episode. The third and final narrative block (1 Kgs 17:17–24) is about the death of the widow’s son and his resurrection and is introduced by וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה.

This third episode differs from the previous two in narratively significant ways. In contrast to the last two blocks, the *Wortereignisformel* (וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה)

⁴ Jerome T. Walsh affirms, “The phrase ‘to listen to the voice’ of someone is the usual idiom in Hebrew for ‘to obey,’ and it is often translated that way when the subject is a human being (for example, 1 Kgs 20:36)” (*1 Kings*, Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996], 235). In his turn, Jesse C. Long says that “in an important statement for the larger story, the narrator says that the LORD hears Elijah’s cry (literally, ‘heard/obeyed Elijah’s voice’ [קול, *qól*]).” Such statements are, however, the exception. Long highlights the parallel with Josh 10:14, where the phrase appears in connection with Joshua (*1 & 2 Kings*, College Press NIV Commentary [Joplin, MO: College Press, 2002], 208).

יְהוָה) is absent, and with it, divine promises and guidance. But from a lexical perspective, a similar sounding opening clause is provided:

Table 1. Narrative clause openings in 1 Kgs 17

First episode (v.2)	וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו
Second episode (v.8)	וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו
Third episode (v.17)	וַיְהִי אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה

However, through the similarities, the differences shine: again, there are “word(s)” (דְּבָרִים/דְּבַר, vv.2, 17). This time, however, they are not YHWH’s words but just the narrated—that is, “worded”—events (הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה). The prophet finds himself no longer grounded in a word from YHWH. He now stands simply on the grounds of past events (“worded” history). The situation is challenging because he must manage without divine instructions. While YHWH saves the prophet from hunger and death at Cherith (first episode) and in Zarephath (second episode), he now must take care of the premature death of a boy in the absence of a word from YHWH.

Here follows the next contrast: while the prophet has been the object of care in each episode (v.4: ravens take care [כול] of him; v.9: the widow takes care [כול] of him), he is now called to become a caretaker himself—he is to care for the vanishing life of the widow’s child. The absence of the verb כול in this third episode is apparent. It reappears in the next episode of 1 Kgs 18, where Obadiah is taking care (כול) of hundred prophets he is hiding from Jezebel (cf. 1 Kgs 18:4, 13). This verb contributes significantly to the textual coherence of the Elijah cycle.⁵

Finally, the first two episodes emphasize the prophet’s obedience to YHWH’s command (cf. vv. 3–5, 9–10).⁶ However, in the third episode, it is the prophet who commands YHWH, “Return now the life of the boy!” (וּתָשֶׁב נַפְשֵׁי־הַיָּלֵד הַזֶּה, v.21). In response, YHWH fulfills Elijah’s request in v.22b: “And he returned the life of the boy” (וּתָשֶׁב נַפְשֵׁי־הַיָּלֵד). The reverse

⁵ One could claim that in all instances where כול appears, it is the servants of YHWH who are being cared for. While ravens, a widow, or the servant Obadiah guarantee the survival of the prophet, the prophet is never portrayed as a caring agent. Rather, the narrator develops the prophetic persona of Elijah as the one who can control the laws of nature simply by the words of his mouth (cf. 1 Kgs 17:1).

⁶ The divine command לך (v.3) is followed by Elijah’s obedient action: וַיִּלְךְ (v.5a). The prophet’s obedience is explicitly emphasized by the narrator with the complementary clause “he did according to the word of YHWH” (וַיַּעַשׂ כְּדְבַר יְהוָה, v.5b). In the second episode, the divine command לך צִרְפָּתָה (v.9a) is followed by another obedient action by the prophet: וַיִּקָּם וַיִּלְךְ צִרְפָּתָה (v.10a).

of the commanding pattern with the additional reverse of the obedience pattern is emphasized with the surprising and puzzling formulation of the opening clause of v.22a: וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֱלִיָּהוּ. As we will argue below, a literal translation would render, “And God obeyed Elijah.” The narrative climax, then, is complete. The role of servant and Lord appear to be reversed: the hierarchy between the divine and human agents has flipped. If such a reading is justified, it invites us to explore the God-man relationship in the context of theophanies.

YHWH Obeys His Prophet: Valence Analysis of שמע + בקול

The verb שמע appears in the HB 1168 times⁷ and is represented by four different stems. Both CDCH and HALOT list renderings for שמע that vary between “to hear,” “to listen to,” “to pay attention,” “to obey,” “to understand,” “to be heard,” “to be obedient,” “to summon,” “to cause to hear,” and “to make known.”⁸ What meaning is activated depends on two significant factors: *stem* and *valence*.⁹ While comprehensive dictionaries provide information about the relationship between verbal meaning and verbal stem, they often lack guidance regarding verbal meaning and valence.¹⁰ Thus, while dictionaries are a good starting point for discovering the meaning and scope of שמע, further analysis of its actual valence patterns is needed.

From the perspective of stem distribution, שמע appears most frequently in the qal stem (1051x).¹¹ The apparent general meaning triggered in the qal is “to hear.”¹² For our purpose, we are particularly interested in the functioning of the different meanings that שמע triggers in its qal stem. Our method for exploring verbal meaning has been discussed elsewhere.¹³ To get an overview of the different valence patterns of שמע, we will utilize the ETCBC database

⁷ See SHEBANQ query [ID2926](#).

⁸ Cf. CDCH, 469–470; HALOT, 1570–1574.

⁹ The valency of a verb refers to the number of complements a verb may select. See Christo H. J. Van der Merwe, Jacobus A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze. *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), §12.3 and §33.2, 58–61, 277–280.

¹⁰ Cf. Janet W. Dyk, Oliver Glanz, and Reinoud Oosting, “Analysing Valence Patterns in Biblical Hebrew: Theoretical Questions and Analytic Frameworks,” *JNSL* 1.40 (2014): 43–62; Oliver Glanz, Reinoud Oosting, and Janet W. Dyk, “Valence Patterns in Biblical Hebrew: Classical Philology and Linguistic Patterns,” *JNSL* 2.41 (2016): 31–55.

¹¹ See SHEBANQ query [ID2927](#).

¹² HALOT and other dictionaries list “to hear” as the first and most general meaning. Cf. HALOT, s.v. “שמע.”

¹³ See Dyk, Glanz, and Oosting, “Analysing Valence Patterns,” 43–62; Glanz, Oosting, and Dyk, “Valence Patterns,” 31–55.

and tools like SHEBANQ and Text-Fabric.¹⁴ Querying the ETCBC database will allow us to identify the different valence patterns and detect the distribution statistics that come with them.

In most cases, שמע appears with either an explicit direct object or a complement.¹⁵ However, in 141 of all the שמע cases in qal, שמע does not come with any explicit object or complement.¹⁶ The meaning generated by these constructions is “to hear,” and in most cases, the object of hearing is implied.¹⁷

Where one or more obligatory elements¹⁸ are involved, it does not come as a surprise that in most qal cases, שמע appears with an explicit direct object (447x).¹⁹

The second strongest valence distribution of שמע is with complements in the form of prepositional phrases (290x).²⁰ The different constructions can be grouped according to the preposition that forms the head of the phrase and can be paired with the specific meanings they trigger. The table below includes three examples for each pattern:

¹⁴ A broad and detailed introduction into SHEBANQ can be found at <https://github.com/ETCBC/shebanq/wiki>. For more advanced linguistic analysis utilizing the latest technical tools for data mining, Text-Fabric has proven to be the go-to tool. The latest news and general information can be found here: <http://etcbc.nl/category/text-fabric/>.

¹⁵ With a total of 1051 qal cases, 669 cases have שמע with an explicit complement or object. See SHEBANQ query [ID2942](#).

¹⁶ See SHEBANQ query [ID2943](#).

¹⁷ Translations indicate this by adding “of it” or “it” (e.g., Gen 21:26; 2 Sam 10:7; 1 Kgs 8:34).

¹⁸ Obligatory elements are also called complements. Complements are necessary elements that cause a verb to have a specific meaning. See Coulter George, “[Verbal Valency](#),” in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Language and Linguistics*, ed. Georgios K. Giannakis, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2013). See also John A. Cook, “Valency: The Intersection of Syntax and Semantics,” in *Contemporary Examinations of Classical Languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, and Greek): Valency, Lexicography, Grammar, and Manuscripts*, eds. Timothy Martin Lewis et al., (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2016), 53–66. Unfortunately, the ETCBC database does not clearly differentiate between its nomenclature syntactical elements (e.g., subject, predicate, object) and valence elements (e.g., core, complement, adjunct). From a valence perspective, the ETCBC categories, objects (i.e., direct objects), complements (i.e., indirect objects), and certain location phrases, are to be considered valence relevant complements.

¹⁹ See SHEBANQ query [ID2931](#). As the query results show, the direct object can either come in the form of an object phrase or an entire object clause.

²⁰ See SHEBANQ query [ID2932](#) (e.g., Gen 3:17; 16:11; 21:12; 41:15). Indirect objects are tagged as complements in the ETCBC database.

Table 2. Valence patterns of שמע

Group	Pattern	Function and Examples
A	אל + שמע (110x) ²¹	triggers the meaning: “to listen to X” וְקָרָאתָ שְׁמוֹ יִשְׁמָעֵאל כִּי־שָׁמַע יְהוָה אֶל־עֲנִידֶךָ (Gen 16:11) And you shall call his name Ishmael for YHWH listened to your affliction. וַיִּתְעַבֵּר יְהוָה בִּי לְמַעַנְכֶם וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֵלַי (Deut 3:26) And YHWH was angry with me because of you and thus did not listen to me. שְׁמָעוּ אֵלַי יְדַעֵי צְדָקָה (Isa 51:7) Listen to me, you who know righteousness!
B	בָּ + שמע (105x) ²² In all בָּ + שמע + constructions the preposition בָּ governs the noun קול.	בָּקוּל + שמע triggers the meaning: “to obey” עָקַב אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַע אֶבְרָהָם בְּקוֹלִי וַיִּשְׁמַר מִשְׁמֹרֹתַי מִצְוֹתַי וְחֻקֹּתַי וְתוֹרֹתַי: (Gen 26:5) because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws וְאַתֶּם לֹא־תַכְרִיתוּ בְרִית לְיוֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת מִזְבְּחוֹתֵיהֶם תִּתְצוּן וְלֹא־ שְׁמַעְתֶּם בְּקוֹלִי (Judg 2:2) and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars. But you have not obeyed my voice. שְׁמַע בְּקוֹל הָעָם (1 Sam 8:7) Obey the voice of the people
C	לְ + שמע (52x) ²³	triggers the meaning: “to pay attention to” ²⁴ וְלְאָדָם אָמַר כִּי־שָׁמַעְתָּ לְקוֹל אִשְׁתְּךָ (Gen 3:17) And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife” וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם לְקוֹל שָׂרַי: (Gen 16:2) And Abraham listened to the voice of Sarai וְעַתָּה שְׁמַע לְקוֹל דְּבָרַי יְהוָה (1 Sam 15:1) now therefore listen to the words of the Lord

²¹ See SHEBANQ query [ID2945](#).

²² See SHEBANQ query [ID2946](#).

²³ See SHEBANQ query [ID2947](#).

²⁴ The preposition בָּ also introduces a complement of the verb שמע. But since it

The Problem of God's Obedience in 1 Kgs 17:22a

In light of the distribution of the שמע + בקול valence, it appears somewhat awkward when we find a text in which יהוה/אלהים obeys the voice of created beings.²⁵ Usually, human obey the voice of יהוה/אלהים.²⁶ Hence, regarding 1 Kgs 17:22 (B בקול A וישמע), we would expect יהוה to be in position B and אליהו in position A.

The initial clause of v.22a (וישמע יהוה בקול אליהו) is placed between the command-and-compliance elements mentioned in the previous section. English Bible translations hide the unexpected formulation in their rendering:

Table 3. Rendering of וישמע יהוה בקול אליהו in English Bible Translations

NKJV, NASB	Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah
ESV, NRSV	And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah
NIV84	The LORD heard Elijah's cry
NET	The LORD answered Elijah's prayer
NLT	The LORD heard Elijah's prayer
JPS	And the LORD hearkened unto the voice of Elijah
KJV	And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah

As discussed in the first part of this article, the problem with these renderings is that, when the preposition ב governs the noun קול as the complement of the verb שמע, the meaning triggered is not “to hear” or “to listen to” but “to obey.” While the translations render the valence שמע + בקול correctly in most other cases, the reason for deviating from their translation strategy is apparent: How can God obey a human being? The same phenomenon happens in Num 21:3, Deut 1:45, Josh 10:14, and Judg 13:9.²⁷ In all cases,

occurs only once, there are not enough examples to examine its valence. In Isa 66:8, the construction means simply “to hear.” See SHEBANQ query [ID2954](#).

²⁵ Such a construction can only be found 4x: SHEBANQ query [ID2937](#).

²⁶ See SHEBANQ query [ID2938](#). Indeed, the great majority of קול construct relationships are established with יהוה/אלהים (occurrence: 34x). This stands in contrast to a minority of קול construct relationships without יהוה/אלהים (occurrence: 16x). See SHEBANQ query [ID2939](#). Where קול has a pronominal suffix attached, it usually refers to YHWH as the speaker. See SHEBANQ query [ID2940](#).

²⁷ Only a few authors have recognized the implications of the obedience formula found in these passages. Commenting on Num 21:3, Baruch A. Levine points out the rarity of this formulation in biblical literature. See Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 21–36*: AB 4A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 85. He also points to Judg 13:9 and 1 Kgs 17:22 as other instances in which the obedience formula (to

the translations follow the same practice and translate the construction as

use his terminology) is used. From the perspective of the canonical order, the first occurrence of the formula appears in Num 21:3. However, from the perspective of the chronology of the story line, Deut 1:45 represents the earliest reference to divine obedience. Recalling Israel’s past, Moses reviews the rebellion of the exodus generation in the desert of Paran at Kadesh when they refused to enter the land forty years earlier. He remembers their intention to go up and fight against the Canaanites in an attempt to reverse God’s condemnation (Deut 1:41–42). Without God’s intervention in their favor, the defeat would have been guaranteed. After a shameful debacle, they cried to Yahweh, but he did “not obey” them (וְלֹא־שָׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקִלְכֶם) - Deut 1:45). It seems evident that the use of the formula here is ironic. In Deuteronomy 1:43, Moses says, “So I spoke to you, but you did not listen (וְלֹא־שָׁמַעְתֶּם); you rebelled against the command of Yahweh.” As they disobey God, he now “disobeys” them when they ask him to interfere. The reversal of the situation is found in Num 21:3. Now, thirty-eight years after this defeat before the Amorites, Israel is in the same place (note the mention of Hormah in both passages), ready to face the Canaanites from Arad. There are still people from the first generation alive—although they “will not claim the promise themselves, they will begin to see it fulfilled” (Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, NICOT [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981], 399). It is significant that the episode marks a turning point in the military fortune of Israel, who from this point on start to overcome in every battle against the Canaanites. It is also important that the episode is literarily arranged after Aaron’s death. The exodus generation is almost gone, and God starts to fulfill his plan with the second generation. Thus, God reverts their fortune and “obeys” them, giving them victory over the king of Arad. Such an irony should be understood in light of the covenant. On the one hand, as his people obey God’s commands, he also obeys them, granting their request for help. On the other hand, as his people disobey him, he also “disobeys” them, denying his intervention in a circumstance he has not led them to. The use of the obedience formula in Judg 13:9 remains puzzling. The apparent lack of exceptionality in Manoah’s request and the subsequent reply from Yahweh here seem to raise the question of whether this idiom reliably corresponds to the gloss “obey.” When Judg 13:9 is considered in the context of the other passages where the obedience formula appears, the exceptional character of the occurrence becomes more evident. There are three coincidences common to all these passages where divine obedience is found. First, all of them appear in the Deuteronomist history. Second, all of them are related somehow to a battle against a power antagonistic to God (Amorites—Deut 1:45; Canaanites from Arad—Num 21:3; Amorites—Josh 10:13; Philistines—Judg 13:9; Baal—1 Kgs 17:22). Finally, and more important, all these passages involve a messianic figure (Israel, Joshua, Samson, and Elijah). On the development of messianic overtones involving Samson, see Matthew J. Grey, “‘The Redeemer to Arise from the House of Dan’: Samson, Apocalypticism, and Messianic Hopes in Late Antique Galilee,” *JSJ* 44 (2013): 553–589. As these characters relive the history of Israel, their typological function is established. See G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 21–22. Regarding the use of the obedience formula in Josh 10:13, the exceptional nature of the circumstance is obvious. In his commentary on Josh 10:13, Paul Hinlicky remarks that “an exchange of idioms or attributes, indeed of subjectivities, occurred in this singularity: as YHWH

“the Lord heard,” “listened to,” “heeded,” “hearkened,” and so forth. One exception is the NET Bible translating the expression in Josh 10:14 with the correct nuance: “The LORD obeyed a man.” As seen in the table, NET Bible translators were not consistent, for they translated the same expression differently in Josh 10:14 and 1 Kgs 17:22.

The struggle to render the expression seems to date back to the Septuagint (LXX). As a whole, the Greek version of 1 Kgs 17 presents few deviations from the MT.²⁸ In the face of the general textual agreement between the LXX and the MT, the change in v.22 is significant.

Table 4. MT-LXX comparison

	MT	LXX
cl1	וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֱלִיָּהוּ	
cl2	וַתִּשָּׁב נְפִשׁ-הַיֵּלֶד עַל-קִרְבּוֹ	καὶ ἐγένετο οὕτως,
cl3	וַיַּחֲיֶה:	καὶ ἀνεβόησεν τὸ παιδάριον

The LXX does not render the critical first clause (cl1) but adds between cl1 and cl2 *καὶ ἐγένετο οὕτως* (“and it happened thus”). After Elijah’s command in v.21, the LXX states that what the prophet commanded took place

fought for Israel, YHWH became the servant, listening to and obeying the human voice of Joshua, who acted as Lord in commanding heavenly bodies” (*Joshua*, BTCOT [Collegetown, MN: The Liturgical, 2021], 155). The way the LXX translators render these passages suggests that the valence triggers the obedience formula in each case. Joshua 10:14 (*ἐπακούσαι θεὸν ἀνθρώπου*) and Judg 13:9 (*καὶ ἐπήκουσεν ὁ θεὸς τῆς φωνῆς Μανωῆ*) use the word *ἐπακούω*, which means (according to BDAG) “to obey” or “to pay close attention to what one is told w. implication of being responsive.” The other two cases, Num 21:3 (*εἰσήκουσεν κύριος τῆς φωνῆς Ἰσραὴλ*) and Deut 1:45 (*καὶ οὐκ εἰσήκουσεν κύριος τῆς φωνῆς ὑμῶν*), use the construction *εἰσακούω* + *φωνῆς*. Again, the basic meaning BDAG suggests is “to obey” or “to listen, with implication of heeding and responding.” Throughout the LXX, most of the cases of *ἐπακούω* and *εἰσακούω* have human beings as subjects that obey (or are called to obey) YHWH.

²⁸ Except v.22, the most significant is the change from the singular to the plural of לְבַגְתָּ (in Greek *τοῖς τέκνοις σου*) in vv.13 and 15 (*τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς* instead of *וביתך*). Such a change may be an attempt to harmonize “her household” and “your son.” Provided is a list of all of the deviations: v.1 LXX adds *τῶν δυνάμεων ὁ θεός*; v.13 LXX = *τοῖς τέκνοις σου*, MT = *וְלִבְנֶיךָ*; v.15 LXX = *τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς*, MT = *וביתך*; v.17 LXX = *πνεῦμα*, MT = *נְשָׁמָה* (see Gen 2:7); v.20 LXX = *ὁ μάρτυς*, MT = *עַל*; v.21 LXX = *ἐνεφύσησεν*, MT = *וַיַּתְמַדְד*; v.22 LXX = *καὶ ἐγένετο οὕτως, καὶ ἀνεβόησεν τὸ παιδάριον*; MT = *וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֱלִיָּהוּ וַתִּשָּׁב נְפִשׁ-הַיֵּלֶד עַל-קִרְבּוֹ וַיַּחֲיֶה*; v.23 LXX does not have *וַיַּחֲיֶה אֱלִיָּהוּ אֶת-הַיֵּלֶד וַיִּקַּח*.

without the explicit involvement of YHWH. Only the second clause (cl2) loosely follows the Hebrew and is rendered *καὶ ἀνεβόησεν τὸ παιδάριον* (“and the lad cried out”). Although no conclusive argument may be drawn from this, for we may be dealing with a different *Vorlage*,²⁹ it is not impossible to assume that the LXX translator struggled with an obedient God.³⁰

²⁹ Unfortunately, none of the published DSS material covers the text of 1 Kgs 17. The forming of any solid hypothesis is, therefore, impossible.

³⁰ The LXX could have translated the Hebrew valence with *ἐπακούω* (“to obey”) as it did in Josh 10:14 (*ὥστε ἐπακούσαι θεὸν ἀνθρώπου* / “as God obeyed a human being”). The LXX renders the Hebrew valence *עמַשׁ + לִקְרָא* ninety-one times by using different constructions. The constructions can be categorized as follows: (a) The majority of the cases offer a formalistic translation that reproduces the Hebrew valence in the form of a Hebraism: *ἀκούω τῆς φωνῆς* (49), *εἰσακούω τῆς φωνῆς* (25), *ὑπακούω φωνῆν* (6), *ὑπακούω φωνῆς* (3), *ἐπακούω τῆς φωνῆς* (3). That the Hebrew valence is understood to trigger the meaning “to obey” is evident when considering the context of the *ἀκούω τῆς φωνῆς* passages and when taking into account that the chosen verbs have the basic meaning of “to obey” (*εἰσακούω*, *ὑπακούω*, *ἐπακούω*), “to follow instruction” (*ὑπακούω*), “to pay close attention to what one is told with implication of being responsive” (*ἐπακούω*), or “to listen, with implication of heeding and responding” (*εἰσακούω*) (see BDAG). (b) In only three cases, the LXX uses *ἀκούω* without the accusative or genitive form of *φωνή*. In these cases, *ἀκούω* is followed by a genitive form that functions as a syntactical object (Gen 27:8; Exod 18:19; 1 Sam 8:19). For example, *ἄκουσόν μου* (2x in the imperative form: “Listen to me!”). In all these three cases, either a command is issued, or a disobedience/rejection is described. BDAG confirms that *ἀκούω* followed by a genitive form can trigger the meaning “to heed.” (c) In Josh 5:6, the Hebrew *הַיְהוָה לִקְרָא עֲשֵׂה אֵל* is rendered as *οἱ ἀπειθήσαντες τῶν ἐντολῶν τοῦ θεοῦ* (“the ones disobeying the laws of God”), again confirming that the LXX understands the Hebrew valence *עמַשׁ + לִקְרָא* to have the meaning “to obey.” (d) In one case, *ἐπακούω* is used without carrying over the Hebrew *לִקְרָא* into the Greek (Josh 22:2). As shown above, however, *ἐπακούω* has as its basic meaning “to obey” or “to pay close attention to what one is told with implication of being responsive” and is, therefore, a good functional translation of the Hebrew valence *עמַשׁ + לִקְרָא*. (e) The final variant for rendering the *עמַשׁ + לִקְרָא* is the one-time use of *εἰσακούω* followed by a genitive pronoun that functions as an object (Exod 23:21). As shown above, the default meaning of *εἰσακούω* is “to obey” or “to listen, with implication of heeding and responding.” A detailed look at each of the cases above shows that the majority of constructions have a human being or a people group as a subject, with *θεός* or *κύριος* functioning as the object of obedience. In this way, it resembles the use of *עמַשׁ + לִקְרָא* in the HB. It is, however, noteworthy that in the Psalms, *κύριος* is called (*κύριε!*) to “obey” or “to listen with the implication of heeding” to the prayer of the poet (Pss 6:9; 26:7; 27:6; 63:2; 114:1; 129:2). It then seems that figures like Joshua and Elijah encourage the praying poet to believe that God could indeed “obey” the voice of a mere mortal, since YHWH has shown himself willing to follow the instructions of Joshua and Elijah.

Instead of translating אֱלֹהֵי הוּ יִשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֵלִיָּהוּ (“and God obeyed Elijah”), he preferred a more generic rendering in Greek: καὶ ἐγένετο οὕτως (“and it happened thus”).³¹

A similar phenomenon occurs in the Targum of 1 Kgs 17, which translates v.22a as אֱלֹהֵי הוּ יִשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֵלִיָּהוּ (“and the Lord received the prayer of Elijah”). It is possible to conjecture that the translator was again trying to avoid the theological problem of an obedient God. A detailed examination of the valence of שָׁמַע in the equivalent texts in the LXX and the Targumin could confirm this possibility.

In any case, the modern translations’ failure to communicate the nuance of the Hebrew text overshadows the narrative strategy in 1 Kgs 17:22. While one should suggest a more precise translation, one is simultaneously confronted with the challenge of how to understand divine obedience.

However, we take the narrator’s use of this specific שָׁמַע valence to be functioning as an additional means to express an interplay between YHWH and Elijah. Only as part of this overall narrative strategy can the meaning of 1 Kgs 17:22 be appreciated.

God’s Obedience as Part of the Literary Strategy

The Referent of “My Word” (17:1)

The reversal of roles is not only hinted at in this third episode. Already, the beginning of the chapter opens the door for assuming that Elijah has YHWH-like authority.

Elijah appears abruptly in the scene after mentioning Ahab’s sins in 1 Kgs 16:29–34. Elijah’s narrative interrupts the sequence of kingly successions, providing “a pause to consider the *prophetic counterforce* in Israel’s life.”³²

Different from what Patterson and Austel have named “Elijah’s call,”³³ there is no call at all. Elijah is not even introduced as a prophet or man of God; only his geographical and ethnic origin are mentioned briefly.³⁴ There-

³¹ A detailed study on the relationship between the Masoretic Text and the LXX of 1 Kgs 17–19 is provided by Phillippe Hugo (Philippe Hugo, *Les deux visages d’Elie, texte massorétique et Septante dans l’histoire la plus ancienne du texte de 1 Rois 17–18* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2006); Phillippe Hugo, “Text and Literary History: Case of 1 Kgs 19,” in *Soundings Kings: Perspectives and Methods in Contemporary Scholarship*, eds. Mark Leuchter and Klaus-Peter Adam (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010), 15–34.

³² Walter Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, ed. Samuel E. Balentine, SHBC (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 207. Emphasis in the original.

³³ Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: 1 Samuel–2 Kings*, eds. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 770.

³⁴ There is no agreement on the meaning of תְּשֻׁבַּי in v.1. On the discussion about the origin of Elijah, see Lissa M. Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, ApOTC (Downers Grove, IL:

fore, only by considering Ahab’s sins in the backdrop can the reader understand that Elijah is a prophet announcing judgment against the king. Elijah’s proclamation of the draught in v.1 is not presented as a divine oracle or speech (in contrast to vv.2, 8). Hee-Sook Bae puts it this way: “Elijah’s proclamation of the drought...is not attributed to YHWH, but rather to Elijah.”³⁵ And Walsh notes that “in view of the bold claims Elijah makes in this verse, the narrator’s silence about his religious authority is striking.”³⁶

Although Elijah is characterized as following God’s direction later in the narrative, the initial lack of prophetic authorization creates confusion regarding the source of authority in Elijah’s oath. Is he speaking for himself or for God? Since only God can prevent the pouring down of dew or rain (טל ומטֶר), the text blurs the distinction between Elijah’s and God’s voice. The blurring of identities continues with the use of the phrase כִּי אִם־לְפִי דְבָרִי (“except at my word”).³⁷ In 1 Kgs 17:1, this clause complements the sense of the oath by establishing the condition by which the land will see rain or dew again—namely, לְפִי דְבָרִי.

A literal rendering of the prepositional phrase פִּי דְבָרִי would be “the mouth of my word.” A search for the phenomenon through the HB shows that outside of 1 Kgs 17:1, the phrase containing פִּי in construct with דְבָר appears only in the Pentateuch (Gen 43:7; Exod 34:24; Deut 17:10).³⁸ Although the expression may be considered typical for the Pentateuch, its occurrence in 1 Kgs 17:1 is unique.³⁹ Still, the use of the expression in 1 Kgs 17:1 seems to

InterVarsity, 2014), 231; Patterson and Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” 771; Mordecai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB10 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2001), 425; Marvin A. Sweeney, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2013), 210–211.

³⁵ Hee-Sook Bae, “Elijah’s Magic in the Drought Narrative: Form and Function,” *BN* 169 (2016): 13.

³⁶ Walsh, *1 Kings*, 226.

³⁷ Most of nominal clauses opened by כִּי אִם are found in the Deuteronomistic literature (including Jeremiah), with a major concentration in the Former Prophets. See Text-Fabric query results in section “Conditional Clause Opening of Nominal Clauses” of our jupyter notebook: <https://bit.ly/3rIfCMH>. Conditional verbal clauses are well distributed over the entire HB.

³⁸ See Text-Fabric query results in section “For the Mouth of My Word: An Exceptional Formulation” of our jupyter notebook: <https://bit.ly/3rIfCMH>. The formulation appears awkward. One would expect the reverse word order, resulting in “the words of [my|the] mouth.” One would think that words belong to a mouth rather than a mouth to words. The expression “the words of [my|the] mouth” is well testified in the HB corpus. The phrase containing דְבָר in construct with פִּי can be found frequently (cf. 1 Kgs 17:24; Ps 36:4; Prov 18:4; Jer 5:14; 9:19; etc.).

³⁹ In this passage, the noun פִּי is determined by the 1sgC pronominal suffix, while in the Pentateuch, the noun is determined by the article (e.g., פִּי הַדְּבָר in Deut 17:10).

build on an idiomatic expression that appears frequently in the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic history, triggering the meaning “measure of X.”⁴⁰ If this is the case, the best rendering of this phrase would be “by the measure of my word.” Consequently, we suggest that Elijah claims that the effectiveness of his words is closely connected to the authority of his mouth.⁴¹ Elijah’s mouth, then, can cause a drought and reverse it as well.

Lastly, an additional point to be considered here is the referent of the 1sgC pronominal suffix in דְּבָרִי. It is interesting that apart from the poetic literature (Job, Psalms, Proverbs), the 1sgC pronominal suffix attached to דְּבָרִי always has God as its referent.⁴² Thus, the use of the expression itself may indicate some blurring of identity between YHWH and the prophet. But it is the lack of a previous indication of divine discourse that makes the use of דְּבָרִי here striking. Since the referent here is Elijah and the word involves the shutting down of the sky, preventing dew or rain, we wonder how the prophet could say it only on his initiative. And if he is just quoting God’s words or

Furthermore, while in the Pentateuch the noun is governed by the preposition עַל, it is governed by the preposition לְ in 1 Kgs 17:1.

⁴⁰ Idioms are regularly built by having the preposition לְ governing the noun פֶּה as part of a construction relation (e.g., “mouth of the sword,” Num 21:24, Josh 6:21). Often it carries the meaning of “measure” or “amount” (“the amount that goes through your mouth”). For example, “And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat (אִישׁ לְפִי אֶכְל) you shall make your count for the lamb” (Exod 12:4 ESV). The meaning of “measure”/“amount”/“proportion” is also present in constructions with שָׁנָה, as in Lev 25:16 (KJV): “According to the multitude of years (לְפִי | רֹב הַשָּׁנִים) thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of years (וּלְפִי מְעוֹט) (הַשָּׁנָה) thou shalt diminish the price of it: for according to the number of the years of the fruits doth he sell unto thee.” See the complete data retrieval in the Text-Fabric query result section “For the Mouth of my Word: The Idiomatic Background to the Formulation” in our jupyter notebook (<https://bit.ly/3rIfCMH>).

⁴¹ While the UBS handbook on *1 & 2 Kings* provides no arguments for their translation advice, our analysis (the idiomatic background to the דְּבָרִי לְפִי construction) supports their suggestion:

Except by my word is literally “except at the mouth of my word.” This may be rendered in a variety of ways in different languages. Some will prefer to say “unless I command it” (NCV) or “except as I give orders” (Mft). Others may prefer “until the time when I give permission.” (Paul Clarke et al., eds., *A Handbook on 1 & 2 Kings*, 2 vols., United Bible Societies’ Handbooks [New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 2008], 1:520)

⁴² The only exceptions are Judg 11:35, Neh 6:12, and 1 Kgs 17:1. The construction appears fifty-seven times in fifty-six verses throughout the HB. If Job, Psalms, and Proverbs are disregarded, thirty-five out of thirty-eight times, God is the referent of the suffix. For the entire distribution of “my word,” see Text-Fabric query result-section “My Word”: <https://bit.ly/3rIfCMH>.

conveying his will (as the rest of history indicates), why does the text not make it clear?

As can be seen, the omission of any divine directive to Elijah in v.1 creates an ambiguity between God’s and Elijah’s voice. On the one hand, the ambiguity leaves the reader wondering whether Elijah is speaking for himself. The answer is given in the rest of the story, and it becomes very clear in the widow’s speech in v.24: אָמַת דְּבַר־יְהוָה בְּפִיךָ אֱמַת (the word of the Lord that is in your mouth is truth). On the other hand, the blurring between God and Elijah’s acts signals the special relationship that the prophet has with YHWH. The word of Elijah is no less than the word of God itself.

Imitation through the Command-and-Compliance Pattern

Further support for the existence of an interplay between YHWH and Elijah is the command-and-compliance pattern. Command-and-compliance designs the phenomenon where the imperative meets its fulfillment in the *wayyiqtol* of the same root. Through this literary device,⁴³ the narrator reveals the quality of his character’s obedience. The use of this pattern is summarized in the table below:

Table 5. Comand-and-Compliance in the Kerith Valley and in Zarephath

In the Kerith Valley		In Zarephath	
God’s command	Elijah’s compliance	Elijah’s command	Widow’s compliance
לֵךְ מִזֶּה (v.3: Leave here)	וַיֵּלֶךְ (v.4: and he went)	קַח־י (v.10: take)	וַתֵּלֶךְ לְקַח־ת (v.11: she went to take)
קוּם לֵךְ (v.9: Get up, go)	וַיִּקַּם וַיֵּלֶךְ (v.10: and he got up and went)	לְקַח־י (v.11: take)	no compliance
		בֵּאֵי עֲשֵׂי (v.13: go and do)	וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתַּעֲשֶׂה (v.15: and she went and did)

The command-and-compliance pattern expresses Elijah’s strict obedience to God’s instructions.⁴⁴ This idea is reinforced in v.5 when the narrator concludes בַּדְּבַר יְהוָה וַיַּעַשׂ (“and he did according to the word of God”) and by the subsequent repetition of וַיֵּלֶךְ.

In the first scene of Zarephath, Elijah issues imperatives while the widow takes the place that belonged to the prophet in the Kerith valley. Thus, there

⁴³ Repetition has often been confused with unnecessary repetition.

⁴⁴ The repetition is not a naive narrative pleonasm but a way to say that the prophet was completely obedient.

is an imitation of the previous command-and-compliance pattern. Now, however, Elijah is for the widow what God was for him in the first scene.⁴⁵

One peculiar aspect of the widow's compliance is that the pattern is not perfect. She obeys, but her obedience is hesitant. This is particularly visible in what follows v.11a. This hesitancy increases and turns into noncompliance in the third scene (vv.17–24). In the face of a significant crisis, the woman does not obey anymore. Rather, she questions the prophet in v.18 (מַה־לִּי וְלָדָּךְ).⁴⁶ In v.19, Elijah commands, תִּנְנֵנִי לִי אֶת־בְּנֶךָ (Give me your son!). But instead of וַתִּתְּנֵהוּ (“and she gave him”)—what would be expected if the command-and-compliance pattern were to be continued—the narrator adds וַיִּקְחֵהוּ מִחִיקָהּ (“and he took him from her lap”). With this, the narrator subtly points out that she is in “rebellion” against the prophet, for she thinks that his presence somehow caused her son's death.⁴⁷ At this point, there is an irony revolving around the use of the verb מוֹת (to die). Through the divine miraculous intervention, the prophet delivers the widow and her son from their imminent death (“we will eat it, and then we die [מות in qal]”). Now, in v.18, the same

⁴⁵ The same compliance-and-command pattern involving Elijah is found in ch. 18. For instance, the pericope of 18:16–40 is dominated by the pattern where Elijah's imperatives always meet with compliance. In 1 Kgs 18:16–40 alone, there are twelve occurrences of the command-and-compliance pattern. They can be found in verses 19, 20, 25–28, 30, 34, 35, and 40. A few instances are in the table:

<i>Imperative—Order</i>		<i>Wayyiqtol—Fulfillment</i>	
וְעַתָּה שְׁלַח	And now send! (v.19)	וַיִּשְׁלַח אַחָזָב	Ahab sent (v.20)
וְעַתָּה רְאֵשְׁנָה	Do first! (v.25)	וַיַּעֲשׂוּ	They (Baal's prophets) did (v.26)
גָּשׁוּ אֵלַי	Approach to me! (v.30)	וַיִּגָּשׂוּ	They (people) approached (v.30)

Thus, in 1 Kgs 18 Elijah is in charge. First, the king (18:19–20) and then Baal's prophets (vv.25–27) and the people (vv.30, 34–36) submit to Elijah's commands—he is in total control of the situation. While the repetition may sound unnecessary to a modern audience, the narrator is making an important point: as God's representative, Elijah has authority over the king, the people, and even over Baal's prophets.

⁴⁶ The expression מַה־לִּי וְלָדָּךְ appears in Judg 11:12; 2 Sam 16:10; 19:22; 2 Kgs 3:13; and 2 Chr 35:21. The equivalent Greek expression appears in Matt 8:29; Mark 1:24; and John 2:4. According to Jones, the question asked is literally, “What have I and you (in common)? Which means why do you interfere in my affairs?” (Gwilym H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, NCBC 2 [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984], 308)

⁴⁷ Her accusation can be better understood in light of the ancient Near East thought: “Prophets were often considered dangerous and having one around posed considerable risk. The gods could be harsh taskmasters as often as they could be generous benefactors, and the prophets represented them. Additionally, if the prophet were to become angered or offended at any little thing, he might, in an uncontrolled moment, pronounce some sort of curse that would inevitably come true” (Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000], 377).

woman⁴⁸ accuses the prophet of having come to kill her son (מות in hifil). Elijah himself redirects such an accusation to God in v.20 (לְהַמִּית אֶת־בְּנֵיהָ).

In short, the narration blurs the role of YHWH and Elijah by imitating the command-and-compliance pattern of the first scene (Elijah obeys God) in the second scene (the widow obeys Elijah).

Imitation through the Authorized Word

In the first scene, the narrator stresses in v.5 that Elijah acts according to YHWH’s word (וַיַּעַשׂ כְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה). The expression דִּבְרֵי יְהוָה (the word of the Lord) functions as an organizing principle in the Elijah cycle. The word of YHWH dominates every part of 1 Kgs 16:29–2 Kgs 2:11. Brodie recognizes an “overarching emphasis on the word” by affirming that “the multi-faceted richness of God’s word is perhaps the single most important idea in the Elijah-Elisha narrative.”⁴⁹ Such emphasis is in line with the thrust of the book as a whole.⁵⁰

Textually, the centrality of “the word of the Lord” in 1 Kgs 16:29–2 Kgs 2:11 is manifested through its dense distribution: the expression דִּבְרֵי־יְהוָה

⁴⁸ Some have suggested that the woman in vv.8–16 is different from the boy’s mother in 17–24. The main argument is based on the fact that the woman in the first scene is about to starve to death, and hence, she seems to be financially deprived. In her turn, the woman in the second account has a two-story house, which some have seen as an indication of a better social status. Besides, the woman in the second narrative is not called “widow” but “owner of the house” (הָאִשָּׁה בַּעֲלַת הַבַּיִת) (v.17). However, it should be remembered that the woman in the first scene has a household (v.15), which can imply that there were more people in her home. The text never calls the boy “her only son.” Such a household could include more relatives. In a prolonged drought, even people who were financially strong could face starvation. In addition to that, the house mentioned in v.17 seems to be the way in which the narrator links the story to the characters of v.15, whose household is sustained by the divine miracle. The prophet identifies the mother of the lad as “the widow with whom I lodge” (הָאִלְמָנָה) (אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי מְתַגְּדֵר עִמָּה, v.20). Therefore, it seems to be clear that the woman in both scenes is the same individual.

⁴⁹ Brodie, Thomas L. *The Crucial Bridge: The Elijah-Elisha Narrative as an Interpretive Synthesis of Genesis-Kings and a Literary Model of the Gospels* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 70.

⁵⁰ Hagan summarizes, “This is a work which emphasizes the inexorability of that fate by its use of repetitive, stereotypical language and by a continuous demonstration of the reliability of prophecy.... There is no prophetic figure in Kings (except those who are intentionally proved false) whose words do not come to pass, either as predicted or with some degree of reinterpretation. The ideal of prophecy invoked here is that of Deuteronomy 18:22: true prophecy is that which actually comes about, but ‘if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken’” (G. Michael Hagan, “Chapter 12: First and Second Kings” in *The Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*, edited by Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III. [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2010], 147, 161).

appears fifteen times in only eight chapters,⁵¹ becoming a *Leitwort* in this narrative cycle.⁵² Bearing in mind the theological importance of *יְהוָה*, it is significant that in v.15, the narrator uses the slightly altered phrase from v.5: the widow acts according to the word of Elijah (*בְּדַבַּר אֱלִיָּהוּ*). By putting in parallel the same expression and substituting the *postconstructus* YHWY with Elijah, the narrator is playing with the roles of God and his prophet (*בְּדַבַּר יְהוָה* vs. *בְּדַבַּר אֱלִיָּהוּ*). This becomes even more obvious once the distribution of the construction *יְהוָה בְּדַבַּר* is compared with the distribution *בְּדַבַּר* followed by a non-YHWH proper name. In 1 Kgs the *בְּדַבַּר* construction is always followed by YHWH as a proper name.⁵³ There is only one exception found in 1 Kgs: v.15 (*בְּדַבַּר אֱלִיָּהוּ*). Consequently, the formulation “according to the word of Elijah” breaks with the expected formulation “according to the word of YHWH” and emphasizes the YHWH-like authority of Elijah.⁵⁴

Swapping YHWH’s and Elijah’s Roles in 1 Kgs 17:21b, 22b

An unexpected alternation of the command-and-compliance pattern can be found in vv.21b–22b.

Table 6. Prophetic command and divine compliance

Elijah’s “command”	YHWH’s “compliance”
תָּשָׁב נָא נַפְש־הַיָּלֵד הַזֶּה עַל־קִרְבוֹ	וַתָּשָׁב נַפְש־הַיָּלֵד עַל־קִרְבוֹ
“may the life of this boy return to him”	“and the life of the boy returned to him”

An interesting aspect of v.22 is the relationship between *תָּשָׁב נָא נַפְש־הַיָּלֵד* in v.21b and *וַתָּשָׁב נַפְש־הַיָּלֵד עַל־קִרְבוֹ* in v.22b. Since Elijah uses the jussive (*תָּשָׁב נָא*)⁵⁵ instead of the imperative form of *שׁוּב*, his command is

⁵¹ 1 Kgs 16:34; 17:2, 5, 8, 16, 24; 18:1, 31; 19:9; 21:17, 28; 22:5, 19; 2 Kgs 1:17.

⁵² It occurs in different contexts: guidance regarding the prophet’s movements: 1 Kgs 17:2; 8; 18:1; the prophet’s obedience: 1 Kgs 17:5; fulfillment: 1 Kgs 17:16; widow’s affirmation of faith: 1 Kgs 17:24; judgment against Ahab and Jezebel: 1 Kgs 21:17; divine mercy toward Ahab: 1 Kgs 21:28; Jehoshaphat’s request: 1 Kgs 22:5; judgment against Ahab: 1 Kgs 22:19, 38.

⁵³ 1 Kgs 12:24; 13:26; 14:18; 15:29; 16:12, 34; 17:5, 16; 22:38.

⁵⁴ See Text-Fabric query results in section “According to the Word of...”: <https://bit.ly/3r1fCMH>.

⁵⁵ The LXX also rejects the use of a direct second person imperative and chooses a more indirect third person passive imperative (*ἐπιστραφήτω*): Κύριε ὁ θεός μου, ἐπιστραφήτω δὴ ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ παιδαρίου τούτου εἰς αὐτόν.

indirect and functions much more like a request.⁵⁶

The jussive formulation (תִּשָּׁב נָא) is matched perfectly with the subsequent *wayyiqtol* וַתִּשָּׁב (‘‘and it returned’’) in v.22b. In this way, the previous command-and-compliance pattern is resumed, though more softly. A jussive instead of an imperative form is used. That the resumption of command-and-compliance is intended is evident through the use of the שמע + בְּקוֹל valence in v.22a: וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֵלֶיָּהוּ—‘‘And YHWH obeyed Elijah’’ (see our earlier analysis).⁵⁷

With the interchange of roles, the narrator intentionally plays with the concept of prophetic authority and the prophet’s divine partner.

Theological Explorations of a Special God-Man Relationship

The narrator’s strategy of establishing an interplay between YHWH and Elijah, as seen above, takes the prophet’s relationship with God to a new dimension. We will explore the theological facets of this relationship to better understand 1 Kgs 17:22 and the prophetic status of Elijah in this chapter.

Elijah as an Agent of Creation

The motif of creation and de-creation is vital in 1 Kgs 17. In Gen 1, God speaks, and everything comes to existence. In 1 Kgs 17, God’s word put in motion his prophet (vv.2, 8), who acts on God’s behalf, promoting sustenance and life. In the same chapter, we find all dimensions of nature obeying God’s command, whether inanimate things like the rain (17:1; cf. 18:1) or living creatures like animals (v. 3) and human beings (v.9).

On the other hand, the motif of de-creation is evident in the lack of water over ‘‘the face of the earth’’ (עַל-פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה) (v.14, cf. Gen 1:2, 29). Due to the sin of the land’s inhabitants, there is a process of de-creation taking place. The lack of food⁵⁸ and the death of the boy represent reverses of the

⁵⁶ Elijah does, however, use the imperative form to address YHWH at the Mount Carmel episode in 1 Kgs 18:37 (עֲנֵנִי יְהוָה עֲנֵנִי). The imperatives are also rendered in the LXX (ἐπάκουσόν μου, κύριε, ἐπάκουσόν μου).

⁵⁷ The only other episode in the HB in which a man’s command or request directed to God is followed with ‘‘and God/the LORD obeyed’’ is the narrative about Samson’s birth. There Manoah calls for the Angel of the LORD to return and instruct the parents about their soon to be born son (Judg 13:7–8). See Text-Fabric query results in section ‘‘Jussive/Imperative followed by שמע + בְּקוֹל’’: <https://bit.ly/3rfCMH>.

⁵⁸ In addition to de-creation overtones, the lack of flour (קֶמַח) and oil (שֶׁמֶן) (v.16) signals the polemic between YHWH and Baal. Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton observe that ‘‘grain and oil were two of the major exports of the city of Zarephath. The fact that they were in short supply is an indication of how severe the drought was. They are also two of the most basic commodities for survival. As staple products they represent the major arena where fertility can be observed’’ (Walton, Matthews,

original Edenic condition. In particular, the combination of נְשָׁמָה (breath) leaving the body of the boy in v.17 and the call for restoring the boy's נַפְשׁ (life/soul) in v.21 alludes to the language used in Gen 2:7.

In this context, Elijah is the agent of creation by which God's creative power is transmitted. At the prophet's word, the rain (מְטָר) is withdrawn, disrupting the creation order that will be restored in 1 Kgs 18. Through Elijah, God provides for the widow and her household as he does in Gen 1:29–30. However, it is in the miracle of resuscitation that the evidence of divine creative power climaxes. The text does not leave room for doubt: the boy had died.⁵⁹ Hence, we find in this episode the first example of the miracle of resurrection in the Bible.⁶⁰ Interestingly enough, resurrections in the HB are performed only by Elijah and Elisha (cf. 2 Kgs 4:18–37; 13:20).⁶¹ Elijah is used by God to realize something unique that only God himself had ever done in the history of humankind.⁶²

Chavalas, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 377).

⁵⁹ According to the narrator, the boy's sickness resulted in his death. The expression לֹא-נִוְתַרְה־בּוֹ נְשָׁמָה is used in other contexts to describe actual death (cf. Josh 10:40; 11:11, 14). See also H. Lamberty-Zielinski, "נְשָׁמָה, nešāmā," *TDOT* 10:68. Besides, both the mother and Elijah use the root מוּת to describe the lad's condition.

⁶⁰ The miracle takes place in the upper room of the house. Wray Beal notes that each chapter from 17 to 19 "climaxes with a journey to a high place: an upper room (17); Mount Carmel (18); and the mount of God (19), and it is solved when Elijah descends from the high place" (*1 & 2 Kings*, 230).

⁶¹ Curiously, the three resurrections happen in connection with Elijah and Elisha, which is the same number of resurrections related in the Gospels in connection with Christ: Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:41), the young man of Nain (Luke 7:14), and Lazarus (John 11:38–44). Thomas L. Brodie considers Luke 7:11–17 to be an *imitatio* of 1 Kgs 17:17–24 ("Towards Unravelling Luke's Use of the Old Testament: Luke 7:11–17 as an *Imitatio* of 1 Kings 17:17–24," *NTS* 32.2 [1986]: 247–267).

⁶² The idea that the boy's resuscitation is an example of a verbal, physical, and ritual magical act, as Bae defends, is not supported by the biblical text (Bae, "Elijah's Magic," 23). In opposition to this view, Nobuyoshi Kiuchi suggests that when Elijah "deliberately pollutes himself by lying on top of the corpse," he is sacrificing himself and, like Moses, is willing "to make himself anathema for the one for whom he prays" ("Elijah's Self-Offering: I Kings 17, 21," *Bib* 75.1 [1994]: 78. In his turn, Andrew R. Davis proposes a new reading of the verb וַיִּתְמַז in 1 Kgs 17:21, which, according to him, is not from מָדַד ("to measure") but from מִיד ("to shake"). Then, "in this reading, Elijah's action is neither therapeutic nor magical, it is diagnostic and a necessary step that enables Elijah to formulate a prayer that is specific to the boy's predicament. His revival is not achieved through Elijah's self-measurement or sympathetic magic, rather it is the result of the prophetic word, which has the power to move YHWH to action" ("Rereading I Kings 17:21 in Light of Ancient Medical Texts," *JBL* 135.3 [2016]: 465).

Elijah as a New Joshua

Many scholars have recognized several links between Moses and Elijah. Indeed, the evidence is compelling and suggests that the narrator deems Elijah as a kind of Moses redivivus.⁶³ However, the intertextual links are not restricted to Moses. The connection between Elijah and Joshua has often been ignored. In 1 Kgs 17, at least three textual indications show a link between the two characters. Elijah is introduced in v.1 immediately after an allusion to Josh 6:26.

Table 7. Josh 6:26 and 1 Kgs 16:34

Josh 6:26 (NRSV)	1 Kgs 16:34 (NRSV)
Joshua then pronounced this oath, saying, “Cursed before the Lord be anyone who tries to build this city—this Jericho! At the cost of his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest he shall set up its gates!”	In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho; he laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by Joshua son of Nun.

In Joshua 6:26, Joshua charges the Israelites with an oath, cursing the one who would rebuild the city of Jericho. In 1 Kings 16:34, the narrator announces the fulfillment of the curse during the reign of Ahab, who rebelliously acts against Joshua’s charge. Instructively, Paul J. Kissling affirms that

without any divine directive, Joshua had sworn an oath (men) which laid a divine curse upon anyone rebuilding Jericho (Josh. 6.26)... Significantly, what was originally an unauthorized statement, apparently on Joshua’s own initiative, is reported in 1 Kgs 16.34 as, ‘the word of Yahweh which he spoke by the hand of Joshua, the son of Nun.’⁶⁴

The same logic is present in Elijah’s oath, which is an unauthorized statement based on Elijah’s own initiative, from the narrative point of view, even though the narrator reveals it later as the word of God.

The second link is found in v.16. Here the phrase *כְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּיַד אֱלֹהֵי* (lit. “according to the word of God which he spoke through the hand of Elijah”) is the verbatim repetition of the Hebrew at the end of 1 Kgs 16:34: *כְּדִבְרֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּיַד יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹון*. Jesse C. Long remarks that “only Elijah is

⁶³ See D. J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1993), 45; Walsh, *1 Kings*, 284–289; Hagan, “First and Second Kings,” 162; Havilah Dharamraj, *Prophet Like Moses: A Narrative-Theological of the Elijah Cycle* (Bletchley: Authentic Media, 2011), 218–221.

⁶⁴ Paul J. Kissling, *Reliable Characters in the Primary History: Profiles of Moses, Joshua, Elijah and Elisha* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press: 1996), 114–115.

substituted for Joshua.”⁶⁵ According to him, “the narrator introduces a Moses/Joshua paradigm that will serve as a construct for reading and interpreting Elijah’s story. As Joshua (and Moses) served Yahweh, so Elijah stands in a special place as his representative in Israel.”⁶⁶

Finally, the last and perhaps most crucial intertextual link is found in v.22. As seen before, the only other occurrence of the valence שמע + בקול with YHWH as subject and a human being as part of the complement בקול phrase is found in Josh 10:14, where the narrator records, “There has not been a day like it before or since. The LORD obeyed a man, for the LORD fought for Israel! (NET).”

This third Joshua-Elijah analogy shows how “the storyteller carefully calls attention to the special relationship Yahweh has with the prophet.”⁶⁷

It seems adequate to affirm that the language in v.22 imitates Josh 10:14, forming an intertextual connection between the two characters. From a theological point of view, both Moses/Joshua and Elijah serve as covenant mediators through whom God acts powerfully to carry out his sovereign plan for his people.

Elijah and the Presence of God

Our findings in 1 Kgs 17, combined with the remarkable claim in v.22 that YHWH obeyed the prophet, suggest that the narration assumes a concept in which a prophet—and more generally speaking—a created human being can embody a theophany for the surrounding witnesses. Such a conclusion is similar to what Nicholas P. Lunn has proposed. He argues that Elijah and Elisha are prophetic representations of the divine presence in the Northern Kingdom. According to him, “the books of Kings associate these two prophetic figures with nothing other than the presence of God himself.”⁶⁸ Being a radical claim, it is surprising that Lunn does not consider the interplay between YHWH and his prophet as recorded in 1 Kgs 17. We suggest that our study affirms what Lunn termed a “‘human-theophany’ prior to the Gospel account of the Incarnation.”⁶⁹ Elijah is a concrete representation

⁶⁵ Long, *1 & 2 Kings*, 207.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Long, *1 & 2 Kings*, 208.

⁶⁸ Nicholas P. Lunn, “Prophetic Representations of the Divine Presence: The Theological Interpretation of the Elijah-Elisha Cycles,” *JTJ* 9.1 (2015): 50. He defends that “many of the episodes involving Elijah and Elisha include language relating either to the Hebrew sanctuaries, namely, the tabernacle and temple, or to theophanies” (“Prophetic Representations,” 49).

⁶⁹ Lunn states further, “As God was earlier representatively present in the tabernacle temple, so he was similarly representatively present in Elijah and Elisha, with each serving as the guarantee of his presence among his people” (“Prophetic Representations,” 61).

of God to his people. Without access to the sanctuary, the immanent God makes himself present through his prophet in a special, merciful way.

Elijah as a Prophetic Prototype

When we consider the narrative strategy that builds an interplay between YHWH and Elijah in 1 Kgs 17, taking into consideration the language games and surprising formulations (cf. v.22) and their theological implications, it is not difficult to see how Elijah must be received as one of the greatest prophets of Israel. Paul House concludes similarly, “This individual is not just *a* prophet but as time passed came to be considered *the* great prophet, the man who stands as the pattern for other prophets (cf. Mal 3:22–24 [NRSV Mal 4:5–6]).”⁷⁰

These insights about Elijah open the way for his reuse in Mal 3:22–24 (MT; 4:5–6 ET) and his typological interpretation found in the New Testament. In the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:16), the forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist, would fulfill his mission.

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyze the valance of שמע and to explore the literary strategies of 1 Kgs 17 in order to understand the narrative report in v.22a: “And YHWH obeyed Elijah.” Our study sought to demonstrate that most English Bible translations are inconsistent in translating וישמע יהוה as “and the Lord heard the voice of Elijah” instead of “the Lord obeyed Elijah.” Although the Hebrew text creates an initial theological conundrum, the failure to transmit the original nuance of the Hebrew impoverishes the reader regarding the original meaning of the text. Modern readers should have access to the actual idiom that triggers the meaning “to obey,” for otherwise, they miss the theological climax in the narrative. Rather than preventing the Hebrew from shining through, modern translations should allow readers the chance to ponder the meaning of God’s obedience in the literary context of the passage.

The language choice in v.22 connects Elijah directly with Joshua (see section “Elijah as a New Joshua”). As the new Joshua, Elijah is the covenant mediator. His oath predicting the drought and the problems resulting from it (v.1) was already foretold by God in the curses on disobedience in Lev 26:19b, 26 and Deut 28:23–24. In this sense, even though there is no mention of an oracle from the Lord, his initial oath is based on “the vengeance of the covenant” (Lev 26:25).

Another interesting theological implication of the command-and-compliance interplay between YHWH and his prophet concerns Elijah’s role.

⁷⁰ House, Paul R. *1, 2 Kings: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*. TNAC (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 1995), 209.

He represents God's presence to a people who did not have regular access to the sanctuary. The ministry of Elijah is a significant manifestation of God's grace given through his presence. Finally, all these theological implications invite the reader to see the HB prophetic prototype par excellence in Elijah. This can also explain why Elijah's ministry transcends the functions of the Former Prophets and becomes the paradigm for the forerunner of the Messiah in the NT.

It is interesting that despite Elijah's prowess and his interplay with God in 1 Kgs 17, James remarks that his "nature [is] like ours" (Ἡλίας ἄνθρωπος ἦν ὁμοιοπαθὴς ἡμῶν) at the end of his epistle (Jas 5:17). It is true that throughout the Elijah cycle, the prophet is portrayed as a champion of the true religion, whose powerful ministry overcame several difficulties, culminating in his ascension to heaven. However, at the same time, he is portrayed in a very human way with weaknesses and personal struggles. Such a picture inspires us to pursue God's calling even in the face of our frailties. It is only by God's grace that "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (Jas 5:16–17).

ON GOD'S SIDE OF HISTORY: TIME AND APOCALYPTIC
HISTORY IN PAUL'S SPEECH AT THE AREOPAGUS

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Abstract

This paper considers Paul's speech to the Areopagus from the framework of Jewish apocalyptic historiography in order to determine the degree of overlap between Paul's conceptual background on history and time and Stoic philosophy. The main facets of Jewish apocalyptic historiography include unique conceptions of God, time, and human existence with different existential implications, all of which are found in Acts 17:22–31. The added element of the Christ event (vv. 30–31) heightens the urgency of Paul's message of repentance. Despite some proximity between Paul and Stoicism, the Jewish apocalyptic worldview of Acts 17 differs significantly from the pantheistic and deterministic cyclical view of time intrinsic to Stoic philosophy. With these differences in mind, this paper concludes that Paul's urgent call to repentance is only intelligible from a Judeo-Christian understanding of God and history.

Keywords: apocalyptic, eschatology, historiography, Stoicism, Paul, Acts 17, Areopagus

Introduction

It has long been recognized that Paul's speech to the Areopagus in Acts 17 "is the most momentous Christian document from the beginnings of the extraordinary confrontation between Christianity and philosophy that was destined to continue through the following centuries and to determine the entire history of the Occident."¹ This so-called confrontation between Jerusalem and Athens has led to disparate views concerning the extent of the overlap between Paul's sermon in Acts 17 and Greek, specifically Stoic, philosophical ideas.² For some scholars, Paul is portrayed as deeply indebted to the Stoic

¹ Hans Conzelmann, "The Address of Paul on the Areopagus," in *Paul and the Philosophers*, eds. Ward Blanton and Hent de Vries (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2013), 41 (first published in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, eds. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn [London, UK: SPCK, 1968], 217–230).

² Since Martin Dibelius, it has been noted that Paul's speech "is familiar to Hellenistic, particularly Stoic, philosophy" (Martin Dibelius, "Paul on the Areopagus," in

worldview, and “only the conclusion [of the sermon] makes it a Christian one.”³ For others, despite similarities in vocabulary between Stoicism and Paul’s speech, the differences of thought are irreconcilable and “the pagan philosophical grammar is sufficiently reorganized to the point that it speaks a different language.”⁴ Still other scholars take a mediating approach, arguing that the speech “is characterized by agreement and contradiction, carefully calibrated in view of the specific audience on Ares Hill.”⁵

Much of the scholarly discussion on Paul’s distance or proximity to Stoicism in Acts 17 centers on individual elements of the speech, such as his views on natural revelation, divine providence, and idolatry.⁶ And though most would agree that Acts 17:31 is “Christian” in its reference to a final judgment through Jesus Christ who was raised from the dead, the notion that Judeo-Christian eschatology was unique and distinct from Stoic views on the end of the world is not ubiquitous.⁷ F. Gerald Downing, for example,

Studies in the Acts of the Apostles, ed. Heinrich Greeven, trans. Mary Ling [London, UK: SCM, 1956], 63). While both Stoics and Epicureans are mentioned in Acts 17:18, this paper will limit discussions on Greek philosophy to the Stoics because of the widespread acceptance of *Anknüpfungspunkte* in Paul’s speech.

³ Dibelius, “Paul on the Areopagus,” 27. See also David L. Balch, “The Areopagus Speech: An Appeal to the Stoic Historian Posidonius Against Later Stoics and the Epicureans,” in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, eds. David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson and Wayne A. Meeks (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 52–79; Bruce W. Winter, “Introducing the Athenians to God: Paul’s Failed Apologetic in Acts 17,” *Them* 31.1 (2005): 38–59.

⁴ C. K. Rowe, “The Grammar of Life: The Areopagus Speech and Pagan Tradition,” *NTS* 57.1 (2011): 44. See also Rowe, *One True Life: The Stoics and Early Christians as Rival Traditions* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016).

⁵ Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Contextualizing Paul in Athens: The Proclamation of the Gospel before Pagan Audiences in the Graeco-Roman World,” *R&T* 12.2 (2005): 183. See also Joshua W. Jipp, “Paul’s Areopagus Speech of Acts 17:16–34 as Both Critique and Propaganda,” *JBL* 131.3 (2012): 567–588; Jipp, “Does Paul Translate the Gospel in Acts 17:22–31? A Critical Engagement with C. Kavin Rowe’s *One True Life*,” *PRSt* 45.4 (2018): 361–376.

⁶ See, e.g., Bertil Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation*, trans. Carolyn H. King, ASNU 21 (Uppsala: Gleerup, 1955); Jipp, “Paul’s Areopagus Speech,” 576–586; Balch, “The Areopagus Speech,” 52–79.

⁷ Authors who mention clear distinctions between Judeo-Christian eschatology and a Stoic understanding of end of the world scenarios include Oda Wischmeyer and N. T. Wright in George van Kooten, Oda Wischmeyer, and N. T. Wright, “How Greek Was Paul’s Eschatology?” *NTS* 61.2 (2015): 245–253; Howard C. Kee, “Pauline Eschatology: Relationships with Apocalyptic and Stoic Thought,” in *Glaube und Eschatologie: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 80. Geburtstag*, eds. Erich Grässer and Otto Merk (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1985), 152; C. K. Barrett, “Paul’s Speech on the Areopagus,” in *New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World*, eds.

has argued that the similarities in eschatological language and motifs among first-century Jews, Christians, and pagans are such that “the contrast between Jewish and early Christian linear eschatologies on the one hand, and necessarily cyclical Greco-Roman views on the other is one that should be deliberately dispensed with,”⁸ a strong claim considering that the contrast between linear and cyclical approaches to history are necessarily linked to conceptions of God, humanity, and the world.⁹

And yet, as recent scholarship has demonstrated, the Paul of Acts is deeply indebted to and faithful to his Jewish roots, such that “the days of seeing Acts as marginalizing and denigrating Judaism as a religion of the past that has now been superseded by the universal gospel of Paul and Christianity are over.”¹⁰ Furthermore, “there is widespread agreement that Paul was influenced by apocalyptic eschatology,”¹¹ a primarily Jewish narrative that shaped his worldview and the gospel that he preached.¹² However, the dispar-

M. E. Glasswell and E. W. Fashole-Luke (London: SPCK, 1974), 73; Rowe, “The Grammar of Life,” 45.

⁸ F. G. Downing, “Common Strands in Pagan, Jewish and Christian Eschatologies in the First Century,” *TZ* 51.3 (1995): 211. See also George van Kooten’s view in van Kooten, Wischmeyer, and Wright, “How Greek Was Paul’s Eschatology?” 239–245; J. A. Harrill, “Stoic Physics, the Universal Conflagration, and the Eschatological Destruction of the ‘Ignorant and Unstable’ in 2 Peter,” in *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, eds. Tuomas Rasmus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Ismo Dunderberg (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010), 117.

⁹ Downing’s claim stands in contrast to Oscar Cullmann, who traced the origin of several heresies in early Christianity to “the fact that very early the Greek conception of [cyclical] time supplanted the Biblical [linear] one” (*Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, trans. Floyd V. Filson [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1962], 54). On Jewish-Christian linear history versus Greco-Roman cyclical history, see also John N. Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 111–184; M. C. Lemon, *Philosophy of History: A Guide for Students* (London: Routledge, 2003), 28–73.

¹⁰ Joshua W. Jipp, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *The State of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, eds. Scot McKnight and Nijay K. Gupta (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2019), 355.

¹¹ D. E. Aune, “Apocalypticism,” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 30.

¹² Despite nuanced differences in definition, “It is now almost universally affirmed that Paul had an apocalyptic worldview” (Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston, “Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction,” in *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination*, eds. Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich and Jason Maston [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016], 3). Furthermore, despite differing viewpoints, scholars who emphasize the apocalyptic framework of Paul agree that his theology stresses “both *eschatology*—that is, Paul’s two ages paradigm (temporal/horizontal axis)—and *revelation*—that is, the intersection of heavenly and earthly

ity some scholars have posited between the “Paul of Acts” and the historical Paul complicates the degree to which the latter’s apocalyptic framework may be used in comparison to Acts 17 since it is argued that this Paul owes more to the literary creation of Luke. Scholars have shown, however, that this supposed dichotomy between the two has been overstated,¹³ and the present study supports the conclusion that, insofar as an apocalyptic worldview is concerned, the Paul in Acts is in harmony with Pauline tradition.¹⁴

This paper will therefore revisit Paul’s speech at the Areopagus from the framework of Jewish apocalyptic historiography in order to determine the proximity between Paul’s conceptual background on history and time and Stoic philosophy.¹⁵ This paper will first survey the main facets of Jewish apocalyptic historiography. Then, the temporal elements in Paul’s speech in Acts 17:22–31 will be analyzed in light of the temporal framework of Jewish apocalyptic historiography. Finally, the existential appeal of these aspects in Paul’s speech in comparison to that of Stoic presuppositions will be considered. This paper concludes that Jewish apocalyptic historiography provides an important conceptual framework for Paul’s speech to the Areopagus, thus allowing for a stronger existential application and appeal to his audience than an appropriation of Stoic philosophy would accomplish.

realms by way of God’s redemptive activity and Paul’s mystical experiences (spatial/vertical axis)” (Op. cit., 5; emphasis in the original). As such, Paul’s apocalyptic framework coheres with John J. Collins’s accepted definition of apocalyptic genre, which will be discussed below. On the apocalyptic worldview of Paul, see J. C. Beker, *The Triumph of God: The Essence of Paul’s Thought*, trans. Loren T. Stuckenbruck (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 134–135; Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *The Myth of Rebellious Angels: Studies in Second Temple Judaism and New Testament Texts*, WUNT 335 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 240–256; Blackwell, Goodrich, and Maston, *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination*; Douglas J. Moo, *A Theology of Paul and His Letters: The Gift of the New Realm in Christ*, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021), 30–31.

¹³ Thus, “Many scholars argue for the substantial Pauline character of the speech,” and Craig S. Keener concludes that “the shared elements are far more than we would expect if Luke simply composed Hellenistic apologetic with no awareness of Pauline tradition or theology.” See discussion and references in Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014), 3:2620–2625.

¹⁴ On the framework of salvation-history and historical revelation in Luke-Acts, see R. G. Hall, *Revealed Histories: Techniques for Ancient Jewish and Christian Historiography*, JSPSup 6 (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 1991), 171–208.

¹⁵ For recent studies on the concept of time and temporality in apocalypticism in the NT, see Lynne M. Bahr, “The ‘Temporal Turn’ in New Testament Studies,” *CurBR* 18.3 (2020): 268–279; Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Some Reflections on Apocalyptic Thought and Time in Literature from the Second Temple Period,” in Blackwell, Goodrich, and Maston, *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination*, 137–155.

Jewish Apocalyptic Historiography

By way of definition, the apocalyptic worldview encompasses “an integrated set of axioms about the nature of space, time, and human existence.”¹⁶ According to the now standard definition of John J. Collins, apocalypticism involves “a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.”¹⁷ As such, apocalypticism “is one of history’s most powerful and influential worldviews.”¹⁸ Following the contours of apocalyptic historiography provided by Lorenzo DiTommaso, this section will focus on key aspects of the Jewish apocalyptic understanding of time and history.¹⁹

The crucial starting point for the apocalyptic worldview is the idea of the transcendence of God. This notion of divine transcendence is at the center of apocalyptic literature, for it “bridges both the form and the content of the revelation.”²⁰ Only a transcendent deity can know and reveal (*ἀποκαλύπτω*) the heavenly mysteries that would otherwise remain unknown to humans (cf. Dan 7:15–16; 8:15–17; 9:20–22; Rev 1:1–2; 4:1; 1 En. 1:1–2; 3 Bar. 1:4–8; etc.).²¹ But beyond that, it is the transcendence of God that marks the Jewish approach to time and history as unique and distinct from pagan cyclical conceptions.²² M. C. Lemon writes,

¹⁶ Lorenzo DiTommaso, “Apocalyptic Historiography,” *Early Christianity* 10.4 (2019): 437.

¹⁷ John J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 9.

¹⁸ Lorenzo DiTommaso, “The Development of Apocalyptic Historiography in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Celebrating the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Canadian Collection*, eds. Peter W. Flint, Jean Duhaime, and Kyung S. Baek, EJJL 30 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2011), 498.

¹⁹ DiTommaso affirms that “the logic of the apocalyptic worldview is comprehensive, comprehensible, and internally consistent. The features of its historiography are clear, and the allusions and imagery in the texts do not obscure the essential revelation of the true meaning of history, which is always meant to be understood by their intended audiences” (DiTommaso, “Apocalyptic Historiography,” 436). See also DiTommaso, “History and Apocalyptic Eschatology: A Reply to J. Y. Jindo,” *VT* 56.3 (2006): 413–418; DiTommaso, “The Development of Apocalyptic Historiography,” 497–522. On Jewish and Christian historiography, including apocalyptic literature, see also Hall, *Revealed Histories*.

²⁰ L. J. Kreitzer, “Apocalyptic, Apocalypticism,” *DLNT*, 62.

²¹ DiTommaso, “Apocalyptic Historiography,” 449.

²² “The ‘secret’, then, in the momentous claims made for Christianity is that it is not its linear as distinct from the (pagan) cyclical approach which makes it ‘unique’ in the sphere of ‘philosophy of history’ but, mundanely enough, its concept of God” (Lemon, *Philosophy of History*, 70). See also pp. 52–56.

The significance of a *transcendent* deity is that, being “above” or “apart” from the universe...a deity thereby has control over the universe. It is its creation and it determines what happens in it. God’s transcendence is here seen as the condition of His determination of the course of history, since absolute power requires absolute disentanglement from that which is controlled.²³

Granted, the existence of such a sharp dichotomy between a linear and a cyclical view of time and history has been questioned, especially based on the writings of church fathers and later medieval Christians who were more open to incorporating Greek philosophical concepts into their theology.²⁴ But significantly enough, the uniqueness of the Jewish linear worldview is especially amplified when apocalyptic historiography is considered. According to DiTommaso,

The idea that time is finite, linear, and unidirectional is unique to apocalypticism. It was not part of the notional world of any other religion or culture before its contact with an apocalyptic religion, usually Christianity but occasionally Islam. For this reason, the apocalyptic conception of time is one of several indicators that the apocalyptic worldview developed uniquely in early Judaism, and that all subsequent expressions, whatever forms they take, may be traced back to this single point of origin.²⁵

History, therefore, within the apocalyptic worldview, covers finite time between the creation of the world and its eschatological end.²⁶

The beginning of history at creation as recorded in Gen 1–3 is assumed a priori in apocalyptic works.²⁷ Thus, numerous references to God as the Creator of the world and of humankind are found (e.g., 1 En. 25:7; Sib. Or. 1:5–9; 4 Ezra 3:4; 6:38–55; 6:1–6; Gk. Apoc. Ezra 7:5; Apoc. Sedr. 8:7; 4 Bar. 3:10; 9:6).²⁸ Note, for example, the direct correlation in Sib. Or. 3:8–29

²³ Lemon, *Philosophy of History*, 70; Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths*, 111–184; James P. Ware, “What No Other God Could Do: Life and Afterlife Among Paul and the Philosophers,” in *Paul and the Giants of Philosophy: Reading the Apostle in Greco-Roman Context*, eds. Joseph R. Dodson and David E. Briones (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 127.

²⁴ Lemon, *Philosophy of History*, 56–60.

²⁵ DiTommaso, “Apocalyptic Historiography,” 446. While this definition limits the uniqueness of linear history to apocalypticism, it is important to note that it is a feature of apocalypticism insofar as it is a feature of a Jewish worldview more broadly, as evinced in the Hebrew Bible. Cf. T. Prokrifka, “Time,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*, ed. Temper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 820–826.

²⁶ DiTommaso, “Apocalyptic Historiography,” 442.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 443.

²⁸ While some of these apocalyptic works are later than Paul and contain some Christian interpolations, these distinctions are not necessary here. Both Jewish and Christian writings share a common worldview on the points under consideration.

between God's work of creation (the "ἀθανάτου κτίστου" [immortal creator] who "created everything by a word," Sib. Or. 3:10, 20–35) and his divine, transcendent attributes and his act of revealing himself: "There is one God, sole ruler, ineffable, who lives in the sky, self-begotten, invisible, who himself sees all things. No sculptor's hand made him, nor does a cast of gold or ivory reveal him, by the crafts of man, but he himself, eternal, revealed himself as existing now, and formerly and again in the future" (3:11–16).²⁹ But DiTommaso affirms that the "special contribution of the apocalyptic literature of early Judaism was to furnish time (and history) with an ending."³⁰ Thus, Gerhard Pfandl has argued, for example, that the term קְרַתּוּל in Hebrew literature is unique to Daniel (Dan 8:17; 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9) and "seems to be a technical term standing for the final period of human history leading up to the eschaton...when the old aeon will give way to the new one and God's kingdom will be established."³¹ Such an eschatological end of history becomes a central facet in later Jewish apocalyptic literature, allowing, for example, 1 Enoch to speak of "the end [τέλος] of what is coming" when "the earth and everything will be destroyed" (1 En. 10:2;³² cf. 2 En. 70:7; 4 Ezra 3:8; 4:33, 51; 7:113; 8:63–9:12; 12:9; Sib. Or. 3:211; 8:91; 2 Bar. 21:8; 54:4; Gr. Apoc. Ezra 3:13; 4Q243–244; etc.).³³

On God as Creator, see also Rev 4:11; 10:6; 14:7. Interestingly, there are no obvious references to creation in the apocalyptic portions of Daniel. One reference is found in Dan 4:37.

²⁹ Trans. *OTP* 1:362.

³⁰ DiTommaso, "Apocalyptic Historiography," 443. As he notes, this notion is rooted in the biblical prophets and the hope of the coming "Day of the Lord," but while "the prophets envision the decisive act of God on behalf of Israel within the bounds of time and history, the apocalyptic presumption is that the divine action will bring time and history to a climax" (443–444).

³¹ Gerhard Pfandl, "Daniel's 'Time of the End,'" *JATS* 7.1 (1996): 148–149.

³² *OTP* 1:17.

³³ "Apocalyptic speculation is thus intrinsically *teleological*" (DiTommaso, "Apocalyptic Historiography," 453; cf. D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996], 500). Within the field of philosophy of history, the question of whether progress exists within history and whether the notion of progress is exclusive to linear conceptions of history has been the subject of endless debate. Lemon points out that in the Judeo-Christian conception, it is the notion of an immanent, caring deity that makes history progressive (Lemon, *Philosophy of History*, 70). Within apocalyptic historiography, however, perhaps it is necessary to qualify that history moving toward a *telos* is not necessarily the same as "progress" as defined in an evolutionary manner. That apocalypticism views history moving toward the eschaton from a macro perspective says nothing about individual or societal progress in itself.

At this eschatological end, certain themes are characteristic of the apocalyptic worldview.³⁴ First is the theme of an eschatological resurrection. The book of Daniel is one of the few texts in the HB to allude to a final resurrection, an eschatological event that will happen “at that time” (Dan 12:1–3).³⁵ The eschatological nature of the resurrection is evinced in apocalyptic texts by language of future expectation, such as “that day,” “in those days,” an “eternal age,” or “age to come” (cf. 1 En. 51:1–5; 4 Ezra 7:26, 43, 49). Connected to the resurrection is the theme of the ultimate fulfillment of God’s covenant promises, which includes promises of liberation from oppression, both political and moral, the restoration of the community, and a new creation, with the abolishment of suffering and death (T. Jud. 25:1; T. Benj. 10:6–9).³⁶ Finally, the eschatological end-times are often associated with a final judgment through which God’s justice prevails and the righteous are vindicated (Dan 7:10; Rev 6:10; 16:5–7; 19:2; 1 En. 1:7–9; 27:2; 50:1–5; Sib. Or. 4:178–192; 4 Ezra 6:1–6; etc.).³⁷

But eschatology is not the only concern of apocalyptic literature. Rather, the periodization of history leading up to the eschaton is a common feature in apocalyptic texts.³⁸ Such an overview of history and the identification of specific historical details and events serve as “mileposts” which enable “readers to locate themselves historically and theologically” as they await the eschatological climax.³⁹ Thus, many apocalypses reveal an interest in the course of history (Dan 7:7–8, 19–20; Sib. Or. 4; 1 En. 83–90; 91:12; 93; 2 Bar. 55–74;

³⁴ DiTommaso, “Apocalyptic Historiography,” 439.

³⁵ This passage was one of the primary texts in the Hebrew Bible that later became the basis for other Second Temple Jewish literature on the subject (Kevin L. Anderson, *“But God Raised Him from the Dead”: The Theology of Jesus’ Resurrection in Luke-Acts*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs [Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006], 52–55).

³⁶ Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 213; Anderson, “*But God Raised Him*,” 81–82.

³⁷ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 3 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004), 153–175; Anderson, “*But God Raised Him*,” 55–61; DiTommaso, “The Development of Apocalyptic Historiography,” 519–520. Judgment and vindication are essential to apocalyptic literature because “theodicy is the mother of apocalypticism” (DiTommaso, “The Development of Apocalyptic Historiography,” 505).

³⁸ This is in contrast to prophetic literature, in which this feature is uncharacteristic (DiTommaso, “The Development of Apocalyptic Historiography,” 514). The concept of periodization is adopted in talmudic understanding of history, undoubtedly influenced by earlier apocalypticism. See Jacob Neusner, “History, the Conception of in Classical Judaism,” *EnclJud* 1:385–386.

³⁹ DiTommaso, “History and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” 415–416. See also Hall, *Revealed Histories*, 118.

T. Levi 14–18; 4 Ezra 11–12),⁴⁰ identifying world kingdoms along with their sequence and characteristics, and sometimes rulers, battles, and events, among other things.⁴¹ Apocalyptic historiography is based on the premise that these historical periods are ordained by God⁴² and, therefore, recording the unique events within history that have a causal relationship to the divine plan serve the purpose of mapping history in anticipation of its climactic end.⁴³ And further, the fact that God is sovereign over all of history is connected to the notion that all of humankind is subject to this single God, which has led some scholars to suggest that a universal conception of the history of humanity can also be traced to Jewish apocalyptic.⁴⁴

Such periodization of history has led some scholars to question whether the Jewish apocalyptic approach to time and history is indeed as distinct from pagan cyclical views of history as has been generally affirmed.⁴⁵ G. W. Trompf, for example, talks about the “historical recurrence” of events within

⁴⁰ DiTommaso, “The Development of Apocalyptic Historiography,” 514–515; Christopher Rowland, *Christian Origins: An Account of the Setting and Character of the Most Important Messianic Sect of Judaism*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: SPCK, 2002), 55.

⁴¹ DiTommaso, “History and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” 414–415. Some texts structure history into four sequential kingdoms (Dan 2; 7; Sib. Or. 4; 4Q554 2 III; 4Q552–553). Others adapt the sequence to their contemporary situation or include more kingdoms into the sequences (4 Ezra 12:11–12; 1 En. 91:11–17 and 93:1–10 [Apocalypse of Weeks], 11Q13; etc.). See DiTommaso, “The Development of Apocalyptic Historiography,” 514–515, n69. On apocalypses that cover world history, see Hall, *Revealed Histories*, 61–81. On the political nature of apocalyptic, see N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 4 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 175.

⁴² See, e.g., 4Q180 (4Q Ages of Creation), which states, “Interpretation concerning the ages which God has made: An age to conclude [all that there is] and all that will be. Before creating them he determined [their] operations [according to the precise sequences of the ages,] one age after another age” (Florentino G. Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* [New York, NY: Brill, 1997], 1:372).

⁴³ DiTommaso, “The Development of Apocalyptic Historiography,” 515.

⁴⁴ Lemon, *Philosophy of History*, 53; Kreitzer, “Apocalyptic, Apocalypticism,” 63–64; DiTommaso, “Apocalyptic Historiography,” 446, n47, 447. A universal view of history and humanity is intrinsic to the discipline of philosophy of history. Thus, Jacob Neusner writes that “only by taking account of the world at large can the Talmud’s theory of history yield a philosophy of history worthy of the name, that is, an account of who Israel is, the meaning of what happens to Israel, and the destiny of Israel in this world and at the end of time” (“History,” 1:385).

⁴⁵ Lemon, *Philosophy of History*, 56–60.

history,⁴⁶ a notion found in both Jewish and non-Jewish histories.⁴⁷ Trompf, however, is looking at historical recurrence *within* the historical timeline, which is different from viewing history from a macro perspective. As DiTommaso says, “The linear and unidirectional nature of apocalyptic history is not contradicted by periodizing schemata, which should be understood as cycles *within* time: they structure history but do not define it.”⁴⁸

Finally, apocalyptic historiography has an intrinsically existential element to it: “The core message that the last days are here and the end is near constitutes the *existential* dimension of the worldview.”⁴⁹ The function of these revelations is to provide readers with the certainty that God is in control of the broad sweep of history.⁵⁰ The “mileposts” within revealed history confirm the divine sovereignty over history, giving evidence that earth’s evil kingdoms and their unjust treatment of the righteous people of God are only temporary. The future-oriented outlook of apocalypticism ensures readers that there will be an eschatological time “when the righteous and the wicked receive their just reward or due punishment.”⁵¹ The themes characteristic of the eschatological climax mentioned above (resurrection, fulfillment of God’s promises, judgment, and vindication) provide an answer to the question of theodicy and a guarantee that unresolved doubts concerning God’s care for his people will ultimately find resolution. It is this view that history “is the fulfilling, through time, of God’s *design*, or *purpose*” (italics original) that ensures that history is meaningful.⁵² Beyond that, however, the certainty of God’s control over the broad sweep of history and the ultimate fulfilling of his purposes is meant to put the focus on the contemporary situation of the audience,⁵³ impelling them to decide to follow the path of good and place themselves

⁴⁶ G. W. Trompf, *The Idea of Historical Recurrence in Western Thought: From Antiquity to the Reformation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979).

⁴⁷ Thucydides, for example, composes his *History of the Peloponnesian War* with an awareness that it could be useful for future generations since many events “will someday, in all human probability, happen again in the same or a similar way” (Thucydides, *P.W.* 1.22.4 [Smith]).

⁴⁸ DiTommaso, “Apocalyptic Historiography,” 445 (emphasis in the original); cf. DiTommaso, “History and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” 417.

⁴⁹ DiTommaso, “Apocalyptic Historiography,” 439.

⁵⁰ “If there is a panoptic aspect to apocalyptic literature, it is only from the perspective of God’s overarching plan for humanity. This plan, to which readers are privy via the medium of revelation, is axiomatic to the theology of history informing the message of the vision and its interpretation” (DiTommaso, “History and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” 415).

⁵¹ DiTommaso, “Apocalyptic Historiography,” 453

⁵² Lemon, *Philosophy of History*, 70.

⁵³ DiTommaso, “Apocalyptic Historiography,” 456.

firmly on the side of God, who will ultimately emerge victorious.⁵⁴ Thus, the linear approach to history within the Jewish conception affirms not only the sovereignty and transcendence of God but also the loving and caring nature of God, who is not indifferent to the sufferings of his children and is doing what he can to ensure that evil and its consequences are definitively dealt with.⁵⁵ The idea of a transcendent God who is also immanently present and involved in his creatures' lives to the point of intervening in history, revealing himself to them and giving them hope for the future, is at the heart of what makes the Judeo-Christian philosophy of history unique.⁵⁶

In sum, Jewish apocalyptic historiography emerges from a well-defined worldview that encompasses unique conceptions of God, time, and human existence. It presupposes a transcendent-immanent view of God and a linear understanding of history. This transcendent God created the world and everything in it and personally directs the course of history to an eschatological climax and end. This divine plan of history is revealed by God in such a way that allows his people to situate themselves within history, thus giving them the opportunity to respond accordingly to God so that when the final judgment arrives, they can find themselves on God's side of history.

Paul's Speech to the Areopagus

That Paul's speech to the Areopagus follows a salvation-historical framework has been argued by many commentators to greater or lesser degrees.⁵⁷ After introducing the speech (vv.22–23), Paul begins his main exposition with creation (v.24) and ends the speech with the eschatological judgment (μέλλει κρίνειν; v.31) after alluding to the resurrection of Jesus as the decisive turning

⁵⁴ The question of divine determinism and human free will is a significant debate within the perspective of philosophy of history, leading Lemon to affirm that the dilemma is a conceptual contradiction “threatening to render the claims made for Christianity’s contribution to philosophy of history unintelligible” (*Philosophy of History*, 70–71). However, as DiTommaso points out, “Apocalyptic determinism does not exclude the possibility of free will. In fact, the logic of the worldview favors human instrumentality,” since humans have the choice between good and evil “within a universe whose rigid duality is axiomatic. In the apocalyptic mind-set, there are only two possibilities for human action, good or evil (however construed): there is no individual path to the good beyond that which is revealed to the group” (“Apocalyptic Historiography,” 454). On a similar complementary approach to divine determinism and human free will within the context of theodicy, see John C. Peckham, *Theodicy of Love: Cosmic Conflict and the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2018).

⁵⁵ Lemon, *Philosophy of History*, 70; Peckham, *Theodicy of Love*, 55–86.

⁵⁶ Lemon, *Philosophy of History*, 70; Flavien Pardigon, *Paul Against the Idols: A Contextual Reading of the Areopagus Speech* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019), 151–153.

⁵⁷ In the last century, Bertil Gärtner (*Areopagus Speech*) is the main proponent of Jewish influence in Acts 17, cited by subsequent authors.

point in salvation history (vv.30–31).⁵⁸ As Hans Conzelmann has observed, this “course of the world is determined by uniqueness, by a beginning and an end,” which is ultimately an expression of the Jewish apocalyptic conception of history.⁵⁹ Conzelmann goes on to affirm that while “early Christianity took over the basic outline of this apocalyptic worldview,” Luke reduced it in such a way that “all that remains is the sheer structure: beginning-end, and in between a single insertion that determines the situation of man in world: the resurrection of Jesus, which introduces a historical epoch fundamentally new compared with the former one.”⁶⁰ However, as outlined above, there is more to the framework of Jewish apocalyptic historiography than a beginning and an end, and such themes find significant resonance in Paul’s speech. In what follows, the temporal markers in the passage will be considered as they relate to Jewish apocalyptic historiography.

Just as the framework of Jewish apocalyptic historiography relies on the premise of a transcendent Creator God, in Acts 17:22–31 “God *qua* Creator is the frame of reference for the entire speech, and therefore the point of reference from which everything that is said must be understood.”⁶¹ It is not the mere fact that Paul affirms a beginning point to history that is significant but that this is combined with an affirmation of the transcendent nature of God “who made [ποίησας] the world [τὸν κόσμον] and everything [πάντα] in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth [οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς]” (v.24; cf. 4:24; 7:49–50; 14:15; Rom 1:20–25; Eph 3:9; Col 1:15–17).⁶² God’s rule and authority is therefore universal, and he does not depend on humans for anything (v.25).⁶³ Such a premise on the nature of God also characterizes Paul’s speech “as the anti-idol polemic of Israelite prophets,”⁶⁴ directly confronting the Athenians’

⁵⁸ Cf. Pardigon, *Paul Against the Idols*, 202–216.

⁵⁹ Conzelmann, “The Address of Paul,” 50.

⁶⁰ Conzelmann, “The Address of Paul,” 50–51. See also Rowe, “The Grammar of Life,” 44: “By situating human existence within God’s creative purpose in Adam and eschatological end in Jesus Christ, Luke enframes the totality of human life. He is thus able to narrate the whole of human history in terms of a drama of divine hope and human ignorance.”

⁶¹ Pardigon, *Paul Against the Idols*, 148.

⁶² Ibid. In these passages, God is the one who “made” (ποίηω) “heaven and earth” (οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς) and “everything” (πάντα) in it, echoing numerous HB and extra-biblical Jewish texts (Gen 1:1; Neh 9:6; Ps 19:1; Isa 45:18; Jer 10:12; cf. Sib. Or. Pro. 90–100; Sib. Or. Frag. 3.4; 4 Ezra 16:55; T. Job 2:4; Jub. 7:36; 22:6; LAB 3:6; 11:8; Pr. Man. 2). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are from the NRSV.

⁶³ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 336–337; Carl R. Holladay, *Acts: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2016), 343–344.

⁶⁴ Kenneth D. Litwak, “Israel’s Prophets Meet Athens’ Philosophers: Scriptural Echoes in Acts 17, 22–31,” *BTB* 85.2 (2004): 212.

idolatry, which frames and prompts the speech in the first place (vv.16–23; cf. Rom 1:19–32; 1 Cor 8:1–6; 10:14; 12:2; 2 Cor 6:16; 1 Thess 1:9).⁶⁵

The next temporal marker in the speech is found in v.26, where it says that God “allotted the times [καιρούς] of their [the nations’] existence.” The interpretation of this verse has been one of the most debated issues in the Areopagus speech since Martin Dibelius, who viewed it as the starting point for interpreting the entire speech.⁶⁶ For him, vv.26–27 betray a strong reliance on Stoic natural philosophy, and in such a context καιρός refers to seasons, such as in Acts 14:17, which give evidence of God’s care for people through nature.⁶⁷ Alternatively, Bertil Gärtner argued for a salvation-historical interpretation in which καιρός refers to historical epochs such as those found in Jewish apocalyptic literature.⁶⁸ Contextually, there are more arguments in favor of Gärtner’s view.⁶⁹ Καιρός is not the usual word for seasons; it is only because of the modifier καρποφόρους in 14:17 that it takes on such a meaning.⁷⁰ In Luke-Acts, καιρός is often used in a salvation-historical sense, especially in the plural form, such as in 17:26 (cf. Luke 1:20; 12:56; 18:30; 21:24; Acts 1:7; 3:20).⁷¹ This sense is reinforced by the verb ὀρίζω, which in Luke-Acts also refers to God’s act of predetermining the plan of salvation, specifically the death of Jesus on the cross and his appointment

⁶⁵ On the narrative framing of the speech around the issue of idolatry, see Pardigon, *Paul against the Idols*, 101–129; Drew J. Strait, *Hidden Criticism of the Angry Tyrant in Early Judaism and the Acts of the Apostles* (New York, NY: Lexington Books, 2019), 309–346; Drew J. Strait, “The Wisdom of Solomon, Ruler Cults, and Paul’s Polemic Against Idols in the Areopagus Speech,” *JBL* 136.3 (2017): 609–632; Rowe, “The Grammar of Life,” 36–39; Litwak, “Israel’s Prophets,” 211.

⁶⁶ Dibelius, “Paul on the Areopagus,” 27–37. According to Conzelmann, v.26 “poses the most difficult problem of detailed interpretation” (“The Address of Paul,” 45).

⁶⁷ Main proponents of Dibelius’s philosophical interpretation of v.26 include Walther Eltester, “Gott und die Natur in der Areopagrede,” in *Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann*, ed. Walther Eltester, ZNTW Beiheft 21 (Berlin: Alfred Töppelmann, 1954), 202–227; Max Pohlenz, “Paulus und die Stoa,” *ZNW* 42 (1949): 69–104; Balch, “The Areopagus Speech,” 54–57.

⁶⁸ Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 147–152.

⁶⁹ To put it more strongly, the philosophical/natural interpretation poses “insurmountable problems” (Pardigon, *Paul Against the Idols*, 172–175). See also R. Lapointe, “Que sont les *kairoi* d’Act 17,26? Étude sémantique et stylistique,” *EgT* 3 (1972): 323–338.

⁷⁰ See discussion in Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*, 147, n2.

⁷¹ According to Kirsopp Lake and Henry Cadbury, the plural anarthrous καιροί is used in Luke-Acts as a technical term for a salvation-historical epoch (*BegC* 4:216). See also Keener, *Acts*, 3:2649. Notably, καιρός is also often used in Paul in a salvation-historical sense (Rom 3:26; 5:6; 11:5; 13:11; 1 Cor 7:29; 2 Cor 6:2; Eph 1:10; 2:12; 1 Thess 5:1; 1 Tim 2:6; 6:15; 2 Tim 3:1; 4:3; Tit 1:2–3).

as judge (Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 10:42; 17:31; cf. Rom 1:4).⁷² That *ὀρίζω* is used precisely in such a salvation-historical way merely a few verses later for God's appointment of a judge (v.31) strengthens a temporal, historical epoch interpretation of *καιρός* in v.26.⁷³ In this case, the "allotted times [*προσ τεταγμένους καιρούς*]" would refer to the periodization of history such as is found in Jewish apocalyptic literature.⁷⁴

This is supported by the second clause subordinated to *ὀρίσας*, "the boundaries [*ὀροθεσίας*] of the places where they would live" (v.26).⁷⁵ The noun *ὀροθεσία* is a *hapax legomenon*, but extrabiblical evidence shows that it refers to political boundaries and demarcations.⁷⁶ Thus, Craig S. Keener points to several Jewish texts that emphasize God's ordaining of political boundaries among nations.⁷⁷ Notably, several of these texts are connected to the stories of Noah and of the dispersing of the peoples after the tower of Babel (1Q33 X, 14; Jub. 8:8–11; 9:14; Sib. Or. 3:114–120), which corre-

⁷² The only use of *ὀρίζω* not in connection to the plan of salvation is Acts 11:29.

⁷³ Pardigon, *Paul Against the Idols*, 172. Furthermore, in Acts, the "plan" (*βουλή*) of God is always associated with his purposes of salvation (2:23; 4:28; 5:38–39; 13:36; 20:27; cf. Luke 7:30). See John T. Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*, SNTSMS 76 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993). *Βουλή* is used only twice in Paul (1 Cor 4:5; Eph 1:11), but in Eph 1:11, it is also used in reference to God's salvific plans.

⁷⁴ This interpretation is favored by Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts: Expanded Digital Edition*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), on Acts 17:26; Keener, *Acts*, 3:2648–2651; Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 526–527; Pardigon, *Paul Against the Idols*, 161–184. While Paul only rarely discusses a type of periodization of history (cf. Gal 4:4), in 1 Thess 5:1 he writes that the Thessalonians do not need to concern themselves with "times and seasons" (*περὶ δὲ τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν καιρῶν*), a phrase that makes reference to a timeline of periods and events, because the "day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (5:2). However, due to misunderstandings concerning the day of the Lord, Paul then clarifies in his second epistle that certain future events would take place before that day (2 Thess 2:3–8), thus referring to these events as temporal markers within history in a manner similar to other Jewish writings. Cf. Nijay K. Gupta, *1–2 Thessalonians: A New Covenant Commentary*, NCCS (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), 102; Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 306–309.

⁷⁵ Again, Dibelius prefers here a natural/philosophical interpretation, taking *τὰς ὀροθεσίας τῆς κατοικίας αὐτῶν* to refer to geographical zones on earth that are habitable as opposed to regions of the earth not naturally suited for human dwelling ("Paul on the Areopagus," 31).

⁷⁶ Cf. Ceslas Spicq ("*ὀροθεσία*," *TLNT* 2:596), who points to a couple of Greco-Roman inscriptions in support of a political interpretation. Its cognate *ὄρος* can also refer to boundaries of a region or nation (BDAG, s.v. "ὄρος").

⁷⁷ Keener, *Acts*, 3:2650.

sponds well to the universality of the peoples in the context of v.26 (πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων).⁷⁸ Indeed, it is the universal nature of v. 26—all nations inhabiting the *whole* earth (cf. Rom 1:5; 10:18; 15:11; 16:26; Gal 3:8; 2 Tim 4:17)⁷⁹—in connection to divinely appointed historical epochs that strongly points to Jewish apocalyptic historiography as the background for the speech to the Areopagus.⁸⁰ All humanity is under the sovereignty and providence of the one God who orders and ordains history so that all humanity might search for God (ζητεῖν [purpose infinitive] τὸν θεόν; v.27a) and have the opportunity to find him. God's control over and ordaining of history, which is moving toward an appointed *telos* (vv.30–31), has the immediate purpose of creating opportunities for humankind to pursue fellowship with him.⁸¹ Thus, history is conceived in linear fashion under the divine plan of the transcendent God, who is also immanently seeking fellowship with his creatures (v.27b).

While verse 26 alludes to the periodization of history more broadly, v.30 creates a clear divide in history: the “times of human ignorance [χρόνους τῆς ἀγνοίας]” that God has overlooked and the “now [νῦν]” time in which God calls for all people everywhere to repent.⁸² “Ignorance” is a recurring theme within the speech, clearly referencing idolatry and the lack of knowledge of

⁷⁸ Several commentators note the relevance of Deut 32:8 (LXX) for Acts 17:26, which reads: “When the Most High apportioned the nations [ἔθνη], when he divided humankind [υἱοῦς Ἀδάμ], he fixed [ἔστησεν] the boundaries of the peoples [ὄρια ἔθνῶν] according to the number of the gods.” Note that in this passage ὄρος, a cognate of ὀροθεσία, also appears in the same context as ἔθνος. Acts 17:26 omits the reference to Adam since it would be unintelligible to Paul's audience, but it does refer to the nations coming “from one man [ἐξ ἑνός],” which is usually taken as an allusion to Adam (cf. Rom 5:12). See Pardigon, *Paul Against the Idols*, 171; Witherington, *Acts*, 527; Bruce, *Acts*, 337–338. Considering the understanding of οἰκουμένη in Greco-Roman texts, the LXX, and in Luke-Acts, its usage in the context of Acts 17:6, 31 strengthens the sociopolitical interpretation of v.26. See Deok H. Jung, “Conflicting Worldviews in Acts,” *ExpTim* 132.2 (2020): 53–62.

⁷⁹ While the focus of this paper is on historiography, space is also an important aspect of the apocalyptic worldview. The spatial axis of apocalypticism encompasses the whole earth in relationship to the heavenly axis. See DiTommaso, “Apocalyptic Historiography,” 547–552; Kreitzer, “Apocalyptic, Apocalypticism,” 65–66.

⁸⁰ See footnote 44.

⁸¹ On seeking God, see Keener, *Acts*, 3:2651–2653; Witherington, *Acts*, 528; Pardigon, *Paul Against the Idols*, 175–184.

⁸² For Conzelmann, while the previous verses are debated regarding the extent of their proximity to Greek philosophy, these elements are gone in vv.30–31, and “the course of world history is now divided into two periods: before and after the raising of Jesus” (“The Address of Paul,” 47).

the true, living God (cf. v.23, 25, 29).⁸³ As Eckhard J. Schnabel points out, “The description of the proud history of Athens as ‘times of ignorance’ is a bold move.”⁸⁴

But the emphasis of v.30 is clearly on the “now [τὰ νῦν],” which “functions as a temporal frame for what follows,” and therefore, “the change of time reference in the discourse it expresses is strongly highlighted, thus sharpening the contrast between the two epochs.”⁸⁵ Implied is the full revelation of God in Christ, which makes ignorance of God inexcusable.⁸⁶ While the cross is not explicitly mentioned, the passage does suggest that, in contrast to the Athenians’ former ignorance, *now* they have received the opportunity to hear the full truth through Paul’s proclamation.⁸⁷ This revelation has come through history and has the clear purpose of leading people to repentance.⁸⁸ But this does not apply only to the Athenians but to “all people everywhere.” The significance of this statement is emphasized by Joshua W. Jipp, who states that “the universality of Paul’s claim is striking. Because this God is the single God who created the world (17:24), controls and maintains history (17:26–27), and has made humanity to seek him (17:27–29), he has authority to ‘command’ all humanity repent.”⁸⁹

The urgency of the call to repentance is strengthened by v.31, which asserts that a day of judgment has been determined by God. That this is

⁸³ Thus, “from nature Greeks have evolved not natural theology but natural idolatry” (C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, ICC [New York, NY: T&T Clark, 1998], 850–851).

⁸⁴ Schnabel, *Acts*, on Acts 17:30.

⁸⁵ Pardigon, *Paul Against the Idols*, 202–203. Notably, νῦν and νυνὶ δὲ are favorites of Paul in highlighting the contrast between before and after Christ, whether in terms of salvation-history more broadly or on a personal level in one’s own life. Cf. Rom 3:21, 26; 5:9, 11; 6:22; 7:6; 1 Cor 15:20; Gal 2:20; 3:3; 4:9; Eph 2:13; Col 1:22, 26; 3:8; 1 Tim 6:17; 2 Tim 1:10; Titus 2:12.

⁸⁶ Bruce, *Acts*, 340; Bruce, “Paul and the Athenians,” *Exp Tim* 88.1 (1976): 11–12.

⁸⁷ “What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim [καταγγέλω] to you” (17:23). The verb καταγγέλω and its cognates are consistently used throughout Acts for the proclamation of the gospel (cf. 4:2; 13:5, 38; 15:36; 16:17, 21; 17:3, 13). On Luke’s kerygmatic vocabulary, see Carl R. Holladay, “Acts as Kerygma: Λαλεῖν Τὸν Λόγον,” *NTS* 63 (2017): 159–172.

⁸⁸ Pardigon points out that “the command of God is to repent, not to complement or supplement one’s preexisting knowledge (a rather obvious point), nor merely to ‘change one’s mind’ (the most common philosophical usage for μετανοέω)” (*Paul Against the Idols*, 210). Thus, it is not “correct to say that Acts 17 suggests that pagans were already groping in the right direction toward the biblical God. Paul must proclaim to his audience what they do not truly know” (Witherington, *Acts*, 534).

⁸⁹ Jipp, “Paul’s Areopagus Speech,” 586.

the eschatological judgment to which history is moving toward is evinced by μέλλει, indicating an imminent expectation, along with ἔστησεν ἡμέραν, “suggestive of the scriptural theme of the ἡμέρα κυρίου,” which “contributes therefore to the eschatological mood of the passage.”⁹⁰ Moreover, the appointment (ὀρίζω) of “a man” as judge evokes the imagery in apocalyptic texts of “one like a son of man” who is given authority to judge all peoples and nations (Dan 7:9–14; 1 En. 48; 63:11–12; cf. Acts 10:42; Rom 2:16; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 Thess 1:9–10; 2 Tim 4:1).⁹¹ Again, the universality of this judgment is noteworthy, especially considering the use of οἰκουμένη, a polemical term that accentuates the conflict of authority between Roman hegemony (Acts 17:6–7) and God’s universal rule, which “becomes definitive when the true eschatological event happens” (17:31; cf. Luke 21:26).⁹² The guarantee (πίστιν) that this judgment is certain is that the man appointed as judge has been raised from the dead (17:31). In other words, Christ’s resurrection inaugurates the eschatological end-times and functions as the guarantee that the eschatological judgment determined by God will certainly happen in the near future.⁹³

Thus, all of the main elements of Jewish apocalyptic historiography as elaborated above are accounted for in Paul’s speech: history begins with the creation of the world by a transcendent God, it is divided into epochs appointed by God, and it is moving toward an eschatological *telos* characterized by judgment. This overarching movement of history follows a preordained divine plan and is all-encompassing, including all peoples everywhere.

⁹⁰ Pardigon, *Paul Against the Idols*, 203. See also Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 31 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 612; Bruce, *Acts*, 340–341; Litwak, “Israel’s Prophets,” 209–210.

⁹¹ Bruce, *Acts*, 341; Holladay, *Acts*, 346; John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC 26 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 377; Schnabel, *Acts*, Acts 17:31, n1187; Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 570; Jung, “Conflicting Worldviews,” 61.

⁹² Jung, “Conflicting Worldviews,” 60. Luke 21:26–28 is especially relevant for the context of Acts 17:31 since it also refers to the eschatological end-times that will come upon the οἰκουμένη and makes direct reference to the coming of the “Son of Man.”

⁹³ The notion that Christ’s resurrection functions as the guarantee for the eschatological judgment is parallel to the idea of the resurrection of Jesus as the necessary prerequisite for the eschatological resurrection of God’s people, a theme found elsewhere in Acts and Paul (cf. Acts 26:23; 1 Cor 15:20–24; Col 1:18). Most scholars agree that in all of these passages, while there is certainly a temporal primacy connected to the resurrection of Jesus, the emphasis is on the dignity or status of his resurrection. Cf. Michaelis, “Πρώτος, Πρῶτον, κτλ.,” *TDNT* 6:878; Dabelstein, “νεκρός,” *EDNT* 2:460; John D. Crossan, “The Resurrection of Jesus in Its Jewish Context,” *Neot* 37.1 (2003): 48; Anderson, “*But God Raised Him*,” 280, 283.

Thus, “history is teleological; it is pressing on in one direction, to the day of final judgment,” but “history is constrained not only by creation at one end and judgment at the other, but by singularities.”⁹⁴ This transcendent God is also immanently present in the world, revealing himself within history in order that people might have the opportunity to freely respond to him and repent. In doing so, when the final judgment arrives, they will be found on God’s side. But while within the Jewish apocalyptic worldview resurrection is situated at the end of history, here Paul makes mention of the resurrection of Christ, which has already taken place in the “now” time. This resurrection is proof not only that history is indeed moving toward a *telos* but also that the message of repentance is all the more urgent, for it indicates that the end is certain and near.

Paul and the Stoics

It is widely recognized that Paul’s speech to the Areopagus has many similarities, or *Anknüpfungspunkte*, to Stoic philosophy. Like Paul, the Stoics affirmed that God could not be confined to temples and lacked nothing, they accepted the brotherhood of all humanity and referred to God as the Creator, they believed in divine providence, and among all the Greeks, Stoics came closest to Jewish eschatology in believing in the final conflagration of the earth.⁹⁵ The question, however, is whether convergences between Stoicism and early Christianity were such that they allowed for a significant degree of both common ground and critique or whether Paul was simply using shared vocabulary to make himself intelligible to his audience, understanding that their underlying premises were fundamentally different.⁹⁶

In terms of a historiographical or philosophy of history approach, however, it is not enough to consider individual *Anknüpfungspunkte* or shared vocabulary and slogans (cf. 17:28). Rather, underlying conceptions of God, humanity, and the world must be considered, and here it must be said that there are “seminal differences between the Graeco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian attitudes towards

⁹⁴ Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 500–501.

⁹⁵ For a summary of points of contact between Paul’s speech and Stoic philosophy, see Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 376–378.

⁹⁶ Regarding the current state of scholarship on this question, Jipp writes, “One strand in recent scholarship on Acts, then, emphasizes the early Christian movement’s intense conflict with and critique of Greco-Roman religiosity, while others have made abundant contributions emphasizing that the early Christian discourse in Acts draws on Greco-Roman religious scripts, themes, and philosophy in such a way as to both critique Greco-Roman religion and show cultural convergences between it and Christianity” (“The Acts of the Apostles,” 360). For an overview of scholars on the different positions, see the introduction.

time and history.”⁹⁷ These differences begin with contrasting conceptions of the nature of God. Stoics were famously pantheists (cf. Cicero, *Nat. d.* 1.39; 2.37–39; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 7.147; Epictetus, *Disc.* 1.14.5–10; *Frag.* 3–4; Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 6.36–38; Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 1035;), viewing that “taken as a whole, together with its parts, the cosmos is properly called god,” which is why for them “theology is the culmination of physics.”⁹⁸ In this sense, “there is no distinct concept of ‘supernatural,’” and “‘nature’ (φύσις)—or the ‘universe’ (κόσμος)—is everything there is.”⁹⁹ If God is continuous with and identified with nature, he is not personal or transcendent, and as “creator” he is merely a craftsman working with the existing material of earth, water, air, fire, and intelligence.¹⁰⁰ This continuity between God and nature extends to humanity in a pantheistic manner as well though not genetically or through one Creator God.¹⁰¹

Granted, among Roman Stoics of the first century CE, there were claims about “the god whose purpose is shaping the history of the cosmos” and “is directly, even affectionately, involved in human affairs.”¹⁰² Such language of divine providence is very similar to Paul’s in Acts 17 and seems to evince a move toward a more personal view of God though whether this actually reflects a shift in theology has been questioned.¹⁰³ Either way, it must be

⁹⁷ Lemon, *Philosophy of History*, 56. Lemon does not seem convinced of this disparity, but he is skeptical of the Christian contribution to philosophy of history largely based on later writers such as Augustine. For the purposes of this paper, however, Christian reflections from the second century CE and beyond are not germane.

⁹⁸ Brad Inwood, *Reading Seneca: Stoic Philosophy at Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), 158–159. See also Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 131; A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1: *Translations of the Principal Sources, with Philosophical Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 323–333.

⁹⁹ Pardigon, *Paul Against the Idols*, 150–151.

¹⁰⁰ David Sedley, *Creationism and Its Critics in Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 205–238; David E. Hahm, *The Origins of Stoic Cosmology* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1977).

¹⁰¹ Jung, “Conflicting Worldviews,” 59; Pardigon, *Paul Against the Idols*, 167–168. Bruce notes that Athenians believed that their race was superior to the rest of humankind (*Acts*, 337).

¹⁰² Kee, “Pauline Eschatology,” 140.

¹⁰³ Concerning language reflecting belief in a more personal God, Bruce Winter writes regarding the first-century Roman Stoic Seneca that “it would be easy to draw the conclusion that Seneca believes in a personal God and therefore represents normative first-century Stoicism.... It, however, has been shown that Seneca’s characteristic method was to work from the premise of the recipient of his letter and to develop a more orthodox Stoic view as he proceeded. After a careful analysis of the basic contrast between Paul and Seneca on this point, it has been concluded

noted that the Stoic understanding of divine providence in history and of eschatology did not change. Their view of providence derived directly from their perception of physics and natural law, thus remaining impersonal and pantheistic.¹⁰⁴ In terms of eschatology, Stoics believed the world would have an end in the form of a conflagration and/or flood (cf. Cicero, *Nat. d.* 2.118; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 7.141; Seneca, *Ep.* 9.16), a final destruction very similar to that described in some Jewish writings.¹⁰⁵ However, not only does there seem to be no indication in Stoic texts that the end was near,¹⁰⁶ but also Stoic eschatology differed from Jewish apocalyptic regarding “the specific power which occasions the cataclysm, and the nature of the special relationship to the divine which characterizes those who directly benefit from the cosmic change.”¹⁰⁷

Even more significant is that, in contrast to the Jewish perception of history, Stoics were committed to a cyclical view of history and the world, with each cycle an identical repetition of the previous one (cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 7.137; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.1.18; Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 5.13, 32; Seneca, *Ep.* 36.10;). As Lemon points out, this “widespread general belief in *cosmological* cycles . . . persisted for centuries,” into the second century AD and beyond.¹⁰⁸ This notion of cyclical history led to the idea that everything was predetermined: fate was the power “determining not only the overall course of history, but the histories of individuals.”¹⁰⁹

It is true that Stoic philosophy and theology had ethical implications, leading to “the obligation of human beings to live in conformity with immanent reason.”¹¹⁰ And it is within the world of ethics that we find the “clearest

rightly that ‘Seneca is in the last resort not serious when he speaks of the personal god’” (“Introducing the Athenians to God,” 52). See also J. N. Sevenster, *Paul and Seneca* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 37; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 221.

¹⁰⁴ Winter, “Introducing the Athenians to God,” 52. See also Balch, “The Areopagus Speech,” 66–67.

¹⁰⁵ Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 274–279; Downing, “Common Strands,” 205; Inwood, *Reading Seneca*, 173; Edward Adams, *The Stars Will Fall from Heaven: Cosmic Catastrophe in the New Testament and Its World*, LNTS 347 (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2007), 116–118.

¹⁰⁶ Downing, “Common Strands,” 199.

¹⁰⁷ Kee, “Pauline Eschatology,” 145.

¹⁰⁸ Lemon, *Philosophy of History*, 33 (emphasis in the original). See also Sedley, *Creationism*, 208; Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 308–313; Adams, *The Stars Will Fall*, 118–120.

¹⁰⁹ Lemon, *Philosophy of History*, 34; Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 333–343.

¹¹⁰ Kee, “Pauline Eschatology,” 144. There are minimal future implications for such ethical behavior but not beyond the conflagration. “If one learned to live in

evidence of Stoic influence on Paul."¹¹¹ And yet, these ethical responsibilities in Stoicism are mostly limited to the present, with few or no implications for future destiny and certainly not beyond the conflagration, a significant point of contrast to the very eschatologically oriented Pauline ethics.¹¹²

Ultimately, then, despite considerable proximity between Paul and the Stoics in ethics, divine providence, unity of humanity, and even condemnation of idols and temples, these similarities are peripheral when compared to the deeper questions regarding the nature of God, humanity, and the world.¹¹³ It is the doctrine of God and the God-world relationship that functions as the foundation for all other ideas.¹¹⁴ Thus, arguments such as F. Gerald Downing's for general commonalities in pagan, Jewish, and Christian eschatologies are unsatisfactory.¹¹⁵ For Downing, the similarities in broad themes and vocabulary trump other differences, with the implication that "the contrast between Jewish and early Christian linear eschatologies on the one hand, and necessarily cyclical Greco-Roman views on the other" should be "deliberately dispensed with."¹¹⁶ Such a position not only misconstrues the pecking order of doctrines but also fails to adequately account for existing differences. Thus, in relation to Paul and Stoicism, N. T. Wright has observed that "if we are to compare different schemes of thought with one another we must compare centres with centres, not one person's centre with another person's periphery."¹¹⁷

accord with the cosmic tension, with tautness of soul, then one would be truly wise and assured of survival until the conflagration and renewal that would bring the present order to an end" (op. cit., 137). On the importance of ethics for eschatology in some Stoic writers, see Harrill, "Stoic Physics," 115–140.

¹¹¹ Kee, "Pauline Eschatology," 148. On ethics in Paul and contemporary Roman Stoicism, see Runar M. Thorsteinsson, "Paul and Roman Stoicism: Romans 12 and Contemporary Stoic Ethics," *JSNT* 29.2 (2006): 139–161.

¹¹² Kee, "Pauline Eschatology," 137; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 484, 1097; Thomas Schmeller, "Stoics, Stoicism," *ABD* 3:213.

¹¹³ To reiterate the point from Lemon, "The 'secret', then, in the momentous claims made for Christianity is that it is not its linear as distinct from the (pagan) cyclical approach which makes it 'unique' in the sphere of 'philosophy of history' but, mundanely enough, its concept of God" (*Philosophy of History*, 70).

¹¹⁴ "The God-world relationship encompasses everything that is. Accordingly, the doctrine of God holds implications for *everything else*" (John C. Peckham, *The Doctrine of God: Introducing the Big Questions* [New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2020], 1, emphasis in the original).

¹¹⁵ Downing, "Common Strands," 196–211.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 211.

¹¹⁷ Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1385–1386. Wright therefore has several substantial critiques of approaches such as that of Troels Engberg-Pedersen in

Naturally, this does not negate the presence of double entendres or the multilayered composition of Acts 17:22–31.¹¹⁸ There is something to be said about Luke’s skill in adequately adapting the rhetoric and content of his reported speeches for their respective audiences.¹¹⁹ Similarly, it is fair to assume that Paul had sufficient knowledge of basic Stoic themes and concepts that were widespread among his gentile audience, thus allowing him to present the gospel intelligibly to his hearers.¹²⁰ Nonetheless, it is precisely with the concept of a transcendent Creator God that Paul frames his speech, the one foundational concept that clashes most significantly with Stoic pantheism and that most profoundly impacts their respective philosophies of history.

As discussed above, Jewish apocalyptic historiography had an inherent existential aspect to it. History, according to God’s purpose, moves in a linear fashion to a *telos*, at the end of which is judgment, hence the importance of mileposts within revealed history to instill a sense of urgency for people to make a decision for God. Stoic philosophy, on the other hand, had no such sense of urgency, regardless of its belief in a conflagration sometime in the unknown distant future. Indeed, such notions of urgency would have clashed with the Stoic virtues of apathy and equanimity (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.8.23; Seneca, *Lucil.* 66.6).¹²¹ Ultimately, a pantheistic conception of God, along with a cyclical view of history, left little to no room for concern regarding in what point of history one lived or its implications for one’s eternal destiny. One might even wonder whether Luke’s description of how the Athenians would “spend their time [εὐκαιρέω] in nothing but telling or hearing something new” (17:21) suggests a certain indolence or detachment, which could be the result of the lack of urgency and purpose in a deterministic, cyclical view of time.¹²² Indeed, while εὐκαιρέω could simply indicate “to have time for

Paul and the Stoics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000); Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹¹⁸ Jipp, “Paul’s Areopagus Speech,” 567–588.

¹¹⁹ Keener, *Acts*, 1:311–319.

¹²⁰ Jipp, “Does Paul Translate the Gospel?” 361–376; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1384.

¹²¹ “A philosophy which was content to leave untouched the worldview system of paganism, with its tendency towards a loosely Stoic pantheism, would never generate a sense of eschatological urgency such as we find...not only in early Christianity but also in the teachings of Jesus himself” (N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, *Christian Origins and the Question of God 2* [London, UK: SPCK, 1996], 72–73). See also Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 378.

¹²² That linear versus cyclical approaches to history are not only abstract theoretical models but have real-life, practical implications can be observed even today. In

something" in a general manner (cf. 1 Cor 16:12; Polybius, *Hist.* 20.9.4), the notion of leisure is comfortably within its semantic range (cf. Mark 6:31; Philo, *Embassy* 175; Polybius, *Hist.* 4.60.10) and seems to be alluded to in the context of Acts 17.¹²³ Paul, however, interrupts their leisure, prompting them to repent and leave behind their time of ignorance due to the exigency of the "now" time. In his speech, which follows the contours of Jewish apocalyptic historiography, it is the Christ event that heightens even more the need for an existential decision intrinsic to the Jewish concept of time: *now* is the time to repent because the resurrection of this one man (who has also been appointed as judge) inaugurated the eschatological end-times and is the guarantee that the eschatological day of judgment determined by God is now closer than ever. And since this God is the Creator of all humankind, sovereign over all of the οἰκουμένη, the imminence of the day of judgment should instill this sense of immediacy in all peoples and nations everywhere.¹²⁴ Therefore, the Jewish apocalyptic notion of time and history not only serves as a theological and conceptual framework for Paul's speech but also has the important purpose of sparking a practical change in his audience's attitude because of their place within history.

Conclusion

Discussions on the minutiae of how Paul's crafted his speech to the Areopagus in Acts 17:22–31 will undoubtedly continue though most scholars would likely agree that it includes both dialogue and critique. From the viewpoint of philosophy of history, however, Jewish apocalyptic historiography is unique in its conception of a transcendent-immanent view

the American, British, and German linear concepts, time is money, and when that time is not used wisely or good decisions are not being made, people are wasting time (the so-called "Protestant work ethic"). Usually, tasks are tackled one at a time and follow a fixed schedule. Southern Europeans, on the other hand, are "multi-active" and feel more fulfilled when multiple things are being done at once. Priority is given to the present rather than to schedules or appointments. Eastern cultures with a cyclical view of time tend to think long term and will circle around problems before committing to them instead of solving problems sequentially (Richard Lewis, "How Different Cultures Understand Time," *Business Insider*, 1 June 2014, <https://www.businessinsider.com/how-different-cultures-understand-time-2014-5>). See also Kensy Cooperrider and Rafael Núñez, "How We Make Sense of Time," *Scientific American*, 1 November 2016, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-we-make-sense-of-time/>; Bhaskar Pant, "Different Cultures See Deadlines Differently," *Harvard Business Review*, 23 May 2016, <https://hbr.org/2016/05/different-cultures-see-deadlines-differently>.

¹²³ Cf. BDAG, s.v. "εὐκαιρέω"; LSJ, s.v. "εὐκαιρέω"; MGS, s.v. "εὐκαιρέω"; Spicq, "εὐκαιρέω, εὐκαιρία, εὐκαιρος, εὐκαιρίως, κτλ," *TLNT* 2:118–120.

¹²⁴ Keener, *Acts*, 3:2670–2673.

of God who is sovereign over history, a linear understanding of history beginning with creation and ending with the eschaton, and a universal conception of history and humanity. This paper has argued that when the temporal elements in Paul's speech are analyzed, it can be shown that the speech follows this framework down to the details characteristic of Jewish apocalyptic historiography, such as the periodization of history, resurrection, and a final judgment. The one addition to this framework is the Christ event, which divides history into former "times of human ignorance" and the "now" time, a new era within the historical timeline characterized by an inaugurated eschatology awaiting its final consummation. The resurrection of this "man," Jesus the Christ, inaugurates the end-times and therefore heightens the urgency of the need for "all people everywhere" to repent because the day of judgment is now guaranteed and near. Such a framework differs significantly from the pantheistic and deterministic, cyclical view of time intrinsic to Stoic philosophy.

It is insufficient, therefore, to focus only on points of contact and contrast between Paul and the Stoics if the underlying worldviews presuppose vastly different conceptions of God, history, and time. Furthermore, worldviews are connected to lifestyles and actions, and it is only from within a Judeo-Christian understanding of God and history that the urgency of Paul's appeal to repent *now* becomes meaningful. These practical implications of the speech cannot be overlooked and should be included in considerations of Paul and Stoicism in Acts 17.

APPLICATION OF THE TERM FREQUENCY-INVERSE
DOCUMENT FREQUENCY WEIGHTING SCHEME
TO THE PAULINE CORPUS

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Abstract

The term frequency-inverse document frequency (TF-IDF) weighting scheme is applied to the text of the thirteen epistles traditionally associated with the apostle Paul. The data for the analysis is the morphologically tagged text of the Society for Biblical Literature's Greek New Testament. The TF-IDF scheme is then used to construct the document term matrix (DTM) for a corpus under consideration. The DTM allows each document to be represented by a multi-dimensional document vector. A query document is then chosen and a vector representation of it is constructed. The cosine similarity between the query document and documents in the corpus is calculated. The following pairs of documents are consistently found to have the highest similarity: (1) Romans and Galatians, (2) Ephesians and Colossians, and (3) 1 Timothy and Titus. It is shown that computational methods may be applied to the thirteen epistles and that the results are in accordance with those obtained from theological or literary analysis.

Keywords: New Testament, Paul, authorship, term frequency-inverse document frequency

Introduction

The New Testament was written in Koine Greek, an ordinary human language, which implies that the text can be analyzed using methods of computational linguistics.¹ Stylometry is one aspect of computational linguistics in which a statistical analysis of a corpus is done. One application of stylometry is authorship-attribution and one of the earliest examples, applicable to biblical studies, is that of Augustus De Morgan who, in 1851, suggested that average word length could be used for author-attribution. In a letter addressed to a

¹ William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), loc. 457.

friend,² he expressed the opinion that average word length would indicate that the Greek of Hebrews “was not from the pen of Paul.” Other measures used in stylometry are sentence length, distribution of parts of speech, word length of parts of speech and vocabulary distribution.³ Methods of stylometry have also been applied to thirteen epistles in the New Testament that are historically associated with the apostle Paul. These are Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Even though there is disagreement in the literature as to whether the historical Paul was the author⁴ of all these epistles, we will collectively refer to them as the “Pauline corpus.”

A. Q. Morton and his co-workers used sentence length and the frequency and position of function words to claim that only Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians are attributed to the historical Paul.⁵ The book, “*A Stylometric Study of the New Testament*” by Anthony Kenny,⁶ is considered an important work in the field of biblical stylometry. Close to ninety-nine criteria were put forward to analyze the literary style of the New Testament. With reference to the Pauline corpus, his results differ from those of A. Q. Morton in that he suggests that twelve of the Pauline Epistles may be attributed to one author. D. L. Mealand tested a seven-epistle theory using positional stylometry⁷ and later multivariate methods, using cluster analysis and discriminate analysis to test Pauline authorship.⁸ Other work⁹ using Burrows’s Delta and Labbé’s intertextual distance suggests that Romans, Galatians, and 1 and 2 Corinthians may be attributed to the historical Paul, but that Colossians and Ephesians may not be Pauline. The

² R. D. Lord, “Studies in the History of Probability and Statistics, VIII: De Morgan and the Statistical Study of Literary Style,” *Biometrika* 45 (1958): 282.

³ John R. Allen, “Methods of Author Identification Through Stylistic Analysis,” *The French Review* 47 (1974): 904–916.

⁴ Keeping in mind that there are many subtleties associated with the notion of “authorship” in the ancient Mediterranean world. See C. L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006).

⁵ See remarks in Anthony Kenny, “Some Observations on the Stylometry of the Pauline Epistles,” in *Actes du Congrès International Informatique et Sciences Humaines, L.A.S.L.A.* (Liege, Belgium: Université de Liège, 1986), 501–512.

⁶ Anthony Kenny, *A Stylometric Study of the New Testament* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁷ D. L. Mealand, “Positional Stylometry Reassessed: Testing a Seven Epistle Theory of Pauline Authorship,” *NTS* 35.2 (1989): 266–286.

⁸ D. L. Mealand, “The Extent of the Pauline Corpus: A Multivariate Approach,” *JSNT* 59 (1995): 61–92.

⁹ Jacques Savoy, “Authorship of Pauline Epistles Revisited,” *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 70 (2019): 1089–1097.

works mentioned previously are not meant to be exhaustive, and a detailed review of stylometry, applied to the Pauline corpus, can be found in chapter 2 of *Pauline Language and the Pastoral Epistles* by Jerro van Nes. Later, when we assess our results, we will refer again to the above-mentioned authors, as well as those referenced by van Nes.¹⁰

Based on the discussion in Asumang,¹¹ we will define the following two sets:

1. Undisputed letters:
 $S_U = \{Rom, 1 Cor, 2 Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil, 1 Thess, Phlm\}$
2. Disputed letters: $S_D = \{Col, 2 Thess, 1 Tim, 2 Tim, Titus\}$

These letters can be further partitioned as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Partitioning of the Pauline corpus.

	Undisputed	Disputed
Free	Romans	2 Thessalonians
	1 Corinthians	1 Timothy (Pastoral)
	2 Corinthians	Titus (Pastoral)
	Galatians	
	1 Thessalonians	
Prison	Ephesians ¹²	Colossians
	Philippians	2 Timothy (Pastoral)
	Philemon	

Natural language processing (NLP) can be broadly defined as a subfield in artificial intelligence, where the numerical implementation of mathematical algorithms allows a computer to process and analyze a corpus of documents written in human language. The algorithms can range from the simple counting of word frequencies, for example, to sophisticated machine learning algorithms or even deep neural networks. The application of mathematical algorithms to human language can be difficult to implement since the data are in an unstructured format. In addition, mathematical algorithms require

¹⁰ Jerro van Nes, “Pauline Language and the Pastoral Epistles” in *Linguistic Bible Studies*, eds. S. E. Porter, J. Peláez and J. M. Watt (Boston, MA: Brill, 2018), 16: 67–75).

¹¹ A. Asumang, *Paul and His Letters* (Johannesburg, South Africa: South African Theological Seminary Press, 2010).

¹² Some scholars deny the Pauline authorship of Ephesians. However, we have included it in the “undisputed” group since (1) authorship attribution is not the goal of this article and (2) there are a number of scholars who do affirm Pauline authorship. See, for example, Benjamin L. Merkle, *Ephesians*, eds., A. J. Köstenberger, and R. W. Yarbrough (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 22; Grant R. Osborne, *Ephesians Verse by Verse* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 7.

numerical inputs, and thus an appropriate scheme must be devised as to how one can do this transformation from text to numbers while preserving the integrity of the input data.

The data for our analysis will be the morphologically tagged text of the Society for Biblical Literature's Greek New Testament (SBLGNT).¹³ The entire Pauline corpus is available as ordinary text files containing the following information: (1) book/chapter/verse, (2) part of speech, (3) parsing code, (4) text (including punctuation), (5) word with punctuation removed, (6) normalised word and (7) lemma. The primary tools for the text analysis were the Natural Language Toolkit¹⁴ (*nltk*) and *gensim*.¹⁵ All scripts were written in Python within the *Jupyter* notebook environment using the Anaconda platform.

Model

In this section, the Pauline corpus will be analyzed using the cosine similarity method, which allows one to quantify the similarity between two or more vectors. When one attempts textual analysis via numerical methods, the words and documents must be represented as numerical objects such as vectors, since the latter serve as the input to the models. The advantage of representing documents as vectors lies in the fact that the similarity can then be quantified in terms of an angle between two vectors. While it is possible to calculate the actual angle between the two vectors, it is customary to define document similarity in terms of the cosine similarity¹⁶ given by the equation:

$$\cos \theta = \frac{\vec{d} \cdot \vec{q}}{|\vec{d}| |\vec{q}|}$$

In this equation, the cosine function has been introduced on the left-hand-side. This function will always vary between 0 and 1 if the angle θ

¹³ J. K. Tauber, ed., *MorphGNT: SBLGNT Edition*. Version 6.12 [Data set], 2017, doi: 10.5281/zenodo.376200, <https://github.com/morphgnt/sblgnt>; Michael W. Holmes, ed., *Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010).

¹⁴ S. Bird, E. Loper, and E. Klein, *Natural Language Processing with Python* (Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, 2009). The official website is: <https://www.nltk.org>.

¹⁵ R. Řehůřek and P. Sojka, 'Software Framework for Topic Modelling with Large Corpora,' Proceedings of the LREC 2010 Workshop on New Challenges for NLP Frameworks (Valletta, Malta: ELRA, 2010). The official website is <https://radimrehurek.com/gensim/>.

¹⁶ A. Huang, "Similarity Measures for Text Document Clustering," Proceedings of the 6th New Zealand Computer Science Research Student Conference (Christ Church New Zealand, NZCSRSZ, April 2008), 49–56; M. D. Lee, B. Pincombe, and M. Welsh, "An Empirical Evaluation of Models of Text Document Similarity," in *Proceedings of the 27th Annual Cognitive Science Society* (Stresa, Italy: Cognitive Science Society (Stresa, Italy: Cognitive Science Society, 2005), 1254–1259).

varies between 0° and 90° . For our application, this will always be the case since all of the entries in the document vectors will be non-negative, and thus all the vectors will be in the same quadrant. On the right-hand-side, we have introduced the dot product of two vectors, which is defined as

$$\vec{d} \cdot \vec{q} = d_1q_1 + d_2q_2 + \dots + d_Nq_N$$

while $|\vec{d}|$ and $|\vec{q}|$ denote the length or magnitude of the vectors \vec{d} and \vec{q} , respectively.

The cosine similarity allows us to quantify document similarity in terms of a real number between 0 and 1. If the cosine similarity is equal to 0, then we say that the two vectors are orthogonal, that is, they are at right-angles with respect to one another. In this case, the two documents are totally dissimilar. If the cosine similarity is equal to 1, then the two vectors are parallel, and the two documents are identical. The dot product allows us to calculate the cosine similarity for vectors of arbitrary dimension. Note also that the magnitude of the document vectors does not affect the cosine similarity, because only the direction of the vectors is important.

Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency Weighting Scheme

The term frequency-inverse document frequency (TF-IDF) weighting scheme is a mathematical procedure, that allows every document in a collection of documents to be represented as a vector.

The TF-IDF model entails the following steps:

1. Selecting documents to form the corpus.
2. Creating a list of unique tokens, which is referred to as the dictionary.
3. Calculating the document-term matrix (DTM).

The corpus is a finite collection of documents $S_C = \{d_0, d_1, \dots, d_{n-1}\}$ where d_i is a document containing one or more sentences. An example of a corpus is

$$S_C = \{1 \text{ Corinthians } 1:3; \text{ Ephesians } 6:24; \text{ Philemon } 1:25\} = \{d_0, d_1, d_2\}$$

where

$d_0 = \text{χάρις σὺ καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατὴρ ἐγὼ καὶ κύριος ἰησοῦς
χριστός}$

$d_1 = \text{ὁ χάρις μετὰ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπάω ὁ κύριος ἐγὼ ἰησοῦς χριστός ἐν
ἀφθαρσία}$

$d_2 = \text{ὁ χάρις ὁ κύριος ἰησοῦς χριστός μετὰ ὁ πνεῦμα σὺ}$

where we have used the lemma for each word in the Greek text.

The token is an informational unit in the document and, in our case, it will be taken as a single word. This means that now we simply view each document as a collection of words. This is called the bag-of-words (BOW) model since the document is treated as an unordered collection of words.

The next step is to determine the dictionary for the corpus, which is the list of unique words across all the documents. For the simplified corpus above, we get as the dictionary:

$$S_D = \{\epsilon\acute{\iota}\rho\eta\gamma\eta, \theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma, \kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}, \kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma, \pi\alpha\tau\acute{\eta}\rho, \sigma\acute{\upsilon}, \chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma, \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma, \acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{o}, \acute{\epsilon}\gamma\acute{\omega}, \iota\eta\sigma\omicron\upsilon\varsigma, \mu\epsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}, \pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma, \acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\pi\acute{\alpha}\omega, \acute{\alpha}\phi\theta\alpha\rho\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha, \acute{\epsilon}\nu, \acute{\delta}, \pi\nu\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\mu\alpha\}$$

In table 2, we show, for each document, the tuples (w, f) where w indicates a word in the dictionary and f indicates the frequency of that word in a particular document.

Table 2. Frequency count for the tokens in the simplified corpus.

1 Corinthians 1:3	Ephesians 6:24	Philemon 6:24
($\epsilon\acute{\iota}\rho\eta\gamma\eta$, 1),	($\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$, 1),	($\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$, 1),
($\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$, 1),	($\acute{\epsilon}\nu$, 1),	($\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$, 1),
($\kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}$, 2),	($\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\acute{\omega}$, 1),	($\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$, 1),
($\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$, 1),	($\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$, 1),	($\iota\eta\sigma\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, 1),
($\pi\alpha\tau\acute{\eta}\rho$, 1),	($\mu\epsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}$, 1),	($\sigma\acute{\upsilon}$, 1),
($\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$, 1),	($\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$, 1),	($\mu\epsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}$, 1),
($\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$, 1),	($\acute{\delta}$, 3),	($\acute{\delta}$, 3),
($\acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{o}$, 1),	($\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$, 1),	($\pi\nu\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$, 1)
($\sigma\acute{\upsilon}$, 1),	($\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\pi\acute{\alpha}\omega$, 1),	
($\iota\eta\sigma\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, 1),	($\acute{\alpha}\phi\theta\alpha\rho\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$, 1),	
($\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\acute{\omega}$, 1)	($\iota\eta\sigma\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, 1)	

The TF-IDF model is so named because the calculation of the matrix element, which will be explained later, comprises two steps: (1) calculating the term frequency of a token, and (2) calculating the inverse document frequency of a token. The simplest choice for the term frequency is the raw count of a token per document.¹⁷ In this paper, the term frequency of a token (w_i) in document (d_j) is defined as:

$$tf(w_i, d_j) = \frac{N(w_i, d_j)}{L(d_j)}$$

where:

1. $N(w_i, d_j)$ is the number of times that token i appears in document j .
2. $L(d_j)$ is the length of the document. The length is the number of tokens in the document and thus, in our case, simply the word count.

The term frequency is both “token” and “document” dependent, and it is a local parameter. The inverse document frequency part of the matrix element aims to increase the contribution of words that are rare and decrease the contribution of common words. It is defined as:

¹⁷ L. H. Peter, “A Statistical Approach to Mechanized Encoding and Searching of Literary Information,” *IBM Journal of Research and Development* 1.4 (1975): 309–317.

$$idf(w_i, D) = \log_x \left(\frac{|D|}{N_d(w_i)} \right)$$

where:

1. D refers to the entire corpus, and $|D|$ is the total number of documents.
2. $N_d(w_i)$ is the number of documents containing the token w_i .

The value of x is typically 2 or 10. Since we are using the *gensim* implementation of the TF-IDF model, $x = 2$. Note that the inverse document frequency is a global parameter. In the TF-IDF model, the entire corpus can be represented by a matrix of dimension $|D| \times N_w$, where N_w is the number of tokens in the dictionary. This matrix is called the document-term matrix (DTM), where the number of rows is equal to the total number of documents and the number of columns is equal to the number of tokens in the dictionary.

	εἰρήνη	θεός	καί	κύριος	πατήρ	σύ	χάρις	χριστός	ἀπό	ἐγώ	ἰησοῦς	μετά	πᾶς	ἀγαπᾶω	ἀφθαρσία	ἐν	ὁ	πνεῦμα
d_0	0.35	0.35	0.7	0.0	0.35	0.13	0.0	0.0	0.35	0.13	0.0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
d_1	0.00	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.00	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.00	0.16	0.0	0.16	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.47	0.00
d_2	0.00	0.00	0.0	0.0	0.00	0.23	0.0	0.0	0.00	0.00	0.0	0.23	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.70	0.63

Figure 1. DTM for the simplified corpus. To obtain the shown values, we used the equations for the term-frequency and the inverse document frequency and then normalized the resulting document vector.

The DTM for the simplified corpus is shown in figure 1. It is a 3 x 18 matrix since there are 3 documents in the corpus and 18 tokens in the dictionary. The rows of the DTM are labeled by the documents and the columns are labeled by the tokens in the dictionary, which are, in this case, the individual words. Each document can now be represented by an 18-dimensional row vector (called the document vector), and every word can now be represented by a 3-dimensional column vector (called the word vector). Note that many zeros appear in the DTM since not every word will necessarily appear in every document. When the corpus contains many documents, then the DTM will be a sparse matrix since, in general, the number of tokens will far exceed the number of documents. The word vectors for *κύριος*, *χάρις* and *χριστός* (see columns 4, 7 and 8 in the DTM), have 0 at every element since these words appear in all three documents. This happens because the inverse document frequency contribution of a word occurring in every document is $\log_x 1 = 0$ independent of the basis x .

In the TF-IDF model, the query document is one that does not form part of the corpus when calculating the DTM. To quantify the similarity

We are now in a position to calculate the similarity indices for documents chosen from the Pauline corpus.¹⁸ We will do this systematically as follows:

1. Consider only documents from the undisputed letters when forming the corpus and choosing the query document. This will allow us to obtain baseline values for what may be considered ‘similar’ or possibly ‘dissimilar.’
2. Use the undisputed letters as the entire corpus, and choose the query document from only the disputed letters.

Similarity Indices for the Undisputed Letters

The results in this section will be based on the following procedure:

1. Select one letter L_Q , which will be the query document, from the set of undisputed documents S_U .
2. Calculate the DTM based on the corpus

$$S_C = S_U \setminus L_Q$$

where the ‘back slash’ denotes the set difference, that is, the set of documents in S_U except for L_Q . This step will generate the word and document vectors.

3. Calculate the document vector of the query document.
4. Calculate the similarity index of the letter L_Q with respect to the elements (letters) in the set S_C .

Table 4 presents the dimension of the DTM for each choice of the query document. Since only the eight undisputed epistles are taken into account, the number of rows of the DTM will always be 7. If Romans is the query document, then there are 1891 unique tokens in the dictionary, and thus the number of columns is equal to 1891. For this case, the word vectors are 7-dimensional column vectors, and the document vectors are 1891-dimensional row vectors. Similar statements hold for other choices of the query document. This table also shows that the DTM is different for every choice of the query document.

Table 4. Dimension of the document-term matrix when the query document is taken from the set of undisputed epistles.

Query document	Dimension of DTM
Romans	7 x 1891
1 Corinthians	7 x 1921
2 Corinthians	7 x 1999
Galatians	7 x 2112

¹⁸ Note that we will use the lemmatized form of the tokens in each epistle for all subsequent calculations.

Ephesians	7 x 2092
Philippians	7 x 2126
1 Thessalonians	7 x 2167
Philemon	7 x 2194

In figure 2, we show the results for the cosine similarity index for the various possibilities. The columns indicate the Epistles that form part of the corpus for the specific query document, specified in the row. Note that the diagonal elements are left empty since the query document cannot be part of the corpus that is used to calculate the DTM. For example, the first row indicates that Romans is the query document, and the corpus consists of all the remaining undisputed Epistles. The cells that are grey in this table, indicate the maximum value of the similarity index for a given query document.

	Romans	First Corinthians	Second Corinthians	Galatians	Ephesians	Philippians	First Thessalonians	Philemon
Romans		0.438	0.309	0.457	0.244	0.220	0.185	0.0716
First Corinthians	0.451		0.263	0.232	0.258	0.148	0.181	0.0409
Second Corinthians	0.352	0.284		0.213	0.164	0.224	0.199	0.0684
Galatians	0.496	0.260	0.209		0.144	0.137	0.140	0.0289
Ephesians	0.287	0.301	0.175	0.153		0.159	0.167	0.0628
Philippians	0.255	0.173	0.246	0.144	0.156		0.164	0.161
First Thessalonians	0.213	0.204	0.195	0.144	0.161	0.162		0.0356
Philemon	0.0996	0.0544	0.0857	0.0356	0.0714	0.188	0.0429	

Figure 2. Similarity index values

The results in figure 2 can be represented graphically as shown in figure 3. In the latter figure, the x -axis always represents a query document. The colored symbol associated with each epistle is indicated in the legend. If we now refer back to figure 2, we can see that every query document will have seven similarity indices associated with it. These values indicate the level of similarity between it and the documents in the corresponding corpus. This clarifies why there are seven symbols per query document shown in figure 3. Let us take Romans as an example, which means that we must refer to the first row in figure 2. When Romans is the query document, it has a similarity

index of 0.438 with respect to 1 Corinthians. This explains why the red star is at the shown position in the first column of symbols in figure 3. Recall that this first column is associated with the case where Romans is the query document. From the first row of figure 2, we see that Romans has a similarity index of 0.457 with respect to Galatians. This is also the highest similarity value in that row. This explains the position of the yellow star in the first column of symbols in figure 3. Similar statements hold for all the other cases. Figures 2 and 3 must be viewed in conjunction with each other, but figure 3 gives a quick visual representation of the spread of the similarity values per query document.

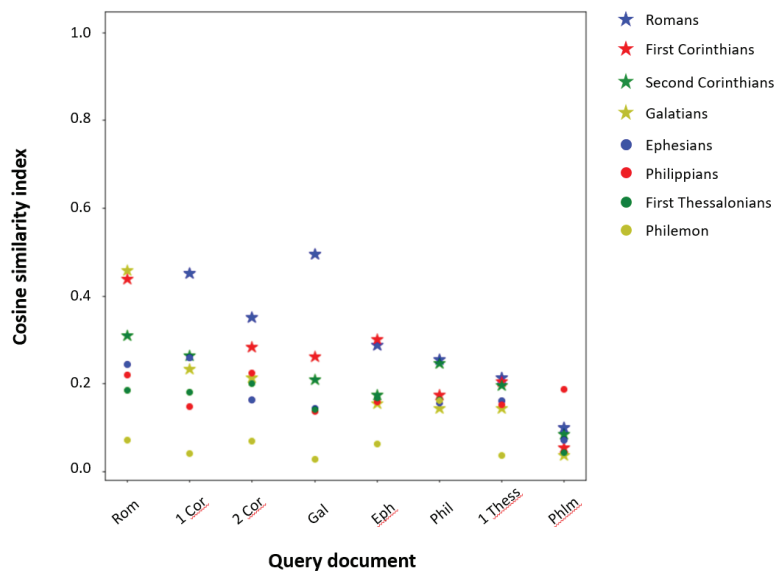


Figure 3. Spread of similarity index values for a given query document on the x-axis.

From figure 3 we see the following:

1. If Romans is the query document, it is most similar to Galatians, with a similarity index of 0.457. Next, it is most similar to 1 and 2 Corinthians, followed by Ephesians and Philippians. Romans is least similar to Philemon, with a similarity index of 0.0716.
2. When Galatians is the query document,¹⁹ it is most similar to Romans. The ordering of the similarity indices for Galatians with respect to the

¹⁹ The fourth column of symbols in figure 3.

other epistles is very similar to that for Romans. The only difference is that now Ephesians, Philippians, and 1 Thessalonians form a cluster. As in the case of Romans, Galatians is least similar to Philemon. At first glance, it may seem odd that the similarity index of Romans relative to Galatians is different than the similarity index of Galatians relative to Romans, since the cosine similarity is symmetric. However, it must be remembered that the corpus is different for the two cases, and thus the DTM will also be different.

3. When 1 Corinthians is the query document, it is most similar to Romans. The similarity indices of 1 Corinthians with respect to 2 Corinthians and Ephesians are practically identical. Galatians is next, followed by 1 Thessalonians and Philippians. As in the case of Romans, Philemon provides the lowest value of the similarity.
4. When 2 Corinthians is the query document, it is most similar to Romans, followed by 1 Corinthians. Philippians, Galatians, and 1 Thessalonians form a cluster, followed by Ephesians and, lastly, Philemon.
5. When Philemon is part of the corpus, the corresponding query document (apart from Philippians) will always have the lowest similarity index with respect to it.
6. When Philippians is the query document, two clusters are formed. The first cluster consists of Romans and 2 Corinthians. The second cluster consists of the remaining epistles.
7. When Philemon is the query document, it is most similar to Philippians, while the remaining epistles form a cluster.

The next set of calculations will investigate the similarity index values where the corpus is formed by taking documents only from the undisputed set, and the query document will be taken only from the disputed set. The procedure is as follows:

1. Select one letter L_Q from the set of disputed letters. This one will be the query document.
2. Calculate the DTM using only the set of undisputed letters, that is, $S_C = S_U$. This step will generate the word and document vectors.
3. Calculate the query vector for the letter L_Q .
4. Calculate the similarity index of L_Q with respect to the letters in the set S_C .

Figure 4 displays the results for the procedure outlined above. The columns indicate the letters, taken from the undisputed corpus used to construct the DTM. The rows indicate the letters from the disputed corpus, which function as the query documents. For example, if Colossians is the query document, then the first row indicates the similarity index of Colossians with respect to the letters in the undisputed corpus. As before, the values in figure 4 can be represented graphically and this is shown in figure 5.

		Corpus							
		Romans	First Corinthians	Second Corinthians	Galatians	Ephesians	Philippians	First Thessalonians	Philemon
Query document	Colossians	0.196	0.191	0.148	0.126	0.389	0.109	0.0969	0.159
	Second Thessalonians	0.183	0.217	0.155	0.0737	0.125	0.115	0.211	0.0159
	First Timothy	0.190	0.220	0.115	0.114	0.159	0.0948	0.0991	0.0461
	Second Timothy	0.225	0.142	0.150	0.102	0.157	0.110	0.121	0.125
	Titus	0.161	0.125	0.0884	0.0706	0.137	0.0893	0.0596	0.0380

Figure 4. Similarity index values

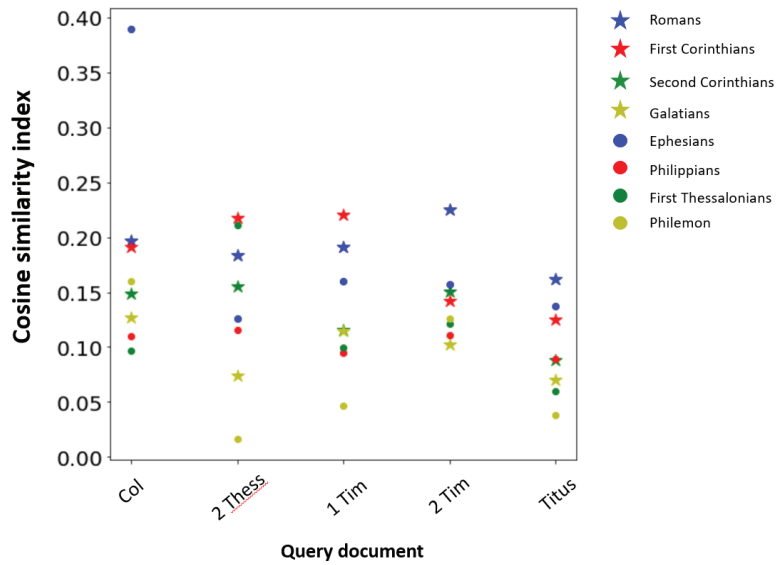


Figure 5. Similarity index values for given query document on the x-axis

1. When Colossians is the query document, it is most similar to Ephesians, which is indicated by the filled blue circle in the first column of symbols in figure 5. Romans and 1 Corinthians form a cluster, followed by Philemon, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, and lastly, 1 Thessalonians.
2. When 2 Thessalonians is the query document, it is found to be most similar to 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians.
3. First Timothy is most similar to 1 Corinthians, whereas 2 Timothy and Titus are both most similar to Romans.

Let us now include both the undisputed and disputed letters in the construction of the DTM. The query documents will also be chosen systematically from all thirteen letters. Table 5 indicates the dimension of the DTM for each choice of the query document. Since all 13 epistles are now taken into account, the number of rows of the DTM will always be 12.

Table 5. Dimension of the document-term matrix when the query document can be any of the epistles and the remainder is then used to construct the corpus.

Query document	Dimension of DTM
Romans	12 x 2364
1 Corinthians	12 x 2391
2 Corinthians	12 x 2457
Galatians	12 x 2546
Ephesians	12 x 2555
Philippians	12 x 2562
1 Thessalonians	12 x 2603
Philemon	12 x 2628
Colossians	12 x 2574
2 Thessalonians	12 x 2617
1 Timothy	12 x 2508
2 Timothy	12 x 2538
Titus	12 x 2590

The results for the similarity indices are shown graphically in figure 6.

We note the following:

1. The introduction of the disputed letters does not significantly distort the distributions of the similarity indices compared to when only the undisputed letters were used to form the corpus. For example, for Romans, the order of similar undisputed epistles given in figure 6 is the same as the order given in figure 4, with the exception that the disputed epistles now slot in slightly above Philemon.
2. In most cases, Titus and Philemon form a cluster and provide the lower bound for the similarity index.
3. Colossians is still most similar to the undisputed letter, Ephesians, whereas for 2 Thessalonians, we find the cluster of 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians providing the highest similarity index.
4. First Timothy is now most similar to Titus, whereas it was previously most similar to 1 Corinthians. Second Timothy is now most

- similar to a cluster of letters, namely, 1 Timothy and Titus.
5. In a few cases such as Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians, we find that they are clearly most similar to specific epistles, whereas in other cases the similarity indices tend to form clusters, and thus it is not possible to identify one clear partner to which the query document is most similar.
 6. From the final set of 13 letters, we can also identify three “symmetric pairs.” By “symmetric pairs,” we mean that A is most similar to B and B is most similar to A when all 13 letters are taken into account. Recall that we cannot necessarily expect this symmetry since the query document cannot form part of the corpus, and thus the DTM will be different when A is the query document compared to when B is the query document. The TF-IDF model yields the following three symmetric pairs:
 - a. Romans and Galatians
 - b. Ephesians and Colossians
 - c. 1 Timothy and Titus

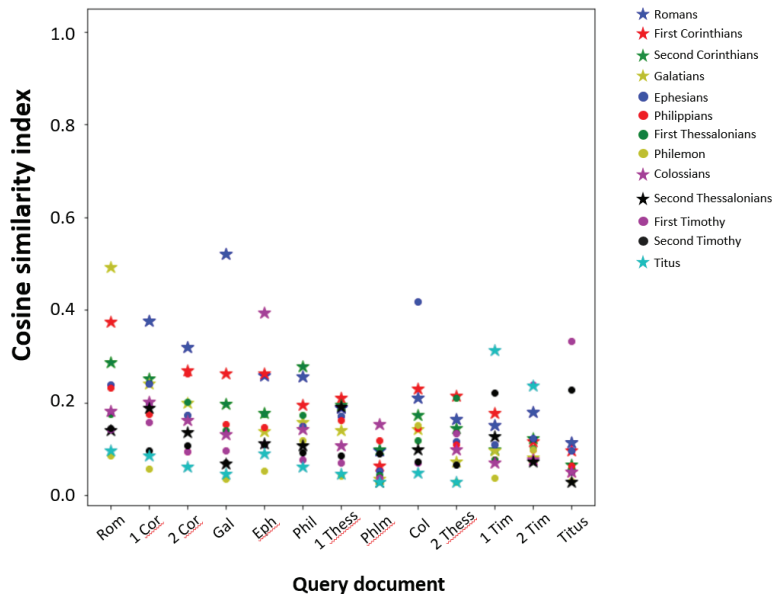


Figure 6. Similarity index values for given query document on the x-axis

At this point, it is important to place our results within the wider context of Pauline studies. Firstly, we note that, apart from stylometry within the

framework of computational linguistics, the Pauline corpus has been studied using different methods such as (1) word studies, (2) the epistolary character, and (3) rhetorical criticism.

With reference to “word studies,” the interested reader is referred to the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*²⁰ for examples of this methodology. However, the richness of Paul’s vocabulary makes word studies no easy task. In addition, Paul would imbue certain words with a richer meaning that was absent in the surrounding Hellenistic or Jewish strata. For example, Mounce²¹ writes that *χάρις* was in Classical Greek a “colorless word without religious connotations,” whereas it is a foundational word in Pauline theology. Word studies have their limitations however, and the exegete must guard against forcing a single definition of a word into a passage. In his review of contemporary research in Pauline studies, Porter²² warns that individual words cannot be equated with concepts. Sivonen²³ states that “the same author can alter the meaning of a word, depending on the context, including augmentation, purpose, the audience’s situation, and the social setting.” With reference to authorship, Dibelius and Conzelmann²⁴ write that “the vocabulary of the Pastorals appears to diverge markedly from that of the other Pauline epistles,” and this is why, amongst other reasons, the Pastorals are placed in the class of *antilegomena* or disputed Pauline letters.²⁵

The work of Adolf Deismann played a significant role in highlighting the epistolary character of the Pauline corpus.²⁶ The apostle’s letters were primarily occasional and sought to address various concerns of either Paul or the intended recipients. The ancient letter of Paul’s day had a general structure, and therefore, a basic pattern can be discerned in many of the New Testament letters. With reference to the Pauline corpus, both the type of letter and the

²⁰ G. F. Hawthorne and R. P. Martins, with D. G. Reid, eds, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1992).

²¹ W. D. Mounce, “Pastoral Epistles,” WBC 46 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 550.

²² S. E. Porter, “Understanding Pauline Studies: An Assessment of Recent Research [Part One],” *Themelios* 22.2 (1996): 1–12.

²³ M. Sivonen, “The Doxa Motif in Paul,” (PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2018), 3.

²⁴ M. Dibelius and H. Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1972), 3.

²⁵ M. Harding, “Disputed and Undisputed Letters of Paul,” in *The Pauline Canon*, ed. S. E. Porter (Boston, MA: Brill, 2004), 137.

²⁶ T. L. Donaldson, “Introduction to the Pauline Corpus,” in *The Pauline Epistles*, eds. J. Muddiman and J. Barton (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 45.

structure of the letter are questions, which must be studied very carefully²⁷ and various authors have analyzed the letters' opening, body, and closing. While it is true that the ancient Greek letter would belong to two broad categories of "Official Letters" and "Personal Letters," it is ill advised to rigidly assign the Pauline letters to one or the other: Adams²⁸ states that "hard and fast classifications are not conducive to producing constructive dialogue."

The Pauline corpus may also be analyzed according to the method of rhetorical criticism, which classifies the epistle according to its rhetorical type, that is judicial, deliberative, or epideictic. The argument may also contain elements of ethos, logos, and pathos. With reference to logos, ancient rhetoric assumed a prescribed structure consisting of *exordium*, *narratio*, *propositio*, and *exhortatio*.²⁹ As before, great care must be taken to not force a stringent adherence of the Pauline text to these rhetorical structures. Watson³⁰ warns that "the three species are historically conditioned, not comprehensive, and certainly not universal."

The method presented in this article falls within the framework of computational linguistics, where the words form the input variables to an algorithm which consists of two steps: (1) the TF-IDF part which provides an abstract representation of documents, and (2) the cosine similarity, which can then be calculated using the abstract representation of two documents. The three traditional methods mentioned above focus on the semantic range of a word or on structural aspects of the document. They are not algorithmic and require deep domain knowledge. In contrast, the TF-IDF method combined with cosine similarity provides a very transparent way to represent the text numerically and then evaluate the similarity of documents. According to this algorithm, Romans and Galatians are most similar, and this result is in complete accordance with what was found using the traditional methods mentioned above. Gloag³¹ states, "It is certainly an undeniable fact that there is a remarkable resemblance between the Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans." With reference to

²⁷ C. B. Puskas and M. Reasoner, *The Letters of Paul* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), 39; S. E. Porter and S. A. Adams, "Pauline Epistolography: An Introduction," in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* eds., S. E. Porter and S. A. Adams (Boston, MA: Brill, 2010), 3.

²⁸ S. A. Adams, "Paul's Letter Opening and Greek Epistolography: A Matter of Relationship," in Porter and Adams, *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, 33.

²⁹ T. L. Donaldson, "Introduction to the Pauline Corpus," 47–48.

³⁰ D. F. Watson, "The Three Species of Rhetoric and the Study of the Pauline Epistles" in *Paul and Rhetoric*, eds. J. P. Sampley and P. Lampe (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2010), 43.

³¹ P. J. Gloag, *Introduction to Pauline Epistles* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1874), 149.

Galatians, Lightfoot³² states, “The resemblance to the Epistle to the Romans is much more striking and definite.” He goes on to write:³³ “There is no parallel to this close resemblance in St. Paul’s Epistles, except in the case of the letters to the Colossians and Ephesians.” This result, that is, the similarity between Ephesians and Colossians, is also seen using the two-part algorithm presented in this article. Even though 1 Timothy and Titus are considered by many scholars to be non-Pauline, this work does identify them as being the most similar, which is not entirely surprising since they share content and purpose.

The comparisons mentioned above between traditional methods and the algorithm employed in this article are not meant to be exhaustive but are merely to illustrate that we obtained results in accordance with traditional views regarding the *Hauptbriefe*. On the other hand, these traditional methods have also been used to classify certain letters as being deuter- or trito-Pauline. Van Nes writes³⁴ that “scholarly impressions about language are valuable but can become somewhat subjective,” and thus, the use of a quantitative method rooted in computer-assisted analysis is justified. However, he also warns³⁵ that “the results of so-called stylometric studies, like those based on scholarly impressions, often prove contradictory.” Therefore, it is vital that we now compare our results with previous stylometric studies, with the caveat that we are not primarily focused on authorship attribution, as some of these studies are.

Let us now compare our results to those of Kenny, Mealand, and Alviar, since these authors provided an ordering of the epistles with respect to Romans. For this comparison, we need to refer to the first column in figure 6, where Romans is the query document and its similarity with respect to the remaining twelve epistles is shown.

Table 6. Comparison of the results of this work to those of Kenny, Mealand and Alviar.

Kenny ³⁶	Romans, Philippians, 2 Timothy, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, Philemon, 1 Corinthians, Titus.
Mealand ³⁷	Romans, Galatians, 2 Corinthians, 2 Thessalonians

³² J. B. Lightfoot, *St Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (London, UK: MacMillan, 1866), 45.

³³ *Ibid.*, 48.

³⁴ van Nes, “Pauline Language,” 75.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

³⁷ D. L. Mealand, “Reviewed Work(s): A Stylometric Study of the New Testa-

Alviar ³⁸	Galatians, 1 Timothy, Ephesians, 2 Corinthians, Colossians, Philip- pians, 1 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians
This article	Galatians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Timothy, 1 Timothy, 2 Thessalonians, Titus, Philemon

Even though Savoy³⁹ focused on authorship attribution, which was not a goal of this work, it is useful to compare our results to his. Firstly, he finds that Romans, Galatians, 1 Corinthians, and 2 Corinthians form a group, and he assigns Pauline authorship to them. Our results also suggest that these four epistles may indeed be connected, because Romans is most similar to 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, and Galatians. Secondly, he classifies 1 and 2 Thessalonians as a cluster. Our results also indicate that 1 and 2 Thessalonians are very similar, but the latter also has a high similarity index with respect to 1 Corinthians. Thirdly, his group of Titus, 1 Timothy, and 2 Timothy is also in accordance with our results. Fourthly, he groups Ephesians and Colossians, but denies their Pauline authorship. According to our calculations, Ephesians and Colossians are indeed most similar to each other. Interestingly though, Romans and 1 Corinthians are second nearest to both Colossians and Ephesians.

The results of this article also show some correspondence with that of Libby, which van Nes describes⁴⁰ as “the most recent and most sophisticated of studies using multivariate statistics.” Firstly,⁴¹ Libby identifies what he calls the “Thessalonian Pairing” and calls it the “most ubiquitous finding in this research.” From figure 6 we see that when 2 Thessalonians is the query document, it is indeed very similar to 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians. When 1 Thessalonians is the query document, it is very similar to 2 Thessalonians along with 1 Corinthians. The tight pairing of these two epistles, which Libby refers to, is absent in one or two cases, such as when 2 Corinthians or Philippians is the query document. Secondly,⁴² Libby identifies the “Colossians and Ephesians” pairing which is in accordance with the result of

ment by Anthony Kenny,” *JTS* 39 (1988): 196.

³⁸ J. J. Alviar, “Recent Advances in Computational Linguistics and Their Application to Biblical Studies,” *NTS* 54 (2008): 151.

³⁹ Savoy, “Authorship of Pauline Epistles,” 1089–1097.

⁴⁰ van Nes, “Pauline Language,” 74.

⁴¹ J. A. Libby, “The Pauline Canon Sung in a Linguistic Key: Visualising New Testament Text Proximity by Linguistic Structure, System, and Strata,” *BAGL* 5 (2016): 185.

⁴² *Ibid.*

this paper. Recall that Ephesians and Colossians form a symmetric pair and are always most similar to each other, even when the entire corpus is taken into account. Thirdly,⁴³ he also identifies the pairing of 1 Timothy and Titus, which this work found to be a symmetric pair. Libby likewise believes that the Thessalonian pairing is close enough to suggest the same author and, even though authorship attribution was not the goal of this paper, our similar result could be taken as a datum in support of this belief.

Despite promising results, caution in interpretation must be exercised. It must be kept in mind that we are using a BOW model, and thus, lexical-level features are extracted and used to test for similarity. The results of the two-step algorithm used in this paper must therefore be seen as part of a cumulative case. When analyzing the Pauline corpus and word studies, rhetorical methods and the epistolary character of the letters must be taken into account.

Conclusions

In this work, the cosine similarity method was used to analyze the following collection of documents: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. These were collectively referred to as the Pauline corpus.

We used the TF-IDF weighting scheme to construct the DTM, from which one obtains the document vectors (the rows of the DTM) and the word vectors (the columns of the DTM). Since each document was now represented by a vector, the similarity index between it and a query document could be calculated. Three sets of calculations were done:

1. Seven epistles were taken from the undisputed corpus and the remaining epistle was then chosen to be the query document. The results for all possible combinations are shown in figure 3.
2. All eight undisputed epistles were chosen to form the corpus and the query document was one of the five disputed epistles. The results are summarized in figure 5.
3. The entire Pauline corpus was used, in which case twelve would be chosen to form the corpus and the remaining one would be chosen as the query document. The results for all possible combinations are shown in figure 6.

When all thirteen epistles were taken to construct a corpus and choose a query document, then we found that three symmetric pairs could be identified: (1) Romans and Galatians, (2) Ephesians and Colossians, and (3) 1 Timothy and Titus.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 186.

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

AN ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON OF THE MISSIONAL DOCTRINAL HERMENEUTICS OF KEVIN J. VANHOOZER AND VELI-MATTI KÄRKKÄINEN, WITH EMPHASIS ON THEIR NOTIONS OF GOD, ESCHATOLOGY, AND MISSION

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Date completed: July, 2021

This dissertation analyzes Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen's and Kevin J. Vanhoozer's theological method, in order to understand its structural elements, and thereby to facilitate comprehension of their missional doctrinal hermeneutics, and the ramifications of those hermeneutics for the construction and development of Christian theology. Missional doctrinal hermeneutical models conceive the missional dimension of doctrine in various ways. Some privilege the maintenance of theological identity cohering with the foundational sources of theological authority. Others privilege theological constructions that assimilate the context and the missional situational framework of understanding. This dissertation strives to examine the diverging missional hermeneutics of Kärkkäinen and Vanhoozer, the foundational assumptions and presuppositions of which hold significant implications for conceptualizing the interconnections between the notions of God, eschatology, and mission. The results of this study demonstrated that Kärkkäinen's doctrinal formulation is comparative, integrative, and ecumenical. It privileges the contextual/dynamic pole of missional doctrinal hermeneutics, assimilating the macro-hermeneutical assumptions of the targeted missional situation. Vanhoozer's doctrinal formulation is confessional, directive, participatory. It privileges the source theological authority as a fixed pole. In so doing, it establishes the direction of dependency from the canon as theological authority to the missional situation. The contribution of this analysis to missional doctrinal hermeneutics is to establish missional theology as reflecting more than simply the contextual theological reflection of a particular community, and as more than providing theological generalization by formulating doctrine/dogma/fundamental beliefs (or its equivalent). On the one hand, the contextual nature of missional theology leads to the fragmented and perspectival nature of knowledge. On the other hand, the generalist nature of doctrine maintains consensus, agreement, and catholicity/universality. Both concreteness (local-

ity, context) and generality (universality/constant) ought to be in dialectical tension. That would enable the hermeneutical non-linear processes for making the Christian message both intelligible and faithful to the theological normative sources while also relevant to the missional situation. The introductory chapter defines the problem, purpose, method, and delimitations of the study. It delineates the meaningfulness of the doctrine of God, eschatology, and mission as it relates to missional doctrinal hermeneutics. Chapter 2 provides a conceptual overview of selected missional doctrinal hermeneutical models in the twentieth century, namely, representative models of contextual theologies (translation and cultural/anthropological) and doctrinal development (fixed and dynamic theological formulations). Chapters 3 and 4, respectively, present a description and analysis of Kärkkäinen's and Vanhoozer's missional doctrinal hermeneutics through a structural methodological analysis of their theological construction as it relates to the doctrines of God, eschatology, and mission. Chapter 5 critically compares and evaluates Kärkkäinen's and Vanhoozer's missional doctrinal hermeneutics. It then offers synthetic considerations in reference to the previous discussion, pointing out possibilities for habilitating the missional dimensionality of doctrinal formulation and development. Finally, the conclusion of this study provides a summary, implications, and further areas of research.

POTTERY HORIZONS OF THE JALUL CERAMIC ASSEMBLAGE
IN THE IRON AGE IIA-C FROM SQUARE G4 IN ITS HISTORICAL
AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

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Several scholars have debated the traditional and low chronology of the Iron Age in Southern Levant using pottery as one of their main pieces of evidence. Both approaches disagree in regards to the dates assigned to the early Iron Age II pottery. To achieve a better understanding of the problem, the still rudimentary knowledge of Iron Age II pottery in Transjordan needs to be improved. Since 1992, *Tall Jalul*—the largest tell site in the central Jordan plateau—has been due for a comprehensive study of its ceramic assemblages. The site produced Iron Age IIA–C pottery in stratified layers, and it has the potential to contribute to the enlightenment of the debate mentioned above. Therefore, *Tall Jalul*'s Iron Age II pottery and its chronological horizons require a more robust study, in conjunction with historical sources. This dissertation attempted just that, using the methodology of comparative analysis of Iron Age IIA, IIB, IIC of *Jalul* ceramics with those of *Tall al-Umayri* and *Tall Hisban* and other relevant sites in the region when necessary. The method used to convey this analysis includes the selection of *Jalul* pottery from Field G4 that is relevant for a typological and chronological study; and a typological examination of this pottery. What I found was that the Courtyard and Pottery Room in Field G4 differ in their stratigraphy and ceramic accumulation. The Courtyard Room displays three phases of ceramic development: Iron Age IIA and earlier forms, Iron Age IIB, and a transitional subperiod of Iron Age IIB-IIC. This is consistent with the stratigraphy, which rests mainly on the architectural development of the building. Meanwhile, the Pottery Room contains a solid transitional subperiod Iron Age IIB–IIC and a probable phase of Iron Age IIB. Both rooms display a similar repertoire, but the Pottery Room seems to have undergone a different process of accumulation of both the debris and the pottery, especially during Iron Age IIB–IIC. Judging by the number, quality, and variety of vessels found in the Pottery room, it seems safe to conclude that its residents belonged to a wealthy family. The parallels of painted pottery may indicate a Moabite connection, although an Ammonite association is also possible. Some parallels of square rims from *Khirbat al-Mudayna* on the *Wadi ath-Thamad* and *Balu'a* strengthen the Moabite correlation. However, the evidence is still emerging and being understood, and as new information comes to light through future publications, it will be possible to confirm or deny the association of this type of pottery with Moab. As regards *Jalul*'s registry of red slipped burnished ware, it seems at least in

both the Courtyard and Pottery Rooms that this type of pottery precedes the appearance of painted pottery that appears mainly during Iron Age IIB–IIC. I concluded that the typological study of *Jalul* ceramic assemblage from Square G4 shows that Phase 3 contains Iron IIA or earlier forms. Phase 2 contains Iron IIB pottery types, some of which are typical Jordanian pottery. In this phase, there is also some red burnished ware that seems to precede the appearance of multicolor pottery. Phase 1 seems to be a transitional subperiod Iron Age IIB–IIC. This phase contains most of the multicolor-painted pottery. The parallels of painted pottery and square rims suggest their probable connection with Moabite ceramic.

BOOK REVIEWS

Beilby, James K. and Paul Rhodes Eddy, eds. *Understanding Transgender Identities: Four Views*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019. 272 pp. Paperback. USD 27.00.

As should be obvious from the title of the book, this is a collection of four theological perspectives on transgender people by Christian scholars. The book begins with an introduction (fifty-four pages), where the editors inform readers about the history (3–13), issues and controversies (13–44), and Christian perspectives on transgender experiences and identities (44–53). In the following four chapters (of about thirty pages each), different authors present their views on transgenderism. At the end of each chapter, there are responses (of about five pages each) from the other contributors. The book contains a glossary of terms and a Scripture and subject index of interest to readers.

In the introduction, the editors, James K. Beilby, professor of systematic and philosophical theology at Bethel University, and Paul Rhodes Eddy, professor of biblical and theological studies at Bethel University, present a historical overview of transgender experiences and identities within the US context. Starting with Christine Jorgensen, the first American to become widely known for having sex reassignment surgery (male to a female) in December 1952, they identify three key moments leading to a tipping point in the popular view on transgender issues — namely, (1) Caitlyn Jenner’s interview in April 2015, (2) the TV show *I Am Jazz*, released in July 2015, featuring Jazz Jennings, a transgender teen, and (3) the transgender bathroom debate.

The authors also point out that since the 1990s, several studies have shown that some children do experience gender dysphoria, typically between the ages of seven and ten (34). In an attempt to address the matter, researchers have proposed three basic approaches to understand, support, and treat gender dysphoric children: gender realignment, the dominant response throughout the twentieth century (36–38), gender affirmation, supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics (38–41), and watchful waiting (41–42).

Moving beyond the words of the controversies to real people, the editors highlight that in the quest for respectful treatment of transgender people, Christians of different persuasions should ponder whether believers ought to follow God’s original binary model or Jesus’s nonbinary model (biblical and theological), whether sex and gender are binary (scientific), and the best and most appropriate ways of assisting people with gender dysphoria (practical and pastoral).

Owen Strachan (ch. 1), associate professor of Christian theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, approaches the issue of transgender identities from a biblical and theological lens. Based on the biblical data, he states that God created humanity with two sexes: male and female (57, 60); that the view that sex is binary is reaffirmed throughout the Scriptures (60–73); and that the concept of marriage depends on sexual complementarity (67). Considering this, Strachan claims that nonbinary views fall far short of God's original blueprint. With such a theological framework, Strachan concludes that the experience of gender dysphoria comes as a result of Adam's fall (57, 74). Despite his stronger stance against transgender people, he maintains that Christians should champion the dignity of humanity without exception (55). Unlike the other exponents, Strachan believes in gender realignment—that is, gender identity should be aligned to natal sex. Thus, he judges that the only solution for those experiencing gender dysphoria is mental transformation (58) rather than bodily transition (57).

Mark A. Yarhouse, chair of the psychology department at Wheaton College, and Julia Sadusky, a postdoctoral fellow at EDCare (Denver, CO), are clinical psychologists with theological training (MA in theological studies and BA minor in theology, respectively) who look at the topic (ch. 2) considering three interpretive lenses through which people see research findings, theological matters, and pastoral care (102). They call the first framework the “integrity framework,” which emphasizes God's original plan from creation. The second framework, the “disability framework,” considers the consequences of sin upon human nature as a present reality, implying that transgender people are not directly capable of choosing their experience (104–105). The third framework is the “diversity” lens, which respects one's sense of personhood (105). The authors do not favor any particular lens; instead, they argue for the integration of all three. They encourage congruence of gender identity with biological sex if possible, but they admit that in their experience, in cases of transgender identity, congruence rarely occurs once a person reaches adulthood (113). Consequently, Yarhouse and Sadusky propose a theology of healing, which aims at spiritual healing while not producing complete physical or psychological healing (114).

Megan K. DeFranza (ch. 3), a research associate at the Center for Mind and Culture (Boston) and a visiting researcher at Boston University School of Theology, confesses that at the beginning of her doctoral studies, she shared Strachan's view—that is, that transgender people need mental and spiritual healing (transformation) not bodily change (transition). She held that view because based on her theological framework, she believed that it is Christ's work to restore humanity to the ideal of Eden (148). However, after examining the roles of experience and emotion (148–152), science (152–157), and Scripture in moral reasoning (157–178), DeFranza is now convinced that transgender people do not need to be transformed. She calls attention to bodily variations such as intersex (154), brain differences between cisgender

and transgender (155–156), and the salvation of eunuchs (Isa 56:4–5; Matt 19:12; Acts 8:38–39), who were excluded from the assembly of God (Deut 23:1), as evidence that nonbinary people do not need to be restored to God's original design of male or female to be saved (165–178).

Justin Sabia-Tanis (ch. 4), assistant professor and director of the Social Transformation Program at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, argues that God expresses his intention for gender diversity in creation. He calls attention to the fact that, as stated in Gen 1:27, humanity was created in the image and likeness of God, as both male and female, meaning that God's own being includes more than one sex (197). Sabia-Tanis states that God's mixed gender can be affirmed because the Bible uses male and female images to refer to God (191). On this basis, he claims that God's multiple identities have similar reflections in humanity (192) just as they are found in the animal and plant kingdoms (199–200). Sabia-Tanis also argues that since there is no male or female in Christ (Gal 3:28), there is nothing to prevent the baptism of a transgender person who believes. He further states that some persons are called to change their gender, just as some animals are (204).

The book is an excellent introduction to the current debate on transgender people. All contributors are respected in their fields of study. The editor's introduction is a must-read for those who want to explore the theme of transgenderism. Readers will be exposed to different sources of disagreement—namely, biblical and theological disagreements, biological and social disagreements, and pastoral care disagreements. I suspect that being exposed to a variety of opinions and information from different fronts will enable the reader to tackle the issue more objectively.

The book, however, has some shortcomings. First, it does not present four views as the title claims but rather three. Strachan (ch. 1) advocates for gender realignment, while DeFranza (ch. 3) and Sabia-Tanis (ch. 4) stand for gender affirmation. Saduski and Yarhouse (ch. 2) speak in favor of both gender realignment and gender affirmation. Second, there is a lack of common ground among the authors. Each contributor approaches the topic from a different field of study. Some argue from a theological framework, while others use a psychological and social framework. As a result, theological arguments are responded to with psychological and social explanations and vice versa, making the conversation unfruitful. Third, Strachan's comments regarding a complementarian view on women are a little distracting since that is not the issue being debated.

However, the flaws mentioned above do not take away the value of the work, which is to bring a range of perspectives and approaches into dialogue (2). Even though readers may disagree with the views of the different authors, they will grow to understand the issues, questions, and lines of reasoning involved in Christian conversations on transgenderism.

Lancaster, Massachusetts

RONALD ROJAS

Derr, Colleen R. *Renewing Communication: Spirit-Shaped Approaches for Children, Youth, and Families*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020. 288 pp. Paperback. USD 29.00.

From the beginning, the author, Colleen Derr, makes it clear that her book is about transformational communication, which can only be done through the power of the Holy Spirit. She puts great emphasis on this belief because, as she affirms, without the Holy Spirit, our work is mere motion. Even if we accomplish something, it won't be transformational. It is the Holy Spirit who prepares us and makes our communication transformational, during and even after our encounters with children, teens, and adults. What differentiates between effective and transformational communication is the Holy Spirit. Transformational communication can include preaching the gospel, but it is also more generic, from individual conversations to class lectures, anything that brings positive change for Christ. This change, a goal of communication, can come from something as small as greeting other people to becoming a mentor. What differentiates transformational communication from effective communication is the Holy Spirit, and the positive change resulting from it is not for self, but God.

The book is Christ-centered, emphasizing the word of God and the Holy Spirit as the foundation and our guide to the truth. Derr explores the Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, to make her point that only the Holy Spirit can speak to people's hearts and bring complete transformation in their lives. With many books on transformation available out there, the uniqueness of this one is that it solely focuses on communication. Whether we like it or not, we are communicating something all the time to the people around us, with or without words. If we can improve our communication, this can potentially improve all aspects of our lives.

Throughout the book, Derr goes through a step-by-step process for making transformational communication possible: (1) we must recognize that it is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit; (2) before we approach others, we need to first seek personal spiritual transformation because we cannot transform others when we are not transformed; (3) afterward, we can build an authentic relationship with those we want to communicate with; (4) we need to understand the lives of others; (5) then we can prayerfully develop goals for the communication to meet their needs and assist in their growth; (6) next, we can engage in communication with proclamation, using creative and experiential techniques; (7) during and after the conversation, we should assess and evaluate its effectiveness and check whether the goals were met; (8) finally, we must recognize what the Holy Spirit has accomplished through us and always find something to celebrate, regardless of the outcome.

Derr simplifies this further into four parts: (1) foundations of transformational communication, which she emphasizes as the work of the Holy

Spirit (steps 1–3); (2) preparation for transformational communication, which means finding out about the listener (steps 4–5); (3) engagement in transformational communication, exploring various communication methods to best assist the listener (step 6); and lastly, (4) assessing and evaluating transformational communication (steps 7–8).

Each chapter starts with a brief outline of what it pertains to and ends with a conclusion to summarize the chapter, followed by short questions for the readers to further reflect on. These questions are helpful for small group discussions. However, Derr also poses many questions throughout the chapters, and they are not answered. This can leave the readers bewildered. On the other hand, the book is easy to read. It does not use religious jargon, and anyone, professional or nonprofessional, will find it helpful to improve their communication. Derr asserts that it is everyone's responsibility to answer God's call to make disciples. This requires the ability to communicate. Christian communication is not only teaching God's Word but also involves relationships. Derr suggests that God's communication to us started from understanding where we are and our conditions and touching every aspect of our lives through the life of Jesus. She then models the biblical approach God used to communicate to his people by delineating the communication steps, as previously mentioned, so that readers can follow them in their interactions with children, youth, and any family member.

She also adds the psychological and physiological development of humans to explain each communication step from a scientific point of view. Derr summarizes the stages of human development in a simple way to ensure that they are easy to understand. Nevertheless, incorporating every step of the communication procedure seems daunting and unrealistic. We normally do not think about these steps in our casual conversations with friends and families, but Derr argues that for successful communication to occur, all the factors need to be considered. This can be too technical for daily conversation, and it can even be unrealistic to apply in every interaction. However, the knowledge of these steps is at least important if someone wants to be intentional about enhancing communication. The process also points out which areas of our communication need more attention and improvement. These steps are not there to overwhelm the speaker but as guidance for them to become a better communicator.

The book is more practical than theological, more mission-oriented than academic, and more of a self-help book than a textbook. It helps readers to self-reflect on their communication with others, and it provides methods to improve each step so that others can pay more attention to your communication and have a desire to listen to you. Ultimately, the steps aim to transform lives via effective conversations.

As the title of the book implies, Derr focuses on how to approach children. She was a children's pastor, so it is evident that her personal stories

and experiences reflect reaching and dealing with teens and youth more than adults. One downside of her stories is that when she names biblical characters such as Joseph, Jonah, and Jesus as examples, she assumes that readers know the stories. So people who do not have basic Bible knowledge may find some of the examples hard to follow.

There are a few things Derr can improve on in the book. One point is clarifying the difference between developing a relationship with the listener in ch. 3 and knowing the individuals in the audience in ch. 4. It seems that developing a relationship is building trust by showing love and care, whereas knowing the individual is learning more facts about them and their circumstances. It would have been helpful if she had clarified the distinction between the two because developing a relationship can equate to knowing the individual.

The second and perhaps most confusing part of the book is the proclamation step of communication. Derr suggests developing tailored goals for each individual before communication starts. Examples of these goals are: identifying a specific way to help others, signing up to serve as a mentor, setting a specific number of church attendances, or setting a specific number of prayers each day. These are specific goals, yet when Derr spells out the next step of engaging the communication, what to proclaim and how to proclaim with these specific goals in mind, she suddenly shifts to the generic proclamation of the gospel, God's work, and the salvation message. These themes are unspecific and abstract topics, and it is difficult to connect how proclaiming God's work can transition to signing up to serve as a mentor. More should have been done to integrate this information into the major goal of the book.

Lastly, she lists numerous possible scenarios where things could go unexpectedly wrong in communication. Even the most prepared communication will indeed encounter sudden obstacles, and we need to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit to guide us through. However, the majority of the book is dedicated to delineating the steps we can take for better communication. Therefore, rather than simply leaving the matter to the Holy Spirit to meet all the unexpected situations, it would have been helpful if she had offered corresponding solutions for how to respond to her specific list of unexpected situations. It is one thing to simply give a warning, but another more helpful thing would have been for her to describe the unexpected situation with suggested solutions. Then readers could anticipate how to respond to these possible scenarios.

Nevertheless, the book makes it clear that the foundation of transformational communication is the work of the Holy Spirit. At the end of the day, it is the role of the Holy Spirit that convicts our hearts and guides us to the truth, and it is our privilege to be a part of and play a role in transforming someone's life as they grow in Christ. Therefore, we must create space in every step of our communication and allow the Holy Spirit to work in both the speaker and the listener's heart, even if we have to abandon our well-

prepared script and plans because, as Derr mentions, it is ultimately the Holy Spirit who transforms, not us. For that reason, we are called to live lives that proclaim the power of the Holy Spirit, lives where we actively pursue personal transformation so that we can be effective tools to communicate with and transform our children, youth, and families.

Overall, I felt this book helps refocus our attention on what is most important in our communication—the Holy Spirit. Those who are knowledgeable in the topic of communication may find the book to be at an introductory level, but Derr’s perspective from a children’s pastor’s view can provide valuable insight to those who lead children and youth in the church.

Berrien Springs, Michigan

SION SUNG

Eastman, David L. *Early North African Christianity: Turning Points in the Development of the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021. 174 pp. Paperback. USD 21.99.

David Eastman has written a well-organized introduction to early Christianity in Roman North Africa. In his first chapter, he clarifies what he means by “Early North African Christianity.” Based on the geopolitical divisions of the provinces in the Roman Empire, Eastman explains to his readers that Africa, for the Romans, did not include Egypt, but it was a label used for the northern coast of the continent west of Egypt (1). So this is not a book on Christianity in the continent of Africa, as defined in modern maps, but only one region of it. From the outset, I noticed that Eastman’s objective would be one of simplifying and explaining the history. Through the ample use of primary sources, he explains who is who, where is where, and what is what, not assuming that his readers know who Tertullian was, where Numidia is, or what a *libellus* was. I could not put the book down even though I am familiar with this history as a PhD student in early Christianity. His style is very engaging. The language is informal but elegant. He writes as if he is telling a story to a young Christian who is not familiar with the church’s historical roots. As I read the book, I often imagined Eastman in front of me, sitting on my couch and talking to me. For this accomplishment alone I congratulate the author (and editors). This book is a great option for students of early Christianity. It is concise, and it covers the most important issues of Christianity in this period.

Eastman selected a few characters to tell his history of Roman African Christianity up to the fifth century: Perpetua and Felicity (Part 1), Tertullian (Part 2), Cyprian of Carthage (Part 3), the Donatists (Part 4), and Augustine of Hippo (Part 5). The book is divided into five parts, each one containing three chapters. The first chapter of each part introduces the main character(s) in their historical context (entitled *The Life and Times of*). In the second and

third chapters of each section, Eastman explains some theological discussions that sprung from historical circumstances that led these important figures of North African Christianity to articulate a coherent opinion on important subjects like the purpose of martyrdom, the locus of divine authority in the church, the role of rituals and the church for salvation, divine predestination, and church unity. At the end of each section, Eastman invites the reader to reflect on the implications of their articulations of these issues, contextualizing them in a contemporary setting, making the history relevant to modern readers. His usage of primary sources is exemplary. His quotations are short and to the point. The titles of each chapter are creative and pedagogical. For example, in part four on the Donatist controversy, he labels the chapters *Caecilianists versus Donatists: Rival Churches* (ch. 12) and *Donatists versus Caecilianists: Rival Martyrs* (ch. 13). In part two on Tertullian, he uses the titles *Tertullian Defending the Faith: Apologetics and Heretics* (ch. 6) and *Tertullian Defining the Faith: The Fullness of the Trinity* (ch. 7).

In his conclusion, he states that “the goal of this book has been to highlight significant contributions made by the early North African church that shaped the Christian world then and have continued to shape it up to today” (163) and that his “goal has not been to convince you of *what* you should think about these issues, but I do want to convince you *that* you should think about these issues” (165). By not idealizing or demonizing either the past or the present, Eastman, in my estimation, was successful in his endeavor. As a good historian, he invites his readers to reflect on the past and its influences on the present and challenges them to decide what kind of future they desire based on the lessons of history. In writing history as a Christian, he makes clear his historical assumption, that God’s works are both manifested in the past and the present, and that the church is moving forward despite the changes in culture and someone’s opinions about it (165–167).

The book includes a small index, a few pictures of church ruins, maps of the Roman Empire, and diagrams connecting characters in the Donatist controversy. This work also provides a selected annotated bibliography, indicating which books Eastman recommends and for what reasons. Young scholars of early Christianity will appreciate his selections as a shortcut to the most relevant readings of this period and the geography of early Christianity he covers in this book. To those interested in Christianity in Africa in general, I would add to his list Keith Burton’s *The Blessing of Africa* (IVP Academic, 2007), which focuses on Egypt and East Africa and goes beyond the medieval period although not the specific time and area covered in Eastman’s book, and *The Kingdom of God in Africa* by Mark Shaw and Wanjiru Gitau (Langham Global Library, 2020 [rev.]), which is a comprehensive history of Christianity in the African continent and also covers the period Eastman discusses.

[Epp, Eldon Jay. *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism. Vol. 2. Collected Essays, 2006–2017.* NovTSup 181. Leiden: Brill, 2021. xliii–825 pp. Hardcover. USD 172.00.](#)

Eldon Jay Epp's impact on the field of NT textual criticism has been enormous. Beginning with his early work on Codex Bezae, Epp is an exemplar of American scholarship. A selection of his articles and essays was first available in 1993 in *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism*, which included works by Epp and Gordon D. Fee. Brill published the first volume of *Perspectives* in 2005. That volume contained selections of Epp's work from 1962 to 2004. The subsequent volume offers a collection of Epp's work published from 2006 to 2017.

Any collection of previously published works offers a two-fold dilemma for the scholar. First, is the book worth purchasing if the content is available elsewhere? Second, how should the scholar avoid redundancy or confusion in citations? I will revisit the first question at the conclusion of this review. For the second question, a helpful list of the original publication data for each essay is provided at the beginning of the volume (xiii–xv), and original page numbers are included throughout each essay. In addition to this data, the front matter includes a preface, acknowledgments, abbreviations, notes to readers, and introductions for each volume of *Perspectives*. In his preface, Epp helpfully defines his view on the goal of NT textual criticism: to establish the "earliest attainable text" and learn about the history of the text through textual variation (xxiv). Scholars may quibble about various aspects of this proposed goal, but it is largely representative of the views of most scholars working on the NT text today.

The chapters of the volume appear to have been organized chronologically, with some exceptions. Nonetheless, for this review, I will discuss the chapters topically. Chapters 1, 5, and 9 involve Epp's work on papyri. The first chapter discusses what can be known of the Jewish community in Oxyrhynchus based on the papyri found there. From his survey of the data, he concludes that a large Jewish population was diminished after the Bar Kokhba revolt in the second century AD and then grew again in the third century. Chapter 5 discusses the NT papyri manuscripts discovered at Oxyrhynchus. This is a succinct summary, albeit dated, of these important manuscripts. Chapter 9 is slightly more up-to-date and wider in scope, summarizing all NT papyri rather than simply those manuscripts found at Oxyrhynchus. Originally published in 2013, this essay already shows its age when it comes to listing the extant manuscripts. Because new papyri are published on an almost yearly basis, there are limits to the usefulness of republishing older articles. Scholars wishing to explore the topic will need to supplement these two chapters with recent publications on the NT papyri.

Epp includes two articles dealing with specific textual problems. In ch. 2 he tackles Rom 16:7, the infamous “Junia/Junias” passage. In this article, he draws on work from his longer monograph, *Junia—The First Woman Apostle*. He first argues persuasively against “Junias,” showing that the masculine form is highly speculative, with no manuscript support. The rest of the article works through the genuine variations present in Rom 16:7. Epp agrees with the Nestle-Aland text in each instance, albeit with some illustrative discussion on the genesis of each variation. Chapter 6 is an extended book review for *Do This in Remembrance of Me: The Disputed Words in the Lukan Institution (Luke 22.19b–20)* by Bradly Billings (T&T Clark, 2006). Billings argued that the shorter reading of this Lukan passage was produced in Lyons ca. 177 AD. Epp is skeptical, poking several holes in Billings’s argument.

In the world of NT textual criticism, Epp is most known for his incisive commentary on the discipline. He is at his best as a scholar when he questions commonly held scholarly assumptions. Six chapters in this volume speak about various methods or practices within the field itself. In ch. 3, Epp speaks of the goal of textual criticism, arguing that even those variants which were not part of the original text hold meaning for our understanding of Christian history. Most scholars would agree with Epp’s proposal, although the relative emphasis placed upon variant readings might differ from person to person. Often Christian apologists will cite the wealth of manuscript evidence as proof of the Bible’s purity. Epp tests this assertion in ch. 4. Through a variety of tables and quantitative summaries, Epp affirms that we have a great many early NT manuscripts but reminds the reader that many of the earliest manuscripts are extremely fragmentary. It should also be noted that the number of extant manuscripts has increased since this article was written. Chapter 7 addresses the so-called “canons” of textual criticism (e.g., “prefer the more difficult reading,” etc.). After summarizing how these canons were developed, Epp gives an updated listing. Perhaps the greatest insight he provides is that either the longer or shorter reading should be preferred, depending on the context (213). Scholars, especially those associated with the Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung, have recently been calling for the abandonment of text types in text-critical research. In ch. 10, Epp defends the practice of grouping consanguineous manuscripts and proposes new, clearer terminology. Chapter 19, one of the most recent articles to be published, gives Epp’s methodology for isolating the Western text (or “D-text”) in Acts. This chapter serves as a practical application of the theory presented in ch. 10 and demonstrates how different methodologies must be developed for different corpora.

Chapters 8 and 12 both provide summaries of NT textual criticism. Chapter 8 is directed at exegetes wishing to understand the relevance of textual

criticism to interpretation. Chapter 12 is similar but includes brief discussions of current debates taking place within the field. Chapters 13 and 18 explore a concept that has already been discussed in multiple chapters: the story behind the variants. In chapter 13, Epp gives a history of this emphasis on “narrative textual criticism,” then uses a variety of textual problems to illustrate what can be learned from variants. Chapter 18 is a summary and revision of Epp’s dissertation, which argued for an anti-Jewish bias in Codex Bezae’s text of Acts. Epp uses the common bias present in several variation units in Acts to argue for the existence of a D-text (commonly “Western” text).

Several chapters address the history of NT textual criticism. Chapter 11 explores the identity of the “earliest recoverable text.” Epp summarizes the language used in a variety of Greek NT editions to show the changing view of how far back reconstructive efforts can go. Chapter 14 celebrates the discovery of Codex Sinaiticus and places that discovery in its historical context. Similarly, ch. 17 discusses the contribution of Codex Sinaiticus and Constantin Tischendorf to the world of NT textual criticism. Chapters 15 and 16 are a two-part exploration of critical editions of the Greek NT. In all of these chapters, Epp shows himself to be a skillful historian.

The volume concludes with an appendix with three summaries of textual criticism, two previously published and one not. A series of indices complete the volume.

Each article in this volume is well written, well-argued, and well researched, as is typical of Epp’s work. Returning to the question asked at the beginning of this review, Is the book worth purchasing if the content is available elsewhere? For most, the answer will be no. The various articles and essays in the volume simply overlap too often and vary too much in their assumed audience to be worth the high cost of this hardcover edition. Some articles, like those republished in chs. 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, and the appendix, give introductory material suitable for those new to the field. These introductions tend to show their age, especially when discussing the number of extant manuscripts. Other articles—namely, ch. 10, 11, and 19—are required reading for specialists. Yet most specialists would already have access to these articles from their previous publications. Because Epp’s scholarship is important and worthy of reprinting, this volume will make a useful addition to theological libraries, where students and researchers could have ready access to this collection of text-critical essays. However, the disparate audience for the articles in *Perspectives* makes the volume unnecessary for most personal libraries.

There is an error in the footnotes in ch. 6, from pages 175–181. The footnote numeration is off by one.

Dallas, Texas

JONATHAN CAMPBELL

[Gurtner, Daniel M. *Introducing the Pseudepigrapha of Second Temple Judaism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020. xix + 456 pp. Hardcover. USD 49.99.](#)

Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), biblical scholars have increasingly engaged with ancient Judeo-Christian documents that did not make it into the biblical canons. Texts such as the book of Jubilees, the Testaments of the Patriarchs, and the books of Enoch though previously known became more relevant to the study of the NT—and consequently, early Judaism—because we now have manuscript evidence for their transmission in the early days of rabbinic Judaism and Christianity. It is now widely recognized by scholars that these texts are of paramount importance to understanding the life and ideas of these religious traditions. It is becoming common practice in seminaries and religious programs in Judaism and Christianity to have courses on Second Temple Judaism and its literature. In this current environment, Gurtner's introduction becomes a great resource to the novice in the area, and I can see its usefulness as a textbook. It is well organized, and it serves also as a guide to scholars dealing with this body of literature. He is up-to-date on the discussions in the field since he was the co-editor of the *T&T Clark Encyclopedia of Second Temple Judaism* with Loren Stuckenbruck (T&T Clark, 2019). This present introduction is probably a result of his work as an editor of the encyclopedia.

The work is organized into four sections, along with an introduction and conclusion. In the introduction, Gurtner explains the rationale for the organization of the book and the reason for the selection of works he chose to include. He also deals with methodological issues, such as the definition of the pseudepigrapha, its role in the history of ancient Judaism, and its appropriation by Christians. And in the conclusion, he summarizes all the works discussed in the four sections, highlighting themes from selected works, indicating that the Israelite religiosity was diverse in its beliefs and expressions of those beliefs. I found the conclusion to be a great synopsis of the relevant noncanonical works of ancient Judaism. But since this book is an introduction and/or reference work, I found it useful to read the conclusion right after the introduction. And that's how I plan to assign it to my students. I think it would be better to read them side-by-side as introductory essays before tackling the synopsis of the ancient literature in the four sections, which serve as the main part of this reference work.

The four sections are based on different genres of the so-called pseudepigraphic collection: (1) Apocalypses, (2) Testaments and Related Texts, (3) Legends and Expansions of Biblical Traditions, and (4) Psalms, Wisdom Literature, and Prayers. Similar to works like Susan Docherty's *The Jewish Pseudepigrapha: An Introduction to the Literature of the Second Temple Period* (Fortress, 2015), but with some minor differences, Gurtner's introduction

organizes the pseudepigrapha by genre. This approach is evidence of the influence of the English collection of this literature by James Charlesworth (*The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols [Yale University Press/Doubleday, 1983–1985]) that suggested such an organization instead of a chronological one. Gurtner follows this method, though he argues that his ultimate selection was based on chronology, of works dated up to the early second century CE. Gurtner limited his discussion to four widely accepted categories though he recognizes the challenges of assigning a label to these ancient kinds of literature since some works could be included in two of these categories, depending on how they are defined. So, it should be noted by those unfamiliar with the scholarly debate, that there is no universal agreement on the original date, provenance, and how to classify these works based on genre, as one can see by comparing other works on the pseudepigraphic collections (e.g., Docherty, Charlesworth).

In each section, he prioritizes works that can be, in his opinion, safely dated before the Bar Kochba revolt and produced by non-Christian Jews. At the end of each section, he adds a category called *Additional Writings* to discuss works whose date and provenance he considers less certain. In section one (Apocalypses), he included: 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, Apocalypse of Abraham, and Sibylline Oracles 3–5. In the additional writings, he includes 2 Enoch, 3 Baruch, Apocalypse of Zephaniah, Testament of Abraham, and apocalyptic material from the DSS (e.g. 4Q243–246, 4Q552–553). In section two (Testaments), one will find the Testament of Moses, Testament of Job, Aramaic Levi Document, Testament of Qahat, and Visions of Amram. In the additional material, he discusses the Testament of Solomon, Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Testament of Naphtali (4Q215), and other Testaments from the DSS. Section three (Legends and Expansions) includes Jubilees, Biblical Antiquities (*Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* or Pseudo-Philo), Genesis Apocryphon, Letter of Aristeas, and Joseph and Aseneth. The additional materials in this section are the Life of Adam and Eve (Greek), 4 Baruch, and Ezekiel the Tragedian. For the last section (Psalms, Wisdom, Prayers) Gurtner selected Psalms 151–155, Psalms of Solomon, and Pseudo-Phocylides. And for the additional writings, he included some Hellenistic Synagogal Prayers, Prayer of Joseph, and Prayer of Nabonidus (4Q242). His selection will probably be disputed by other scholars because of the complex nature of the subject. I found it positive that many texts from the DSS are included alongside other Jewish works, avoiding the debate of whether a text was sectarian or not. This presents the complexity of Judaism without labeling what was “orthodox” or not. What I could not understand is why the DSS were mostly included in the *Additional Writings* category even though their geographic origins and manuscript dates are the most ancient and reliable we have of all the works of the so-called pseudepigrapha.

For the main works of each section, Gurtner's summary follows this outline: (1) Introduction, (2) Language and Manuscript, (3) Provenance, (4) Date, (5) Content, (6) Critical Issues, (7) Contribution and Context, (8) Purpose, and (9) Reception History. These categories are not applied consistently to all of the works. For the Testament of Qahat and the Vision of Amram, provenance, and purpose fall under one subtitle, as do language, date, and manuscript (or manuscript, language, and date), while in the Aramaic Levi Document, Gurtner conflates date, provenance, and purpose. He also does not discuss the purpose of Psalms of Solomon or the reception history of the Sibylline Oracles, Genesis Apocryphon, or Pss 151–155. Though there might be a good reason for this decision, it would look better if the book had followed the same structure throughout. If the categories did not apply to a given literature, a statement of clarification would suffice.

Gurtner chose to discuss the works found in the *Additional Writings* section differently. The sections are titled (1) Introduction, (2) Content, (3) Contribution, and (4) Text and Provenance. Again, he is not consistent, and one finds in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs the sections on contribution and text and provenance under the same subtitle. And for the section on apocalyptic material in the DSS, no subtitles are given, but individual works are briefly discussed. These might be minor details about the design that certainly do not affect the excellent content of the book, but as a reference work, which I think it is, it would have been good to be consistent so the researcher would know exactly what to expect when consulting Gurtner's summary of each book.

Comparing Gurtner's selection with that of Charlesworth's collection, this present work falls short of including many ancient works. The reason is the methodology. While Charlesworth tried to gather as much literature that was used by Jews and Christians as possible and maintain some kind of relation to the canonical literature of the HB, Gurtner preferred to err on the side of caution and limited his selection to what he considered to be of Jewish origin and dated prior to the late second century CE. However, determining provenance and original date to many of these titles is almost impossible, as Gurtner himself recognizes. This is because most of their oldest manuscripts are from the medieval and later period, and most of them were preserved by Christians. Gurtner's word choice throughout the book ("generally though," "might," "could have," "suggests," "most likely") indicates the level of uncertainty found in scholarship over this sensitive issue of provenance and identity. What should be considered Jewish literature instead of Christian? It has become more evident with the discovery of the DSS and the Nag Hammadi texts that the Judaism and Christianity of today are the results of developments from the pluriform reality in antiquity. There was no Judaism and Christianity but Judaisms and Christiani-

ties. And since the Jesus's movement was composed primarily of Jews in the first century, the drawing of a line between them is a hard task. Gurtner often uses the expression Judaism though he does not define it. The closest he comes to a specific characterization of Judaism is found in his discussion of disputed works in the Additional Writings section, such as 3 Baruch. He affirms that the author of this apocalypse, though a Jew, had "little interest in distinctive features of Judaism, such as circumcision, idolatry, Sabbath observance, or temple worship" (147). And in his discussion of the Apocalypse of Zephaniah, Gurtner writes that the "apocalypse contains elements of Judaism—judgment for sin, prayer, afterlife—that bear nothing distinctly Christian" (151). However, temple worship was no longer available for Jews (and Christians) after the year 70 CE. Most Christians prayed words of the Psalms similar to other Jews and believed in the afterlife and divine judgment for sin. Many Christians observed the Sabbath and were against idolatry, and some even favored circumcision. Based just on this characterization of Judaism and Christianity, it is not clear why works such as these (3 Baruch or Apocalypse of Zephaniah) would be disputed as Jewish. And in many examples, it is uncertain whether a work of the so-called Jewish pseudepigrapha was tempered by Christians turning these texts into "Christian" texts.

I assume that disputes on the provenance of these works and the definition of ancient Judaism and Christianity will continue in scholarship and, of course, will influence the way these ancient writings will be understood. Though I am sympathetic to Gurtner's attempt to be safe on the side of a smaller sample, because of the uncertainties, I prefer the broader approach of Charlesworth. So for those looking for a larger selection of possible ancient Jewish writings, Charlesworth's two-volume *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* and Richard Bauckham, James R. Davila, and Alexander Panayotov's *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures* (Eerdmans, 2013) remain the references of choice, for they also contain the translation of these ancient texts along with introductory comments. The value of Gurtner's *Introduction* is that it offers in one "small" volume the summary of the most relevant Jewish pseudepigrapha, organized in an easily searchable way. It is up-to-date and highlights arguably the most important issues for future research. This is currently the best English introduction and summary of the noncanonical literature originally produced by Jews and adopted by Christians, and I would recommend it to any teacher looking for an easy and informed textbook on the Jewish pseudepigrapha, as well as to scholars trying to stay on top of the relevant discussion in this area.

Berrien Springs, Michigan

RODRIGO GALIZA

[Keener, Craig S. *1 Peter: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021. 608 pp. Hardcover. USD 59.99.](#)

Craig Keener is the prolific F. M. and Ada Thompson Professor of Biblical Studies at Ashbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. His stand-alone commentary on the book of 1 Peter fits with other commentaries Keener has written, such as his massive four-volume commentary on Acts (Baker, 2012–2015) and his two-volume commentary on John (Baker, 2010).

Keener is a master of background information, particularly background literature, and he does not disappoint in this one-volume commentary. The text of the commentary is filled with references to ancient literature, which are in my opinion, the greatest benefit of the volume. The commentary itself runs 413 pages, followed by nearly 200 pages of sources and indices. The index of ancient sources is 62 pages long. The commentary contains twenty-five excursuses, with titles such as Slavery in the Early Empire, Marriage Expectations in Greco-Roman Antiquity, Household Codes, Women's "Weakness" in Ancient Sources, Ancient Baptism, Christ's Ascension in Its Ancient Context, Satan/the Devil in Early Jewish Understanding, and the Kiss of Love. The commentary is worth the price simply for these excursuses that appear on all or parts of 144 pages.

The commentary begins with Keener's somewhat unique translation of 1 Peter, followed by about forty pages of introductory material covering structure, outline, authorship, external attestation, date, provenance and destination, setting, and the theme of hope in suffering. Keener, an evangelical, takes the conservative stance that the apostle Peter wrote 1 Peter with significant help from assistants. He counters several arguments against Petrine authorship: (1) that the letter contains little distinctively Petrine material (answer: such reasoning is circular since there are no undisputed Petrine sources to compare it to), (2) that the letter sounds too much like Paul (answer: Silvanus's involvement in writing could account for that), (3) that the letter does not echo Jesus enough (answer: Peter does echo Jesus and much more than Paul, given the size of the letter), and (4) that Peter would not use the Septuagint (answer: when writing in Greek, one would typically use the Greek OT when quoting the Bible).

The way Keener deals with key disputed passages in the book illustrates his exegetical stance. Concerning 1 Pet 2:8 regarding stumbling over the cornerstone "as they were destined to do" (ESV), Keener sees the passive of *τίθημι* as probably a divine passive. "God placed the stone in Zion (2:6), and God has assigned unbelievers to stumble over it (2:8)" (137). However, Keener is not certain that unbelievers were so destined as a group. It may be specific persons who were so destined.

Concerning 1 Pet 3:1–6 regarding the role of women, Keener provides a great deal of background information on household patterns in the Greco-Roman world, where patriarchy was paramount. Keener argues, "Rather than

teaching a universal subordination of wives, Peter's exhortation to submission here becomes an expression of mission, of evangelism, in a setting in which verbal evangelism became impossible" (224–225). He goes on, "While Peter may accommodate social expectations for the sake of witness, his ideal of the wife winning her husband to faith differs starkly from Greco-Roman male expectations of the wife sharing her husband's gods" (225).

When dealing with the challenging passage of 1 Pet 3:18–22, Keener argues with most modern scholars that the events described refer to the risen Christ, not his soul visiting hell (269–270). The "spirits in prison" are the fallen angels who disobeyed in Noah's day over whom the risen Lord proclaimed triumph (272–273). Regarding the form of their disobedience, Keener cites numerous Jewish materials from the period (2 Peter, Jude, 1 Enoch, Jubilees, 2 Baruch) and notes without much discussion the argument in the extracanonical texts (1 Enoch, Jubilees, 2 Baruch) that these fallen angels had sexual relations with antediluvian women (270–275). Keener notes, "Peter's audience may have been able to take for granted the sort of message proclaimed to the fallen angels on the basis of widely circulated Jewish stories about proclamation to such angels" (275).

This commentary is an important resource for anyone wishing to understand the message of 1 Peter within its cultural setting. The voluminous references to ancient sources help to place the apostle's message within its historical, religious, and cultural setting. Such context is particularly helpful in countering the numerous voices criticizing Peter's position on wives submitting to their husbands (see, for example, Elliott's thoughtful but deeply critical evaluation in John Elliott, *1 Peter* AB 37B [Doubleday, 2000], 585–599).

While the emphasis on backgrounds is valuable, sometimes more could be said about literary patterns and the exegesis of passages. Regarding the use of *τιθημι* in 1 Pet 2:8, Keener only briefly notes the parallel usage in 2:6. It seems that a better argument could be made that God placed (*τιθημι*) the cornerstone, Jesus Christ, in Zion (2:6) and by so doing, "placed" (*τιθημι*) the outcome of anyone who rejected him (2:8). That is, it is not a case of predestination but rather a predetermined outcome depending on how one reacts to the reality of the cornerstone. Regarding the spirits in prison (3:19), it would be helpful to note that the extracanonical writings are the ones that speculate concerning the "sons of God" as fallen angels having sexual relations with women. Not even Jude, which cites 1 Enoch, goes so far, and certainly neither do 1 or 2 Peter. This detail would be a helpful caveat in the discussion, making a distinction between the canonical and extracanonical writings.

Keener's commentary will hold a special place among the commentaries on 1 Peter with its very useful and voluminous background information. He is to be commended for this addition to the growing number of commentaries on this most fascinating book.

[Koester, Craig R., ed. *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020. xxii + 525 pp. Hardcover. USD 150.00.](#)

The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation contains thirty articles on the NT Apocalypse written by a large team of contributors led by editor Craig R. Koester—the Asher O. and Carrie Nasby Professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, and a research associate at the University of Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa. Koester also authors the opening article (ch. 1), entitled “Introduction to Revelation’s Social Setting, Theological Perspective, and Literary Design,” which provides an excellent entry point to the five-part volume.

Part I contains seven articles on the literary features of the book of Revelation. Chapter 2, “The Genre of the Book of Revelation” is written by Mitchell G. Reddish. He discusses the three main proposals of genre for the book of Revelation: apocalypse, letter, and prophecy. Given the mixed nature of the work, which defies traditional genre boundaries, Reddish concludes that “Revelation is an apocalypse, written by a Christian prophet, sent as a quasi-letter to the churches of Asia Minor” (33). Chapter 3, “Narrative Features of the Book of Revelation” by James L. Resseguie, explores some narrative traits of the book of Revelation, such as characters and characterization, architectural and topographical settings, and numerical symbolism. Resseguie demonstrates how these intertwined features construct meaning in Revelation’s unified narrative. The author concludes that Revelation’s master plot is “the story of the people of God’s quest to find a homeland that is free from all tyranny and from potent poseurs that offer the fraudulent for the genuine and the ephemeral for a vanished Eden. In sum, the master plot of Revelation is the quest story of the people of God in search for a new promised land, the new Jerusalem” (48). In chapter 4, Konrad Huber discusses “Imagery in the Book of Revelation.” He goes over different kinds of metaphorical speech, such as simile, symbol, and narrative image to explain some of the major uses of figurative language in the book. The author also assesses the various types of backgrounds, mostly from the HB and Jewish apocalyptic literature, that inform John’s creative reuse of images. Huber further analyzes the function and effect of the imagery produced by the NT Apocalypse and closes the article indicating later iterations of its images. David A. deSilva discusses the “Rhetorical Features of the Book of Revelation” in ch. 5. As he puts it, “John is writing not to entertain, but to persuade . . . , to win audiences over to particular perspectives, to particular allegiances, to particular actions and avoidances of actions—and . . . he is doing so in a setting of competing voices vying for these audiences’ assent and allegiance” (69). Further, deSilva explains John’s rhetorical goals as deliberative and epideictic though the author also makes use of forensic

topics. Next, deSilva assesses the way John builds his authority (*ethos*), appeals to the audiences' emotions (*pathos*), and engages in rational argumentation (*logos*). He concludes that "John's language is the result of rhetorical practice and not of grammatical deficiency" (82). In his view, John's pervasive

appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos throughout Revelation—all within the framework of primarily deliberative discourse aimed to affect choices immediately ahead of the audience—suggest that Revelation is not primarily an informational prognostication concerning a distant future, but a text whose author was deeply concerned to shape his hearers' perception of and responses within their present moment (82).

In the sixth chapter, Steve Moyise addresses the use of "The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation." He explains how Revelation differs from the rest of the NT in the use of OT material (generally favoring allusions to the Hebrew/Aramaic instead of the Greek text). Moyise provides some examples of allusions from what he considers John's favorite OT books (Ezekiel, Daniel, and Isaiah) and analyzes a few selected passages (1:12–16; 5:5–6; 12:7–12; 15:3–5). He also traces some common themes from the OT in Revelation ("Worship God Alone," "New Exodus," and "God's Abiding Presence"). While some interpreters see Revelation's unique use of the OT as resulting from a scribal/exegetical model (similarity-based), Moyise prefers a dialogical model (difference-based), combining rhetorical and mystical features that preserve the tensions found in the text. He concludes that the "Old Testament still speaks through Revelation but in a transformed way" (99). In the seventh chapter, David L. Mathewson analyzes "Revelation's Use of the Greek Language," specifically its "solecisms—grammatical incongruities of various types that depart from 'acceptable' grammatical rules and usage of the language" (101). Considering recent advances in linguistic research, especially by Stanley E. Porter, Iwan Whiteley, Laurentiu Florentin Mot, and himself, Mathewson argues that "the grammatical irregularities in Revelation are not as extensive as usually thought, that most of them have plausible explanations and that Revelation's Greek fits into the language of the first-century Greek culture" (102). Justin P. Jeffcoat Schedtler discusses in ch. 8 "The Hymns in Revelation." He elaborates on the hymnic genre in antiquity (in Greco-Roman, Jewish, and early Christian contexts) as well as on the function of hymns ("they provide structural landmarks in the text" and "help to convey central theological, Christological, and soteriological tenets in the Apocalypse" [119]). After assessing several hymns, Jeffcoat Schedtler concludes that "the hymns are not only integrally connected to the surrounding visions but also provide them with more precise theological and Christological dimensions" making them an "essential element of the apocalyptic imagination of John of Patmos." Thus, these hymns help frame the events of the visions "in the surrounding action sequences" (127).

Part II is made up of four articles dealing with Revelation's social setting. In chapter 9, "Revelation and Roman Rule in First-Century Asia Minor," Warren Carter analyzes the issues of the Roman emperors, persecution, and the imperial cult as they relate to Revelation's historical setting. He argues that these traditional approaches "have proven unsatisfactory owing to a lack of evidence and too restricted a focus." He thus suggests a broader discussion that gives "attention to the cultural accommodation, socioeconomic participation, gender presentations, and environmental discussions" and argues that "the author seeks to disrupt what she or he claims to be unacceptable levels of cultural and economic accommodation among (many) Jesus followers" (133). In chapter 10, Mikael Tellbe discusses the "Relationships among Christ-Believers and Jewish Communities in First-Century Asia Minor." He analyzes theological, sociopolitical, and financial factors that may have caused tension between these groups. He also assesses the book of Revelation, especially the letters to the seven churches, to describe such tensions. He concludes that the author of Revelation uses universal language to redefine the identity of the people of God as both Old and New Testament believers, excluding "hostile ethnic Jews" (164). In chapter 11, Richard S. Ascough assesses the "Greco-Roman Religions and the Context of the Book of Revelation," especially the cult of several deities, the imperial cult, and related practices in the seven cities of Asia Minor mentioned in the Rev 2–3. Ascough concludes that the author of Revelation bundles together all those he disagrees with into one category—the "other"—and thus, does not well represent "the rich and diverse practices of the various cult groups extant in Asia Minor at that time" (181–182). Paul Trebilco, in ch. 12, analyzes "John's Apocalypse in Relation to Johannine, Pauline, and Other Forms of Christianity in Asia Minor." After comparing these communities, he evaluates disputed issues such as eating food sacrificed to idols and attitudes toward imperial rule in terms of acculturation, assimilation, and accommodation. He also assesses these churches in terms of material possessions and views on leadership and authority. Trebilco closes by stating that "John was aware of and familiar with these varied [Pauline and Johannine] traditions" and he wrote, "to *all* Christians in western Asia Minor" (198), thus communicating with people who had "a range of views" or to people who saw "things differently from himself" (199).

Part III contains eight articles on theology and ethics. Chapter 13, "God in the Book of Revelation," is written by Martin Karrer. He focuses on the various names (YHWH, Kyrios) and designations ("He who Is, the Creator, IAŌ, AŌ, Father, and Pantokratōr") of God as well as on some ways God is portrayed ("The Enthroned One, Unique against Foreign Gods, Saving, and Judging") in the narrative of Revelation. Contrary to "older concepts of religious history [that] strictly separated Jewish apocalypticism and Greek reflection" (218), Karrer concludes that the author of Revelation is a "theologian" who "builds a fascinating bridge between biblical and Greek traditions" (219). Chapter 14,

“Jesus in the Book of Revelation,” is authored by Loren L. Johns. After summarizing the many ways Jesus is described in Revelation (“titles, names, and participial descriptors”), Johns explores the lamb designation of Jesus as the most significant one and discusses the ethical implications it conveys in the context of the book’s anti-imperial stance. Johns concludes that “the pervasiveness of the symbol, the literarily strategic and dramatic unveiling of the lamb in Rev 5, along with the lamb Christology’s relationship with other significant themes in the book ... suggest the lamb Christology should serve as the prism through which we read the rest of the narrative” (235). In chapter 15, John Christopher Thomas discusses “The Spirit in the Book of Revelation.” After surveying “the scholarship devoted to the seven Spirits, the ‘in the Spirit’ phrases, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the relationship between Jesus and the Spirit,” Thomas concludes that “the role the Spirit plays within the Apocalypse is a pervasive one and its pneumatology robust ... stand[ing] equal in importance alongside the other major pneumatological voices found within the New Testament” (254). Chapter 16, “Creation and New Creation in the Book of Revelation,” is written by Mark B. Stephens. After addressing these two themes in the HB, in the apocalyptic literature of the second temple period, and in the rhetorical context of first-century Roman Asia Minor, Stephens assesses them in the text of Revelation itself. He shows how Revelation portrays suffering creation as a result of not only “consequences of divine judgment against human wickedness” but also of “the disordering effects of corrupted rule” (264). In Revelation, this is solved by the transfer of earth’s sovereignty from its destructive counterfeit rulership to the faithful Creator. While such a portrayal takes shape from Rev 4 to 20, it finds its final fulfillment in Rev 21–22. Stephens concludes that “only on the basis of this theology of creation can John effectively persuade his audience to cultivate critical distance from their idolatrous social context, a distance that is necessary if they are to perform their role being prophetic witnesses to the nations” (270). In chapter 17, Gregory Stevenson deals with “Perspectives on Evil in the Book of Revelation.” He discusses the controlling warfare metaphor, the social context of the book, and clarifies how evil is used and defeated in Revelation. He advocates for a combination of persecution (old paradigm) and accommodation (more recent perspective) regarding the social context of the seven churches. This allows the text of Revelation to “*both* comfort the oppressed and to challenge the oppressor” (280). Stevenson concludes, “Embracing the flexibility of Revelation’s rhetoric in speaking both to the oppressed and to the complacent allows Revelation to show how evil can be defeated in all its varied forms” (288). Chapter 18, “Violence in the Apocalypse of John,” by David L. Barr, assesses the issue of violence in Revelation in terms of actions, images, and language. He classifies violence in terms of sources (subjects) and victims (objects) and discusses violence, particularly as coercion, immoral actions, sadism, and procrastination. Barr also explores explanations of violence as real and metaphoric. While concluding that Revela-

tion is “a violent story,” written in a violent age that “shows little concern about employing images that are both violent and ethically offensive” (303), Barr also recognizes that John “does not advocate violence, and nothing in his gory story can be read as legitimizing violence against others” (302). It is a story that makes use of “extreme irony.” The “conquering force” in the narrative is the “suffering” of Jesus and his followers (303). The following chapter (19), by Lynn R. Huber, is on “The City-Women Babylon and New Jerusalem in Revelation.” Huber assesses the ancient tradition of personifying cities and nations as women. In Revelation particularly, she analyzes the images of the whore Babylon and the bride Jerusalem. She concludes that both images are necessary for John’s vision of Christian identity. As she puts it, “Revelation deploys the rhetorical resources of the ancient world, but as tools for resisting and constructing alternative identities” (321). Chapter 20, “The People of God in the Book of Revelation,” is written by Peter S. Perry. He analyzes the five main images that characterize God’s people in the book of Revelation: assemblies, slaves, saints, those clothed in white, and witnesses. Perry shows how these descriptors are used by John to shape their self-understanding and stimulate them to both participate in change as well as be active witnesses who promote change in others.

Part IV is made up of seven articles on the history of reception and cultural influence of the book of Revelation. The opening piece (ch. 21), written by Juan Hernández Jr., is on “The Greek Text of Revelation.” The author discusses and maps the manuscript tradition of Revelation under the labels *Textus Receptus*, Karl Lachmann, Constantin von Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, Bernhard Weiss, Wilhelm Bousset, Hermann von Soden, Herman C. Hoskier, and Josef Schmid. He closes the essay assessing the twenty-first-century developments, most notably Marcus Sigismund and Darius Müller, eds., *Studien zum Text der Apokalypse II*. ANTF 50 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017) vis-à-vis Josef Schmid’s work, and offers some final remarks. In chapter 22, Tobias Nicklas discusses “Revelation and the New Testament Canon.” He goes over the complex history of interpretation and how the canonicity of the book of Revelation has been perceived throughout the centuries both in the West and the East. Despite the general lack of interest in the book by mainstream Christianity today, Nicklas thinks Revelation is still relevant for churches for at least three reasons: (1) Revelation’s anti-imperial stance “opens the eye to a reality behind the sometimes brutal, purely secular society”; (2) “Revelation’s rich images of God and his agent, Jesus Christ ... tie together an incredible number of ideas, motifs, and questions from both the Old and New Testaments.... In this way, they help to correct ideas of God and of Jesus Christ that are too one-sided” (371); (3) Revelation balances other voices of the canon and, in turn, is balanced by the canon’s other voices (372). Ian Boxall writes ch. 23, “Reception History and the Interpretation of Revelation.” He starts with a description of reception history and moves on to the scope, purpose, and methods used in the discipline. Next, the

author goes over three exemplars of recent “big picture” reception: Kovacs’s and Rowland’s, Chilton’s, and Koester’s. The segment is followed by the subjects of textual criticism, visual reception, usefulness, and prospects. In Boxall’s estimation, “the future for reception-historical study of John’s textually ambiguous and highly visual Apocalypse looks decidedly healthy” (391). In chapter 24, Charles E. Hill discusses “The Interpretation of the Book of Revelation in Early Christianity.” Throughout his assessment, Hill tries to cover each interpreter’s views and contributions to eschatology, hermeneutics, and canonicity. His first section is on the interpretation of Revelation in the West before Tyconius: Justin, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, and Victorinus. The second section focuses on the East: Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Dionysius. The third section is devoted to Tyconius—given his influence on Augustine and Jerome. Hill’s article demonstrates that “the interpretation of this enigmatic book [Revelation] was never monolithic... Despite their differences, however, Christian interpreters on all sides recognized in the symbols of Revelation a divine mingling of things both present and future, both earthly and heavenly” (410). Chapter 25, written by Julia Eva Wannemacher, addresses “The Interpretation of John’s Apocalypse in the Medieval Period.” After a brief introduction to the foundational period of early Christian commentators on Revelation, the author discusses the work and influence of notable interpreters in the early Middle Ages, from the late Tyconian tradition to *Glossa Ordinaria*, the historical turn of the twelfth century, Joaquim de Fiore and his influence, and concludes her survey with the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Chapter 26, “The Book of Revelation in Music and Liturgy,” by Paul Westermeyer, discusses the soundscape of the book of Revelation. He organizes his article into the following sections: liturgy, the Lamb of God, hymnic influences, oratorios, and Messiaen’s *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*. Westermeyer concludes that “the church’s liturgical and musical influences from Revelation, [Thomas Allen] Seel’s and [Thomas D.] Busted’s insights, oratorios, and pieces like [Oliver] Messiaen’s point to a far-sighted view about Revelation’s relevance for worship, music, and life together” (444). Joshua T. Searle and Kenneth G. C. Newport discuss in ch. 27 the “Forms of Futuristic Interpretation of Revelation in the Modern Period.” Their assessment focuses primarily on premillennial dispensational readings of Revelation. Within the modern period, they trace this hermeneutical program to John Nelson Darby and unpack the system’s main traits and exponents to the contemporary period. They conclude that “futuristic readings of Revelation will remain influential ... into ... postmodernity” (458).

Part V concludes the volume with three articles on currents in interpretation. In chapter 28, Susan E. Hylen writes on “Feminist Interpretation of Revelation.” She first presents the major passages and interpretive issues for a feminist interpretation of the Apocalypse. She then addresses the central question—namely, if Revelation can be liberating for female readers. Next,

Hylen discusses the issue of the rhetorical function of female images in ancient and modern contexts. She closes by proposing a reimagination of categories for future feminist research. Chapter 29, “Interpreting Revelation through African American Cultural Studies,” is written by Thomas B. Slater. He surveys the increasing engagement with the book of Revelation in African (or Black) American scholarship that utilizes cultural studies from the 1990s to the present. Slater reviews the work of three authors who were influenced by liberation theology (himself, Allen D. Callahan, and Brian K. Blount) and the impact of womanist readings of Revelation by four additional scholars (Clarice Martin, Shanell Smith, Lynne St. Clair Darden, and Mitzi Smith). Though these authors may have slightly different views, “all see Revelation requiring a strong, courageous lifestyle in response to a repressive regime.... All find points of contact between their cultural location and those within the Apocalypse to John” (496–497). In chapter 30, Harry O. Maier discusses “Post-Colonial Interpretation of the Book of Revelation” in three sections: “The Book of Revelation and Colonialism,” “Revelation’s Colonial Entanglements,” and “Catachresis, Mimicry, and Hybridity.” His assessment reveals that “the book of Revelation ... has been a potent resource for the imposition of imperial discourses, as well as for the deconstruction of them. It has been at hand for those establishing colonial blueprints and for those resisting them” (511).

The articles in the *Handbook* are generally balanced and provide engagement with or at least point to wider discussions and different perspectives. However, I missed this breadth, to a certain extent, in the discussion of the relationships among early believers in first-century Asia Minor (ch. 10). The author seems to construct his argument from the perspective of an early parting of ways between Christians and Jews which is then read back into Revelation. His otherwise well-written essay would benefit by taking into account that the partings were many and they took place over several centuries (see, e.g., Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik, eds., *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* [Hendrickson, 2007]; Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* [Mohr Siebeck, 2003]; Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* [University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004]). Considering this phenomenon could provide a different, or at least broader, perspective for the discussion of the first-century context of Revelation.

While there are several edited books on Revelation, none is quite like this one. *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation* stands out as a very diverse blend across several perspectives. It offers a wide range of views and robust bibliography on a variety of interpretative issues. Students of Revelation will enjoy the five sections of the book and the varied approaches that appear in each of them. I particularly welcome the attention given to the literary features of Revelation—an area that has received more attention

in the past two decades but which still has much more fruit to yield. The *Handbook* makes an important contribution in that direction with its nine opening articles. I highly recommend the *Handbook* to fellow scholars and to those who wish to go deeper into the rich and complex book of Revelation.

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FLAVIO PRESTES III

[Kusio, Mateusz. *The Antichrist Tradition in Antiquity: Antimesianism in Second Temple and Early Christian Literature*. WUNT 2/532. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020. 292 pp. EU 84.00.](#)

This study is a dissertation turned book from Oxford from 2019, under the supervision of Dr. Markus Bockmuehl. The goal of this study was to clarify if antimessianic ideas articulated by Christians can be traced back to early Jewish sources. In the scholarship on the antichrist, the point has been disputed. Kusio assumes that this is the case. And to demonstrate that, he defines the antichrist as a tradition of an end-time conflict between the messiah and an opponent, with the antimessiah imitating the messiah to claim the messiah's authority (25). This definition is based on the literal sense of antichrist as the antimessiah. Kusio logically had to deal with the scholarly debate of defining what a messianic text is and he does so by using M. Novenson's study on messianism (*The Grammar of Messianism: An Ancient Jewish Political Idiom and Its Users* [Oxford University Press, 2017]). Kusio suggests that the messiah is a figure "in the broad sense identifiable with an eschatological redeemer, and an anointed figure, that is, a literal Messiah *in the strict sense*" (19, emphasis in the original). So in his selection of sources, he analyzed only texts that have the "grammar of messianism" by identifying the biblical language about the messiah and, consequently, his opponent. He does recognize that some of the texts he selected have the *potential* of being understood as references to the antichrist.

His methodology claims to be similar to G. Jenks (*The Origins and Early Development of the Antichrist Myth*, BZNTW 59 [De Gruyter, 1991]) who first defined the antichrist from patristic sources and from it looked for these characteristics in earlier Jewish texts. In this, Kusio is trying to correct the arguments of other scholars like G. Lorein (*The Antichrist Theme in the Intertestamental Period* [T&T Clark, 2003]), who uses some texts from the HB to define the messiah and his enemy (mainly Deut 13, 1 Sam 17, and Zech 11). Kusio himself first deals with texts from the HB that were used by later writers as messianic and whose contexts indicate a connection to the idea of an antagonistic force. The texts Kusio selects are Gen 3, 49:16–18, Isa 11:4, Ezek 38–39, some Psalms, and Daniel. But as one can already see, by comparing the texts favored by Kusio and the ones favored by Lorein as examples, scholars do not agree on which texts should be classified as messi-

anic. Using Kusio's definition of the antichrist as an eschatological opponent to the messiah, the emphasis of Lorein on Goliath (1 Sam 17) does make more methodological sense than Dan (Gen 49) even though from my readings of the church fathers, the latter figure was more influential on speculations regarding this eschatological enemy. Noticed that in neither of these biblical texts there are any eschatological references. This is just one example to show the methodological challenge of studies on the antichrist, as Kusio himself points out in his evaluation of scholarship on the antichrist in ch. 1. His is a great overview of the literature on the subject. I don't think I could have done a better analysis. I commend him (and his doctoral committee) for the production of such a fine diagnosis of the problems. The solution, however, in my opinion, is not of the same quality.

Kusio does recognize that the texts he selected do not form a comprehensive list, but he argues that these are "the most important texts which generated the largest amount of exegetical discussion" (27). His selection is presumably based on the reuse of certain texts by later Jews and Christians. This might be the case, but Kusio does not demonstrate that in his study, and as a reader, I was left wondering if his critique of previous studies, like Jenks and Lorein, of imposing their ideas of the antichrist on ancient texts could be applied to his study as well. Instead of starting with a brief analysis of the patristic texts and then going to the biblical sources they used, Kusio starts his discussion of the biblical texts that presumably were influential in Christianity, followed by the reception of the text in some of the Pseudepigrapha, DSS, Philo, the NT, gnostic texts, targums, LXX, rabbinics, and at last in the church fathers. At the end of each discussion, Kusio suggests the *generative potential* of the portrayal of evil in the context of a messianic figure. The problem with this argumentation is that some of these texts arguably do not have in themselves the messianic grammar he suggested in his methodology. The example of Gen 49 is illustrative. Though the imagery of Dan was appropriated by many Christian interpreters to talk about the antichrist, it does not follow that the text itself has the grammar of messianism, or at least Kusio did not demonstrate that. So the premise for his selection could be questioned.

I agree with him that more needs to be done in the realm of defining the grammar or language of motifs or traditions such as the antichrist. One fruitful venue could be to isolate particular characteristics of this eschatological enemy clearly articulated by the Christian literature and trace them in older texts. A theme I am working on right now is the desecrating enemy in the sanctuary, which seems to be an important characteristic of the eschatological enemy in influential passages like Dan 7–11 and 2 Thess 2. Maybe by identifying how agents of contamination were defined in the HB and later literature, one could potentially understand how this theme informed the ancient interpretation of texts like Daniel and 2 Thessalonians and, consequently, one

characteristic of the antichrist. So far, my study on this has aligned with the conclusions of Kusio, Jenks, and Lorein, that often the eschatological enemy was identified as originating from within the sacred community as a deceiver, not as a foreigner breaking violently into the sacred. This would go against the widely held assumption about Antiochus as a major source of inspiration for the antichrist, instead of pointing to a wicked priest in Jerusalem.

In his conclusion, Kusio suggests, alongside Lorein, that the tradition about the antichrist “revolves around the two axes which are its distinct marks, namely violent conflict and mimetic rivalry.” The first is seen in texts like Isa 11 and 1QM (Milhamah), while the latter is seen in Daniel and 4Q175, 379 (Testimonia) (217). I have found a similar axes in my study of the desecrating enemy in the sanctuary. Something to be noticed is that Kusio points to Daniel and Qumran as sources of the motif of mimetic rivalry, while most scholars would identify Antiochus IV’s violent conflict as the “antichrist” in Daniel. Taking the influence of Daniel in the DSS and the proximity of the Jewish community involved with these manuscripts to the episodes of the book of Maccabees, I suggest that this long-held opinion should be reexamined in light of the evaluation of the Maccabean revolt presented by scholars such as Elias Bickerman, who suggested that the major (not the only) problem faced by the pious Jews of the time was the corruption of Hellenistic priests (*The God of the Maccabees: Studies on the Meaning and Origin of the Maccabean Revolt* [Brill, 1979]). The major source of defilement was not a gentile but a wicked priest. It was not Antiochus but Menelaus or Simon, as Lorein hinted at with his reference to the studies of H. Burgmann on 4QTest (“Antichrist—Antimessias: der Makkabäer Simon?” *Judaica* 36 [1980]: 152–174). This Qumranic text is also studied by Kusio. Although Kusio cites other studies of Burgmann, he does not elaborate on his conclusion on the identity of the enemy in 4QTest as the wicked priest Simon. Kusio, however, makes this bold claim that “4QTest provides the very first instance of a literary motif...i.e. the mimetic rivalry” (100). This assessment should be re-evaluated depending on where one starts looking for this literary motif in the Hebrew tradition.

After his analysis of the biblical texts, which take up about a fourth of the book, he deals with selected texts from the DSS (ch. 3), the NT (ch. 4), the Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha (ch. 5), and the church fathers (ch. 6). Different from the chapter on biblical material, in these chapters, Kusio does not deal with the reception of these texts in later discussion of the antichrist but “attempts to ascertain the presence of antimessianic expectations” in these corpora (112). Kusio here again is not exhaustive. From the DSS, he selected 1QM (Milhamah), 4Q175 and 349 (Testimonia), 4Q246 (Apocryphon of Daniel), 4Q285 (Book of War), and 11Q13 (Melchizedek). From the NT, he selected portions of the Synoptic Gospels (Matt 24, Mark 13, Luke 21), 2 Thess 2, 1–3 John, Rev 12–13, 17. From the Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha, he selected the Ps. Sol. 17, Assumption of Moses, Sib. Or. 2.165–173,

3.63–74, 2 Baruch, 4 Ezra, Ascension of Isaiah, Apocalypse of Peter, Coptic Apocalypse of Elijah, and Testament of the Lord. No reason is given for the exclusion of other texts like the books of Enoch and the Testaments of the Patriarchs, thus indicating the partiality of his selection. From the church fathers, he analyzes the texts of the Didache, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Origen, Commodianus, Lactantius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Tyconius, and Augustine. The goal of this last chapter is to see how antimessianic expectations led to the crystallization of the term antichrist, first attested in the NT. As Kusio again recognizes, his selection is just a sample of texts he deems important to the development of the motif since the antichrist tradition can be identified in other patristic texts. His selection can only indicate some directions of Christian appropriation of the antimessiah tradition.

From all of these, he did not detect a uniform tradition but disparate elements that characterize the enemy of the messiah. From the DSS, Kusio highlights that the theme of the mimetic rivalry of the antichrist becomes important, besides the idea of a military enemy and a heavenly antagonist. From the Pseudepigrapha, Kusio draws attention to the number of details that are provided in the elaboration of this eschatological evil character. Here again, no uniform characterization can be seen, but the elements of violent opposition and mimetic rivalry predominate. From the church fathers, Kusio concludes that the books of Daniel and some portions of the NT (mainly Revelation) were the constant sources of inspiration. The identity of the antichrist was often understood in the traditional view of history based on the four-kingdom scheme in which Rome occupied the last position (on this motif, see my book review of Andrew B. Perrin and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, eds. *Four Kingdom Motifs before and beyond the Book of Daniel*. TBN 28, [Brill, 2021] in *AUSS* 59.1 [2021]: 157–161). This led the politics of the day, inside and outside the church, to shape the characterization of the antichrist(s). The major contribution he sees in the development of this theme in the church fathers is the polemical usage of the antichrist label to refer to heretics or false imitators of Christ. Here, mimetic rivalry takes prominence. Kusio also points out what is already known by studies on the antichrist in Christian history, that in Augustine and Tyconius the main locus of the antichrist is not outside but inside the church.

Kusio's reflection of the antichrist tradition in antiquity demonstrates the lack of clarity in scholarship on the identity of the antichrist and the need for a better definition of this idea to more accurately assess the development of this motif. His review of the literature is very good, and I would agree with most of his assessments. There is a need to be precise regarding what particular element of this pluriform tradition or traditions we are talking about. Since clarity or uniformity is not to be expected from a plurality of ancient sources, scholars would do well if they could be precise in their definitions when studying them. Kusio tried just that, and this is a good addition to

the studies on the antichrist theme. Because of the fascinating and complex nature of the subject, I suspect that more studies will follow. (For the editors a few typos: p.9 – nt should be NT; p.217 – “Another other core claim” should be “Another core claim”).

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RODRIGO GALIZA

[Merkle, Benjamin L., Robert L. Plummer, with Andreas J. Köstenberger. *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek*. Rev. ed. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2020. x + 562 pp. Hardcover. USD 49.99.](#)

Going Deeper with New Testament Greek covers the intermediate study of NT Greek grammar and syntax. It is the second volume in a series, following *Beginning with New Testament Greek*. To produce *Going Deeper*, Merkle and Plummer teamed up with another renowned scholar and author, Andreas J. Köstenberger, research professor and director of the Center for Biblical Studies at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The 2020 revised edition brings minor changes and is almost identical to its 2016 original edition.

The book is designed for a typical fifteen-week semester. It has fifteen chapters and is generally geared for the classroom setting (2). Besides the chapters on syntax (chs. 2–12), the book has an introductory chapter on the Greek language and textual criticism (ch. 1), as well as chapters on diagramming, discourse analysis, word studies, and useful resources (chs. 13–15). Each chapter covering syntax has a set structure: a case study, chapter objectives, syntax and grammar explanations, summary charts, practice exercises, new vocabulary, and a Greek NT reader with notes for translation. This volume offers two appendixes: frequent NT vocabulary and a survey of twelve grammars regarding nouns and the article. The book also includes a name, subject, and Scripture index, which readers will find helpful.

Similar to the first volume, *Going Deeper* is endorsed by an even bigger number of scholars, including several prominent linguists such as Constantine R. Campbell, Buist M. Fanning, William Mounce, Steven E. Runge, and others (i–iv). The book is projected “to become a standard among intermediate Greek grammars” (i), and without a doubt, it has many positive aspects. At the same time, it also contains a number of elements that could be addressed and improved. It would be difficult or even unfair to evaluate the syntax of Greek examples due to the subjective nature of syntactical analysis. The same Greek word may fall into several overlapping syntactical categories and be classified differently. The category one chooses solely depends on what one wants to highlight. This could be seen in the authors’ treatment of the cognate accusatives (66). Examples provided could also be classified as direct objects or double accusative. On the same note, a few pages later the phrase βαπτισθέντες τὸ βάπτισμα (having been baptized with the baptism) is

not classified as the cognate accusative but the accusative of respect (71). So leaving subjective matters aside, I will evaluate the book from an educator's perspective.

Beginning with positive aspects, it is worthy to mention the up-to-date robust scholarship. This textbook interacts with numerous grammarians (11–12) building on the works of others. It presents the material in constant dialogue with other experts, preserving a balanced and well-researched view. The footnotes are enriching and provide further clarifications and sources. The summary tables at the end of every chapter are succinct and useful. Students will appreciate seeing large portions of material put in a concise form. I also enjoyed the “going deeper” sections in each chapter where the authors demonstrate the practical relevance of the upcoming material. For example, the study of ἰδίᾳ δόξῃ καὶ ἀρετῇ in 2 Pet 1:3 (121–123) depends on whether it could be taken as a dative of means (*by* his glory and excellence) or as locative (*to* his glory and excellence). In the same way, the proper diagramming could shed light on the understanding of the Great Commission in Matt 28:18–20 (441–442), while the application of textual criticism to Luke 2:14 helps students better understand the differences in translations (87–89).

The integration of the vocabulary of each chapter into the NT Greek reader of the same chapter is a strong pedagogical practice. Teachers will appreciate the selections of passages, and the commentary notes will provide many opportunities for student discussions. Educators will also appreciate the teacher's aids (5–6) in the forms of quizzes, exams (midterm and final), PowerPoint presentations, answer keys, and more, available digitally on the internet (<https://bhacademic.bhpublishinggroup.com/deeper-greek/>). Access to digital resources is a huge help to teachers. As anyone who has taught languages knows, it takes time to create pedagogical materials. With provided resources, one gets a head start in course preparation.

The inclusion of other disciplines into the intermediate Greek grammar was an interesting maneuver. The ones I found helpful were the sections on diagramming and word studies. Having brief descriptions of four major types of diagrams (line, arc, bracket, and phrase diagrams) in one place is convenient (457–464). Teachers could touch on all of them or focus on one in particular. I was especially interested to see how *Going Deeper* would treat word study (483–499). Overall, Plummer presents a sound approach to it that meets the standard set by lexical semantics. He explains a word's range of meaning, the priority of synchrony over diachrony, and safeguards against various fallacies. He also provides the commendable list of best lexicons and dictionaries (489–491) yet cautions that they are not inerrant. His pastoral remark not to become “the infallible pope of Bible translation” (485) is a good reminder to everyone to be humble. Squeezing discourse analysis into a mere three pages though is disappointing (464–467). Neither students nor teachers can use what is given in a meaningful way without turning to outside resources.

The information is simply insufficient. Another shortcoming I found was the blending of textual criticism with syntax. It seems like a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it offers some interesting nuances, as in the study of Luke 2:14 (87–89). On the other hand, the disciplines are different and unrelated. The syntactical analysis is the step performed after the text has already been established by text critics. No doubt, textual criticism enriches one's understanding of the Scripture but from a different angle.

Going Deeper aims to be a multipurpose, versatile, “one-size-fits-all” resource. The authors attempted to interlink various disciplines. Most of them are placed in the last chapters as supplemental material. Textual criticism, on the other hand, permeates the entire book, adding an extra layer of study. From a practical standpoint, it could be challenging for teachers and perhaps overwhelming for students to go through the multidisciplinary textbook in one semester. At the same time, the book will serve well as a quick reference. The syntactical studies, in general, are similar to Daniel Wallace's approach in *The Basics of New Testament Syntax* (Zondervan, 2000). *Going Deeper* seems to put more emphasis on the verbal aspect than Wallace does. The authors do pretty well in their coverage of the aspect's main principles and applications. That being said, I felt that the full benefit of the verbal aspect for exegesis was not revealed. The case study of John 2:1–11 (236–237, *Aspect and Discourse*) concludes with the trivial statement that “non-past imperfective and stative aspects may be used to provide various kinds of additional information” (237). However, what kind of information it provides and what to do with it remains unclear. The verbal aspect section would be richer if the authors included a discussion about the aspect and the plains of discourse promoted by Stanley E. Porter (*Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, Biblical Languages: Greek 2 [Sheffield Academic, 1992]; *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, With Reference to Tense and Mood*, Studies in Biblical Greek 1 [Peter Lang, 2003]), David L. Mathewson (*Verbal Aspect in the Book of Revelation: The Function of Greek Verb Tenses in John's Apocalypses*, Linguistic Biblical Studies 4 [Brill, 2010]), and Jeffrey T. Reed (*A Discourse Analysis of Philippians: Method and Rhetoric in the Debate Over Literary Integrity*, JSNTSup 136 [Sheffield Academic, 1997]). The authors of *Going Deeper* cite Porter's books frequently, so I was surprised that they did not include a more detailed discussion on this topic.

The book's use of Greek texts and integration of vocabulary is worth discussing. Why include the beginning Greek vocabulary (50+ occurrences) in an appendix (513–521) if the students are focusing on intermediate-level words (15–49 occurrences)? The students then have nowhere to go to reference a word except through each chapter's vocabulary list. In addition, the Greek examples and exercises constantly employ words from lower frequencies. For instance, the exercises on p. 74 contain words such as ἀνεσις (5x), στῦλος (4x), and ἐνορκίζω (*hapax legomena*). It would be helpful to see the meaning of rare words provided. Rare words also appear in syntactical examples, illustrating

the main points of grammar. Thus φορτίζω (2x), φορτίον (6x), στοιχείον (7x) are used as keywords in syntactical explanations (66–67). Although their meaning is given, utilizing words from the intermediate level (or better from the chapter's vocabulary) as keywords would only make the book more useful.

Teachers should also note that all examples of adverbial participles are given in the nominative case, leaving oblique cases untouched (328–337). In the same way, the adjectival use of prepositional phrases is given for the preposition κατά only (402). A small quibble I have with one explanation about the ability of the article to substantivize a prepositional phrase (403) is that it appears to me that in the examples provided, the article itself serves substantivally, while the following prepositional phrase is used adjectivally. It would be helpful if the authors provided footnotes and references to clarify and support their explanations of this section. Finally, the exclusion of the answer key from this volume (not following the previous volume) is understandable for a classroom setting; however, it might be problematic for the individual readers who are trying to learn at home.

Considering all factors, the authors produced a colossal resource! Without a doubt, learners will be enriched by its wealth of information, while teachers will get substantial help in building their own intermediate Greek course. For anyone who wants to go deeper into the NT Greek, this book is a must.

Berrien Springs, Michigan

STANISLAV KONDRAT

[Merkle, Benjamin L., and Robert L. Plummer. *Beginning With New Testament Greek*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2020. xiii + 401 pp. Hardcover. USD 39.99.](#)

Beginning with New Testament Greek is a practical, user-friendly, and comprehensive up-to-date beginning Greek grammar. The authors, Benjamin L. Merkle and Robert L. Plummer, are professors at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The book reflects not only their expertise in the latest developments in linguistics but also the best pedagogical practices. The material is comprehensive yet presented in simple down-to-earth language that any beginner student will understand.

The book features twenty-four chapters that logically advance the material. Each chapter has a flexible structure: overview, significance, grammar explanations, paradigms and morphology, the use and meaning of the learned grammar (translation tips), and a variety of practice exercises. Besides the chapters on grammar, the authors included six introductory excursions on larger areas of Greek studies. Among them are discussions on (a) critical editions of the Greek NT, (b) textual criticism, (c) lexicons and vocabulary-building tools, (d) commentaries, (e) diagramming, and (f) digital resources. The book also boasts 118 pages of various appendixes, an answer key, vocabulary, glossary of terms, along with name, subject, and Scripture indices.

The book itself is endorsed by several scholars and reasonably so. First, the authors chose simple beginner-friendly language. From the first pages, readers will sense the authentic voice of the authors conversationally sharing the nuances of Greek. Numerous tips and easy-to-digest learning strategies create a sense that one is learning from a friend. The “apple pie” rule to learn the pure alpha (20) and the “mineral” or “learn more nonsense rules” mnemonics for the liquid verbs (141) enhance comprehension and make learning fun. Without a doubt, such gems will be appreciated by both students and teachers alike.

The easy-to-understand language in no way diminishes the comprehensive nature of the book. On the contrary, this work keeps abreast of linguistics, bringing the latest research in verbal aspect, middle voice, and discourse analysis. In addition, the authors put a big emphasis on morphology and morphological history (149–150). The book contains numerous paradigms and schemes illustrating diachronic changes in various morphemes. Although students may not be interested in such details (and at times, they are advised to skip these discussions), educators may find them quite helpful. Moreover, the authors are not shy about introducing syntax when they feel it is needed. The syntactical discussion of “subjective genitive” appears as early as pages 27–28, which seems a bit overwhelming for beginner students, and perhaps unnecessary. Although there is a distinct line between beginning and intermediate Greek, the authors masterfully bridge two levels. Their syntactical discussions for the aorist (118), the adverbial participles (187–188), and the infinitive (239–242) not only help students with basic translations but also reveal the realm of syntax that students may want to explore in the future.

Another strong aspect of the book is its considerable interaction with the NT Greek texts. From the first chapter, the authors invite students to work with the biblical texts, gradually increasing their difficulty and length. The engagement in the translation of the Greek NT both motivates students and equips them to work with the Scripture on their own after the class is completed.

Nevertheless, what makes this book stand out from other Greek grammar books is the integration of modern technologies. The book contains numerous links to various digital resources, such as video and audio materials, lectures, quizzes, PowerPoints, aids, and so forth. The book then becomes a learning hub connecting readers with rich resources available on the Internet. The linked materials are not generic but rather specific to the studied lesson. Both students and teachers will undoubtedly appreciate this expansion of the material.

Any book, no matter how great it is, can certainly be improved. Below are a handful of suggestions that could make *Beginning with New Testament Greek* better. A few sections appear in odd places. Thus, the masculine nouns of the first declension are found in the chapter on imperfect indicative verbs (66–67). If one would search for these irregular masculine nouns, the chapter on imperfect verbs would be the last place to look for it. It would be better

to move this section to ch. 2 (first declension nouns) or ch. 3 (second declension nouns). Similar to the issue above, the imperfect of εἶμί is found in the chapter on contract verbs (74–75). Moving this section to the previous chapter (imperfect indicative verbs) would enhance the reader’s experience and improve navigation and the overall flow of material.

Another area of improvement could be the interaction of the Greek NT texts with the vocabulary. When building vocabulary, the authors aimed to ease students’ experience by providing the relevant words in the previous chapter (2). At the same time, the biblical examples throughout the book employ words not only from the upcoming chapters but also from the lower frequencies outside of the student’s vocabulary (e.g., πρόθεσις [132], πτώμα [145], κατακλάω [205], etc.). Although the authors provide the meaning of these words in parentheses, this practice as a whole is counterproductive to the aim stated in the introduction. Realignment of the exercises to the learned vocabulary and limiting the number of not-yet-learned words to a minimum would significantly increase comprehension. The vocabulary-focused exercises would reinforce translation skills without the distraction of unfamiliar words.

In conclusion, *Beginning with New Testament Greek* by Merkle and Plummer is a refreshing and innovative way of teaching beginning Greek. It is filled with pedagogical aids, tips, and thorough materials to make it a reference source for educators. On the other hand, students will also appreciate its content, easy-to-understand language, charts, exercises, and answer key. The book is helpful for the classroom setting and personal home learning. In light of the above, it is my joy to recommend this work to anyone who studies or teaches biblical Greek.

Berrien Springs, Michigan

STANISLAV KONDRAT

[Mikles, Natasha L., and Joseph P. Laycock, eds. *Religion, Culture, and the Monstrous: Of Gods and Monsters*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021. ix + 225. Hardcover. USD 110.00.](#)

Natasha L. Mikles, assistant professor at Texas State University, teaches in the new religious studies program. She is also the current editor of the *Journal of God and Monsters*. Joseph P. Laycock is an associate professor of religious studies at Texas State University. He is co-editor of the journal *Nova Religio*. This book is a collection of articles that explores the juncture of monster studies with religious studies. The purpose is to answer two questions: (1) “How can monster theory enhance religious studies?” and (2) “What can religious studies offer to the burgeoning field of monster studies?”

The first part of the book covers “Thinking with Monsters.” The editors, Natasha L. Mikles and Joseph P. Laycock, wrote the first chapter. Here, they expand on Jeffery Jerome Cohen’s essay *Monster Culture (Seven Theses)*. They

add five more theses not about monsters in general but about where monster theory and religious studies intersect. The five theses are as follows: monsters are a second-order category, monsters imply and (paradoxically) preserve categories, monsters are phenomenologically actual, monsters can be the center or the periphery, and monsters have social consequences.

The second chapter, by Douglas E. Cowan, covers the idea of reiterations. This chapter explains how retelling stories with variants points to monsters always returning and that the happy ending is a myth. In the third chapter, Brandon R. Grafius gives six theses on studying horror and the Bible. Grafius's six theses are as follows: horror reveals anxiety, culture helps to shape the particular form of our anxieties, horror is used for many different purposes, broad definitions of horror are more productive than narrow ones, connections should be sought and argued for, and hope and fear exist in a dialectical relationship. In the following chapter, William Blake Smith describes a biological model of monster flaps. A monster flap is when "occasionally within a geographical area, and within certain chronological constraints, a high frequency of monster reports will cluster together" (41). Smith organizes the patterns he observes in popular monster sightings into a pollination model, where the focus is on attention as the primary nutrient for monster flaps.

"Monsters Guarding the Gates" is the second part of the book, comprising chapters five through eleven. Wafi A. Momin writes about "The Idea of Evil and Messianic Deliverance in the Satpanth Ismaili Tradition of South Asia," discussing theodicy in the context of demonic corruption and messianic deliverance. "Ghost Stories from *Tales of Retribution: Understanding Elements of Seventeenth-Century Japanese Ghost Stories*" is the chapter written by Frank F. Chu. He shows how ghost stories demonstrate the increased supernatural power of Buddhism to handle such encounters. Eric D. Mortensen's chapter, entitled "Of Monsters and Invisible Villages: *Nags myi rgod* Tales of the Tibetans of Gyalthang," talks about how the stories in this region of the world form a folklore node for the social and cultural mixture of forces. However, he points out that such stories are malleable and influenced by the changing culture. Rohit Singh contributes a chapter entitled "Godly Aromas and Monstrous Stenches: An Analysis of Buddhist New Year Fumigation Rituals in an Indo-Himalayan Borderland." Singh applies smell and scent theory to provide new insights into studying religions and their connections to the monstrous. The ninth chapter is entitled "Man, Yeti, and Mi-go: The Transgressive History of a Monstrous Word." Here Lee A. Weis explains how the mi-go indicates the trespass of civility and humanity. Madadh Richey wrote the tenth chapter, entitled "The Mesopotamian Demon Lamaštu and the Monstrosity of Gender Transgression." Richey describes how Lamaštu represents gender transgression and how the demon uses her voice to speak out against marginalization. The final chapter of this section is "Topophilic Perversions: Spectral Blackface and

Fetishizing Sites of Monstrosity in American Dark Tourism.” Whitney S. May discusses how American Dark Tourism has replaced the stalking dragons and sea monsters of the maps of old with equally fantastical monstrous racial stories, this time for the sake of sensational entertainment. This phenomenon demonstrates the “cultural fascination with dead landscapes” and the ghost stories that go along with them (167). In contrast to attempts to recast American history with “rose-colored glasses,” dark tourism points to the edge of the map and signals that there is something worse than monsters lurking there; it is us (167).

The final section contains chapters dealing with “Monsters Tearing Down the Gates.” Timothy Grieve-Carlson starts the section with a chapter called “Finding Bigfoot: The Anthropological Machine and the Generation of Monsters.” Grieve-Carlson shows how monsters, especially Bigfoot, violate human/nonhuman distinctions. The next chapter, written by Justin Mullis, is “Thomas Jefferson: The First Cryptozoologist?” Mullis explains how Jefferson, to make America exceptional, engaged in monster hunting to prove its essential status as a nation. “Shapeshifters and Goddesses: Gods, Monsters, and Otherness in the Mysticism of Gloria Anzaldúa,” by Stefan R. Sanchez, is the next chapter. Here Sanchez explains how Anzaldúa breaks through the natural with monsters that defy rationality. Leland Merritt writes the following chapter, entitled “The Monster Within: Rape and Revenge in Genesis 34.” Merritt demonstrates how Gen 34 fits the rape and revenge narrative structure found in the 1970s and 1980s horror films. This narrative explores the complicated nature of *lex talionis*, where those seeking justice are as monstrous as the perpetrators. “Monsters Among Us: The Cathartic Carnage of *American Horror Story*,” by Heidi Ippolito, is the next chapter. Ippolito points out how the show *American Horror Story* may be used as a way for Americans to process how they have been monstrous in their actions in the past and how we can hold each other accountable not to do the same in the future. The final chapter, by Elena Pasquini, is entitled “To Eat or to Be Eaten—*CHEW*: A New Study between the Beast and the Sovereign.” Pasquini examines the comic book *CHEW* with Derrida’s concept of a man as a wolf to explore the liminal space where the monster dwells between humanity as a god, man, or wolf.

The book does achieve its intended goal by offering several chapters from different religious perspectives, demonstrating how monster theory may enhance religious studies. The chapters also show how monster studies may be benefitted from religious studies.

What I find interesting about this book is how there are some common themes connecting monster theory to all religions. However, the book’s chapters also point out the particular ways in which monster theory relates to different religions. As a Christian, I found the chapters by Grafius (horror and the Bible) and Merritt (on Gen 34) to be more relevant to my studies. Grafius outlines some general principles for using monster theory

in biblical studies and theology, while Merritt shows how this could be accomplished in practice.

Because of the wide range of religious perspectives, the book is suitable for anyone interested in the intersection of monster theory and religion. The book could be helpful to students of comparative religion and cross-cultural engagement (missions). Finally, the two chapters on Christianity, in particular, could be beneficial for biblical scholars and Christian theologians.

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NATHANIEL GIBBS

[Nihan, Christophe, and Julia Rhyder, eds. *Text and Ritual in the Pentateuch: A Systematic and Comparative Approach*. University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2021. xii + 335 pp. Hardcover. USD 129.95.](#)

Text and Ritual in the Pentateuch is a multiauthored volume of essays that integrates various perspectives on the relationship between pentateuchal texts and the rituals that they reflect. Several of the essays illuminate possibilities for this relationship by comparing evidence from other ancient Mediterranean and West Asian cultures. Most of the essays were developed from papers presented at a conference held at the University of Lausanne in May 2016, titled “Text and Ritual in the Pentateuch: A Systematic and Comparative Approach.” Each essay concludes with a helpful and substantial bibliography, in addition to full reference citations in the footnotes. Indices of ancient (including biblical and extrabiblical) sources and subjects appear at the end of the volume.

The volume opens with an informative introduction by Christophe Nihan, which begins by concisely surveying key methodological and theoretical issues involved with text and ritual in the Pentateuch. Then Nihan summarizes the thirteen essays and concludes by highlighting perspectives for future research and discussion, including the relevance of a comparative approach, the need for more complex models, the relevance of material culture, and bridging the study of biblical and early Jewish rituals.

The first five essays examine text and ritual in ancient non-Israelite religious cultures. First, Giuseppina Lenzo investigates “Rituals in the Spells of the *Book of the Dead* in Ancient Egypt,” concluding that spells from different origins in many versions are attested in texts that were adapted and rearranged. Some spell texts can be compared with archaeological data, suggesting that the rituals indicated by the texts were performed, although not necessarily in accordance with all details of the text descriptions. Written versions of some spell rituals could substitute for actual performance.

Second, Dominique Jaillard, in “Between Utterance and Dedication: Some Remarks on the Status of Textuality in Greek Ritual Practices,” identifies a wide variety of relationships between texts and rituals in Greek polytheism. Texts about rituals could be publicly displayed or concealed; sacrificial

calendars specified particular aspects of ritual practice; some ritual laws could be quite detailed although without complete descriptions adequate for performance; texts could bestow authority on ritual practitioners; texts could be dedicated to gods to honor them; texts could serve as scripts for ritual performance; or written texts subjected to ritual actions could replace ritual speech.

Third, Lionel Marti, in “Inscriptions and Ritual Practices in the Neo-Assyrian Period: The Construction of a Building as an Example,” finds that Neo-Assyrian inscriptions regarding the construction of royal temples and palaces can be divided into the categories of “practical” texts, which include ritual texts, and foundation inscriptions. Performance of actions described in ritual texts, especially the recitation of incantations, was intended to protect a new building from supernatural attacks. Foundation inscriptions commemorated the achievements of the royal builders and appear to have been treated as sacred objects by later kings who (re)discovered them.

Fourth is Patrick Michel’s essay, “Between Text and Ritual: The Function(s) of the Ritual Texts from Late Bronze Age Emar (Syria).” The ritual texts discovered at Emar were likely redacted by the diviner, who was responsible for religious matters in the city, including the installation of priests and priestesses, and who was repeatedly remunerated for his role as a prominent functionary during ritual performances. Thus, the texts probably served the practical function of ensuring that the diviner was paid.

Fifth, Yitzhaq Feder explores “The Textualization of Priestly Ritual in Light of Hittite Sources.” Based on similarities of form, content, and function, he suggests that Hittite and pentateuchal ritual texts served “as aids to ritual practice. Likewise, there is substantial evidence that these corpora were shaped by complementary processes of conserving ritual traditions while enabling necessary adaptations” (145). However, Feder observes that whereas the Hittite ritual texts underwent a complex, messy process of development, the biblical Priestly (P) text is much more unified, apparently because “P’s textualization of ritual traditions seeks to legitimate these practices as rooted in divine revelation, but, no less importantly, serving thereby to reject alternative ‘illegitimate’ traditions” (146).

Sixth, Rüdiger Schmitt, in “Diversity and Centralization of the Temple Cult in the Archeological Record from the Iron II C to the Persian and Hellenistic Periods in Judah,” provides background to the discussion of the relationship between text and ritual by surveying archaeological evidence for ritual activity in Judah from the late monarchic period (Iron II C) to the postexilic Second Temple period. He concludes, contra the theory of Ephraim Stern, that there were strong continuities of ritual practices and objects between the pre-exilic and postexilic periods. There is little evidence for one exclusive cultic center during the Persian period but plenty of evidence for ritual diversity on all social levels, as at the end of the Iron Age. It would have been helpful if Schmitt were to explicitly draw out some implications

of his conclusion for the relationship between archaeologically attested ritual practice and the text of the Pentateuch.

The seventh to eleventh essays focus on biblical ritual texts. James W. Watts, in the seventh essay, observes that “Texts are Not Rituals, and Rituals Are Not Texts, with an Example from Leviticus 12.” Watts points out that meanings of texts inevitably differ from those of the rituals to which they refer because a ritual and all verbal reflections of it are different socially situated acts. Watts supplies a succinct overview of recent approaches to pentateuchal ritual texts and ritual meaning in contemporary research. He finds trends away from symbolic and theological interpretations of rituals, which “do not distinguish sharply enough between ritual behavior and the verbal interpretations of rituals found in texts” (177), toward analysis of persuasive rhetoric in ritual texts and mapping social and spatial relationships (especially hierarchy) through the examination of “indexes” (following C. S. Pierce’s distinction between index and symbol). Then Watts exemplifies the difference between textual rhetoric and ritual practice with a case study of Lev 12, concluding that this text is basically a payment schedule for offerings owed to the sanctuary when a child is born. This interpretation accords with Watts’s rhetorical analysis of Leviticus in his book *Ritual and Rhetoric in Leviticus: From Sacrifice to Scripture* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), in which he argues that the ritual texts of Lev 1–16 were composed by priests to assert their monopoly over the cult and the economic benefits derived from it.

The eighth essay, by Christian Frevel, is titled “The Texture of Rituals in the Book of Numbers: A Fresh Approach to Ritual Density, the Role of Tradition, and the Emergence of Diversity in Early Judaism.” Frevel observes that several Second Temple period communities were committed to the same written tradition—namely, the Torah—but that they could interpret it differently in practice because the textual rituals in the Bible are incomplete and do not serve as ritual scripts. Thus, textualization enabled ritual innovation. The frequency of rituals in the book of Numbers shows that it was formed at a time of “ritual density,” when ritualization bound people tightly together in a small, ideologically homogeneous community. Frevel compares the priestly blessing in Num 6:22–26 with the *Ketef Hinnom* silver scroll to illustrate the complexity of the relationship between text and ritual. Against several other scholars, he argues that the present form of the priestly blessing postdates the text on the silver amulet. Thus, the textualization of Num 6 formed a new ritual carried out by Aaronide priests, which incorporated into the text of the Torah the ritual practice reflected on the amulets to authorize it as belonging to the priestly tradition.

Ninth, Jeremy D. Smoak, in “Speaking with a Divine Voice: The Rhetoric of Epistolary Performance in Numbers 6:22–27,” argues that the instructions for the priestly blessing use epistolary conventions showing a chain of authority from Yahweh to Moses to the priests and indicating that a priest

is Yahweh's messenger, orally performing the blessing of the deity before his people. For Smoak, the intermediary role of Moses coincides with that of the scribe who hears Yahweh's oral blessing and transmits it in writing to another audience. Thus, the authority of the blessing is both oral and written. Smoak further supports his interpretation by comparing the priestly blessing with introductory elements in Iron Age letters, which index social hierarchies, and with formulations in some other biblical passages.

Tenth, Dorothea Erbele-Küster, in "The Ritual Texts of Leviticus and the Creation of Ritualized Bodies," demonstrates that discourse concerning ritual in Leviticus presents a symbolic system of priestly ideology. This system constructs ritual purity versus impurity concerning physical bodies, but without primarily describing physiological processes. For example, the duration of a woman's purification after she gives birth to a girl is twice as long as that which follows the birth of a boy, whose male gender identity is certified by the ritual of circumcision (Lev 12). This difference in the duration of purification is not based on the actual duration of her postpartum bleeding. Also, ritual impurity from menstruation lasts seven days even if monthly physical bleeding does not last that long. Thus, the texts create gendered ritualized bodies that are not the same as physical bodies.

Eleventh, Julia Rhyder, in "The Reception of Ritual Laws in the Early Second Temple Period: Evidence from Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles," points out that textual representations of ritual performances in Neh 8:13–18 and 2 Chr 30 and 35:1–19 affirm the authority of pentateuchal texts, especially Leviticus, as guides for setting ideal ritual standards. However, in the early Second Temple period, scribes did not regard pentateuchal ritual law as rigidly prescriptive and even cited it to justify innovations that departed from instructions in the Pentateuch, to carry out rituals in new situations. One kind of innovation was the acceptance of new authority and ritual roles for persons outside the Aaronide priesthood, such as the kings, other community leaders, and Levites. I would add that such innovation may be related to flexibility in the application of nonritual pentateuchal laws. Such laws provided benchmarks for wise application of their principles to a variety of specific circumstances.

Twelfth, Daniel K. Falk, in "Text and Ritual in the Dead Sea Scrolls," carries out case studies of the various relationships between text and ritual in purification liturgies, collections of liturgical prayers, *tefillin* and the Shema, and the sectarian covenant ceremony in the Qumran literature. Falk affirms a crucial point: "The literary analysis of a textual description of or prescription for a ritual does not qualify as an analysis of the ritual. Ritual is a performance and can only be analyzed as performance" (286). *Tefillin* are ritual artifacts that show "a continuum between an instrumental and material use of text in ritual" (302).

The thirteenth essay, by William K. Gilders, is titled "‘And They Would Read Before Him the Order for the Day’: The Textuality of Leviticus 16

in Mishnah Yoma, Tosefta Kippurim, and Sifra Aḥare Mot.” Gilders finds that the rabbis treated Lev 16 as the authoritative textual manual for the performance of the rituals of the Day of Atonement, but they interpreted and applied the text with theological assumptions. Exemplifying such interpretation is a dispute between the rabbis and the Boethusians concerning the high priest’s placement of incense on burning coals when he enters the holy of holies. Another example is the rabbis’ understanding that Lev 16:6, 11 requires two verbal confessions by the high priest (departing from what Lev 16 seems to prescribe), although Sifra and the Tosefta disagree with the Mishnah concerning the wording of this confession.

Overall, *Text and Ritual in the Pentateuch* is a valuable resource that will stimulate and inform further research. It convincingly demonstrates that focusing on the relationship between text and ritual is essential for the methodology of interpreting the meanings of biblical ritual texts.

Approaches to text and ritual represented by some essays in this volume are deeply affected by the critical hypothesis that the pentateuchal ritual texts were composed much later than the period of the (second-millennium BC Mosaic) narrative setting within which the ritual portions are embedded, which is regarded as fictional. Radically disconnecting the ritual texts from the possibility of ritual performance in a setting that is at least closer to that which is indicated by the literary context magnifies uncertainty regarding the relationship between text and ritual and their respective meanings and functions. Were the ritual practices depicted in the Pentateuch simply invented by its author(s) or did scribes incorporate adapted representations of preexisting practices, as Frevel theorizes regarding the *Ketef Hinnom* texts and the priestly blessing? How can we know, rather than relying on speculation and circular reasoning? If we have a high degree of uncertainty, how can we arrive at solid or even plausible conclusions regarding the relationship between text and ritual and their meanings?

Frevel’s essay raises a question: Why would both Jews and Samaritans, who were antagonistic toward each other, accept the authority of the same Torah if it were composed in the Second Temple period, especially if its authors were Jewish priests? Granted that it could be interpreted in different ways, what would motivate various religious communities to make it their own in the first place? It is implausible that they would have cooperated in its formation. It makes much better sense that both Jews and Samaritans inherited the authoritative Torah from an earlier period as an essential element of their shared heritage (cf. Feder, 146–147).

In response to the essay by Watts, he is right that texts are not rituals and rituals are not texts. I agree that analyses of rhetoric and indices are fresh and important methodologies for the interpretation of ritual texts and can serve to correct weaknesses in other approaches. However, I think such analyses should be expanded and integrated with other valid approaches, rather than

replacing the latter. Both here and in Watts's *Ritual and Rhetoric in Leviticus*, I find his approach to be helpful and important for identifying rhetorical features of ritual texts, but reductionistic and simplistic in drawing conclusions regarding their functions (see Roy E. Gane, "Didactic Logic and the Authorship of Leviticus," in *Current Issues in Priestly and Related Literature: The Legacy of Jacob Milgrom and Beyond*, ed. Roy E. Gane and Ada Taggar-Cohen, et al., Resources for Biblical Study [Society of Biblical Literature, 2015], 197–221; Roy E. Gane, "Was Leviticus Composed by Aaronide Priests to Justify Their Cultic Monopoly?" in *Exploring the Composition of the Pentateuch*, ed. L. S. Baker, Jr., Kenneth Bergland, Felipe A. Masotti, and A. Rahel Wells; BBRSup 27 [Eisenbrauns, 2020], 195–212).

Of course, Leviticus uses rhetorical persuasion, presents Aaronide priests as the exclusive ritual officiants, and specifies remuneration for their services. But the composition of Leviticus by priests for priests is a scholarly hypothesis, not a fact, and there is much more to Leviticus, including its rhetoric, than Aaronide cultic hegemony. For one thing, Leviticus provides some standardized outlines of essential aspects of the performance of several kinds of sacrifices (esp. Lev 1:1–5:13; 7:1–5). Granted that these are textual prescriptions that do not provide all information necessary to reconstruct the ritual performances, which could vary in smaller details, the information in the texts could have served as aids to ritual practice as Feder suggests. The data presented in several essays in the present volume indicate that some ancient ritual texts were closer to ritual practice than others, so Watts's wide distinction between texts and rituals seems too rigid.

Leviticus 12 is much more than a schedule for payment of a tiny priestly portion from a purification offering bird (vv. 6, 8; not from a burnt offering) that indexes the sociological construct of priestly authority. The priestly portion is not even mentioned here. By barring the parturient's contact with holy things or access to the sanctuary during her period of blood purification (v. 4), the text indexes some kind of opposition or contrast between her status and the holiness associated with the deity. Her subsequent required sacrifices at the sanctuary (vv. 6–8) index her restoration to full harmony with holiness. Such opposition and reintegration carry theological implications concerning the divine-human relationship, which may be illuminated by placing Lev 12 within the larger context of Leviticus.

Aside from similar terminology of impurity and purification in Lev 12 and elsewhere, at least two other factors in Lev 12 call for more consideration of the larger context. First, this chapter only lists sacrifices by their types, with no performance instructions, so the text is dependent on the procedural instructions in Lev 1:10–17 (burnt offerings) and 5:7–10 (purification offering birds). Second, final purification from physical ritual impurities caused by other serious genital flows requires similar sacrifices (15:14–15, 29–30).

Apart from the question of whether the text of Leviticus reflects or prescribes actual ritual performance, the ritual portrayals are religious and therefore involve theology, which is often expressed in symbolic terms. To be persuasive, the texts require not only effective rhetoric; they also need to connect with the religious worldview of their hearers, who believe in their deity, their own moral and physical faultiness, possibilities for expiation and purification through ritual types that provide certain ranges of efficacy, and divine authorization of certain ritual practitioners. It is this combination of beliefs that would motivate a mother to follow directions by offering specific sacrifices following childbirth. Leviticus 12 does not establish or elaborate on these beliefs but draws on them. It is true that symbolic interpretive expressions and clues in biblical ritual texts are sparse and laconic, but they should be fully taken into account along with other textual aspects.

To conclude this review of *Text and Ritual in the Pentateuch*, the rich collection of data, interactions with scholarship, and numerous insights in this volume make it an important resource for serious students of pentateuchal ritual texts. I have raised criticisms of some aspects of the volume, but I am deeply grateful for the thought and effort that all of the authors and editors have invested in this fine project.

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ROY E. GANE

[Plenc, Daniel O., Silvia C. Scholtus, Eugenio Di Dionisio, and Sergio Becerra. *Foundational Missionaries of South American Adventism*. Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos: Editorial UAR, 2020. 263 pp. eBook. USD 8.11.](#)

When the Foreign Mission Board of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists began planning to send missionaries to South America, this region of the world was considered a “neglected continent,” at least as far as evangelism was concerned (“Missionaries for South America,” *Review and Herald*, August 8, 1893, 502). In a way, the historiographical study of the South American Adventist mission was also neglected for too long. It was almost a hundred years after the arrival of the first Adventist missionary in South America before Héctor J. Peverini, a pastor and church administrator, published the first book on the history of the beginnings of Seventh-day Adventism in South America (see *En las huellas de la Providencia* [Buenos Aires: Asociación Casa Editora Sudamericana, 1988]). The dissemination of South American Adventist history to an international English-speaking audience also took time. In 2011, Floyd Greenleaf published *A Land of Hope: The Growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South America* (Tatuí, SP: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 2011). This book became the first historiographical work in English to recount the history of the Adventist Church in South America. Although the doctoral dissertations of Walton J. Brown

(“A Historical Study of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Austral South America” [University of Southern California, 1953]) and Juan Carlos Viera (“Seventh-day Adventists in Latin America: Their Beginnings, Their Growth, Their Challenges” [Fuller Theological Seminary, 1993]) had already explored this topic in English, these works were never published.

Foundational Missionaries of South American Adventism is the first book in English solely devoted to narrating the lives and work of pioneer missionaries, ministers, and administrators during the early days of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South America. Unlike the books previously mentioned, its focus is not on exploring the historical beginnings of Adventism in South America but on addressing the lives of the most notable pioneers.

The book consists of fifteen chapters plus a bibliography. Chapters 1, 2, 8, 10, 11, and 15 were written by Daniel O. Plenc, the current director of the Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office at the Universidad Adventista del Plata. Chapters 3 and 7 were prepared by Sergio Becerra, who currently serves as dean of the School of Theology at the Universidad Adventista del Plata. Meanwhile, chs. 4, 5, 12, and 13 were composed by Eugenio Di Dionisio, who, although currently retired, worked as an Adventist minister and history professor. Finally, chs. 6, 9, and 14 were written by Silvia C. Scholtus, now retired but formerly director of the Centro Histórico Adventista at the Universidad Adventista del Plata.

The first chapter, which functions simply as the introduction, explains the purpose of the book and mentions the sources used and the *status quaestionis* of the topic under study. Chapter 2, entitled “A Space for Memory” (although a better translation perhaps would have been “A *Place* for Memory”), reviews the historical evidence to determine the location of the first Adventist worship service in South America, in what was the home of Reinhardt Hetze, the first convert to Adventism baptized in this region of the world. Chapters 3 through 14 are each dedicated to a missionary, pastor, or administrator whose work was instrumental in the foundation of South American Adventism. The third chapter focuses on the life of Geörg Riffel (1850–1917), the first missionary to reach South America. His work as a self-supporting lay worker was vital to the organization of the first South American Adventist Church, in what came to be known as the Crespo Campo Church.

Chapters 4 and 5 are dedicated to Frank (1858–1944) and Joseph Westphal (1891–1949), the first ordained pastor and the first president of the South American Union Mission respectively. These two brothers, through their evangelistic and administrative work, laid the ecclesiastical foundations of what is now the administrative territory of the South American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Chapter 6 is dedicated to Robert Habenicht (1866–1925), the founder of the current *Sanatorio Adventista del Plata*, the first Adventist health institution established in South America. Then follows the story of colporteur Thomas Davis (1866–1911), the first mission-

ary to enter Ecuador and the first worker to die fulfilling his evangelistic duty. Chapter 8 narrates the life of Eduardo Thomann (1874–1955), who “probably was the first [native] ordained minister in South America” (110) and founder of the *Revista Adventista*, the South American version of the *Review and Herald*. The ninth chapter focuses on Luis Ernst (1874–1952), one of Uruguay’s first converts, the first student of the current Universidad Adventista del Plata, and a successful evangelist.

The following sections of the book are dedicated to two missionary couples: Ferdinand Stahl (ch. 10) and Anna Carlson Stahl (ch. 11), and Pedro Kalbermatter (ch. 12) and Guillermina Deggeller de Kalbermatter (ch. 13). These four individuals focused on evangelizing the native peoples of Peru and Bolivia. In addition to their successful labor as missionaries, they carried out important medical and educational work. Chapter 14 recounts the life of Walter Schubert (1896–1980), an influential and successful evangelist who served as associate director of the General Conference Ministerial Association between 1954 and 1962. Finally, the book ends with a reflection on the importance of remembering the lives and work of these pioneers as examples of self-denial, effort, and service.

It is important to note that this work is the translation of a Spanish original published in 2012 (and reedited in 2014 and 2016). Both the original publication and the English translation have the merit of being the first work (in their respective languages) to present the biographies of these pioneers. It is true that some of them, such as Frank Westphal, Ferdinand Stahl, and Pedro Kalbermatter, wrote autobiographies or memoirs. However, *Foundational Missionaries of South American Adventism* presents their lives using a historiographical rigor usually absent in autobiographical works.

The main objective of this book is to reach an international audience by presenting the lives of the main South American pioneers in the world’s lingua franca. Despite the commendation of this purpose, three obstacles seem to hamper its fulfillment. First of all, the translation is far from fluid. Although the ideas are understandable and the text is easy to read, the syntax is clumsy and the translation technique overly literal. A more dynamic and flexible translation would have allowed me to better enjoy the reading of the lives of these great pioneers. Second, researchers and historians who approach the book will find that the final bibliography is incomplete. Not only are there dozens of bibliographic references missing, but sometimes the footnotes themselves include incomplete references that make it difficult to identify and access sources. This is particularly regrettable because it is clear that each chapter is the product of careful historical research that made use of a variety of primary sources, including personal files, letters, magazine articles, church reports, and so forth. The same level of historical carefulness that is manifested in each chapter should also have been applied to the correct registration of the bibliographic and documentary sources used.

Finally, it would have been helpful if the translation had also incorporated additional commentaries or explanatory notes for those readers who are unfamiliar with the geography and history of South America. While the original Spanish book was aimed at an audience more familiar with the South American regions, the broader international audience to which this translation is aimed could hardly identify many of the geographical, cultural, and historical references present throughout the book. Explanatory comments or notes from the translator would have been enough to make up for this deficiency.

In addition to these three points, it is necessary to mention two general observations about the content. First, it is regrettable that the translation was not used to update the information in the book and incorporate the most recent historical discoveries. For example, ch. 3 states that George Riffel “arrived at the port of Buenos Aires in February of 1890” (20). However, in 2019, retired pastor and amateur historical researcher Roland Bernhardt Hetze discovered that the ship carrying him arrived at the port of Buenos Aires on May 29 (*Crespo Campo, Iglesia Madre* [Author’s Edition, 2019], 41–43). Although it is a minor detail, it is unfortunate that the information was not updated. In other cases, a lack of exhaustiveness in the analysis of sources is revealed. For example, ch. 4 states that Frank Westphal preached three continuous sermons in a meeting the very night he arrived in Crespo, Entre Ríos, where a small group of Sabbath-keepers was living. This was indeed told by Westphal in a memoir written in his old age (*Pioneering in the Neglected Continent* [Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1927], 5–6). However, Westphal himself also stated in a letter sent to the *Review and Herald* a few days after the event that this three-sermon marathon occurred six days after his arrival and not in Crespo but in a neighboring village (“Argentine Republic,” *Review and Herald*, October 30, 1894, 678). Priority should be given to a source near the event over a testimony written decades later based on the memory of an old man.

Despite these observations on the content and translation technique, it should be remembered that *Foundational Missionaries of South American Adventism* is still the most important work on the life of these pioneers. Despite its flaws, it is a must-have reference book for those seeking this biographical information. Missiologists and historians will certainly benefit from having this book on their shelves.

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ERIC E. RICHTER

Wiggins, Steve A. *Nightmares with the Bible: The Good Book and Cinematic Demons*. Lanham, MD: Fortress Academic, 2021. ix + 225 pp. Hardcover. USD 100.00.

Steve A. Wiggins is an independent scholar working as an editor at a university press in New York City. Wiggins has a PhD from Edinburgh University. The book's purpose is to define demons by using the "reception history" of demons and taking the popular cultural viewpoint seriously. The "point of this study is to demonstrate that popular culture drives theology, not the other way around" (2).

Wiggins introduces the idea that demons are our worst nightmares and that "perhaps more than any other monster, take on the shape of modern people's fears" (4). Wiggins connects the demonic in popular culture with the Bible. Since the data on demons in the Bible is limited, he shows how popular culture has added to the description of demons throughout history.

The first chapter introduces the subject of demons. Wiggins first covers several popular sources for society's current understanding of demons: reality television ghost hunting programs, paranormal investigators Ed and Lorraine Warren, exorcist Jesuit Malachi Martin, and exorcist Father Gabriel Amorth. Wiggins then goes on to argue that the main catalyst for the modern interest in demons was the novel *The Exorcist* and the movie based on the book. He demonstrates that this story and film have not only shaped popular conceptions of demons but have also affected biblical interpretation because biblical demons have been interpreted through this cultural lens.

In the second chapter, Wiggins covers the idea of demonic possession. Such activities have been attested throughout history in various places with different reception. Possession is not always recorded as an adverse event; in many cultures, it is invited. Wiggins claims that through the influence of popular media, American culture came to equate spiritual possession with demonic activity. Again, *The Exorcist* has shaped the perception of spiritual possession as something evil. Wiggins points out that Scripture itself does not use the term possession. There are numerous records of individuals plagued with evil spirits. The Bible provides little data on the mechanics of enticing demonic notice; however, records from postbiblical periods provide more information about the process. This lack of data in the Bible leaves gaps that modern Bible readers supply with their cultural understanding.

The third chapter covers the origins of demons by looking at ANE culture and the HB. Demons, of course, in this worldview were assumed, and nobody doubted their existence. The culture of the ANE was polytheist, so a theodicy was not needed to "solve" the presence of evil. In this perspective, bad events were explained as the result of being in the wrong place in the battle between divine beings. Besides the belief in deities, these people also attributed agency to other spiritual forces classified as demons, and the fear of

them was primarily due to their unpredictable nature. The ancients believed that demons were the embodiment of chaos. However, ancient people wrote more about their gods than demons; therefore, our understanding of ancient demonology is limited. Wiggins notices that the HB presents with a similar limitation. For example, there is no generic word for “demon” in the HB. The Hebrew word often translated as demons, *shedim*, has a disputed etymology. The author warns that readers of the HB should not read a “post-*Exorcist*” image of demons into the HB. Wiggins also mentions that a culturally famous demon, Azazel, is not defined clearly in the HB although it is identified as a demon in later texts. To counterargue traditional interpretations of demons in the HB, Wiggins discusses Isa 34:14, a passage that depicts figures that have been translated as “goat demons” or “Lilith” and which later Jewish and Christian interpreters understood to be evil spiritual beings. To him, these terms were merely used to describe scary but completely natural desert animals, not supernatural spiritual entities. These later developments in the interpretation of the text again demonstrate how culture changes the understanding of ancient texts.

Wiggins says that as monotheism developed, there was a need to explain the presence of other deities in the surrounding cultures. And a common articulation was that these other gods were demons. Zoroastrianism, unlike polytheism, had only two deities: Ahura Mazda, the good god, and Angra Mainyu, the evil god. Wiggins reports that when the Hebrews were brought into connection with Persia, this influenced their ideas of eschatological judgment and the demonic. The HB does not mention the devil but uses “Satan.” Satan, meaning *adversary*, was developed to match Zoroastrianism’s evil god. Finally, Wiggins points out that there is no hell in the HB but only Sheol. Sheol is not a place of punishment but a vague term describing the afterlife.

In the fourth chapter, Wiggins outlines the development of demons in Second Temple literature. Demons were, at this point, becoming personalities. The tradition of the Watchers, derived from Gen 6, developed demonology by describing these evil forces as intermarrying with women. In some sources, demons are described as the souls of evil humans; in others, they are the fallen angels. Solomon is linked with esoteric knowledge in the Testament of Solomon, including the occult. This Solomonic knowledge would develop into *The Lesser Key of Solomon*, a medieval grimoire. Some of these developments again show the effect of culture on the text.

In the fifth chapter Wiggins covers the NT concept of demons, the devil, and hell. Wiggins points out that the NT does not give much information on demons. There is only one mentioned by name, Legion. Two concepts developed in NT times: the devil as an anti-God entity, and hell, instead of the wilderness, as the demonic home. However, these views were not universal and were not systematized or fully developed. Unlike the NT, the early church writers were more intrigued by demons and wrote

much about them. However, Wiggins attests that “much of the discussion is bogged down to narrow points of theology” (83). Though many references to demonic entities emerged in the NT times, demonology was not systematized until the Middle Ages.

In the sixth chapter, Wiggins covers the growing systematization of the demonic in the Middle Ages. He concludes that the modern concept of demons is a result of developments during the medieval and early modern periods. References to demons during this time explained chaotic behavior, like violations of religious protocols and physical laws. Many popular conceptions of dramatic signs associated with demons come from this period. He also explains the rise of grimoires, or magical books, that purportedly taught one to invoke spiritual forces. Witchcraft and demons became associated during this period as well.

The seventh through eleventh chapters cover the emergence of demons in popular culture, especially in film, and how these films portray the demonic from the Bible. In these chapters, Wiggins compares modern cinematic themes about the demonic with the way demons were revealed throughout history.

Wiggins has achieved his goal of adequately demonstrating that popular culture has indeed driven modern conceptions of the demonic. This understanding is important because these conceptions still permeate how we interpret the text, even if one does not watch horror movies. In explaining what the Bible says about demons, I do not always agree with Wiggins’s interpretation of the text. However, I concur with him that little is said about demons in the HB. Therefore, interpreters tended to add details to the demonic figure to make sense of the ancient texts, and many of these details came from the broader cultural environment. Similarly, Wiggins also demonstrates that the current culture gets its ideas primarily from cinema and not the Bible.

This book is a great addition to the field of interdisciplinary studies on religion and pop culture, and specifically to movie theories, horror as a genre, and biblical studies. Anyone interested in the impact of culture in the formation of religious ideas in general and biblical interpretation specifically should pay attention to the reflections of Wiggins.

Berrien Springs, Michigan

NATHANIEL GIBBS

[CALL FOR ARTICLES ON TRUTH AND INFORMATION WARFARE](#)

Andrews University Seminary Studies plans to publish a special issue of our journal on **Truth and Information Warfare**. The importance of this subject may be briefly introduced. First, the Bible records Pilate's question to Jesus, two thousand years ago, concerning "What is truth?". Second, currently, there is growing discussion of the data, information, knowledge, and wisdom pyramid—highlighting the need to balance the gathering of information with transformation (personal, social, political, theological, etc.). Third, the issues of truth and transformation are complicated by the reality of information warfare—defined as the intentional deceptive manipulation of information.

In response to these issues, we invite you to submit articles from various disciplinary perspectives, such as Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Historical Theology, Systematic Theology, Christian Ethics, Christian Ministry, and Missiology. Articles written by scholars from non-theological disciplines will also be considered for publication if they are suitable for the AUSS venue. You are invited to share studies in connection with, but not limited to, the following areas:

- Perspectives on the relations of truth, information, and power within biblical, theological, and non-theological academic disciplines;
- The history of attitudes toward and responses to truth and information warfare in different religions and different regions of the world;
- Truth and information warfare as illuminated by different biblical genres such as: history, narrative, prophetic, wisdom, psalms, legal, apocalyptic, gospels, parables, epistles;
- Sources for understanding truth and information warfare, such as: Scripture, tradition, experience, reason, science, theology, history, etc;
- Studies on truth and information warfare in relation to the biblical and theological theme of the cosmic conflict between good and evil, light and darkness, Christ and Satan;
- Studies on truth and information warfare in relation to the concept of God's two books—Scripture and nature—and in relation to theological method and scientific method;
- Religious and theologically relevant studies on the relations of the elements of the pyramid of data, information, knowledge and wisdom.

Interested scholars may submit queries or abstracts to auss@andrews.edu for editorial feedback before writing a full article. Completed articles are to be submitted to www.andrews.edu/auss via the "Submit Manuscript" link in the sidebar. **Please indicate in your cover letter that your article is in response to the "Call for Articles on Truth and Information warfare."** **Articles must be received by July 31, 2022.**

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