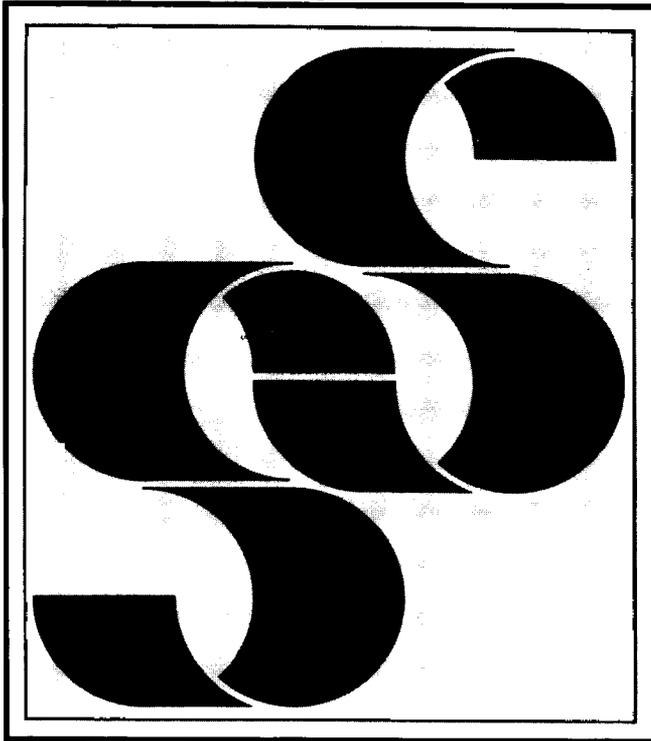


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Editors: Jerry Moon and John W. Reeve
Book Review Editor: John W. Reeve
Assistant Editor: Karen K. Abrahamson, auss@andrews.edu
Copy Editors: Leona G. Running,
Madeline Johnston,
Marilynn Youngblood,
aussbook@andrews.edu
Book Review Manager: Erhard Gallos, ausscirc@andrews.edu
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Communications: Phone: (269) 471-6023
Fax: (269) 471-6202
Electronic Mail: auss@andrews.edu
Web: <http://www.auss.info>

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THE FIRST ENCOUNTER BETWEEN SAUL AND DAVID: ACCORDING TO JOSEPHUS

CHRISTOPHER BEGG
The Catholic University of America
Washington, D.C.

1 Samuel 16:14-23 is a brief but important segment within the book of 1 Samuel; in it the two future antagonists, Saul and David, encounter one another for the first time.¹ In this essay, I shall examine the retelling of the Samuel passage by Josephus in his *Antiquitates judaicae* (hereafter *Ant.*) 6.166-169.² More particularly, my study will address three overarching questions concerning *Ant.* 6.166-169: First, does Josephus's version have particular affinities with one or the other of the various ancient text-forms of 1 Sam 16:14-23, i.e., MT (BHS),³ Codex Vaticanus (hereafter B)⁴ and the Antiochene or Lucianic (hereafter L) manuscripts⁵ of the LXX and Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets (hereafter Tg.)?⁶ Second, which rewriting techniques does Josephus use in the above passage and what distinctive features of his presentation there result from their use? Finally, how does Josephus's retelling compare with other scattered references to 1 Sam 16:14-23 that one finds in Jewish-Christian tradition?⁷

¹On this passage, see, in addition to the commentaries: D. M. Howard Jr., "The Transfer of Power from Saul to David in 1 Samuel 16:13-14," *JETS* 32 (1989): 473-483; R. D. Bergin, "Evil Spirits and Eccentric Grammar: A Study of the Relationship between Text and Meaning in Hebrew Narrative," *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. R. D. Bergin (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1994), 320-335; J. Piedad, "¿Dos traducciones en 1 Sam 16,14-23?," *Qol* 22 (2000): 59-91.

²For the text and translation of *Ant.* 6.166-169, I use R. Marcus, *Josephus V*, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), 248-251. I have likewise consulted the older text of B. Niese, *Flavii Iosephi Opera II* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1954²), 40-41; and the more recent text and translation of E. Nodet, *Flavius Josephus III: Les Antiquités juives, livres VI et VII* (Paris: Cerf, 2001), 52-53*.

³1 Sam 16:14-23 is not extant in the important Qumran manuscript 4QSam^a.

⁴For the B text of 1 Sam (1 Rgns) 16:14-23, I use A. E. Brooke, N. Maclean, and H. St. J. Thackeray, *1 and 2 Samuel, The Old Testament in Greek*, II:1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), 54-55. I have likewise consulted the translation of this passage in B. Grillet and M. Lestienne, *Premier Livre des Règnes (La Bible d'Alexandrie 9,1)*, Paris: Cerf, 1997), 288-291.

⁵For the Antiochene/Lucianic text of 1 Sam (1 Rgns) 16:14-23, I use N. Fernández Marcos and J. R. Busto Saiz, *El texto antioqueno de la Biblia griega, 1, 1-2 Samuel*, Textos y estudios "Cardenal Cisneros" 50 (Madrid: C.S.I.C., 1989), 47-48.

⁶For the targumic text of 1 Sam 16:14-23, I use A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic 2* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 126; and for the translation D. J. Harrington and A. J. Saldarini, *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets*, The Bible in Aramaic 10 (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1987), 132-133.

⁷Among these other references, the rendering of 1 Sam 16:14-23 in Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (hereafter *L.A.B.*), 60, is of particular interest. For the text of this passage, see H. Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, AGJU 31 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1:82; and for the translation, 187-188.

Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him. And Saul's servants said to him, "Behold now, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our lord now command your servants, who are before you, to seek out a man who is skilful in playing the lyre; and when the evil spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will be well." So Saul said to his servants, "Provide for me a man who can play well, and bring him to me." One of the young men answered, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skilful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence; and the LORD is with him." Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, "Send me David your son, who is with the sheep." And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a skin of wine and a kid, and sent them by David his son to Saul. And David came to Saul, and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight." And whenever the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand; so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him (1 Sam 16:14-23, RSV).

1 Samuel 16:14-23 and Ant. 6.166-169 Compared

1 Samuel 16:14 clearly constitutes the start of a new unit within chapter 16: the protagonists of the preceding unit, vv. 1-13,⁸ i.e., Samuel and David, (temporarily) disappear from the scene and attention reverts to King Saul, the dominant figure (along with Samuel) throughout 1 Sam 9-15. Josephus, on the other hand, conflates (and rearranges) elements of 1 Sam 16:13b and 16:14a at the opening of *Ant.* 6.166: "So, after these exhortations,⁹ Samuel went his way,¹⁰ and the Deity abandoned Saul,¹¹ went over to David,¹² who, when the divine spirit (τοῦ θεοῦ πνεύματος) had removed to him,¹³ began to prophesy (προφητεύειν)."¹⁴

⁸1 Sam 16:1-13 is the story of David's anointing by Samuel. On the Josephus and Pseudo-Philonian versions of this incident, see C. T. Begg, "Samuel's Anointing of David in Josephus and Pseudo-Philo," *Revista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 32 (1996): 492-526.

⁹With this phrase, Josephus alludes back to the admonitions—unparalleled in 1 Sam 16:1-13 itself—which Samuel addresses to the newly anointed David in *Ant.* 6.165. (I italicize elements of Josephus's presentation, such as the above, which lack a direct counterpart in the biblical text.)

¹⁰Cf. 1 Sam 16:13bβ: "And Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah." Josephus leaves aside the biblical precision concerning the prophet's destination.

¹¹Cf. 1 Sam 16:14a: "Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul" (Tg.: "the spirit of power from before the Lord that was with Saul passed from him"). Here, as frequently, Josephus rewords/avoids biblical mentions of the (divine) "spirit" (Hebrew רוּחַ, Greek πνεύμα); on the phenomenon, see E. Best, "The Use and Non-use of Pneuma by Josephus," *NovT* 3 (1958): 218-225; and J. R. Levison, "Josephus' Interpretation of the Divine Spirit," *JJS* 47 (1996): 234-255.

¹²This phrase, which highlights God's contrasting dealings with Saul and David, lacks a biblical counterpart. It does, however, serve as a lead-in to Josephus's delayed use of 1 Sam 16:13bα in what follows. See above.

¹³Cf. 1 Sam 16:13bα: "And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward." Here, exceptionally (see n. 11), Josephus does reproduce a biblical mention of the divine spirit. At the same time, however, he also modifies the Bible's presentation concerning the moment of David's reception of that spirit: in 16:13, the spirit comes upon David in conjunction with his anointing and prior to the departure of Samuel. Josephus, by contrast, depicts David's spirit-reception following Samuel's exit (see above) and in connection with the Deity's abandonment of Saul. The historian's

Saul's abandonment by the "Spirit of the Lord" (1 Sam 16:14a) results in the situation briefly portrayed in 16:14b: "an evil spirit from the Lord tormented¹⁵ him." Josephus's (6.166b) rendering of this notice is reminiscent of the double reading of LXX L cited in n. 15: "But as for Saul, he was beset by strange disorders and evil spirits (πάθη . . . καὶ δαιμόνια)¹⁶ which caused him such suffocation (πνιγμούς)¹⁷ and strangling (στραγγάλας)."¹⁸

Saul's afflicted state prompts an intervention by the king's "servants," who first offer a diagnosis that reiterates what has already been reported by the narrator in 16:14b (v. 15) and then proceed to suggest that a lyre-player be sought, whose playing will relieve the king when the evil spirit comes upon him (v. 16). The historian (6.166c) uses a different designation for Saul's interlocutors and recasts their words in indirect address:¹⁹ "that the physicians"²⁰

other uses of the above expression "divine spirit" are in *Ant.* 4.108, 118 (recipient: Balaam); 6.222 (// 1 Sam 19:21: the messengers sent by Saul to apprehend David); 8.354 (Micaiah); and 10.239 (Daniel).

¹⁴1 Sam 16:13 does not mention such "prophesying" by David upon his reception of God's spirit at the moment of his anointing. (In *L.A.B.* 59.4, David responds to his anointing [which results in the Lord's being with him from that day, 59.3], with an extended song of praise, extolling God's choice of him.) One finds the same conjunction of the reception of the "divine spirit" and "prophesying" by the recipient(s) in *Ant.* 6.222 (see previous note). Elsewhere as well, Josephus interjects references to David's prophetic status; see *Ant.* 7.334; 8.109; and cf. L. H. Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 560-561. David is also designated a "prophet" in Acts 2:30.

¹⁵This is the RSV translation of the verb used by MT here and in v. 15, i.e., *נִצַּח* (*piel*). The LXX term for the action of the evil spirit upon Saul is more specific, i.e., ἐπιγεν ("suffocated"). LXX L offers a double reading, i.e., συνείχεν . . . καὶ ἐπιγεν ("oppressed and suffocated"). Cf. *L.A.B.* 60.1: "et prefocabat eum spiritus pessimus" ("and an evil spirit was terrifying him").

¹⁶This is Josephus's paraphrase of the biblical expression "an evil spirit from the Lord"; the paraphrase avoids attributing Saul's affliction to the Deity (cf. the rendering of *L.A.B.* 60.1, cited in n. 15). Josephus, in line with the tendency mentioned in n. 11, substitutes the phrase τὰ δαιμόνια for biblical mentions of a/the "spirit" twice elsewhere in 6.166-169: 6.166c (// 1 Sam 16:15), 168 (// 16:23); on the other hand, he does use the conflated expression "the evil spirit and the demons" (τοῦ ποιηροῦ πνεύματος καὶ τῶν δαιμονίων) in *Ant.* 6.211 (no biblical parallel), where Jonathan refers to David's driving these beings out of Saul. On Josephus's "demonology" overall, see R. Deines, "Josephus, Salomo, und die von Gott verliehene τέχνη gegen die Dämonen," in *Die Dämonen: Die Dämonologie der israelitischen und frühchristlichen Literatur im Kontext ihrer Umwelt*, ed. A. Lange, H. Lichtenberger, und K. F. D. Römhald (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 365-394.

¹⁷This is the noun cognate of the verb πνίγω, used by LXX BL 1 Sam 16:14b to describe Saul's affliction; see n. 15. Josephus uses the noun only here; the verb appears in *Bellum Judaicum* (BJ) 2.327; 5.471; *Ant.* 10.121.

¹⁸Josephus uses the noun στραγγάλη twice elsewhere: *Ant.* 9.92; 16.394.

¹⁹Josephus does this frequently in his biblical paraphrase; on the phenomenon, see C. T. Begg, *Josephus' Account of the Early Divided Monarchy (AJ 8.212-420)*, BETL 108 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993), 12-13, n. 38.

²⁰Josephus makes the same substitution of "physicians" for a biblical mention of "servants" in *Ant.* 7.343 (// 1 Kgs 1:2), where the problem facing King David is also

could not devise other remedy save to order search be made²¹ for one with the power to charm away spirits (ἐξάδειν)²² and to play upon the harp (ψάλλειν ἐπὶ κινύρα),²³ and whensoever the evil spirits (τὰ δαιμόνια, see 6.166b, cf. n. 16) should assail and torment Saul,²⁴ to have him stand over the king²⁵ and strike the strings (ψάλλειν) and chant his songs (ὕμνους).²⁶

Saul responds to the servants' proposal in 16:17 with the order "provide for me [one] who can play well, and bring him to me." Josephus (6.167a) compresses the wording of the king's directive, while prefacing it with a narrative notice on the attention he gives the physicians' suggested remedy: "Saul did not neglect this advice, but commanded that search be made (ζητεῖθαι προστάξει)²⁷ for such a man."

The servants' proposal of 16:16 and Saul's endorsement of this in 16:17 leaves open the question of where the suggested "player" may be found. This

a "medical" one, i.e., his inability to keep warm due to advanced age. Nodet (*ad loc.*) also calls attention to *Ant.* 1.208, where, in his retelling of Gen 20, Josephus inserts mention of the "physicians," having already despaired of the life of King Abimelech, whom God had stricken for his taking of Abraham's wife Sarah; see also *Ant.* 10.25, where, in his version of Hezekiah's near-fatal illness (// 2 Kgs 20:1-11// Isa 38), Josephus interjects an allusion to the king's "physicians" having given up any hope for his recovery. In all these instances, the Bible's mention of a (royal) character's serious medical condition inspires Josephus to make mention of the attending "physicians" and their response to the emergency—as would have been expected in the case of sick kings in his own time.

²¹From the biblical servants' opening words to Saul, Josephus omits their reiteration (1 Sam 16:15) of the diagnosis already given by the narrator in v. 14b, i.e., Saul is being "tormented by an evil spirit from God." He likewise recasts their proposal (v. 16aα) that Saul command them to seek out a man as an order given by the physicians themselves about such a search. Finally, his (interjected) allusion to the physicians' being unable to think of anything else to do than call in an outside specialist underscores the seriousness of Saul's affliction.

²²Josephus uses the verb ἐξάδω a total of three times, i.e., *Ant.* 6.166, 68, and 214 (in each instance of the relieving of Saul's affliction by David). The above phrase is an amplification of the reference to the lyre player that the servants recommend be sought in 1 Sam 16:16aβ.

²³Cf. LXX BL 1 Sam 16:16 εἰδότα ψάλλειν [LXX L + τῷ κυρίῳ] ἐν κινύρα. Like LXX, Josephus transliterates the Hebrew word (נָוּן) for "lyre."

²⁴Cf. 1 Sam 16:16a: "and when the evil spirit from God [LXX B lacks from God] is upon you."

²⁵Josephus inserts this detail about where the lyre-player is to position himself when ministering to the king.

²⁶In 1 Sam 16:16bβ, the servants' proposal is simply that Saul's musical therapist "play" (LXX ψαλεῖ; MT adds with his hand; LXX BL on his lyre). Josephus appends a reference—here and in what follows—to the therapist's "chanting songs" as well, doing this under the influence of the wider biblical tradition (see, e.g., 2 Sam 23:1 [David, the "sweet psalmist of Israel"]); see Nodet, *ad loc.* Conversely, Josephus does not reproduce the servants' concluding assurances from 16:16, i.e., "and you will be well [LXX add 'and he will relieve you']," perhaps finding such an assurance on their part presumptuous, given the severity of the case.

²⁷This phrase echoes the expression ἐκέλευσαν ζητήσαντας ("ordered that search be made") employed of the physicians in 6.166c. By employing a variant of the physicians' own "order," Saul makes clear that he has made their initiative his own.

question is resolved in 16:18, where “one of the young men” reports his having seen a son of Jesse who, he affirms, possesses no less than six desirable attributes. Josephus’s version of the speaker’s intervention both rearranges and abbreviates the catalogue of David’s qualities: “And one of those present²⁸ said that he had seen in the city of Bethlehem²⁹ a son of Jesse, a mere boy (παῖδα) in years,³⁰ but of pleasing and fair appearance³¹ and in other ways worthy of regard,³² who was moreover skilled in playing on the harp (ψάλλειν εἰδότα)³³ and in the singing of songs (ᾄδειν ὕμνους),³⁴ and an excellent soldier (πολεμιστὴν ἄκρου).³⁵ . . .”³⁶

In response to the young man’s report in 16:18, Saul (16:19) dispatches messengers to Jesse with the directive “send me David your son who is with the flocks.” Josephus’s king (6.167c) appends a motivation to this command for Jesse: “Saul sent to Jesse and ordered him to take David from the flocks and

²⁸Neither the Bible nor Josephus gives a name to the speaker. In *b. Sanh.* 93b, he is identified with Doeg, the future killer of the priests of Nob (see 1 Sam 21–22), whose praises of David in 16:18 are designed to incite Saul’s envy of him. One finds the same tradition in question 57 of the (ninth-century-A.D.) work *Questions on the Book of Samuel* of “Pseudo-Jerome” (A. Saltman, ed., *Pseudo-Jerome, Questions on the Book of Samuel*, STB 26 [Leiden: Brill, 1975], 90).

²⁹Josephus substitutes a reference to the place (Bethlehem), where the speaker has seen Jesse’s son, for the mention of his having seen “a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite” in 16:18a.

³⁰This reference to David’s age lacks a counterpart in 16:18. The allusion picks up on the mention of David as a “lad” (παῖς) in *Ant.* 6.164, and is itself echoed in David’s own reference to himself as “no older than a boy (παιδός)” in 6.180. As used here in 6.167, the phrase highlights the extraordinary character of David’s (adult-like) attributes that will be cited in what follows—he possesses these even as a boy.

³¹In the list of David’s attributes in 16:18, the corresponding item (“a man of good presence,” [RSV]) occurs only in fifth place. Josephus highlights David’s handsome appearance by mentioning it first; this characteristic of David will feature prominently in what follows.

³²This designation for David has no clear-cut equivalent in the listing of his qualities in 16:18. Conceivably, however, it is inspired by the second phrase used of him in MT, i.e., נָבוֹר הָיָה (RSV: “a man of valor”; cf. LXX B1, where the reference is to David’s being an “intelligent [συνετός] man”).

³³Cf. 16:18’s phrase “who is skillful in playing” (LXX B εἰδότα ψαλμόν; LXX L ἐπιστάμενον ψάλλειν). In the Bible’s catalogue of David’s attributes, this item appears in first, rather than third, place, as in Josephus’s listing.

³⁴This expansion of the biblical reference to David’s “playing” abilities echoes wording used previously by Josephus. Thus, in 6.166c, the physicians call for one with power “to charm away spirits” (ἐξάδειν) and conclude by referring to that one’s “chanting his songs (ὕμνους)” for the afflicted Saul. See n. 27.

³⁵This phrase is Josephus’s equivalent to the expression that stands third in the list of David’s attributes in 16:18: “a man of war” (LXX B ὁ ἀνήρ πολεμιστής; LXX L ὁ ἄνθρωπος πολεμιστής).

³⁶Josephus’s speaker ascribes a total of four distinct qualities to David, as opposed to the biblical list of six. From the Bible’s list, he omits the fourth (David is “prudent in speech”) and sixth (“the Lord is with him”) component elements. Particularly, the latter item might seem a matter about which the speaker—who has simply “seen” David—might not be in a position to know.

send him to him;³⁷ *he wished, he said, to see the young man, having heard of his comeliness and valour* (τῆς εὐμορφίας καὶ τῆς ἀνδρείας).³⁸

1 Samuel 16:20 highlights the gifts (bread, a skin of wine, and a kid) that Jesse sends³⁹ along with David to Saul. Josephus (6.168a) limits himself to a generalized allusion to Jesse's accompanying gifts, focusing attention rather on the dispatch of David himself: "So Jesse sent his son, also giving him presents to carry to Saul."⁴⁰

1 Samuel 16:21 relates four moments in the initial encounter between the two protagonists of the story: David comes to Saul, whose service he enters and by whom he is "greatly loved,"⁴¹ becoming his armor-bearer. Josephus's rendition concludes with an anticipation of the notice on David's ministrations to the afflicted king in 16:23, adducing these as the reason for the latter's favorable reception of the former: "When he came, Saul was delighted with (ἡσθη)⁴² him, made him his armour-bearer (ὀπλοφόρον)⁴³ and held him in the highest honour,⁴⁴ for his illness was charmed away (ἐξῆδετο)⁴⁵ by him; and against the trouble caused by the evil spirits (τῶν δαιμονίων; see [τὰ] δαιμόνια, 6.166 [bis]); whenever they assailed him, he had no other physician (ιατρός) than David,⁴⁶

³⁷In *L.A.B.* 60.1. Saul, terrified by an evil spirit (/ / 1 Sam 16:14), acting on his own initiative, immediately sends and brings David (/ / 16:19), doing this, moreover, without any reference to David's father Jesse (who is nowhere mentioned in *L.A.B.* 60). Thus, in Pseudo-Philo's presentation, the intervening three-way conversation of 16:15-18, to which Josephus has a parallel in 6.166b-167b, disappears.

³⁸The above motivation for Saul's command concerning David picks up on the first and last of the qualities attributed to the latter by the courtier in 6.167b: "of pleasing (εὐπρεπῆ) and good appearance[.] . . . and an excellent soldier," while, strikingly, saying nothing about the youth's musical abilities, which were the focus of the foregoing discussion about Saul's state. On "courage" as an key component of Josephus's portrayal of David, see Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation*, 544-550.

³⁹On the text-critical problem of the opening words of 1 Sam 16:20—where MT reads literally "(Jesse took) an ass, bread," LXX B has "(Jesse took) an homer (γόμερον) of bread(s)," and LXX L offers the conflated reading "(Jesse took) an ass and placed on it a homer (γόμερον) of bread(s)," see the commentaries and D.T. Tsumura, "*hamor lehem* (1 Samuel xvi 20)," *VT* 42 (1992): 412-414.

⁴⁰As with LXX B 1 Sam 16:20, and in contrast to MT and LXX L (see n. 39), Josephus's formulation makes no reference to an "ass" as the bearer of Jesse's gifts.

⁴¹The verb "loved" in 1 Sam 16:21bα is without an explicit subject in MT and LXX B, leaving it ambiguous whether that subject is Saul (so RSV) or rather David. LXX L clarifies by specifying Saul as the subject.

⁴²This is Josephus's equivalent for the verb "loved" (LXX ἠγάπησεν) of 1 Sam 16:21bα; as with MT and LXX B, Josephus does not explicitly identify the subject (Marcus supplies this [Saul] in the above translation); see previous note.

⁴³This is the same Greek word for "armor-bearer" used by Symmachus in his translation of 1 Sam 16:21bβ. LXX BL have αἰρων τὰ σκευῆ αὐτοῦ. See Nodet, *ad loc.*

⁴⁴This phrase, expatiating on the reference to David's becoming Saul's armor-bearer with which 1 Sam 16:21 ends, echoes (and represents the fulfillment of) the courtier's declaration (6.167) about David's being "worthy of regard."

⁴⁵This verb echoes the forms ἐξάδειν and ἄδειν of 6.166 and 6.167, respectively.

⁴⁶This phrase echoes Josephus's mention of the "physicians" (ιατρούς) in 6.166. Those "physicians"—despite their numbers—are unable to do anything themselves for

who, by *singing his songs* (ὕμνους)⁴⁷ and playing on the harp (ψάλλων ἐν τῇ κινύρα; see ψάλλειν ἐπὶ κινύρα, 6.166), restored him to himself.”⁴⁸

In the biblical presentation, the concluding notice of 1 Sam 16:23 concerning David’s ministrations to Saul and their effects (see n. 49) is preceded by mention (16:22) of the king’s enjoining Jesse to permit David’s continued attendance upon himself, given “the favor” David has “found in his sight.” Reversing this sequence, Josephus (6.169) makes the royal request the conclusion of his version,⁴⁹ likewise filling in the source *lacuna* concerning Jesse’s response to this: “He accordingly sent to Jesse, *the lad’s father*, desiring him to leave David with him, since the sight of the boy and his presence gave him pleasure (ἠδεσθαι⁵⁰). *Jesse would not gainsay Saul, but permitted him to keep David.*”⁵¹

Conclusion

Here at the conclusion of my essay, I wish to briefly return to the three questions I posed at the beginning concerning *Ant.* 6.166-169. Given the brevity of the passage and Josephus’s paraphrastic tendency, it is not surprising that our investigation yielded rather meager results concerning my first question, i.e., the text-form(s) of 1 Sam 16:14-23 used by him. We did, however, note the historian’s reference, in accordance with the LXX B(L) reading in 1 Sam 16:14b, to Saul’s suffering “suffocation” at the hand of the spirit(s), whereas MT uses a more general term (“tormented”) to speak of the evil spirit’s effect upon the king; see n. 17. We likewise pointed out the negative agreement between Josephus (6.168a) and LXX B 1 Sam 16:20, i.e., neither of

Saul. David, by contrast, is a single individual; yet, he can cure Saul on his own, thereby showing himself to be the only physician whom the king needs.

⁴⁷This addition to the reference to David’s playing the lyre of 1 Sam 16:23 recalls Josephus’s previous insertions on David as (also) a singer of “songs” (ὕμνους; see 6.166, 167 and cf. nn. 26 and 34. It likewise has parallel in *L.A.B.* 60.2-3, where Pseudo-Philo, in his expanded version of 16:23, cites a wording of the exorcistic song that David addresses to the evil spirit that has taken possession of Saul. According to Nodet (*Flavius Josephus III*, 52*, n. 6), the “only thing” Philo (see *De confusione linguarum* 149) knows about David is precisely his status as “God’s psalmist” (τοῦ τὸν θεὸν ὑμνήσαντος).

⁴⁸With the above notice on David’s efficacious ministrations to Saul, cf. 1 Sam 16:23: “And whenever the evil (so LXX BL; MT lacks the term) spirit from God (so MT LXX L, > LXX B) was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand (LXX BL τὴν κινύραν . . . ἐψάλλειν); so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.” As will be noted, Josephus’s version compresses the Bible’s three-part indication concerning the effects of David’s endeavors into a single one (“[he] restored Saul to himself”).

⁴⁹The historian’s rearrangement seems intended to improve on the Bible’s movement of thought: Saul would naturally first wish to ascertain that David could indeed perform the cure for which he had been summoned in the first place (see 16:23), before asking that David be left with him on a long-term basis (see 16:22).

⁵⁰This is a form of the same verb, ἠδομαι, used in 6.168 in reference to Saul’s “being delighted with” (ἠσθη) David.

⁵¹In both the biblical and the Josephan sequence, what follows next is the story of David’s victory over Goliath, 1 Sam 17// *Ant.* 6.170-192. On the latter passage, see C. T. Begg, “The David and Goliath Story according to Josephus,” *Le Muséon* 112 (1999): 1-14.

them mentions the “ass” to which MT and LXX L refer in connection with Jesse’s sending gifts to David (see nn. 40-41).⁵²

My second opening question dealt with the rewriting techniques employed by Josephus in 6.166-169 and the distinctive features of his version these generate. The historian’s retelling of 1 Sam 16:14-23 is marked, first, by a variety of additions to and expansions of source items, e.g., David’s “prophesying” under the influence of God’s spirit (6.166a; cf. 16:13), the elaboration of the attendants’ proposal (6.166c; cf. 16:15-16), Saul’s motivation in summoning David (6.167c; cf. 16:19), the fuller form of the description of David’s ministrations in 6.168c vis-à-vis 16:23, and the appended notice on Jesse’s response to Saul’s (second) request of him (6.169b; cf. 16:22). Conversely, Josephus omits or compresses biblical elements that might seem repetitious or unessential. Instances of this phenomenon include his nonreproduction of the verbatim reiteration of the narrator’s diagnosis of Saul’s condition (16:14b) by the servants in 16:15, those servants’ assurance about Saul’s getting well at the end of 16:16; two of the six attributes of David listed in 16:18 (see n. 36), the three-member enumeration of Jesse’s gifts for Saul of 16:20, and the sequence on the effects of David’s ministrations in 16:23b (see n. 49).

Josephus likewise rearranges the biblical sequence, both at the beginning and end of his own presentation (see 6.166a and cf. 1 Sam 16:13-14a; 6.168c-169a and compare 16:22-23). Finally, in addition to the above three rewriting techniques, Josephus’s version evidences still other kinds of modifications of biblical data. Stylistically, he consistently recasts source direct as indirect discourse (see n. 19). Terminologically, he introduces a number of *Leitworte* that are peculiar to his own presentation, e.g., δαμονία (6.166 [bis], 168), ἐξάδω/ἄδω (6.166, 167, 168); ὕμνους (6.166, 167, 168), and ἥδομαι (6.168, 169). By contrast, he avoids—with a single exception (6.166b)—the “spirit terminology” that permeates 16:14-23 (see n. 11), just as he calls Saul’s interlocutors “physicians” rather than “servants” (cf. 6.166c and 16:15). These figures, moreover, themselves “order a search” for a musical therapist, rather than suggesting such a search to Saul, as their counterparts do in 16:16.

What now is distinctive about Josephus’s version that results from the application of the above rewriting techniques? The narrative “gaps” concerning Saul’s reason for wanting David sent to him (see 6.167c; cf. 16:19) and Jesse’s response to Saul’s request that David stay with him (see 6.169b; cf. 16:22) both get filled in. Saul himself makes that request at a seemingly more appropriate point, i.e., only after he has experienced David’s healing capacities (6.168c-169a), rather than prior to this (16:22-23) (see n. 50). The Josephan David assumes additional roles in 6.166-169; he prophesies (6.166a), not only plays, but also “sings songs” (see nn. 26, 34, 48), and ends up as Saul’s only “physician” (6.168c). Theologically, Josephus takes care not to ascribe a divine origin to the supernatural entity that afflicts Saul—as 1 Sam 16:14-23 does repeatedly. Similarly, the theological claim made by the speaker in 16:18 (the Lord is with David) is omitted in Josephus’s parallel 6.167b as something—we have suggested (see n. 36)—the speaker would not have been in a position to know.

In my final opening question, I asked about similarities and differences between Josephus’s rewriting of 1 Sam 16:14-23 and other allusions to this

⁵²For more on the text of Samuel used by Josephus, see E. C. Ulrich, “Josephus’ Biblical Text for the Books of Samuel,” *Josephus, the Bible and History*, ed. L. H. Feldman and G. Hata (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 81-96.

passage in Jewish-Christian tradition. The summary rendition of the Samuel text in *L.A.B.* 60 proved of particular interest for such comparative purposes. In common with Pseudo-Philo, Josephus, we pointed out (see n. 48), goes beyond the Bible itself in highlighting David's role as one who not only "plays," but also "sings" for Saul. In addition, both authors dispose of the theological difficulty posed by the biblical emphasis on the divine origin of the "evil spirit" that assails Saul by leaving that connection aside. On the other hand, however, Pseudo-Philo goes much further than Josephus, both in what he eliminates from the biblical story (i.e., the entire sequence of 16:15-18 and all reference to Jesse's role; see n. 37) and what he adds to this (i.e., the words of David's exorcistic song in 60.2-3). With regard to this final question, I likewise recall the fact, mentioned in n. 38, that, whereas various Jewish-Christian writings give a name ("Doeg") to the anonymous speaker of 1 Sam 16:18, Josephus, who elsewhere does occasionally supply names for anonymous biblical figures,⁵³ leaves him nameless as well.

The four paragraphs making up *Ant.* 6.166-169 constitute a minuscule portion of Josephus's twenty-book *Antiquitates judaicae*. Nevertheless, as I have aimed to show in this essay, a close reading of even so short a passage can reveal much about the historian's various ways of dealing with his biblical source material.

⁵³See, e.g., the nameless "man of God" from Judah of 1 Kgs 13, whom Josephus, in accordance with Rabbinic tradition, calls *Jadōn* in *Ant.* 8.231.

THE TECHNIQUES OF THE SACRIFICE OF ANIMALS IN ANCIENT ISRAEL AND ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA: NEW INSIGHTS THROUGH COMPARISON, PART 1¹

JOANN SCURLOCK
ELMHURST COLLEGE
Elmhurst, Illinois

Introduction

There is an understandable desire among followers of religions that are monotheistic and that claim descent from ancient Israelite religion to see that religion as unique and completely at odds with its surrounding polytheistic competitors. Most would not deny that there are at least a few elements of Israelite religion that are paralleled in neighboring cultures, as, e.g., the Hittites,²

¹I would like to thank the following persons who read and commented on earlier drafts of this article: R. Beal, M. Hilgert, S. Holloway, R. Jas, B. Levine and M. Murrin. Abbreviations follow those given in W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, 3 vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965-1981); and M. Jursa and M. Weszeli, "Register Assyriologie," *Afo* 40-41 (1993/94): 343-369, with the exception of the following:

(a) series: D. O. Edzard, *Gudea and His Dynasty*, Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Early Periods (RIME) 3/1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); S. Parpola and K. Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, State Archives of Assyria (SAA) 2 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988); A. Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, SAA 3 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989); I. Starr, *Queries to the Sungod*, SAA 4 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1990); T. Kwasman and S. Parpola, *Legal Transactions of the Royal Court of Nineveh*, Part 1, SAA 6 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1991); F. M. Fales and J. N. Postgate, *Imperial Administrative Records*, Part 1, SAA 7 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1992); H. Hunger, *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings*, SAA 8 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1992); S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, SAA 10 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1993); L. Kataja and R. Whiting, *Grants, Decrees and Gifts of the Neo-Assyrian Period*, SAA 12 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1995); E. von Weiher, *Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk 2*, Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft in Uruk-Warka (ADFU) 10 (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1983); idem, *Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk 3*, ADFU 12 (Berlin: GeBrüder Mann, 1988); E. von Weiher, *Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk 4*, Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka, Endberichte (AUWE) 12 (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1993); S. Langdon, *Die Neubabylonischen Königsinschriften*, Vorderasiatische Bibliothek (VAB) 4 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1912).

(b) books: A. Green, "Ancient Mesopotamian Religious Iconography" in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. Sasson (New York: Scribner, 1995), 1837-1855; S. M. Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung: Eine Untersuchung altorientalischen Denkens anhand der babylonisch-assyrischen Löserituale (Namburbi)* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1994).

Note that the numbering of Lev 5-6 follows that of the JPS Torah Commentary and of Catholic Bibles, rather than that of Protestant Bibles.

²For a summary of Hittite sacrificial practices, see G. Beckman, "Opfer.A.II," in *RLA* 10 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003): 106-111.

the Greeks, or at Ugarit, but the tendency is to see these elements either as fossilized remnants of borrowed Canaanite culture or as alleged Assyrian impositions,³ in either case extraneous and essentially irrelevant accretions.

In sharp contrast to this view, Morton Smith⁴ argued for the essential similarity of ancient Israelite religion with all other ancient religions of the Mediterranean area. He saw ancient Israelite religion, like ancient Mesopotamian religion, as being based on that sort of contractual, *do ut des*, relationship between man and god that is generally classified as “polytheism” or even “magic.”⁵ Moreover, he argued that similarities between ancient Israelite and other ancient Mediterranean religions are not necessarily evidence for cultural borrowings from Mesopotamia or survivals of Canaanite religion,

³The author agrees that there was no Assyrian imposition of religion, but would argue that those who seek to deny any similarity between ancient Israelite and ancient Mesopotamian sacrificial ritual are going too far. See, e.g. W. G. Lambert, who argues that “in modern usage, ‘sacrifice’ is too dependent on Biblical institutions and concepts to be a suitable vehicle to express ancient Mesopotamian practices,” and that “the Sumerians and Babylonians had nothing equivalent to Hebrew sacrifices” (“Donations of Food and Drink to the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia” in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. Quaegebeur, OLA 55 [1993]:191-201). Cf. R. de Vaux, who is willing to refer to what the ancient Mesopotamians did as “sacrifice,” but who agrees that “the essential forms of Israelite sacrifice, viz. the holocaust and the communion-sacrifice [‘peace’ offering], did not exist in Mesopotamia” (*Ancient Israel* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965], 2:434). B. Lafont agrees with this assessment, but is willing to allow for “points of convergence” between ancient Israel and Amorite Mari (“Sacrifices et rituels à Mari et dans la Bible,” *RA* 93 [1999]: 57-77).

⁴Morton Smith, “The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East,” in *Essential Papers on Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. F. E. Greenspahn (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 49-65.

⁵Smith, 53, notes: “The relation between people and god was therefore always essentially a contractual one.” Karel van der Toorn also seeks to encourage the search for parallels between Israel and Mesopotamia (*Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia* [Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1985]). His position is that, albeit monotheistic, ancient Israel was, like Mesopotamia, characterized by a non-Western mode of thought. He, 6, classes this non-Western mode as associative (as in “magical analogies”) in contrast to Western dissociative (as in rationalist “split and name”) thinking. The problem with this formulation is that associative thought is an imaginary beast; what is categorized as associative thought is actually a mixture of associative and dissociative thought, i.e., not the binary opposite of dissociative thought as it should be but the theoretically nonexistent middle. To make matters worse, ancient Greece, which should, in principle, mark the Western category was, at this time, also characterized by a mixture of associative and dissociative thought. Purely dissociative thought is an invention of the Persians (Mazdean dualism). In other words, the “Western” category is indeed Western if you mean René Descartes, but Eastern if you are talking about antiquity. It is also to be noted that, according to ancient Greek philosophers, any extreme (and dissociative thought is an extreme) is by definition false. In short, the alleged Eastern category is misdefined, and actually Western and the alleged Western category is false and actually Eastern. I think we need to try again.

but reflect the fact that similar problems tend to generate similar answers when faced by peoples with generally similar belief systems.

To argue that a particular practice was borrowed, it is not sufficient merely to show that there was a similarity. Instead, it must be established that the practice in question was confined to a restricted number of cultures within the Mediterranean region rather than common to all, that it was not practiced in the borrowing culture before a certain point in time, and that, at the time of alleged borrowing, there was actual contact between putative borrowers and borrowees. Subjected to this level of scrutiny, it is obvious that very few alleged borrowings will pass muster. Even allowing that failure to prove borrowing is not proof that borrowing did not occur, it is to be remembered that there existed in ancient Israel an attitude that foreign practices were inherently suspect. One might, then, begin to do what the neighbors did, but only if it seemed appropriate or if some salient event (such as a defeat) could be interpreted as a sign from YHWH that a particular (originally foreign) practice was henceforth to be followed. In either case, the practice would cease to be foreign, and the fact that it had been borrowed would essentially be irrelevant.

The Assyrian imposition model is even less promising as an explanation for observed similarities between ancient Israelite and ancient Mesopotamian practices. Assyria was, to be sure, an imperial power, but it did not practice cultural imperialism. It is a well-known fact that Assyrian monarchs felt (and were not ashamed to express) great admiration for Syro-Palestinian architectural styles and artwork in particular. It follows that the similarities in cult praxis, which we shall soon be describing between Israel and Assyria⁶ (viz. regular holocaust offerings both to YHWH and to Assyrian gods), are not to be explained away as impositions by Assyrian overlords. Even if borrowing was the source of the similarity, we must not be too hasty in assuming that the direction of the borrowing was from East to West.

The important role played by Sennacherib in cultic reforms in Assyria must be stressed. It has long been known that his queen, Naqia Zakutu, had great influence over him, and it now appears that his mother was also from the West, perhaps, to judge by her name Athalayah, even a Judahite princess.⁷

⁶As noted in W. R. Mayer and W. Sallaberger, "Opfer.A.I," in *RLA* 10 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 97, the closest parallels to holocaust offerings (see below) are from the Neo-Assyrian period.

⁷Stephanie Dalley, "Yabâ, Atalyâ and the Foreign Policy of Late Assyrian Kings," *J.A.B.* 12 (1998): 83-98. The thesis there presented that Yabâ is Atalyâ's mother would make the latter's marriage incestuous, as pointed out by K. Lawson Younger Jr., "Yahweh at Askelon and Calah? Yahwistic names in Neo-Assyrian," *VT* 52 (2002): 207-218. Dalley's formulation is, obviously, to be discarded. Neither is there any reason to suppose that religious considerations account for Sennacherib's being soft on Judah. Babylonians and Assyrians worshiped the same gods, but was Sennacherib soft on Babylonians? The important point about Athaliah is not that it is a -ya name but that it is a name characteristic of the Judahite royal family. (Although Younger is cautious on the subject of the equation of the name Atalyâ with the name Athaliah, he does admit that

Thus, if borrowing there was, it is as likely that it was by Assyrian monarchs from an original West Semitic context than the other way round.

Instead, then, of looking at Israel's neighbors as a source of contamination, what Smith's approach invites us to do is to see the surrounding regions as rich potential sources of texts that may cast new light on Israelite practices, which have thus far remained unexplained. And, for Assyriologists, conversely, there is the possibility that Israelite practices will aid in providing a better understanding of ancient Mesopotamia. This is certainly not to say that there were no differences between ancient Israel and its neighbors in matters of religion: On the contrary, each individual culture represented its own unique variant, which, however, existed in silent dialogue with other variants of the same religious system. It follows, however, that certain aspects of ancient Israelite religion and, in particular, the whys and why nots of the sacrificial system, can never be understood until the beliefs and practices of ancient Israelites have been put back into their original context.

Optimally, Israelite religious practices should be compared and contrasted with those of each and every culture of the ancient Mediterranean world of which we have sufficient records. In the interests, however, of establishing the usefulness of such an approach, which would require the input of specialists in many fields, as, e.g., Ugaritic studies and Hittitology, the following will present a trial comparison between the sacrificial practices of ancient Mesopotamia and those of ancient Israel in order to demonstrate the advantages and limitations of this type of cross-cultural comparison in gaining a better understanding of ancient religions.

This will be a broad survey of ancient Israelite and ancient Mesopotamian practices across the spectrum, and not an essay on the developments that must have occurred over the course of several millennia of history, nor a comparative study of regional differences.⁸ It should be noted that much of the evidence for the specifics of sacrificial ritual is, of necessity, drawn largely from the later periods (Neo-Assyrian and, in some cases, Seleucid).

it cannot be excluded from possibility on purely linguistic grounds.) If it is admitted that Yabâ and Atalyâ might have been buried together because mother-in-law and daughter-in-law were fond of one another (as Naomi and Ruth) and not because they were genetically related, there remains the possibility that Atalyâ was indeed a member of the Judahite royal family, not, however, carried off or deported but acquired in an honest manner when Ahaz submitted to Tiglath-pileser III. On such occasions, it was the custom of the Assyrians to demand the surrender of women of the royal blood to serve as *sakintus* of Assyrian palaces "with dowries," presumably with the intention of marrying them off to minor members of the royal family or high officials. When Sargon seized the throne, his wife, by this scenario, unexpectedly became queen and her son, Sennacherib, was then a relative of Hezekiah. Religious matters aside, blood is thicker than water; if Hezekiah was indeed related to Sennacherib, it would go a long way toward explaining how he got off so lightly.

⁸For those interested in compiling such an essay or comparative study for ancient Mesopotamia, the place and/or time period of examples cited are usually indicated.

As is discussed more fully in my “Animal Sacrifice in Ancient Mesopotamian Religion,”⁹ the relationship between men and gods in ancient Mesopotamia was cemented by regular offerings and occasional sacrifices of animals. In addition, there were divinatory, treaty, and “covenant” sacrifices. In each case, it was the form and procedure of the sacrifice that warned the recipient divinity that he was now entering a new relationship with a particular group of humans (“covenant” sacrifice), that he was now being continued in such a relationship (regular offerings), that some particular favor was now being asked (occasional sacrifice), that some piece of information was now required (divinatory sacrifice), and that he was now being called to witness and to insure the sanctity of oaths (treaty sacrifices). Before an animal could be sacrificed, however, certain preliminaries needed to be attended to.

Preliminaries for Sacrifice

Choice of Animal

In ancient Mesopotamia, sacrificial animals, and in particular those used in divinatory sacrifice, had to be (at least apparently) healthy and unblemished. They were also not supposed to be scrawny; those intended for the gods’ table were fattened with barley for up to two years.¹⁰ Similarly, animals for Israelite sacrifice, whether they were to be eaten or consumed as holocausts, could not be lame, blind, or suffer from any other serious defect, such as a skin disease.¹¹ This was for the simple reason that gods, whether singular or plural, would regard the sacrifice of an inferior animal as an insult.¹²

⁹In B. Collins, ed., *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), chap. 14; see also chap. 13.

¹⁰*Racc.* 77 r. 4-5. Note also “one fattened ox for the god’s meal” (MDP 10.55/71:1 [Ur III]); for other references, see *CAD* M/1 306-307 s.v. *marû* mg. 1b).

¹¹Lev 22:17-25; Deut 15:21; 17:1; cf. Num 19:2.

¹²Deut 17:1. It is interesting to note the striking similarity between the defects that disqualified a priest from officiating at the sacrifice (Lev 21:17-23) and those that disqualified an animal from being sacrificed (Lev 22:17-25). See also Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2000), 1870-1882, 1821-1834, 1836-1843; Baruch Levine, *Leviticus*, JPS Torah Commentary 3 (Philadelphia: JPS, 1989), 141 (chart). That both priests and animals needed to be without blemish is not unexpected; however, the word-for-word equivalence between requirements is striking and requires an explanation. This is supplied by Num 3:12-13; 8:15-19; cf. 3:40-51, which states that the Levites belonged to the Lord in place of the firstborn of the Israelites, who would otherwise have had to be offered to him in sacrifice. As such, the Levites were to be ritually sacrificed by having hands laid on their heads and being offered “as a wave offering” to the Lord (Num 8:9-11, 13-14; cf. 21-22). As human beings could not literally be offered unless “doomed,” however, the Levites, in turn, laid their hands on bullocks that were sacrificed in their place (Num 8:12). As symbolic sacrifices, it is understandable that the Levites would have come under the rules that governed the fitness of sacrificial animals.

The most typical animal for occasional sacrifice to any god in ancient Mesopotamia was a sheep, but virgin she-goats also appear with some frequency. In many cases (but not always), the sex of the animal used for regular or occasional sacrifice was the same as that of the deity receiving the offering; this does not, however, seem to have been an invariable rule. Gods could get cows, ewes,¹³ and even virgin she-goats offered to them,¹⁴ while goddesses were offered bulls, billygoats,¹⁵ male lambs or sheep.¹⁶ In ancient Israel, the usual requirement was that the animal sacrificed to the Lord must be an unblemished male,¹⁷ but here too there were exceptions. In certain types of Israelite sacrifices, female animals were allowable¹⁸ and for others they were actually mandated.¹⁹

One possible reason for worshipers being allowed to offer female animals to male divinities may have to do with economic realities. The male of the species is, generally speaking, a luxury rather than a necessity and is, for that reason, generally more highly valued than the female.²⁰ On a purely economic scale of value, the offering of an ox would have represented a considerable sacrifice.²¹ It is, therefore, hardly surprising to notice that in ancient Mesopotamia cult objects (viz. the gods' or goddesses' stool, chariot, harp, or plow), when appealed to with sacrifices, generally got only a goat.²² Similarly in

¹³See, e.g., M. E. Cohen, *Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1993), 86, 92.

¹⁴As in Maul, §§ V.3.1: 9-13, 77-79, V.3.2: 11-15.

¹⁵See, e.g., Cohen, 99, 102, 138.

¹⁶As in W. Farber, *Beschwörungsrituale* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1977), 185:13-14, 227:25-26; B. Menzel, *Assyrische Tempel*, *Studia Pohl Series Maior 10/2* (Rome: Pontificio Institutum Biblicum, 1981), T 102:9; *BBR* no. 1-20:106-109.

¹⁷Exod 12:5; 29:1, 35-36; Lev 1:3, 10; 4:3, 14, 23; 5:15, 18, 25; 8:14, 18, 22; 9:2-4; 14:10, 21; 16:3, 5; 19:21; 22:18-19, 24; 23:18-19; Num 6:12, 14; 7:87-88; 8:8; 15:6, 8, 24; 28:11, 15, 19, 22, 27, 30; 29:2, 5, 8, 11, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 31, 32, 34, 36, 38; Ezek 43:19, 22-23, 25; 45:18, 22-23; 46:4, 6, 11. For details on the ages of sacrificial bulls, see Anders Hultgård, "The Burnt Offering in Early Jewish Religion," in *Gifts to the Gods: Proceedings of Uppsala Symposium, 1985*, ed. Tullia Linders and Gullög Nordquist (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1987), 86.

¹⁸Lev 3:1, 6.

¹⁹Lev 4:28, 32; 5:6; 14:10; Num 6:14; 15:27; 19:2.

²⁰Milgrom makes the opposite assumption, which leads him into certain difficulties (*Leviticus 1-16*, AB 3 [New York: Doubleday, 1991], 174). See esp. p. 252, where it is argued that the *shayekh* is required to give a "less valuable" offering than the pauper because he can better afford to do so.

²¹See F. Blome, *Die Opfermaterie in Babylonien und Israel* (Rome: Pontificio Institutum Biblicum, 1934), 62-63, 79-80, on the comparative rarity of cattle offerings at Lagash (as compared to sheep and goats).

²²Cohen, 87, 89, 187; cf. 171, 174; Blome, 97-98. Some very special objects, such as the boat of the god Anu, received full-priced offerings (see Cohen, 218).

ancient Israel, the “sin” offering for a priest or the entire community was a bull,²³ whereas the same offering for a private individual took the form of a goat or a lamb.²⁴ If the sinner could not afford a sheep or goat, he could substitute birds and, ultimately, flour.²⁵

Male and female animals seem to be similarly scaled. Israelite holocaust offerings required a male animal; the less holy “peace” offering could be male or female.²⁶ The sinning *shayekh* was required to provide a male goat, whereas the ordinary individual needed only to provide a female (and could substitute even for that),²⁷ implying that it was the responsibility of the leaders of the community to set an example for others.

Following this logic through consistently would, however, require seeing the “guilt” offerings, which require a male animal, as more important than the private “sin” offerings, which require a female. Since some of the former were for sins against man, which God could not unilaterally forgive,²⁸ this prioritizing is possible, if rather unexpected. The more usual explanation is that allowing for extensive substitutions made it less possible for a person to plead poverty to avoid performing “sin” offerings.²⁹

In ancient Mesopotamia, omens were taken from the flaws and markings on the sacrificial animal and on the way it was observed to behave, both on the way to and during the sacrifice.³⁰ About what else befell the sacrificial animal before it was sacrificed, we hear little, except that, in the Neo-Assyrian *mīs pi* ritual, it is mentioned that *mashatu*-flour was allowed to fall onto the forehead of the sheep before sacrifice.³¹ There seems little parallel here with Israelite cult

²³Lev 4:2-3, 13-14.

²⁴Lev 4:22-23, 27-28, 32.

²⁵Lev 5:7, 11.

²⁶Lev 3:1, 6.

²⁷Lev 4:22-23, 27-28, 32; 5:7, 11. The ashes of the Red Heifer were also intended for individual use, which is probably why it was a heifer. See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 272.

²⁸“The Day of Atonement atones for the sins between man and God. But the Day of Atonement does not atone for the sins between man and his fellow until he has made restitution to his fellow” (m. *Yoma*, 8:9). “If when you bring your gift to the altar, you suddenly remember that your brother has a grievance against you, leave your gift where it is before the altar. First go make your peace with your brother, and only then come back and offer your gift” (Matt 5:23f.; cf. t. *Pesah* 3:1). See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 370; cf. Levine, 33. For more on the distinction between “guilt” and “sin” offerings, see below.

²⁹See, e.g., Levine, 28-29, 75, 88.

³⁰For references, see E. Leichty, “Ritual, ‘Sacrifice,’ and Divination in Mesopotamia,” in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. Quaegebeur, OLA 55 (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters en Department Oriëntalistiek, 1993), 237-242.

³¹C. B. F. Walker and M. B. Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian mīs pi Ritual*, SAALT 1 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001), 76:45. In Israel, the holocaust offering lamb was given a drink

praxis. However, the routine laying on of hands on the sacrifice,³² although not explicitly attested from ancient Mesopotamia, can be elucidated by placing it in this wider context.

The Laying On of Hands in Ancient Israel

The laying on of hands or other handling of the offering³³ was a fairly obvious method by which sin (for the “sin” offerings), guilt (for the “guilt” offerings), illness, defeat, crop loss, or other disaster occasioned by YHWH’s wrath (for the “peace” offerings), or any or all of the above (for the holocaust) could be safely transferred to the sacrificial animal,³⁴ with a view to subsequently retransferring it to the altar and sanctuary via the sacrificial blood (see below).

The desire for such a transfer, to be effected by the laying on of hands or other handling of the offering, is indicated in the terminology used to describe expiation as, e.g., in Lev 1:4: “He lays his hand on the head of the holocaust so that, assuming (the sacrifice) is acceptable for him,³⁵ it may provide ritual cleansing (*kipper*) for him.”³⁶ The term used for “ritual cleansing” is, as has long been recognized,³⁷ cognate to the Akkadian *kuppuru*, which specifically refers to the “magical” transfer of problems from a human patient to a surrogate by means of direct physical contact.³⁸

from a golden bowl just before it was killed (see Hultgård, 88).

³²Exod 29:10, 15, 19; Lev 1:4; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33; 8:14, 18, 22; Num 8:12. Cf. Num 8:10; 2 Chron 29:23.

³³On the equivalence of the handling of offerings and the laying on of hands, see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 151-152.

³⁴On this point, see also Theodor Herzl Gaster, “Sacrifices,” *IDB*, 152. This is Milgrom’s “explanation a” (*Leviticus 1-16*, 151), but with considerably more being potentially transferred than just “sin.” It is to be remembered that, for believers in nonsalvation religions, “sins” are dangerous because they occasion divine anger, which will result in this-worldly disaster, and that it is disasters, or the fear of same, which occasions the offering of sacrifices and not, as in salvation religions, the threat of punishment in the hereafter. Milgrom rightly rejects “explanation b” (“identification”), which holds that the laying on of hands was “intended to penetrate the animal with the soul of the offerer.” If that were the case, the killing of the animal in sacrifice would have been intended to bring about the immediate death, dismemberment, and cremation of the offerer! For “explanation c” and “explanation d,” see below.

³⁵*sāmak yād . . . weniršā lō lekappēr ‘alav*. The conventional translation of this passage takes *weniršā* as a result clause with the sacrifice as the subject and the sacrificer as the intended dative object. See, e.g., Levine, 6; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 153. For reasons which will be made clear below, I prefer to understand the *waw* as epexegetical.

³⁶See Levine, xviii.

³⁷See, e.g., Levine, 23-24; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 306-307.

³⁸For references, see *CAD K*, 178-180. Milgrom accepts this meaning as of direct applicability for the “sin” offerings and ordination “peace” offering only (*Leviticus 1-16*,

To fully appreciate this parallel, it must be realized that, Frazer to the contrary notwithstanding, “magical” transfers were not “automatic” and had nothing to do with “contagion.” Ancient Mesopotamians recognized that diseases could be contagious; the expressions that they used to describe this, however, are not related to the verb used to describe transfers, which implies a complete removal, literally “extraction” of the illness. In contrast to the situation with contagious diseases, the ill did not simply infect the recipient, but was actually drawn into the recipient, leaving the patient free and clear (and the recipient somewhat damaged) in the process. Thus another way of looking at it was as an exchange of good and bad qualities between patient and recipient, an exchange which is not infrequently explicitly mentioned in the legomena of ancient Mesopotamian transfer rites.³⁹

In sorcerous transfers, this equation was reversed; that is, the victim lost his good health or luck to the sorcerer’s charm and received either the sorcery or some other undesirable quality in return. Thus “leaning” one’s hand on someone (*qātu ummudu*: the Akkadian equivalent of Hebrew *samak yād*)⁴⁰ could result either in healing (when the *āšpu* did this to a patient) or conversely bewitchment (when a sorcerer did this to his victim).

This exchange was essentially a “bad bargain,” in which the surrogate was paid for desired benefits with tainted offerings.⁴¹ It was, nonetheless, still a bargain and, as such, could not by its very nature be “automatic,” but had to be carefully arranged beforehand and might require guarantors to insure compliance. It was, therefore, to show proper respect to the deity to say that laying hands on a sacrificial animal would result in ritual cleansing, “assuming

410, 529, 1079-1084). For the other offerings, he argues that “expiation” is meant and that the laying on of hands is not a rite of transfer but a mark of “authenticated ownership,” without which the sacrifice was invalid (152). This is almost exactly the opposite of Levine, 6, who understands “hand leaning” as marking off the sacrifice as sacred and belonging to God. A particular difficulty with Milgrom’s interpretation arises in his discussion of what is conventionally translated as “wave” offerings (462-463), where Milgrom argues that the reason that portions of “peace” offerings are “waved”—whereas holocaust offerings are not—is that the former “initially belong to their offerers whereas most sacred gifts belong to the Lord from the start.” If hand laying was an assertion of private ownership, and if one type of sacrifice was privately owned and the other wasn’t, should not one type of sacrifice have required hand leaning and not the other? And if holocaust offerings belonged to the Lord from the start, would it not have been offensive, to put it mildly, to insist by special ritual that they were the private property of the sacrificer?

³⁹See JoAnn Scurlock, “Translating Transfers in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. P. Mirecki and M. Meyer (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 209-223.

⁴⁰The equivalence is acknowledged in Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 150, 153.

⁴¹The Philistines’ “guilt offering” of golden hemorrhoids and golden rats, which accompanied the return of the Ark of the Covenant (1 Sam 6:1-18), was clearly intended to retransfer the plague of hemorrhoids and rats (5:6-12) to the place from which it had come.

(the sacrifice) is acceptable.”⁴² Philo⁴³ was perfectly correct in asserting that the gesture was intended as a “declaration” (i.e., a signal of desired cleansing) rather than the actual cleansing itself, which only YHWH could grant.⁴⁴

A similar sentiment informs the story of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai and the “heathen,”⁴⁵ where the Rabbi explains to the “heathen” that the purificatory ceremony with the ashes of the Red Heifer, another ostensibly “magical” transfer rite,⁴⁶ is essentially equivalent to the “heathen’s” exorcism of a madman

⁴²See above.

⁴³Philo, *Spec. Laws* 1:202-204.

⁴⁴This is Milgrom’s “explanation c” (*Leviticus* 1-16, 151). “Explanation d,” which is followed by Milgrom, de Vaux, Sarna, and many others, namely, that the laying on of hands was a mark of “ownership” of the sacrificial animal, seems to miss the point. Yes, it would be important for the animal to belong to the one sacrificing it, but only because, like the adopted son who carried out Confucian rites for his adoptive ancestors but benefitted his real ancestors instead, if a person used someone else’s animal, they would run the risk that *the other person* would receive the benefit of *their* sacrifice.

⁴⁵See Milgrom, *Leviticus* 1-16, 270-271.

⁴⁶This is classified by Milgrom as lying on a continuum of more or less “pre-Israelite” customs, which begins with the purificatory sacrifice for “leprosy,” progresses through the rite of the Red Heifer and the Ritual of Atonement, ending with the “sin” offering as the youngest and least similar (although still comparable) to ancient Mesopotamian “magical” transfer rites (*Leviticus* 1-16, 270-278). Although the author is to be commended for recognizing the “ritual cleansing” of “sin” offerings as comparable to “magical” transfer, the schema is rather Tylor-esque, particularly in its details. Why, if it were not for the fact that ancient Israel and ancient Mesopotamia allegedly differ on these points, should it be more “magical” to exorcize people than to exorcize objects (274)? And why should “magical” rites be more, rather than less, likely to require the services of an ordained priest (275)? The real objection, however, is that the assumption—that this artificially created progression from “paganism” generated by “obsessive irrational fears” (275) to “monotheism” represents a real and chronological development in the history of ancient Israelite religion—involves the author in a basic failure of logic. If, as he argues, there is no trace of “magical transfer” in the laying of hands on the holocaust and “peace” offerings, despite the use of the same “expiatory” language (410), must not the “sin” offerings be older than the holocaust offerings by this schema? Yet the author retains the conventional (Rabbinic) chronological ordering of these rites: holocaust and “peace” offerings first, “sin” and “guilt” offerings as later developments (268, 288-289). This problem can be partially remedied by realizing that Milgrom’s argument may be predicated on Tylor’s theory of the evolution of religion from magic, but what he is actually talking about is cultural borrowing. When items are taken from another culture and reworked, the closer the item is to its original form, the more recently it must have been borrowed. If then, Milgrom’s assumptions are reversed, and what he claims to be genuine “magical” rites, which have been gradually adapted by the Israelites to their own monotheistic context (289), are ordered earliest to latest in accordance with their degree of transformation, then “sin” offerings become later than holocaust offerings as they should be by conventional ordering. Unfortunately, what that means is that if, as he also argues,

and then adds, for the benefit of his students:

By your lives, I swear: the corpse does not have the power by itself to defile, nor does the mixture of ash and water have the power by itself to cleanse. The truth is that the purifying power of the Red Cow is a decree of the Holy One. The Holy One said: "I have set it down as a statute, I have issued it as a decree. You are not permitted to transgress my decree." This is the statute of the Torah.⁴⁷

What is not commonly appreciated is that the insistence, both within ancient Israelite religion itself and in later Rabbinic commentaries, that these transfer rites could only work, or at least only work properly, God willing, is not a "break with paganism"⁴⁸ but actually part and parcel of the original, polytheistic system. Rabban Yohanan's explanation to his students, and particularly the reference to the Torah, evokes the ancient Mesopotamian saying quoted to Esarhaddon by Balasi: "Ea made it; Ea unmade it. He who created the earthquake is the same one who created (its) NAM.BÚR.BI (apotropaic ritual)."⁴⁹

It was presumably this always-inherent possibility that the spirit would decline to accept a particular sacrifice (and with it the contract dependent on it) that gave rise to the ancient Mesopotamian practice of taking preliminary omens from the flaws and markings on the sacrificial animal and the way it was observed to behave, both on the way to and during the sacrifice. Omens were the means by which man communicated with gods and gods with man; taking an omen at this point gave the divinity to whom the sacrifice was to be offered an opportunity to express his willingness (or unwillingness) to comply with the sacrificer's request.⁵⁰

Nonetheless, there was Torah, and there were NAM.BÚR.BIs; the gods whom human beings kept happy with offerings were predisposed to cleanse away ills and forgive sins, assuming that certain basic procedures were followed. Unfortunately, this very cooperativeness (a feature of gods as opposed to demons, who had to be subjected to ritual oaths⁵¹ before they could be trusted to keep their bargains) exacerbated the ever-present danger of accidental transfer. In other words, when contact was accidentally established between a

Israelites performing "sin" offerings no longer recognized them as magical (279-280), whereas the rite of the Red Heifer was still so obviously magical that Rabbinic tradition recognized its origins, then the "sin" offerings will have to have been borrowed at a much earlier date than the Red Heifer rite.

⁴⁷*Pesiq. Rab Kab.* 4:7.

⁴⁸Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 278.

⁴⁹R. F. Harper, ed., *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collections of the British Museum (ABL)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1892-1914), 355 r. 9-12.

⁵⁰It was presumably for this reason that the Philistines allowed the cart carrying the returning Ark of the Covenant and their "guilt offering" to make its own way home (1 Sam 6:7-9).

⁵¹See, e.g., J. Scurlock, *Magico-Medical Means of Treating Ghost Induced Illnesses in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Groningen: Brill-Styx, 2006), nn. 18, 120, 131.

potential donor and recipient, there was the danger that the exchange of good and bad qualities might take place, but that the recipient or guarantor, not having been adequately paid for services rendered, might become infuriated, with disastrous consequences.

It was for this reason that those who ate of the Israelite “peace” offering had to be ritually clean⁵² (as did all who came into contact with holy objects), lest some unpaid-for impurity be accidentally transferred in the process.⁵³ It was for this reason also that the laying on of hands was traditionally preceded by hand washing.⁵⁴ Optimally, this washing reinforced the message that cleansing was desired, but at the very least it avoided the problem of the dirt on the sacrificer’s hands being all that got cleansed off, or worse yet that the wrath of YHWH was brought down on the head of the sacrificer.

That ritual cleansing was indeed the object of ancient Israelite sacrifice is made explicit in the annual scapegoat ritual:

When he has completed the atonement rite for the sanctuary, the meeting tent and the altar, Aaron shall bring forward the live goat. Laying both hands on its head, he shall confess over it all the sinful faults and transgressions of the Israelites, and so put them on the goat’s head. He shall then have it led into the desert by an attendant. Since the goat is to carry off their iniquities to an isolated region, it must be sent away into the desert.⁵⁵

This almost directly parallels the custom, attested in the Neo-Assyrian *bīt rimki* (“bath house”) ritual, of having the king station a variety of prisoners, human and otherwise, to his right and left and then release them as a means of ridding himself of his misdeeds:

The prince makes seven prisoners (i.e., convicts) sit to the right and seven to the left before *Šamaš* and says as follows: “I have remitted their misdeeds. . . . I will release a bound sheep before you.⁵⁶ Just as I release this sheep, so may any evil misdeed, crime, offense or omission which is in my body be released before

⁵²See Lev 22:3-8. Similarly, Lev 6:20: “[A]nyone who is to touch (the flesh of the sin offering) must be in a holy state.” See Levine, 40. Milgrom follows a school which regards holiness as “contagious” (*Leviticus 1-16*, 443-456); see Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, JPS Torah Commentary [Philadelphia: JPS, 1991], 191). This position is directly denied by Mal 2:11-13 (see Levine, 38). According to the priesthood of Jerusalem in the early postexilic period, impurity could be transferred by physical contact; holiness could not. To make a person or object holy required a rite of consecration.

⁵³If the person who ate of an offering was unclean, some impurity that had not been paid for by sacrifice could potentially be passed to the sanctuary and some of the sanctuary’s purity could be lost in the exchange. On the marked tendency of impurities to be attracted into holy objects, see Levine, 38.

⁵⁴Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 153.

⁵⁵Lev 16:20-22.

⁵⁶A bound sheep is listed in an inventory presumably—to judge from the appearance also of a gazelle, chicken/goose, duck, pairs of birds and a live fish—for the performance of this very ritual (von Weiher, *SpTU* 4 no. 128:75-77).

your godship." . . . He captures two birds. . . . The king releases them to east and west and the king says [the recitation]: "I have remitted their misdeeds." The seven and seven prisoners who were held to the right and left of the king he releases.⁵⁷

Much has been made of the fact that the typical Israelite sacrificial offering was marked by the laying on of a single hand, whereas the ritual scapegoat had two hands laid upon his head.⁵⁸ This should not, however, be taken as evidence for a different origin for the former rite. The reason for the difference is immediately apparent from the context—the sacrificial animal upon whom one hand was laid was intended to absorb the sin, guilt, or other problem of an individual sacrificer. If, therefore, the officiating priest at the ritual of atonement had laid only one hand on the scapegoat, only his personal sins would have been cleansed away. The intent of the rite was, however, that "all the sinful faults and transgressions of the Israelites" should be cleansed away; therefore, he, instead, laid on two hands, one for himself and the other for everyone else.

Once transferred to the sacrificial animal, the sin, guilt, or other problem of the Israelite sacrificer was subsequently transferred to the sanctuary in the course of the sacrifice: "To find favor with the Lord, he shall bring it to the entrance of the meeting tent and there lay his hand on the head of the holocaust so that, assuming it is acceptable for him, it may provide ritual cleansing for him. He shall then slaughter the bull before the Lord, but Aaron's sons, the priests, shall offer up its blood by splashing it on the sides of the altar which is at the entrance of the meeting tent."⁵⁹ It was for this reason that the structure with cherubim that sat on top of the ark⁶⁰ was referred to as an "instrument of ritual cleansing" (*kapporet*).⁶¹

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, *SpTU* 2 no. 12 ii 20-21, 31-33, iii 15, 20-24; cf. *ibid.*, *SpTU* 3 no. 68 i 1-16.

⁵⁸See, e.g., D. P. Wright, "The Gesture of Hand Placement in the Hebrew Bible and in Hittite Literature," *JAOS* 106 (1986): 433-446 (with previous literature); cf. Levine, 6; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 151. Rabbinic tradition resolved the problem by assuming that two hands were actually meant in all cases (Sarna, 188).

⁵⁹Lev 1:3-5. See also Exod 29:10-12, 15-16, 19-21; Lev 1:11, 15; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:4-7, 15-18, 24-25, 29-30, 33-34; 8:14-15, 18-19, 22-24; 9:9, 12, 18; 17:6; Num 18:17; Deut 12:27; Ezek 43:18, 20; 44:15; cf. 2 Chron 29:21-24. For the exact locations on the altar where the blood was splashed, see Hultgård, 89. Aaron was protected from contamination by a special gold plate worn on his forehead (Exod 28:36-38). It was also customary in the Second Temple period for the priests to wash both hands and feet before commencing the holocaust sacrifice (*ibid.*, 88).

⁶⁰Exod 25:17-22.

⁶¹This object is now conventionally translated as "cover" (as, e.g., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* 4:457-458; cf. Sarna, 161). This translation assumes a connection with Arabic *kafara*. It has escaped notice, however, that what is being translated as "to cover" is listed in *CAD* as a secondary meaning of the Akkadian verb *kapāru*: "to cleanse (magically) by rubbing." This secondary meaning (or separate verb, according to von Soden's *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*) is used in Akkadian fairly specifically to refer to coating an object with bitumen (*kupru*) to make it watertight (for references, see *CAD*

In two cases—the ordination (“peace”) offering⁶² and the guilt offering for *šaraʿat*⁶³—part of the blood was smeared on the tip of the sacrificer’s right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the big toe of the right foot, creating indirect contact between the person to be purified and the altar⁶⁴ (cf. the splashing of bowls of blood onto the worshipers by Moses to cement the renewed covenant between YHWH and the Israelites).⁶⁵ The principle involved is readily illustrated by a set of purificatory rites, also for *šaraʿat*, in which one of a pair of birds was slaughtered in the presence of the patient. The surviving bird was dipped into the blood of the slaughtered bird, which was also used to sprinkle the patient, thus establishing indirect contact between the patient and the live bird. When the live bird was subsequently released to fly away over the countryside, it took the impurity away with it.⁶⁶

A further transfer of sin, guilt, and problems to the Israelite sanctuary was

K 178-180 mngs. 2, 4). “This meaning of the root appears in Hebrew in Gen. 6.14. In Arabic, the roots, if originally separate, have fallen together, primary and secondary meanings have been reversed, and the dual and opposite connotations of the root (‘to smear pitch on’ and ‘to wipe dirt off’) have been exploited to convey on the one hand the spiritual blackening of one’s face (as with pitch) by refusal to believe in God (hence *kefir*, ‘infidel’) and on the other the potential cleansing (or whitening) of the sinner’s face by some combination of penance, atonement or forgiveness (as the Arabs say ‘whiten the face’)” (F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [BDB] [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907], 497). Hebrew etymological dictionaries attempt to use the translation “to cover,” drawn from the primary meaning of Arabic *kafara*, to convey the sense of cleansing (from sin), which is the primary meaning of Akkadian *kapāru*. This seems rather backward. That an Arabic word manages to mean itself and its opposite is hardly surprising, but it seems a bit odd that the Arabic primary meaning, which refers to a person “covered” with sin (as with bitumen), should be used to justify the translation of a term in Hebrew, whose primary meaning, as in Akkadian, is clearly the opposite process of cleansing from evils (a.k.a. sin). Both the LXX and Vulgate translations agree that the *kapporet* had to do with “propitiation,” and the object in question was not, in any case, a cover. As Sarna, 160-161, notes the *kapporet* was imagined as YHWH’s throne and the ark as his footstool. Is a throne the “cover” for a footstool? On further problems with the translation “cover,” see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1014.

⁶²Exod 29:19-21; Lev 8:22-24, 30.

⁶³Lev 14:14, 25.

⁶⁴In the ordination sacrifice, blood from the altar was also sprinkled on the priest and his vestments (Exod 29:21; Lev 8:30).

⁶⁵Exod 24:5-8.

⁶⁶Lev 14:6-7, 49-53. On this point, see also Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 838. Compare the Emar ritual to purify a patient from *sabarsubba*, which requires him to burn one shelduck as a holocaust offering and to rub the other over himself before releasing it (A. Tsukimoto, “By the Hand of Madi-Dagon, the Scribe and Apkallu-Priest—A Medical Text from the Middle Euphrates Region,” in *Priests and Officials in the Ancient Near East*, Colloquium on the Ancient Near East 2, ed. K. Watanabe [Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1999], 199-200, 88-89).

achieved on festival days, when the people were actually allowed to enter the inner court of the temple: "When the people of the land enter the presence of the Lord to worship on the festivals, if they enter by the north gate they shall leave by the south gate, and if they enter by the south gate they shall leave by the north gate; no one shall return by the gate through which he has entered, but he shall leave by the opposite gate."⁶⁷ Passing by a recipient is a commonplace method of transfer. The reason for the prohibition on leaving by the same gate as one entered is quite obviously the same as a not-uncommon warning in ancient Mesopotamian transfer rites that the patient is not to look behind or to take (to get home) the road he or she took to get there, namely, to prevent the problem from being retransferred right back to the patient in the process.⁶⁸ It was this practice of transferring human problems to divinities (also attested in ancient Mesopotamia) that necessitated an annual purification of the Israelite sanctuary in the Ritual of Atonement. One of the main reasons that temple buildings and the statues of gods (or for aniconic deities, the upright stone, or the ark, for instance), need periodic "baths" or other purification is that they become polluted with the problem-causers (e.g., demons, misdeeds, pollution, bad omens, curses, witchcraft), which they have obligingly removed from human supplicants during the course of the year. Note that the "instrument of ritual cleansing" (*kapporet*) was the particular focus of purification rites that took place in the holy of holies on that day.⁶⁹

In this annual Israelite purification rite, a series of "sin" offerings was performed by the priest to make atonement for himself and "for the sanctuary because of all the sinful defilements and faults of the Israelites" and for the altar to "render it clean and holy, purged of all the defilements of the Israelites."⁷⁰ "Sin" offerings were also used independently to purify and consecrate altars.⁷¹ The object of performing an animal sacrifice for this purpose was not simply to produce a ritual bath of purifying blood,⁷² since if that were the case every ancient Israelite offering would have purified the altar. When the blood of the "sin" offering was dotted on the horns⁷³ and poured out into the trough at the base of the altar,⁷⁴ indirect contact was established between the altar and the sacrificial

⁶⁷Ezek 46:9.

⁶⁸For specific examples of such prohibitions, see Scurlock, "Translating Transfers in Ancient Mesopotamia," 217, 221.

⁶⁹Lev 16:11-16.

⁷⁰Lev 16:3-19, esp. 16 and 19; Exod 30:10.

⁷¹Exod 29:35-37; Lev 6:23; Ezek 43:18-27; cf. 2 Chron 29:21-24. For a discussion of the Ezekiel passage, see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 281-284.

⁷²So Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 254-258, 261-264.

⁷³For a discussion and illustrations of horned altars, see *ibid.*, 234-236.

⁷⁴This trough is described in Ezek 43:13-17; cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 238-239.

animal, which was to serve as recipient of the impurity.⁷⁵

The parallel between the establishment in the “guilt” offering for *saraʿat* of indirect contact between the person to be purified and the altar, which was to receive his impurity, and Ezekiel’s sanctification rite between the altar to be purified and the “sin”-offering bull and he-goat, which were to receive its impurity, could not be more striking. In the former, the tip of the sacrificer’s right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the big toe of the right foot were smeared with the sacrificial blood;⁷⁶ in the latter, the blood was daubed on the corresponding parts of the altar, namely, the horns (“ears”), the corners of the ledge (“hands”), and the gutter at the base (“feet”).⁷⁷

What gave “sin” offerings their purificatory properties, then, was not the blood, but the manner of disposal of the sacrificial animal’s carcass. When a “sin” offering was intended for the priest or for the community as a whole or was being used to purify and consecrate an altar, the flesh, hide and offal, all or part of which were usually burned on the altar, were instead taken “outside the camp” and incinerated there.⁷⁸ The effect was to draw off any impurities into the desert. To make sure that they stayed there, in the annual ritual of atonement, “the one who burns them shall wash his garments and bathe his body in water; only then may he enter the camp.”⁷⁹

The Importance of Blood

The importance of blood in Israelite religion is justly stressed; the blood and caul fat⁸⁰ of all animals, which it was permissible to eat, whether actually sacrificed or not,⁸¹ were reserved for the Lord: “Wherever you dwell, you shall not partake of any blood, be it of bird or of animal. Every person who partakes of any blood shall be cut off from his people.”⁸² “Since the life of a living body is in its blood, I have made you put it on the altar, so that atonement may thereby be made for your own lives, because it is blood, as the seat of life, that makes atonement. That is why I have told the Israelites: ‘No one among you, not even a resident alien,

⁷⁵Blood can purify, but it does so because it absorbs impurities, and whatever absorbs impurities can also be used to transfer them.

⁷⁶Lev 14:14, 25; cf. 14:17, 28.

⁷⁷Ezek 43:20. On the similarity with the corresponding rite in the priest’s ordination, see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 528-529.

⁷⁸Exod 29:12, 14; Lev 4:5-7, 11-12, 16-18, 21; 6:23; 8:15, 17; 9:9, 11; 16:18-19, 27; Ezek 43:20-21; cf. Num 19:4-5, 9.

⁷⁹Lev 16:28; cf. Num 19:7-10. Cf. Lev 16:26: “The man who has led away the goat for Azazel shall wash his garments and bathe his body in water; only then may he enter the camp.”

⁸⁰Ordinary fat was permissible; see Levine, 16, 45.

⁸¹Lev 7:22-27; 17:13-14; Deut 12:15-28; 15:21-23.

⁸²Lev 7:26-27. See also Gen 9:4; Lev 3:17; 17:10; 19:26.

may partake of blood.”⁸³ The consequence of noncompliance was to be cut off from the community since to eat the blood of an animal was tantamount to murder, a violation of the commandment “Thou shalt not kill,” and a rupture of the covenant of Moses, which linked the Israelites to their god by means of a stream of blood:

Moses took half of the blood (of the sacrificial animals) and put it in large bowls; the other half he splashed on the altar. Taking the book of the covenant, he read it aloud to the people, who answered, “All that the Lord has said, we will heed and do.” Then he took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying: “This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words of his.”⁸⁴

Aliens, too, had made their peace with YHWH by submitting to the leaders of the Israelite community and had, consequently, a covenant also to protect.

A covenant relationship between man and god was not the concept in Mesopotamia; neither was it the custom to eat the blood of animals, whether sacrificed or not. It is the relationship between the blood and the covenant and the concomitant attitude that a person killing his own animal for food but neglecting to use proper procedure could be guilty of murder, that seems odd from a Mesopotamian perspective.

This having been said, however, there is little about the actual use of the blood in sacrificial context that would not have been immediately comprehensible to a Mesopotamian observer. An ancient Mesopotamian animal sacrifice, properly speaking, consisted of the shedding of the animal’s blood, as the phrase used to describe the process (*nīqu naqū*) indicates.⁸⁵ So important was the blood to the sacrifice, that the failure of it to appear required the performance of an apotropaic ritual (NAM.BÚR.BI).⁸⁶ Similar rituals were used for other obvious disruptions of the ritual procedure, as when the sacrificer inadvertently knocked over the offering table, broke the drinking cup, spilled the food, tipped over the beer, or worst of all (literally) fell flat on his face.⁸⁷

In ritual context, the appearance of this blood was insured by cutting the throat of the sacrificial animal (*nakāsu*).⁸⁸ One of Sennacherib’s reliefs⁸⁹ shows a

⁸³Lev 17:11-12. See also Deut 12:23.

⁸⁴Exod 24:5-8.

⁸⁵For the specific meaning (in a nonsacrificial context) of “to shed blood” for this verb, see *CAD* N/1 338/341 s.v. *naqū*, mngs. 2, 5b, 6a. See also E. P. Dhorme, *La religion Assyro-Babylonienne. Conférences données à l’institut catholique de Paris* (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffte, 1910), 272. For the general significance of blood, see G. Pettinato, “Il sangue nella letteratura sumerica”; and L. Cagni, “Il sangue nella letteratura Assiro-Babilonese” in *Sangue e Antropologia Biblica*, Centro Studi Sanguis Christi 1, ed. F. Vattioni (Rome: Pia Unione Preziosissimo Sangue, 1981), 37-85.

⁸⁶Maul, §VIII.19, cf. VI.3.1:9’.

⁸⁷See Leichty, 241.

⁸⁸As, e.g., in Maul, §§V.3:12, 79, VI.3.1:9’, VIII.10:22, 34-35(!), 62-63, 91, VIII.18:7,

slaughtering operation in progress. The animal, hind feet tethered, was laid on its back on a flat surface elevated above the ground so that the head hung down, exposing the neck. An assistant held the forelegs fast, while the slaughterer cut the throat over a waiting vessel, holding the animal's mouth with his free hand. The relief shows this operation being performed on what looks like an ordinary table. In cultic texts, the locus for slaughter is described as a *maškittu*.⁹⁰

This procedure by itself was adequate only for small, docile animals. Bulls, at least, had to be killed first before the throat could be safely cut.⁹¹ The actual slaughter of a bull (*palāqu*)⁹² was carried out with a special knife (*naplaqu*), with which the animal was stabbed, producing a characteristic bellow.⁹³ Then the bull was ready to be laid out for the rest of the operation.⁹⁴ While all this was being done, the name of the god(s) and/or goddess(es) who was (were) to receive the meat was (were) invoked to insure that uninvited guests did not share in the offering.⁹⁵

The methods of killing sacrificial animals were similar in ancient Israel. Not only is the Hebrew word for sacrificial slaughter (*šābat*) the exact equivalent of Akkadian *nakāsu*: "to cut (the throat),"⁹⁶ but Ezekiel also describes

73, VIII.19:1; Farber, 57:20, 185:14, 227:25; von Weiher, *SpTU* 2 nos. 5:65; 17 iv 15; *Racc.* 24 r. 9, 78 r. 8-9,11; G. van Driel, *The Cult of Aštur* (Assen: Van Gorcum), 202 r. 9^a-10^a; *BBR* nos. 1-20:75,115; 26 ii1; 84-85:5; 86:5; Emar VI.3 nos. 369:14; 385:29; 446:31. For other references, see *CAD* N/1 177-178 s.v. *nakāsu* mng. 4a.

⁸⁹For an illustration, see B. Janowski et al., *Gefährten und Feinde des Menschen: Das Tier in der Lebenswelt des alten Israel* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993), 242.

⁹⁰For references, see *CAD* M/1 376; cf. A. Vivante's "The Sacrificial Altar in Assyrian Temples," *RA* 88 (1994), 163-168, which discusses *inter alia* the stone offering tables found in the Temple of the Sibitti at Khorsabad.

⁹¹So too in classical sacrifices, where bulls were frequent victims; for details, see H. Limet, "Le sacrifice sanglant," *WZKM* 86 (1996): 251-252.

⁹²Bulls were *palāqu* 'd, lambs simply *tabābu* 'd; for references, see *CAD* L 227-228, s.v. *lū* and *CAD* A/2 336, s.v. *aslu* A. For the use of *palāqu* in ritual context, see, e.g., *Racc.* 14 ii 16; A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium B.C. I (1114-859)* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1991), 151:74.

⁹³"He bellows like a bull which has been *palāqu* 'd with a *naplaqu*" (W. von Soden, "Der grosse Hymnus an Nabû," *ZA* 61 [1971]: 52-57). Note also Lie, Sg. 165, where an enemy's suicide by running into his sword is compared to the slaughtering of pigs. Sometimes, oxen are said to have been "struck (with a weapon)" (*mabāsu*); see, e.g., *Racc.* 120 r. 6.

⁹⁴For representations on Sumerian seals depicting cattle on their backs having their throats slit during the course of ritual slaughter, see Limet, 254-255.

⁹⁵*Racc.* 78 r. 8-12; Menzel, T 118 v 9-16, 17-23; T121/122 viii 14-24; cf. T 112:7-17, 22-23 (when salting the meat).

⁹⁶See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 154, 716-718. To the Akkadian term for "sacrifice" (*nīqu naqū*), literally "to pour out the sacrifice as a libation," compare the Hebrew

the ancient Israelite equivalent of the *maškittu*: tables made of cut stone, upon which the holocausts were slaughtered.⁹⁷ Although, to my knowledge, no religious justification was given for the practice, great care also seems to have been taken in ancient Mesopotamia to get every last bit of blood out of butchered animals before cooking them (see below).

The sprinkling of the blood of a sacrificial animal could also, as may be seen from the use of the causative of “to accept” (*šumḫuru*) to describe it, be used to insure that the ancient Mesopotamian sacrifice got where it was going: “(In case of an eclipse in Araḫšamna), let him sacrifice a sheep to Marduk and Šakkan; let him cause the blood to be accepted to the west.”⁹⁸ Note also the rubbing of blood and oil onto the upright stones in the course of the *zukurru*-festival at Emar.⁹⁹

Where the deities being approached were chthonic (and had to be accessed via an *apû* or spring), this libatory aspect of the sacrifice is more than usually evident.¹⁰⁰ “He (the king) makes a sacrifice. . . . He goes (and) causes the blood to be accepted in the *apû*. He pours honey (and) oil into the *apû*. He pours beer (and) wine into it.”¹⁰¹ “The king goes to the spring. He makes a sacrifice. He causes the blood to be accepted in the spring.”¹⁰² “O Netherworld,” Etana complains, “you have drunk the blood of my sacrificial lambs!”¹⁰³

Note also the practice of spattering foundation stones with the blood of a ram before setting them in their trenches,¹⁰⁴ and the sprinkling rite performed to avoid the ominous consequences of an eclipse in Kislimu: “You make a libation of water in front of the herds when the herds enter (the city). You sacrifice a sheep. You mix the blood from the cut (throat) with beer. The gate is sprinkled (with it). You burn *šgūšū*-barley all night in the south gate.”¹⁰⁵

Most interesting is the parallel between Israelite treatment of the blood of sacrificial animals and another of the rites performed in connection with the Neo-Assyrian ritual *bīt rimki* (“bathhouse”): “The *āšipu* goes out the outer gate and sacrifices a ram [and an adult male goat] in the palace gate. With the blood

expression “pouring out of blood” (*šāpak dām*) used of the “peace offerings” (ibid., 217).

⁹⁷Ezek 40:39-43.

⁹⁸P. Jensen, *KB* 6/2 44:26-27. Note also: “You cut (the throat) of a dove. You pour its blood [o]ver it (the buried figurine)” (BAM 323:63).

⁹⁹Emar VI.3 no. 373:32, 57-58.

¹⁰⁰Containers full of blood were rarely laid out for the gods alongside more conventional offerings (Walker and Dick, 46:116).

¹⁰¹Menzel, *T* 99/100 iii 7', 10'-12'.

¹⁰²Menzel, *T*, 76 i 8'-9'.

¹⁰³J. V. Kinnier Wilson, *The Legend of Etana* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1985), 100:133. See also Mayer and Sallaberger, 10:97.

¹⁰⁴Parpola, *SAA* 10, no. 354:15-18.

¹⁰⁵Jensen, 44:30-32.

of that adult male goat he [sprinkles] the thresh[hold], the . . . and the doorposts to the right and left of the palace gate."¹⁰⁶

Note the striking similarity between this explicitly purificatory rite and the Israelite Passover sacrifice: "The lamb must be a year-old male and without blemish. You may take it from either the sheep or the goats. . . . They shall take some of its blood and apply it to the two doorposts and the lintel of every house in which they partake of the ram."¹⁰⁷ "On the first day of the first month you shall use an unblemished young bull as a sacrifice to purify the sanctuary. Then the priest shall take some of the blood from the sin offering and put it on the doorposts of the temple, on the four corners of the ledge of the altar, and on the doorposts of the gates of the inner court."¹⁰⁸

Preparation of the Sacrificed Animal in Mesopotamia

In divinatory sacrifices, the spirit of the sacrificed sheep was placated by sprinkling water on it. The head was removed and placed near an incense burner on the circle used in the ritual and sprinkled with water that had been aromatized with Amanus cedar.¹⁰⁹ The internal organs of the divinatory animal were then subjected to the diviner's autopsy, upon completion of which the flesh of the animal was available for cooking and eating.¹¹⁰ For regular and occasional sacrifices, after the animal had been dispatched, the carcass was disarticulated and cooked. We have a description of this in what is, apparently, (in view of the absence of any invocation to a god or any other indication that an actual sacrifice is being described) an Old Babylonian butcher's manual.¹¹¹ Since boiled meat was the end result of the cooking process for daily and calendric sacrifices (see below), the procedure for these rites is likely to have been similar. The dead animal was beheaded and bled. At some point, it must also have been skinned, but our text neglects to mention this.¹¹² The hooves and tail were roasted (to facilitate removal of the marrow). The shoulder and rib cuts, having been removed and boiled, were ready to be served. The caul fat was washed and put raw on the table—doubtless to be cooked to the diner's taste just before eating (for an echo of this practice,

¹⁰⁶BBR no. 26 iii 19-21.

¹⁰⁷Exod 12:5, 7.

¹⁰⁸Ezek 45:18-19.

¹⁰⁹BBR nos. 84-86.

¹¹⁰For more details, see JoAnn Scurlock, "Animal Sacrifice in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East*, ed. B. J. Collins (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 397-399.

¹¹¹D. A. Foxvog, "A Manual of Sacrificial Procedure" in *DUMU-É-DUB-BA-A: Studies in Honor of Ake W. Sjöberg*, ed. H. Behrens et alia (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1989), 167-176.

¹¹²For the skinning of a sacrificial animal, see Farber, 57:20, 59:46; BBR no. 40:3.

see below). The intestines were checked over;¹¹³ if satisfactory, they were pulled out for use and separated, the inedible connective tissue being removed.¹¹⁴ The colon had the feces cleaned out of it (a must for decent flavor). The liver was checked over; if it was satisfactory, the remaining entrails (e.g., heart) were pulled out for use. The butcher was just in the process of cutting up the raw meat into bite-sized pieces (for boiling) when the text unfortunately breaks off. At Ur, the actual kitchens in which this process would have been carried out have been discovered in excavation.¹¹⁵

*Regular Offerings*¹¹⁶

General Remarks

The reason for all this care taken in butchering and cooking sacrificial animals before presenting them to the gods was that both regular and occasional sacrifices were intended as divine meals. Ancient Mesopotamian deities expected to be fed twice a day,¹¹⁷ without fail by their human worshipers, with extra luxurious fare during the “monthly offerings”¹¹⁸ and the numerous festivals that enlivened the ancient Mesopotamian calendar. Generally, sacrificial animals were chosen from domesticated stock, excluding draft animals. Despite the fact that pigs were eaten in ancient Mesopotamia, they were rarely offered to the gods, the few exceptions to this rule tending to be in nocturnal or Netherworld contexts.¹¹⁹

Israelite and ancient Mesopotamian customs regarding regular offerings would seem to present the most extreme contrast possible. Indeed, it is hard to imagine there being much common ground between the ancient Mesopotamian custom of careful cooking and formal presentation of sacrificial animals, followed by redistribution of the leftovers on the one hand and the Israelite holocaust offering on the other. Appearances can, however, be deceptive.

¹¹³This does not mean that they were examined in the divinatory sense; in divinatory sacrifice, the liver would certainly have been examined first and the intestines last; whereas, in this case, the reverse is true.

¹¹⁴Cf. Parpola and Watanabe, SAA 2 no. 6:551-554. This part of the operation was at least potentially women’s work—see Livingstone, SAA 3 no. 38: 46-49.

¹¹⁵See D. Charpin, *Le Clergé d’Ur au siècle d’Hammurabi* (Geneva, France: Librairie Droz, 1986), 336-340 (with plan).

¹¹⁶By this I mean offerings made on a regular (calendric) basis to confirm an ongoing relationship with a divinity.

¹¹⁷For references, see Mayer and Sallaberger, 10:95.

¹¹⁸That is, extra animals offered on specific days of every month, viz. new moon, full moon, and half way between. See W. Sallaberger, *Der kultische Kalender der Ur III-Zeit*, UAVA 7 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), part 1:37-96; Charpin, 307-318; *Racc.* 79 r. 32-34; CAD G 135-136, s.v. *guqqû*; cf. Blome, 63-65.

¹¹⁹For more details, see Scurlock, “Animal Sacrifice in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 392-393.

Like their ancient Mesopotamian counterparts, Israelite holocaust offerings were imagined as divine meals,¹²⁰ presented twice daily at dawn and dusk,¹²¹ with extra animals offered weekly on the Sabbath,¹²² monthly at the new moon,¹²³ and annually on days set aside as festivals.¹²⁴ For the feast of booths alone, the total of extra animals came to 71 bullocks, 15 rams, 105 yearling lambs, and eight goats.¹²⁵ Since sacrifices were to be eaten, it stood to reason that the animals chosen for Israelite sacrifice should, as with their ancient Mesopotamian counterparts, have been animals that would have been suitable as food for humans,¹²⁶ namely domesticated stock,¹²⁷ excluding draft animals,¹²⁸ supplemented by lesser amounts of game (in the Israelite case, birds).¹²⁹

The ancient Mesopotamian diet was considerably more varied than the Israelite, giving the gods a much more exciting selection of animals to choose from for their regular offerings. Although unusually restrictive, however, Israelite dietary laws¹³⁰ are paralleled by food taboos associated with specific ancient Mesopotamian divinities. For example, the god Šakkan refused to eat

¹²⁰See G. A. Anderson, "Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings (OT)," *ABD*, 5:878. For specific references to offerings as "food" for God, see Blome, 13; cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 250, 440 ("linguistic fossils").

¹²¹Exod 29:38-41; Lev 6:13; Num 28:3-8; cf. Exod 30:7-8; Lev 6:2; 9:16-17; Ezek 46:13-15; 2 Chron 31:3.

¹²²Num 28:9-10; Ezek 46:4-5; cf. Ezek 45:17; 2 Chron 31:3. The Sabbath was also honored with special shewbread (Lev 24:5-9).

¹²³Num 28:11-15; Ezek 46:6-7; cf. Ezek 45:17; Num 29:6; 2 Chron 31:3.

¹²⁴Lev 23; Deut 16:1-17; Num 28:16-29, 39; Ezek 45:18-25; 46:11; cf. 2 Chron 31:3.

¹²⁵Num 29:12-39.

¹²⁶That is, "every clean animal and every clean bird" (Gen 8:20).

¹²⁷Cattle: Exod 29:10, 35-36; Lev 1:3-5; 3:1; 4:3, 14; 8:14; 9:2-4; 16:11; 17:3; 22:19, 27; 23:18; 27:26; Num 7:87-88; 8:8; 15:8, 24; 19:2; 28:11, 19, 27; 29:2, 8, 13, 17, 20, 23, 26, 29, 32, 36; Deut 16:2; 17:1; 18:3; Ezek 43:19, 23, 25; 45:18, 22-23; 46:6, 11; 2 Chron 29:21, 32-33; 30:24; 35:7-9. Sheep: Exod 12:3-5; 29:15, 19, 38-39; Lev 1:10; 3:6-7; 4:32; 5:6, 15, 18, 25; 8:18, 22; 9:2-4; 12:6; 14:10, 21; 16:3, 5; 17:3; 19:21; 22:19, 27; 23:12, 18-19; 27:26; Num 6:12, 14; 7:87-88; 15:5, 6; 28:3, 9, 11, 19, 27; 29:2, 8, 13, 17, 20, 23, 26, 29, 32, 36; Deut 16:2; 17:1; 18:3; Ezek 43:23, 25; 45:15, 23; 46:4, 6, 11, 13; 2 Chron 29:21, 32-33; 30:15, 24; 35:1, 7-9. Goats: Exod 12:3-5; Lev 1:10; 3:6, 12; 4:23, 28; 5:6; 9:3; 16:5; 17:3; 22:19, 27; 23:19; Num 7:87-88; 15:5, 11, 24, 27; 28:15, 22, 30; 29:5, 11, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34, 38; Deut 16:2; Ezek 43:22, 25; 45:23; 2 Chron 29:21; 30:15; 35:1, 7-9.

¹²⁸The firstborn of asses were doomed to the Lord; but, since they were not allowable for sacrifice, they had either to be redeemed or killed (Exod 34:19-20; cf. Num 18:15).

¹²⁹Turtle doves or pigeons: Lev 1:14; 5:7; 12:6, 8; 14:21-22; 15:14-15, 29-30; Num 6:10-11. That these were (or could be) captured wild birds—and, therefore, not necessarily domesticated species—may readily be seen from the Rabbinic tale of Agrippa and the poor man's holocaust (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 166-167).

¹³⁰Lev 11; Deut 14:3-21.

mutton, Ningublaga, beef, and Belet-šeri, poultry. Ereškigal, dread goddess of the Netherworld, might accept a sheep or goat, but never ox meat or fowl.¹³¹ A man going up to the temple of his god could touch a “dog of Gula” with impunity, but was advised not to have recently eaten leeks, *sablu*, garlic, onions, beef, or pork,¹³² the latter meat being considered generally unsuitable for the divine table.

On specific days, designated in hemerologies, even normally allowable foods, such as roof rodents and fish, were off limits,¹³³ and in intercalary months, on every seventh day (plus a few extra days midmonth), meat cooked over coals, bread baked in ashes, or “anything which fire has touched” was not to be indulged in.¹³⁴ This last prohibition is particularly interesting in view of the Israelite Sabbath interdiction: “You shall not even light a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day.”¹³⁵

Presentation

When a Mesopotamian divinity shared his temple with a host of minor gods and goddesses, as was often the case, it was assumed that all concerned would wish to eat together. Thus arrangements were made for regular and calendric sacrifices to be shared among them.¹³⁶ The meatiest sections naturally went to the most important god, with rib cuts and the like being reserved for the lesser lights.¹³⁷

For regular and calendric sacrifices, each god’s share was put on his table or tray, accompanied by bread, fruits, or vegetables, and whatever was on offer for the god to drink: “They sacrifice an ox and six sheep before the Storm God. They place be[ef] (and) mutton, the *paršu* (“ritual portion”)¹³⁸ before the god.

¹³¹Racc. 79 r. 40-42.

¹³²C. J. Gadd, *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum (CI)* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1926), 39.38 r. 8, 11.

¹³³For more details, see Scurlock, “Animal Sacrifice in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 393-394.

¹³⁴Jensen, 12 i 30, 14/16 ii 15, 41, 18/20 iii 3, 35; cf. Ch. Virolleaud, “Quelques textes cunéiformes inédits,” *ZA* 19 (1905/6): 378:13.

¹³⁵Exod 35:3; cf. Num 15:32-36.

¹³⁶Note the stock phrase that offerings have been divided among the gods of Emar (Emar VI.3 nos. 369:19, 47-48, 87; 370:39-40; 385:11-12; 388:61-62, 66; 452:7; 463:4-6, 29-30). Note also the passing of Anu’s and Ištar’s trays to the other gods and/or goddesses in Racc. 90:25; and S. Lackenbacher, “Un nouveau fragment de la ‘fête d’Ištar,’” *RA* 71 [1977]: 40:22-23; and the setting of Bel’s golden offering table before Nabû when he arrives from Borsippa in Racc. 142/143:385-412.

¹³⁷As, e.g., in the Middle Assyrian ritual for Adad, where specified cuts of the sheep sacrificed to the god went to Šala, Taramua, Kubu, and Anu (Menzel, T, 3 r. 7-11). Note also T 99/101 iii 7, 16-17, iv 21-22; T 102:8-9, 19.

¹³⁸See D. E. Fleming, *The Installation of Baal’s High Priestess at Emar*, HSS 42 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 137-140.

They place seven meal breads, seven dried breads (and) two dried breads with fruits before the gods. They fill cups with wine and beer.”¹³⁹ It is occasionally mentioned that meat offered to gods was first salted to make it more palatable.¹⁴⁰

The morning and evening meals¹⁴¹ had their own etiquette, which varied somewhat depending on whether this was an ordinary day or one associated with some festival. Normally, meals were left for a decent interval and then cleared away, doubtless to prevent their spoiling before they could be redistributed (see below); on special occasions, however, the food on the gods’ trays was left out overnight¹⁴² (and presumably thrown away in the morning), as may be seen from the following description of the routine for the ninth and tenth days of the seventh-month *akītu*-festival of Anu at Uruk:

The big (meal of the morning) is cleared away and the small (meal) is offered; he fills the incense burner and the singers sing. . . . It is not cleared away. In the evening, it is cleared away and the big meal of the evening is offered. He fills the golden incense burner and makes sacrifices of oxen and sheep. The singers sing. The big (meal) is cleared away and the small (meal) is offered. The singers sing. . . . It is not cleared away (but) spends the night. The door is locked. . . . When day dawns, the door is unlocked and what has spent the night is cleared away and he brings water for washing. Oil is taken out. The big meal of the morning is offered. The singers sing. The big (meal) is cleared away and the small (meal) is offered. The small (meal) is cleared away and the big meal of the evening is offered. The singers sing.¹⁴³ The small (meal) of the evening is cleared away and the door is locked.¹⁴⁴

In regular offerings and calendric rites of the Neo-Assyrian period, boiled meat (*silqu*) was typically offered to the gods.¹⁴⁵ The rare occasions on which roasted meat (*šumē*) is offered in calendric rituals suggest that this distinction

¹³⁹Emar VI.3 no. 369:11-12, cf. nos. 369:27-28, 49-50; 370:45-47, 48-50, 51-53, 60-62, 63-65, 66-68; 385:5-7, 12-13, 29-34; 387:11-16; 388:2-3.

¹⁴⁰BBR nos. 1-20:80, 83, 86; Menzel, T, 46:4-6; T 78 v 12’-13’; T 102:19-20; T 112:22, cf. 7-17.

¹⁴¹These were served at dawn and at dusk; see Charpin, 317.

¹⁴²Note *Racc.* 79 r. 36-38, where “overnight” rites are mentioned alongside monthly offerings, “brazier,” “(purifications with) holy water basin,” “(new) clothing,” and “marriage” ceremonies, etc., in a list of offerings that occurred periodically throughout the year.

¹⁴³Note the mention of singers in connection with divine meals in Old Akkadian Elam (I. J. Gelb and B. Kienast, *Altakkadischen Königsinschriften*, 325/326 ii 14-iii 2).

¹⁴⁴*Racc.* 92/93 r. 3-14 (days 9-10); cf. 121 r. 28-31 (end of the festival).

¹⁴⁵Note also M. Birot, “Fragment de rituel de Mari relatif au *kispu*,” in *Death in Mesopotamia: Papers Read at the XXVIIe Rencontre assyriologique internationale*, Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology 8, ed. B. Alster (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1980), 142 i 11-12 (Old Babylonian Mariot *kispu* offerings); *Racc.* 79 r. 32-34 (late Babylonian monthly offerings).

was a way of marking a less important offering,¹⁴⁶ as to an object¹⁴⁷ or minor divinities, when an important god was also receiving offerings.¹⁴⁸

More importantly, the presence of roasted rather than the usual boiled meat could symbolize the fact that the recipient was in transit at the time of the offering. Thus, for example, during the seventh-month *akītu*-festival of Anu at Uruk, the god ate roasted meat for the seven days he was in the *akītu*-house, and was offered hot roasted meat on his first day back in the courtyard of his temple as well.¹⁴⁹

Although Israelite regular offerings took the form of holocausts, a certain amount of fuss was still made about the exact manner in which the meat was to be presented: "Then he shall skin the holocaust and cut it up into pieces. After Aaron's sons, the priests, have put some burning embers on the altar and laid some wood on them,¹⁵⁰ they shall lay the pieces of meat, together with the head and the fat, on top of the wood and embers on the altar.¹⁵¹ The inner organs and shanks, however, the priest shall first wash with water. The priest shall then burn the whole offering on the altar as a holocaust."¹⁵²

As in ancient Mesopotamia, the divine meal consisted mostly of meat, but cereal offerings¹⁵³ were also formally presented and libations of wine poured

¹⁴⁶The Old Babylonian butcher's manual (see above) would seem to indicate that, even when the rest of the animal was being boiled, certain parts (viz. the hooves and tail) were still roasted. One might suppose that it was this sort of "roast" that was offered to objects and lesser divinities; however, the "roast" and the "boil" mentioned in calendric rites always seem to come from separate sheep; note Menzel, T, 100 iii 13'-14', where the king waits for them to finish roasting the meat before presenting his offering.

¹⁴⁷Menzel, T, 99 ii 24-25 (a bed); T 100 iii 13-15 (a stool).

¹⁴⁸As, e.g., the offering of roasted meat, which is placed in the *apū* for the Lisikutu gods (Menzel, T, 100 iii 16-21).

¹⁴⁹*Racc.* 89:7-15, 90:22-25; cf. Lackenbacher, 71 40:19-21' (Ištar's *akītu*). Similarly with Marduk and Nabū at the *akītu* of the New Year's Festival (Livingstone, SAA 3 no. 34:50; no. 35:26; *Racc.* 142/143:385-412). The same encoding may apply to the offerings to Gula in Menzel, T, 102:14, 23, since the goddess receives first roasted and then boiled meat in the course of the ritual. Note also Menzel, T, 99 iii 14,22, where the goddess Ištar is "brought in" and then offered roasted meat, as well as the fact that the visiting Anu and Enlil (but not the resident Nergal and Ereškigal) are said to receive roasted meat in the Netherworld (Gilg VII iv 43).

¹⁵⁰For details on the type of wood used, see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 387-388; Hultgård, 87. In addition to being from one of the twelve correct varieties, the wood had to be worm-free, hard, clean, and not too old.

¹⁵¹Actually, the meat was thrown onto the altar from a safe distance; see Hultgård, 90.

¹⁵²Lev 1:6-9, cf. 12-13; Exod 29:17-18; Lev 8:20-21; 9:13-14. Birds were also plucked, decropped, split down the middle, and flattened out (Lev 1:16-17). For more details on presentation, see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 156-163, 169-172; cf. 240 (the location and archaeologically excavated contents of Jerusalem's ash heap).

¹⁵³Exod 29:38-41; Lev 2:1-2, 8; 6:7-8; 9:3-4, 16-17; 14:10, 19-20, 21, 31; 23:12-13,

out.¹⁵⁴ On the Sabbath, two piles of six cakes each of baked shewbread were placed on the pure gold table before the Lord.¹⁵⁵ Salting of the meat (and cereal offerings) was mandatory.¹⁵⁶ To complete the meal-like atmosphere, the dark interior of the sanctuary was lit with olive oil lamps¹⁵⁷ and special incense¹⁵⁸ was burned at the morning and evening holocaust offerings.¹⁵⁹

The most striking difference between this and ancient Mesopotamian gods' meals is not the method of presentation, but the comparative poverty of the offerings. If ancient Mesopotamian gods ate like modern Syrians, then the god of the Israelites ate like modern Mauritians. This was doubtless not an accident. According to Israelite tradition, their ancestors were originally seminomadic herdsmen (like many modern Mauritians), and retaining in the offerings some features of that seminomadic past would be consistent not only with tradition, but with a more general principle that the food offered to spirits, and particularly remote and distant spirits (more usually ghosts or Netherworld gods) should be 'archaic'.¹⁶⁰

The Israelite evening holocaust was left on the hearth of the altar all night and not removed until the following morning.¹⁶¹ As we have seen above, ancient Mesopotamian divine meals were, by contrast, left only for a decent interval and then cleared away, doubtless to prevent their spoiling before they could be redistributed. On special occasions, however, as for example on the ninth and tenth days of the seventh-month *akītu*-festival of Anu at Uruk, the

18, 37; Num 4:16; 6:14-15; 7:13, 19, 25, 31, 37, 43, 49, 55, 61, 67, 73, 79, 87; 15:3-4, 6, 8-9, 24; 28:3-5, 8, 9, 11-13, 19-21, 27-29, 31; 29:2-4, 6, 8-10, 11, 13-15, 16, 17-18, 19, 20-21, 22, 23-24, 25, 26-27, 28, 29-30, 31, 32-33, 34, 36-37, 38, 39; Ezek 45:23-24, 25; 46:4-5, 6-7, 11, 13-14, 15.

¹⁵⁴Exod 29:38-41; Lev 23:12-13; Num 15:3-5, 6-7, 8-10; 28:7, 14; cf. Lev 23:18, 37; Num 6:14; 15:24; 28:8, 9, 10, 15, 24, 31; 29:6, 11, 16, 17-18, 19, 20-21, 22, 23-24, 25, 26-27, 28, 29-30, 31, 32-33, 34, 36-37, 38, 39. This could not, of course, be done in such a way as to extinguish the fire; for details, see Milgrom, *Numbers*, JPS Torah Commentary 4 (Philadelphia: JPS, 1989), 119; Hultgård, 90.

¹⁵⁵Lev 24:5-6.

¹⁵⁶Lev 2:13; Ezek 43:23-24; cf. Num 18:19 ("covenant of salt"; see Milgrom, *Numbers*, 154). See Levine, 13, for various opinions as to the significance of this requirement. The incense was also salted (Exod 30:35), as was the skin of the holocaust (*ApLev* 37; see Hultgård, 90).

¹⁵⁷Exod 27:20-21; 30:7-8; Lev 24:1-4; Num 4:16; 8:1-4. The oil used in these lamps was of cooking rather than ordinary lamp grade; see Sarna, 175-176.

¹⁵⁸The formula is given in Exod 30:34-38; see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 236-238.

¹⁵⁹Exod 30:7-8; cf. Num 4:16; 7:86.

¹⁶⁰See J. Scurlock, "Ghosts in the Ancient Near East: Weak or Powerful?" *HUCA* 68 (1997): 87-90.

¹⁶¹Lev 6:2. For details on the procedure of removal, see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 385-386.

food on ancient Mesopotamian gods' trays was left out overnight (and presumably thrown away in the morning). In this ceremony, what was the required pattern for biblical offerings seems to represent a transitional meal (day 9) between the roasted meat offerings of days one to eight (for which see below) and the normal routine that settles in on days ten and eleven. A similar leaving overnight occurred during the bonfire festival of Anu at Uruk.¹⁶²

Interesting, therefore, in comparative perspective is to notice that, in both ancient Mesopotamian rites the leaving overnight of food appears in a context in which a god is in the process of being introduced into his sanctuary (from the *akītu* house in the case of the seventh-month ritual and from the heavens in the case of the bonfire festival). The fact that leaving overnight was standard in Israelite cult praxis would, then, seem to suggest that the Israelite Lord of Hosts, like the *kami* spirits of Japanese shrines, was not fully resident in his sanctuary, but had to be invited in to receive his offerings (and/or kept there) by means of a perpetual fire, as is described in the same passage from Leviticus:¹⁶³ "The holocaust is to remain on the hearth of the altar all night until the next morning, and the fire is to be kept burning on the altar. . . . The fire on the altar is to be kept burning; it must not go out."¹⁶⁴

The contrast between regular and occasional offerings in Israel could not take the form of boiled versus roasted meat,¹⁶⁵ as in ancient Mesopotamia. Interesting to note, however, is the fact that the cereal offerings that accompanied the meat were different for the daily and calendric holocausts than they were for "peace" offerings. The former were always accompanied by fine flour mixed with olive oil and frankincense,¹⁶⁶ whereas the latter were presented with specially baked or fried, unleavened cakes and wafers (see below). An apparent exception is an otherwise troublesome passage in Leviticus, describing the priest's cereal offering that apparently accompanied the morning and evening holocausts.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶²Racc. 119:12-13, 121 r. 28-29.

¹⁶³To the term *tamid*, used of this daily offering in Rabbinic sources, compare the ancient Mesopotamian offering term *ginū* "continual" (for references, see CAD G 80-82).

¹⁶⁴Lev 6:2, 6; cf. 6:5. The sanctuary's oil lamps were also kept burning all night (Exod 27:20-21; Lev 24:1-4), a pillar of smoke by day and of fire by night (cf. Exod 40:38; Num 9:15), signaling the presence of YHWH in his sanctuary; see Sarna, 176.

¹⁶⁵Note, however, that one of the etymologies for the term used to describe the ancient Israelite holocaust offering would link it to the Arabic *ḡy* ("to boil"); see Gaster, 154.

¹⁶⁶Exod 29:40-41; Lev 6:7-8; 9:4; 14:10, 21; 23:12-13; Num 7:13, 19, 25, 31, 37, 43, 49, 55, 61, 67, 73, 79; 15:3-4, 6, 8-9; 28:3-5, 9, 11-13, 19-21, 27-29; 29:2-4, 8-10, 13-15; Ezek 45:23-24; 46:4-5, 6-7, 11, 13-14, 15. The exact preparation is described in Lev 2:1-3. The presence of the oil and frankincense helped to distinguish between this and the substitute "sin" offering of flour (Lev 5:11-13); see Levine, 29-30; Hultgård, 87.

¹⁶⁷Lev 6:13-16. This passage has caused much difficulty of interpretation; see Levine, 34, 38-39; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 396-401. According to the *Tamid*, which envisages nine priests to carry various parts of the offering, the seventh priest is to carry the cereal offering and the ninth the libation accompanying the holocaust, whereas the

Perhaps at least a partial explanation for this is that the griddle cakes, which the priest was to crumble and burn in their entirety, were a private offering, designed to make the leftovers of the regular (flour) cereal offering, described in the immediately preceding passage, lawful for him to eat.¹⁶⁸

Also one of the exceptions to the general rule of boiled meat in regular and calendric offerings in ancient Mesopotamia, namely, the fact that, during the seventh-month *akītu*-festival of Anu at Uruk, the god ate roasted meat for the seven days he was in the *akītu*-house and was offered hot roasted meat on his first day back in the courtyard of his temple, as well¹⁶⁹ accords quite well with Israelite offering encoding.

When the offering meat was to be cooked and eaten by the priests or sacrificers in or near sacred ground, Israelite protocol invariably demanded boiling: "You shall take the flesh of the ordination ram and boil it in a holy place. At the entrance of the meeting tent Aaron and his sons shall eat of the flesh of the lamb and the bread that is in the basket."¹⁷⁰ To this rule, there was only one exception and that was the requirement that the Passover lamb, which people were supposed to eat "like those who are in flight," be roasted rather than boiled.¹⁷¹ If, as seems probable, the reason that roasted meat was offered to the gods in ancient Mesopotamia in occasional sacrifices is that these rites were not performed in the god's house (the temple), as with regular and calendric rites, but were typically carried out in places in which the relatively "uncivilized" technique of spit-roasting meat over an open fire would seem naturally appropriate (see below), then the principle governing the choice of which type of meat to use was not dissimilar between ancient Mesopotamia and Israel.

Holocaust Offerings in Mesopotamia

A little-known fact is that there were, particularly in the late periods, a number of ancient Mesopotamian rites that required an entire animal to be consumed as a holocaust offering: "For *dību*, *šibtu* and plague not to approach the hor[ses and] soldiers of the king . . . [y]ou heap up a brush pile. You load on *e²ru*-hardwood and *āšagu*-thorn. On top you bind a virgin lamb. . . . You ignite the [fir]."¹⁷² A similar fate presumably awaited the "sheep for burning," mentioned in a late Babylonian text, recording the paraphernalia needed for an

eighth carries the separate cereal offering of the high priest (see Hultgård, 89-90).

¹⁶⁸Rabbinic tradition indicates that the evening offering of griddle cakes was the last offering of the day (see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 399), which would position it temporally between the regular flour offering and the consumption of the ritual leftovers.

¹⁶⁹*Racc.* 89:7-15, 90:22-25; cf. Lackenbacher, 71.40:19-21' (Ištar's *akītu*). Similarly with Marduk and Nabû at the *akītu* of the New Year's Festival (Livingstone, SAA 3 no. 34:50; no. 35:26; *Racc.* 142/143:385-412).

¹⁷⁰Exod 29:31-32; cf. Lev 8:31; Num 6:19; Ezek 46:20, 24.

¹⁷¹Exod 12:8-9, 11.

¹⁷²R. Caplice, *OrNS* 39 118/119 no. IX:1-2, 15-16, 36-37.

unspecified ritual, probably *bīt rimki*.¹⁷³

In some cases, at least, the animal seems to have been slaughtered before burning. Part of the late Babylonian builders' ritual for a house called for an immolation on the roof: "You ignite a brush pile of sweet reed on top of four bricks. You smear the neck of a red lamb with cedar resin¹⁷⁴ and then you cut (its throat). You dress (it) in a white garment and then you burn it."¹⁷⁵ The offerings that precede the holocaust indicate that the Sibitti (i.e., the Pleiades) were the intended recipients.¹⁷⁶ To accompany a "hand-raising" prayer directed to another astral divinity, the moon god Sin, what appears to be a similarly humane holocaust offering was also contemplated: "At night, in the presence of Sin, you sweep off the roof. You [sprinkle] pure water. You pile up a brush pile. You arrange seven emmer breads on top of the brush pile. You disarticulate a pure lamb which is not black.¹⁷⁷ 3 *qū* of [fl]our which a man has ground, 1 *qū* of salt. . . . You fill seven jugs with honey, ghee, wine, [be]er and water and heap them on top of the brush pile. You pour out a libation of *mibbu*-beer."¹⁷⁸

As a holocaust offering was an expensive sort of sacrifice, allowances had to be made when someone other than the king was expected to perform it: "If (the sponsor of the divinatory sacrifice) is a prince, he burns a dove as a burnt offering; if he is a poor man, he burns the heart of a sheep."¹⁷⁹ The person cured of *sabaršubbū*, another probable charity case, was to burn a shelduck and a crab before Šamaš.¹⁸⁰

Holocausts also appear as part of calendric rites. For example, as part of the Late Babylonian New Year's festival, an ox seems to have been, literally, torched: "In the great courtyard, they open up a pit, and he puts into the pit forty straight reeds of three cubits each, which have been neither cut nor broken and which he has tied into a bundle with a palm frond.¹⁸¹ He puts in honey, ghee, pure oil (and). . . . They . . . a white ox bef[ore] the planet

¹⁷³von Weiher, *SpTU* 4 no. 128:75; see below. The reference is perhaps to the point in the ritual in which the officiant is to "burn the [sh]eep² of the brush pile" (*BBR* no. 26 ii 25).

¹⁷⁴Literally the "blood" of the cedar, an obvious signal that the appearance of the lamb's blood was desired.

¹⁷⁵von Weiher, *SpTU* 2 no. 17 iv 14-16.

¹⁷⁶There were seven thrones, seven white cloths, seven red cloths, seven reed altars, seven emmer breads and seven *namxītu* vessels, one for each of the "Seven Gods" (von Weiher, *SpTU* 2 no. 17 iv 9-13).

¹⁷⁷One of the meanings of the color black was to signal an eclipse; since the moon god was being addressed in this sacrifice, such a color would give an entirely wrong message.

¹⁷⁸E. Ebeling, *MVAG* 23/1 (1918) 15/16 iii 13-19; cf. also *BAM* 580 vi 17'-20'.

¹⁷⁹Menzel, *T*, 109 r. 6-7.

¹⁸⁰Tsukimoto, 199-200:88.

¹⁸¹These represent the enemies of Marduk as is revealed by a Neo-Assyrian cultic commentary: "The bundle of reeds which one prepares is Bel, treading on the necks of his . . . relentless enemies" (*Livingstone*, *SAA* 3, no. 38: 10-11).

Mercury].¹⁸² The king [introduces] an ignited fire into it by means of a reed. The king and . . . [say] this *naqbitu*-prayer: "Shining Mercury"¹⁸³ that brigh[tens the darkness . . .] burner of Anu."¹⁸⁴

Such holocausts are not uncommon in Neo-Assyrian calendric rites: "He (the Assyrian king) sets up an offering table. He makes sacrifices. He offers the boiled meat. . . . He burns a virgin she goat."¹⁸⁵ The same is true of Middle Babylonian Emar: "They (the Emariots) make a *kebadu*-offering of a ewe . . . before the Battle Gate; they burn that one ewe for all the gods."¹⁸⁶ "In the night, they bu[rn] one bird, water, honey (and) ghee."¹⁸⁷ In the "Anatolian" rituals from Emar, adult male goats were consumed in some quantity, along with bread (and) sometimes beer and wine as well.¹⁸⁸ Most importantly, in Assyria at least, holocausts were included among the daily offerings. A Neo-Assyrian royal grant records the setting aside of "twenty-three sheep, two oxen, two calves for the incense burners, for the burnt offerings of morning and evening."¹⁸⁹ This last usage of the holocaust is the closest equivalent to the Israelite "burnt offering" (*ʿōlā*). Interesting, therefore, from a comparative perspective, is the fact that we possess a Neo-Assyrian cultic commentary that indicates that such holocaust offerings were understood to please the gods by symbolically destroying their enemies: "The [brazier]r which is lighted in front of Mulissu, and the sheep which they throw on the brazier and which the fire

¹⁸²The name of the planet Mercury is *šibtu* from *šabātu*, for which the Sumerogram is GU₄.UD. Taken another way, however, the Sumerogram could mean "white ox" (GU₄.BABBAR), hence the choice of offering.

¹⁸³The interpretation follows J. A. Black, "The New Year Ceremonies in Ancient Babylon: 'Taking Bel by the Hand' and 'A Cultic Picnic,'" *Religion* 11 (1981): 45, 51, but it should be noted that the copy has a clear ZĀLAG in line 461 where an UD would be required.

¹⁸⁴Racc. 145/146:454-462.

¹⁸⁵Menzel, T, 60 vi 25-27; cf. T 77 ii 5-9; T 80/81 i 3-5, vi 5-6; T 34 iv 17, 19.

¹⁸⁶Emar VI.3 no. 373:33-35, cf. 59-60; no. 446:90-91. Compare the sheep that are "turned into smoke" as part of a first-millennium Aramaic ritual (Steiner apud Cohen, 452).

¹⁸⁷Emar VI.3 no. 463:9; cf. no. 446:98.

¹⁸⁸Emar VI.3 nos. 471:29-33; 472:16-18, 23-24, 27-29, cf. 14-15. If Cohen's interpretation of NĪG.GIŠ.TAG.GA as "burnt offering" is correct, the earliest attestation of such "burnt offerings" in Mesopotamia would be at Umma in the Ur III period (see Cohen, 165, 171 [oxen]; 174, 181, 190 [vegetarian]). Note, however, that this interpretation is disputed (Mayer and Sallaberger, 10:100).

¹⁸⁹Kataja and Whiting, SAA 12 no. 48:10-11; cf. *ABL* 606 r. 2-6, 648:6-r. 6. Note also: "They place the *parsu* ox and the *parsu* six sheep on the incense burner which is before Iškur" (Emar VI.3 no. 369:37; cf. nos. 370:23-26; 385:12-13; 394:29; Menzel, T, 54 no. 33: 4-7; T 62 vii 44-48; T 64 viii 30-42). For further references, see *CAD* M/1 252a s.v., *maqlūtu* mng. 2; *CAD* Q 70-71 s.v., *qalū* mng. 3; *CAD* Š/2: 51 s.v. *šarāpu* mng. 1d and *CAD* Š/3: 373 s.v. *šurupūtu* mng. 2.

burns, is Qingu when they burn [him] in the fire.¹⁹⁰ The torches which he lights from the brazier are merciless arrows from the quiver of Marduk. . . . The king, who wears his jewelry and burns up virgin she-goats is Marduk who, wearing his armor, bur[ned] the sons of Illil and Anu in the fire.”¹⁹¹ To be noted in this connection is the expression, which is almost invariably used to describe holocaust offerings in Israel and which literally means “a soothing odor to Yahweh.”¹⁹²

This by no means excludes the argument of Baruch Levine that holocaust offerings were designed to attract the attention of YHWH to the needs of his human worshippers.¹⁹³ On the contrary, we have already argued (see above) that the ancient Israelite deity may not have been fully resident in his sanctuary, but had to be invited in to receive his offerings (and/or kept there) by means of a perpetual fire. Perhaps significant in this regard is the technical term conventionally translated as “token offering” (*azkarah*) on the strength of a supposed connection with Akkadian *zikru* B: “image, counterpart, replica.”¹⁹⁴ The considerably more common *zikru* A: “words, mention, name” derives from *zakāru*, meaning (*inter alia*) “to invoke,”¹⁹⁵ allowing for an alternative interpretation of *azkarah* as (“invocation offering”). This, in turn, allows for a direct association between what Levine terms “rites of attraction” and Israelite burnt offerings, since the “token” offering (see below) was almost invariably burnt.

¹⁹⁰Note Menzel, T, 64 viii 30-32. For instance, “(When) there is too much firewood at his breast, he appeals to Šamaš. Thus says the lord of everything (EN ŠÚ) Qingu: ‘Will he bind me and burn me? Why do they now bring me before Nusku?’” (A. Livingstone, *Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works of Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986] 169).

¹⁹¹Livingstone, SAA 3 no. 37:9-12, 16-17.

¹⁹²See Hultgård, 91. This translation is dismissed by Milgrom on the usual grounds that, although the Akkadian cognate to *nibāab*, namely *nubbu*, indisputably refers to “appeasing, placating, soothing,” in Hebrew this is a frozen expression whose original meaning has been forgotten (*Leviticus 1-16*: 162-163, 252). The problem is that this formulation sounds to Milgrom uncomfortably like “magic,” a connection which he seeks to deny. For the relevance of the Akkadian cognate, see also Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 2:696. In addition to the holocaust offering, the expression is also used of the *selāmim* and once of the “sin” offerings, but never of the “guilt” offerings, which were designed to expiate offenses that were primarily sins against man rather than sins against god; see below.

¹⁹³Levine, 5-6. This is seconded by Jonathan Klawans, “Pure Violence: Sacrifice and Defilement in Ancient Israel,” *HTR* 94 (2001): 151-156.

¹⁹⁴See Levine, 10; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 181-182.

¹⁹⁵See *CAD* Z. 16-22.

Leftovers of the Sacrifice

In ancient Mesopotamian regular sacrifices, food was prepared and presented to the gods, who took only the essence, leaving the remainder¹⁹⁶ to be divided up among the temple personnel. Who, exactly, got what could get very complicated, but care was taken to see to it that none was wasted.¹⁹⁷

Nabu-apla-iddina, king of Babylon, for the sake of Šamaš, Aya and Bunene, established a portion, the king's share (of the offerings), as food ration for the *šangū* (of their temple). From the sheep from the king's sacrifices for the whole year, a leg, the hide, the back section, the tendons, half of the stomachs, half of the intestines, two fetlocks and a bowl of meat broth. . . . Nabu-apla-iddina, king of Babylon gave as a gift to Nabu-nadin-šumi, *šangū* of Sippar, the diviner, his servant.¹⁹⁸

In Assyria, where the king was also high priest, sacrificial leftovers served not only to feed various temple personnel, but also to supply the palace table with meat. A set of documents found in the palace of Aššurbanipal at Nineveh record the distribution of "leftovers" (*rihtu*) of sacrificial meals from the Aššur temple, which consisted of a wide variety of foodstuffs: cuts of beef and mutton, fowl, stomachs, livers, kidneys, hearts, chick peas, onions, sesame, olives, meat broth, spices, at least four types of bread, milk, wine, and flavored beers (of which the goddess Mulissu seems to have been especially fond), and various types of sweets and fruits, especially quinces.¹⁹⁹

Even in Babylonia, where the king was not high priest, it was the custom, from at least the Old Babylonian period on,²⁰⁰ for him to receive a share of certain sacrificial offerings.²⁰¹ It followed that giving "the king's share" to a person was a way of acknowledging that person as king. By the Neo-Assyrian period, it was possible for the prominent cult centers of Babylonia to acknowledge their submission to Assyria by the simple

¹⁹⁶These were referred to as "leftovers" (cf. *CAD* R 340 s.v. *rihtu* mng. 2).

¹⁹⁷On these points, see esp. Charpin, 303-325 (Old Babylonian Ur). There is no longer any excuse for quoting the virulently polemical *Apochrophon of Bel and the Dragon* (Lambert, 55, 200) as evidence for ancient Mesopotamian cult praxis. On this point, also Mayer and Sallaberger, 10:98.

¹⁹⁸*BBS* no. 36 v 3-15, vi 9-13. Note also the more complete listing from the Eanna temple in Uruk from the same reign: G. J. P. McEwan, "Distribution of Meat in Eanna," *Iraq* 45 (1983): 187-198; cf. Emar VI.3 no. 369:89-94.

¹⁹⁹Fales and Postgate, SAA 7 nos. 182-219; cf. Kataja and Whiting, SAA 12 nos. 68, 77, 78, 81; Menzel, T, 97.

²⁰⁰There is a single document from the Ur III period (*BIN* 2 304) that would seem to indicate that leftovers of sacrificial animals were already being eaten by royal officials at this time (reference and interpretation of this text are courtesy M. Hilgert).

²⁰¹See J. R. Kupper, "Le rituel *elūnum*," *NABU* 1996 no. 32; cf. idem, "*anumma zittaki*," *NABU* 1996 no. 130. This practice was still in evidence under the Neo-Babylonian kings; see P. A. Beaulieu, "Cuts of Meat of King Nebuchadnezzar," *NABU* 1990 no. 93.

expedient of formally handing over sacrificial leftovers.²⁰²

Enterprising citizens of Old Babylonian Ur²⁰³ and Late Babylonian Uruk sold entitlements to shares of the benefits of minor temple offices, such as butcher and courtyard sweeper on the open market:

Rubuttu, daughter of Anu-uballit, son of Nidintu-Anu . . . has sold one thirtieth(?) of a day per day from day one to day five (and) one ninth of a day per day from day six to day [x], her share of the *ērib bitūti* prebend before Anu, Antu, Papsukkal, Ištar, Belet-šeri and all the gods of their temples (plus) one twelfth of a day per day from day one to day fifteen, her share of the *ērib bitūti* prebend before Enlil, Papsukkal, Nanay, Belet-reš, Šarrahitu and all the gods of their temples (plus) one fifth and one thirty-sixth of a day per day on days twenty-three and twenty-four, her share of the *ērib bitūti* and butcher's prebend in Egalmah, the temple of Gula . . . and all the gods of her temple (plus) her portion (consisting of) two cuts of cooked or raw meat on day one, six cuts of cooked or raw meat on days ten, eleven and twelve, and one cut of cooked or raw meat on day twenty-seven from the sheep which come up on those days to that temple to the table of the Mistress of the Land (Gula) (plus) her portion (consisting of) hulled barley, six *takkasū* pastries, oil, thirty Dilmun dates, and a leg of mutton on day thirteen together with a back portion from the *pēt bābi* festival which come up to the table of Anu and Antu (plus) her portion (consisting of) one cut of cooked or raw meat from the sheep which come up on day four to the table of Belet-šeri (plus) her portion of the cooked or raw meat from the sheep which come up on day thirteen to the table of Papsukkal and Belet-šeri, a total of three fifths of that meat (plus) her portion (consisting of) one half of a thigh from the lamb which comes up on day three to the table of Ištar (plus) her portion (consisting of) one twenty-eighth of the ducks which come up on every *ēšēšū* festival to the table of Nanay and her portion (consisting of) one half of a sheep which comes up on every *ēšēšū* festival to the table of the statues of kings, these portions, monthly, for the whole year . . . for one mina of pure silver in staters of Demetrius as its full price to Anu-zera-iddin, son of Anu-uballit, son of Anu-zer-iddin, etc.²⁰⁴

Even assuming Rubuttu to have been a very ample personage indeed, and one who ate red meat every day of the year in defiance of hemerologies, she can hardly have consumed so much by herself. The excess presumably went to feed her family, servants, dependents, or was resold to other persons. As the small fractions of shares indicate, however, there was nothing to prevent prebends from consisting of more manageable portions as in a Neo-Babylonian sale of "one ox head (and) one sheep's head, the revenue of his prebend from before Išhara."²⁰⁵

²⁰²For references to such incidents under Adad-Nirari III, Tiglath-Pileser III, and Sargon II, see H. Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences & Humanities, 1994), 86-87.

²⁰³See Charpin, 251-269; for actual examples of such sales see, e.g., 174-175, 178-179, 180-182, 190-191.

²⁰⁴G. J. P. McEwan, *Priest and Temple in Hellenistic Babylonia*, FAOS 4 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1981), 76/77:1-23.

²⁰⁵F. E. Peiser, *Babylonische Verträge der Berliner Museums* (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard,

On festival days, the increased quantity of offerings was balanced by a corresponding widening of the circle of those allowed to eat from the god's table. Minimally, those performing special work²⁰⁶ or helping to carry the gods' emblems in procession,²⁰⁷ as well as the festival sponsors, got to take home sacrificial leftovers.²⁰⁸ Maximally, all of the inhabitants of the god's city or city quarter got a chance to feast. At Emar, during the *kišzu*-festival of Išhara and Ninurta, "the men and women of the city, whoever they may be, take (some of the bread) [from] before them."²⁰⁹ In Neo-Assyrian Kalḫu, during the marriage feast of Nabû in Ayyaru, "anybody who brings an offering of as little as one *qû* of bread may eat in the temple of Nabû."²¹⁰

Ordinary worshipers also participated in calendric sacrifices in other ways. The cella of an ancient Mesopotamian temple was too small to accommodate large numbers of people; on festival days, therefore, the crowd that assembled in the temple courtyard to witness the festivities were treated to a periodic appearance of the officiant: "He (the king) makes a sacrifice. He burns honey (and) oil. He finishes his *maqû*-bowl. He is seen (by the people)."²¹¹ Where the sacrifice was out in the open and water was offered for the gods to wash, the people in attendance on the rite might be sprinkled with some of it.²¹² At the end of the ceremony, Neo-Assyrian ritual instructions sometimes mention the

1890), nos. 96 + 123:8-9.

²⁰⁶As, e.g., the craftsmen who manufactured figurines required for the late Babylonian New Year's festival at Babylon (*Racc.* 132/133:196-200). Note also the slave girl, the pastry cooks, and the potter required by Emariot rituals (Emar VI.3 nos. 387:20-21; 388:11-13, 68-69); cf. van Driel, 202 r. 12'-14' (two scribes and a cook).

²⁰⁷As in the Middle Assyrian festival for Adad, where the *qadištu*-women got a share of the sacrificial meat (Menzel, T, 3 r. 12).

²⁰⁸See, e.g., Emar VI.3 nos. 369:12-14, 38-39, 53-55, 61, 69-71, 78-79, 81-82, 370:55-58; 385:14, 24, 36-38; 387:22-23; 388:60-61, 64-65; 394:36-38; 446:20-22, 33-38, 60, 78-80, 103-104, 116. Officiating temple personnel and the king also got their shares; see, e.g., Emar VI.3 nos. 369:55-59, 75-76, 79-87; 370:33-36, 59, 111-114; 385:16-18; 388:57-58, 62-63, 67; 394:23-25, 41-44; 446:27-28, 38-39, 44, 51-53, 74-75, 80-81, 93-94, 101, 104, 108-109; 447:3-5.

²⁰⁹Emar VI.3, no. 387:18-19; cf. nos. 370:32-33, 110 (the troops); 472:73-74.

²¹⁰*ABL* 65 r. 8-9 (see E. Matsushima, *ASJ* 9:133; cf. Cohen, 312). Note also a festival celebrated by the Ur III monarch Šulgi, where, it has been estimated, enough beer was mustered to have satisfied the thirst of 45,000 persons to the tune of four liters of beer per day for each of the four days of the festival (D. O. Edzard, "Private Frömmigkeit in Sumer" in *Official Cult and Popular Religion in the Ancient Near East*, ed. E. Matsushima [Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1993], 198).

²¹¹Menzel, T, 99/100 iii 7'-9'.

²¹²*Racc.* 90:22-23, 91 r. 3-4, 102 iii 17-18, 103 iv 11-12, 115 r. 8; Lackenbacher, 41:31-32, 46:26.

polite removal (*passuku*) of this crowd of onlookers.²¹³

Although YHWH is also described as imbibing the essence of the holocaust,²¹⁴ one might have thought that there would have been no leftovers from Israelite daily offerings to divide. However, the hide of the holocaust was the prerogative of the priest who made the offering.²¹⁵ The cereal offerings that accompanied the holocaust were also meant, with the exception of the frankincense and a handful of the flour and oil, which were burned as a “token” offering,²¹⁶ to be consumed by the priests, although in this case the officiant could not take all of it for himself, but had to share with his colleagues.²¹⁷ The priests were to make this flour into unleavened cakes and to eat them in a sacred place.²¹⁸

The shewbread, with the exception of the frankincense that was placed on it, was also a prerogative of the sons of Aaron.²¹⁹ The king of Israel was not a priest and should not, theoretically, have had any entitlement to the leftovers of regular offerings.²²⁰ Nonetheless, the fury of Saul when Ahimelech allowed

²¹³See, e.g., Menzel, T, 99 ii 10; T 101 iv 15’.

²¹⁴“When the Lord smelled the soothing odor, he said to himself, ‘Never again will I doom the earth because of man’” (Gen 8:21).

²¹⁵Lev 7:8.

²¹⁶Lev 2:1-3; 6:7-11; 9:17; cf. Ezek 44:29; Lev 2:14-16 (first fruits); Num 5:25-26 (cereal offering of jealousy). Milgrom explains this custom of partial burning of the holocaust cereal offering as an attempt to differentiate properly Yahwist worship from popular and heterodox practices allegedly consisting of completely burnt cereal offerings introduced from Assyria and intended for the goddess Ištar (*Leviticus 1-16*, 201-202). He seems to have forgotten that “every cereal offering of a priest shall be a whole burnt offering; it may not be eaten” (Lev 6:16), a passage that follows on the heels of instructions to burn only a handful of the cereal offering flour as a “token” offering (Lev 6:8). If an original, totally burnt offering was changed to a partial burning to avoid “rampant idolatry,” would not the priest’s personal offering have been the first to be changed?

²¹⁷Lev 7:9-10. Although it was only fair that the officiating priest should be paid for his services, some sharing was necessary, since Levites who had the misfortune to be imperfect could not actually officiate in person at sacrifices (Lev 21:17-23). Milgrom argues that the unshared cooked cereal offerings (and thigh of the “peace” offerings—see below) represent the cultic praxis of older non-Jerusalemite sanctuaries, which was ultimately combined with the younger Jerusalemite praxis of shared uncooked cereal offerings (and breast of the “peace” offerings) after the centralization of the cult (*Leviticus 1-16*, 183-184, 412, 435-436, 480-481). That the temple in Jerusalem with its large staff should have insisted on the sharing of offerings and have preferred as a meat cut the much larger breast is understandable. However, that this complex, which actually possessed kitchens, should have offered cereal raw to YHWH when little local shrines without kitchens offered it cooked or, for that matter, that raw flour mixed with frankincense and oil should have been considered an appropriate offering to an almighty god except on the grounds of ancestral praxis is hard to imagine.

²¹⁸Lev 6:9; 10:12-13.

²¹⁹Lev 24:7-9.

²²⁰Ezek 45:17 requires him to provide the regular offerings; Ezek 46:12 allows him

David to eat the shewbread²²¹ suggests that the priest's action, like the donation of the sword of Goliath that accompanied it,²²² was a symbolic acknowledgment of David's right to the throne (as indeed the equivalent action would have been in ancient Mesopotamia).²²³

On festival days in Israel, as in Mesopotamia, it was possible for ordinary persons to participate in the ritual as bystanders: "Thrice a year (Passover, Weeks, and Booths) shall all your men appear before the Lord God."²²⁴ Ordinary persons were not allowed to enter the Holy of Holies under any circumstances; what was contemplated was access to the altar of burnt offerings in the courtyard.²²⁵ Also once a year, ancient Israelite worshipers were allowed to partake of the sacrifice; at Passover, every household was to eat the roasted flesh of a lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.²²⁶

Interim Conclusion

We have been examining the sacrificial systems of ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East in comparative perspective in the hope that the why's and why not's of each system may be better understood by putting the beliefs and practices of ancient Israelites back into their original context.

The sex of the animal used for regular or occasional sacrifice in ancient Mesopotamia was usually the same as that of the deity receiving the offering. Moreover, the term used for "ritual cleansing" is cognate to the Akkadian *kuppurn*, which specifically refers to the "magical" transfer of problems from a human patient to a surrogate by means of direct physical contact. In contrast to the situation with contagious diseases, a transferred ill did not simply infect the recipient, but was actually drawn into the recipient, leaving the patient free and clear (and the recipient somewhat damaged) in the process.

Once transferred to the sacrificial animal, the sin, guilt, or other problem of the Israelite sacrificer was subsequently transferred to the sanctuary in the course of the sacrifice. It was this practice of transferring human problems to divinities (also attested in ancient Mesopotamia) that necessitated an annual purification of the Israelite sanctuary in the Ritual of Atonement.

the singular privilege of entering the temple complex to make his freewill offerings.

²²¹ Sam 21:2-8, 22:11-18.

²²² Sam 21:9-10.

²²³ As pointed out by Magnus Ottosson, as part of Saul's anointment as king of Israel by Samuel, Saul was made to eat the leg, i.e., the priest's share of a sacrificial meal ("Sacrifice and Sacred Meals in Ancient Israel" in *Gifts to the Gods, Proceedings of Uppsala Symposium, 1985*, ed. Tullia Linders and Gullög Nordquist [Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1987], 135-136).

²²⁴ Exod 23:14-17; 34:18, 22-24; Deut 16:16-17.

²²⁵ Ezek 46:9.

²²⁶ Exod 12:3-11; Num 9:11-12; cf. Deut 16:2-3.

Even with regular holocaust offerings, ostensibly the most distinctively non-Mesopotamian part of ancient Israelite sacrificial practices, parallels allow for greater understanding or serve to confirm observations made on other bases. Thus the holocaust was indeed intended as a food offering. Moreover, the Israelite Lord of Hosts was not fully resident in his sanctuary, but had to be invited in to receive his offerings (and/or kept there by means of a perpetual fire). More significantly, the fact that the Assyrian god Aššur received twice daily holocaust offerings allows us to understand, via Neo-Assyrian cultic commentaries, that holocaust offerings were understood to please gods by symbolically destroying their enemies. (To be concluded.)

IRIDESCENCE IN EZEKIEL

ROSS E. WINKLE
Pacific Union College
Angwin, California

Introduction

Explicit references to the rainbow in the OT occur only in Gen 9:13, 14, 16, and Ezek 1:28. While rainbow imagery (i.e., iridescence) is explicit in Ezek 1, one also finds it implicit not only in chapter 1 but also elsewhere in Ezekiel, shimmering beneath the surface of the text in all of its multicolored splendor. In this article, I will review the explicit iridescent imagery in Ezekiel and investigate such implicit imagery elsewhere in Ezekiel.¹ Further, I will explore the broader context of Ezekiel's iridescent imagery elsewhere in order to help explain why such imagery is relatively rare in the OT and NT.

Ezekiel's Explicit Iridescent Imagery

The explicit use of iridescent imagery occurs in only one place in Ezekiel. In Ezek 1, the prophet has an extraordinary, scintillating visionary experience of the glory² of the LORD by the Chebar River (1:1; cf. 8:4 and 43:3). Ezekiel begins his visionary description this way: "As I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it [וַיִּנְהַל לוֹ קַיִבִּיב], and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire" (1:4).³ Ezekiel's description subsequently moves inward as he describes, first, the four living creatures (vv. 5-12, 14, 23-24), then the burning coals of fire that flash forth lightning within the living creatures (v. 13), the mysterious wheels filled with eyes (vv. 14-20), the firmament above the living creatures (v. 22), the throne above the firmament (v. 26), and, finally, the being on the throne (vv. 26-27).

Ezekiel, consequently, sees a brightness or radiance surrounding the being upon the throne (1:27: וַיִּנְהַל לוֹ קַיִבִּיב).⁴ He then describes further how this radiance appeared: "Like the bow [הַקֶּשֶׁת] in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the splendor [הַנְּהִי] all around" (1:28a). The Hebrew word for

¹I am unaware of any published research that specifically analyzes in detail the topic of iridescence in Ezekiel.

²For the purposes of this article, I have decided *not* to capitalize "glory" unless a quoted source has done so.

³The text is taken from the NASB. Unless otherwise indicated, however, all English translations of the Hebrew OT and Greek NT are taken from the NRSV.

⁴Moshe Greenberg argues that this radiance surrounds the entire figure on the throne, instead of just the lower description of this being (*Ezekiel 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 22 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983], 50-51).

“bow” in this text (קשקש) occurs numerous times in the OT and normally refers to the bow of an archer.⁵ The meaning of “rainbow,” however, occurs in Ezekiel only here (cf. 39:3, 9); elsewhere in the OT it occurs only in Gen 9:13, 14, and 16.⁶ Thus this passage is the only explicit place where the prophet Ezekiel compares the radiance (הנה) surrounding the being on the throne to a rainbow (קשקש).⁷

It is important to note what the rest of Ezek 1:28 says. The whole verse reads: “Like the bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the splendor all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of someone speaking.” But what precisely does the “likeness of the glory of the LORD” encompass? Though it may appear so at first glance, the reference to “the likeness of the glory of the LORD” does not refer solely to rainbow imagery. Rather, it refers to the entire description in Ezek 1:26b-28a, where the vision zeroes in on the being on the throne and the surrounding radiance.⁸ One finds confirmation for this when one notices that in other texts in Ezekiel the glory is more than a radiance and would appear to include the celestial being that Ezekiel saw on the throne in chapter 1.⁹

⁵Cf., e.g., Gen 27:3; 48:22; 49:24; Josh 24:12; 1 Sam 2:4; 18:4; 2 Sam 1:22; 22:35; 1 Kgs 22:34; 2 Kgs 6:22.

⁶Aron Pinkas is clearly wrong when he states that the reference to the bow [קשקש] in Ezek 39:9 is “in the context of the rainbow” (“The Lord’s Bow in Habakkuk 3,9a,” *Bib* 84 [2003]: 417); there is *no* rainbow in that context.

⁷To Ezekiel, the radiance is not a rainbow; rather, it is *like* the appearance (קמראה) of a rainbow (1:28). Cf. the Akkadian concepts of *melammu* and *pul(u)ḥ(t)u* in their association with sparkling and even iridescent imagery. The classic article on this is by A. L. Oppenheim, “Akkadian *pul(u)ḥ(t)u* and *melammu*,” *JAOS* 63 (1943): 31-34. More recently, see Nahum M. Waldman, “A Note on Ezekiel 1:18,” *JBL* 103 (1984): 614-618. For the relationship of *melammu* to the (rain)bow, see Elena Cassin, *La splendeur divine: Introduction à l'étude de la mentalité mésopotamienne*, *Civilisations et Sociétés* 8 (Paris: Mouton, 1968), 118; and George E. Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of the Biblical Tradition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 32-66. See also Moshe Weinfeld, “Divine Intervention in War in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East,” in *History, Historiography and Interpretation: Studies in Biblical and Cuneiform Literatures*, ed. H. Tadmor and M. Weinfeld (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1983), 121-147.

⁸Greenberg, 51, asserts that the glory is the human figure “with the elements of *bašmal*, fire and radiance.” For the uncertainty expressed over the extent of this phrase, see Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24*, Hermeneia, trans. by Ronald E. Clements, ed. by Frank Moore Cross and Klaus Baltzer with the assistance of Leonard Jay Greenspoon (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 124.

⁹Cf., e.g., Ezek 1:28-2:1; 8:1-4; 43:2-3. Later some Jews believed that the rainbow-like radiance itself was the full physical manifestation of the glory of the LORD, and thus they felt that one should fall prostrate whenever one saw a rainbow, just as Ezekiel had fallen prostrate before the glory. See *b. Ber.* 59a and the discussion in David J. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision*, TSAJ 16 (Tübingen: Mohr

Ezekiel's Implicit Iridescent Imagery

The iridescent imagery explicitly found in Ezek 1:28 is implicit elsewhere in Ezekiel. In Ezek 1:4, quoted above, the prophet describes the bright light or radiance surrounding the great cloud (וַיִּנְהַר לוֹ קַבִּיב). The language is similar to Ezekiel's description of the radiance surrounding the being on the throne in 1:28. Notice the parallels in the following table:

Table 1 Radiance Imagery in Ezek 1:4 and 1:27-28			
Ezek 1:4		Ezek 1:27-28	
cloud	עָנָן	cloud (v. 28)	עָנָן
brightness	וַיִּנְהַר	splendor (vv. 27, 28)	וַיִּנְהַר
around it	קַבִּיב	all around (vv. 27, 28)	קַבִּיב
fire	וְאֵשׁ	fire (v. 27)	אֵשׁ
gleaming amber	הַחֲשָׁמַיִם	gleaming amber (v. 27)	חֲשָׁמַיִם

The terms do not occur in the same order, and there is not an exact one-to-one correspondence with some of the terms. Nevertheless, the clustering of these terms in close affinity to each other within their respective contexts leads one to conclude that since Ezekiel has compared the brightness (וַיִּנְהַר) to iridescent imagery (חֲשָׁמַיִם) in 1:27-28, this brightness is the same brightness (וַיִּנְהַר) that occurs for the first time in 1:4.¹⁰ In other words, I would suggest that the rainbow imagery in 1:27-28 is implicit in 1:4.¹¹

[Siebeck], 1988), 252-257.

¹⁰Greenberg states that the radiance in v. 4 is "spoken [of] in terms identical to those of our passage [vs. 27]" (*Ezekiel 1-20*, 50). William H. Brownlee suggests that 1:4b is "anticipatory of vv. 26-28" (*Ezekiel 1-19*, WBC 28 [Waco: Word, 1986], 11).

¹¹F. Field cites the enigmatic "Hebrew" (ὁ Ἑβραῖος) in Origen's Hexapla on Ezek 1:4: φῶς γὰρ ἐν μέσῳ αὐτοῦ, ὡς ὄρασις ἵριδος ("For there was a light in the middle of it, as the appearance of a rainbow" [my translation]; text in F. Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt; sive veterum interpretum graecorum in totum vetus testamentum fragmenta* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1875; reprint ed., Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms, 1964], 2:769). Here the נָהַר has become the φῶς, and the latter assumes the appearance of the ἵρις (rainbow), showing that the interpretation advanced here is not new, but ancient. Cf. also Halperin, *Facets*, 526.

The word הַנִּי occurs in only one place in Ezekiel outside of chapter 1.¹² In Ezek 10:4, the prophet observes the movement of the glory of the LORD: “Then the glory of the LORD rose up from the cherub to the threshold of the house; the house was filled with the cloud, and the court [הַיְצִיט] was full of the brightness [הַנִּי] of the glory of the LORD.” The court filled with the brightness of the glory of the LORD in 10:4 is the *inner* court, since Ezekiel explicitly refers to the inner court in the previous verse and the outer court in the next verse. A distinction appears to be made between the cloud and the brightness: if, as in 1:4, the brightness (הַנִּי) surrounds the cloud,¹³ this would provide a parallel to 10:4 and help to explain why the brightness is in the inner court, while the cloud fills the house. Another observation is that the cloud is not identical with the glory of the LORD, for while the cloud fills the house/temple, the glory remains at the threshold (cf. 10:18). It appears that while the glory is at the threshold of the temple, the surrounding cloud fills the temple and the brightness of the glory fills the inner court.¹⁴

It may be that in 10:4 Ezekiel is describing two related aspects of the same enveloping phenomena around the glory of the LORD, i.e., the cloud on the one hand (on one side of the threshold) and the brightness of the glory on the other hand (on the other side of the threshold).¹⁵ In any case, this brightness or

For a brief discussion of “the Hebrew translator,” see Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 42. See also Natalio Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context: An Introduction to the Greek Versions of the Bible*, trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson (Boston: Brill, 2001), 161-163; and cf. Bas ter Haar Romeny, “Quis Sit ó Σύροϋς Revisited,” in *Origen’s Hexapla and Fragments: Papers Presented at the Rich Seminar on the Hexapla, Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, 25th July–3rd August 1994*, ed. Alison Salvesen, *Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum*, no. 58 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 374-375 and 397-398.

¹²In Ezekiel, it occurs in 1:4, 13, 27-28, and 10:4. I will discuss 1:13 later in this article.

¹³The cloud here is *not* the same as the storm cloud in 1:4. The relation of the brightness to the cloud in both texts, however, may be parallel. See Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 320.

¹⁴Cf. the description in Sir 50:5-7 of the exit of the High Priest Simon II from the “house of the curtain” ($\text{οἴκου καταπετάσματος}$) into the court, where he is described as a “rainbow gleaming in splendid clouds [$\text{τόξον φωτίζον ἐν νεφέλαις δόξης}$] (NRSV).” On the use of Greek as a starting point for the exegesis of Sirach, see the recent analysis by Jan Liesen, *Full of Praise: An Exegetical Study of Sir 39, 12-35*, JSJSup 64 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 19-20.

¹⁵The glory of the LORD fills the tabernacle/temple/house in Exod 40:34-35, 2 Chr 7:1-2, and Ezek 43:5 and 44:4 (cf. Isa 6:1 [LXX]; Rev 15:8). On the other hand, the cloud fills the temple/house in 1 Kgs 8:10-11 and 2 Chr 5:13-14. It is in these latter texts, however, that the cloud is explicitly equated with the glory of the LORD (see, e.g., 1 Kgs 8:10-11: “And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD”). See also reference to the glory of the LORD appearing in the

radiance of the glory of the LORD can be none other than that which Ezekiel saw by the Chebar River (1:27-28), for the language is virtually the same; the rainbow-like radiance filled the inner court.¹⁶

Another implicit reference to the iridescent, rainbow-like radiance of the glory of the LORD occurs in Ezek 43:2, even though the term *נֹהַר* is absent. There Ezekiel describes the glory of the LORD shining or illuminating the earth: "And there, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east; the sound was like the sound of mighty waters; and the earth shone with his glory [וְהָאֲרָץ הָאֵימָרָה מִכְבָּרוֹ]." Despite the lack of the term *נֹהַר*, Ezekiel describes the return of the glory in terms of light imagery. Additionally, Ezekiel identifies what he sees here with what he had seen earlier by the River Chebar (43:3). Further, his response of prostration to this vision of glory mirrors his visionary experience by the Chebar (43:3; cf. 1:28).¹⁷ While the glory that enlightens the earth in 43:2 is not narrowly focused on iridescence (cf. 1:26-28), it does include that imagery.

The results of this initial survey of Ezekiel are rather narrow,¹⁸ yet they are significant. Within the overall context of Ezekiel, the radiance of the glory of the God of Israel includes not only the explicit rainbow-like brightness he saw in 1:27-28, but also the implicit, iridescent radiance that he saw in 1:4 and 10:4 and that he included in 43:2.¹⁹ Several other texts that refer to the glory of the

(pillar of) cloud in Exod 16:10 (cf. Exod 24:16; Num 16:42; 2 Macc 2:8). It seems that Ezekiel is not making the same kind of exact identification between the cloud and the glory.

One should also note the presence of the LORD in the pillar of cloud and fire (cf. Exod 13:21; 14:24; 34:5; Num 11:25; 12:5; 14:14; Lev 16:2; Deut 31:15; Ps 99:7). According to Sir 24:4, it was Wisdom that had its throne in the pillar of cloud. The pillar of cloud was sometimes called simply "the cloud" (Exod 14:20; 34:5; 40:34-38; Num 9:15-22; 10:11-12; 10:34; 12:10; 14:14; 16:42; Ps 78:14; 105:39; 1 Cor 10:1-2; Wis 19:7), and it was from this cloud that the glory of the LORD sometimes appeared (Exod 16:10). Exod 40:38 describes the pillar of fire as the (pillar of) cloud with fire in it by night, while Num 9:15 (cf. v. 21) describes the (pillar of) cloud having the appearance of fire during the night. Is it possible that the juxtaposition of the cloud and the glory of the LORD in these texts implies an iridescent radiance as in Ezekiel?

¹⁶Since Ezekiel ties the rainbow-like radiance to the glory of the LORD in 1:27-28, the radiance of the glory of the LORD in 10:4 can be none other than what 1:28 refers to. See Block, *Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 321, n. 33.

¹⁷Block compares the intense glory of 43:2 to the light and fire motif in 1:4 and 13 (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 579).

¹⁸See below for the discussion of the *נֹהַר* in Ezek 1:13.

¹⁹Richard M. Davidson suggests that the overall structure of the book of Ezekiel is important for understanding God's glory returning to the temple ("The Chiasmic Literary Structure of the Book of Ezekiel," in *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*, ed. David Merling [Berrien Springs, MI: Institute of Archaeology, Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum, Andrews University, 1997], 71-94). I wish to thank Jiří Moskala for drawing my attention to this article.

LORD as seen initially in Ezekiel's Chebar vision—but without mentioning its splendor or radiant quality—would also *implicitly* include the rainbow-like radiance, unless otherwise qualified as in 10:4.²⁰ Despite the paucity of texts, particularly explicit ones, the significance of the iridescent glory in Ezek 1 and its reverberations throughout the work cannot be dismissed.

*Possible Iridescent Imagery Behind
the Text of Ezek 9?*

It is possible that iridescence in Ezekiel may not be limited to the texts we have thus far explored. Margaret Barker has provocatively suggested that another reference to iridescent imagery occurs in the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the LXX version of Ezek 9:2.²¹ There the prophet sees six men approach and stand beside the bronze altar. Among these men, however, is one who is “clothed in linen, with a writing case [קֶסֶת הַסֵּפֶר; literally, ‘a scribe’s writing case/palette’] at his side.” But the LXX of this text is radically different: the “Man in Linen” is instead a man clothed in a long robe (ἐνδεδυκώς ποδήρη). Further, the LXX says he has a lapis lazuli²² ceremonial belt/sash²³ at his waist (ζώνη σαπφείρου

²⁰See 3:12, 23 (notice Ezekiel falls prostrate again); 8:4; 9:3; 10:18-19; 11:22-23; 43:2-5; and 44:4.

²¹Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Which God Gave to Him to Show to His Servants What Must Soon Take Place (Revelation 1.1)* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 268-269.

²²σαπφείρος does not refer to our modern “sapphire” (blue corundum), as found in many modern translations (cf. the NASB, NIV, and NRSV on Exod 24:10). Walter Schumann observes that from antiquity until as late as the Middle Ages “the name sapphire was understood to mean what is today described as lapis lazuli” (*Gemstones of the World*, trans. Evelyn Stern [New York: Sterling, 1977], 86); cf. DBAG, s.v. “σαπφείρος”; LSJ, s.v. “σαπφείρος”; John S. Harris, “An Introduction to the Study of Personal Ornaments of Precious, Semi-Precious and Imitation Stones Used Throughout Biblical History,” *ALUOS* 4 (1962-1963), 69-70; idem, “The Stones of the High Priest’s Breastplate,” *ALUOS* 52 (1963-1965), 52, where he states: “So strong are the arguments concerning the relation of the ancient name Sapphire to the mineral Lapis-Lazuli that little more need be added”; Mohsen Manutchehr-Danai, *Dictionary of Gems and Gemnology* [Berlin: Springer, 2000], s.v. “lapis lazuli”; H. Quiring, “Die Edelsteine im Amtsschild des jüdischen Hohenpriesters und die Herkunft ihrer Namen,” *Sudhoffs Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften* 38 (1954): 200-202; and Nahum N. Sarna, who agrees and states that the modern sapphire “was unknown in the ancient Near East, . . .” (*Exodus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, JPSTC [Philadelphia: JPS, 1991], 153). See, e.g., Pliny the Elder *Nat.* 37.119-120, where *sappirus* cannot mean sapphire because it has gold flecks in it, as one finds in lapis lazuli; and Theophrastus *Lap.* 1.8; 4.23; and 6.37. Lapis lazuli is “an attractive, massive, complex aggregate of several blue minerals” and “it consists chiefly of lazurite, hauynite, which gives it color, also sodalite, noselite, and flecks of pyrites in a matrix of calcite” (Manutchehr-Danai, *Dictionary*, s.v. “lapis lazuli”). Its primary blue color ranges from azure to green to purple-blue (ibid.).

²³“Girdle” has the wrong connotation today. Since commentators typically refer

ἐπί τῆς ὀσφύος αὐτοῦ) instead of having a writing case/palette, as in the MT.²⁴

Why are the MT and the LXX so divergent here?²⁵ Two broad possibilities immediately come to mind. First, the LXX could have misunderstood the Hebrew.²⁶ A. M. Honeyman's derisive comment that the LXX "succeeds in making nonsense of the [Hebrew] phrase" is an example of taking this approach.²⁷ Alternatively, the LXX could have read different Hebrew words.²⁸ In this case, the LXX would not be guessing but rather translating.²⁹

According to Barker, in the phrase יִיחַתֵּב רִשְׁתּוֹ וְכָתוּב (‘‘and a scribe’s writing

to either the belt or sash, or to both of them as alternative translations, I have kept both terms in use.

²⁴I take the ‘‘Man in Linen’’ or ‘‘Man with a Lapis Lazuli Belt/Sash’’ as the seventh person, not one of the six. See, e.g., Block, *Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 304; Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 143; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 246.

²⁵In Ezek 10:2, the LXX translates the MT’s ‘‘Man in Linen’’ with τὸν ἄνδρα τὸν ἐνδεδυκότα τὴν στολήν (‘‘the man clothed with the [long] robe’’). In 10:6 and 7, however, the reference is τῷ ἐνδεδυκότῃ τὴν στολήν τὴν ἁγίαν (‘‘to the one clothed with the sacred [long] robe’’) and τοῦ ἐνδεδυκότος τὴν στολήν τὴν ἁγίαν (‘‘of the one clothed with the sacred [long] robe’’). The terminology for this sacred dress (τὴν στολήν τὴν ἁγίαν) is the same as that found in LXX Exod 28:3—but there it is with regard to Aaron, the (high) priest (cf. LXX Exod 28:4: στολὰς ἁγίας). But since I am exploring Barker’s suggestion with regard to Ezek 9:2, I will not deal with those texts in this article. On the Greek in relation to the MT, see Field, *Origenis*, 2:792; Halperin, *Faces*, 525, n. f; Joseph Ziegler, ed., *Ezechiel*, 2nd ed., with an appendix by Detlef Fraenkel, *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum 16.1* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 124-125; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 226.

²⁶Cf. Johan Lust, ‘‘A Lexicon of the Three and the Transliterations in Ezekiel,’’ in *Origen’s Hexapla and Fragments: Papers Presented at the Rich Seminar on the Hexapla*, Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, 25th July–3rd August 1994, ed. Alison Salveson, TSAJ 58 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 300; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 224.

²⁷A. M. Honeyman, ‘‘The Pottery Vessels of the Old Testament,’’ *PEQ* (1939): 90.

²⁸Lust, ‘‘Lexicon,’’ 300.

²⁹For example, Robert Eisler took this route and suggested that the LXX read רִשְׁתּוֹ instead of רִשְׁתּוֹ (‘‘gštj = Κάστου τοῦ γραμματέως = רִשְׁתּוֹ רִשְׁתּוֹ im Danielkommentar des Hippolytos von Rom,’’ *OLZ* 33 [1930]: col. 586). But Eisler’s רִשְׁתּוֹ appears incorrect and should instead be רִשְׁתּוֹ, ‘‘alliance, conspiracy’’ (‘‘רִשְׁתּוֹ,’’ *HALOT* 3:1154); the latter term would be understood to be in line with a related word, such as רִשְׁתּוֹ, ‘‘ribbons, breast-sashes [of women]’’ (‘‘רִשְׁתּוֹ,’’ *HALOT* 3:1154). The related verb is רִשְׁתּוֹ, which, among its meanings, can mean ‘‘to tie or tie up,’’ as in Job 38:31, and ‘‘to tie on or wear as a belt,’’ as in Isa 49:18 (see ‘‘רִשְׁתּוֹ,’’ *HALOT* 3:1153-1154). In any case, רִשְׁתּוֹ would not seem too distant from ζώνη. Despite his use of רִשְׁתּוֹ, this is where Eisler ended up in his retroversion (‘‘gštj,’’ col. 586; cf. W. Max Müller, ‘‘Zwei ägyptische Wörter im Hebräisch,’’ *OLZ* 3 [1900]: cols. 49-50). Cf. Lust, ‘‘Lexicon,’’ 300; and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 224. If the Greek translator had seen רִשְׁתּוֹ, as Eisler suggests, he would have had to guess at a cognate of this word (e.g., רִשְׁתּוֹ) in order to arrive at ζώνη. But this seems overly complex and unlikely.

case/palette at his side” [my translation]), ספר was read as ספיר (“lapis lazuli”³⁰) and no scribe was seen. The first term, קסר, a rare term (it occurs only in Ezek 9:2, 3, and 11 in the OT),³¹ was read instead as the more common word קשך (“bow” or “rainbow”). Thus the concept was understood to mean a rainbow of lapis lazuli on his waist and became written as ζώνη σαπφείρου ἐπὶ τῆς ὀσφύος αὐτοῦ.³²

Though Barker never explains how a rainbow could turn into a belt/sash, her hypothesis remains intriguing. With regard to the first Hebrew term in this enigmatically translated phrase, Maximilian Ellenbogen notes that קסר “has no cognate in any Semitic language and the Hebrew itself does not offer any etymological connections.”³³ The consensus of scholars is that קסר is a loanword from the Egyptian gštj,³⁴ yet this is problematic in that the Egyptian š is frequently represented by the Hebrew ש instead of ס. It is thus possible that the Egyptian word could have been transliterated into Hebrew as קשך³⁵—but that is also the same series of consonants as the “bow” or “rainbow.” In any

³⁰Barker translates it, however, as “sapphire” throughout (*Revelation*, 268, 269).

³¹Barker appears to be wrong when she states that the term “does not occur anywhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures,” for the only text she has referred to in that paragraph is Ezek 9:2 (*ibid.*, 268).

³²Cf. *ibid.*

³³Maximilian Ellenbogen, *Foreign Words in the Old Testament: Their Origin and Etymology* (London: Luzac & Co., 1962), 150. Though some have related the term to קשור, “jar” (cf. Ernest Klein, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English*, foreword by Haim Rabin [New York: Macmillan, 1987], s.v. “קסר”), Joshua Blau states that this is doubtful (*On Pseudo-Corrections in Some Semitic Languages* [Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1970], 117).

³⁴See, e.g., Block, *Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 305; and G. R. Driver, *Semitic Writing from Pictograph to Alphabet: The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, 1944*, newly rev. ed., ed. S. A. Hopkins (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 86, n. 10. For more detailed studies, see Müller, “Zwei ägyptische Wörter,” cols. 49-51; *idem*, “Ägyptologisch-Biblisches,” *OLZ* 3 (1900): col. 328; H. Grimme, “Zu hebräischem קסר,” *OLZ* 3 (1900): cols. 149-150; and Eisler, “gštj,” cols. 585-587. Thomas O. Lambdin rejects Grimm’s assignation of קסר to the root קשך as “baseless” (“Egyptian Loan Words in the Old Testament,” *JAOS* 73 [1953]: 154).

³⁵Lambdin, “Egyptian Loan Words,” 154. He concludes that “this would tend to show a late borrowing,” i.e., after c. 1200 B.C.E. (*ibid.*).

³⁶Here I follow D. M. Stec, who complained about “the all too frequent practice of pointing *šm* and *šm* in an otherwise unpointed Hebrew text. I cannot see the reason for this” (review of *Translation Technique in the Peshitta to Job: A Model for Evaluating a Text with Documentation from the Peshitta to Job*, by Heidi M. Szpek, *JSS* 40 [1995]: 156). Cf. “ש, ׀, ׀,” *HALOT* 3:1301, which also notes that originally there were no diacritical marks. Consequently, I do not print the diacritical marks in order to more faithfully reproduce what the Greek translator would probably have seen. They are printed, however, when I refer to what other authors have said about this problem in order to be clear about their discussion.

case, ܢܘܦ was a difficult—if not impossible—word for some Greek translators; Walther Zimmerli notes in both Aquila and Theodotian's translations of κάστου γραμματέως, the first word is basically their attempt to transliterate “the unintelligible ܢܘܦ.”³⁷

But there is another witness with regard to this textual conundrum that deserves attention. The Peshitta Syriac version of Ezek 9:2 *also* speaks of a man clothed in linen wearing a “sapphire” belt:

ܘܘܫܘܪܘܘܢܐ ܕܘܫܘܪܘܪܐ ܕܘܫܘܪܘܪܐ ܕܘܫܘܪܘܪܐ

(“and he bound his loins with a girdle of sapphire”).³⁸ The relationship between the Peshitta and the LXX is an incredibly complex one.³⁹ In 1999, in his highly acclaimed introduction to the Peshitta, M. P. Weitzman implicitly accepted the conclusion of C. H. Cornill, from more than a hundred years earlier, that LXX influence on the Peshitta was frequent in Ezekiel.⁴⁰ But does this mean that agreements between the Peshitta and the LXX are not noteworthy? There has not been unanimity with regard to the relationship between the Peshitta and the MT in general, not to mention in Ezekiel. For example, at the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, M. J. Mulder, the preparer of the critical edition of the Peshitta in Ezekiel, stated: “So, when P agrees with LXX, P proves to be of importance in judging MT. In such cases, we must proceed on the assumption that P and LXX are independent translations, and that they present a certain reading as independent witnesses. This does not imply that agreement of P and LXX automatically points to an older text.”⁴¹ Further, he concluded: “Every translation ought to be taken as a textual witness in its own right.”⁴²

³⁷Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 224. Symmachus has πινακιδίου γραφῆως (“writing tablet of a writer/scribe”), while the 2d edition of Aquila has μελανοδοξείων γραφῆως (“inkstand of a writer/scribe”) and ὁ Ἑβραῖος has μελαν και καλαμος γραφῆως (“ink and reed of a writer/scribe”); see Ziegler, *Ezekiel*, 122.

³⁸The text is taken from a critical edition of the Peshitta of Ezekiel: M. J. Mulder, *Ezekiel* (part III, fascicle 3 of *The Old Testament in Syriac According to the Peshitta Version*, ed. The Peshitta Institute, Leiden [Leiden: Brill, 1985]). The translation is taken from Joaquim Azevedo, “The Textual Relation of the Peshitta of Ezekiel 1-12 to MT and to the Ancient Versions (Iq^l and LXX),” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1999), 207.

³⁹Heidi M. Szpek, “On the Influence of the Septuagint on the Peshitta,” *CBQ* 60 (1998): 265. Cf. also Azevedo, “Textual Relation,” 227 and 232-235.

⁴⁰M. P. Weitzman, *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament: An Introduction*, University of Cambridge Oriental Studies 56 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 68. Cornill's work on the Peshitta is found in his *Das Buch des Propheten Ezechiel* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1886), 137-156.

⁴¹M. J. Mulder, “The Use of the Peshitta in Textual Criticism,” in *La Septuaginta en la Investigacion Contemporanea (V Congreso de la IOSCS)*, ed. N. F. Marcos, *Textos y Estudios “Cardenal Cisneros”* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1985), 53.

⁴²*Ibid.*

Attempts to recognize the value of the Peshitta have continued.⁴³ In his 1988 dissertation on the influence of the LXX on the Peshitta in Genesis and Psalms, Jerome A. Lund concluded:

Since the caricature of S [Peshitta] found in secondary literature is wrong, students ought to be encouraged to study S as a primary source for research on the Bible. First, S reflects ancient understanding of the Hebrew Bible and so functions as a tool of exegesis. Second, a study of the techniques of translation used by S could prove fruitful for modern Bible translators, who face the same problems, linguistically and exegetically. Third, S sheds light on the text of the Hebrew Bible in a primary sense. In conclusion, S needs to be studied by itself, as an independent and primary version of the Hebrew Scriptures. The ghost of the direct influence of G [LXX] on S has vanished.⁴⁴

Recently, Joaquim Azevedo, in his dissertation on the relationship of the Peshitta Syriac of Ezek 1–12 to the MT and the versions, states with regard to the similar readings between the Peshitta and the LXX at Ezek 9:2 that “it is not strong evidence to support a direct relationship. They may reflect two independent translations based on a similar Hebrew text.”⁴⁵ Azevedo, in fact, denies any possibility of a direct relationship between the Peshitta and the LXX because the Peshitta of the next verse, Ezek 9:3, is the same as 9:2 (ܘܢܘܨܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ), while the LXX of 9:3 contains only

⁴³Cf. Mulder, who stated that with regards to Ezekiel the value of the Peshitta outweighs all other versions except for the LXX (“Some Remarks on the Peshitta Translation of the Book of Ezekiel,” in *The Peshitta: Its Early Text and History: Papers Read at the Peshitta Symposium held at Leiden 30-31 August 1985*, ed. P. B. Dirksen and M. J. Mulder, Monographs of the Peshitta Institute Leiden, 4 [Leiden: Brill, 1988], 180).

⁴⁴Jerome A. Lund, “The Influence of the Septuagint on the Peshitta: A Re-evaluation of Criteria in Light of Comparative Study of the Versions in Genesis and Psalms” (Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1988), 418-419. Weitzman apparently does not refer to this work (the index to his work is defective [cf. on “Lund, J.,” where there is only one reference—one that does not refer to a work by Lund on p. 68, n. 11]).

⁴⁵Azevedo, “Textual Relation,” 208. For instance, Ellenbogen concluded that in Ezek 9:2 “the Peshitta is evidently based on the LXX and does not offer any independent evidence” (*Foreign Words*, 150). But one cannot assume dependence based simply on agreement. Cf. Mulder, “Einige Beobachtungen zum Peschittatext von Ezechiel in seinen Beziehungen zum masoretischen Text, zur Septuaginta und zum Targum,” in *Salvación en la Palabra: Targum—Derash—Berith (En memoria del profesor Alejandro Díez Macho)*, ed. D. Muñoz Leon (Madrid: Consejo de Investigaciones Científicas, 1986), 463-470. Lund concludes: “In the past, the direct influence of the LXX on the P [Peshitta] has been grossly exaggerated” (“Grecisms in the Peshitta Psalms,” in *The Peshitta as a Translation: Papers Read at the II Peshitta Symposium Held at Leiden 19-21 August 1993*, ed. P. B. Dirksen and A. van der Kooij, Monographs of the Peshitta Institute Leiden, 8 [Leiden: Brill, 1995], 102). Cf. Szpek, who concludes that congruent readings between the Peshitta and the LXX can no longer be simply attributed to direct dependence of the former on the latter (“Influence,” 265).

ζώνην—with no reference to the lapis lazuli.⁴⁶ Azevedo concludes that this is “strong evidence for an independence of translation” between the Peshitta and the LXX in Ezekiel.⁴⁷ The fact that the Peshitta of 9:2, 3, and 11 mirrors the MT in referring to the linen clothing of this being (MT = כְּבִימָה [9:2]; הַכְּבִימָה [9:3, 11]; Peshitta = כְּבִימָה [9:2, 3, 11]), while in all three verses the LXX refers instead to his long robe (ποδήρη),⁴⁸ might further support such a conclusion. But even this conclusion—that apparent, nonconsistent use of the LXX by the Peshitta shows independence—has been countered by Weitzman. He concluded that “it is wrong to argue that, because P’s translator has not followed LXX consistently, he was not influenced by LXX at all,” for “this is in fact typical of the way that P’s translators used LXX.”⁴⁹ Again, on the other hand, if the Peshitta did indeed consult and utilize the LXX here in its translation, it may have been because the LXX translation simply made sense.⁵⁰

Azevedo ultimately concludes with the following points about the relation of the Peshitta of Ezek 1–12 to the MT and the versions that impact this study: its *Vorlage* was a Hebrew text similar to the MT⁵¹; it smooths the text, and while doing so, it adds words to clarify (not modify), rarely omitting any portion of the text (here he mentions one example of omission being במחני in 9:2, 3, and 11⁵²); it has “no direct relationship” with the LXX “except when they share the same translation techniques and when coincidence is in play”⁵³; despite any similarities to other versions of Ezek 1–12, it is an independent translation⁵⁴; and it is “useful as a tool in textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, for it is a valuable witness of a Hebrew consonantal text very similar to [MT].”⁵⁵

I would disagree with Azevedo that the Peshitta of Ezek 9:2, 3, and 11 omits the phrase במחני found in the MT. For one thing, that Hebrew

⁴⁶Azevedo, “Textual Relation,” 209.

⁴⁷Ibid. Azevedo also believes that there is strong evidence that there was a single translator for Ezek 9 (ibid., 205, 220).

⁴⁸In Ezek 9:2, Aquila has ἐξάριετα, Symmachus has λίννα, and Theodotion has βαδδίον, while in 9:11 the same translations occur, but with the articles (i.e., τὰ ἐξάριετα, τὰ λίννα, and τὸ βαδδίον); cf. Ziegler, *Ezekiel*, 122 and 124; and Field, *Origenis*, 2:790 and 792.

⁴⁹Weitzman, *Syriac*, 79.

⁵⁰Cf. ibid., 36–43, 61–62.

⁵¹Azevedo, “Textual Relation,” 323.

⁵²Ibid., 324.

⁵³Ibid., 325. Cf. Emanuel Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*, 2d ed., rev. and enlarged (Jerusalem: Simor, 1997), 188.

⁵⁴Azevedo, “Textual Relation,” 326.

⁵⁵Ibid. Cf., however, Tov, who states that the close relationship between the Peshitta and the LXX was often the result of common exegetical traditions, and “by definition, these common traditions have no bearing on the issue of the Hebrew text presupposed by the versions” (*Text-Critical Use*, 188).

phrase does not occur in 9:11; there it is only *הַקֶּסֶת בְּמַחְנֵי*.⁵⁶ But I would further suggest that the Peshitta has not omitted what its Hebrew text has. When the Peshitta and LXX of Ezek 9:2 speak of a “belt of sapphire /lapis lazuli,” one could reasonably hypothesize that they both read the Hebrew words as *סַפֵּר* and *קֶשֶׁת* without the Peshitta necessarily depending on the LXX for its translation.⁵⁷

In any case, both the Peshitta and the LXX are translated in a similar manner with regard to the clothing of the man in Ezek 9:2. The relationship between the Peshitta and the LXX is full of intriguing possibilities. Nevertheless, while it might be possible that a different Hebrew *Vorlage* than the MT was behind the Peshitta’s translation,⁵⁸ it appears nevertheless difficult to prove such a hypothesis in this case, since there are so many complex factors and text-critical possibilities involved. Thus, while the Peshitta provides a fascinating comparison to the LXX in Ezek 9, one cannot be certain that the Peshitta evidence is the result of a different Hebrew *Vorlage* than one finds in the MT.

Consequently, it is most prudent to rest any possibility of an iridescent background in Ezek 9 primarily on the realities of the Greek text. With regard to the LXX translation of the Hebrew into ζώνη (“belt,” “sash”), one should start with the possibility of actual translation, if a case can be made for that, rather than jump to the conclusion that the result is nonsense. Now the ποδήρης (“long robe”) clothing the key figure in 9:2 is what appears in the LXX instead of the *בְּרִיִּים* (“white linen”) in the MT. As an article or type of clothing, *בֵּר* refers to priestly attire (Exod 28:42; 39:28; Lev 6:10; 16:4, 23, 32; 1 Sam 2:18; 22:18; 2 Sam 6:14 [despite its being on David; see the next verse]; and 1 Chr 15:27); the other texts in which this Hebrew term occurs, refer to visionary beings or heavenly messengers (Ezek 9:2, 3, 11; 10:2, 6, 7; Dan 10:5; and 12:6, 7).⁵⁹ ποδήρης typically suggests high-priestly imagery,⁶⁰ and we can conclude that the translator saw the *בְּרִיִּים* as a high-priestly clothing image (cf. Lev 16:4,

⁵⁶Azevedo says that the relative clause *אֲשֶׁר הִסְפֵּר בְּמַחְנֵי* in the MT of 9:11 is the “same phrase” as in 9:2 and 3, but this is not correct. The phrase that occurs in those two verses is *וְקֶסֶת הַסַּפֵּר בְּמַחְנֵי*, a fact which even he acknowledges (“Textual Relation,” 220).

⁵⁷With regard to Genesis and Psalms (but not Ezekiel), this is also the conclusion of Lund, “The Influence of the Septuagint on the Peshitta: A Re-evaluation of Criteria in Light of Comparative Study of the Versions in Genesis and Psalms” (Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1988), 46, 416.

⁵⁸See Weitzman, *Syriac*, 83-84.

⁵⁹Cf. “III *בֵּר*,” *HALOT* 1:109.

⁶⁰It refers to the attire of the high priest in Exod 25:7; 28:4, 31; 29:5; 35:9; Zech 3:4; Wis 18:24; and Sir 45:8. The only place where priestly imagery is not explicitly present is in Sir 27:8. Cf. *Let. Aris.* 96; Josephus *Ant.* 3.153-154, 159; *J. W.* 5.231; and Philo *Alleg. Interp.* 2.56. David E. Aune states that the term in all of its twelve occurrences “always refers to a garment worn by the high priest” (including Sir 27:8) but denies that it can be understood in a technical sense, because it translates five different Hebrew words (*Revelation 1-5*, WBC 52A [Dallas: Word, 1997], 93). The only place it translates *בֵּר* is in Ezekiel.

23, 32)⁶¹ and utilized another high-priestly clothing image.

But why would ζώνη show up in the text? The ζώνη, the common belt (cf., e.g., 1 Kgs 2:5; Ps 108:19 [MT 109:19]; Isa 5:27), frequently appears as another piece of priestly clothing, the priestly belt or ceremonial sash (Exod 28:4, 39-40; 29:9; 36:36 [MT 39:39]; Lev 8:7, 13; 16:4).⁶² As such, it was multicolored (Exod 36:36 [MT 39:29]; cf. 28:39) and woven like the multicolored screens (ἤρα) at the entrance to the court and the tabernacle.⁶³ Could it be that the polychromatic⁶⁴ nature of the ζώνη was the reason for using the term in Ezek 9:2, 3, and 11? If the translator saw ἤρα, one could reasonably assume he would have had to be guessing to arrive at ζώνη. If, on the other hand, the translator saw ἤρα, understanding it as a rainbow would provide a link to the polychromatic ζώνη.⁶⁵ This latter possibility would provide the basis for the assumption that the translator was *not* translating what appeared to be unintelligible, but was rather attempting to translate the visual concept of the ἤρα into a context that was understood to refer to high-priestly clothing.⁶⁶ In other words, the LXX translator was attempting to make sense

⁶¹On the basis of this term, Ka Leung Wong describes the Man in Linen as a “priestly figure” (*The Idea of Retribution in the Book of Ezekiel*, VTSup 87 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 175, and the literature he cites there in support).

⁶²Cf. Josephus *Ant.* 3.154, 159, 171, 185; *J. W.* 5.232.

⁶³ἤρα ἤρα (“the work of a weaver,” NASB) occurs in Exod 26:36 (screen of tabernacle); 27:16 (screen of the court); 28:39 (priestly belt/sash); 36:37 [LXX 37:5] (screen of tabernacle); 38:18 [LXX 37:16] (screen of court); and 39:29 [LXX 36:36] (priestly belt/sash). Cf. Josephus *J. W.* 5.232.

⁶⁴Here I differentiate polychromatism from iridescence in that the former refers simply to a variety or change of colors (i.e., something that is multicolored), while the latter also includes the glowing and often brilliant play of light, or the subtle shifts in shades and hues, that one finds in a prism or a rainbow.

⁶⁵In his commentary on Daniel, Hippolytus of Rome (died c. 235) alluded to both Ezek 9:2 (by using τὸ κάστου τοῦ γραμματέως; cf. κάστου γραμματέως in both Aquila’s and Theodotian’s versions) and Dan 10:5 (by using βαδδιν and ἐνδευμένοσ; cf. Theodotian’s version) and understood them to refer to Jesus Christ (cf. Hippolytus *Comm. Dan.* 4.36.11-13 and 56.11-12, text quoted from *Hippolyt: Kommentar zu Daniel*, ed. Georg Nathanael Bonwetsch, 2d rev. ed. by Marcel Richard, in *Hippolyt Werke: Erster Band: Erster Teil*, GCS 7 [Berlin: Akademie, 2000], 280, 326). Cf. Joseph Ziegler, “Der Bibeltext im Daniel-Kommentar des Hippolyt von Rom,” *NAWG* 8 (1952): 190. In the commentary of Hippolytus, the garment referred to (χιτῶνα) is multicolored (ποικίλον); cf. Gen 37:3, 23, and 32. Eisler had compared κάστου to the Assyrian *qāṣtu*, “bow” (related to the Hebrew ἤρα [“bow, rainbow”]), but he did not conclude any derivation (“gštj,” col. 587).

⁶⁶Outside of Ezek 9:2, 3, and 11, the terms ποδήρης and ζώνη occur together in only one verse (Exod 28:4), part of a larger passage (28:4-39) mostly describing the clothing of the high priest (cf. also 28:31 [ποδήρης] and 39 [ζώνη]; and 29:5 [ποδήρης] and 9 [ζώνη]). There may have been a tradition of interpreting the executioners of Ezek 9 in high-priestly terms; see, e.g., the remarks of James R. Davila, who suggests that the

of the $\eta\sigma\kappa$ in a context that already included $\pi\omicron\delta\eta\rho\eta\varsigma$, and thus utilized the $\zeta\acute{\omega}\nu\eta$, which could easily work in a high-priestly context that included polychromatic imagery.

This leaves us with $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\pi\phi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\varsigma$. Outside of our text and the problematic Ezek 28:13, $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\pi\phi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\varsigma$ translates ספיר (Exod 24:10; 28:18; 36:18 [MT 39:11]; Job 28:6, 16; Sol 5:14; Isa 54:11; Lam 4:7; Ezek 1:26; 10:1; Tob 13:16).⁶⁷ Commentators typically suggest that the LXX misread or confused the Hebrew.⁶⁸ Azevedo, however, suggests the possibility of the opposite: “the Hebrew word ספר , ‘writing, writer,’ could well be a misunderstanding of an unvocalized text containing the word ספיר , ‘lapis [sic] lazuli’ (see Exod 24:10).”⁶⁹ This is a possibility, but again it remains conjectural. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to see how $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\pi\phi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\varsigma$ might have been derived from something approximating ספר .⁷⁰

What about the phrase $\zeta\acute{\omega}\nu\eta$ $\sigma\alpha\pi\phi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$?⁷¹ While the words can be explained, can the phrase be explained? What is a “belt/sash of lapis lazuli”? Two possibilities suggest themselves. One would be to take the reference to lapis lazuli to be a synecdoche for all the actual *colors* embroidered in the priestly

reference to the seven chief angelic princes (or, angelic high priests) in the Qumran liturgical work *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (e.g., 4Q403 1 i 1-29) was inspired by “the seven angels in Ezek 9:1-2” (*Liturgical Works*, ECDSS 6 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 120).

⁶⁷Although there is no precise, sequential, one-to-one correlation between the stones of the MT and the LXX adorning the Tyrian king in Ezek 28:13, ספיר occurs in the MT and $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\pi\phi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\varsigma$ occurs in the LXX. In Tobit, ספיר appears in 4QpapTob* at frg. 18 and correlates to $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\pi\phi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\varsigma$ in Tob 13:16 as found in the critical edition by Robert Hanhart, *Tobit*, Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum 8 part 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 173.

⁶⁸E.g., Ellenbogen, *Foreign Words*, 150; Honeyman, “Pottery Vessels,” 90; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 224.

⁶⁹Azevedo, “Textual Relation,” 208. Cf. Richard A. Taylor, review of *Translation Technique in the Peshitta to Job: A Model for Evaluating a Text with Documentation from the Peshitta to Job*, by Heidi M. Szpek, *JETS* 39 (1996): 343.

⁷⁰If $\zeta\acute{\omega}\nu\eta$ derived from $\eta\sigma\kappa$, what we have in the LXX is possibly even more noteworthy. In Ezek 1:26-28, one finds reference in both the LXX and the MT to lapis lazuli (v. 26), the waist of the being on the throne (v. 27: $\delta\sigma\phi\acute{\upsilon}\varsigma$ [cf. 8:2; 9:2, 3, and 11]), and a rainbow (v. 28). The terms do not have the same reference, since the lapis lazuli describes the throne, the waist refers to the being on the throne, and the rainbow describes the brightness surrounding the being. Nevertheless, it suggests that the LXX translator may have seen the man in 9:2 in light of the being on the throne in 1:26-28 (so Barker, *Revelation*, 269). Martha Himmelfarb suggests that the description of the glory of God in Ezek 1 drew on an understanding of “the high priest as rainbowlike” (*Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1993], 20).

⁷¹If this had indeed derived from ספר קשת (“rainbow of lapis lazuli”), cf. Rev 4:3: $\text{\u0399}\rho\iota\varsigma$ $\text{\u039a}\kappa\lambda\acute{\omicron}\theta\epsilon\text{\u03bd}$ $\text{\u0398}\omicron\upsilon$ $\text{\u0398}\rho\omicron\text{\u03bd}\omicron\text{\u03bd}\text{\u03bd}$ $\text{\u0398}\rho\acute{\alpha}\sigma\epsilon\iota$ $\text{\u0398}\mu\alpha\rho\alpha\gamma\delta\iota\text{\u03bd}$ (“around the throne is a rainbow that looks like an emerald”).

ζώνη: ὑακίνθου καὶ πορφύρας καὶ κοκκίνου (Exod 36:36 [MT 39:29]: “blue, purple, and crimson”⁷²).⁷³ Here ὑακίνθος translates the MT חֲלָהּ (as it also does in Ezek 27:7 and 24; cf. 16:10), which was associated with lapis lazuli in later Jewish interpretation.⁷⁴ The LXX’s maintenance of σάφειρος, instead of the actual ὑακίνθος of the ζώνη, would have been not only because of the Hebrew רֶפֶס, but because it would have also provided an allusion to the color of God’s throne, as found in 1:26 and 10:1.

Alternatively, the reference to lapis lazuli in 9:2 might allude more to *substance* than color. Again, two possibilities suggest themselves: *garments* of (lapis lazuli) stone or *bodies* of (lapis lazuli) stone. In Cant 5:14 the Beloved is described as having an ivory body (or, abdomen) encrusted with lapis lazuli (מַעֲלָפָה שֵׁן מְעִי עֲשָׂה שָׁן מְעִי רֶפֶס / סַפִּיר). Lapis lazuli (רֶפֶס / סַפִּיר / σάφειρος) was one of the gems worn by the Israelite high priest (e.g., Exod 28:18), as well as the king of Tyre (Ezek 28:13). While these are stones on a person, they do not appear to refer to stone *garments*.

That a stone *garment* is not impossible to visualize can be seen from the Jewish *Hekhalot* (from הֵיכָלוֹת, “palaces”) corpus, written between late antiquity and the early Middle Ages.⁷⁵ A *Hekhalot* fragment from the Cairo Geniza (T.-S. K 21.95.C) speaks of the angelic figure known as the “Youth,” who has “a garment of stone” “girded on his loins.”⁷⁶ This would appear to be an allusion to something similar to the LXX translation of Ezek 9:2, with its “belt/sash of lapis lazuli.”⁷⁷ In another reference to the “Youth,” found in a recension of

⁷²LSJ, s.v. “ὑακίνθος”; “πορφύρα”; and “κόκκινος.”

⁷³Cf. Himmelfarb, 62, who suggests that the purple garment of the principal angel Yaeol/Iaeol in *Apoc. Ab.* 11:3 is priestly in that it is “one of the colors of the high-priestly garments of Exodus 28.” On the work’s possible first-century-C.E. date, see *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 1:683, nn. 15 and 16.

⁷⁴See *b. Soṭah* 17a, *b. Menah* 43b, *b. Hul.* 89a, *p. Ber.* 1:2 (3c) and the discussion in Halperin, *Faces*, 217–220. *Midr. Ps* 24:12 (= *Rab. Num* 14:3) and *Midr. Ps* 90:18 associate the blue with—among several items in nature—the rainbow, but not with lapis lazuli (cf. *ibid.*, 218)! Matthew Black associates ὑακίνθος with the lapis lazuli (רֶפֶס) in Ezek 28:13 (*The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch: A New English Edition*, SVTP 7 [Leiden: Brill, 1985] 251, n. 2).

⁷⁵James R. Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot: The People behind the Hekhalot Literature*, JSJSup 70 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 2.

⁷⁶Quoted from James R. Davila, “Melchizedek, the ‘Youth,’ and Jesus,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity: Papers from an International Conference at St. Andrews in 2001*, ed. James R. Davila, STDJ 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 255. The same translation is found in *idem*, *Descenders*, 186.

⁷⁷See §398b (cf. §389b) of Peter Schäfer’s synopsis of the mystical *Hekhalot* corpus (Peter Schäfer, *Synopsis zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, TSAJ 2 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981]), where the “Youth” has six men in an apparent allusion to Ezek 9:2 (Halperin, *Faces*, 494). That the “Youth” enters beneath the throne of glory in §385 and §398a indicates an allusion to Ezek 10:1–2 (cf. *ibid.*, 492; Barker, *Revelation* 264, 269).

Siddur Rabbah 36 in the pre-kabbalistic Jewish *Shi'ur Qomah* (“The Measurement of the Body”) traditions, the “Youth” is not girded in stone; rather, his “body is like the rainbow”!⁷⁸ This latter statement is all the more intriguing since *Shi'ur Qomah* speculation was related to interpretation of the *Song of Songs*,⁷⁹ and it is in Cant 5:14 that we have already seen lapis lazuli—with a rainbow nowhere in sight there. This causes one to wonder about the exegetical traditions of Jewish mysticism that could alternate between describing the “Youth” with a body of lapis lazuli or with one that looked like a rainbow—especially since these alternating descriptions remind us of the question of the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the LXX’s translation of Ezek 9.

Such “stone” clothing is possibly found much earlier than the aforementioned Jewish mystical traditions. In Rev 15:6, some variants (A C 2053 2062), whose combined attestation G. K. Beale reminds us is usually superior to any other combination of texts for Revelation,⁸⁰ state that the seven-plague angels exiting the heavenly temple are clothed (ἐνδεδυμένοι) in λίθον (“stone”), instead of the accepted text, λίνον (“flax”⁸¹ or “lamp wick”⁸²).⁸³ While this *lectio difficilior* itself may go back to Ezek 28:13 (πᾶν λίθον χρηστὸν ἐνδέδουσαι [“you have bound upon yourself every stone”⁸⁴]), it may more likely reflect the LXX of Ezek 9:2, which refers to lapis lazuli, and Dan 10:6, which refers to another “Man in Linen,” seen by Daniel by the bank of the Tigris, having a body like “tarshish”⁸⁵—presumably a precious stone (שִׁשְׁבַּת וְיָהוּדִים).⁸⁶

⁷⁸Quoted from Martin Samuel Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah: Texts and Recensions*, TSAJ 9 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1985), 41. See also the following text found in Schäfer, §398: “His body resembles the rainbow, . . .” (quoted from Halperin, *Faces*, 405).

⁷⁹So Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, AGJU 14, (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 213. In Cant 7:7 (LXX 7:8), one finds the term קִמָּה (“height/stature”), from which *Qomah* derives.

⁸⁰G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 804. R. H. Charles states that the textual evidence “is strongly in favor of λίθον.” But he then rejects it on the basis that it simply cannot be right (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, ICC [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1920], 2.38). In a similar vein, Henry Barclay Swete rejects λίθον as comprising an “intolerable” metaphor—“even in the Apocalypse” (*The Apocalypse of St John: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Indices*, 3d ed. [London: Macmillan, 1917], 198). While accepting that λίθον is the *lectio difficilior*, Aune rejects it because it “makes no sense in the context” (*Revelation 6-16*, WBC 52B [Nashville: Nelson, 1998], 854).

⁸¹See Exod 9:31; Prov 31:13; Isa 19:9; by metonymy, the term means “linen” (Deut 22:11; *Pss. Sol.* 8:5 [?]).

⁸²See Isa 42:3; 43:17; *Pss. Sol.* 8:5 (?); Matt 12:20.

⁸³Beale, 804-805, mounts a defense of this *lectio difficilior* in *Revelation*, 804-805.

⁸⁴My translation.

⁸⁵I have left the Hebrew untranslated. Both the LXX and Theodotion left it that way as well and simply transliterated it (θαρσις). English translations vary: e.g., the NASV and the NRSV translate it here as “beryl,” while the NIV translates it as

Another text like Dan 10:6 that describes a being with a stone *body* is the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, which refers to the principal angel Yaeol having a body of “sapphire” (11:2).⁸⁷ In this latter text, the reference might be a reflection of Exod 24:10 and Ezek 1:26 and 10:1 (alluding to the material nature of God’s throne).⁸⁸ But the lapis lazuli clothing of the Man in Linen in the LXX of Ezek

“chrysolite.” שִׁשְׁבִּיט as a stone appears in Exod 28:20; 39:13; Cant 5:14; Ezek 1:16; 10:9; and 28:13. The LXX translates it as χρυσόλιθος (“chrysolite” or “beryl”) in Exod 28:20 and 36:20 [MT 39:13], θαρσις in Cant 5:14 and Ezek 1:16, and ἄνθραξ (“turquoise” [?]) in Ezek 10:9 (the translation of this latter term, which typically means “coal” [cf. Isa 6:6; Ezek 1:13] is unsure; cf. Exod 28:18; 36:18 [MT 39:11]; Isa 54:11; Sir 32:5; Tob 13:17); the MT and the LXX in Ezek 28:13 do not agree.

Not all LXX mss. translated the term alike. Pap. 967 translates it as θαλάσσης (“sea”), which Christopher Rowland notes (“A Man Clothed in Linen: Daniel 10.6ff and Jewish Angelology,” *JNT* 24 [1985]: 109, n. 11). Rowland, *ibid.*, demonstrates that this may have been motivated by discussions concerning the color of the divine throne—blue.

Later Jewish interpreters saw the שִׁשְׁבִּיט in terms of sapphire/lapis lazuli, fire, and brightness (גִּי). See Schäfer, §371a, as quoted and discussed in C. R. A. Morray-Jones, *A Transparent Illusion: The Dangerous Vision of Water in Hekhalot Mysticism: A Source-Critical and Tradition-Historical Inquiry*, JSJSup 59 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 213.

⁸⁶Cf. Beale, *Revelation*, 805. Another possibility, less likely in my opinion, is that what occurs in Revelation was mistranslated or misunderstood from the unpointed Hebrew שֵׁשׁ. This word means “linen” (Gen 41:42; Exod 25:4; 26:1, 31, 36; 27:9, 16, 18; etc.), but the Aramaic form means “alabaster/marble” (שֵׁשׁ: 1 Chr 29:2 [LXX: πάριος]; שֵׁשׁ: Esth 1:6 [LXX: παρίνοις καὶ λιθίνοις]; Cant 5:15 [LXX: μαρμάρινος]). Ep Jer 71 apparently mistranslated שֵׁשׁ into marble instead of linen, and thus one finds a reading that refers to the rotting (σηπομένης) of purple and marble (τῆς πορφύρας καὶ τῆς μαρμάρου), the latter being simply impossible; see the discussion in Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 854. Assuming something similar happened in Revelation would possibly mean that Revelation was written in Aramaic, with the Aramaic author utilizing the Hebrew word, while the Greek translator translated the Aramaic word. See the discussion in Charles C. Torrey, *The Apocalypse of John* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 141-142. In the *Hekhalot* literature, marble was often associated with variegated colors (cf. Morray-Jones, *Transparent Illusion*, 36-44 and 89-100).

⁸⁷Several of the Old Slavonic mss. may refer to “his body (and) legs,” and thus R. Rubinkiewicz, the author of the critical edition, states that “perhaps sapphire refers only to the legs or feet and a separate description of the body has been lost” (“Apocalypse of Abraham,” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:694, n. 11a). Cf. *idem*, *L’Apocalypse d’Abraham en vieux slave. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et commentaire* (Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego 129; Lublin, Poland: Société des Lettres et des Sciences de l’Université Catholique de Lublin, 1987), 135.

⁸⁸Cf. Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 62. On the possibility that the lapis lazuli in Ezek 1:26 refers to the firmament and not the throne, see Morray-Jones, *Transparent Illusion*, 98-100. Note that in its interpretation of Ezek 1, the Qumran document *Second Ezekiel* (4Q385 6 6) speaks of “a radiance of a chariot” (גִּי מִרִכְבָּה), referring to the throne of God. For text, translation, and discussion, see Deborah Dimant, *Parabiblical Texts, Part 4: Pseudo-Prophetic Texts*, vol. 21, *Qumran Cave 4*, DJD 30 (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 43-46.

9 must also be seriously entertained as a possible influence.

It is also possible that the concept of stone bodies may be related to the Jewish tradition of angelic beings being engraved on the pedestal of the divine throne. In the Qumran *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, one reads of such beings (4Q405 19 5-7a):

- Line 5 luminous spirits. A[] their [workmanship] (is of) h[oly] wondrous mosaic, [spirits] of mingled [רִיקְמָה] colours, [fi]gures of the shapes of god-like beings, engraved
- Line 6 round about their [gl]orious brickwork [לִבְנֵי] , glorious images of the b[ric]kwork [לִבְנֵי] of splendour and majes[ty.]Living god-like beings (are) all their construction
- Line 7 and the images of their figures (are) holy angels.⁸⁹

The figures engraved around about the glorious brickwork (lines 5-6) most likely refer to the lapis lazuli platform upon which the throne of God rests (Exod 24:10: לִבְנֵי הַפִּיִּיר).⁹⁰ Thus these angelic figures have, in essence, “bodies” of lapis lazuli. At the same time, these (implied) lapis-lazuli bodies are situated in a context describing a polychromatic mosaic or plating⁹¹ of mingled (רִיקְמָה) colors (line 5)—the term רִיקְמָה later being used in another *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* text (4Q405 20 ii-21-22 11) as a circumlocution for the rainbow of Ezek 1:28!⁹²

The concept of celestial beings “engraved” or “attached” to the throne may also appear in Rev 4:6.⁹³ This verse, in part, describes the four living creatures: Καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου τέσσαρα ζῶα (“Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures”). How can these four living creatures be “in the midst” of the throne

⁸⁹The translation is taken from the critical edition by Carol Newsom, “Shirot ‘Olat HaShabbat,” in *Poetical and Liturgical Texts, Part I*, ed. Emanuel Tov, vol. 6, *Qumran Cave 4*, DJD 11 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 341. The Hebrew is taken from *ibid.*, 339.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 340; cf. Joseph M. Baumgarten, “The Qumran Sabbath Shirot and Rabbinic Merkabah Traditions,” *RQ* 13 (1988): 203; Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *All The Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, STDSS 42 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 385; Bilhah Nitzan, “The Textual, Literary and Religious Character of 4QBerakhot (4Q286-290),” in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Technological Innovations, New Texts, and Reformulated Issues*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Eugene Ulrich, STDJ 30 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 644.

⁹¹The reading here is uncertain; cf. Newsom, “Shirot,” 343 on l. 5, and Davila, *Liturgical Works*, 142-143.

⁹²Fletcher-Louis, *Glory of Adam*, 372; cf. Newsom, “Shirot,” 352 on l. 10-11; and Christopher Rowland, “The Visions of God in Apocalyptic Literature,” *JSJ* 10 (1979): 143, n. 14. On this latter text, see also Saul M. Olyan, who sees a reference to angelic creatures interpreted in terms of this rainbow imagery (*A Thousand Thousands Served Him: Exegesis and the Naming of Angels in Ancient Judaism*, TSAJ 36 [Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1993], 46).

⁹³So Baumgarten, “Qumran Sabbath Shirot,” 204.

and “around” the throne? Robert G. Hall, suggesting that the text assumes that the throne is patterned on the OT tabernacle ark, concluded that one should take the text just as it reads (i.e., the creatures are both in the midst of the throne *and* around it), with the living creatures in the midst of the throne *as components of it*.⁹⁴ Such an interpretation would be in line with the Jewish tradition of God sitting on a cherub throne.⁹⁵ In relation to the ark in the tabernacle, Josephus reports that Moses saw the two cherubim (πρόστυποι δύο) sculpted on the throne of God.⁹⁶ Some later Jewish interpreters understood that the four living creatures were components of the throne.⁹⁷ If such a view were correct in Rev 4:6, Rev 5:6a (Καὶ εἶδον ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ τῶν τεσσάρων ζώων καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἀρνίον ἑστῆκος ὡς ἐσφαγμένον) would make sense as the NASB translates it: “And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain.”⁹⁸ Thus, with Hall’s interpretation, the four living creatures would be parts or components of the (lapis lazuli?) throne, yet able to move and even worship the occupants of the throne (Rev 5:8; 19:4).⁹⁹ In this sense, they would

⁹⁴Robert G. Hall, “Living Creatures in the Midst of the Throne: Another Look at Revelation 4.6,” *NTS* 36 (1990): 608-613.

⁹⁵God rode or moved on a cherub (Ps 18:10 = 2 Sam 22:11). Texts that describe God as one who sits on (or, is enthroned on) the cherubim (e.g., יֹשֵׁב הַכְּרֻבִים) would be related (cf. 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kgs 19:15; 1 Chr 13:6; Ps 80:1; 99:1; Isa 37:16). See the discussion in Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 10 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 244. Some translations (e.g., NIV, NKJV), however, translate these passages to refer to God sitting “between” the cherubim.

⁹⁶Josephus *Ant.* 3.137. Greek text taken from *Jewish Antiquities, Books I-IV*, vol. 4 of *Josephus*, trans. by H. St. J. Thackeray, LCL (London: Heinemann, 1930), 380. See also the discussion in *Judean Antiquities 1-4*, trans. and commentary by Louis H. Feldman, vol. 3, *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, ed. Steve Mason (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 267; Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, “Le Couple de l’Ange et de l’Esprit: Traditions juives et chrétiennes,” *RB* 88 (1981): 54.

⁹⁷*Pirqe R. El.* 4 and *Rab. Cant.* 3.10.4. See the discussion in Hall, “Living Creatures,” 610-611; and Beale, *Revelation*, 329.

⁹⁸For ἐν μέσῳ . . . ἐν μέσῳ being translated as “between,” see *DBAG*, s.v. “μέσος, η, ον.” See also the discussion of this verse in Halperin, *Faces*, 89-90. He sees the “self-contradictory” statement here (*ibid.*, 91) as reflecting a tension between the identification of the living creatures and the cherubim in Ezek 10, on the one hand, and the hymnic tradition of angels surrounding the throne, on the other: “as cherubim, the *hayyot* ought to be part of God’s seat (Exodus 25:18-19); as angels in the hymnic tradition, they ought to surround it, singing praises” (*ibid.*, 92).

⁹⁹Hall, “Living Creatures,” 612-613. Cf. Beale, *Revelation*, 329. John never describes the material substance of the divine throne in Revelation. Yet if John is drawing on the understanding of the throne from Ezekiel, it would implicitly be lapis lazuli. Beale suggests that John’s description in Rev 4:2-3 combines references to several OT texts that speak of lapis lazuli, including the LXX of Ezek 9:2 (*Revelation*, 320)! The word σάπφειρος occurs in the NT only in Rev 21:19 as the second foundation stone of the

implicitly be understood to have “stone” bodies.

Hall’s interpretation is intriguing. Nevertheless, this interpretation of Rev 4:6 has yet to win wide support. David E. Aune, for example, has countered this interpretation largely on the basis that it still seems difficult (despite what Hall says) to understand how component parts of the throne could prostrate themselves before the throne.¹⁰⁰ But in a context in which an altar speaks (Rev 16:7) and people become pillars in God’s temple (Rev 3:12)—the temple which John later denies exists in the New Jerusalem except in terms of the Lord God and the Lamb (Rev 21:22)—it may not be as difficult to accept, even if one cannot understand it completely.

The preceding discussion regarding the meaning of Ezek 9:2 (cf. vv. 3, 11) has had its share of complex possibilities and dead ends. Yet it has provided a possible rationale for why the LXX (cf. the Peshitta) refers to ζώνη σαπφείρου in comparison to the חֲסִידֵי הַסֶּפֶר one finds in the MT. It is possible, as Barker suggested, that the LXX translator saw חשק (i.e., חשק) instead of חסק. The iridescence of the rainbow, however, has been replaced by the polychromatic nature of the ζώνη. As such, any iridescence in Ezek 9 can only be *hypothesized*, not proven, particularly since extant versions, such as the LXX, at best implicitly portray simple *polychromatism* rather than the shimmering, radiant nature of *iridescence*. Iridescence in Ezekiel, consequently, is best focused at this point on the explicit reference in 1:27-28 and the implicit, polychromatic radiance in 1:4, 10:4, and 43:2.

The Broader Context of Ezekiel’s Iridescent Imagery

Ezekiel’s rainbow imagery in association with a theophanic vision is unique in the OT, and in the NT only the book of Revelation can compare. John’s iridescent references themselves in 4:3 (ἶρις) and 10:1 (ἡ ἶρις) are unique in that he is the only biblical author to use this particular Greek term for the concept of the rainbow. The term is absent from the rest of the NT, and when one turns to the OT, the only word used for the rainbow in the LXX is τόξον,¹⁰¹ a word that

walls of the New Jerusalem. On the meaning of this term here as lapis lazuli, see Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 2d ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 394. Not all are as certain about this identification, however. Cf., e.g., Robert L. Thomas, who states that some references refer to sapphire, while others might refer to lapis lazuli (*Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* [Chicago: Moody, 1995], 471).

¹⁰⁰Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 272. On the other hand, Beale is more open to this possibility while recognizing that it has at least one problem that is not, in his opinion, fatal (*Revelation*, 329).

¹⁰¹It is used with this definition only in Gen 9:13, 14, 16; and Ezek 1:28. This term (τόξον) is also used in Sir 43:11 and 50:7 in reference to the rainbow. It is used once in Revelation (6:2), where it takes on its typical meaning of an archer’s “bow.”

normally refers to an archer's bow (cf. the Hebrew קַשְׁקֶשֶׁת).¹⁰² But one can easily restrict the field of vision regarding iridescent imagery if one does not understand the broader context of theophanic light imagery in Jewish and Christian literature.

1 Timothy 6:16 begins by saying of God: "It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light (φῶς οὐκ ὄντων ἀπρόσιτον), whom no one has ever seen or can see [ὄν εἶδεν οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ ἰδεῖν δύναται]." The latter part of this portion of the verse clarifies the earlier part—i.e., no one has ever seen or can see God *because* he dwells in unapproachable light. This reminds one of the imagery in Ps 104:2, where the psalmist describes God as "wrapped in light as with a garment [הוּרַק בְּאֵשׁ אֵשׁ אֵשׁ אֵשׁ]." Such references to God's dwelling in light (implicit or explicit) are more numerous than the few in Ezekiel and Revelation that describe him surrounded by a rainbow or rainbow-like brightness.¹⁰³

One could, however, describe the rainbow imagery as a subset of theophanic light imagery, which encompasses such phenomena as the sun, fire, snow, and the rainbow, as well as such abstract terms as brilliance, radiance, and glory. Thus, for example, the Synoptic Gospel evangelists, when describing Jesus' transfiguration, described the *same* event but with *different* light imagery: "and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white" (Matt 17:2: καὶ ἔλαμψεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος, τὰ δὲ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο λευκὰ ὡς τὸ φῶς); "and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them" (Mark 9:3: καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο στίλβοντα λευκὰ λίαν, οἷα γραφεὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς οὐ δύναται οὕτως λευκᾶναι); and "his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning" (Luke 9:29 [NIV]: ὁ ἱματισμὸς αὐτοῦ λευκὸς ἐξαστράπτων).¹⁰⁴

The possibility thus exists that there is a certain amount of overlap between various forms of such theophanic light imagery. For example, while Ezek 1:27-28 describes the rainbow-like brightness surrounding the One on the throne, one looks in vain for a parallel description in *1 En.* 14, a passage that

¹⁰²Perhaps John used the term ἵρις as an accommodation to his audience; this term was the pagan term for the rainbow, and Josephus equates it with τόξον in his discussion of the Flood (*Ant.* 1.103). Cf. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 285-286; and Peter R. Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels: Angelology and the Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, SNSMS 95 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 133-134. Carrell reminds of the possibility that ἵρις was used because it was found in a version of Ezek 1:4 (that of ὁ Ἑβραῖος) attested in Origen's Hexapla (*ibid.*, 134). Another intriguing possibility is that, while the term τόξον referred to the bow-shaped half-circle of the rainbow that was visible to human eyes, the term ἵρις referred to a complete, fiery-like circle of light. On this, see Louis A. Brighton, "The Rainbow: A Sign of God's Covenant with His Creation," in Dean O. Wenthe, Paul L. Schrieber, and Lee A. Maxwell, eds., *"Hear the Word of Yahweh": Essays on Scripture and Archaeology in Honor of Horace D. Hummel* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2002), 188.

¹⁰³Cf., e.g., Isa 60:19-20; Dan 2:22; Acts 22:6-11; 1 John 1:5, 7; and Rev 21:23; 22:5.

¹⁰⁴Notice how Luke also describes the overall scene in terms of the disciples seeing Jesus' glory (9:32: εἶδον τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ).

contains another finely detailed vision of the throne of God. But it might be misleading to simply look in *1 En.* 14 for rainbow-imagery. *1 Enoch* 14:21-22 states: “And no angel was able to enter this house, or to look on his face, by reason of its splendour and glory; and no flesh was able to look on him. A blazing fire encircled him, and a great fire stood in front of him.”¹⁰⁵ What surrounds the One on the throne is a blazing fire—not a rainbow-like radiance.

One can see, however, how this blazing fire in *1 Enoch* could be understood to be iridescent or rainbow-like in appearance. In *1 En.* 71:2, part of the *Similitudes of Enoch*, the seer sees “two streams of fire, and the light of that fire shone like hyacinth.”¹⁰⁶ The color “hyacinth” in Ethiopic is *yāknēt*, and this term translates the Greek ὑάκινθος, itself a term we have already seen and one that typically translates¹⁰⁷ the Hebrew חבלה (generally, blueish- or violet-colored purple,¹⁰⁸ but spanning heliotrope to green as well¹⁰⁹) in the OT.¹¹⁰ Thus, in *1 Enoch*, the fire the seer sees looks like a shade of purple.¹¹¹

All of this suggests that the “fire” that one runs across several times as surrounding or associated with the divine throne may well have been viewed or interpreted, at times, in terms of many colors—thus like the rainbow.¹¹² This makes sense from a phenomenological standpoint, since fire *does* appear at times

¹⁰⁵Text quoted from Black, *Book of Enoch*, 33.

¹⁰⁶Text quoted from *ibid.*, 67.

¹⁰⁷Black (*ibid.*, 251, n. 2) associates ὑάκινθος with the term ספיר (“lapis lazuli”) in Ezek 28:13.

¹⁰⁸“חבלה,” HALOT 4:1733.

¹⁰⁹Athalya Brenner, *Colour Terms in the Old Testament*, JSOTSup 21 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 148.

¹¹⁰Cf. Exod 25:4; 26:1, 31, 36; 27:16; 28: 5, 8, 15, 33, 37; Ezek 23:6; 27:7, 24; etc. Note, however, that *LSJ* states that ὑάκινθος is a blue color (s.v. “ὑάκινθος”).

¹¹¹In the NT, ὑάκινθος occurs only in Rev 21:20, where it is a name of one of the precious or semiprecious foundation stones of the New Jerusalem. It is typically translated as “jacinth” (cf. NASB, NIV, NRSV), but the NJB is one that translates it as “sapphire.” The related word ὑάκινθινος is found in the NT only in Rev 9:17 and describes a color ranging from dark blue to dark red that is associated with fire and brimstone (cf. in the OT Exod 25:5; 26:4, 14; 28:31; 35:7, 23; 36:29, 28 [MT 39:22, 31]; etc.). There John refers to fire and brimstone again almost immediately (9:17; 9:18), but he associates the latter references with smoke instead of hyacinth.

¹¹²Cf. also the *Apoc. Ab.* 18:13: “And above the wheels was the throne which I had seen. And it was covered with fire and the fire encircled it round about, and an indescribable light surrounded the fiery crowd” (trans. Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:698). Christopher Rowland states that this text reflects Ezek 1:27b in its description of the fire and the surrounding brightness (“The Influence of the First Chapter of Ezekiel on Jewish and Early Christian Literature,” Ph.D. dissertation, Christ’s College Cambridge, 1974, 46). Consequently, it appears the author of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* felt free to describe the Ezekielic rainbow-like radiance as fire.

to have flames of purple, blue, violet, red, yellow, green, and/or orange.¹¹³

It is possible to trace a trajectory of interpretation of Ezek 1 that implicitly or explicitly relates the iridescence of the rainbow with the glowing, multicolored nature of fire. First, it is at this point that we can pick up the second occurrence of הֲנֵה in Ezekiel, found in 1:13, that we have delayed exploring until now. There Ezekiel describes the fire that exists within the living creatures: “In the middle of the living creatures there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro among the living creatures; the fire was bright [שֵׁשׁ לְ הֲנֵה], and lightning issued from the fire.” Daniel I. Block sees the comparison of the הֲנֵה to the rainbow in 1:28 as suggesting that this particular term describes “polychromatic splendor” not only in 1:28, but “throughout this account”—that is, throughout Ezek 1.¹¹⁴ Block’s conclusion would confirm the iridescent nature of 1:4, as we have already seen. But it also points to the iridescent nature of the הֲנֵה in 1:13 as well, and Block, in fact, describes the flames there as displaying a “mesmerizing variation in color.”¹¹⁵ Thus, while the rainbow-like iridescence shows up explicitly at 1:27-28, it also shows up implicitly at 1:4 and 1:13.¹¹⁶

Second, 4QBerakhot (4Q286-290) is another liturgical text found at Qumran that draws its inspiration and language from Leviticus, Deuteronomy, the *Community Rule* (1QS), and the *Damascus Document* (CD), while sharing a similar approach to exegeting Ezek 1 as the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* and showing similarities to parts of Revelation.¹¹⁷ In 4QBer^b ii 1-3, the broken text describes the heavenly temple via a *merkabah* vision:¹¹⁸

¹¹³One interpretation of the fabrication of the tabernacle menorah was that it took place by a miracle: God took white, red, green, and black fire and fashioned the candlestick (see Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, trans. by Paul Radin [Philadelphia: JPS, 1947], 3:219, referring to *Tanh. B. III*, 28-29 [ed. Buber; Wilna, 1885]).

¹¹⁴Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 105. Here “polychromatic splendor” would better approximate the gleaming or glistening nature of iridescence than a less complex and more subdued “polychromatism.”

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹¹⁶Cf. Brownlee, who observes the use of הֲנֵה in reference to the dawn in Isa 60:3 and concludes that the fire was “many hued” (*Ezekiel 1-19*, 12). Prov 4:18 also describes dawn in terms of the הֲנֵה : “But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn [כְּאֹרֶן הֲנֵה], which shines brighter and brighter until full day.” See also Isa 4:5, which describes the “brightness of a flaming fire [וְהֵנָּה אֵשׁ]” (NASB).

Cf. the late Jewish mystical interpretation of Ezek 1 found in *Hekhalot Zutarti* (“The Lesser [Book of Celestial] Palaces”), §353 in Schäfer’s *Hekhalot* synopsis, where the living creatures are described as having an appearance “like the appearance of the rainbow in the cloud” (quoted from Halperin, *Faces*, 388). This is intriguing in light of the fact that the fire in the midst of the living creatures in 1:13 is described in terms of the הֲנֵה that one also finds in 1:28 in comparison with the rainbow.

¹¹⁷Davila, *Liturgical Works*, 43-47.

¹¹⁸*Merkabah* material derives from the OT: “The *merkabah* appears to play the role

Line 1] their [] and [*m*]b their engraved forms []
 Line 2] their [] their splendid s[tr]uctures []
 Line 3 [walls of] their glorious [hal]ls, their wondrous doors []

Immediately following these lines is the following:¹¹⁹

Line 4] their. [], angels of fire and spirits of cloud . []
 Line 5 brightness of the brocaded spirits of the holiest ho[li]ness

The author of the critical text, Bilhah Nitzan, suggests that the carved forms in lines 1 to 3 may be the angels in line 4 and the spirits in line 5.¹²⁰ And then she remarks: "It thus seems that the images carved in the heavenly temple are of classes of angels which create the impression of the 'brightness' of the 'mingled/brocaded colors' . . . , referring to the flamed [*sic*] and lightning surrounding of the heavenly throne and the appearance of God known from Ezekiel 1:4, 27-28; 8:2; 10:3-4; Psalm 97:2-3; 104:4; Daniel 7:9-10, and 1 *Enoch* 14:17-22."¹²¹ Though Nitzan does not state it, Ezek 1:27-28 contains the bright, iridescent imagery we have been exploring. Thus she implicitly hypothesizes that the multicolored, physical images in the heavenly temple were understood by the author of this text to provide the basis for the brightness of the rainbow imagery that Ezekiel saw. Thus here she associates the "angels of fire" with the iridescence similar to a rainbow.

Third, the *Hekhalot* corpus also provides enlightenment in regard to the visual relation of the rainbow to fire. Despite this literature's late date in relation to Ezekiel, it is important for its interest in Ezek 1.¹²² One *Hekhalot* interpretation of Ezekiel's vision in chapter 1 attempts to unveil the multicolored, glowing nature of fire and compares flames of fire to "all kinds of colors mixed together."¹²³ Thus one can see why, in another *Hekhalot* passage, the rainbow is explicitly compared to fire: "The crown [of the 'youth'] resembles the rainbow, and the

of the central 'cult object' of the heavenly temple, recalling the tradition of 1 Chr. 28:18, which identifies the central cult object of the Jerusalem temple as the 'chariot of the cherubim'" (Carol A. Newsom, "Merkabah Exegesis in the Qumran Sabbath Shirot," *JJS* 38 [1987], 14). In this paper, I follow the custom of spelling the "chariot" as "merkabah" rather than "merkavah."

The text is from the critical edition: Bilhah Nitzan, "Berakhot," in *Poetical and Liturgical Texts, Part I*, ed. Emanuel Tov, vol. 6, *Qumran Cave 4*, DJD 11 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 52. I have attempted to replicate the spacing of the text as it is in the critical edition.

¹¹⁹Text from *ibid.*

¹²⁰Nitzan, "4QBerakhot (4Q286-290)," 643.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, 643-644.

¹²²Davila notes that it also shows a strong relationship to earlier apocalyptic and Gnostic works (*Liturgical Works*, 43-47).

¹²³Schäfer, §371a (quoted from Morray-Jones, *A Transparent Illusion*, 176; cf. p. 213). Morray-Jones notes that the image of mixed colors reminds one of the multicolored temple veils described in Chronicles, Philo, and Josephus (*ibid.*, 213).

rainbow resembles all *the appearance of fire all around it*.¹²⁴

And fourth, other Jewish texts comparing a rainbow to fire can be found in the *Shi'ur Qomah*, part of the mystical *merkabah* ("throne") corpus. *Siddur Rabbah* 36, referred to earlier, states that the body of the celestial being called the "Youth" is like a rainbow (רשקב), "and the rainbow [to which his body is similar] would be one which is similar to anything with an image of fire surrounding it all around."¹²⁵ Here one immediately notices the allusions to Ezek 1, as well as the comparison of the rainbow with fire. *Sefer Haqqomah* 132 is similar: "His body resembles a bow [רשקב], and the bow is (something) like the semblance of fire (forming) a house around it."¹²⁶

Granted, the *Hekhalot* and *Shi'ur Qomah* are much later than Ezekiel, yet they provide further interpretive support for what we have already seen strongly hinted at in Ezek 1:13, namely, that the fiery flames there were understood in iridescent terms similar to the explicit rainbow imagery in 1:27-28 and the implicit iridescence in 1:4 and 10:4.¹²⁷ The term רשקב provides the linkage between all three texts, and despite the absence of רשקב in 43:2, the same iridescence undergirds that text because of its explicit linkage to chapter 1.

In the case of the throne-room visions, such as found in Ezekiel, the visionaries grasped at what was familiar to describe what was not familiar. Sometimes they saw a rainbow-like radiance, other times a blazing fire,¹²⁸ and at

¹²⁴Schäfer, §487 (quoted from Halperin, *Faces*, 539). Here again the fiery flames have a glowing, multicolored nature.

¹²⁵Text quoted from Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah*, 41.

¹²⁶Text quoted from *ibid.*, 153. *Sefer Razi'el* 256-257 and *Sefer Haqqomah* 157 state that this Youth's name is "Metatron"; however, cf. Davila, "Melchizedek," 258-261. See also Schäfer, §398: "His body resembles the rainbow, and the rainbow resembles *the appearance of fire all around it* [Ezekiel 1:27]" (quoted from Halperin, *Faces*, 405).

¹²⁷Even more, the interpretive comparison of Ezekiel's rainbow to fire is neither as late nor as narrowly restricted as might appear at first. Recently Robert Blust, in a fascinating and wide-ranging study, examined worldwide folkloric characterizations associated with the dragon and suggested that the concept of the dragon developed from rational and prescientific observations about the rainbow ("The Origin of the Dragon," *Anthropos* 95 [2000]: 519-536). In his analysis, "the clues are literally everywhere," and he concludes that "it is astonishing that the identity of the rainbow and the dragon has gone so long unrecognized" (*ibid.*, 534). From this perspective, stories of fire-breathing dragons reveal another intermingling of iridescent imagery deriving from rainbow and fire phenomena. While Blust shows from the standpoint of folklore how dragons who breathe fire are related to the meteorological phenomena of the rainbow, he does not explicitly make the comparison between the rainbow and fire (*ibid.*, 531-532).

¹²⁸Did the gold, blue, purple, and scarlet colors that adorned the high priest's garments and the tabernacle veils suggest the blazing fires of heaven (or vice versa)? For instance, the inner veil prevented access to the Most Holy Place, while in *1 En.* 14:21-22 the blazing fire prevented access to the One on the throne. Cf. Meredith G. Kline, who indicates that such bright reds, blues, and gold colors gave a fiery effect: "Artist [*sic*] could

other times simply a brilliant light.¹²⁹ In other words, and with particular regard to this study, the rainbow-like radiance was *one* of several ways in which visionaries described the brilliant—and variegated—light of the heavenly throne room.

Conclusion

Iridescent imagery is both explicit and implicit in Ezekiel. One finds explicit imagery only once, in reference to the rainbow around the throne (1:27-28). But it also appears implicitly in the description of the radiance elsewhere (cf. 1:4, 10:3-4, and included in 43:2). The question of whether iridescent imagery stands behind the LXX (and Peshitta?) text of Ezek 9, while intriguing and possible, is conjectural and cannot be compellingly demonstrated. The absence of explicit or implicit iridescent imagery in reference to descriptions of the throne room of God indicates nothing more than that the rainbow was but one of the several ways in which the visionaries saw and/or described the brilliant radiance that surrounded God. Moreover, references to fire in heaven or in the heavenly temple¹³⁰ could well be more or less equivalent to the rainbow imagery

scarcely do more with an earthly palette in a cold medium to produce the effect of fiery light" (*Images of the Spirit*, Baker Biblical Monograph [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980], 43).

¹²⁹See Kline's comprehensive summary of biblical light imagery in *ibid.*, 18. Kline implicitly ties the "beauty" aspect of the rainbow with the appearance of the high priest's garments (*ibid.*, 42-43), which were designed for "glory and for beauty [לְכָבוֹד וְלִתְּהָאָרָה]" (Exod 28:2, NASB).

Cf. the substitution of the rainbow-like radiance by "light" in Logion 83 of the *Gospel of Thomas*: "Jesus said, 'The images are manifest to man, but the light in them remains concealed in the image of the light of the Father. It [the light] will become manifest, but his [the Father's] image will remain concealed by his light'" (trans. April D. De Conick, *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas* [VCSup 33; Leiden: Brill, 1996], 101). Quoting Ezek 1:27, De Conick states that "the Glory, God's 'body' or 'image', was believed to be surrounded by radiant light, and when the mystic looked at God, he saw this light-man seated on the Throne" (*ibid.*, 102; De Conick does not refer to the image of the rainbow, however, but only to the "brightness around him"). The concealment of the Father's image in the *Gospel of Thomas* means that "God's image is concealed by the light radiating around God. This must be grounded in the early idea that God's form was enshrouded with light" (*ibid.*, 103; cf. also 105). De Conick believes this tradition goes back to *1 En.* 14:22-23, where God's form remains hidden behind his light—i.e., the flaming fire (*ibid.*, 104).

Cf. also the "cloud of light" in Gnostic works. For example, in *Ap. John* 10:10-19, Sophia creates a being whom she surrounds in a "cloud of light." Rowland affirms that this reference is, in general, similar to Ezek 1:4 ("Influence of Ezekiel," 81). But I have demonstrated above that Ezek 1:4 refers to the *same* rainbow-like radiance as 1:27b. See also the parallel between this and the passage in *Orig. World.* 106:1-6, in which one finds the throne of Jesus within the light of a great cloud (cf. *ibid.*, 85). References to these two Gnostic works are taken from James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 3d rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990).

¹³⁰See, e.g., Dan 7:9-11.

of Ezekiel, since fire could be understood in terms of bright, shifting colors as well (e.g., Ezek 1:13). Focusing on explicit iridescent imagery in contrast or distinction to other light imagery (e.g., fire imagery), however, makes one unable to adequately explain the apparent paucity of such iridescent imagery in both the OT and the NT.

Iridescent imagery in Ezekiel had a checkered history among interpreters. Notice David J. Halperin's careful observation: "Ezekiel 1:26-28 compares God both to a human being and to a rainbow. The first comparison, as far as we can tell, did not seriously disturb the rabbis. The second did."¹³¹ As he further notes, God's "rainbow-like glory excited some of them and disturbed others."¹³² One who was apparently not disturbed by Ezekiel's dazzling, iridescent imagery, as we have briefly seen, was the NT prophet John. He is the *only* NT author to explicitly refer to the rainbow (Rev 4:3; 10:1), but a fuller exploration of his explicit and implicit use of Ezekiel's iridescent imagery—whether resplendent in all of its glorious colors or shimmering beneath the surface of his text—is a topic for another time.

¹³¹Halperin, *Faces*, 250.

¹³²*Ibid.*

THE ANGEL AT THE ALTAR (REVELATION 8:3-5): A CASE STUDY ON INTERCALATIONS IN REVELATION

RANKO STEFANOVIC

Andrews University

As has been commonly observed, the book of Revelation is characterized by its artful composition. In writing down his visions, the author made use of several literary techniques. One of these techniques is intercalation (sandwiching), known also as interlude or intermission. In this literary strategy, a literary unit is split into two parts. Between these two parts another unit, different in content, is intercalated or interlocked, functioning parenthetically, thus interrupting the scene description.¹ Thus, for instance, 8:3-5 is sandwiched between vv. 2 and 6; 12:7-12 between vv. 6 and 13; and 15:2-8 between 15:1 and 16:1. In a similar way, chapter 7 is interlocked between the sixth and seventh seals, and 10:1-11:14 between the sixth and seventh trumpets.

A question might be asked regarding the purpose and meaning of these intercalatory passages as intended by the author of the Apocalypse. In endeavoring to find an answer to this question, this article takes Rev 8:3-5 as a case study.

And another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake (Rev 8:3-5).²

Revelation 8:3-5 serves as an introductory vision to the vision of the blowing of the seven trumpets. The passage is intercalated between 8:2, describing seven angels with seven trumpets standing before God, and 8:6-9:21, portraying the same angels blowing the trumpets. To my knowledge, except for that of G. K. Beale,³ no serious scholarly endeavor has been made regarding the connection of Rev 8:3-5 with its immediate and broader contexts. The scholarly opinions range from the majority, who view 8:3-5—in connection to 6:9-11—as the key to understanding the vision of the seven trumpets, to the view that the passage is self-contained, having no obvious

¹Cf. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, Proclamation Commentaries (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 69-70.

²Unless otherwise noted, Scripture references are from the NASB.

³G. K. Beale has offered the most extensive treatment of Rev 8:3-5, seeing it as “a parenthetical transition” between the seals and the trumpets (*The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 460-464).

connections with the context in which it is found.⁴ This article presents an endeavor to examine the purpose and meaning of Rev 8:2-6 and its possible connection with the texts between which it is located.

The Meaning of the Altar in 8:3a

The crux of Rev 8:3-5 is ἄλλος ἄγγελος (“another angel”) coming and standing ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου (“on/at the altar”). The scholarly consensus holds that the scene takes place in heaven. Since neither the Hebrew Scriptures nor early Jewish literature mention an altar of sacrifice of burnt offering in heaven or sacrificial practices carried out there, the θυσιαστήριον in Rev 8:3 must refer to the altar of incense.⁵ However, as David Aune correctly observes, the text under consideration is, together with 9:13, the only passage in Jewish apocalyptic literature where the altar of incense or the incense offering in heaven is mentioned.⁶

Only a few scholars see in the θυσιαστήριον, at which the angel was seen standing in Rev 8:3a the altar of the sacrifice of burnt offering, as distinguished from the “golden altar,” or the altar of incense (8:3b).⁷ However, even these scholars unanimously agree that since the scene of Rev 8:2-6 takes place in heaven, the altar under consideration must be, in their view, located in heaven.

A number of recent scholars argue that the θυσιαστήριον in Rev 8:3 combines the aspects of both the altar of incense and the altar of burnt offering in the Israelite temple.⁸ This assertion is based on the conclusions reached by R. H. Charles that in Jewish Apocalyptic literature there is only one altar in heaven, namely, the altar of incense upon which “bloodless sacrifices and incense could be offered.”⁹ Charles, however, failed to support such a conclusion with evidence from the Jewish Apocalyptic literature. He rather referred to the *Testament of Levi* 3:4-7, which talks about “the uppermost heaven” that is identified as the holy of holies where there “are the archangels, who serve and offer propitiatory sacrifices to the Lord in behalf of all the sins

⁴As argued by David Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, WBC 52b (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 511.

⁵See R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985), 1:228; this view is followed by Aune, who translates the θυσιαστήριον in 8:3 as “the altar of incense” (ibid., 511).

⁶Ibid. Aune, however, overlooks Rev 5:8, which mentions the twenty-four elders “with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”

⁷The view goes as far back as Wilhelm Bousset (*Die Offenbarung Johannis*, 6th ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1906], 293-294); the view was also held by Isbon T. Beckwith (*The Apocalypse of John*, reprint [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], 552-553); George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 125.

⁸This list includes Beale, 454-455, who builds his conclusion on Charles, 1:228.

⁹Charles, 1:228.

of ignorance of the righteous ones. They present to the Lord a pleasing odor, a rational and bloodless oblation.”¹⁰

It appears that the Jewish Apocalyptic sources are not helpful for our understanding of the θυσιαστήριον in Rev 8:3. As Aune correctly observes, apart from the book of Revelation, the Jewish Apocalyptic literature knows neither an altar of sacrifice of burnt offering nor the altar of incense in heaven.¹¹ Nor do the alleged parallels between Rev 8:3-5 and *Testament of Levi* 3:4-7 render conclusive evidence that in writing down his vision John was dependent on this pseudepigraphal text. For instance, while the *Testament of Levi* talks about seven angels of the presence offering propitiatory bloodless sacrifices (no incense offering is explicitly mentioned), in Rev 8:3-5 one angel offers the incense offering upon the golden altar.¹²

In addition, the function of the altar of burnt offering in the earthly temple is clearly distinguished from the function of the altar of incense. Any evidence of the two altar aspects combined into one can hardly be supported either by the pre-exilic or the Second Temple practice.

Θυσιαστήριον (“altar”) is mentioned eight times in Revelation, of which three refer to the altar of incense (8:3b; 8:5; 9:13), four to the altar of sacrifice of burnt offering (6:9; 11:1; 14:18; 16:7), and once in 8:3a, the meaning of which is to be determined in this article. The word θυσιαστήριον (from the verb θυσιάζειν, “to sacrifice”; Heb. זֶבֶח) simply means “the place for offering sacrifices.” In the LXX, it is used of both the altar of sacrifice of burnt offering and the altar of incense of the earthly temple. The same occurrence of the word is found in the NT.¹³ In the earthly temple, the altar of burnt offering stood in the court before the entrance to the sanctuary (Exod 40:29), while the altar of incense was situated inside the sanctuary in front of the curtain separating the holy from the most holy place, “near the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is over the ark of the testimony” (Exod 30:6-7; cf. Lev 4:18). Since its function was closely connected with the most holy place, the altar of incense was considered to belong to the most holy place (cf. 1 Kgs 6:22; Heb 9:3-4) and was often referred to as “the altar which is before the Lord” (Lev 4:7, 18; 16:18; 1 Kgs 9:25; Rev 9:13).

Which of the two altars is in view in Rev 8:3a, the altar of burnt offering or the altar of incense? The question to be discussed, first, is regarding the location of the θυσιαστήριον in view. As mentioned above, scholars generally hold that the entire scene of 8:3-5 takes place in heaven, and since there is not

¹⁰James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1983), 1:789.

¹¹Aune, 511.

¹²Ibid., 511-512.

¹³The altar of burnt of offering is mentioned in Matt 5:23-24; 23:10-20, 35; Luke 11:51; Rom 11:3; 1 Cor 9:13; 10:18; Heb 7:13; 13:10; Jas 2:21; Rev 6:9; 11:1; 14:18; 16:7. The altar of incense is found in Luke 1:11; Rev 8:3; 5; 9:13.

an altar of burnt offering in heaven, the θυσιαστήριον in 8:3a must, accordingly, be the altar of incense. Such an understanding is problematic for several reasons. First, the angel “came and stood at the altar” (8:3). The text does not indicate where he came from. In Revelation, whenever an angel(s) “came” (ἦλθεν) to perform a special task, he (they) regularly came from the presence of God, which is expressed with phrases such as “from the rising of the sun” (7:2), “from heaven” (10:1; 18:1; 20:1), and “out of the temple [in heaven]” (14:15, 17, 18; 15:6). Three times the text simply states that the angel “came,” without indicating where from (8:3; 17:1; 21:9). In each case, however, the context indicates that the angel came from the very presence of God. Thus one might conclude beyond any reasonable doubt that the “another angel” of 8:3 also comes from the very presence of God. If such an understanding is correct, then the first altar by which he was seen standing cannot be the altar of incense for the simple reason that that altar was located “before the Lord” in the heavenly sanctuary. This would make the word “came” problematic and superfluous due to the fact that, in this view, the angel was already in the presence of the Lord.

Second, 8:3 states that the angel came (from the presence of the Lord) and stood ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου (“on the altar”) with a golden censer. Then, at this altar, the angel was given the incense in order to offer it with the prayers of the saints ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τὸ χρυσοῦν τὸ ἐνωπιον τοῦ θρόνου (“on the golden altar which is before the throne”).

The scholarly consensus holds that the phrase “stood ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου” denotes the angel seen standing “at” or “by” the altar (of incense). Basically, the preposition ἐπὶ denotes a position “on” or “upon” something that forms a support or foundation, and, as such, is the opposite of ὑπὸ (under).¹⁴ In its association with the genitive, it most frequently means “on” or “upon,” answering the question “where.”¹⁵ The usage of the preposition ἐπὶ with a noun in the spatial genitive in Revelation consistently denotes someone or something “on” something, rather than “at” or “by” something.¹⁶

¹⁴Murray J. Harris, “epi,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. C. Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975-1985), 3:1193.

¹⁵F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 122.

¹⁶The construction ἐπὶ + the genitive case occurs about 57 times in Revelation: ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (“upon the earth,” 3:10; 5:3, 10, 13; 6:10; 7:1; 8:13; 10:2, 5, 8; 11:10; 13:8, 14; 14:6; 16:18; 17:8; 18:24); ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου (“on the throne,” Rev 4:10; 5:1, 7; 6:16; 7:15); ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης (“on the sea,” Rev 5:13; 7:1; 10:2, 5, 8); ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων (“upon the foreheads,” 7:3; 9:4; 13:16; 14:1, 9; 22:4); ἐπὶ τῆς δεξιᾶς (“on the right hand,” 1:20); τοὺς καθημένους ἐπ’ αὐτῶν (“the ones sitting on them [horses],” 9:17; 19:18, 19, 21); ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς (“on the head,” 10:1; 12:1; 14:14); ἐπὶ τῆς πλατείας (“on the street,” 11:8); ἐπὶ τῶν κεράτων (“on the horns,” 13:1); ἐπὶ τῆς χειρὸς (“on the hand,” 13:16; 14:9); ἐπὶ τῆς νεφέλης ([sitting] “on the cloud,” 14:15, 16); τῆς καθημένης ἐπὶ ὑδάτων πολλῶν (“sitting on many waters,” 17:1); κάθηται ἐπ’ αὐτῶν (“sits on them

In the LXX, ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου (in the spatial genitive case) regularly denotes the sacrificial offering on, or being offered on, the altar of burnt offering (Exod 29:38; Lev 1:8, 12; 3:5; 7:31; 8:30; 9:24; 1 Chron 16:40; Ezra 7:17; Isa 56:7).¹⁷ With reference to persons, the same phrase—ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου—is used to denote somebody standing on the altar of burnt offering (1 Kgs 18:26; Amos 9:1).¹⁸ The same meaning is expressed with ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον (in the spatial accusative; cf. 1 Kgs 13:1; 2 Kgs 23:16-17).¹⁹ Someone (Lev 10:12) or something (Deut 16:21) “at” or “by” the altar of incense in the LXX is expressed by παρὰ τὸ θυσιαστήριον.²⁰ This suggests that ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου²¹ (where θυσιαστήριον refers to the altar of burnt offering) with reference to persons denotes someone standing “on” the altar of burnt offering.

The foregoing arguments lead to the conclusion that the use of the preposition ἐπὶ in Rev 8:3 could be deliberate due to the fact that in the Jerusalem temple, the altar of burnt offering had large dimensions. According to the *Middoth* tractate of the *Mishnah*, the size of the altar at its base was thirty-two by thirty-two by one cubit at the base, while the altar proper was thirty by thirty by five cubits.²² It thinned toward the top in several steps, measuring at the top level twenty-four by twenty-four cubits.²³ One cubit on every side of the top level was the place where the priest stood offering the sacrifice. Since

[mountains]”, 17:9); ἐπ’ αὐτῶν (“on them [foundations],” 21:14); “across” (21:16). It is also sometimes used metaphorically, denoting “over” with regard to “authority” or “control” (Rev 2:26; 9:11; 10:6; 14:18; 17:18; 20:6) or to do something to someone (3:10).

¹⁷It is used also in reference to something (e.g., a cover) on the altar of incense (Num 4:11, 13). The same meaning is expressed with ἐπ’ + θυσιαστήριον (in the accusative case; cf., “upon the altar of burnt offering,” Lev 1-9); “upon the altar of incense,” Deut 33:10; 1 Chron 6:34). Frequently, the two combinations are used interchangeably (cf. Lev 1-9).

¹⁸Some other usages are ἀπέναντι τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου (“before the altar,” Lev 6:7; Num 7:10; Deut 26:4); ἐνώπιον τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου (2 Kgs 18:19); κατὰ πρόσωπον τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου (“in front of the altar,” 1 Kgs 3:15; 8:22, 31, 54; 1 Macc 7:36).

¹⁹Cf. εἰστήκει ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τοῦ ἐπιθύσαι (“he stood on the altar of sacrifice,” 1 Kgs 13:1); εἶδεν ὁ βασιλεὺς τὸ θυσιαστήριον καὶ ἀνέβη ἐπ’ αὐτὸ (“the king saw the altar and went upon it,” 2 Kgs 16:12).

²⁰However, to approach the altar of burnt offering (1 Kgs 12:32-33) or the altar of incense (Lev 16:18; 1 Sam 2:28) is expressed with ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον.

²¹Some manuscript variants have the reading ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον (ἐπὶ + τὸ θυσιαστήριον in a spatial accusative); see Aune, 483.

²²*Mishnah Middoth* 3.1 (Herbert Danby, ed. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1933], 593). The measurement given by Josephus of the same altar is 50 x 50 x 15 cubits (*J.W.* 5.5.6).

²³*Mishnah Middoth* 3.1; according to Josephus, a ramp ran to the top level of the altar (*J.W.* 5.5.6); cf. Exod 20:26.

the author of the Apocalypse obviously drew the altar imagery from the Jerusalem temple, the angel he saw standing ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου meant “on the altar,” presumably of burnt offering.

This seems to suggest that two different altars are in view in Rev 8:3-5: “the altar” (8:3a) on which the angel was said to have stood, and “the golden altar which is before the throne” (8:3b-5). That the second θυσιαστήριον is referred to as “the golden altar” (τὸ θυσιαστήριον τὸ χρυσοῦς) “before the throne” (ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου) could be because the author wanted to distinguish it from the first altar, which is referred to as “the altar,” without qualification. “The golden altar” (Heb. זָהָבִי פָאָרִי) of the earthly sanctuary/temple was the altar of incense,²⁴ while the altar of burnt offering was known as “the bronze altar” (τὸ θυσιαστήριον τὸ χαλκοῦν).²⁵ The descriptive phrase “before the throne” parallels the phrase “before God” in 8:4 (cf. 9:13), thus denoting the altar of incense that was before the Lord (Lev 4:7, 18; 16:18; 1 Kgs 9:25), namely, “near the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is over the ark of the testimony” (Exod 30:6-7). The throne in 8:3 refers to the ark of the covenant because, in the earthly sanctuary, the ark functioned as the throne of YHWH.²⁶ In the ancient Jewish temple practice, the priest(s) selected to offer the incense on the golden altar took the censer with the incense and coals from the altar of burnt sacrifice and brought it into the temple to offer it on the altar of incense.²⁷ In Rev 8:3, it seems that it was at the altar of sacrifice that the angel was seen as standing, and from there he took the censer with incense to offer in the holy place of the heavenly temple.

John the Revelator did not find it necessary to identify the first altar in 8:3, but rather the second one (τὸ θυσιαστήριον τὸ χρυσοῦν). The first one he refers to simply as τὸ θυσιαστήριον (“the altar”) without qualification. The reason for that could be that he had in mind the altar previously mentioned in the book, namely, the one in the scene of the fifth seal (6:9-11), beneath which the slain martyrs prayed to God for vindication: “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will you not judge and avenge our blood upon those who dwell on the earth”? (my translation). The angel in 8:3 seems to be standing at the same θυσιαστήριον under which the blood of the slain martyrs, which had been poured out, was crying for vindication. The imagery of the slain martyrs underneath the altar, whose blood was poured out, is drawn from the Hebrew Bible sacrificial ritual. As such, it must be understood symbolically. The altar of burnt offering in the court of the earthly sanctuary was the place where the

²⁴Cf. Exod 39:38; 40:5, 26; Num 4:11; 1 Kgs 7:48; 2 Chron 4:19; Rev 9:13.

²⁵Cf. Exod 38:30; 39:39; 2 Kgs 16:14-15; 2 Chron 1:5-6; 7:7; Ezek 9:2.

²⁶Aune, 512.

²⁷See *Mishnah Tamid* 4.2-5 (*The Mishnah*, ed. Herbert Danby [London: Oxford University Press, 1974], 585); Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, trans. T. A. Burkill et al, rev. and ed. G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. Black (Edinburgh: T. & T Clark, 1979), 2:305-306.

bloody sacrifices were offered. The most sacred part of the sacrifice was the blood, a symbol of life. Because life belonged to God (Lev 17:11-14), the blood of the slain animal was drained and poured out at the base of the altar (Exod 29:12; Lev 4:7, 30-34; 8:15; 9:9).²⁸ Thus, in a symbolic presentation drawn from the Hebrew Bible, John portrays God's faithful people in terms of sacrificed saints with their blood poured out as an offering to God. Later, in Rev 16:6-7, he uses the phrase "poured out" with reference to the blood of the saints and prophets that was poured out, most likely, beneath the altar (as v. 7 indicates).

The idea of martyrdom as a figurative sacrificial offering to God is well known in the NT.²⁹ Jesus told his disciples that the day would come when those who would kill them would think that they were offering service to God (John 16:2). Paul applies this imagery to the death of Jesus when stating that Jesus gave himself up for us as "an offering and sacrifice to God for a fragrant aroma" (Eph 5:2). He also describes the suffering that Christians must undergo in terms of "sheep to be slaughtered" (Rom 8:36), and speaks of himself as "being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith" (Phil 2:17). Anticipating his soon-coming martyrdom, he makes the figurative statement: "For I am already poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come" (2 Tim 4:6). In the same way, the scene of the fifth seal describes the death of the saints under the altar as a sacrificial offering to God: they were slain because of their faithfulness to "the word of God" and "the testimony which they had maintained" (6:9).

The figurative presentation of the souls of the slain martyrs seen "underneath the altar" (ὑποκάτω τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου)—not upon it—indicates that the θυσιαστήριον in Rev 6:9 is the altar of burnt sacrifices. Here the revelator uses the language from Lev 17:11, which identifies the soul of the sacrifice with the sacrificial blood. The "souls" of the slain saints underneath the altar cry to God to avenge their *blood*. This suggests that the "souls" of the saints is a synonym for the "blood" of the saints poured at the base of the altar as a sacrifice,³⁰ which is crying for vindication regarding their death just as Abel's blood cried out to God because of his death (Gen 4:10). In later Jewish tradition, the souls of the righteous are to be preserved under the throne of

²⁸Cf. *Mishnah Tamid* 4.1 (Danby, 585).

²⁹In addition, Paul sometimes describes the entire Christian life as offering sacrifice to God (cf. Rom 12:1; Heb 13:15-16; 1 Pet 2:5). In Phil 4:18, he describes the financial support for his ministry made by the Christians in Philippi as "a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God."

³⁰Contrary to Beale, 391-392, who struggles with the fact that in the text the slain saints are seen "under the altar" (ὑποκάτω τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου), rather than upon it. He thinks that it is because of the "blood running down to the base of the altar after having been poured on its top." However, he clearly overlooks the fact that in the earthly temple blood was never poured out under the altar of incense; it was rather sprinkled on it or the horns of the altar was smeared with blood by the top of the finger (cf. Lev 4:6-7, 17-18, 16:18-19), which rules out any idea of "blood running down to the base of the altar."

God.³¹ This rules out any identification of the θυσιαστήριον in Rev 6:9 as the altar of incense for the simple reason that the blood of sacrificial animals was never poured out under the altar of incense; it was, rather, sprinkled on it.³²

As mentioned earlier, the altar of burnt sacrifice in the earthly temple did not stand in the temple, but rather in the outer court. In biblical typology, the outer court stands for the earth (cf. Heb 10:5-12; Rev 11:1-2). John the Revelator likewise refers to the earth in terms of the court of the earthly temple located outside the temple (11:2), with the altar of burnt offering on it. This locates the altar in 6:9 together with the entire scene of the fifth seal on earth, rather than in the temple in heaven. Since the evidence strongly suggests that the altar in 8:3a, at which the angel with the golden censor stood, is the same altar under which the souls of the slain saints cry to God for vindication and justice (6:9-11), the altar in 8:3a must be placed on earth rather than in heaven.³³

The Background of the Scene of 8:3-5

It thus appears that the clue to the full theological meaning of Rev 8:3-5 lies in the scene of the fifth seal in which the slain martyrs at the base of the altar of burnt offering are praying to God for vindication and judgment on their enemies (6:9-11). Thus the scene of 8:3-5 builds on the preceding scene of 6:9-11. The entire scenario seems to be built on the daily sacrifice known as the *tamid* in the ancient Hebrew cultic system, as described in the *Tamid* tractate of the *Mishnah*.³⁴ In the *tamid* evening service, after the sacrificial lamb had been placed upon the altar of burnt offering, the blood was poured out at the base of the altar. At the altar of burnt offering, the assigned priest would have taken the golden censor filled with incense³⁵ (while another priest took coals of fire from the altar). Next, he took the incense inside the temple and offered it upon the golden altar of incense in the holy place.³⁶ After offering the incense, he came out to bless the people, who were waiting in the court. At that moment, two priests blew their trumpets, marking the end of the daily sacrificial ceremony.

It appears that the first-century readers of Revelation, who had first- and

³¹As pointed out by Charles, 1:229; cf. Babylonian Talmud *Shabbath* 152b (I. Epstein, ed. [London: Soncino, 1936]).

³²Cf. Lev 4:6-7, 17-18; 16:18-19; the blood of the sacrifice was rather poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offering (cf. Lev 4:7, 18, 25; 30:34; 8:15; 9:9).

³³Beale, 455, and Robert H. Mounce (*The Book of Revelation*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977], 157) argue that the θυσιαστήριον in 8:3 combines aspects of both the altar of burnt offering and of the altar of incense of the earthly temple.

³⁴*Mishnah Tamid* 4.1-5.6 (Danby, 585-587); see also Schürer, 2:299-308.

³⁵The golden censor (λιβανωτός χρυσοῦς) was a "firepan" (θυίσκη χρυσή) in the Solomon temple (cf. 1 Kgs 7:50; 2 Chron 4:22; Jer 52:18-19), as well as in the Second Temple (see *Mishnah Yoma* 5 [Danby, 167]).

³⁶In the evening service of the *tamid*, the incense was offered after the sacrifice, while in the morning service it was offered before the sacrifice (see Schürer, 2:307).

second-hand knowledge of the Hebrew cultic ritual, could see strong parallels between the scene of 8:3-5 and the *tamid* evening service. In light of what they knew, they would have read the scene under consideration in the following way: the angel first comes to the altar of burnt offering—under which the blood of the slain saints, which had been poured out, was crying for vindication—where he fills the golden censer with incense and takes coals of fire from the altar (Lev 16:12). Incense in the Bible is associated with the prayers of the faithful (cf. Ps 141:2; Rev 5:8). David prayed: “May my prayer be counted as incense before You” (Ps 141:2). It also brings to mind the scene of Zachariah ministering the incense offering, while the people were in prayer in the court of the temple (Luke 1:9-10). According to Rev 5:8, incense represents the prayers of the saints. The incense offered on the altar in Rev 8:3 is associated with the prayers for justice and judgment of the slain saints under the altar of burnt offering in the scene of the fifth seal (6:9-11). The angel takes the incense and the coals into the holy place of the temple in heaven and administers the incense on the golden altar before the throne³⁷ (cf. Lev 16:12b-13). The prayers of the saints, in the manner of the smoke of the incense, go directly before God (8:4).³⁸ They are heard and accepted by God. God is already in the process of vindicating them.³⁹ In direct response to the saints’ prayers, God sends his judgment on the earth: the angel fills the censer with the fire from the golden altar and hurls it down to the earth. This is followed by thunder, voices, flashes of lightning and an earthquake, the cosmic phenomena denoting theophany (cf. Exod 19:16-19; Isa 19:6; Rev 11:19; 16:18).

The scene remarkably resembles the scene portrayed in the *Mishnah*, stating that during the *tamid* ritual, when the priests officiating in the holy place reached the place between the porch and the altar of incense, one of them took the shovel and threw it down. The noise of the shovel was so loud that no one in Jerusalem could hear the voice of his neighbor.⁴⁰ According to the same tractate, the sound of the shovel could be heard as far as Jericho.⁴¹ This is further indication that the entire scene in 8:3-5 mirrors the Second Temple *tamid* services.

In a similar scene in Ezekiel’s vision, the man clothed in linen took coals of

³⁷According to *Mishnah Yoma* 5.1 (Danby, 167), when the priest entered the holy place and “reached the Ark he put the fire-pan between the two bars. He heaped up the incense on the coals and the whole place became filled with smoke.”

³⁸Grant R. Osborne observes, interestingly, the relationship between the “smoke” of the prayers of the saints here, and the “smoke” of the torment of the evildoers rising forever and ever (14:11; 19:3): “In the theology of the book, the smoke of the latter is God’s response to the smoke of the former” (*Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002], 345).

³⁹*Ibid.*, 346.

⁴⁰*Mishnah Tamid* 5.6 (Danby, 587). The word “shovel” is *magrefah*, an instrument made in the shape of a shovel, having ten pipes with ten holes in each pipe; as such, it could produce many different sounds (see *ibid.*, 585, n.1).

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 3.8 (Danby, 585).

fire from between the cherubim and scattered them over Jerusalem as a token of divine judgment because of the abominations committed in the city (Ezek 10:1-7). The throwing of fire down on the earth is a judgment action.⁴² The action of the angel here brings to mind the statement of Jesus: "I have come to cast fire upon the earth" (Luke 12:49). It is especially significant that in Rev 8:5 the judgments of God are sent on the earth from the very same altar from which the prayers of the saints were offered to God. Similarly, the censer used for offering incense has now become the source of judgment, hurled on the earth in response to the prayers of the slain saints under the altar. This symbolic scene was intended to show that it was in response to the prayers of God's oppressed people that God's judgments, portrayed in the symbolic presentation of the seven-trumpet plagues, were sent on the earth and its inhabitants. Its purpose was to provide God's faithful people with a firm assurance that they are not forgotten by God and that their prayers have been heard and will be answered.

The offering of the incense on the golden altar and the hurling of the fire on the earth served as a signal to the seven angels to blow, one after another, their trumpets and herald the plagues being sent on the earth and its inhabitants. This is another indication that the trumpet judgments are affected by the prayers of the slain saints in the scene of the fifth seal: "How long, O Lord, will you not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (6:9-10). Now God responds to these prayers by sending the trumpet plagues, thus judging "those who dwell on the earth" (8:13).

This entire scene brings to mind the words of God to Moses: "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry" (Exod 3:7). Just as with the Egyptian plagues, so the trumpet woes are depicted as judgments against the enemies of God's people, comprising steps toward their deliverance.⁴³ The obvious parallels between the two—i.e., the trumpet series and the plagues of Egypt (Exod 7:11)—suggest that the latter are, for the most part, the main source from which John drew the descriptions of the seven trumpet plagues. However, any further discussion regarding this topic is beyond the scope of this study.

Revelation 8:3-5 within Its Literary and Thematic Contexts

It appears that Rev 8:3-5 acts as the springboard text, both concluding the seven-seals series and introducing the seven-trumpet-plague series. As a particular literary technique of Revelation,⁴⁴ the springboard passage provides

⁴²E.g., Luke 18:28-29; Rev 8:7-9; cf. Isa 66:15-16; Ezek 39:6; Amos 1:4-2:5; Mal 4:1.

⁴³Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 13.

⁴⁴Springboard passages function both as the concluding statement of the preceding section and the introduction to what follows. They seem to conclude and introduce almost all major sections of Revelation: e.g., the concluding statement of Rev 1:20 of the

the key to the meaning of the major sections of the book, suggesting the author's own intention regarding the understanding of the text. It enables the interpreter to find the interpretation that is imbedded in the broader context of the book, rather than to search outside the book for a creative interpretation.⁴⁵ Serving as "a parenthetical transition"⁴⁶ from the seals to the trumpet plagues, Rev 8:3-5 picks up and continues the theme introduced in the scene of the fifth seal (6:9-11) and inaugurates it into the vision of the seven trumpets, thus making the trumpets a divine response to the saints' prayers.⁴⁷ The following section explores the theological meaning of the two visions in light of their Hebrew Bible backgrounds.

The scene of the opening of the seven seals echoes the Hebrew Bible covenantal curses concept.⁴⁸ The covenant curses in the Hebrew Bible are the penalties sent by God on Israel because of their unfaithfulness to the covenant. The covenant curses are referred to in terms of "war, famine, pestilence and wild beasts" (Lev 26:21-26; Deut 32:23-25). These "four severe judgments" (Ezek 14:21) or "four kinds of doom" (Jer 15:3) were intended to wake the people and their leaders from their apostate condition and bring them back to God. By the seventh/sixth century B.C., they became well-known technical terms used by the prophets for the covenant "woes," which, in turn, were used by God to punish apostasy and lead the people to repentance.⁴⁹ Aune observes how the language of the covenant curses was used by Dio Cassius in reporting the casualties the Jews suffered during the Bar-Kokba revolt (132-135 A.D.).⁵⁰

vision of the glorified Christ (1:9-20) functions simultaneously as the introduction to the seven messages to the churches (chaps. 2-3). Rev 3:21, as the summary statement of the messages to the seven churches (chaps. 2-3), functions as the introductory text for Rev 4-7. The vision of the sealed one hundred and forty-four thousand (chap. 7) elaborates and explains the concluding statement of Rev 6:16-17 in the form of a question regarding who will stand before the great wrath of the Lamb. Rev 12:17, as the concluding statement of chap. 12, is developed in chaps 13-14. Rev 15:2-4 serves both as the conclusion of Rev 12-14 and the introduction to the seven last plagues. Some springboard texts seem to provide the clue for the larger portions of the book (e.g., 11:18 seems to outline the entire second half of the book [12-22:5]).

⁴⁵For further research on this topic, see Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2002), 26-27, 160-161.

⁴⁶Beale, 454.

⁴⁷See Pierre Prigent, *Apocalypse as Liturgie* (Neuchatel: Delachaux et Niestle, 1964), 135; Beale 462-463.

⁴⁸For the following ideas I am indebted to Jon Paulien ("The Seven Seals," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book 1*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 6 [Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992], 222-224). See also Stefanovic, 214-219.

⁴⁹See, e.g., Jer 14:12-13; 15:2-3; 21:6-9; 24:10; 29:17-18; Ezek 5:12-17; 6:11-12; 14:12-23; 33:27-29.

⁵⁰See Aune, 402, who cites Dio Cassius: "Five hundred and eighty thousand men

In implementing the covenant curses, God used enemy nations, such as the Philistines, Moabites, Assyrians, and Babylonians, as instruments of his judgment (cf. Judg 2:13-14; Ps 106:40; Isa 10:5-6).⁵¹ The enemy nation would come and afflict the Israelites by plundering and destroying them. In most cases, these nations, while sent by God as the executor of judgment, overplayed their part and tried to destroy God's people. In their hopeless situation, the people of Israel would turn to God for deliverance. At this point, God responded to the prayers of his afflicted people and reversed the judgments on the enemy nation(s) in order to provide deliverance for his people (cf. Deut 32:41-43). Thus, for instance, Jeremiah spoke on behalf of YHWH: "I will repay Babylon, and all the inhabitants of Chaldea for all their evil that they have done in Zion before your eyes," declares the Lord" (Jer 51:24). Joel prophesied that YHWH would judge and punish all nations for what they have done to his people (Joel 3:2-7).⁵² The text in Zechariah reflects strong parallels with Rev 6, where a question is raised by an angel: "O Lord of hosts, how long will You have no compassion for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which You have been indignant these seventy years?" The prophet is said to proclaim: "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion. But I am very angry with the nations who are at ease; for while I was only a little angry, they furthered the disaster'" (1:12-15).

The striking parallels between the language of the first four seals of Rev 6:1-8 and the covenant curses texts, together with Zech 1:12-15, strongly suggest that John had the Hebrew Bible covenantal curses motif in mind while writing down the scene of the breaking of the seven seals. This Hebrew Bible background clearly defines the context of the seals: the situation of the church in the hostile world. The opening of the first four seals describes in a symbolic presentation the judgments of God on the church unfaithful to the gospel (6:1-8). The scene of the fifth seal portrays the slain faithful at the base of the altar of burnt offering, crying to God for intervention and judgment on their oppressors and enemies: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will you not judge and avenge our blood upon those who dwell on the earth?" (my translation). The plea of the slain saints does not sound like a request for revenge on their

were slain in the various raids and battles [i.e., by the *sword*], and the number of those that perished by *famine, disease* and fire was past finding out. Thus nearly the whole of Judaea was made desolate, a result of which the people had had forewarning before the war . . . and many *wolves and hyenas* rushed howling into their cities" (*Historiae Romanae* 69.1.2; emphasis and the bracketed phrase supplied by Aune).

⁵¹This idea might be best observed in Judges when the situation in Israel is described in the following terms: the Israelites did evil in the sight of YHWH; YHWH sends an enemy nation, who oppresses them; the people turn to YHWH crying for deliverance; YHWH provides the deliverance for them (cf. 2:11-16; 3:7-9, 12-15; 4:1ff.; 6:1-14; 10:6ff.; 13:11ff.).

⁵²Similar texts are found throughout the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Jer 50:17-20; 33-34; Joel 3:19-20; Zech 14:3-21).

oppressors and enemies. The Greek word ἐκδικέω (“avenge”) means literally “procure justice for someone,”⁵³ implying a legal action. The legal usage of the word is best expressed in Luke 18:3-5, where the widow in Jesus’ parable makes a plea to the judge: “Give justice/legal protection [ἐκδίκησόν] to me against my opponent!” The judge responds: “Because this widow bothers me, I will give her justice/legal protection [ἐκδικήσω].” The legal aspect of the word is clearly seen in Rev 19:2, where God has judged Babylon by avenging [ἐξεδίκησεν] on her the blood of his servants. Thus the plea of the slain saints under the altar “must be seen as a legal plea in which God is asked to conduct a legal process leading to a verdict that will vindicate his martyred saints.”⁵⁴

The slain saints are urged not to active resistance, but to patient endurance (6:9-10). The following scene of the sixth seal was seemingly intended to answer in part the petition of the saints: the day is coming when God will ultimately judge the oppressors and enemies of his people. The subsequent chapter 7—which functions as an interlude providing the answer to the question raised in 6:17—and the breaking of the seventh seal, conclude the seven-seals series. What follows is the vision of the seven-trumpet plagues introduced by the intercalation in view (8:3-5). As the springboard passage, 8:3-5 continues the theme of 6:9-11, providing the suffering faithful a strong assurance that their prayers for vindication are not forgotten because God is speedily coming in judgment against those who assault them.⁵⁵ This theme is further developed in the following vision of the trumpet plagues, which thus function as heaven’s speedy response to the prayers of God’s afflicted people.

Next, it is necessary to consider the theological meaning of the trumpets. In the Bible, the blowing of the trumpet is the symbol of “the intervention of God in history.”⁵⁶ The life of ancient Israel was closely connected to the blowing of trumpets.⁵⁷ Their theological meaning is defined in Num 10:8-10:

⁵³Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. “ἐκδικέω.”

⁵⁴Joel Musvosvi, *Vengeance in the Apocalypse*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 17 (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1993), 232.

⁵⁵Alan Johnson, “Revelation,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 12:489.

⁵⁶William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, 2d ed., Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1976), 2:42.

⁵⁷In the Hebrew Bible, trumpets were used for different purposes: in most cases, they were used in the context of the temple liturgy and holy wars (Lev 25:9; Num 10:9-10; Josh 6:4-20). But, a sounding trumpet could be, for instance, the summons to battle (Judg 3:27; 6:34; Jer 51:27), to announce the coronation of an Israelite king (2 Sam 15:10; 1 Kgs 1:34, 39; 2 Kgs 9:13; 11:14), for gathering the people (Num 10:2-7; 1 Sam 13:3-4; Neh 4:20; Joel 2:15-16), or as a warning of approaching danger (Jer 4:5, 19-21; 6:1-17; Ezek 33:3-6; Amos 3:6).

The priestly sons of Aaron, moreover, shall blow the trumpets; and this shall be for you a perpetual statute throughout your generations. And when you go to war in your land against the adversary who attacks you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the Lord your God, and be saved from your enemies. Also in the day of your gladness and in your appointed feasts, and on the first days of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be as a reminder of you before your God. I am the Lord your God.

As the text indicates, the purpose of blowing the trumpets was to cause God to “remember” his people; in other words, it provided Israel with the assurance that God remembered them when their adversaries attacked them and viciously harassed them, and that he would deliver them. In practice, it looked as follows: whether seeking forgiveness from sins in the sanctuary or fighting against enemies, the priests blew the trumpets. God then responded by remembering them, namely, forgiving the people’s sins and delivering them from their adversaries. This concept is best illustrated in 2 Chron 13:14-15:

When Judah turned around, behold they were attacked both front and rear; so they cried to the Lord, and the priests blew the trumpets. Then the men of Judah raised a war cry, and when the men of Judah raised the war cry, then it was that God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah.

Trumpet blasts in the Hebrew Bible designate the appearance of God in relation to the most important events in Israel’s history.⁵⁸ This concept passed into the NT, where trumpets are associated with the end-time appearance and intervention of God (cf. Matt 24:31; 1 Cor 15:51-53; 1 Thess 4:16-17). Revelation 8–9 should be best understood against these Hebrew Bible and NT backgrounds. The blowing of the seven trumpets must be regarded as a series of interventions by God in history in response to the prayers of his afflicted people in the scene of the opening of the fifth seal: “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will you not judge and avenge our blood *on those who dwell on the earth?*” (6:10; emphasis supplied). The purpose of Rev 8:2-5 is to show that their prayers were heard by God. In responding to the prayers of the saints, the angel takes the golden censer (by which the incense mingled with the prayers of the saints was offered on the golden altar) and fills it with fire from the altar; then he throws it on the earth, and there follow “thunders and voices and lightning and an earthquake” (Rev 8:5). This theophanic manifestation in Revelation might be associated with the judgment (cf. 16:18).⁵⁹ It is then that one after another the seven angels blow their trumpets; in such a way, God comes to remember his people; his wrath kindles in judgments on those who have been oppressing them. Revelation 8:13 states

⁵⁸E.g., at Sinai, the Israelites saw the thunder and the lightning flashes, the thick cloud on the mountain, and heard “a very loud trumpet sound” (Exod 19:16; 20:18); a loud trumpet blast caused the destruction of Jericho (Jos 6:4-16); the trumpet sound is an integral part of the Hebrew Bible Day of the Lord concept (Isa 27:13; Joel 2:1; Zeph 1:16; 9:14).

⁵⁹This theophanic-manifestation phenomenon is referred to in a variety of contexts (e.g., Exod 19:16-19; Rev 4:5; 11:19).

clearly that the trumpets are for “those who dwell on the earth,” which links the trumpet judgments to the prayers of the saints in Rev 6:10. The focus-objects of both texts are clearly “those who dwell on the earth.”

The foregoing discussion strongly suggests that the seven trumpets are heaven’s response to the prayers of God’s people for deliverance from their oppressors. While the scene of the sixth seal provides the saints with an assurance that the day is coming when God’s ultimate judgments will visit their adversaries, the vision of the seven trumpet plagues gives an even more direct message: God is already judging the enemies of his faithful people. This makes the trumpet plagues preliminary judgments and the foretaste of the ultimate and final judgments to fall on the wicked as portrayed in Rev 15–16. The trumpet plagues are seen as mixed with mercy; the bowl plagues are expressed as the fullness of God’s wrath unmixed with mercy (15:1). At their execution, the pronouncement is made: “Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because you judged these things; for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them the blood to drink. They deserve it.’ And I heard *the altar* saying, ‘Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are your judgments’” (16:5-7; emphasis supplied). The altar here acknowledging God’s judgments on the enemies of God’s people must be the one from the scene of the fifth seal under which the slain saints were making their plea to God for deliverance (6:9). The justice is executed; the enemies of God’s people have received their just judgment.

This is confirmed later in the book and recognized by the redeemed saints themselves: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because His judgements are true and righteous; for . . . He has avenged the blood of his bond-servants on her” (19:1-2). The expression “He has avenged the blood of his bond-servants” links the passage in view here with 6:9-11. As indicated before, the petition of the slain saints under the altar was for a legal action. Now, God has judged Babylon (cf. 18:20) and given justice (ἐξεδίκησεν) as the ultimate answer to the petition of the saints. The judgment is referred to in terms of the “smoke” that “rises up forever and ever” (19:3). This smoke of torment that the evildoers experience stands here in a direct contrast to the smoke of incense ascending to God with the prayers for vindication of the faithful saints in 8:2-3. It appears that “the smoke of the latter is God’s response to the smoke of the former.”⁶⁰ It is reasonable to conclude that the slain saints are seen at the center of this rejoicing multitude before God’s throne.⁶¹

Conclusion

This study leads to the conclusion that the parenthetical passage of Rev 8:3-5 functions as a connecting link, both concluding the seven-seals series and

⁶⁰I am indebted to Osborne, 345, for this insight.

⁶¹As rightly observed by Gerhard A. Krodel, *Revelation*, ACNT (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 306; and Beale, 916.

introducing the seven-trumpet series. As such, the passage defines the theological meaning and nature of the trumpet plagues in the light of the petition of the slain saints for justice in the scene of the fifth seal (6:9-11). The strong verbal and thematic parallels between the scene of the fifth seal (6:9-11) and 8:3-5, as well as the introductory function of 8:3-5 to the seven-trumpet series suggest what seems to be the main theme of the entire Apocalypse: the situation of faithful Christians in the hostile world. The purpose of the passage in view was, on one hand, to provide the faithful, suffering under the oppression of Rome, as well as the Christians throughout the centuries, with an assurance that their suffering is not the last word and that heaven is not indifferent to what they pass through. On the other hand, the passage—and the whole book as well—is at the same time a call to the suffering faithful of all ages not for active resistance, but rather for patient endurance (cf. Rev 13:10; 14:12). The last word is with God, and he will bring judgment and retribution on the oppressors of his people.

DECONSTRUCTING EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY?

FERNANDO CANALE
Andrews University

Probably most evangelical theologians would be more inclined to defend, expand, and disseminate their theological convictions than to deconstruct them. The notion that their theology could be “deconstructed” may sound, to them, preposterous, even sacrilegious. As a methodological step, however, deconstruction is always necessary to understand revealed truths. In our postmodern times, “deconstruction” has become a synonym for “destruction.” However, as I will explain later, in this article I will use the word “deconstruction” to name a critical method of analyzing and evaluating the presuppositions on which theological systems have been built. Though the deconstruction may be applied to all schools of Christian theology, in this article I will specifically apply it to evangelical theology.

This article suggests the possibility of analyzing evangelical theology¹ critically by deconstructing the theological system on which it stands. Though deconstruction can be applied to biblical interpretation and pastoral practices, in this article I am focusing on the deconstruction of Christian teachings that were constructed through the centuries by way of dogmatic or systematic theological thinking. Instead of facing the ever-increasing fragmentation of evangelical theology and its lack of relevance in the life of the church,² I suggest we take an honest, introspective look at our own thinking. Thus the aim of methodological deconstruction is not to destroy evangelical theology, but to open the way for new theological understandings and fresh discovery of truth.³ This proposal may be especially helpful in a time when evangelical theology is going through a period of crisis and transition.⁴

My purpose is modest. I aim at presenting a preliminary outline of the

¹Though in this article I discuss the program of theological deconstruction in concrete relation to American evangelicalism, deconstruction is required in all forms of evangelical theologies and schools of Christian theologies.

²On the lack of relevance of theology in our times, see, e.g., Millard J. Erickson, *Where Is Theology Going? Issues and Perspectives on the Future of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991); and David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

³For instance, Clark Pinnock is convinced that “there is always a place for asking questions and for challenging assumptions. Our God-talk is always open to re-evaluation because mistakes can be made and need correcting” (*Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God’s Openness* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2001], ix).

⁴For an introduction to the ongoing crisis and transition in evangelical theology, see Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 151-183.

main components calling for theological deconstruction.⁵ To achieve this objective, we need to consider the postmodern context facing evangelical theology, the postmodern turn to hermeneutical reason, and the notions of hermeneutical principles and deconstruction. Then we must consider the philosophical origin of Christian hermeneutics and the concrete way in which the classical hermeneutical tradition interpreted the hermeneutical foundations of theology. At this point, we will examine the pivotal axis around which theological deconstruction revolves. This axis includes the philosophical deconstruction of the ontology on which Christian theology was constructed, the hermeneutical alternative that such deconstruction presents to evangelical theologians, and the forgotten temporal horizon from which biblical thinkers understood God's being and actions. Finally, from the evangelical affirmation of the *sola, tota*, and *prima Scriptura* principles we will consider the role Scripture plays in theological deconstruction in general, and specifically in the deconstruction of classical and modern macro hermeneutics, the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, and the historical-critical method.

Evangelical Theology and Postmodernity

We do theology within a historical context. Here I will briefly consider the immediate intellectual context from within which deconstruction as theological procedure should be understood. Since the last decade of the twentieth century, our times have been consistently characterized as "postmodern." Although evangelical theologians consider postmodernism a "challenge," some see it in a more positive light than others.⁶ Here I will refer to postmodernity not from the apologetical, but from the methodological perspective as the intellectual environment that facilitates the task of deconstruction.

Some years ago, Hans Küng realized that the word "postmodernity" is a label for an "epoch that upon closer inspection proves to have set in decades ago . . . and is now making broad inroads into the consciousness of the masses."⁷ Briefly put, then, we can say that "postmodernity" is a cultural phenomenon taking place at the intellectual and social levels. Though the social level permeating American culture is of great importance for practical theology,

⁵Deconstructing Christian doctrines we have received by way of tradition will not be possible within the limits of this study.

⁶ Under the title "Postconservative Evangelicalism," Gary Dorrien provides a survey of recent trends in constructive evangelical theology (*The Remaking of Evangelical Theology* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998], 185-209). A number of proposals on how to face postmodernity may be found in David S. Dockery, ed., *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995); see also Millard J. Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998); and idem, *Truth or Consequences: The Promise and Perils of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001).

⁷Hans Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium*, trans. Peter Heinegg (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 2.

our proposal naturally connects with the intellectual ground of postmodern times.⁸

Among others, French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard has influenced the evangelical understanding of postmodernism at the intellectual level. Lyotard used the word "postmodernity" to describe the "condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies."⁹ In a small treatise, he presented postmodernity by reporting on the status of scientific knowledge at the end of the twentieth century. He took the word "postmodernity" from American sociologists and critics, who used it to designate "the state of our culture following the transformations which, since the end of the nineteenth century, have altered the game rules for science, literature, and the arts."¹⁰ We can say, then, that "postmodernity" is the broad cultural acceptance of the epistemological criticism of reason and the nature of scientific knowledge that took place during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. So far, however, evangelical theologians have related to postmodernity more as a sociocultural reality than as an intellectual phenomenon.

When seen from the cultural perspective, postmodernity's main "sin" is the denial of objective, absolute truth in favor of total scientific and cultural relativism.¹¹ According to Paul Lakeland, postmodernity "is deeply suspicious of notions of universal reason, and it rejects all metaphysical and religious foundations, all 'grand theory,' all theoretical systems."¹² Not surprisingly, the postmodern notion that texts are incapable of conveying meaning upsets biblical theologians.¹³ Besides, most writers understand postmodernity as a continuity replacement of modernity. In a hidden way, modernity becomes the central and foundational formative period in Western philosophy and theology. Whatever is premodern¹⁴ or precritical¹⁵ is belittled. The realization that the postmodern turn implies a deconstruction of theological constructions based on premodern and modern ontologies and epistemologies seems to have not

⁸For an introduction to postmodernity, see Paul Lakeland, *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997); and Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

⁹Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), xxiii.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹David S. Dockery, "The Challenge of Postmodernism," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, ed. David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 14. This implies a revolt against medieval and modern minds (Carl F. H. Henry, "Postmodernism: The New Spectre?" in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, ed. David S. Dockery [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 40), the conviction that religion is a private affair (ibid., 41), and the rejection of foundationalism (ibid., 42).

¹²Lakeland, xii.

¹³Henry, 36.

¹⁴Erickson, *Truth or Consequences*, 32-52.

¹⁵Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 3-4.

yet dawned on most evangelical theologians.

Postmodernity affects Christianity in general and the evangelical theological community in particular for two primary reasons. First, because evangelicals preach the gospel to the world, any change in the world and its culture directly relates to its proclamation. If adjustments are not made, the church may find herself preaching to a nonexistent world. Second, because most theologians construct their views on the methodological assumption that besides Scripture other sources of cultural origination must be included, notably philosophy and, since the Enlightenment, the factual sciences. For instance, the postmodern reinterpretation of reason affects evangelical theology because during the twentieth century evangelical apologetics was constructed using the old—Enlightenment—rules of the game, which postmodernity has now changed.¹⁶ However, the postmodern period is not the first time that philosophy has changed the rules of the game on Christian theologians. The period of Enlightenment, or the Modern age, produced the first epochal change. Much of Protestant and American evangelicalism came into existence during the modernist epoch and did not escape its influence.¹⁷ Thus, in different and unique ways, the Enlightenment shaped Fundamentalism, Liberalism, and Neo-Orthodoxy.

Because in his *Report on Knowledge* Lyotard only described the status of scientific knowledge without discussing its epistemological and philosophical causes, postmodernity appears, to evangelical thinkers, to be another cultural paradigm shift to which we have to adjust when preaching and defending the gospel.¹⁸ In this context, evangelical theologians have reacted to the challenge of postmodernity in various ways. Authors attempting to overcome the epistemological challenge presented by postmodernity emphasize one corner of the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” of theological sources.¹⁹ Thus, for instance, Thomas Oden works from tradition, Stanley Grenz from tradition and experience, Kelvin Jones from reason, and Millard Erickson from Scripture.

Oden and Grenz have produced the more nuanced proposals to date. Besides, they have developed systematic approaches to theology in concrete dialogue with postmodernity.²⁰ Their approaches center around and build upon

¹⁶See, e.g., Grenz, *Primer on Postmodernism*, 161.

¹⁷See Bernard Ramm, *The Evangelical Heritage: A Study in Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 64-101.

¹⁸For instance, Grenz affirms that “Postmodernism refers to the intellectual mood and cultural expression that are becoming increasingly dominant in contemporary society. We are apparently moving into a new cultural epoch, postmodernity” (*A Primer on Postmodernism*, 13).

¹⁹For an introduction to the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral,” see Albert C. Outler, *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991); and Donald A. D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990).

²⁰Thomas C. Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987,

tradition. Having been a modernist theologian himself, Oden criticizes modernity and modern theology, sparing no words. According to him, to overcome modernity we should work “with” but not “within” the postmodern interpretation of historical reason,²¹ and draw our hermeneutical directives from the consensus of early Christian tradition.²² His proposal then calls for a “postmodern orthodoxy.”²³ Grenz builds his approach to a postmodern evangelical systematic theology on tradition and experience. However, he emphasizes present tradition as it actually takes place in concrete communities of faith over the “Grand Tradition” emphasized by Oden, Alister McGrath,²⁴ and Carl Henry.²⁵ A third approach consists in canceling out postmodernity by reaffirming the objectivity of reason via classical philosophical thinking; at least this seems to be the suggestion of Kelvin Jones, who builds on Henry and Thomas Aquinas, who, in turn, built on Aristotle and Plato.²⁶ A fourth approach, advanced by Erickson, calls for critical evaluation, adaptation in the proclamation of the gospel message in order to be understood by postmodern persons,²⁷ and the need to accelerate the transition from postmodernity to “postpostmodernity.”²⁸ Among several recommendations about how to accelerate this transition, Erickson suggests that we should become aware of our philosophical presuppositions and define them not from the philosophical supermarket as traditionally done, but from Scripture. He explains:

We should seek to discern whether the Bible gives us a metaphysics, then check against it our own conceptions, correcting them to fit, then repeating the exegesis, again matching the results to our philosophy and continuing in this process. It is like adjusting an automobile compass. One does not attempt to

1989, 1992); and Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994).

²¹Thomas C. Oden, ed., *The Living God* (New York: Harper and Collins, 1992), 375, 391; Kwabena Donkor, *Tradition, Method, and Contemporary Protestant Theology: An Analysis of Thomas C. Oden's Vincentian Method* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003), 84-87.

²²Thomas C. Oden, *Two Worlds: Notes on the Death of Modernity in America and Russia* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 53.

²³Thomas C. Oden, *Agenda for Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 30-31.

²⁴Alister McGrath, “Engaging the Great Tradition: Evangelical Theology and the Role of Tradition,” in *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*, ed. John G. Stackhouse Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 139-158.

²⁵Henry, “Postmodernism: The New Spectre?” 50.

²⁶Kelvin Jones, “The Formal Foundation: Toward an Evangelical Epistemology in the Postmodern Context,” in *The Challenge of Postmodernity: An Evangelical Engagement*, ed. David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 344-358.

²⁷Erickson, *Truth or Consequences*, 307-308.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 325.

eliminate the entire directional error in one step. Rather, one successively heads the car in each of the four primary directions, each time removing one half of the remaining compass error.²⁹

The methodological, philosophical, and theological issues involved in this simple suggestion are momentous. Erickson is saying we should not take anything for granted in the area of philosophy. Philosophy changes too often to be a reliable ally. However, if we check our philosophical ideas from Scripture, we are *de facto* reinterpreting the hermeneutical foundations on which evangelical and Christian theologies were built. Emotionally, this is not easy to do because this process involves the deconstruction of evangelical theology that Erickson probably did not envision when he wrote this paragraph.³⁰

The proposal for deconstructing evangelical theology not only takes place within a postmodern intellectual context, but it is also a way to overcome postmodernity theologically. Thus to understand theological deconstruction as methodology, we need to gain an appreciation of the philosophical nature of the postmodern turn, to grasp deconstruction as method, to realize that Christian theologies have been constructed on philosophical rather than biblical hermeneutical grounds, and to take heed of Erickson's momentous suggestion about the philosophical role of Scripture.

The Postmodern Turn: Hermeneutical Reason

Arguably, postmodernity has a sociocultural manifestation and a philosophical base. While properly addressing postmodernity as cultural phenomenon, evangelical thought has neglected its philosophical base.³¹ The generalized conviction is that something of paradigmatic proportions has shifted in our

²⁹Ibid., 327.

³⁰An example of its difficulty can be found in Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993). On one hand, Lints affirms the hermeneutical role of the *sola Scriptura* principle in today's theology (290-292) and is convinced that we should relate cultural presuppositions to the principles of rationality that undergird the gospel (119). On the other hand, however, he fails to apply the hermeneutical role of Scripture to the philosophical foundations of Christian theology as Erickson suggests. This becomes evident when he divides rationality into two kinds, "cultural" and "native" (118). The former corresponds to the historical rationality of postmodernism, while the latter corresponds to the classical-modern understanding of reason as universal and objective. Finally, he grounds native rationality theologically on Calvin's view of God's nature and actions (125). In so doing, he does not apply the hermeneutical guidance of Scripture to the interpretation of reason. He applies a theological construction built on the hermeneutical guidance of neo-Platonic philosophical notions.

³¹The philosophical causes of postmodernity can be traced back to seventeenth-century English Empiricism. In the study of nature, empiricism led to the birth of the modern sciences, scientific positivism, analytical philosophy, and contemporary science. In the study of human beings, empiricism led to historicism, phenomenology, existentialism, general ontology, and hermeneutics. Familiarity with these developments may help us to understand postmodern philosophy.

culture. According to Lyotard's *Report on Knowledge*, we may perceive this "turn" in the status of scientific thinking. The so-called "postmodern turn" revolves around a new interpretation of reason. While modernism limited reason's reach from timeless to spatiotemporal objects, postmodernism limited reason's a priori from timeless-objective to temporal-historical categories. To put it simply, if modernity was the "age of absolute reason," postmodernity is the "age of hermeneutics." As modernity left behind the "pure" reason of classical times, postmodernity left behind the "absolute-scientificist" reason of modernity. Thus we find ourselves operating within the "hermeneutical" reason of postmodernity.³²

Lyotard assumes this change has taken place and reports its results in the area of science with particular emphasis on the question of legitimation. "Legitimation" is the process by which a legislator or a scientist may promulgate a law as the norm for other human beings.³³ Classical and modern societies achieved legitimation through metaphysics. In the postmodern condition, where metaphysics and metanarratives are no longer credible sources of legitimation,³⁴ "who decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided?"³⁵ The question, then, is not about objectivity, but about universality and authority. In Lyotard's mind, this question is connected to the power some human beings exercise upon others.

Under the influence of Lyotard and Richard Rorty, evangelical theologians encounter postmodernity as an intellectual phenomenon that revolves around a reinterpretation of reason. Specifically, postmodernity is the "turn" from absolute to hermeneutical reason. Yet, what is hermeneutical reason? David Tracy encapsulated the notion of hermeneutical reason by saying "to understand at all is to interpret."³⁶ To interpret means that not only the object of knowledge but

³²"Pure" reason is an obvious reference to Kant's criticism of knowledge. "Scientificist," which was an outcome of Kant's criticism, is a reference to what we contemporarily refer to as "science," that is, knowledge based on empirical evidence and experimental methodology.

³³Lyotard, 8-9.

³⁴Ibid., xxiii-xxiv.

³⁵Ibid., 9.

³⁶David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 9. The entire quotation is enlightening. "Interpretation seems a minor matter, but it is not. Every time we act, deliberate, judge, understand, or even experience, we are interpreting. To understand at all is to interpret. To act well is to interpret a situation demanding some action and to interpret a correct strategy for that action. To experience in other than a purely passive sense (a sense less than human) is to interpret; and to be 'experienced' is to have become a good interpreter. Interpretation is thus a question as unavoidable, finally, as experience, understanding, deliberation, judgment, decision, and action. To be human is to act reflectively, to decide deliberately, to understand intelligently, to experience fully. Whether we know it or not, to be human is to be a skilled interpreter."

also the cognitive subject contribute to the formation of knowledge.³⁷ If this is true, to know is to construct. Our knowledge, then, is not passively shaped by objects (as in realism and positivism), nor is it a projection of our imagination (such as in idealism and cultural postmodernity), but results from an interaction between subject and object. Native to hermeneutical reason is the temporal historicity of the categories it uses for constructing meanings and judgments. Briefly put, the categories or presuppositions necessary to interpret, evaluate, and judge are not innate or divinely infused but acquired from experience. That is why postmodern hermeneutical reason lacks universality, not objectivity. The notion that postmodern philosophy calls for unbridled subjectivism is unwarranted.³⁸ At least the paradigmatic changes in philosophy that took place in the last century do not point in this direction. Overstatements in this respect might have to be eventually adjusted.

Acquaintance with the hermeneutical function of the human mind may help Christian theologians to better understand why their interpretations of the biblical text and doctrinal constructions conflict and figure out ways to overcome them.³⁹ To understand the postmodern turn we need to introduce ourselves to the basic structure of interpreting interpretation.⁴⁰ Specifically, we need to become aware of the basic principles involved in the act of theological interpretation.

Hermeneutical Principles

Philosophical hermeneutics originated recently as the philosophical discipline dedicated to the investigation of the act of interpretation.⁴¹ During the twentieth century, Hans-Georg Gadamer studied in depth the act of interpretation.⁴² In this

³⁷Nicolai Hartmann, *Grundzüge einer metaphysic der Erkenntnis* (Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 1941); 1.5.a.1; cf. 5.1.1.a.

³⁸This misunderstanding and overstatement of postmodernity is properly corrected by James K. A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000). Smith, 163, notes that to “say that everything is interpretation is not to say that all is *arbitrary*. Or, in other words, to emphasize that understanding is relative to one’s situationality is not to espouse a *relativism* (which is largely understood as arbitrariness)” (emphasis original).

³⁹Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “The Pattern of Evangelical Theology: Hommage À Ramm,” in *The Evangelical Heritage: A Study in Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), xiii-xvii. Pinnock, 10-18, uncovers deep divisions within evangelical theology.

⁴⁰Smith, 19-25.

⁴¹For an introduction to the notion and origin of hermeneutics as philosophical discipline, see Raúl Kerbs, “Sobre el desarrollo de la hermenéutica,” *Analogía Filosófica*, 2 (1999): 3-33.

⁴²Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2d rev. ed. (New York: Continuum, 1989); see also idem, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976). Less known, but equally relevant, is the work of Italian philosopher Emilio Betti,

article, we need only to underline the basic structural fact that interpretation always flows from presuppositions we bring to bear on what we know or study. The existence and operation of presuppositions in the act of human knowledge was already recognized by Plato's notion that to know is to remember. It is the presence and application of presuppositions in the formation of human knowledge that makes knowledge an interpretation, or construction. It is necessary, then, to identify the presuppositions that are always involved when Christian theologians construct their interpretations and doctrines.

Speaking generally, the sum total of the personal experiences we bring to the act of knowledge can be classified as presuppositions. However, as presuppositions, not all experiences have the same reach or role. Consequently, in this study, I will concentrate on a specific group of specialized presuppositions that I will call "hermeneutical presuppositions or principles." They are the general conditions involved in the interpretation of theological data and realities. When we look at them from the interpretations they helped to create, they appear to us as "presuppositions." In the task of doing theology, we call them "principles" because they initiate and condition the entire theological task.

Classical and modern philosophers were convinced that our thinking was conditioned by a set of hermeneutical principles somehow built into human nature. To put it simply, as all human beings by nature have, say, a brain, eyes, and legs, they also have the same hermeneutical principles or presuppositions. While postmodernity accepts the presence and role of hermeneutical principles in the generation of human knowledge, it no longer adjudicates their origin to our common human nature. On the contrary, hermeneutical principles originate from temporal-historical experiences, are stored in our minds, and then are used as parameters to interpret fresh events. If this is so, then we all generate or construct knowledge from difference experiences and, in Christian theology, from different hermeneutical principles. In conclusion, we should not confuse hermeneutical principles with the sum total of our experience. In Christian theology, hermeneutical principles or presuppositions differ from the rest of our cultural presuppositions because of their broad reach and all-inclusive interpretive influence.

Briefly put, hermeneutical principles are a tightly interrelated ensemble of overarching general notions that, because of their all-inclusiveness, condition the entire range of Christian thinking. There are different kinds of hermeneutical principles, according to the realm to which they belong. Thus, to borrow Küng's language, we can speak of macro-, meso-, and micro-

"Hermeneutics as the General Methodology of the *Geisteswissenschaften*," in *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique*, ed. Josef Bleicher (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980); and idem, *Teoria Generale della Interpretazione* (Milano: Dott A. Giuffrè Editore, 1990). For an introduction to philosophical hermeneutics, see Josef Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

hermeneutical principles.⁴³ From macro-hermeneutical principles, which some theologians draw from philosophy but most assume from tradition, we move to the meso-hermeneutical principles used to conceive, formulate, and understand Christian doctrines, and to the micro-hermeneutical principles used to interpret the text of Scripture. The interpretive force moves from macro- to micro-hermeneutics. Thus, for instance, when interpreting a text from Paul's Epistle to the Romans, we apply our macro- and meso-hermeneutical presuppositions consciously or unconsciously acquired from or belonging to a specific theological tradition.⁴⁴ For this reason, in this article we will concentrate on the interpretation and role of the macro-hermeneutical principles of theology.

Since theology deals with God, human beings, and creation, theologians always assume ideas about these realities. Besides, they also presuppose an interpretation of human reason, including epistemology, hermeneutics, theological, and exegetical methodologies, and the origin of theological knowledge (revelation-inspiration). Thus in every biblical interpretation, theological construction, and practical application, we find the presence and operation of a few, but very influential, macro-hermeneutical principles. They are principles about reality, including understanding about Being (general ontology), God (theology proper), human nature (anthropology), world (cosmology), and reality as a whole (metaphysics),⁴⁵ and principles about human knowledge, including understanding about hermeneutics, revelation-inspiration, and theological method.

Deconstruction

Deconstruction as critical method should not be confused or identified with deconstructionism. Deconstructionism corresponds to what Erickson, following David Griffin, calls "deconstructive postmodernism,"⁴⁶ of which Mark C. Taylor is a fitting example.⁴⁷ Deconstructionism is the constructive

⁴³Küng, 134, uses the "macro, meso, and micro" categorization to speak about the scientific paradigm in theology.

⁴⁴This results from the historical structure of our beings, which Gadamer, 294-295, describes as "belonging."

⁴⁵Throughout the history of Western philosophy, ontology and metaphysics have been used interchangeably. I am using the word "metaphysics" here only to refer to the articulation or understanding of reality as a whole, that is to say, to the relationship between the parts and the whole. On this issue, see, e.g., Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, trans. Philip Clayton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 130-152; and Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959).

⁴⁶Millard Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 99-103; and D. R. Griffin, W. Beardslee, and J. Holland, *Varieties of Postmodern Theology* (Albany: State University of New York, 1989), 1-7.

⁴⁷Mark C. Taylor, *Deconstructing Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1982); and idem,

attempt to talk about God from within the context of our secular relativistic postmodern culture and in a nontheological form.⁴⁸ Deconstruction is a critical reading of interpretive and systematic traditions.

Deconstruction is not a new phenomenon. Jesus (Matt 15:2-6; Mark 7:1-13) and Luther⁴⁹ used deconstruction effectively and properly. Deconstruction, however, has not been a prominent feature in the practice of theological method because of the importance of theological traditions.⁵⁰ This situation may be explained, in some degree, by the fact that it is difficult to criticize the ground on which one stands. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, deconstruction has become prominent as a methodological feature of postmodern philosophy. Before we can think of applying deconstruction to evangelical theology we need to become aware of the way in which deconstruction is understood in the postmodern context.

By the end of the sixties, French philosopher Jacques Derrida employed the term “deconstruction” to describe his method of literary and philosophical criticism.⁵¹ We do not need to deal with Derrida’s deconstruction in detail here. Only a brief reference to his understanding of deconstruction will help us to understand the sense in which I use the term “deconstruction” in this article.

John Caputo, who has done a remarkable job introducing Derrida’s thought to American readers, tells us that Derrida’s deconstruction is textual, “transgressive,” and messianic. It is textual because it concentrates on classical texts and uses linguistic procedures.⁵² It is “transgressive” because it reads classical texts in dissonance with or transgressing favorite interpretive traditions.⁵³ Finally, Derrida’s deconstruction is messianic—it has a positive side—because opening itself to an absolute future allows for a reinvention of

Erring: A Postmodern Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

⁴⁸Taylor, *Deconstructing Theology*, xi.

⁴⁹Smith, 109-110.

⁵⁰This may be explained in part by the fact that, explicitly or implicitly, tradition plays an authoritative role very close to the role of biblical revelation. See, e.g., Dulles, 103-104.

⁵¹John D. Caputo, ed., *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 77.

⁵²This becomes apparent when we consider Caputo’s example of deconstruction. The text is a passage of Plato’s *Timeaus*, where Derrida focuses on the spatial receptacle (*Khōra*), in which the Demiurge generates the sensory copies of the intelligible ideas. This allows Derrida to distinguish between the Platonic text and Platonic philosophy and to use the former to criticize the latter (ibid., 82-92). Thus Derrida’s analysis of Plato’s text becomes “transgressive” of Platonism as philosophical tradition.

⁵³Jacques Derrida’s “transgression” corresponds to Thomas S. Kuhn’s “anomalies” in normal science. It magnifies that which does not fit the interpretative criteria of “normal science” or accepted paradigm (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2d ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970], 52).

religion.⁵⁴ Of course, Derrida has in mind a secular kind of religion based on human faith (experience), not on divine revelation in history (Scripture).

Derrida's deconstruction, however, is less revolutionary than Martin Heidegger's. Hans-Georg Gadamer underlined the revolutionary nature of Heidegger's approach by saying that he "changed the philosophical consciousness of time with one stroke. Heidegger unleashed a critique of cultural idealism that reached a wide public—a destruction of the dominant philosophical tradition—and a swirl of radical questions."⁵⁵ Moreover, "the brilliant scheme of *Being and Time* meant a total transformation of the intellectual climate, a transformation that had lasting effects on almost all the sciences."⁵⁶ Why was Heidegger's thought so revolutionary? One reason might be that he not only criticized the hermeneutical foundations on which classical and modern philosophy were built, but also replaced them with something very different.

The deconstruction I am proposing, then, is not negative deconstructionism, but a critical instrument to open the way for new theological constructions. The question is whether evangelical theology needs a new theological formulation. After all, doesn't evangelical theology contain the gospel? That may very well be so; yet, in the midst of evangelicalism we find theological fragmentation and conflicting positions.⁵⁷ Moreover, as we have seen above, evangelical theologians are presently involved in rethinking evangelical theology in dialogue with the postmodern context.⁵⁸ Yet, they continue the old practice of remodeling old houses without considering building new ones. As methodological-theological procedure, deconstruction is necessary to open a way through the maze of philosophical and theological interpretations facing theologians at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The hope is that its application is pursued as a critical instrument necessary to open the intellectual space where theologians could build their theologies from Scripture.

Protestant theology came into existence because the great Reformers Luther and Calvin relentlessly deconstructed the salvation-by-works system favored by Catholic theology. They deconstructed it from what Scripture says, just as Derrida deconstructs Platonism from what Plato's classical texts say. However, the Reformers did not deconstruct the hermeneutical foundation of classical theology. They constructed their theological understanding of the biblical truth about justification by faith from the classical system of macro-hermeneutics operative in Roman Catholic theology. In this way, the positive religious change obtained by their labors was clouded by a macro hermeneutics

⁵⁴Ibid., 159.

⁵⁵Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Phenomenological Movement," in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. David E. Linge (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 138.

⁵⁶Ibid., 138-139.

⁵⁷Stanley Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 4-11; see also Vanhoozer, xv.

⁵⁸For an introduction to ongoing theological constructions in evangelicalism, see, e.g., Dorrien, 185-209.

that distorted the content of biblical revelation. In time, these principles precipitated the modernist approach to theology and, in our days, the need to adjust the gospel to postmodern culture.

Deconstruction is also necessary to dispel the illusion that evangelical theology is biblical in a different, more foundational sense than Roman Catholic or Modern theologies. Regular members of the church are under this illusion. Theologians know better. They know that evangelical theology cannot stand on Scripture alone, but also requires the macro-hermeneutical help of classical philosophy.⁵⁹ To properly understand the task of deconstruction, then, we need to become aware of both the philosophical origin of Christian hermeneutics and the philosophical deconstruction of the philosophy used in its construction.

Philosophical Origin of Christian Hermeneutics

As we saw in the section "Hermeneutical Principles," the macro-hermeneutical principles operative in Christian theology include the interpretation of the following key issues or realities: Being, God, human nature, world, totality as a whole, human knowledge, hermeneutics, methodology, and revelation-inspiration. All of these, except for revelation-inspiration, have been studied traditionally by philosophical disciplines, such as general and regional ontologies, philosophical theology, anthropology, cosmology, metaphysics, epistemology, and hermeneutics.

Most evangelical theologians use philosophy in an intuitive rather than intentional fashion. In general, they minimize the role of philosophy in their theologies as playing only a subordinated instrumental role necessary to "facilitate" the proclamation of the gospel.⁶⁰ To avoid the ever-present danger that philosophy may rule over theology, some theologians advise using philosophy occasionally, while avoiding adherence to a single philosophical system.⁶¹ In spite of this advice, the hermeneutical influence of philosophical, ontological, and epistemological theories has played a leading role in the construction of Christian theology, including the understanding of the gospel.

Thomas Aquinas developed the macro-hermeneutical principles from which he wrote his massive and influential *Summa Theologica*⁶² in a small booklet entitled *On Being and Essence*.⁶³ There, he adapted Aristotle's ontological and

⁵⁹This dependence becomes apparent when theologians refuse to let go of the multiplex of theological sources gathered under the umbrella of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

⁶⁰See, e.g., Pinnock, 22-23.

⁶¹Richard Rice, *Reason and the Contours of Faith* (Riverside, CA: La Sierra University Press, 1991), 201.

⁶²Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 3 vols. (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1947).

⁶³Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, trans. Armand Maurer (Toronto: Garden City Press, 1949).

epistemological insights into a macro-hermeneutical grid from which to do Christian theology. Unfortunately, most theologians are not so explicit in uncovering their macro-hermeneutical presuppositions or the way in which they use philosophical insights in theology. For instance, Calvin did not explain in detail the way in which his theological construction consciously or unconsciously depended on hermeneutical principles derived from philosophical teachings. An analysis of his writings, however, uncovers his dependence on Augustine for theological guidance, especially in the doctrine of predestination.⁶⁴ And we know that Augustine's doctrine of predestination flows from his neo-Platonic macro hermeneutics, in particular his timeless understanding of God's being and the human soul.⁶⁵ Thus many doctrines that appear to be "biblical" are interpretations or constructions made with biblical materials from a philosophical, nonbiblical base.

Classical Theological Hermeneutics

Christian theology needs deconstruction because it was constructed under the guidance of philosophical ideas that took over the hermeneutical role that properly belongs to divine revelation. Anticipating this danger, Paul warned Christ's followers to be on guard so "that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ" (Col 2:8, RSV). Christ himself rebuked church leaders because they made void the word of God through their tradition (Mark 7:13; Matt 15:1-3). In spite of these clear warnings, early Christian theologians began to use Greek ontological insights as macro-hermeneutical presuppositions from which to build their theologies. Unfortunately, what Paul was afraid of and Christ condemned was the source that shaped the hermeneutical principles used in the constructions of classical Christian theology. Thus what Heidegger characterized as the onto-theo-logical constitution of metaphysics was replicated in the onto-theo-logical construction of theology.⁶⁶ This means that theology was constructed from the hermeneutical basis of Greek ontology (*onto*) that defined the meaning of God's being (*theo*), and from it the interpretation of Christian doctrines as *logia*. This structure defines the hermeneutical structure of Christian and evangelical theologies.

Very early in church history, theologians began to draw their hermeneutical

⁶⁴François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963), 124-125.

⁶⁵Augustine derived his timeless understanding of God not from Scripture, but from Parmenides's interpretation of Being. Since the timelessness of God's being determines the way in which his will acts, it also determines the understanding of divine predestination and, through it, the gospel. On the timelessness of God in Augustine, see, e.g., *Confessions*, trans. John K. Ryan (Garden City: Image, 1960), chap. 11; on the timelessness of God's will, see chaps. 12, 15, 18.

⁶⁶Martin Heidegger, "The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics," in *Identity and Difference*, ed. John Sambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 54, 60.

perspectives not from Scripture, but from Greek philosophy: "In the conversation between the initial (Palestinian-Jewish) Christian formulation and its new Hellenistic environment, both partners changed. Neither lost its soul. Something new emerged."⁶⁷ What emerged was classical Christian theology. The intermingling between philosophy and theology took place at a level so deep that most of what we today know as Christianity does not correspond to biblical thinking. This fateful alliance brought theologians to the conviction that theology has a diversity of sources, notably, Scripture, tradition, reason (philosophy, science, culture), and experience. Even today we can trace the reasons for the differences between theological projects of various denominations back to the hermeneutical principles they work from and the source from which these principles have been derived.

Dependence on Greek ontology brought about two paradigmatic changes at the macro-hermeneutical level. The conviction that neo-Platonism properly described the nature of reality led Christian theologians to adopt its views on God's being and human nature for theological use. Thus the "onto-theological" movement as the basis of the constitution of Christian tradition began. The notions that God's being and the human soul are not temporal but timeless realities became hermeneutical guides in the construction of Christian theology. They played a decisive macro-hermeneutical role in the interpretation of Scripture (micro hermeneutics) and the construction of Christian doctrines (meso hermeneutics). They also led in the interpretation, formulation, and application of the theological method.⁶⁸

The philosophical and scientific base from which Christian theology has been defined in hermeneutical approaches largely accounts for modern and postmodern theological fragmentation. Since consciously or unconsciously Christian theologians derive their hermeneutical approaches from philosophy and science, changes in philosophy and/or science unavoidably call for change in the hermeneutical approach and in the formulation of doctrines.

Modern theologians openly derive their macro-hermeneutical views from modern and postmodern science and philosophy. They cannot accept biblical views that do not fit their intellectual and moral preferences.⁶⁹ Though in theory, classical, modern, and postmodern theologies could deconstruct their

⁶⁷Jack A. Bonsor, *Athens and Jerusalem: The Role of Philosophy in Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1993), 26. Defining theological hermeneutics from philosophy was not an unknown procedure. Philo had already used it in his construction of Jewish theology. That philosophy and science determine the hermeneutical perspective from which Christian theology was constructed is a fact broadly accepted and methodologically defended by most theological traditions. For a technical introduction to the hermeneutical role that philosophy has played and continues to play in Christian theology, see Bonsor.

⁶⁸Fernando Canale, "Interdisciplinary Method in Christian Theology? In Search of a Working Proposal," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 43/3 (2001): 366-389.

⁶⁹Dorrien, 187.

views, they will not apply it to the macro-hermeneutical level on which their views stand. After all, they cannot reject the ground that allows them freedom to reconstruct theology every few years. Those who work along these lines seem to have forgotten Christ's closing remarks in his Sermon on the Mount when he clearly warned that "Every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it" (Matt 7:26-27, RSV).

Most conservative Protestant and evangelical theologians honestly believe their theologies flow from biblical macro-hermeneutical principles. They affirm the primacy of Scripture in its hermeneutic, doctrinal, and critical functions. A critical analysis of their teachings, however, reveals that even conservative evangelical theologians build their doctrines on classical macro- and meso-hermeneutical principles.⁷⁰ Perhaps evangelical theologians who take Scripture seriously might be willing to deconstruct their own traditions to free Christian theology from the long centuries of hermeneutical bondage under science and philosophy. Perhaps they could understand that the painful deconstruction of cherished ideas is the condition necessary for letting God's word be heard anew in our postmodern context.

In short, that Christian thinkers constructed (interpreted, formulated)

⁷⁰A recent example of this situation can be found in Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1994). Although Grudem, 21, defines the task of systematic theology as the investigation about what the whole Bible teaches us today on any given topic, he, 168-171, assumes the interpretation of God's Being according to classical timeless ontology. Interestingly, all the biblical evidence he gives actually teaches the temporality of God. Yet, as is customary, he uses texts that show God's temporality to affirm his timelessness. This reveals he unconsciously works from classical macro-hermeneutical presuppositions. Surprisingly, he, 169, grounds divine timelessness, not from tradition or Greek philosophy, but by inferring it from scientific knowledge: "The study of physics tells us that matter and time and space must all occur together: if there is no matter, there can be no space or time either. Thus, before God created the universe, there was not 'time,' at least not in the sense of a succession of moments one after another." Though Grudem's reasoning is correct, the truth he is affirming is taught in Scripture (1 Cor 2:7) and does not imply the timelessness of God's being. That he brings timelessness from outside Scripture becomes clear from his analysis of 2 Pet 3:8. Grudem, 170, correctly sees the text as revealing God's experience of time. Yet he hastens to qualify his biblical analysis by saying that "God's experience of time is not just a patient endurance through eons of endless duration, but he has a *qualitatively different* experience of time than we do. This is consistent with the idea that in his own being, God is timeless; he does not experience a succession of moments. This has been the dominant view of Christian orthodoxy through the history of the church, though it has been frequently challenged, and even today many theologians deny it." Thus timelessness enters through the back door of tradition. Because Grudem works from classical, nonbiblical, macro-hermeneutical presuppositions, he cannot perceive the contradiction between the biblical understanding of God's relation to created time and classical Greek ontological timelessness.

classical theology under the hermeneutical direction of Greek ontology is an undisputed historical fact. Without changing the hermeneutical perspective adopted from Greek ontology, modern theologians constructed the modern project of theology on the hermeneutical roots of modern epistemology. At the beginning of the twentieth-first century, philosophers have replaced epistemology with hermeneutics.⁷¹ Not surprisingly, we find evangelical theologians “reconstructing” evangelical theology from a macro-hermeneutical perspective that includes the ontological guidance of classical philosophy, the epistemological insights of modernity, and the hermeneutical criticism of postmodernity.⁷²

*The Philosophical Deconstruction of
Classical Ontology*

We have arrived at a pivotal point in our presentation. Unfortunately, next to the grounding macro-hermeneutical role that ontology has in evangelical theology we find evangelical forgetfulness about it. There are some reasons that may shed light on this fateful forgetfulness. First, the constructors of evangelical theology did not speak about “ontology” or “ontological” issues. The operative notion is that if Luther and Calvin were able to do theology by going directly to Scripture and tradition *without* depending on ontological insights, contemporary evangelical theologians should be able to do the same. Second, as a movement American evangelicalism came into existence in modern times when a new emphasis on epistemology pushed ontology aside. Since René Descartes, philosophers endeavored to ground philosophy on epistemological terrain. Philosophical emphasis turned away from the study of reality (ontology) to the study of the cognitive foundations on which philosophy and science build their teachings (epistemology). Thus ontology receded from the limelight and theologians became more conversant with epistemological issues and the demands of modern scientific reason. This modern “turn to the subject” still hovers large over postmodernity. A third reason may be that Lyotard’s and Rorty’s influential accounts of postmodernity work within the epistemological-hermeneutical divide oblivious of ontological issues.⁷³

However, while this debate was taking place on the English-speaking side of the philosophical world, continental philosophy approached the same epistemological-hermeneutical divide in close association with groundbreaking

⁷¹Richard Rorty’s characterization of postmodernity as the movement from epistemology to hermeneutics may seem forced, yet it communicates with clarity the radical change postmodern philosophers have introduced in their interpretation of human knowledge (*Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 2d ed. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979], 315-356).

⁷²This takes place notably in the theological projects of Oden and Grenz.

⁷³Fernando Canale, *Back to Revelation-Inspiration: Searching for the Cognitive Foundations of Christian Theology in a Postmodern World* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001), 17-19.

progress in ontological reflection. After all, reason's structure is unavoidably linked to our understanding of reality.⁷⁴ American philosophers' primary concentration on epistemological issues has almost concealed from evangelical theologians the paradigmatic ontological change that accompanies the postmodern turn to hermeneutical reason.⁷⁵

Heidegger set the ontological interpretation on which postmodern hermeneutical reason stands. In so doing, he has implicitly shown that postmodernity is not a partial departure from some features of modern thinking, but a radical departure from the intellectual paradigm that has defined Western philosophy and culture since Parmenides's times. Here I will point to the change in a simple and concise manner. In so doing, my purpose is to show that Christian theology cannot keep building on tradition without first deconstructing its hermeneutical foundations.

Heidegger deconstructed not only modern but also classical philosophical traditions. He accomplished that by purposely focusing on the notion of Being, the most general of all human concepts. His epoch-making *Being and Time* begins by doubting that philosophy had properly understood the notion of Being and suggesting that we should attempt to understand it from a temporal perspective.⁷⁶ As far as I know, Heidegger never claimed he was turning more than two millennia of philosophical tradition upside down. However, this is, in fact, what his thought accomplished.⁷⁷ Yet it seems he was not totally aware of the radical nature of his ontological proposal.

In what did Heidegger's paradigmatic shift in ontological interpretation reside? First, he dealt with Being, not with beings. That is, he worked in the field of general rather than regional ontology. Thus he did not try to understand

⁷⁴Parmenides seems to have been the first to recognize this linkage when he affirmed, "it is the same thing to think and to be" ("The Way to Truth," in *Ancilla to the pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Complete Translation of the Fragments in Diels, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, ed. Kathleen Freeman [Oxford: Blackwell, 1948], 42).

⁷⁵I say "almost" because ontological studies are present in the work of American philosophers Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Macmillan, 1929); and Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948). Though some could argue that Whitehead's and Hartshorne's neoclassical philosophical constructions are "postmodern," others could find reasons to see them as modern philosophers. The less critical and more constructive work does not advance along the lines of Rorty's replacement of epistemology by hermeneutics.

⁷⁶Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Collins, 1962), 1.

⁷⁷Heidegger characterized traditional ontology not as being wrong, but euphemistically as being "forgetful." As with all philosophers, he felt his work was completing philosophy by working in what tradition had forgotten. Because of this forgetfulness, the traditional understanding of Being stands in need of radical correction. In this way, Heidegger seems to suggest that his interpretation of Being stands beyond the relativism that its hermeneutical adoption has triggered in the postmodern sciences.

only concrete entities (such as God, man, cosmos, substance), but also Being. At least in *Being and Time*, he explicitly set up the understanding of Being as his ultimate goal.⁷⁸ Since Aristotle, Being has been recognized to be the most general notion the human mind is capable of conceiving. This means that “Being cannot indeed be conceived as an entity,” nor can it “be derived from higher concepts by definition.”⁷⁹ By selecting Being as his object of study, Heidegger placed his quest at the spring from which everything else flows in philosophical thinking. This is because, in its all-inclusive generality, “an understanding of Being is already included in conceiving anything which one apprehends in entities.”⁸⁰ We can better appreciate the far-reaching consequences that the interpretation of Being has for the human sciences when Heidegger unpacks its macro-hermeneutical role:

The question of Being aims therefore at ascertaining the *a priori* conditions not only for the possibility of the sciences which examine entities as entities of such and such a type, and, in so doing, already operate with an understanding of Being, but also for the possibility of those ontologies themselves which are prior to the ontical sciences and which provide their foundations.⁸¹

The interpretation of Being, then, influences the interpretation of the entire span of human knowledge and, of course, the interpretation of Scripture. Aquinas helps us to appreciate the overarching implications that any change in the interpretation of Being unleashes in any construction of theology by saying that “a small error at the outset can lead to great errors in the final conclusions.”⁸² Hermeneutically speaking, at the “beginning” we find the concept of Being, which as all-inclusive macro-hermeneutical principle, conditions the understanding of all other macro-hermeneutical presuppositions. In other words, our consciously or unconsciously assumed understanding of Being shapes our interpretation of the other macro-hermeneutical principles, which include God, human nature, the whole-part totality, cosmology, reason, interpretation, methodology, and revelation-inspiration. Even when theologians may not be aware of the question of Being or its interpretation, their understanding of the other macro-hermeneutical presuppositions guiding their theologies necessarily assumes an understanding of Being.

However, the study of being is only the *place* where Heidegger’s philosophical revolution took place. The revolution consists in his decision to understand Being from the horizon of time.⁸³ In *Being and Time*, his aim was to

⁷⁸Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Intro. 1.1.

⁷⁹Ibid., Intro. 1.1.1-2.

⁸⁰Ibid., Intro. 1.1.1.

⁸¹Ibid., Intro. 1.3.

⁸²Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, 1; Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, 1, 5, 271b, 8.

⁸³Heidegger announces in his preface to *Being and Time*: “Our aim in the following treatise is to work out the question of the meaning of *Being* and to do so concretely. Our

interpret the meaning of time and to use it as horizon for understanding Being.⁸⁴ In so doing, Heidegger found himself at the climax of the long process through which the classical ontological-epistemological system was being deconstructed. The starting point of this process may be traced back to the English Empiricists. The outcome of this movement is postmodernity. Heidegger's contribution was to perceive the epochal change in philosophical perspective that resulted from centuries of dissatisfaction with the classical philosophical paradigm and to adopt a new interpretation of Being as the ground from which all philosophical, scientific, and theological discourse is conceived and formulated. In sum, he dared to change the understanding of the broadest, most inclusive macro-hermeneutical principle.

Thomas Kuhn's analysis of scientific revolutions may help us understand Heidegger's philosophical revolution.⁸⁵ What we witness in and around Heidegger's thought is a paradigm shift of gigantic proportions. In a process that took many centuries, philosophers became increasingly aware that the classical Parmenidean-Platonic-Aristotelic paradigm (normal science) was not able to explain satisfactorily all the data they were supposed to explain. Little by little, time was introduced as the perspective from which to interpret traditional philosophical issues. Heidegger installed that perspective in the philosophical "most holy place," namely, in the understanding of Being. In so doing, he was, in fact, formulating with technical precision the basis for a new philosophical understanding of ontology. Based on previous deconstructive-constructive attempts made, notably, by Locke, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Dilthey, and Husserl, Heidegger had enough background to formulate the shift from the classical paradigm to the postmodern one at the ontological level. Concretely, when Heidegger dogmatically decided to understand Being from the horizon of time, he was, in fact, replacing the classical paradigm that had, since Parmenides, approached the understanding of Being and beings from the horizon of timelessness.⁸⁶

provisional aim is the Interpretation of *time* as the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of Being." In n. 4 of the preface, the translators explain the meaning of the word "horizon": "We tend to think of a horizon as something which we may widen or extend or go beyond; Heidegger, however, seems to think of it rather as something which we can neither widen nor go beyond, but which provides the limits for certain intellectual activities performed 'within' it."

⁸⁴As it happened, Heidegger never dealt with the question of Being in *Being and Time*. Rather, he addressed it in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

⁸⁵See Kuhn.

⁸⁶When seen from this perspective, modernity appears to be a transitional stage. The state of uncertainty at the beginning of the twenty-first century that we have labeled "postmodernity" appears to be the result of a lack of working consensus in "normal science." Yet the temporal-historical, macro-ontological-hermeneutical perspective from which to work out a new "normal science" consensus paradigm is

The Hermeneutical Alternative

Since Christian theological traditions were built under the macro-hermeneutical guidance of classical ontology, we should consider the consequences that the paradigmatic shift in ontological perspective formulated by Heidegger has for the task of doing evangelical theology in the twenty-first century.

For a number of reasons that we cannot enumerate in this article, evangelical theologians have not followed the postmodern shift at the ontological level as closely as they have followed its epistemological and cultural consequences. As it is currently perceived, the postmodern shift from epistemological to hermeneutical reason only prevents evangelical theologians from making absolute and universal rational statements. The postmodern shift from a timeless to a temporal approach to ontology, however, has deeper repercussions. One of them is that in the timeless approach, theological deconstruction is not necessary, while in the temporal approach it becomes unavoidable.

Let us review some facts that lead to the need to deconstruct evangelical theology. First, the most universal and all-inclusive of all hermeneutical principles is the concept of Being.⁸⁷ Second, Parmenides originated the classical tradition that interprets Being from a timeless horizon.⁸⁸ Third, when Plato and Aristotle decided to build their ontologies from the timeless horizon suggested by Parmenides, Western philosophy fixed the macro-hermeneutical direction from which classical and modern philosophies and theologies would be constructed.⁸⁹ Fourth, classical Christian theology sealed its intellectual destiny when Justin Martyr (implicitly) and Origen and Augustine (explicitly) interpreted God and human nature as nontemporal and nonhistorical from within the Platonic ontological tradition. This decision defined the macro-hermeneutical principles for classical, modern, and evangelical theologies.⁹⁰ Fifth, as a culmination of a long process of deconstruction, the undisputed reign of the classical philosophical synthesis came to an end when Heidegger convincingly argued that Being can also be interpreted from a temporal

already beginning to sit deep in the consciousness of Western philosophy and scholarship. Achieving this might take several generations, even centuries.

⁸⁷Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XI, 3.

⁸⁸Parmenides, 7-8; Fernando Luis Canale, *A Criticism of Theological Reason: Time and Timelessness as Primordial Presuppositions*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1983), 76-114.

⁸⁹Plato, *Timaeus*, 37.d-38.c. Heidegger recognized their paradigmatic influence by saying that "what these two men [Plato and Aristotle] achieved was to persist through many alterations and 'retouchings' down to the 'logic' of Hegel" (*Being and Time*, Intro. 1.1).

⁹⁰Modern macro hermeneutics modifies classical macro hermeneutics only in its epistemological component; it is a modification associated with the temporal-spatial limits Kant set on pure (classical) reason (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J. M. D. Meiklejohn [Buffalo: Prometheus, 1990], intro. to "Transcendental Aesthetics").

horizon. Apparently, Heidegger's approach stands at the antipode of Parmenides's. Sixth, therefore philosophy and theology face a primordial alternative at the most inclusive or deepest macro-hermeneutical level. The unavoidable question arises: Should philosophers and theologians approach the understanding of Being and beings from a timeless or a temporal horizon?

Unfortunately, the movement from classical to hermeneutical reason has shown convincingly that reason cannot decide among commensurable conflicting interpretive options with absolute certainty. At the primordial macro-hermeneutical level—where the horizon for understanding Being, and through it everything else within the reach of human knowledge, is located—philosophical reason cannot ground an absolutely certain decision. Nevertheless, choose we must, even if only by default, otherwise our reason would not be able to function properly. Since reason cannot help us to decide, we must seek guidance from the sources of theology.

If modern and postmodern deconstruction-construction disqualified reason to help us make this grounding macro-hermeneutical decision, the next obvious choice is to decide from the perspective of tradition. It is through tradition that Oden's postmodern orthodoxy and Grenz's "theology from the community of God"⁹¹ attempt to overcome the demise of classical and modern understanding of absolute reason and the rise of hermeneutical reason. In so doing, they are following the Catholic way in order to surmount the challenge of postmodernity.⁹² This route has the double advantage of being endorsed, albeit for different reasons, by both the postmodern "academic guild" and the "church board." Besides, since this course of action does not involve the deconstruction of tradition but its affirmation, theologians can, with little effort, use the guidance of classical macro-hermeneutical principles to produce complete "postmodern" systematic theologies. A disadvantage of this path is that it draws its macro-hermeneutical principles from neo-Platonic and Aristotelian ontologies that have been deconstructed by postmodern philosophy.⁹³ Moreover, by neglecting the temporal approach to ontology assumed by postmodern reason, this approach incurs a methodological contradiction. Besides, it substantially reduces to a bare minimum the contribution and role that Scripture plays in the construction of Christian theology. In sum, it diminishes the role of divine revelation in Scripture and does not account for the paradigm shift in ontological understanding implicit in postmodern thinking.

When conceiving and formulating the contents of the macro-hermeneutical principles of biblical interpretation and doctrinal construction, evangelical thinking

⁹¹Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 208-209.

⁹²John Paul II states: "It is to be hoped that now and in the future there will be those who continue to cultivate this great philosophical and theological tradition for the good of both the Church and humanity" (*Fides et Ratio: Encyclical Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Relationship between Faith and Reason* (Vatican: Holy See Web Site, 1998).

⁹³Not surprisingly, both Oden (*The Living God*, 61-54) and Grenz (*Theology for the Community of God*, 91-92) understand God as a timeless being.

should decide between Parmenides's timelessness and Heidegger's temporality not from human tradition or philosophies, but, following Erickson's suggestion, from the unchanging ground of biblical revelation.⁹⁴

God, Time, and Deconstruction

Yet, how do we answer from Scripture the question of Being that Parmenides, Aristotle, and Heidegger addressed? Scripture does not give thought to this question as these philosophers did. Besides, we do not find in Scripture a technically developed ontology, such as we find in their works. Yet, even though biblical writers did not formulate an ontology following the same procedures and thought patterns we find in Greek philosophy, that does not mean they did not think about these entities. It only means that they reflected about these questions in a different way.

As a matter of fact, Scripture includes specific and detailed interpretations about the beings of God, humans, the world, and the whole. So far, however, most theologians have not appreciated the ontological import of biblical teachings on these issues because they have always interpreted biblical teachings from macro-hermeneutical presuppositions drawn from Greek philosophy. When consciously or unconsciously believers interpret biblical texts from classical macro-hermeneutical principles, the meaning of Scripture becomes adjusted to the timeless horizon of Greek ontology.

The only way to grasp the ontological weight of Scripture consists in canceling out the traditional readings of Scripture (contra Oden, Grenz, and Catholic theology). Technically, this step is analogous to Husserl's methodological ἐποχή (epochê). Methodological ἐποχή is the bracketing out of something.⁹⁵ When we place an idea or theory under suspension (ἐποχή), two main consequences follow. First, we suspend judgment on that which we place within brackets. Second, we cannot use the bracketed-out idea or theory in our thinking. Thus we are ready to understand, appreciate, and use biblical teachings to define our macro-hermeneutical presuppositions. Oscar Cullmann says the same thing in simpler terms by advising us to avoid philosophical categories when interpreting NT thought.⁹⁶

⁹⁴Erickson, *Truth or Consequences*, 327.

⁹⁵Edmund Husserl defined and used a methodological procedure he called ἐποχή to gain a perspective that would be "free from all theory" (*Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson, 4th ed. [London: George Allen Unwin, 1931], 111).

⁹⁶Oscar Cullmann states: "The frame within which the writers of the New Testament worked ought to be the same limits which New Testament scholars accept for their work. This means that we must at least attempt to avoid philosophical categories" (*Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, trans. Floyd V. Filson, 3d ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964], 11). Cullmann's advice to not use philosophical categories when reading the NT is not a denial of the philosophical import of the biblical texts, but an affirmation that the NT writers did not think from the philosophically

My proposal goes a step further. Whereas Cullmann claims NT scholars should avoid using philosophical categories, I argue that systematic theologians should do the same. It is difficult to see how changing the macro-hermeneutical horizon from which NT writers thought, would help systematicians to understand and construct Christian theology in faithfulness to divine revelation. Changing the biblical macro-hermeneutical horizon in systematic theology from biblical *times* to philosophical *timelessness* required a deconstruction of biblical thinking and a new construction guided by philosophical categories harmonious with the timeless horizon. Classical, modern, and evangelical theologies have been constructed on this hermeneutical tradition that I propose to deconstruct. Some theologians who deconstruct traditionally accepted views claim to do it by reading Scripture from “suppressed and marginalized” theological traditions.⁹⁷ In evangelical theology, however, we should deconstruct from Scripture and not by pitting one tradition against the other. Scripture must be the ground and instrument to deconstruct all traditions.

When we read Scripture by purposely canceling the hermeneutical function of the classical interpretation of God as timeless being, we discover what was obvious but dismissed because it did not fit the macro-hermeneutical presuppositions brought by the exegete and theologian to the text. In Scripture, biblical writers understand God and his actions not from the horizon of timelessness, but from the horizon of time. We should realize that when we read Scripture from a temporal rather than a timeless macro-hermeneutical horizon (general and regional ontologies) we are *de facto* deconstructing Christian and evangelical traditions. Since, in so doing, we are also building our ontological, epistemological, and hermeneutical macro-hermeneutical preunderstandings not from reason but from Scripture, we are overcoming postmodernity postmodernly. In other words, the postmodern understanding of reason has no place for the claim that reason can reach absolute truth beyond interpretation or legitimize one interpretation over all others with absolute certainty. It is also true that the reception of biblical revelation takes place through interpretation. Yet the horizon and the principles of interpretation are not forced on us by the traditions to which we belong. On the contrary, we can deconstruct our traditions and define our hermeneutical perspective in continuity or opposition to them.

Contrary to general opinion, the interpretive nature of reason does not imply subjectivity or relativism. Postmodernity has not let go of objectivity; it has only deconstructed the classical-modern interpretation of it generated from the horizon of timelessness. It is also constructing a new understanding of objectivity from the horizon of time. Thus those who interpret reason from the horizon of timelessness incorrectly adjudicate relativism to postmodernity. Moreover, we should recognize that theological fragmentation results from the

generated macro hermeneutics assumed by both Roman Catholic and Protestant dogmaticians.

⁹⁷Smith, 112.

hermeneutical nature of human reason as created by God⁹⁸ and not from sin, intellectual defect, or the advent of relativistic postmodern thinking. Realizing that to know is to interpret may help us to understand why there are, and always will be, many ways to understand Christianity.⁹⁹

Thus the classical and modern ways of thinking, which I suggest evangelical theology should deconstruct, will continue to exist. Because all interpretations of Christianity are commensurable,¹⁰⁰ postmodernity sets the stage for the unfolding of a conflict of interpretational dynamics. So, while it is true that in Christian theology many interpretations are possible, it is also true that not every interpretation is true to Scripture's way of thinking. In theology, we should decide theologically, that is, from divine biblical revelation, not from reason.

In deciding the evangelical interpretive horizon, then, we should consider first whether biblical authors assumed an all-inclusive temporal or timeless hermeneutical horizon (the notion of Being). Exegetically and theologically, this task involves many aspects that go far beyond the limits of this article. Here, I only want to show that divine revelation in Scripture works within the horizon of time. As few philosophers have dealt specifically with the issue of Being as an all-inclusive horizon for understanding, few theologians have dealt explicitly with the question of time or timelessness as horizons for understanding.

Working from an exegetical modernist perspective, Cullmann has specifically questioned Scripture regarding its own hermeneutical horizon.¹⁰¹ He

⁹⁸In his deconstructing of Augustinian tradition, Smith, 146-148, convincingly makes this point.

⁹⁹By applying Kuhn's notion of paradigm shift, Hans Küng has shown the reason for the existence of many schools of Christian theology (*Theology for the Third Millennium*); idem, *Christianity: Essence, History, and Future*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Continuum, 1995); and Hans Küng and David Tracy, eds. *Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future* (New York: Crossroad, 1991).

¹⁰⁰Here I use the term "commensurable" in a different sense than Rorty, 316, who sees that discourses are commensurable only when they work under the same set of rational rules. However, discourses can be commensurable in relation to a common subject matter. Agreeing with Rorty that reason can set for itself different rules to play the rational game, I submit that discourses are commensurable when they share the same subject matter. When we speak about the same thing from different rational perspectives (i.e., macro-hermeneutical paradigms) our discourses are commensurable. Only then can the conflict of interpretations take place and one can ask the question about whether conflicting discourses are mutually exclusive or complementary. If discourses are totally incommensurable, they are by definition unrelated and we cannot compare them either as complementary or contradictory. So, I am not lapsing back to what Rorty calls "epistemology," but rather arguing for the commensurability of hermeneutical discourse where there are always several rationally valid ways to look at the same reality. The question of truth has escaped the power of reason. In theology we do not despair, because we decide the truth of theological assertions not from reason, but from biblical revelation.

¹⁰¹Cullmann, 9, specifically refers to the biblical notion of time as a "background" notion, thus agreeing with the hermeneutical function of time I am underlining in this article. I go beyond Cullmann in broadening the hermeneutical role of time to the

has convincingly shown that biblical writers thought and wrote from within the horizon of time.¹⁰² Recently, open-view theologians¹⁰³ working from a systematic perspective have initiated a deconstruction of the Augustinian-Calvinistic interpretation of divine providence. They found too many facts in Scripture and experience refusing to fit within the normal Augustinian-Thomistic-Calvinistic paradigm reigning in evangelical theology at the turn of the millennium. Their own deconstructive efforts led them to reject the classical timeless understanding of God from which the classical Calvinistic paradigm works and to replace it with a temporal understanding of God's being grounded on Scripture and experience.¹⁰⁴

However, most open-view theologians are unaware of the larger macro-hermeneutical consequences that their switch from a timeless to a temporal understanding of God has beyond the doctrine of divine providence.¹⁰⁵ They are

macro-hermeneutical level and applying it not only to exegesis, but also systematic theology.

¹⁰²Cullmann, 68, argues that biblical authors understood the death and resurrection of Christ not from the horizon of timelessness, but from the horizon of time. If the understanding of the central truth of Christianity requires the horizon of time, it follows that any construction that looks at the Christ of Christian theology from an implicit timeless horizon must be deconstructed.

¹⁰³John E. Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998); Clark Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, and idem, ed., *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994).

¹⁰⁴See Sanders, 24-25; Clark H. Pinnock, "Systematic Theology," in *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, ed. Clark H. Pinnock (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 119-121.

¹⁰⁵Pinnock recently recognized that he "did not for a moment imagine in 1994 that our book on 'the openness of God' would create such interest and provoke such controversy, particularly in the evangelical community" (*Most Moved Mover*, ix). At the end of *Most Moved Mover*, Pinnock tells us that in advancing the open view of God he thought he was "taking the Bible more seriously," encouraging us "to think more profoundly," and addressing some questions surrounding our cherished relationship with God." Then he asks, "Why the heated and often angry responses?" Only facing what he experienced as disproportionate reactions from his own theological community, Pinnock began to suspect there could be more in what he was doing that he thought. "Obviously, I have touched a raw nerve: the open view of God is different from the tradition of Augustine and Calvin in many respects" (180). At the time, he did not yet seem to have a clear idea about the macro-hermeneutical nature of the "raw nerve" he touched. The same can be said for his critics, especially because they are reacting to what open theism actually says on divine providence and not to the potential hermeneutical-horizon shift hidden behind the open view of God as theological construction. Norman Geisler concludes that the open view of God "leads to a denial of the infallibility of the Bible, the full omniscience of God, the apologetic value of prophecy, and a biblical test for false prophets. It also undermines confidence in the promises of God, his ability to answer prayer, and any ultimate victory over sin. Indeed, it leads logically to universalism and/or annihilationism. And even an

still oblivious to having stumbled on and *de facto* switched the interpretation of the ultimate, all-inclusive, macro-hermeneutical horizon of Christian theology. They do not yet see all the implications of their paradigmatic switch.¹⁰⁶ However, other evangelical theologians, working within the normal scientific Calvinistic paradigm, have clearly perceived some of the hermeneutical consequences implicit in the switch from a timeless to a temporal interpretation of God's being. Briefly put, on the surface the controversy that the open view of God has generated revolves around a small issue within the doctrine of divine providence. Yet, at the deeper hermeneutical level, most open-view theologians have not yet perceived their horizon shift from classical philosophical timelessness to biblical temporality. For this reason, it is still too early to say if they would eventually embrace the new horizon of biblical temporality or reject it.¹⁰⁷

Ontologically speaking, a phenomenological analysis of Exod 3, the classical text referring to God's being, reveals that God's being is not timeless but temporal.¹⁰⁸ This means that biblical authors assumed a temporal interpretation of God's being compatible with the limited time and space of his creation. Cullmann and open-view theologians are correct—in Scripture, God does not reveal himself from a timeless but from a temporal horizon. Moreover, as Pinnock has correctly recognized, the timeless and temporal horizons are mutually exclusive. We must choose one or the other.¹⁰⁹

Since the timeless horizon has its origin in philosophical speculation and the temporal-historical horizon has its origin in biblical revelation, it is not difficult to ascertain which horizon evangelical theologians should adopt. Our shift from a timeless to a temporal horizon, then, is not grounded on reason—postmodern or otherwise—but on unchanging biblical revelation. From this macro-hermeneutical horizon, we should attempt to understand not

alleged revelation of God, confirmed by an act of God, could be false. This undermines any apologetic for Christianity and any credibility in prophetic claims on which the Bible is based" (*Creating God in the Image of Man? The New "Open" View of God—Neotheism's Dangerous Drift* [Minneapolis: Bethany, 1997], 145). While correctly criticizing open theism, Bruce A. Ware grasps its consequences within the doctrinal and ecclesiological levels (*God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2000], 16-19). I personally do not agree with the open view of God because I see it as theological construction frozen between two paradigms.

¹⁰⁶Conceivably, they might not like all the consequences and so opt out of the temporal horizon of biblical thought and settle for the ready-to-use "middle" of the road, dipolar (time-timeless) horizon of neoclassical process philosophy.

¹⁰⁷See Fernando Canale, "Evangelical Theology and Open Theism: Toward a Biblical Understanding of Macro Hermeneutical Principles of Theology?" *JATS* 12/2 (2001): 16-34.

¹⁰⁸For a detailed discussion of the ontological import of Exod 3 and its historical understanding of God's being, see Canale, *A Criticism of Theological Reason*, chap. 3.

¹⁰⁹Pinnock states: "These two ideals, the Hellenic and the biblical, cannot really be fused successfully. A decision needs to be made whether to go with one or the other, with the philosophers or with God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ" (*Most Moved Mover*, 7).

only God, but also the entire range of Christian theology.

Next to the understanding of God, the interpretation of human nature plays a most influential macro-hermeneutical role in Christian theology (see above). Classical and modern theologies understand human nature in relation to the timeless soul.¹¹⁰ When considering Christian doctrines, it is surprising to find out how much they owe to the classical preunderstanding about human nature as timeless soul. Yet, from the perspective of its temporal understanding of God, Scripture sees human beings as also being temporal entities that relate to God historically.¹¹¹ Therefore, thinking from within the historical horizon of biblical macro-hermeneutics, we should also rediscover the temporal-historical understanding of human nature present in Scripture and use it as our macro-hermeneutical presupposition.

Deconstruction should start by deconstructing the classical timeless understanding of God, around which the evangelical system of theology revolves. The biblical understanding of God and time is the first step in the long and complex path of deconstructing the many systems Christian theologians have created through the centuries.¹¹² Here we can only warn the reader not to understand the meaning of God's temporality from classical macro-hermeneutical principles, from philosophical or scientific studies, or to identify it with human temporality.¹¹³ Our understanding of divine temporality can only be secured by glimpsing into the mystery of God's being as revealed in the pages of Scripture.

¹¹⁰In classical theology, God's timelessness and the timelessness of the human soul are different. Whereas God has timelessness in its higher and most perfect manifestation, the soul only participates in it at a lower level corresponding to its finitude and relation to the body.

¹¹¹Briefly put, Scripture does not teach the immortality of the soul, which is also an ontological idea exported from Greek philosophy into Christian macro hermeneutics and popular belief. As an introduction to this issue, see Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1958); and Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection? A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny* (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1997).

¹¹²Cullmann states: "How much the thinking of our days roots in Hellenism, and how little in Biblical Christianity, becomes clear to us when we confirm the fact that far and wide the Christian Church and Christian Theology distinguish time and eternity in the Platonic-Greek manner" (*Christ and Time*, 61). Two sentences earlier, Cullmann explained that "for Plato, eternity is not endlessly extended time, but something quite different; it is timelessness."

¹¹³Philosophical reflection on time is interesting, but certainly not binding in Christian theology. For an introduction to the philosophical discussion on the nature of time, see, e.g., William J. Hill, *Search for the Absent God: Tradition and Modernity in Religious Understanding* (New York: Crossroad, 1992); William Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge*, Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); and William Lane Craig, *Time and Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship to Time* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001).

Yet, even without a comprehensive study of divine temporality as revealed in Scripture, we can decide to approach the theological task from the temporal horizon assumed by biblical writers. In so doing, we should exercise care not to conceive that God is limited by time as his creatures are. From the testimony of Scripture, it becomes clear that God's time is not to be conceived as being identical to created time (univocal),¹¹⁴ or as totally different from it (equivocal),¹¹⁵ but as analogical to our time. This means, for instance, that only God experiences the fullness of time, while we experience it only partially. In comparison with our limited experience of time, God's time appears as "supratemporal," not in the sense that the "supra" should be understood as timeless, but rather, as the fullness of time that only belongs to the mystery of God's being. What is important here is not the development of a detailed ontological model of divine temporality, but that God can experience the temporal succession of future-present-past both in the deepness of his divinity and at the limited level of his creation.¹¹⁶ In other words, the biblical God experiences in his "eternal" being temporal succession. Without change in his ontological constitution or loss to his perfection, God is able to experience time and do new things not only "for us," but also for himself as, for instance, took place during the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The deconstructive effects of the biblical-temporal horizon applied to the being and actions of God have powerful, all-inclusive deconstructive effects, including not only our understanding of God, but also of his salvific work in history.

¹¹⁴This seems to be the general notion behind process philosophy and the open view of God.

¹¹⁵Emmanuel Levinas argued this position philosophically (*Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis [Pittsburg, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969], 33-40); it seems that Karl Barth also implicitly assumed an equivocal notion of divine temporality, because he simultaneously affirms that God has time and history and understands eternity in the classical timeless way. On divine eternity, Barth states that "the being is eternal in whose duration beginning, succession and end are not three but one, not separate as a first, a second and a third occasion, but one simultaneous occasion as beginning, middle and end. Eternity is the simultaneity of beginning, middle and end, and to that extent it is pure duration. Eternity is God in the sense in which in himself and in all things God is simultaneous, i.e., beginning and middle as well as end, without separation, distance or contradiction. Eternity is not, therefore, time, although time is certainly God's creation or more correctly, a form of His creation. Time is distinguished from eternity by the fact that in it beginning, middle and end are distinct and even opposed as past, present and future" (*Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, 13 vols. [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936], II/1, 608).

¹¹⁶Terence E. Fretheim states: "This common language of planning assumes that temporal sequence is important for God—past, present, and future are meaningful categories. There is temporal succession, a before and after, in the divine thinking. Temporally, God is internally related to the world, that is from within its structure of time, and in such a way that there are now no other options for God" (*The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective*, ed. Walter Brueggemann, Overtures to Biblical Theology [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 41).

Deconstruction, then, works not as a criticism of the Bible from postmodern assumptions, but as a criticism of classical, modern, and postmodern theological constructions from the Bible. Deconstruction starts by shifting the macro-hermeneutical horizon from philosophical timelessness to Scripture's temporality. From there, theologians should define, in faithfulness to biblical teachings, the necessary macro-, meso-, and micro-hermeneutical principles and, under their guidance, construct and formulate the entire body of Christian theology.

Scripture as Ground for Deconstruction

Obviously, to apply deconstruction to one's own theological system is difficult and painful. However, one should keep in mind that the objective of deconstruction is not to destroy Christian theology, but to open the way for a more faithful understanding of divine biblical revelation. As critical methodology, deconstruction helps us to go back to the foundation upon which tradition claims to build Christian and evangelical theologies. In philosophical studies, Heidegger used deconstruction to get back to the "things themselves" and from a temporal horizon to construct a new philosophical understanding on them.¹¹⁷ In this way, one realizes that postmodernity does not involve an absolute, unbridled relativism, but a call for a new understanding of objectivity to be worked out from the new macro-hermeneutical horizon of time.¹¹⁸ The aim and soul of deconstruction, then, resides in the new construction its application facilitates.¹¹⁹

A new construction will not be possible if, after deconstructing the Grand Tradition, we do not find the "things themselves." Yet, what are the "things themselves" in theology? James Smith seems to suggest that in theology the "things themselves" are God, and the Spirit understood as "Word without words."¹²⁰ This view reveals the Pentecostal tradition to which Smith belongs. According to this tradition, we experience God's presence, the "thing itself," directly in our inner being. This idea stands very close to the evangelical experience of the "gospel" or justification by faith as understood by Luther.¹²¹

Identifying the "things themselves" with God's presence as "Word without

¹¹⁷Heidegger, *Being and Time*, II, §7, 49-50.

¹¹⁸With the help of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Dooyeweerd, Smith, 169-175, convincingly argues this point.

¹¹⁹This corresponds to the "messianic" aspect in Derrida's deconstruction.

¹²⁰Smith, 180.

¹²¹Martin Luther, *Word and Sacrament*, Luther's Works, vol. 35, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1999], 119-123. E. Theodore Bachmann states: "According to Luther's understanding, the Word of God is not simply to be equated with the written text of the Scriptures, for it goes much deeper than historical description or moral precept. Rather, it is a uniquely life-imparting power, a message communicated by men in whom the Scriptures had become alive" ("Introduction," in *Word and Sacrament*, LW, 35:1-2).

words” allows Smith to argue his point, namely, to make room for diversity of interpretation in the theological community.¹²² However, in the field of theological knowledge only Scripture as divine revelation can provide the “things themselves.” Gadamer helps us to see this when he applies the Heideggerian notion of “things themselves” also to texts.¹²³ Even Smith seems to assume that the only cognitive public source of data we have from which to build Christian theology is biblical revelation.¹²⁴ After all, scriptural teachings made Luther’s deconstruction possible. Without Scripture, a theological deconstruction of the hermeneutical principles of theology would be impossible.

Deconstructing Christian Hermeneutics

While theoretically affirming the *sola Scriptura* principle, evangelical theology has been constructed from hermeneutical principles of philosophical origin. Deconstruction, therefore, must start by analyzing the hermeneutical principles operative in theological and creedal traditions.¹²⁵ At this level, the aim of deconstruction is to identify macro-hermeneutical principles based on classical ontology and to replace them with biblical teachings on the beings of God, humans, and the world. This will give concrete content to the macro-hermeneutical shift from timelessness to temporality and put an end to almost two millennia of hermeneutical bondage to philosophy.¹²⁶

¹²²Smith, 9, 183-184.

¹²³Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 267.

¹²⁴Smith, 180.

¹²⁵McGrath, 149, encourages theologians to apply a hermeneutics of suspicion to tradition. We should “be on our guard and understand why we believe certain things rather than just accepting them passively from those we recognize as masters and teachers. Tradition is something that is to be actively and selectively appropriated, not passively and unthinkingly received.” McGrath, 153, argues that Calvin also shared a critical approach to tradition. Deconstruction as I am presenting it here is the methodological formalization of the hermeneutics of suspicion that McGrath and Calvin speak about; yet, I doubt they would be willing to apply it at the hermeneutical level and to the extent I am suggesting in this article.

¹²⁶Though Kevin J. Vanhoozer, in his recent “The Voice and the Actor: A Dramatic Proposal about the Ministry and Minstrelsy of Theology,” in *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*, ed. John G. Stackhouse [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000], 61-106), does not deal with the issue of hermeneutics or deconstruction as I do here. Instead, he calls for the leading role of Scripture in determining the macro-hermeneutical principles of theology. He writes: “I have come to believe that, with regard to method, we have to construe or configure *three* factors together: God, Scripture, *and* the nature of theology. We have to enter into a biblical-theological variant of the hermeneutic circle. Decisions taken here affect what we might call, after the philosophers, ‘first theology’—the principles that, methodologically speaking, come first” (74). Of course, as I have argued above, there are more principles involved in what Vanhoozer correctly calls “first theology” and I call “macro-hermeneutical principles.” The important point is that, as an evangelical theologian, he recognizes the grounding role of Scripture in hermeneutics.

To say that Scripture provides the “things themselves” means that they will guide us in the deconstructive process of received theological traditions, as well as in the new deconstruction-construction they make possible. When we apply the deconstruction-construction method to the macro-hermeneutical principles of theology, we have taken the first methodological step in the deconstructive path. We have thereby replaced the onto-theo-logical order of classical theology with a new theo-onto-logical order that is faithful to Scripture.¹²⁷ This means that we will no longer define our macro-hermeneutical principles philosophically. On the new order, we will define them theologically by adopting those principles operative in biblical thinking. Methodologically, then, deconstruction starts by securing the hermeneutical independence of Christian theology from philosophy.

Deconstructing the Wesleyan Quadrilateral

Implicit in the deconstruction of the hermeneutical principles of evangelical theology is the deconstruction of its sources. For convenience, I am dealing with the question of sources under the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” designation. In this section, the historical origin of the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” label within the Methodist tradition is not important. Here we are interested in the question of sources this label evokes. Broadly speaking, Christian theologians use all sources useful to their purposes. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral designation helps us to classify the sources into four general types, namely, Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Different traditions use these sources with different emphases. Evangelical theology is perhaps the tradition that gives greater prominence to Scripture. However, claiming prominence for Scripture within the plurality of sources implicit in the Wesleyan Quadrilateral does not call for the *sola Scriptura*, but for the *prima Scriptura*, principle.¹²⁸ *Prima Scriptura* gives theoretical prominence

¹²⁷For a more detailed explanation of this foundational methodological shift, see Canale, *A Criticism of Theological Reason*, 285-297.

¹²⁸This is made clear by Woodrow W. Whidden, who deals with the Wesleyan Quadrilateral within the limited context of the Methodist and American Fundamentalism. He incorrectly considers the *sola Scriptura* principle as the cause for the “bewildering array of doctrinal options that have arisen among the groups that strenuously profess fidelity to the Bible as their sole authority” (“*Sola Scriptura*, Inerrantist Fundamentalism and the Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Is ‘No Creed but the Bible’ a Workable Solution?” *AUSS* 35 [1997]: 214). Among the various possible causes for theological diversity not all are theological. Cultural, temperamental, psychological, and ecclesiological reasons are always involved in the theological disagreements. Theologically speaking, however, Whidden, 219, correctly recognizes that American fundamentalism did not follow through with its theoretical claim of abiding by the *sola Scriptura* principle. If this is so, then, variety in American fundamentalism might be traced back to its macro-hermeneutical principles unconsciously derived, via tradition, from Greek philosophy. Whidden seems to forget that, as theological source, “reason” involves more than a rationalistic apologetical procedure to fight Enlightenment rationalism on its own turf. Reason also includes ontological interpretations, which, sooner or later, become the real hermeneutical guides, which Whidden certainly would not consciously allow in his theology. However, by arguing in favor of the Wesleyan

to Scripture among other recognized sources theologians may use to communicate the “message of salvation.” By using the *prima Scriptura* formula, theologians recognize the normative role of Scripture, but simultaneously accept and justify the existence and contribution of other sources of theology. The problem is that before the message can be “communicated,” it must be constructed. The fact that what has come to be called “the gospel” (the message of salvation) is also a theological construction is often neglected by evangelical theologians. Thus many of them speak about the “message” or the “gospel” as if existing in a privileged, experiential level beyond hermeneutics and theological construction. As a result, the way in which the plurality of sources has shaped the traditional understanding of the “message of salvation” remains hidden and removed from theological analysis.

The quadrilateral approach to theological sources justifies the use of sources other than Scripture for theological purposes. In so doing, it facilitates the classical and modern conviction that we may draw the macro-hermeneutical principles for doing theology from philosophy and science. By affirming the *sola Scriptura* principle, the deconstruction program I am proposing requires the deconstruction of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral of Sources approach. This is necessary to ground the macro hermeneutics of evangelical theology in Scripture and not in tradition or philosophy. This leads away from Oden’s and Grenz’s proposals to overcome the postmodern challenge by drawing our hermeneutics from past or present traditions. It also leads away from classical and modern theological approaches, which freely derived their hermeneutical guidance from philosophy and science.

To affirm that Scripture is God’s specific revelation and simultaneously insist that the hermeneutical principles to understand it should be drawn from hypothetical philosophical and scientific interpretations of reality is incoherent. Besides, it does violence to the basic scientific principle in which we should let things speak for themselves. If God has revealed himself in Scripture, why should we draw our macro-hermeneutical principles from philosophy or science? That Christian theology has been constructed on this basis does not make it mandatory for us to continue doing it in the same way. Instead, it shows us the need for deconstructing traditional theological systems in order to facilitate the construction of evangelical theology from biblical macro-hermeneutical principles. To define the macro-hermeneutical principles of evangelical theology from Scripture is more coherent and convincing than to persist in deriving them from always-changing philosophical and scientific opinions. Of course, the deconstruction of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral will also

Quadrilateral and the *prima Scriptura* principle, he is arguing in favor of the multiple-source approach Protestant theology inherited from Roman Catholic theology. Facing the added challenge of postmodernity, which Whidden does not consider in his article, the way out of negative diversity in Christian theology is not the affirmation of the *sola Scriptura* principle, but its use as ground and instrument to deconstruct-construct evangelical theology. Kevin Vanhoozer correctly underlines the existence of positive theological diversity (*The Voice and the Actor*, 78-79). Because we receive both intermingled as theological traditions, deconstruction becomes a necessary methodological step in Christian theology.

involve the deconstruction-construction of the revelation-inspiration of Scripture.¹²⁹ I have dealt with this foundational issue in another publication.¹³⁰

Deconstruction and Biblical Theology

Under the hermeneutical guidance of Greek philosophy, Christian theology has been constructed mainly as systematic theology. Biblical theology is a relatively recent theological discipline. Though its antecedents can be traced back to the Protestant Reformation, it only became an independent theological discipline around the middle of the eighteenth century.¹³¹ In its opposition to dogmatic theology,¹³² the deconstructive bent of biblical theology became most apparent since its inception. However, due to its dependence on classical and modern macro-hermeneutical principles, some proposals made by biblical theology have been, unfortunately, negative.

The deconstructive-constructive program that I am suggesting in this article is closely related to biblical theology and relates to it in two main ways. First, it calls for the deconstruction of the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation. We should apply deconstruction to the hermeneutical and methodological foundations from which biblical theologians have retrieved the meaning of the biblical text. The methodology broadly used during the twentieth century is known as the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation.¹³³

¹²⁹Whidden, 219-221, correctly reacts against the evangelical doctrine of verbal inspiration, inerrancy, and the wooden rationalistic hermeneutics that flows from it. However, the solution is not to maintain, via tradition (one source in the quadrilateral), the classical doctrine of verbal inspiration and inerrancy in hopes of “balancing” it with other sources in the quadrilateral. Rather, by affirming the *sola Scriptura* principle, traditional views on revelation-inspiration should be deconstructed and a new model faithful to Scripture’s macro-hermeneutical principles constructed.

¹³⁰Canale, *Back to Revelation-Inspiration*.

¹³¹G. Ebeling traces back the origin of biblical theology to the publication of *Gedanken von der Beschaffenheit und dem Vorzug der biblisch-dogmatischen Theologie vor der alten und neuen scholastischen* (1758), by Anton Friedrich Büsching (*Word and Faith*, trans. James W. Leitch [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963], 87). Gerhard Hasel gives a slightly earlier date for the independence of biblical theology from dogmatics: “As early as 1745 ‘Biblical theology’ is clearly separated from dogmatic (systematic) theology and the former is conceived of as being the foundation of the latter” (*Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975], 18).

¹³²According to Ebeling, 87, biblical theology became “a rival of the prevailing dogmatics [scholastic theology].” With Johann Philipp Gabler’s 1787 presentation, biblical theology “set itself up as a completely independent study, namely, as a critical historical discipline alongside dogmatics” (*ibid.*, 88). See also Anthony C. Thiselton, “Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics,” in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997), 520.

¹³³From a methodological viewpoint, the best introduction to the historical-critical method that I know is by Steven McKenzie and Stephen Haynes, eds., *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application* (Louisville: Westminster John

Though this method has already been criticized by biblical theologians, the deconstruction and replacement of its classical and modern macro-hermeneutical principles has not yet been accomplished.¹³⁴ In other words, the historical-critical method cannot be assumed or utilized in the task of deconstructing evangelical theology because it works from classical and modern macro-hermeneutical principles, which must be deconstructed from Scripture. As a result, the application of the historical-critical method produces the deconstruction and ensuing destruction of biblical thought. Second, once the historical-critical method has been deconstructed and replaced by a methodology based on biblical macro-hermeneutical principles, biblical theology becomes an indispensable ally in the deconstruction-construction of the various traditional theological systems and practices currently operative in Christianity.

Conclusion

I hope the brief outline presented in this article suffices to show the need and possibility of a deconstruction of evangelical theology. The need arises from the method and the hermeneutical presuppositions involved in its construction. That is to say, the need for a deconstructive step in theological method stems from the fact that evangelical theology has been constructed by using macro-hermeneutical presuppositions inherited from tradition and interpreted from the timeless horizon dictated by the Greek understanding of Being (Parmenides-Plato-Aristotle). This interpretation stands in direct opposition to the temporal horizon of biblical thought. The possibility of theological deconstruction springs from the "things themselves" provided to theologians by biblical revelation. Thus, in evangelical theology, deconstruction becomes the necessary instrument to facilitate the Reformation's adage, *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est* (a reformed church is to be ever reforming). In our case, "*theologia reformata semper reformanda est.*"¹³⁵

Understanding biblical thinking from the horizon of time becomes the source of all deconstruction and the basis of all new construction under the methodological guidance of the *sola, tota, and prima Scriptura* principles.

Knox, 1999). The historical-critical method has been criticized, among others, in the following works: Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical Critical Method*, trans. Edwin W. Leverenze and Rudolph F. Norden (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977). Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology*, trans. Robert W. Yarbrough (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990); and idem, *Biblical Criticism on Trial: How Scientific is "Scientific Theology,"* trans. Robert Yarbrough (Kregel, 1998).

¹³⁴To see that every method necessarily involves definitions and application of macro-hermeneutical principles, see Canale, "Interdisciplinary Method in Christian Theology?"

¹³⁵George Vandervelde states: "Without a clear affirmation of the Scripture as supreme criterion, there is no defense against tradition becoming more than interpretive, more than receptive. Without the over-against of the Scriptures the church has no adequate antidote to the illusion that it is exempt from the call of *semper reformand*." ("Scripture and Tradition in the Roman Catholic Church," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 19/2 [1995]: 144-156).

Deconstruction starts from the macro- meso-, and micro-hermeneutical principles and extends to revelation-inspiration, methodological issues, and the entire scope of the theology and practices of the church.

When deconstruction is not applied *to* Scripture, but *from* Scripture to traditionally received and accepted beliefs and practices, deconstruction becomes not a postmodern enemy, but an ally. In so doing, we become aware that we should no longer ground our hermeneutical principles from tradition, philosophy, or science. Instead, we become involved in the task of defining them from Scripture. Though critical of tradition, deconstruction does not imply its wholesale destruction. On the contrary, it guides us in a critical retrieval of those aspects that refuse to conform to the timeless horizon of Greek ontology. In other words, it helps to recover what reflects theological understanding constructed from the temporal-historical horizon of biblical macro hermeneutics.

The task ahead is monumental. Centuries of theological construction must be carefully understood and evaluated from the biblical-temporal horizon within which God's being and actions were understood and described by OT and NT writers. No single person can accomplish such a task. All theologians and disciplines should join in by incorporating deconstruction as a necessary step in the task of doing theology, as a step in the study of theological prolegomena or meta-theological issues.

Deconstruction is a painful task because, through critical analysis faithful to Scripture, it modifies and even rejects long-held and cherished ideas. Yet obedience to Christ, the great theological deconstructionist, and the deconstructionist examples of Luther and Calvin should encourage us to press on to complete the unfinished task with renewed determination. In so doing, we will be following Christ's command to build our life on the rock of his words we receive in Scripture (OT and NT) (Matt 7:24). Simultaneously, we will be overcoming the challenge of postmodernity not only in postmodern terms, but also in faithfulness to the evangelical commitment to Scripture's revelation.

WAS KARLSTADT A PROTO-SABBATARIAN?

EDWARD ALLEN
Union College
Lincoln, Nebraska

Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1486-1541) is still somewhat of an enigma to the scholarly community. There are those who see him as a tragic, heroic figure, denied his due importance. On the other hand, there are others who see him as a nearly heretical fool, a traitor to the Reformation's cause.¹

His 1524 tract "On the Sabbath" was controversial from its first publication. His ambiguous treatment of the subject has made it difficult to define Karlstadt's view of Sabbath observance. After a brief review of the events in Karlstadt's life leading up to the time when the tract was written, this essay will examine the text in detail to try to determine Karlstadt's position concerning Sabbath observance. It will conclude with a brief description of some of the reactions to the tract.

Biographical Background

Karlstadt was educated in the intricate philosophy of the late Medieval period. He knew the *via antiqua* well and was versed in the thought of Thomas Aquinas. Called in 1505 to the new University of Wittenberg, he put the school on the map by being the first of its teachers to issue a publication. Though it has now been determined that he was three years younger than Martin Luther, he was his senior on the faculty and actually presided at the ceremony in which Luther was granted his doctoral degree.²

¹Biographical information about Karlstadt can be found in Hans J. Hillerbrand, "Andreas Bodenstein of Carlstadt, Prodigal Reformer," *CH* 35 (1966): 379-398; Calvin Augustine Pater, *Karlstadt as the Father of the Baptist Movements* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); Gordon Rupp, *Andrew Karlstadt: The Reformer as Puritan*, Part 2, *Patterns of Reformation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 49-153; Ronald J. Sider, *Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt* (Leiden: Brill, 1974); David C. Steinmetz, "Andreas Bodenstein Von Carlstadt," in *Reformers in the Wings*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 123-130. A review of the literature on Karlstadt's life may be found in Calvin Pater, "Lay Religion in the Program of Andreas Rudolff-Bodenstein von Karlstadt," in *Leaders of the Reformation*, ed. Richard L. DeMolen (London: Associated University Presses, 1984), 99-133. Among the most recent treatments of Karlstadt are two articles by Neil R. Leroux, "Karlstadt's *Christag Predig*: Prophetic Rhetoric in an 'Evangelical' Mass," *CH* 72 (2003): 102-137; and idem, "In the Christian City of Wittenberg: Karlstadt's Tract on Images and Begging," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 34 (2003): 73-105.

²With reference to Karlstadt's date of birth, see Edward J. Furcha, "Iconoclast or Regenerator?" in *The Three Loves*, ed. Robert C. Culley and William Klempa (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 159-169. Edward J. Furcha refers to a new archival find described in an article by Ulrich Bubenheimer ("Karlstadt," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. G.

A major turning point in Karlstadt's life came when he was challenged by Luther to examine the writings of Augustine. At the Leipzig book fair on January 13, 1517, Karlstadt apparently purchased an entire set of Augustine's corpus.³ He must have burned the midnight oil reading them, for within a few months his entire theology had become reoriented. He repudiated his scholastic education and under Augustine's influence became devoted to Scripture.

One of his first acts was to begin lecturing on Augustine's *De spiritu et litera*.⁴ Karlstadt took the distinction between the Spirit and the letter that Augustine developed as an organizing principle for his theology. The issue that Karlstadt dealt with beginning in 1517 and continued to address throughout the rest of his writings was "How can one fulfill the law of God?"⁵ Karlstadt's answer was that one can fulfill the law only by the Spirit and not by the letter. In contrast, the organizing principle Luther developed for his theology was the dichotomy between law and grace. For him, the single question worth addressing was, "What makes a person a Christian?"⁶ Luther's answer was that grace makes a person a Christian and not the law.

As the movement for reform gained steam, Karlstadt joined Luther in his emphasis on *sola Scriptura*. When Luther posted his "95 Theses," it was Karlstadt who initiated the debate over Luther's theses with John Eck. For the first four years of the Wittenberg Reformation, Karlstadt was one of Luther's prominent colleagues. When Luther was taken into protective custody at the Wartburg Castle after the Diet of Worms in March 1521, Karlstadt took a leading role in the subsequent work of implementing an actual program of reform. Luther was unhappy with the results and returned to Wittenberg in March 1522. He preached a series of eight sermons on eight successive days attacking the innovations and insisting that they be rolled back. Though not named in Luther's sermons, Karlstadt was implicated in the disturbances. Within a short time, he was forbidden to preach and publish. Not long afterward he assumed the pastorate at the church in Orlamunde. After an eight-month silence, Karlstadt printed five tracts in quick succession from December 1523 through early 1524. One of these tracts, written in German, was entitled

Krause and G. Müller [Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1987]: 17:649ff.).

³Sider, 17.

⁴Augustine, "The Spirit and the Letter" in *Augustine: Later Works*, ed. John Burnaby (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), 193-250. Augustine, 213, 218, 213, affirms that the Christian ought to keep all the Ten Commandments, except the Sabbath. His complex view of the law is expressed paradoxically: "The law was given that grace might be sought; grace was given that the law might be fulfilled" (*ibid.*, 200).

⁵Steinmetz, 125.

⁶Martin Luther, "Letter to the Christians at Strassburg," in *Luther Works* 40 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1958), 67. This letter was written at the request of the reformers in Strassburg who were concerned about Karlstadt's theology. It directly addresses the root issue between Luther and Karlstadt.

Von dem Sabbat und gebotten feyertagen, “Regarding the Sabbath and Statutory Holy Days.”⁷ It appears to have little, if any, relationship to a specific issue in Wittenberg or Orlamunde. While it certainly fits within the larger scheme of Karlstadt’s theology, it is not a particularly polemical tract. E. J. Furcha suggests that it was a popular piece of work, since, after its initial printing in Jena, it was reprinted in Augsburg, Strasbourg, and Constance.⁸

Angels, Festivals, and the Law

Karlstadt’s first, and perhaps primary, concern is with the festival and feast days associated with angels and saints. His intention is to advocate the observance of Sabbath to the exclusion of the celebration of saints and angels. Before specifically addressing the issue of the Sabbath, Karlstadt deals with the place of “commandments and prohibitions.” Since the place of the law in the believer’s life was a major source of contention between him and Luther, his opening words on the law bear close attention.

Karlstadt contends that the law was given to make us aware of our “inner image and likeness.”⁹ By this he means that we were originally created in God’s image and his intention is for us to return to being “as God is” [*wei Gott ist*].¹⁰ This is not a mystical union with God, where humanity is “lost” in godness; but rather a moral likeness to God, characterized by God’s moral attributes, which Karlstadt lists: “holy, tranquil, good, just, wise, strong, truthful, kind, merciful, etc. All commandments of God demand of us to be godlike [*glicheit seiner gotheit*]; in fact, they have been given us so that we might be conformed to God [*gotförmig*].”¹¹

Karlstadt’s positive evaluation of the law is in contrast to Luther’s more negative view. In his second set of lectures on Galatians, Luther describes only two uses of the law. First, there was the civil use of the law, where the sinfulness of unregenerate humanity was kept in check by the civil magistrate. Second, there was the theological use of the law, where it functioned to convict humanity of sin and prepare human beings to receive the gospel. As far as Luther was concerned,

⁷Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, “On the Sabbath,” in *The Essential Carlstadt: Fifteen Tracts*, trans. and ed. E. J. Furcha (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995), 317-338. The German text is from D. Stupperich, “Karlstadts *Sabbat-Traktat* von 1524” (hereafter *Sabbat-Traktat*), *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie* 1 (1959): 349-368. Stupperich’s commentary follows on pp. 368-375.

⁸E. J. Furcha, Introduction to “On the Sabbath,” in *The Essential Carlstadt: Fifteen Tracts*, trans. and ed. E. J. Furcha (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995), 317.

⁹“On the Sabbath,” 319.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid. (“*das ist heilig, still, gut, gerecht, weyß, starck, wahafftig, gütig, barmhertzig etc. Und all gebot Gottes fordern von uns eyn glicheit seiner gotheit, synd auch uns derhalben gegeben, das gotförmig werden sollen*,” *Sabbat-Traktat*, 350). Karlstadt apparently draws mystical ideas from a voluntative mystical tradition rather than an essentialist tradition.

this second use was the chief use of the law.¹² Reformed writers, including Calvin and some later Lutheran writers, came to see a third use of the law. For Calvin, the principal use of the law was in the life of the believers, where it not only reveals God's will, but also arouses the flesh to work.¹³ While not using the later terminology that spoke of a third use of the law, Karlstadt's Sabbath tract contains a positive view of the law for the Christian life. In his introductory material to "On the Sabbath," Karlstadt teaches that the law not only reveals God's will, but also arouses our "desire to become holy as God is holy."¹⁴ He sees both the law and the Sabbath as a means to the believer's sanctification: "God has given us his commandments and counsels that we might become holy and conformed to God, which is to be like God [*Gottförmig*] and as he is. Thus the Sabbath has been instituted by God that we might desire to become holy as God is holy and rest like him, letting go of our works as he did."¹⁵

Luther taught that the purpose of the law is to convict of sin. In Karlstadt's mind, the Spirit and the gospel are what convict of sin. Following Augustine, Karlstadt taught that the law by itself was a "letter that kills." It engenders lust and anger toward God and thus cannot prepare a person for the gospel. In Karlstadt's scheme, it is the gospel's focus on the sufferings and death of Christ that the Holy Spirit uses to reveal what sin really is to humanity. It is not the law that gives life, but the Spirit. To Karlstadt, the law could be a letter that kills or, in the hands of the gospel and the Spirit the law could become an instrument of holiness.¹⁶

It seemed to Luther that Karlstadt's theology of the law involved a loss of Christian freedom:

We must see to it that we retain Christian freedom and do not force such laws and works on the Christian conscience, as if one through them were upright or a sinner. Here questions are in order concerning the place which images, foods, clothing, places, persons, and all such external things, etc., ought to have. . . . From which you now see that Dr. Karlstadt and his spirits

¹²Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians 1535*, in Luther Works 26 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963), 308-309. See also Alden Lorne Thompson, "Tertius Usus Legis in the Theology of Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1969), 6-14.

¹³John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Bk. II, chap. 7, sec. 12, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 360, 361. Calvin, 360, says that "The law is to the flesh like a whip to an idle and balky ass, to arouse it to work."

¹⁴"On the Sabbath," 319.

¹⁵Ibid., 319 ("Daruß ist zu leeren, dz uns Gott syn gebot und rüte ggeben hat, das wir heylig und Gottförmig werden, das ist got gleich, als gott ist. Demnach ist der Sabbat von Gott ingesetzt, das wir begeren heylig zu werden, als Gott heylig ist, und rugen als er, unnd die werck lassen faren," *Sabbat-Traktat*, 350).

¹⁶Thompson, 102-106. See also Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, "Several Main Points of Christian Teaching" in *The Essential Karlstadt: Fifteen Tracts*, trans. and ed. E. J. Furcha (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995), 343.

replace the highest with the lowest, the best with the least, the first with the last. Yet he would be considered the greatest spirit of all, he who has devoured the Holy Spirit feathers and all.¹⁷

For Luther, the law is “not for the Christian, but for the crude and unbelieving.”¹⁸ To Luther, Karlstadt improperly applies the law to the Christian, majoring in minor things and elevating minor things to major status. Luther ridicules Karlstadt’s emphasis on the Holy Spirit, but never takes Karlstadt’s theology of the law and the Spirit seriously.

Ronald Sider examines Karlstadt’s theology carefully and presents the evidence of his teachings on faith and salvation. For example, Karlstadt taught that “Nothing makes us blessed except faith. Nothing damns us except unbelief.”¹⁹ His Christocentric viewpoint is clear from his teaching that

[God] sent his beloved Son in order that we should obtain and have peace through him. As often as we sense our sin and want to atone for it, we see . . . that we need a Saviour, who is Jesus Christ, . . . a payer and compensator of all deficiency. If we believe on him, . . . then we are sure and certain that he placed our sin upon himself and paid for it. The Father sent him for that purpose.²⁰

Sider concludes that Karlstadt did not teach “works-righteousness” as Luther charged him with teaching, though he suggests that Karlstadt’s teaching on the normative role for the OT and NT law in the life of the Christian was legalistic.²¹

The Sabbath and “Sabbatarianism”

Luther saw Karlstadt as imposing a Judaic Sabbath observance. In fact, he held that if one were to keep the Sabbath, one must logically go ahead and be circumcised also.²² Gordon Rupp considers Karlstadt to be a “Proto-Puritan,” especially in his discussion of the Sabbath.²³

The outlines of Reformation-era Sabbatarian teachings can be discerned from Daniel Liechty’s reconstruction of the teachings of the Anabaptist Sabbatarians. Those teachings included three essential components: first, the Sabbath commandment is a part of the moral law, and Christians were to obey all

¹⁷Martin Luther, “Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments” (1525), in *Luther Works* 40, ed. Conrad Bergendoff (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1958), 83.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁹Sider, 251. The quote is from a work, “*Wie sich der gelaub und unglaub gegen dem liecht und finsternus halten*,” which has no English translation (Basel, 1524); cf. Sider’s, 246-259, work on this topic.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 256. The quotation is from a work that has no English translation, “*Von Manigeltigkeit*,” Civ V-D [Köln 1523].

²¹Sider, 299, 300.

²²Luther, “Against the Heavenly Prophets,” 94.

²³Gordon Rupp, “Andrew Karlstadt and Reformation Puritanism,” *JTS* 10 (1959): 308-326. Rupp moderated his views on Karlstadt in his subsequent volume *Patterns of Reformation*.

of the moral law; second, Saturday is still the Christian Sabbath, having its origins in the word, will, and command of God for the Sabbath was not changed to Sunday by Christ or the apostles, but by Constantine and the pope; and third, the Sabbath should be observed as a rest.²⁴

The issue in this essay has to do with whether Karlstadt's teaching on the Sabbath approximates the elements that came to characterize "Sabbatarianism." It is my hypothesis that his tract does not reflect the concepts of "Sabbatarianism."

*The "Spiritual" Sabbath Distinguished
from the "Physical" Sabbath*

A major organizing theme of the tract distinguishes the spiritual, inner Sabbath from the physical, external Sabbath. The first reason God commanded the Sabbath was a spiritual reason—to honor him and to benefit us. The second reason was a physical reason—out of love for the neighbor. The physical Sabbath provides a day free for rest and leisure, that employees and beasts of burden might "renew their strength and be refreshed."²⁵

The spiritual reason for the Sabbath has to do with becoming holy as God is holy, resting as he did, and letting go of our works so that God may do our work.²⁶ This reason, according to Karlstadt, is spiritual, invisible, and eternal. "We may not, without notable diminishment, stray even by a hair's breadth from the reason for the Sabbath."²⁷ Here is one of Karlstadt's characteristic overstatements. It suggests that any slight deviation from this ideal could be disastrous, yet at the same time he qualifies it by suggesting that straying merely brings "diminishment" and that the amount one strays determines how much diminishment occurs.

²⁴Daniel Liechty, *Sabbatarianism in the Sixteenth Century* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993), 30-39; see, in Liechty, Oswald Glaidt's points numbers 1, 2, 10, 21, 25, 32, 33 and Andreas Fischer's points numbers 1, 2, 10, 11, 14. Not much can be inferred about the actual nature of Anabaptist Sabbath observance. Supposedly, Glaidt's booklet on the Sabbath contained suggestions about how the Sabbath was to be observed. Cf. Richard Greaves, who notes the teaching of the much later English Sabbatarians: (1) the Sabbath commandment was a perpetual moral law; (2) Sunday was the Christian Sabbath and had its origins in a divine appointment, thus (3) the Sunday Sabbath should be observed for the entire day in public and private exercises of religion with no time devoted to labor, idleness, or recreation ("The Origins of English Sabbatarian Thought," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 12/1 (1981): 115.

²⁵"On the Sabbath," 319, 320.

²⁶Ibid., 319 ("[U]nd die werck lassen faren, als er than hat, unnd doch ewiglich Gottes werck in leidender weyß wircken, das Gott unser wircklichkeit on uffhören wircke," *Sabbat-Traktat*, 350). Stupperich, 371, notes that Karlstadt is here quoting the *Theologia Germanica*. Stupperich interprets Karlstadt as saying that the human being is ready to receive for himself God's reality in order to grasp the condition that God is working to achieve.

²⁷"On the Sabbath," 319.

After affirming that the reason for the spiritual Sabbath is focused on faith and the love of God, he argues that “just as little as we are able to shorten faith or ignore God’s love without bringing about our perdition, so little can we ignore God’s Sabbath without condemnation.”²⁸

Apparently Karlstadt means that to the extent that we shorten faith, ignore God’s love, and ignore the Sabbath, we are in greater danger of perdition and condemnation. While it might seem that he places the Sabbath on an equal footing with faith and love, it must be remembered that the Sabbath he is speaking of here is not the external, physical day, but the spiritual experience of resting in God in order to become holy as God is holy. Karlstadt is affirming that resting in God’s provision for salvation instead of seeking to earn it by works is as essential or perhaps even equivalent to faith in Christ and the love of God.

Karlstadt explicitly acknowledges the challenges of integrating his concept of the “spiritual” Sabbath with his concept of the “physical” Sabbath. His first attempt at this states that the physical reason for the Sabbath “must conform to the spirit, i.e., it is to be turned into spiritual rest and must be subject to and serve the first reason.”²⁹ Spiritual rest takes priority over physical rest. The inner spiritual reason for the Sabbath must remain unchanged, while the external forms are merely signs between God and humankind and can be changed; yet they are important, for “they indicate that God alone, not our works, sanctifies humankind.”³⁰

For whom has the Sabbath been commanded? For the whole people of God, Karlstadt answers. This includes both human and angelic creatures. All the commandments apply to all members of the people of God. “All who desire to be saved have been given and commanded the Sabbath.”³¹ But to clarify what he means, Karlstadt immediately follows this statement by applying Rom 6:14 to the believers: “You are no longer under the law, but under grace, for the law soon turns into an external testimony and does not remain a commandment.”³²

It seems probable that Karlstadt quotes Rom 6:14 in order to answer the objection that he is legalistic. But his subsequent explanation is puzzling. Perhaps he means that when the law is put into practice within the believer by the power of the Spirit, it turns into an external testimony of God’s work in the believer’s life and does not remain a merely external commandment. The believer keeps the law externally because it has become internalized within him or her. The law of the letter is transformed by the Spirit into a testimony of God’s grace.

²⁸Ibid., 320.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., 320-321.

³¹Ibid., 321.

³²Ibid. The German text reads, “*do er sagt Gal. ij*” (*Sabbat-Traktat*, 352). The English text places Gal 2:16f. in brackets. The correct allusion is to Rom 6:14: “For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.”

Celebrating the "Spiritual" Sabbath

When it comes to the section of the tract on "How the Sabbath is to be Celebrated," Karlstadt again begins with the spiritual and inner Sabbath. The real rest of Sabbath-keeping consists of "knowing that one cannot attain to any holiness save through Christ and that one ought to be holy as God is holy."³³ Since we are incapable of holiness on our own, we are dependent on God to sanctify us: "When we know truly that God sanctifies through Christ alone, without any work or merit, and when we know and understand that God sanctifies without cost, we are at peace with God and enter into the rest of God."³⁴

The form of the Sabbath is dependent on the spiritual "reason for the Sabbath."³⁵ The person who really understands the spiritual reason will just know what ought to be done on the Sabbath. The inner, spiritual Sabbath will determine the form of the external, physical observance of the Sabbath. Thus Karlstadt can state that "the most direct way of celebrating the Sabbath is to understand in a loving manner the abundant glory of Christ. . . . Christ is the perfection of the Sabbath."³⁶ Thus in Karlstadt's thought, the inner spiritual Sabbath is virtually indistinguishable from an experience with Christ.

Karlstadt connects the "spiritual" Sabbath with the concept of "*gelassenheit*."³⁷ Karlstadt first wrote a tract on this concept in 1520.³⁸ He addressed the topic again in April/May of 1523 with a tract entitled "The Meaning of the Term *Gelassen* and Where in Holy Scripture It is Found." Since it was published only seven or eight months prior to the tract on the Sabbath, it provides an important background to Karlstadt's Sabbath theology.

In Karlstadt's writings, *gelassenheit* has a constellation of meanings, including "surrender," "renunciation," "resignation," and "yieldedness."³⁹ For

³³Ibid., 322.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Gordon Rupp points to mystically inclined authors who influenced Karlstadt's concept of *die Gelassenheit*, including Johann Tauler, Johann von Staupitz, and the author of the *Theologia Germanica* ("Word and Spirit in the First Years of the Reformation," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 49 [1958], 15-16). Karlstadt specifically refers to the *Theologia Germanica* twice in his "Tract on the Supreme Virtue of *Gelassenheit*" (Furcha, *The Essential Karlstadt*, 154, 156). Tauler's influence is certain, since notes in Karlstadt's hand have been found on a copy of one of Tauler's sermons (Hans-Peter Hasse, "Tauler und Augustin als Quelle Karlstadts: am Beispiel von Karlstadts Marginalien zu Taulers Predigt zum Johannistag über Lk 1, 5-23," in *Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt [1486-1541]: Ein Theologe der frühen Reformation*, Hrsg. Sigrid Looss und Markus Matthias [Wittenberg: Drei Kastanien Verlag, 1998], 247-275).

³⁸"Tract on the Supreme Virtue of *Gelassenheit*," 133-168.

³⁹See Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation*, 118, n. 4. Rupp, *ibid.*, suggests that Karlstadt's tracts are the "bridge between the late medieval mystics and the Reformation radicals."

him, it was the epitome of what happens in the human experience when the “I” yields itself to God. For Karlstadt, the focus was on surrendering or yielding up the human will in favor of God’s will. Karlstadt writes: “I must not want to know or find out anything about myself and my own, which I might then hanker after, and I must be so fully immersed in God’s will as to have truly died to self.”⁴⁰

Perhaps part of Karlstadt’s fascination with the Sabbath came from the way he connected *gelassenheit* to the Sabbath. For him to celebrate the inner Sabbath meant that “we must not have our own will, but must let go of our will, and accept and do God’s will.”⁴¹ We must “abandon [*galasse*] our delight [*sic*], will, desires, ways and our own soul and mind and everything that delights us. Instead, we must take on the delight, will, desire, ways, and thoughts of God.”⁴²

Celebrating the Physical Sabbath

When Karlstadt discusses the physical Sabbath, it is in the context of one’s relationships with the neighbor. He says that readers must allow their servants and their beasts of burden the day off to be idle and to celebrate. This is so important that to force a servant to work on the Sabbath is against the will of God. It is an act of violence and tyranny so heinous that it is sufficient cause for the servants to oppose the authority of the master.⁴³

Karlstadt acknowledges that he is as guilty as most other Christians of his day in desecrating the Sabbath.⁴⁴ Karlstadt’s confession suggests that he was advocating a greater strictness than he was practicing. That he could live with a contradiction between his preaching and his practice suggests that he viewed a more careful Sabbath observance as an ideal to strive for, but not a requirement of salvation or of the Christian life. He then details further abuses of the Sabbath that he feels should be corrected. The Christian will work his horses in the fields all week long and then take them out on a joy ride on the Sabbath. Workhorses need a rest too. As a result of this horrible vice of disrespect for God, “our animals are stricken and allowed to die.”⁴⁵ While it is an abuse to force children and servants to work on the feast day, it is better for them to work than to carouse.⁴⁶ “It is better for them to till the field than to

⁴⁰“Tract on the Supreme Virtue of *Gelassenheit*,” 138.

⁴¹“On the Sabbath,” 322.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 322-323 (*Wir müssen “der gelasse seinem willen, begirden, weg und sein eigne seel und gedancken und alles, das yn belustet, und neme an sich den lust, willen, begirden, weg und gedancken gottes,” Sabbat-Traktat*, 353). Furcha’s translation is slightly at variance from Stupperich’s German text.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 324. Stupperich suggests that speaking against the “lords” means to revolt [*aufzulehnen*] against them. Cf. Stupperich, 373.

⁴⁴“On the Sabbath,” 324.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 325.

⁴⁶This is an allusion to Augustine’s “Exposition of Psalm 91,” where Augustine

throw dice, curse, blaspheme, get drunk, fornicate, gossip, ridicule, fight, steal, and murder."⁴⁷ Servants or maids that cook should not be forced to do more work on the Sabbath than they would on another day.⁴⁸

In the midst of these instructions to householders to let their servants rest, Karlstadt states: "How Christians observe this, however, I need not tell you."⁴⁹ The reason for his reticence becomes clear later in the tract, where he tells the servants and maids that they cannot appeal to the Sabbath to get out of work when their masters are in need or face potential loss. In those kinds of situations, the servant is "obligated by God to work on the Sabbath."⁵⁰ The female cooks cannot excuse themselves from the necessary work of keeping the fire going and providing food.⁵¹ There seems to be a contradiction between Karlstadt's insistence that the master give his servants the day off, and his teaching that the servant is obligated to work on the Sabbath anyway. That contradiction is resolved by the distinction between the internal and the external Sabbaths.

Since the external Sabbath is for the benefit of people, the external behavior of Sabbath-keeping is not as important as the welfare of people: "The external celebration has not been commanded so rashly and seriously that work which might benefit another could not be done on the Sabbath, or that we should suffer loss or disaster rather than do an external work."⁵² Therefore, the Christian has the right to break the Sabbath under two conditions. The first has to do with benefitting another, and the second with preventing loss. In an apparent reference to 1 Sam 16:7, Karlstadt says: "God does not look to

discusses Jewish Sabbath observance. He ridicules the lazy, lax, and dissolute rest of the Jews and their involvement in frivolous pursuits on the Sabbath. Speaking of Christians, he says: "We rest from wrongdoing; they [the Jews] rest from good works. It is better to plow than to dance." Augustine then develops the idea that "Our Sabbath is within, in our hearts. . . . A person with a good conscience is tranquil, and this tranquility is itself the Sabbath of the heart" (in *The Works of Saint Augustine*, III, vol. 18, trans. Maria Boulding [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002], 346). Karlstadt's dependence on Augustine's Sabbath conceptions is apparent, but needs further study.

⁴⁷Ibid., 325.

⁴⁸Ibid. See R. Willard Wentland, "The Teaching of Andreas Bodenstein Von Karlstadt on the Seventh-Day Sabbath" (M.A. Thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1947), 28-29, 35. Wentland refers to these paragraphs and suggests that Karlstadt advocated a virtual return to Judaistic Sabbath-keeping. On the contrary, it seems more likely that Karlstadt's tract advocated something closer to the minimal level of Sabbath-keeping that was being taught in his day. There were also many who taught a much stricter Sabbath than Karlstadt did. For a description of medieval Sabbath practice and theology, see Kenneth L. Parker, *The English Sabbath* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), esp. chaps. 2, 8-23.

⁴⁹"On the Sabbath," 325.

⁵⁰Ibid., 330.

⁵¹Ibid., 331.

⁵²Ibid., 327-328.

external things and sacrifices, but to the internal ones.”⁵³ If a person is upright internally, then his external behavior will be right too.⁵⁴

In Karlstadt’s mind, the internal condition of the heart is much more important than any external celebration. God prefers a broken heart to any celebration or work. He has no need of a person’s external leisure. God attends to the inner rest and leisure. If that is honest, then the Christian can stand before God even though there may be no external celebration.⁵⁵ Karlstadt’s readiness to dispense with “external celebration” suggests that he would not have supported the positions advocated by the “Sabbatarians” of later years.

Works of Mercy

Karlstadt’s terminology becomes complicated when it comes to the issue of doing works of mercy on the Sabbath. He acknowledges that one might think that he is endorsing the breaking of the Sabbath. But it is right to break the Sabbath to help another person in need. Then again, “it is impossible for a work of love to break the Sabbath.”⁵⁶ That is because there is a hierarchy of commandments. The command of love is a better and higher command than those that speak of sacrifices, Sabbaths, and similar ceremonies. God prefers the commandment of love and mercy toward the neighbor to the commandment of the Sabbath.⁵⁷

Thus one does not break the Sabbath when one works in situations of need or potential loss. One is merely disregarding the external Sabbath, and in that case, “the external Sabbath is then no longer a Sabbath.”⁵⁸ The priority of the “neighbor” over the external Sabbath becomes clear as Karlstadt tells the servants that if they see a thunderstorm coming and their master’s crop is in danger of being ruined, they ought to harness the horse and help bring it in.⁵⁹ In fact, the master has the right to force his servants to work on the Sabbath if necessity demands it.⁶⁰

⁵³Ibid., 328.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid., 329.

⁵⁷Ibid. Here Karlstadt speaks of the Sabbath as a ceremony. This terminology links the Sabbath to the contingent rituals of the OT. Karlstadt’s use of the terminology suggests the presence of a Thomistic view of the Sabbath. Thomas Aquinas divided the Sabbath commandment into two components, teaching that the requirement for a “particular time” was ceremonial, but the requirement to observe a time for concentration on the things of God was moral (*Summa Theologica* Pt. II-II, Q. 122, Art. 4, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province [New York: Benzinger, 1947], 1701). The Puritan Sabbatarians specifically rejected the division of the Sabbath commandment into ceremonial and moral components.

⁵⁸“On the Sabbath,” 330.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid., 331.

Karlstadt's endorsement of field work on the Sabbath when "necessity demands it" is in contrast to later "Sabbatarians." For example, Nicholas Bownde, the chief exponent of English "Sabbatarianism," taught that when his readers were tempted to harvest a crop on the Sabbath because of threatening weather, they should believe that God will alter the weather and preserve the grain. If he doesn't, he may be punishing them or testing their faith as he tested Job's faith.⁶¹

Karlstadt's position was that a person can break the external Sabbath observance may have been in agreement with the common practice of the people. Kenneth L. Parker describes repeated attempts by medieval ecclesiastical authorities to secure a more stringent Sunday-Sabbath observance, yet they were primarily opposed to Sunday market days, servile labor on the holy day, and tipping, dancing, and other entertainment.⁶² Even the stringent and influential "Epistle on Sunday" from the sixth century made exception for cases of danger and acts of mercy.⁶³ It is surprising, then, that Karlstadt addresses the possibility that one might be criticized for breaking the Sabbath in order to help one's neighbor. In fact, he refers to Paul's apparently anti-Sabbatarian message in Col 2:6-16 to support those who might be criticized.⁶⁴ Not only should one help their neighbor, but the Christian should help themselves (if necessity demands it), rather than celebrate the Sabbath.⁶⁵ The reference to critics of his position makes it clear that Karlstadt's teaching would have been considered too "liberal" in some more conservative circles.⁶⁶

Karlstadt concludes the section on "Works of Mercy" with a cryptic statement about the Spirit's work. It is worth quoting because it bears on the question of Karlstadt's alleged spiritualism: "We ought to help ourselves as well, rather than celebrate, as long as we understand that external leisure prevents God's grace from reaching us and that the spirit of God—who leads people in all things to God—directs and leads everything, although this may

⁶¹Nicholas Bownde, *Sabbatum Veteris et Novi Testamenti* (London: Felix Kyngston, for Thomas Man and John Porter, 1606), 149. Bownde quotes Exod 34:21 to support his position against work during harvest time. For a more complete description of Bownde's teaching, see Edward Allen, "Rest as a Spiritual Discipline" (D.Min. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1991), 180-217.

⁶²Parker, 10-14.

⁶³Ibid., 9-10.

⁶⁴The German text reads "*wie Paulus sagt. Coloss. Ij. (16)*" (*Sabbat-Traktat*, 362). Furcha's translation reads "as Paul says [Col 2:6-16]."

⁶⁵"On the Sabbath," 331.

⁶⁶For example, Erasmus ridicules those who claim "that it is a lesser crime to butcher a thousand men than for a poor man to cobble his shoe on a single occasion on the Lord's day" (Erasmus, *Praise of Folly* [1515], trans. Betty Radice, nn. A. H. T. Levi [London: Penguin 1971], 88-89). Levi's note, 108, says that this interpretation was derived "from the exaggerated application of the scholastic principle that crimes against God have a malice not intrinsic to crimes against men."

appear foolish to carnal people who lack the Spirit."⁶⁷

This sentence has in view two possible scenarios. In the first one, a person whose understanding of the Sabbath was not limited to mere "external leisure" would experience God's grace even though he was "helping himself" on the Sabbath. It might seem to an outside critic that he was "breaking" the Sabbath by not celebrating it, but in reality he is following the leading of the Spirit of God. The person in tune with the Spirit is directed and led in everything. He understands what it means to be led by the "spirit of God."

In contrast, the second scenario envisions a person who understands the Sabbath as merely an "external leisure." That kind of limited view of the Sabbath "prevents God's grace from reaching us," while an understanding of the "spiritual" Sabbath would bring God's grace. The person with the limited, merely external view of the Sabbath would not be in tune with the Spirit of God, their leisure on the Sabbath would not come from the Spirit's leading, and, in fact, they would consider the leading of the Spirit to be mere foolishness.

Apparently Karlstadt feels the need to make this distinction as a defense against his more stringent Sabbath-observing critics. He envisions a situation where one person is "breaking the Sabbath" and another is at leisure. An outside critic would condemn the "Sabbath breaker" and approve of the person observing "external leisure." But their judgment would be in error, for they were not able to distinguish which activities were being done as a result of the leading of the "spirit of God" and which were being done as a part of "external leisure."

Later spiritualistic writers, such as Sebastian Franck, tended to separate the work of the Spirit from the word.⁶⁸ In his other writings, Karlstadt gave the Spirit a significant role in the exegetical task. In his thinking, the Spirit enables one to be obedient to the Word and assures one that the text is from God. The Spirit also reveals the proper interpretation of difficult scriptural passages.⁶⁹ But in this passage there does not appear to be a direct issue of scriptural interpretation. The issue is more a matter of application.⁷⁰ How does one know

⁶⁷"On the Sabbath," 331 ("Sollen uns auch lieber helfen dann feyren, so offt wir versteen, das eüsserliche müßigkeit uns an gottes kunst verhindert, das alles der geist gottes weyßt und leret, der den menschen in allen dingen nach Gott leytet. Wiewol das die fleyschlichen und geistlosen menschen nerrisch dunckt," *Sabbat-Traktat*, 362).

⁶⁸In "A Letter to John Campanus," Sebastian Franck writes from Strassburg in 1531: "I wish, however, that thou wert not so addicted to the letter of Scripture, thus withdrawing thy heart from the teaching of the Spirit, and that thou wouldst not drive out the Spirit of God as though it were Satan, crowding him against his will into the script and making Scripture thy god. . . . Thou shouldst not believe and accept something [merely] reported by Scripture—and feel that the God of thy heart must yield to Scripture" (*Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, eds. George H. Williams and Angel M. Mergal [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957], 159). See Sider, 205-206; and Walter Klaassen, "Spiritualization in the Reformation," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 37 (1963): 67-77.

⁶⁹Sider, 276-277.

⁷⁰Stupperich, 370-371, argues that Karlstadt has a spiritualistic understanding of the

what work must be done out of necessity on the Sabbath? How does one know when to “break the Sabbath and put it off to help our neighbor?”⁷¹ How could one do that in the face of potential criticism of one’s actions? How does one discern whether they should “break the Sabbath” or remain at leisure? Karlstadt’s answer to each of these questions is that the Spirit of God will direct and lead you.

This is a kind of spiritualism that presupposes the Scriptures and the Spirit’s guidance in interpreting Scripture. It doesn’t separate Spirit and Word, rather it is Karlstadt’s answer to the tendency toward casuistry. Rather than giving a whole list of detailed rules about Sabbath observance, he simply leaves it to the Spirit to apply the principles to the individual situation. This fits with his earlier statement that a person who spiritually rests in God will simply do what ought to be done.⁷² Thus Karlstadt’s spiritualism is not a threat to the principle of *sola Scriptura*. Rather it is a threat to a rule-oriented approach to Sabbath celebration.

The Slave and Lord of the Sabbath

Karlstadt next seeks to clarify the relationship of the inner, spiritual Sabbath to the external, physical Sabbath. He uses a pattern that appears to be influenced by Luther’s treatise on “The Freedom of a Christian.” Luther’s organizing principles were two seemingly contradictory statements:

A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.

A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.⁷³

Luther’s solution to the contradiction focuses on the distinction between the spiritual and bodily nature in “man.” The spiritual, inner, new “man” is lord of all the external world. He is free from all things. The carnal, outward, old “man” is the servant of all. The Christian has both “men” within himself in a way that he willingly is the servant of all yet remains inwardly free of all.⁷⁴

In his tract on the Sabbath, Karlstadt apparently uses Luther’s scheme with reference to the Sabbath. He says that “human beings are both slave and lord of the Sabbath.”⁷⁵ The spiritual, inner Sabbath is lord over humankind because God is lord over humankind and it is he that sanctifies the soul. The person who rests in and expects holiness from God acknowledges that the Sabbath is

Bible. Karlstadt does use spiritualistic language and concepts from the *Theologia Germanica*, but he does not set the Spirit in opposition to the Bible in the way that Franck did.

⁷¹“On the Sabbath,” 331.

⁷²Ibid., 322.

⁷³Martin Luther, *Selected Writings of Martin Luther*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 20.

⁷⁴Ibid., 34.

⁷⁵“On the Sabbath,” 332.

Lord and that he or she is a servant of the Sabbath.⁷⁶

However, the external, physical Sabbath exists for humankind. It is lower than the inner Sabbath, serving the inner Sabbath when needed. Karlstadt says that “We stand between both Sabbaths, under the spiritual and invisible and above the physical and perceptible—servant of the higher and lord of the lower.”⁷⁷

After an extended treatment of the point, he concludes: “It is not always good for [the inner being] to be bound to time and place, wherefore, God set him above all external Sabbaths.”⁷⁸ Thus, in Karlstadt’s way of thinking, the literal, physical, weekly Sabbath is of less consequence than the inner, spiritual Sabbath.

Karlstadt’s Sabbath Discipline

When Karlstadt returns to the question of what a person is to do on the Sabbath, his answer reveals more of his mystical inclinations than it does a “program” for Sabbath observance. The way he forms this question has to do with how to “pass the long time or [overcome] boredom.”⁷⁹ The question implies a quietistic Sabbath where the person observing it not only avoids work, but does little else. A quietistic Sabbath does not seem to fit with Karlstadt’s teaching about doing works of necessity and mercy on the Sabbath because he has thus far focused on what work is permissible under what circumstances.

Karlstadt now addresses what he envisions to be the discipline of Sabbath observance:

We ought to be idle, do nothing, and endure the long time. The Sabbath has been instituted for the spirit to reach a point of boredom and learn something during the idle time.

For idleness and getting bored is a spiritual circumcision and preparation to receive God’s work, since boredom and ennui drive out human desires.⁸⁰

The discipline here described seems extreme. But its purpose is to act as a sort of “spiritual circumcision” that apparently cuts away the human will and puts God’s will in its place—a concept similar to Karlstadt’s use of self-surrender or resignation (*gelassenheit*).⁸¹ He also says that idleness and boredom have the

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid. (“*Auch ist im nit stets gut, gebunden sein an zeit oder stedt, der wegen hat in Gott über allen eüsserlichen Sabbat gesetz*,” *Sabbat-Traktat*, 363).

⁷⁹Ibid. (“*für die lange zeit oder lange weyl thun sol*,” *Sabbat-Traktat*, 363).

⁸⁰Ibid. (“*Der mensch sol müßig steen, nichts thun und die lange zeit leiden. Wann der Sabbat ist derhalben yngesetzt, das der geist in langweyligkeit komme und etwas in seiner langen zeit lerne. Dann langweyligkeit und verdrieff der zeit ist ein geistliche beschneydung und bereytung, zu entspfahen gottess wercke, alle weyl verdrieff und die langweyleigkeit der creaturen lusten außstreybet*,” *Sabbat-Traktat*, 363).

⁸¹A modern Jewish psychoanalytical parallel to Karlstadt’s idea is found in Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Particulars of Rapture* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 233-237.

specific purpose of preparing one “to receive God’s work, since boredom and ennuï drive out human desires.”⁸² God’s work is described in the next paragraph in terms of cleansing and sanctifying.

Rupp suggests that Karlstadt’s Sabbath discipline of idleness and boredom has its roots in the mystical tradition. He finds in this passage a set of technical terms for a mystical “‘plan of salvation’ about which we have only intriguing hints.”⁸³ In Rupp’s translation, boring idleness, and ennuï [*langweyligkeit und verdriß der zeit*] are the “Waiting Time” and the “Passing of Time,” and he suggests that a reader attuned to mystical terminology would understand what Karlstadt meant by these terms.⁸⁴

Karlstadt’s expression of his Sabbath discipline was evidently meaningful and attractive to him. It is clear that he has a positive assessment of boredom. Thus it is probable that behind his words are mystical ideas that need further explanation. As an example of what those ideas might have been, Michael Raposa describes positive assessment of boredom in his book, *Boredom and the Religious Imagination*, suggesting that boredom can have a positive religious significance.⁸⁵ It is preparation for a detachment from “external” matters and preparation for union with God. Clearly, the mystical terms Karlstadt uses deserve further study to determine whether he was merely using the terminology, transforming the concepts, or was actually using mystical conceptions.

Regardless, Karlstadt’s concept of the ideal Sabbath seems to place him among the most extreme advocates of the Sabbath. He wrote: “It would be good if on a Sabbath we were to put our head in our hands, bow down, and acknowledge our misfortune and weakness with great sorrow; thus we should rush more quickly to the One (who alone cleanses and sanctifies).”⁸⁶ Mitigating the apparent extremity of these words is the fact that Karlstadt’s statement is not a command. He does not lay down a rule or requirement, but merely describes what he thinks would be a good idea. It fits with his ideas of *gelassenheit*. Above all, it is theological. The purpose of bowing down in confession and sorrow is to encourage the believer to rush more quickly to

Zornberg, 235, states: “Shabbat is the very enactment of ‘vacancy’—of ‘not-doing,’ of an apparent lethargy. In the ‘empty time’ of Shabbat, the question of the wilderness comes to its sharpest expression: ‘What does one want to do with one’s time?’ In its earliest form, therefore, Shabbat is a paradoxical gift—bittersweet, curing the bitterness with bitterness.”

⁸²“On the Sabbath,” 333.

⁸³Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation*, 127. Stupperich, 372, supports the idea that Karlstadt’s system can be called a late blooming of German mysticism.

⁸⁴Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation*, 127, 129.

⁸⁵Michael Raposa, *Boredom and the Religious Imagination* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999).

⁸⁶“On the Sabbath,” 333 (“Gut wer es, das einer am Sabbat seinen kopff in die handt neme und sich nider druckte und seine unseligkeit und gebresten mit schmerzzen erkennet, dann also würd er dester geschwinder zu dem (der allein rein unnd heylig machet) zu eylen,” *Sabbat-Traktat*, 363).

God. Karlstadt's Sabbath discipline is designed to prepare a person for contact with "the One" who works within his life to cleanse and sanctify him.

In fact, the theme of God's work in contrast to human work runs through Karlstadt's entire tract.⁸⁷ Immediately following the seemingly extreme and morose paragraph on the Sabbath discipline quoted above, Karlstadt expands on this contrast: "God forbids human beings to work on the Sabbath [Ex. 20:10]" because "our works impede God's work." Rather than working, we are to "remain surrendered [*in der gelassenbeyt bleiben müssen*]." The human part of Sabbath observance is to do nothing but suffer. And when one's limit of suffering is reached, "God's spirit will fill you with his work."⁸⁸

Karlstadt sees a theological reason for the stricture against human work on the Sabbath. The Christian is not saved by his or her own works. The believer needs to renounce his or her own works and rest rather in God's sanctifying work. The Sabbath then becomes a sign that the believer is saved and sanctified not by his or her own works, but by God's.

The Day of Celebration

Karlstadt relates his ideas on Sabbath observance to three contexts: mystical terminology, the Ten Commandments, and a view of salvation by God's works and not by human works.

How closely does Karlstadt tie these conceptions of Sabbath observance to an actual day of the week? Karlstadt devotes an entire section of his treatise to "Which Day of the Week Must Be Celebrated."⁸⁹ His opening idea is that the commandment envisions six days of labor, with the seventh off. He notes that God doesn't specify in the commandment that Sunday or Saturday must be kept. So the master and his servants must celebrate the Sabbath on the seventh day after the servants have worked for six days.⁹⁰ The householder ought to be able to "select and set the seventh day as he pleases."⁹¹ He notes that this only applies to the external Sabbath. When it comes to the spiritual Sabbath, "then every day is a Sabbath and one Sabbath flows from the other. . . . [W]e must therefore keep all days holy and be without work on every working day and

⁸⁷ It is first evident in the second section ("On the Sabbath," 319). "The Sabbath has been instituted that we might become holy as God is holy and rest like him by letting go of our works as he did and yet perform God's work in a passive manner for eternity, so that God may do our work without ceasing" ("Demnach ist der Sabbat von Gott ingesetzt, das wir begeren heylig zu werden, als Gott heylig ist, und rugen als er, unnd die werck lassen faren, als er than hat, unnd doch ewiglich Gottes werck in leidender weyß wircken, das Gott unser wirklichkeit on uffhören wircke") (*Sabbat-Traktat*, 350). See also the idea of the Sabbath as a "work of faith" ("On the Sabbath," 325-326).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 333.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 334.

experience tranquility [*gelassenhey*] and ennui."⁹²

Karlstadt does not tie the external Sabbath to a specific day of the week. He does not see that as part of the commandment. Neither does he connect it with the resurrection. His mention of the preaching of the Word is in connection with the fact that preaching would be disrupted if each household had its own Sabbath.

Karlstadt and Luther have virtually identical positions in terms of their relationship to the literal day of worship. The administration of the Eucharist as a Sabbath discipline does not seem important to either Karlstadt or Luther. Like Karlstadt, Luther taught that "in itself no one day is better than another."⁹³ Luther also taught that "we Christians should make every day a holy day and give ourselves only to holy activities."⁹⁴

As an apparent aside, Karlstadt mentions that "It is no secret that human beings instituted Sunday."⁹⁵ By that, he meant that Sunday was based on human ecclesiastical authority and not on the authority of Scripture. This was a commonly accepted position. Aquinas taught that "In the New Law the observance of the Lord's day took the place of the observance of the Sabbath, not by virtue of the precept but by the institution of the Church and the custom of Christian people."⁹⁶ John Eck wrote in his *Enchiridion of Commonplaces Against Luther and Other Enemies of the Church* that there is no warrant in Scripture for a change from Saturday to Sunday. He argued that the church had changed the day to Sunday.⁹⁷ The Augsburg Confession sought to refute the Catholic use of this argument, asserting that the change had scriptural warrant.⁹⁸

⁹²Ibid. ("So man in usserlich ansycht. Wann aber die usserliche deck uffgehoben und in den geistlichen sabbat gesehen, würden alle tag sabbaten sein und ein sabbat usß dem andern sßessen, dann ye meer sich der mensch in geistlichem feyr übet, ye meer sabbaten folgen und einer usß dem andern kommet. Dann warumb der mensch bedarff gottes heyligkeit alle tag und stund, darumb muß er den Sabbat alle tag heyligen und al tag werckloß seyn und in der gelassenheit und langweyligkeit steen, wie obgemelt ist," *Sabbat-Traktat*, 364).

⁹³Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism* [1529], trans. Robert H. Fischer (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 20.

⁹⁴Ibid., 21.

⁹⁵"On the Sabbath," 333.

⁹⁶Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* Pt. II-II, Q. 122, Art. 4.

⁹⁷John Eck, *Enchiridion of Commonplaces Against Luther and Other Enemies of the Church*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 13, 101-102, 126. Eck, 101, says that the "Sabbath is manifoldly commanded by God [Gen 2:3; Exod 20:9f.; Num 15:32f.] and neither in the Gospel nor in Paul is it set forth that the Sabbath was to cease. Nevertheless the Church established the Lord's Day through the traditions of the apostles without Scripture."

⁹⁸"Augsburg Confession Part II, Article VII," in *The Creeds of Christendom*, 6th rev. ed., ed. Philip Schaff, David S. Schaff (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 3: 64-70. It continues: "For they that think that the observation of the Lord's day was appointed by the authority of the Church, instead of the Sabbath, as necessary, are greatly deceived.

After his statement on Sunday, Karlstadt notes: "As for Saturday, the matter is still being debated."⁹⁹ We know nothing about this debate. Evidently Karlstadt was open to the possibility that Saturday was the more "proper" day upon which to celebrate the Sabbath. But as noted above, he would not have felt it was obligatory. The issue of the "proper" day was part of the external Sabbath and human beings are lord of the external Sabbath. This suggests that even if Karlstadt had been convinced that Saturday was the more "proper" day, he would not have felt he must observe the Sabbath on Saturday.

Karlstadt himself is clear about the fact that "you must celebrate on the seventh day and allow your servants to celebrate whenever they have worked for six days."¹⁰⁰ From the context, it is clear that the seven-day period of time he has in mind is not tied to the weekly cycle. What he means is that after any six days of work on any of the days of the week, the seventh day should be celebrated as a Sabbath. In fact, the householder can "select and set the seventh day as he pleases."¹⁰¹

Karlstadt's Final Observations

Karlstadt then contrasts the "lower" earthly Sabbath with the "higher" heavenly Sabbath. The earthly Sabbath is characterized by fear and bitter resignation [*gelassenheit*], while the heavenly Sabbath is characterized by "total love, complete rest, and nothing but inexpressible, heavenly, eternal joy and freedom."¹⁰² The earthly Sabbath is a promise and an indication of the bright, shining, and eternal Sabbath to come.

In conclusion, Karlstadt ties the Sabbath to God's mercy. Daily work is the result of Adam's sin. It ages people and leads to death: "It would not be unreasonable for God to do away with us and kill us through work."¹⁰³ But God shows his love and mercy toward humanity by issuing the commandment of the Sabbath. Humanity is to work only six days and have the seventh to "revive and strengthen ourselves and restore our exhausted strength."¹⁰⁴

Returning to the use of mystical terminology, Karlstadt says that the boredom, tedium, and ennui are good for those who are strong, well able to work, and, in fact, greatly delight in work. The Sabbath breaks their delight and makes sure that they think about their sinfulness. The Sabbath is not to be turned into pleasure. The idleness of the Sabbath was imposed on humanity "to

The Scripture, which teacheth that all the Mosaical ceremonies can be omitted after the Gospel is revealed, had abrogated the Sabbath."

⁹⁹"On the Sabbath," 333.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 334.

¹⁰²Ibid., 335.

¹⁰³Ibid., 337.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

make the Sabbath also a day of renunciation, sadness, and tribulation."¹⁰⁵

Karlstadt appends to this dark and gloomy view of the Sabbath one sentence about forgiveness: "Never forget that the Sabbath includes forgiveness of sins, for we cannot be sanctified and enter into God's forgiveness before we obtain forgiveness of sins."¹⁰⁶ It sounds like Karlstadt was so caught up with his mystical concepts that he himself almost forgot about forgiveness. Besides that, this sentence is not a very clear nor integrated statement of forgiveness. How does one obtain forgiveness? How does it relate to reflection on one's evil will? Do "idle ennui" and "boring idleness" provide opportunity for more than morose meditation?

Karlstadt and "Sabbatarianism"

Did Karlstadt advocate ideas that were later labeled "Sabbatarianism"? Karlstadt did assume the perpetual character of the moral law and included the Sabbath as part of that law. He was in agreement with the first aspect of "Sabbatarianism." Yet he did not tie the physical Sabbath to a specific day. By separating the spiritual, internal Sabbath from the physical, external Sabbath, he gave priority to the spiritual Sabbath at the expense of the physical Sabbath. Thus he did not see a specific day, either Saturday or Sunday, as a command of God, the second aspect of Sabbatarianism. When it comes to the third aspect, Karlstadt did advocate specific practices of Sabbath observance. Using mystical terminology, he encouraged a discipline of self-reflection and self-renunciation. But he did not advocate a Sabbath with rules concerning what should and should not be done. His ideal Sabbath discipline was complete idleness, and it is entirely possible that he was not seriously advocating it as a regular practice for most people.

Thus on this issue, as on the issue of adult baptism, Karlstadt stood in a no man's land between strongly stated and competing ideas.¹⁰⁷ On the one hand, Luther and Rupp see Karlstadt's discussion of the Sabbath discipline as evidence not only of his "Sabbatarianism," but of an incipient legalism.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, "Sabbatarians" would view his concepts of the Sabbath as inadequate. They would agree with him that the Sabbath is part of the moral law and they would resonate with some of what he says about the Sabbath discipline, although they would probably want to distance themselves from

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 338. Karlstadt believed that "All pleasure is sin. . . . The nature of our pleasure prevents us from knowing God and his divine works" ("The Meaning of the Term *Gelassen*," in *The Essential Karlstadt: Fifteen Tracts*, trans. and ed. E. J. Furcha [Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995], 139).

¹⁰⁶"On the Sabbath," 338.

¹⁰⁷He opposed infant baptism, but, at the same time, he did not require the re-baptism of adults. See Pater, *Karlstadt as the Father of the Baptist Movements*, 110-113.

¹⁰⁸Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation*, 130. Rupp, *ibid.*, states that "In the end Karlstadt's Sabbath is under the sign of the Law rather than of the Gospel."

Karlstadt's mystical conceptions of Sabbath boredom and ennui. They would not agree with his principles for deciding what was necessary work, and they would be disappointed that he did not believe that God had appointed one day or another as the Christian Sabbath.¹⁰⁹

Luther's reaction to Karlstadt's whole theology was virulent. He saw Karlstadt as returning to a works-righteousness because of the positive role he had for the law. Karlstadt's Sabbath tract came in for particular ridicule. According to Luther, the Ten Commandments have two ceremonial laws: those concerning images and the Sabbath. He expresses gratefulness to Paul and Isaiah for freeing Christians from factious spirits like Karlstadt.¹¹⁰ Otherwise:

We should have to sit through the sabbath day with "head in hand" awaiting the heavenly voice, as they would delude us. Yes, if Karlstadt were to write more about the sabbath, even Sunday would have to give way, and the sabbath, that is, Saturday, would be celebrated. He would truly make us Jews in all things, so that we also would have to be circumcised, etc.¹¹¹

Luther exaggerates Karlstadt's spiritualism and his position on the law. Karlstadt says nothing about waiting for a heavenly voice. He affirms the continuity of the moral law, but circumcision is not part of the moral law. It is not necessarily true that if one were to follow Karlstadt's ideas, they would come to Saturday celebration. Luther's comment, soaked with sarcasm, is not a serious description of Karlstadt's position.

Within five years of the publication of the tract, a group of Anabaptists in Moravia began to observe a Saturday Sabbath. While there is no evidence of a direct connection between Karlstadt's tract and this movement, there is a possibility that Karlstadt's tract may have had some influence. We know that Karlstadt's German writings were second only to Luther's in terms of popularity in the years leading up to 1525.¹¹² Balthazar Hubmaier was an avid reader of Karlstadt's works.¹¹³ When Hubmaier fled to Moravia, one of his

¹⁰⁹Having focused on one question in relation to this tract, it is apparent that other issues would provide fruitful study. How does Karlstadt use Jesus' teaching and example, as well as other scriptural passages? How does his use of the categories of "interior" and "exterior" relate to his use of the same categories in his discussion of images, the Lord's Supper, and baptism? Does he use these categories consistently in dealing with all four of these major doctrinal issues? How does Karlstadt's use of these categories relate to their use in the *Theologia Germanica*?

¹¹⁰Martin Luther, "Against the Heavenly Prophets," 93.

¹¹¹Ibid., 94.

¹¹²Mark U. Edwards Jr., *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 26-27. Luther had 1,465 total printings and reprintings of German editions between 1518 and 1525. Karlstadt had 125. After him came Urbanus Rhegius with 77, Philip Melancton with 71, and Ulrich Zwingli with 70.

¹¹³Pater, *Karlstadt as the Father of the Baptist Movements*, 134, 143, 150, 167, 236, 248. Hans J. Hillerbrand, "The Origin of Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism: Another Look," *Archive für Reformationsgeschichte* 53 (1962): 167. Hillerbrand quotes Hubmaier as saying

associates was Oswald Glaidt. Glaidt was the founder of the group that began to keep the seventh-day Sabbath in Moravia.¹¹⁴

Karlstadt himself only mentions the Sabbath once more, and that in a refutation of Luther's "Against the Heavenly Prophets." Luther attacked him for speaking about "external matters," such as the Sabbath. Karlstadt responds that Paul, Moses, and Christ himself spoke about such matters.¹¹⁵ He also uses the Sabbath as an illustration of the "hidden meaning of the law." "Those who truly understood the Sabbath were the lords of the Sabbath and had genuine freedom."¹¹⁶ As far as the record exists, these are the only subsequent references to the Sabbath in Karlstadt's writings. The Sabbath was not one of Karlstadt's major focuses and his connection to the Sabbath movement in Moravia is improbable and at best indirect.

The Anabaptist "Sabbatarianism" that arose shortly after Karlstadt's period of theological activity included three aspects. All three aspects were essential for a "Sabbath" experience to occur. At best, Karlstadt was only one third of a "Sabbatarian." He accepted the Sabbath as part of the law that had ongoing validity. But since he did not believe any particular day was of divine command, there was no way a Sabbath culture could develop. And since he did not advocate a program of positive and negative Sabbath disciplines and, in fact, he idealized idleness, it was unlikely that a positive Sabbath practice could develop from his ideas.

At best, Karlstadt saw the Sabbath as an optional spiritual discipline. It is possible that Karlstadt's tract influenced Anabaptists by raising the issue of Sabbath observance. While rejecting Karlstadt's emphasis on the inner spiritual

that Karlstadt's writings were instrumental in having him "proclaim from the roof-tops what he formerly had to keep in his heart."

¹¹⁴Werner O. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 103-105. George Hunston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992), 333-334. Gerhard F. Hasel, "Sabbatarian Anabaptists of the Sixteenth Century," *AUSS* 5 (1967): 101-121. The seventh-day Sabbatarian Anabaptists Glaidt and Fisher appear to be familiar with Karlstadt's writings on the Sabbath. They oppose Karlstadt's emphasis on the Sabbath's so-called "spiritual" nature. See Glaidt's points number 26 and 33 and Fisher's point 26 (Liechty, 32). Fisher writes: "You cannot be constantly separating the 'inner' from the 'outer.' Therefore, the 'Sabbath of faith' must be seen as allegory and does not mean at all that the Sabbath should not be held externally"(cited in Liechty, 39). Glaidt and Fisher also deny Luther's charge that they are legalists. See Glaidt's point number 17 (where he says that no one would argue "that simply to refrain from murder is an attempt to achieve salvation on the basis of 'works'"); and Fisher's point 6 (where he affirms that "Faith in Christ does not abolish the law (Romans 3:31) but rather through Christ we are able to uphold the law. This includes the Sabbath") (Liechty, 31, 37).

¹¹⁵Karlstadt, "Several Main Points of Christian Teaching," 349-350.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 375.

Sabbath and also rejecting his unwillingness to commit to a Sabbath observance on a particular day of the week, it is possible that some Anabaptists in Moravia followed Karlstad's insistence on the continuity of the moral law and decided that the observance of a particular Sabbath day was not an optional spiritual discipline, but a command of God. They went even further and chose to require the observance of the Sabbath day on Saturday. Nonetheless, Karlstadt's own Sabbath tract does not advocate ideas that can be characterized as Sabbatarian.

“MY SOUL IS ON THE WING FOR GLORY”: ADVENTIST SPIRITUALITY, 1850–1863

BEVERLY BEEM
Walla Walla College
College Place, Washington

GINGER HANKS HARWOOD¹
La Sierra University
Riverside, California

My soul is on the wing for glory. I long to reflect the image of the Lord Jesus. O when shall I be made like him, perfect, as my Father which is in Heaven. . . . His promises are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus, and if I do not claim them all and go on my way rejoicing it is my own fault. O may the Lord prepare me for every good word and work, and eventually save me with that blessed company who have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb.²

This brief excerpt taken from an 1853 letter submitted to *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, the communication vehicle of the Sabbatarian post-Disappointment Adventists, captures the essence of their spiritual aesthetic.³ United by a passionate belief in the soon coming of Christ and the seventh-day Sabbath, these believers shared an experience of God’s transforming presence that was as central to their commitment to the Advent movement as any specific doctrine or ritual practice.⁴ These were individuals who had experienced revival-religion conversion: they knew conviction of sinfulness and the joyous relief that accompanied acceptance by God. This experiential knowledge motivated them to organize their lives around achieving union with God, whatever the personal cost.

The *Review’s* publication of individual and group spiritual experience forms the subject matter for this study of early Adventist spirituality because early Adventist experience shines out through the letters, the testimonies, and the articles featured there. The pages of the *Review* provide what Mary Frohlich calls “the material object—the actual, concrete things we study when we study spirituality.”⁵ While the *Review* contains extensive doctrinal studies, the reader

¹The authors wish to acknowledge with thanks the generosity and support of the Faculty Grants Committee of Walla Walla College.

²R. B. Wheeler, “From Sister Wheeler,” *Review and Herald*, August 4, 1853, 47.

³The name of this journal, originally called *The Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* and now called *Adventist Review*, has over the years been familiarly known as the *Review*, the name by which it shall be referred to in this article.

⁴While these individuals would eventually form the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in the period between the failure of William Miller’s millennial predictions in 1844 and formal organization in 1863, they were simply Sabbatarian Adventists, believing that the Advent of Christ was near and that the date, October 22, 1844, held prophetic significance.

⁵Mary Frohlich, “Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality: Revisiting Questions of Definition and Method,” *Spiritus: Journal of Christian Spirituality* 1 (2001): 71.

can find the evidences of lived Christian life (spiritual experience) interspersed among the theological arguments and business reports. The excerpts from these faith experiences reveal early Adventists' spiritual landscapes and journey.

*Christian Spirituality: Toward an
Understanding of the Topic*

While there are many definitions of Christian spirituality, most focus on the individual experience of the presence of God and the transformations of consciousness and lifestyle that result from that encounter. Spiritual knowledge is experiential and provides a way to organize and respond to all other types of information and events. As William Stringfellow notes: "Whatever else may be affirmed about a spirituality which has a biblical precedent and style, spiritual maturity or spiritual fulfillment necessarily involves the *whole* person—body, mind and soul, place, relationships—in connection with the whole of creation throughout the era of time."⁶ Stressing a lived experience of connection or communion with the transcendent rather than cognitive assent to a theologically orthodox belief set, the various definitions suggest ways to appreciate the interior spiritual world that can accompany religious faith. The landscape of the spiritual realm possesses its own geography, landmarks, places and spaces to explore, its own rhythm and cadence, laws and graces. Familiarity with this reality depends jointly on God's grace and individual spiritual vision and commitment to devote the time required to explore the territory.

Frohlich points out that "lived spirituality is an ongoing dynamic activity in which individuals and groups create and recreate meaning, joy, and shared life from whatever materials are at hand. It is always a bricolage (a patching together, a creative reinterpretation, a claiming-as-one's-own) of a somewhat happenstance conglomeration of elements from nature, historical accident, and established traditions."⁷ Borrowing from the work of de Certeau, Frohlich asserts "lived spirituality is basically tactical rather than strategic," in its task to creatively organize the material at hand in a spiritually meaningful manner. "To say that lived spirituality is tactical rather than strategic is to say that it is more a 'making do' than a 'controlling' or 'grasping'; it has more in common with managing to survive in the thick of a wilderness than with flying over that wilderness pointing out the sights."⁸

If spirituality is, in fact, as suggested by Alister McGrath, "the quest for a fulfilled and authentic religious life, involving the bringing together of the ideas distinctive of that religion and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of that religion,"⁹ then Seventh-day Adventist spirituality

⁶William Stringfellow, *The Politics of Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 22.

⁷Frohlich, 68.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Alister McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 2.

is ultimately the experience of living out (in the face of eschatological delay) the conviction that now is the time to prepare for eternal life in God’s presence.

Early Seventh-day Adventist spirituality arose out of a specific set of religious expectations, practices, and experiences, and reflected both the joy of personal experience with the transforming grace of God’s presence and the angst of uncertainty that accompanied participation in the millennial disappointment. In this paper, we examine the critical events shaping early Adventist spiritual experience, the religious roots and traditions that informed the life of the proto-Adventist Church, and the way in which an idiosyncratic Seventh-day Adventist spirituality (Frohlich’s experiential world of “meaning, joy and shared life”) was constructed in the mid-nineteenth century.

Critical Events Shaping Seventh-day Adventist Spirituality

At least three major shaping events can be identified for the initial members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church: the effect of the Great Awakenings on the American religious context,¹⁰ William Miller’s prophetic interpretation heralding the imminent Second Advent,¹¹ and the Great Disappointment of 1844.¹² Each of these historical events supplied material for the Adventist spiritual bricolage.

The Second Great Awakening

The American spiritual awakenings reflected the growing disillusionment with a society unleashed from Divine imperatives and mandates, and formal religious

¹⁰For a helpful examination and discussion of the major American awakenings, see William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

¹¹William Miller understood the prophecy of Dan 8:14, which speaks of “two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings,” to point to the return of Christ sometime between March 21, 1843, and October 22, 1844. Millerism, the adoption of his interpretation of the biblical passage, has been extensively researched and documented. David Rowe’s work is helpful for understanding the movement (*Thunder and Trumpets: Millerites and Dissenting Religion in Upstate New York, 1800-1850* [Chico, CA.: Scholars Press, 1985]). Edwin Scott Gaustad, ed. offers a valuable bibliography of the movement (*The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth Century America* [New York: Harper and Row, 1974]). Isaac C. Wellcome offers an insider’s view of the phenomenon (*History of the Second Advent Message and Mission, Doctrine and People* [Yarmouth, ME: I. C. Wellcome, 1874]); see also Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller Generally Known as a Lecturer on the Prophecies, and the Second Coming of Christ Jesus* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1835).

¹²The failure of Christ to return as predicted on October 22, 1844, became known as the Great Disappointment to people within the Advent movement. See Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler, eds., *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). For a view of the lasting effects of Millerism and the Great Disappointment on the shaping of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, see Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1944).

observances that satisfied social ideas of religious duty without significantly altering the interior experience of the individual. While trans-Atlantic in nature, fed by Anglican as well as German pietism and influenced by the radical dissenters,¹³ the American Awakenings gave rise to a distinctive response to the emphasis on interior religion. One public venue for the cultivation of this religious impulse was the revival meeting. At these meetings, individuals gathered to participate in a dynamic spiritual exchange focused on common spiritual realities and needs. In its emotionally charged atmosphere, believers, including Anglicans, Quakers, Mennonites, and Baptists, men and women of European, African, and Native American ancestry, “melted” under the force of spiritual power. At the meetings, sins were repented of and salvation sought, while preachers pressed home the necessity of heart religion. In the personal and corporate revival, many perceived the hand of God on the world, and bands of Christians explored ways to realize God’s kingdom in their daily lives. Transformed hearts could lead to a revolution in social ethics as spiritual insight and power were harnessed to build the New Jerusalem.¹⁴

While interdenominational in nature, the revival format encouraged a whole-person response to the gospel: songs were lively, prayers intense, the preaching theatrical, and audience participation expected as the Spirit moved through the meeting. The meetings were designed to stimulate individual spiritual crisis and evoke a personal appropriation of the grace of God.¹⁵ In a religious style very appropriate to Jacksonian American sensibilities, contact between God and the individual was direct and unmediated by formal institutions, hierarchies, or organizationally mandated rituals or sacraments.¹⁶ Penitents wrestled with the Spirit, and converted individuals stood in the presence and glory of God. God met “man” at the mourners’ bench. In short, direct contact with the power and presence of God (through the Holy Spirit) was as available and accessible to the common person as to the cleric or

¹³See Richard Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790-1865* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1978); for a discussion of these influences, see also B. W. Ball, *The English Connection: The Puritan Roots of Seventh-day Adventist Belief* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1981).

¹⁴McLoughlin, 128-130, traces the connection between the stress placed on human ability to change and remake behavior, the obligation of the regenerate to advance God’s will on earth, and the social perfectionism that fueled reform movements in the early nineteenth century.

¹⁵Charles Grandison Finney, the master of the revival format, was clear that his success came from the stimulation of emotions: “Mankind will not act unless they are excited. . . . Men are so sluggish, there are so many things to lead their minds off from religion and to oppose the influence of the gospel that it is necessary to raise an excitement among them till the tide rises so high as to sweep away the opposing obstacles” (cited in McLoughlin, 125-126).

¹⁶For a helpful discussion of this link between American cultural sensibility and the religious movements, see Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

religious virtuoso. The personal encounter with the Divine was an expected, and even mandatory, part of the spiritual experience.

William Miller and Apocalyptic Prophecy

William Miller's reading of biblical eschatological passages added an additional twist to the religious sensibilities of the early nineteenth century. Christ was returning soon; earthly life was about to pass away, and each individual would stand before God's judgment seat. The impending advent shifted attention to the spiritual dimension of life. Now was the time to make the decision that would seal one's eternal fate. There would be no later opportunity to get ready to meet God. The announcement stimulated renewed interest in biblical prophecy and questions of sanctification and one's relationship to God and neighbor.

Miller's proclamation of the "Advent Near," Christ's soon return, created a climate of urgency and intensity. In light of this great impending event, resources were liquidated to finance tracts and preachers to spread the warning; social, religious, and familial relations were strained by the urgency to believe in the Advent Near; and professions and preparations for careers were abandoned in the pursuit of perfect readiness to stand before the Judge of the universe. Both the level of spiritual intensity and sense of urgency separated the Adventists from their fellow Christians.¹⁷

The suggestion that the great chasm dividing earth and heaven was about to be dissolved released believers from the yoke of inevitability that bound their lives to conventional understandings of their possibilities and place within the given order of things. It allowed individuals to recognize their deepest longings for union with God. That God was about to change everything legitimated individuals' interior distress with daily experiences in the humanly constructed world and created a desire for an alternate experience. The belief in the Advent Near created a new world where earthly forms were relativized in face of the grand reality of God's redemption. In this new world, attention focused on spiritual goals and eternal destiny: the new order irrupted into reality as the spiritually hungry were fed and the naked were clothed. Pain and alienation were being removed from human experience as God reconciled and reunited the children of Adam. Once unleashed, this transforming power would not be stopped until everything was conformed to God's paradigm. This was the blessed hope that liberated believers from the tyranny of the ordinary and sent them forth singing as pilgrims headed for a better land.¹⁸ They were on their way home to God.

¹⁷Writing of this time, Seventh-day Adventist cofounder Ellen G. White noted: "We needed great patience, for the scoffers were many. . . . Professed lovers of Jesus scornfully rejected the tidings that He whom they claimed as their best Friend was soon to visit them. They were excited and angered against those who proclaimed the news of His coming, and who rejoiced that they should speedily behold Him in His glory" (*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915], 59-60).

¹⁸Beverly Beem and Ginger Harwood, "Pilgrims and Strangers: Adventist Spirituality, 1850-1863," *Spectrum* 31/4 (2003): 67-75.

The Great Disappointment

When prophecies concerning the end of the world failed in 1844, Millerite men as well as women wept all night as millennial hopes were dashed and the movement of the Advent Near was thrown into disarray.¹⁹ Miller publicly made his own peace with the disappointment, renounced the process of date setting, and retained his conviction that the end was nigh. While he stated that he was not cast down or discouraged and that his hope in the coming of Christ was not diminished,²⁰ his experience was not representative of the masses that had expected to enter the kingdom on October 22, 1844.

The Great Disappointment created a major spiritual and religious crisis for Millerite Adventists. How could they maintain faith in light of the disconfirming evidence? How had they been so mistaken when their position had been based on careful and reasoned study of the Scriptures? What did their failure indicate about the reliability of Scripture or appropriate hermeneutics? How was this failure to be understood and integrated into individual spiritual experience?

The vast majority of Adventists concluded that Miller's hermeneutic and calculations were erroneous and abandoned the movement. Individuals trying to redeem their hope reexamined the material from which their conclusions had been derived and considered varying interpretations of the failure. While some resolved the crisis by acknowledging that their calculations needed to be refigured, others attempted to reconcile the situation on the basis of new revelations given to them in trances, visions, and dreams. These new revelations reframed and interpreted the experience and provided a way to maintain faith in the proximity of Christ's return despite the unanticipated delay.

Maintaining Faith in the Face of Disappointment

During the months following the Disappointment, those who believed that Miller's hermeneutic was sound (Scripture did indicate that the Advent was near) and that the Advent movement came from God were thrown on their own spiritual resources to weather the storm of disappointment and calumny. They sought God in prayer and meditation, searching the Scriptures for a further word from God. The spiritual confusion, distress, and discouragement needed to be met with clear evidence of God's imprimatur on the movement.

¹⁹As Hiram Edson, whose subsequent vision of Christ moving from one apartment into another within the heavenly sanctuary became the basis for providing an alternative understanding for the October 22 date, noted: "Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted, and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I never experienced before" (cited in Edwin Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt, *The Religious History of America: The Heart of the American Story from Colonial Times to Today*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002), 154.

²⁰Miller's own reflections, both on how he arrived at his initial conclusions and how he stood after the Great Disappointment, are recorded in William Miller, *William Miller's Apology and Defence* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1854).

In certain circles, the best demonstration of God's leading was the manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Ellen Gould Harmon, who would become an important agent in the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, stood within such a group. A spiritually intense young person from a strict Methodist Millerite family, Harmon had reveled in the community of believers pressing toward the goal of sanctification in light of the nearness of Christ's return.²¹ She struggled to integrate the "truth" of the message (as revealed through its spiritual fruits) with the failure of expectations and received an ecstatic breakthrough while praying with a small band of young women.²² She was caught up in vision and shown that the believers in the Advent Near were on a journey toward heaven, with Christ leading the way. The path was steep and led away from the world of darkness, and pilgrims must not turn back or they would suffer eternal loss. Thus, whatever disappointment or hardship suffered by Adventists, they must not question the correctness of the Advent message or turn away from preparations to stand in the presence of God. The Second Advent was still near.

Harmon was convicted that her vision needed to be communicated to her former associates, many of whom were struggling to retain their faith. James White, an itinerant Adventist lay preacher who would subsequently be united with Harmon in marriage as well as spiritual labor, heard in Harmon's testimony to the community the very reassurance of God's presence and leading that was needed to revive the failing movement.²³ Harmon's vision served as evidence of God's endorsement of the Advent movement and the validity of continuing in it. The direct communication from God was the guarantee that the Advent message was not the product of human invention or imagination and that their hopes were not in vain. White promoted Harmon's vision as a rallying point for those who accepted "spiritual gifts."

More than a word of reassurance was needed to revitalize the dissipating movement and open the door for the formation of a distinctive spiritual practice. Joseph Bates, an established and recognized Millerite leader, added this necessary element with the introduction of the idea of an important "truth" that had been neglected in their preparation to meet God, the observance of the fourth commandment. Bates convincingly demonstrated to James and Ellen White that the seventh-day Sabbath was a binding command of God and then united with them in coalition-building to restart and maintain the Adventist movement with this new light. James White and Joseph Bates managed to attract a small group of believers to their combined views on "present truth," as they provided a way to integrate the eschatological delay into a comprehensible spiritual journey. Together they labored to redeem millennial expectations in person and in print,

²¹White, 17-63.

²²Ibid., 64-67.

²³Gerald Wheeler, *James White: Innovator and Overcomer* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2003), 38.

preparing broadsides, and answering detractors in various Advent periodicals. God had given them new truth to herald, the seventh-day Sabbath, and spiritual gifts to sustain them along the journey.

*Charismatic Dimensions of Adventist
Spirituality, 1845-1863*

In the months immediately following the Great Disappointment, prominent Advent movement leaders rejected Ellen White's visions as emotional fanaticism.²⁴ From the perspective of the Whites, Joshua Himes's refusal to consider Ellen White's testimony reflected the established split between charismatic Christians and "formalists."²⁵ In short, while united by their eschatology, the two groups expressed two divergent pneumatological views, and these views were fundamental to their spiritual formation.

Ellen White's visions were connected to a specific spiritual worldview that posited the importance of personal experience with the Holy Spirit and God's direct communication to individuals under the Spirit's sway. For the group that would rally around Ellen White's visions, belief in spiritual gifts, including that of on-going revelation from God, was essential to their assurance that their faith in the Advent Near was the product of God's work. The Holy Spirit's direct intervention in the lives of believers served as the tangible evidence of God's leading despite the discounting judgment of family, friends, and religious authorities. Thus dependence on the Holy Spirit and recognition of God's leading through visions became an integral part of this group's spiritual endeavor. A *Review* account of an 1857 meeting reflects the group's charismatic style and the centrality of an affective encounter with God in their worship and spirituality. As James White recounted the session, he reported:

We went to the house feeling that we had nothing for the people. We told brethren on the way that we could not decide on any subject, and wished them to select. We sung a hymn, and had great freedom in prayer; sung again, but felt perplexed as to duty. In this state of mind, knowing not what to do, we gave liberty to others to use the time, when Mrs. W. arose and spoke with much freedom. The place was filled with the Spirit of the Lord. Some rejoiced, others wept. All felt that the Lord was drawing very near.

²⁴The negativity of leaders, such as William Miller and his chief lieutenant Joshua Himes, was not particularly focused on the content of Ellen Harmon White's visions, but was a generalized response to the numerous claims of visions and direct revelations that came pouring in at the time of the Great Disappointment.

²⁵Even before the Millerite crisis, questions concerning spiritual manifestations in public worship divided Christians in various congregations, a tension that continued within the Advent movement but which was superseded by the immediacy of the Second Coming. Visions, trances, and ecstatic states, as well as individual impressions of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, were regular phenomena among certain Adventist groups (including those of Ellen White's Portland, Maine, home), but rejected by others. The leaders of the largest segment of Adventists distrusted and discounted such displays as "enthusiasm."

How sacred the place. Those present will never forget that meeting. When seated, Mrs. W. began to praise the Lord, and continued rising higher and higher in perfect triumph in the Lord, till her voice changed, and the deep, clear shouts of Glory! Hallelujah! thrilled every heart. She was in vision.

Unknown to us there was a poor, discouraged brother present, who had thrown his armor down, in consequence, in part, at least, of neglect by his wealthy brethren, and was returning to strong habits which threatened the happiness of himself and family. A most touching and encouraging message was given for him. By the grace of God he raised his head that very evening, and he and his good wife are again happy in hope. Monterey church will never forget that evening. At least they never should. . . .

In the afternoon the Lord's Supper was partaken by the believing assembly. But while in prayer at the commencement of the meeting, awful solemnity rested down upon the place. Most all wept, several aloud. The scenes of Calvary came vividly up, and we all felt that it was good to weep before the Lord. . . .

Sabbath, the 17th, we spent with the church at Battle Creek, and enjoyed freedom and a blessed season in speaking upon the unity of the church of Christ and perpetuity of the Gifts. We gave it as our opinion that instead of undervaluing what Gifts are manifested among us, it would be better to thank God for what we have, and pray for more.²⁶

The report stands as a record of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit and the affective response of the believers and concludes with an exhortation that the gifts (charisma) of the Spirit should be actively sought rather than rejected. The account includes waiting for direction from the Spirit, the role of prayer in preparation for a manifestation of God's presence, congregational rejoicing and weeping, ecstatic states and utterances, the salvific work accomplished (a discouraged brother rescued), and the unity effected by the charismatic experience.

Private and corporate worship were shaped by the belief in the power of the Spirit to change lives, to open the mind to the Bible truth, to heal, and to manifest the power and will of God. Brother G. W. Holt offered an account in which he relates the manner in which the Holy Spirit functioned in a particular meeting in 1857:

The power of God was manifest in our first meeting. The preaching of Bro. Cornell was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

The spirit of confession was cherished in our meetings. And as heart-felt and deep confessions were made, the cry for mercy from a broken heart, was breathed forth with earnestness and fervency that we scarce ever witnessed before. The Lord heard, and souls were set at liberty. Shouts of "glory" from full hearts might have been heard afar off. Parents confessed to children, and children to parents. Some have been converted, and are going to mount Zion with their parents. . . . The conversation we hear now,

²⁶[ames] W[hite], "Report of Meetings!" *Review and Herald*, October 22, 1857, 196-197.

is about “gold, white raiment and eye-salve,” and less about farms, houses, horses and other things of this world.²⁷

The charismatic spirituality modeled in this account was precisely the model repressed by the “formal” brethren.

Scores of letters were printed to demonstrate the reality of the spiritual gifts that stood as the evidence of God’s presence and leading. In addition to stories of spiritual and emotional healings, the *Review* carried stories of physical healings. In these accounts, the writers extolled the untapped power of God available for physical healing. The following letter details the case of a woman near death who believed in the power of prayer and was healed through the spiritual ministrations of the faith-filled. It reads:

It is thought by some of the Brethren who attended this meeting, that a brief account of it, through the *Review* and *Herald*, together with a notice of the blessing of God bestowed upon Sister Emeline Rice, might not be out of place.

Sister Rice has been sick with consumption for some months, and apparently brought quite near the grave: Yet she believed it to be the will of Him who said, Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, that she should be “raised up.” She also believed that the precious promises contained in this scripture were written to be realized by his children at the present day, as much as at any previous time; just as I hope all believers in present truth do; and not as do many, who “know not the scriptures, nor the power of God” fling these promises back, to be realized only by those living in the days of the apostles.

Agreeable to request, Brn. Morse, Butler and others, went to Granville on Friday last. On Sabbath morning we repaired to the house of Sister Rice, found her able to sit up awhile, but quite feeble. Her pale face, sunken eye and emaciated form, with the usual symptoms attending a sure and immediate victory of this fatal disease, were all swift evidences that death would soon set its cold silent seal upon her lips, if the Great Physician of soul and body, did not interpose in her behalf and bid disease depart. But blessed be God, we expected he would. Prayer was made in “faith believing”—and the glory and blessing of God came down. Our Sister arose from her bed, shouting “Glory, glory to God, I am free—I am made every whit whole.”

Sister Rice then rode to Bro. Kendall’s, (one mile,) where we met with brethren from other towns, and with them enjoyed much of the Spirit of God through the Holy Sabbath. Our sister who had just left a room of sickness, and come out to enjoy another meeting with the brethren, gave strong testimonies in favor of the cause of truth. In one exhortation, said she, “If I die within one week, don’t say God did not heal me, for I know the work is done.” The little company of believers in the “third angel’s message,” at Granville, seemed to gain much strength and gather new courage, to “keep the commandments of God,” from this day’s opportunity.²⁸

²⁷G. W. Holt, “From Bro. Holt,” *Review and Herald*, February 5, 1857, 110.

²⁸A. S. Hutchins, “From Brother Hutchins,” *Review and Herald*, July 8, 1852, 39.

The result of the healing, as noted, was not only the physical restoration of the woman, but the encouragement of the believing community. The spiritual gift of healing was utilized as evidence of the validity of the band's religious ideology.

This story was one of dozens that detailed the effects of the presence of God in the circle of Sabbatarian Advent believers. Producing the *Review* allowed James White and the group most closely associated with him to promote their understanding of the Spirit-led religious life, as well as reinforce faith in Christ's soon appearing. The paper encouraged personal, charismatic religious experience by including reports of meetings, where healings, visions, and physical responses to the Holy Spirit were cited as key evidence of God's presence and the success of the meeting. The accounts of the manifestations of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit simultaneously asserted the group's claim that God was with them and sketched the outlines of a Spirit-led life for believers awaiting Christ's return.

*Sabbatarian Adventist Spirituality: A Journey
Toward God on the Path of Truth*

Drawing Near to God

The spiritual Psalmist said that it was good for him to draw near to God. He spoke from experience. Some of my readers have had a similar experience. It is a comfort to believe that this article will be read by some who know that it is good to draw near to God. What are some of the effects of so doing—effects which led the Psalmist to pronounce it good?

By drawing near to God, we are made to feel that he is love. It is not difficult to form some conceptions of the power, wisdom and justice of God. We can do all this while we remain at a distance from him. But to know the meaning of the expression, God is love, we must draw near to him. When we are near to him, we are in an atmosphere of love. We feel that God is love. All dread and distrust are banished. We see the propriety of the expression, God is love. We have some knowledge of its meaning. It is the most precious knowledge that we can possess.²⁹

Early Adventist spirituality was characterized by personal knowledge of God and firsthand experience of the work of the Holy Spirit. The various testimonies and stories printed in the *Review* underscore the experiential nature of Adventist spirituality. While learning the theory of truth might be a precursor to the experience of truth, knowledge without experience was considered to be incomplete. An article by I. N. Pike entitled “Begin Now: Spoken from Experience” explores the relationship between knowledge and experience. “I would say a word through the *Review* to those who are almost persuaded to obey God, and come out and keep all his commandments. Make a trial.” It was only by experiencing life conformed to the proposed standards that a person was in the situation to judge the salutary effects of redeemed living. The spiritual road could only be known in the walking. He explains:

²⁹“Drawing Near to God,” *Review and Herald*, October 22, 1857, 195.

Do not delay as I have done, in matters that interest the eternal welfare of the soul. I was brought to see the necessity of a change of heart when a youth, but got into a backslidden state, and remained there some five and thirty years; not without some strivings of the Spirit at different times, and often would I resolve anew to start and serve God, yet remained where I was until I was led to see and put in practice the keeping of God's Sabbath, since which time a flood of light has flown in upon my soul that I never before saw, for which I feel to praise and bless God.³⁰

Every step forward led the pilgrim further into the path of light.

Spiritual understanding was deepened and progress made when individuals practiced their faith and "put it to the test." The spiritual life of the Advent people was shaped by opening their lives to receive the "truth" God revealed through the leading of the Holy Spirit and then by experiencing the joys of fuller dwelling within God's design. Throughout the *Review* are letters like that of Sister Cynthia Paine, who testified of the movement toward holiness. She wrote to the readers of the paper:

It is a little more than a year since we commenced to keep the seventh day, and we are more and more convinced that we have the truth. The subject of the Sanctuary together with the Sabbath are glorious doctrines to us. New beauties in them do we continually behold, and it is a great wonder to us that we did not see the truth and believe it before; but it was rather difficult to get rid of a tradition which we had had for fifty years. But the Lord was able to bring us to the light, and to rejoice in his precious truths.—And we know that he will finally bring us off victorious, if we put our trust in him.

We know how to prize the company of the saints, now we are so widely separated from them. The blessed hope cheers us that the time is short, and that very soon we shall all meet no more to be parted forever.

Yours, hoping soon to be gathered with all the saints,

Cynthia Paine.³¹

Each edition of the *Review* labored with readers to continue in their journey of faith through Bible study, prayer, and experiment. It is important not to overlook the connection early Adventists perceived between correct doctrine and spirituality. As Mary Borden shared in 1857: "I do not want a good theory merely, but I want the Spirit and power of the Lord to rest upon me, that I may know his will and obey it."³² The "truth" revealed in the doctrines held spiritual treasure. Elizabeth Degarmo, in an 1854 letter, captured the spiritual riches Sabbath-keeping brought to her experience. Commandment-keeping linked her with the Holy Spirit and filled her with peace and joy. She described filling the night with praise in response to experiencing the truth. She reported: "I have been alone in trying to keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus. It brings such sweet peace that I often in the night, while

³⁰I. N. Pike, "Begin Now: Spoken from Experience," *Review and Herald*, April 23, 1857, 198.

³¹Cynthia Paine, "From Sister Paine," *Review and Herald*, September 13, 1853, 78.

³²Mary Borden, "From Sister Borden," *Review and Herald*, March 12, 1857, 151.

meditating on the beauty of the commandments am led to speak out in praise to God. My course I mean shall be onward and upward till I see Jesus.”³³

The value of the doctrinal expositions is best understood when seen in the light of the approaching Advent. Christ was returning for his people and each Christian needed to be ready to meet him. Those who intended to dwell eternally in God’s presence began to accommodate themselves to the mind and life of God in the present. The Holy Spirit served as the guide to assist believers in their search for and conformity to ennobling truth. E. M. Barrows reflected on the link between doctrinal light, sanctification, and the preparation to join God. In an 1853 letter to the *Review*, she wrote, “I am thankful that the Lord is so mindful of his people. He has not only given us light and truth, in these last days of peril, but he has given us his holy Spirit, which is to ‘lead us into all truth,’ and enable us to detect the spirit of error. . . . I love the Lord, and I thank him for all his benefits.”³⁴

Sister M. A. E. Townsend, requesting that a messenger be sent to further explicate the peculiar Adventist truths, articulated the connection between Adventist doctrine and spiritual progress in this way: “I am as it were almost alone here, in reference to keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. . . . I have never had the privilege of hearing one of our faith preach. O, that some might be directed this way, that we may be taught more perfectly in the way of life.”³⁵

Based on an examination of the *Review* from 1852-1863, key ingredients of Adventist spirituality can be identified. The writers assume a conversion experience that includes a personal experience of the Holy Spirit and reception of spiritual gifts, the process of sanctification (the preparation to meet God acquired through the exercise of spiritual disciplines), a sense of urgency increased by the impending Advent, and persevering patience. While each of these issues contributed to the emerging Adventist spirituality, a sensibility shaped by the controlling metaphor of a transformative journey toward complete union with God, special attention needs to be given to the emphasis placed on sanctification and patience.

Sanctification: The Gold Tried in the Fire

Readiness for Christ’s return required complete conversion, not simply awareness of one’s sin and need for a savior. Conversion involved not only the experience of God’s grace and love, but a response to that love that gave priority to union with God over any other consideration or concern. The call to stand ready to meet God, conformed to his will and filled with his Spirit, provided the foundation for Sabbatarian Adventist spirituality. The approaching union with God was more important than either the prospects or pain of conventional reality and needed to be pursued with a singleness of

³³Elizabeth Degarmo, “From Sister Degarmo,” *Review and Herald*, August 22, 1854, 15.

³⁴E. M. Barrows, “From Sister Barrows,” *Review and Herald*, August 4, 1853, 47.

³⁵M. A. E. Townsend, “From Sr. Townsend,” *Review and Herald*, September 13, 1853, 78.

purpose that happily relinquished anything that would obstruct progress toward the goal. The prime characteristic of the converted Christian was seen as the willingness to abandon cultural, familial, and religious convention in order to progress toward holiness by conforming to God's revealed truth.

Conforming their lives to revealed doctrinal truth stood as a significant part of the Adventist spiritual model in that it simultaneously tested their devotion to their goal and deepened the experimental aspect of their faith. The urgency of living in the last days, the time of Judgment, called believers to discern between things of earthly and heavenly value, to be willing to sacrifice the earthly for the heavenly, the temporal for the eternal. In an 1858 letter, Lucinda Dawson exhorted the community to avail themselves of the power of the Holy Spirit to transform their lives in preparation for the Advent. Calling for a more complete sanctification in light of the shortness of time, she wrote:

I feel as if we were resting too much on the theory of the truth while it is not having that sanctifying influence upon our lives that it should have; for we must be pure and without fault before the throne of God. Is it not time for us to arise and put on the whole armor of God, and prepare for the loud cry of the Third Angel's Message? O for more faith to overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil with all of his works, that we may have a right to the tree of life and enter through the gates into the city. Who of us that profess the truth now, will have these glorious privileges? and who will be shaken out? O let us prepare for the coming crisis.³⁶

Many writers pressed the urgency of attending to spiritual matters based on the shortness of time. The reminder of the nearness of the Advent accompanied many exhortations to holiness, as believers such as Brother L. Schellhous directed the Adventists to attend to their sanctification: "We have no time to lose. I feel the need of a deeper work of grace in my heart, for the time draws near when he that shall come will come and will not tarry. May the Lord help each and every one of us to be in earnest; to be zealous and repent. May we realize that without holiness of heart no man shall see the Lord."³⁷

"Gold tried in the fire" is one of the dominant images in early Adventist spiritual rhetoric, appearing frequently in letters and articles. Brother Schellhous wrote again: "My dear companion is striving with me to overcome and to heed the admonition to buy of him gold tried in the fire that we may be rich towards God, and raiment that we may be clothed, and eye-salve that we may see clearly the way of life."³⁸ Based on the imagery used in Rev 3:18, gold tried in the fire, white raiment, and eye-salve, the necessary elements for entrance into eternal life, are the treasures of ultimate value and ultimate price. In the article "Buy and Sell," A. J. Richmond sees the anointing eye-salve as the gift of the Holy Spirit, but the precious treasure of gold tried in the fire, purified of all dross, must be purchased. "Yes, *bought!* And don't be surprised if in following the

³⁶Lucinda Dawson, "From Sister Dawson," *Review and Herald*, July 8, 1858, 62.

³⁷L. Schellhous, "From Bro. Schellhous," *Review and Herald*, July 22, 1858, 79.

³⁸Ibid.

counsel of this Witness, and of the Holy Spirit in buying them, you are called to part with *all* you have in this world."³⁹

For this group, Sabbath-keeping, requiring a break with tradition, convention, and custom, and frequently engendering a host of social sanctions, provided the believers with a test of their own commitment to the process of sanctification.

Perseverance: The Patience of the Saints

One final component of Adventist spirituality must be mentioned: patient perseverance. It is not enough to renounce the world and embrace the hope of Christ's return. The journey toward God must be continued until its desired result is obtained, whatever the ultimate timetable. It was by clinging to the hope despite opposition, lack of evidence of immediate fulfillment, and the disadvantages entailed that the "gold tried in fire" was obtained. As Sister Tryphena N. Elliot wrote in 1858:

I ever believed that God led his people out on the tenth of the seventh month, 1844, and that they did his will in preaching time. I then expected to see my Saviour coming with clouds, in power and great glory, to take the throne of his father David, and reign forever and ever; but the two thousand and three hundred days ended, and the Lord did not come. But as I had come out of Babylon, I had no desire to return again, therefore the last five verses of the 10th of Hebrews were very precious to me. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward; for ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."⁴⁰

Adventists persevered despite repeated eschatological disappointments, the community derision, and the great loneliness of pursuing what was for many a solitary path. The act of holding onto belief in the face of dashed expectations stood as the separating point between the saints and those who returned to the world (or at least relinquished their Advent hope). This act of keeping the faith when outward confirmation was denied became an important aspect of the Adventist spiritual experience.

The Review and Adventist Spiritual Formation

For many Adventists, the *Review* replaced the local congregation or denomination as their provider of religious education, guidance, and inspiration. The pages of the early *Review* are filled with encouragement and instruction in the spiritual disciplines, particularly prayer, Scripture-reading, family worship, public meeting, and active service. The articles, exhortations,

³⁹A. J. Richmond, "Buy and Sell," *Review and Herald*, October 29, 1857, 206.

⁴⁰Tryphena N. Elliot, "From Sister Elliot," *Review and Herald*, July 22, 1858, 79.

and letters served as a resource for spiritual education, presenting spiritual-growth materials gathered from a variety of Christian sources. Sections of each publication were devoted to exhorting individuals to continue or commence spiritual disciplines and practices: Bible study, private and public prayer, renunciation of “the world,” attendance and participation in “social meetings,” and the articulation of personal spiritual experience in testimony. The *Review* stressed the importance of developing a spiritual voice, a move important not only for its association with acceptable notions of spiritual development in the pietistic and emerging holiness revivalism of the day, but also as an ongoing part of individual participation in the group’s spiritual vitality.

The articles devoted to the various spiritual disciplines reveal the group’s basic spiritual stance: the soul is to be cultivated. Believers are to actively pursue their sanctification and proceed on their spiritual journey. Waiting for Christ is not a matter of confessing one’s sins, being forgiven, and then waiting passively for God’s promised coming. The hope-filled believer grows in grace through intentional spiritual practice. The *Review* provides the scattered ones with material to stimulate both love for God and knowledge concerning how to “draw near to Him.”

As well as functioning as the nerve center of the Sabbatarian Advent group, the *Review* was a steady source of spiritual affirmation and instruction. The following notice placed in the *Review* reveals the active role the paper played in creating a spiritual community and training believers to develop their spiritual voice:

Wanted—On our table a large pile of spirited and interesting articles and communications, from, not only the Corresponding Editors, but also every interested believer of present truth in the land. Where are the pens consecrated to the cause of truth? Where are those all over the land who we are constrained to believe might, and therefore ought, to have a few thoughts to utter in behalf of the message, or a few familiar words of exhortation or experience, for the encouragement of their brethren and sisters?⁴¹

The harvest of the appeal is reflected in the subsequent letters where believers submitted their personal testimonies of the power of God in their own lives.

The *Review* articulated the identity of the Sabbatarian Adventists as a spiritual community preparing itself as the bride of Christ. The discourse in the *Review* provided evidence that Adventist religious commitments were part of a reasoned and reasonable spiritual pilgrimage, however disparate from the privileged (dominant) religious traditions and conventions, and pressed its readers to continue the journey.

Conclusion

The pages of the early years of the *Review* are a fruitful source of material for the reconstruction of early Adventist spirituality, as they record the spiritual experiences of a people longing for the fulfillment of the millennial hope. The

⁴¹“Wanted,” *Review and Herald*, November 24, 1859, 8.

articles and letters reveal their spiritual practices and the meaning they found and made in the face of the millennial delay. They document the efforts of disappointed millenarians to create an authentic spirituality that integrated both their hopes and their frustrations. They reveal the spiritual landscape of a people who have known both the mountaintop of expectation and the valley of disappointment and have then been consigned to journey across the plain of ordinary life.

Early Adventist spirituality was shaped by the major features of the contemporaneous religious climate and the pain of the Great Disappointment. Those who clung to the Adventist hope retained their Second Great Awakening experience of the immediacy of God and maintained the Millerite sense of urgency concerning the importance of preparing for life in God's presence. They abandoned social approval in pursuit of a life anchored by faith in the reliability of Scripture and prophecy, encouraged by manifestations of the Holy Spirit, and characterized by a deep and constant longing for union with God. Perceiving a radical separation between themselves and other Christians that they saw as having a system of beliefs without an accompanying zeal,⁴² they pictured themselves as pilgrims headed for "Glory." On this journey, anything that distracted from the destination had to be jettisoned as they sought the "gold tried in the fire" that made them rich in eternal goods. Finally, these post-Disappointment Adventists realized that, despite their fondest hopes, seeing this journey to its end required perseverance and patience from those whom God would save "with that blessed company who have made their robes white in the blood of the lamb."⁴³

⁴²Godfrey T. Anderson, "Sectarianism and Organization, 1846-1864," in *Adventism in America*, ed. Gary Land (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 38.

⁴³Wheeler, 47.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

THEOLOGY OF JUDGMENT IN GENESIS 6-9

Name of Researcher: Chun Sik Park
Faculty Adviser: Richard M. Davidson, Ph.D.
Date Completed: July 2005

The present dissertation seeks to develop a theology of judgment in Gen 6-9. Following an introductory chapter, the second chapter is devoted to analyzing the four main ANE flood stories (the Eridu Genesis, the Atra-Hasis Epic, the Gilgamesh Epic, and Berossus's account) from the four aspects of judgment: date, cause and purpose, extent, and procedure. The analysis of those stories reveals that the ANE flood was a historical and local (global dimension is implied) event without moral cause, and that the judgment of the deities had a procedure of investigation, sentence, execution, and mitigation.

The third chapter treats the theology of judgment on the basis of textual evidence in Gen 6-9, focusing on the date, cause and purpose, extent, and procedure. The text reveals that the Genesis flood was a historical and global event, caused by the broken relationship between God and humankind. God's judgment was processed by the steps of probation, investigation, sentence, execution, and mitigation.

The fourth chapter is devoted to investigating the various theological motifs that have close relationship with the judgment theme in Gen 6-9: theodicy, human moral responsibility, creation, revelation, and eschatology. The Genesis flood judgment demonstrates God's love and justice toward his creation. Humankind, being the image of God, is responsible for one's multiple relationships, including God, humankind, subhumankind, and the environment. The creation theme underlies a pattern of creation—uncreation—re-creation in God's judgment, and is closely linked with the theme of eschatology: God's revelation creates a remnant that survives God's judgment. Close relationship is found between protology and eschatology. The relationship is illustrated by a comparison between Gen 6-9 and Rev 12-22 from the aspects of three phases of eschatological time (prejudgment time—judgment time—postjudgment time).

The fifth chapter is devoted to investigating the intertextuality of some biblical passages that have a textual and/or thematic relationship with the Genesis flood narrative; the passages include Ps 29:10; Isa 54:9-10; Ezek 14:12-20; Matt 24:36-39 (cf. Luke 17:26-30); Heb 11:7; 1 Pet 3:19-21; 2 Pet 2:5; 3:65-67; and Rev 14:7. The above texts were analyzed in their own literary context from the aspect of cause and purpose, extent, procedure, divine salvific activities, and human moral responsibility. The analysis reveals that these texts take the Genesis flood narrative as a historical and global event and utilize the flood as their type for God's judgment from the aspect of salvation and punishment. Finally, these biblical texts describe a God who is willing to save but is reluctant to punish humankind, thus offering the way of salvation to humankind.

The sixth chapter contains a summary and conclusions. The Genesis flood narrative presents a fertile soil that produces abundant theological reflections on the saving and punishing God and moral responsibility of humankind before God.

**THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY/TEMPLE MOTIF IN THE
HEBREW BIBLE: FUNCTION AND RELATIONSHIP
TO THE EARTHLY COUNTERPARTS**

Name of Researcher: Elias Brasil de Souza
Faculty Adviser: Richard M. Davidson, Ph.D.
Date Completed: April 2005

The present dissertation seeks to ascertain the function of the heavenly sanctuary/temple and its relationship to the earthly counterpart, as reflected in forty-five passages of the Hebrew Bible. Close attention is given to the function of the heavenly sanctuary/temple and, wherever appropriate, the relationship between the heavenly sanctuary/temple and its earthly counterpart. Following an introductory chapter, the second chapter of this dissertation is devoted to a survey of the heavenly sanctuary/temple motif in the ANE literature as represented by Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite, Ugaritic, and Egyptian texts. The investigation of these texts reveals that the heavenly sanctuary/temple motif was part of the worldview of the ANE, where the heavenly sanctuary was not only assumed as existing in heaven, but also as functioning in close relationship to the earthly counterparts. Chapters 3–5 are devoted to the exegesis of heavenly sanctuary/temple passages in the Hebrew Bible, according to the canonical divisions of the Hebrew Bible (namely, Torah, Prophets, and Writings). This investigation has demonstrated that the heavenly sanctuary/temple is understood to function as a place of divine activities, where YHWH supervises the cosmos, performs acts of judgment (sometimes conceived as a two-stage activity in which the execution of the sentence was preceded by an investigative phase), hears the prayers of the needy, and bestows atonement and forgiveness upon the sinners. Perceptions also emerged of the heavenly sanctuary/temple as a place of worship, a meeting place for the heavenly council, and an object of attack by anti-YHWH forces.

In terms of its relationship to the earthly counterpart, it has been found that the heavenly sanctuary/temple functioned in close structural and functional relationship to the earthly counterpart in such a way that the activities of the heavenly/temple sanctuary could affect its earthly counterpart, and conversely the ministrations of the earthly temple/sanctuary were able to reverberate in the heavenly sanctuary/temple.

Chapter 6 is devoted to a theological synthesis of the heavenly sanctuary/temple motif, as uncovered by the investigation undertaken in the previous chapters. Thus some consideration was given to the similarities and differences between the heavenly sanctuary/temple motif as found in the Hebrew Bible and in its ANE background. Next, attention was devoted to some theological implications of the heavenly sanctuary/temple motif for the notions of judgment, the great controversy between good and evil, and the experience of the individual. To conclude, it is pointed out that the Hebrew Bible conceives of the heavenly sanctuary/temple as existing in dynamic relationship with its earthly counterpart, made effective by a functional and structural correspondence.

**REVELATION AND CREATION IN THE THOUGHT OF
BERNARD L. RAMM AND CARL F. H. HENRY:
THE CREATION "DAYS" AS A CASE STUDY**

Name of Researcher: Warren Harvey Johns
Faculty Adviser: Miroslav Kiš, Ph.D.
Date Completed: May 2005

This study explores the relationship between the doctrines of creation and revelation within evangelical thought, especially focusing upon the writings of the two foremost leaders of "neo-evangelicalism," Bernard L. Ramm and Carl F. H. Henry. Neo-evangelicalism arose in America in the 1940s as a reaction against the fundamentalism of the first decades of the twentieth century. One of its purposes was to free evangelicalism from the anti-intellectual tendencies of fundamentalism, while maintaining a belief in the full inspiration and historicity of Scripture. As a result, evangelicals have sought to harmonize the biblical record of creation with modern geological discoveries.

The goals of this study are twofold: first, to explain how and why Bernard Ramm and Carl Henry differ in their understanding of the doctrines of revelation and creation; and second, to uncover the reasons why Ramm, Henry, and most evangelical theologians and scientists adopt a metaphorical understanding of the days of creation, when the large majority of scholars in the past one hundred years have understood the creation days to be literal, twenty-four-hour days.

The approach of this study is descriptive, comparative, analytical, and evaluative. The first two chapters introduce the subject and provide a survey of the historical background for the evangelical understanding of revelation and creation, while the next two chapters, which are also descriptive, examine in detail the thought of Ramm and Henry on the doctrines of revelation and creation, and especially their views on the days of creation. Chapter 5, which is largely comparative and analytical, consists of comparisons and contrasts between the thought of Ramm and Henry upon revelation and creation, as well as upon the specific nature of the creation days. The evaluative phase involves a discussion of why this issue is important to evangelicalism, noted in the last part of chapter 5 and in the summary and conclusions found in chapter 6.

The differences between Ramm and Henry on the doctrines of revelation and creation can be accounted for largely on the basis of the differing methodologies and philosophical positions. The contrast between the evangelical approaches to understanding the days of creation and the approaches of nonevangelical scholarship is best explained on the basis of the evangelical understanding of revelation and inspiration.

BOOK REVIEWS

Bartholomew, Craig, G., and Michael W. Goheen. *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Your Place in the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004. 252 pp. Paper, \$19.99.

Craig G. Bartholomew, Chair of Philosophy at Redeemer University, Ontario, Canada, is the author of *Reading Ecclesiastes*, and coeditor of the *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of Scripture*. Michael W. Goheen, who teaches religion and theology at Redeemer University, is the author of *As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You*. Both scholars bring their own expertise to this volume: one as a biblical scholar, the other as a missiologist.

Bartholomew and Goheen propose that each person has a worldview that influences thoughts, decisions, and actions. Even the way the Bible is read is influenced by a particular worldview. Due to the humanistic worldview, which is rooted in the Enlightenment and that is predominate in Western thought, Westerners are in danger of losing sight of the unity of the Bible because it is often treated as a collection of stories, laws, and poetry, which have no internal connection to one another. This fragmentation of the Bible is seen, unfortunately, even in contemporary churches and apologetic works. Theologians, evangelists, and preachers, looking for biblical support for their particular doctrinal views, often pick and choose verses out of their natural context, thereby reducing the Bible to propositional statements. In *The Drama of Scripture*, Bartholomew and Goheen seek to rediscover the wider perspective from which all the elements and pieces of the Bible fit together in order to preserve the natural unity of the Bible.

For the authors, “the Bible has the shape of a story” (21). Thus *The Drama of Scripture* is structured as a six-act play, with interlude. The story begins at creation, then moves on to the fall and Israel’s history. After a short interlude, representing the intertestamental period, the life of Jesus is presented, followed by the mission of the church and the restoration of all things.

While other biblical theologies tend to focus on particular central themes in the Bible (e.g., covenant, salvation, blessing, promise, and fulfillment), Bartholomew and Goheen choose to join Arthur Glasser and Charles van Engen in looking for the embracing theme “kingdom of God” (cf. *Announcing the Kingdom* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003]). Although the authors survey most of the biblical books in a modest 250 pages, they still find space to deal with misconceptions about the text and even introduce new textual and theological insights.

The authors’ first goal is to help the reader understand the “true nature of Scripture” as God’s story (11). They adopt the paradigm of “grand narrative,” used by Leslie Newbigin, Alasdair MacIntyre, and N. T. Wright, in order to discover the ongoing story behind the biblical text. Bartholomew and Goheen agree that the Bible is the “norm for faith and life” (21), but they indicate that Scripture directs faith and life only when one’s story becomes part of the biblical story. The key word is *involvement*.

What Bartholomew and Goheen mean by “involvement” is “mission.” It is only natural that the primary emphasis of the book is “the centrality of mission within the biblical story” (13). The fact that the concept of “mission” is generally overlooked in the OT is due to Israel’s failure to fulfill its duty. The Bible reader may easily lose sight of God’s original plan to evangelize all the nations and Abraham’s commission to become a “blessing for nations” due to Israel’s egocentrism. *The Drama of Scripture* corrects this problem by pointing to God’s unchanging plan to offer his salvation to all people. Stories such as Esther, Ruth, Naaman, and Jonah make sense in light of God’s desire to save the nations. Even Israel’s exile becomes sensible when seen as a response to its failure to fulfill its mission. However, I would disagree with the authors’ viewpoint

that God's missiological character only began with the fall; rather, I would propose that it began before creation.

I also disagree with the authors' proposal to limit the meaning of "mission" to "restoration." To define "mission" only as "restoration" is to limit its real scope as portrayed in the Bible. Bartholomew and Goheen, moved by the strong conviction that humans should be good stewards of the earth and its resources, repeatedly claim that God's final goal for the earth is not destruction and re-creation, but restoration. They attribute the same intention to God in the flood story. However, what about those passages that speak about destruction and re-creation, both in regard to the flood and the end of history? The prophets frequently talk about what is expected to happen after the restoration of "the Day of the Lord" and describe God's people bringing glory to him for eternity as their true and ongoing mission. Further, Scripture portrays a complete destruction of the earth before a new creation is inaugurated.

The authors' second goal is to help students articulate a "thoroughly biblical worldview" (11). However, this statement raises many questions: Is there a "biblical" worldview? Since the Bible was written over a 1,600-year span by a number of authors, how can one be sure they all shared the same worldview? If there is one biblical worldview, why do Bartholomew and Goheen use a two-pronged approach in which they label the OT as "covenant" and the NT as "kingdom of God"? Although Bartholomew and Goheen do a wonderful job in emphasizing the progression of the story and the continuity of themes in Scripture, it seems strange that they introduce different approaches for each of the Testaments. Further, do individual worldviews affect how the Scriptures are read? All branches of Christianity claim that their particular views espouse the "biblical" worldview. Which one is correct? Although I appreciate Bartholomew and Goheen's efforts to recreate the panoramic vision of the biblical story and to rediscover its larger context, I find their goal to create a thoroughly biblical worldview overstated. However, the task of reconstructing biblical theology from a missiological perspective has the potential to unite us, in spite of our different worldviews, and is, therefore, a worthy, though difficult, project.

In spite of occasional inconsistencies, *The Drama of Scripture* presents a sound perspective and a coherent story. It combines an introductory style to biblical theology with commentary, theological insights, and invitations to engagement. Its style is simple, with good Scripture and Subject indices. The endnotes provide additional interesting and helpful information. It would serve well not only as a textbook for college-level students, but also for laypeople and theologians who are interested in refreshing their perspectives on God's history and plans for humanity.

For those interested in further study, Bartholomew and Goheen have created a website (www.biblicaltheology.ca), which contains PowerPoint presentations for each chapter, reading schedules, supplementary reading, and more. I recommend *The Drama of Scripture* as an excellent addition to a missiologist's or theologian's library.

Berrien Springs, Michigan

CRISTIAN DUMITRESCU

Ego, Beate, Armin Lange, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Kristin De Troyer, eds. *Minor Prophets*, vol. 3B, *Biblia Qumranica*. Leiden: Brill, 2005. xxiv + 195 pp. Hardcover, \$120.00.

The *Biblia Qumranica* series presents a columnar synopsis of the biblical manuscripts discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS). Prepared by an international array of Qumran scholars, the synopsis project encompasses not only the Hebrew, Greek, and

Aramaic manuscripts of the biblical books, but also the biblical quotations in the continuous *pesharim* and other commentaries from the DSS collection. The MT of Codex Firkovich B 19 A (usually according to the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*), the LXX (according to the Göttingen Septuagint if extant, otherwise according to A. Rahlfs' *Septuaginta*), the Samaritan Pentateuch, and, in special cases, also a few others (e.g., the silver amulet texts from *Ketef Hinnom*, the Nash Papyrus) function as reference texts.

The *raison d'être* for such a synoptic edition of the biblical books among the DSS is obvious. In presenting a quick overview of the different manuscripts and their variants to the MT and LXX, the *Biblia Qumranica* facilitates the comparative analysis and aids the initial steps of text-critical study, particularly with regard to the early stage(s) of the biblical text(s).

Volume 3B on the minor prophets is the first fascicle published of the *Biblia Qumranica* series. For the *Dodekapropheton*, K. de Troyer edited the Greek witnesses; B. Ego and A. Lange the Hebrew manuscripts.

For a work such as this it is particularly important to take great care for the arrangement of the printed material. The editors have to be congratulated for an exceptionally clear layout, which, given the nature of creating a columnar synopsis with several textual witnesses, must be considered to be at times an extremely difficult task.

Throughout this fascicle the synoptic texts are arranged in columns on double pages (despite the claim that textual witnesses could be fitted on one page [p. xii], which probably refers to other fascicles in the series). Each double page prints, as reference texts, the Göttingen LXX to the left and the MT to the right, while the DSS manuscripts occupy the columns in between. The DSS manuscripts printed beside LXX and MT are 4QXII^{a-b}, 5QAmos, 8HevXII gr, MurXII, 4QpHos^{a-b}, 4QpNah, and 4QCommMal. Only the Nahal Hever Minor Prophets Scroll (8HevXII gr) is printed in a way that both the diplomatic text and the reconstructed text are identifiable. The reconstructed *kaige* is given to enable the study of the *kaige* recension. The editions used for the *Biblia Qumranica* are all from the *editio princeps* in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert*, except for 4QpNah (which uses M. Horgan's article in *Princeton Theological Seminary Dead Sea Scrolls Project* 6B: 1-201, 141-155) and 4QpHos^{a-b} (which uses R. Vielhauer's article in *Revue de Qumran* 77 [2001]: 39-91).

The layout ranges from three columns (e.g., Hos 9:12–10:8 presents MT, 4QXII^a, and LXX [20-21]) to seven columns per double page (e.g., Zeph 2:15–3:7 presents MT, Mur XII, 4QXIIg, 4QXIIc, 4QXIIb, 8HevXII gr, and LXX [150-151]), depending on how many witnesses exist for a specific text. This is also the reason why different manuscripts sometimes occupy the same column on different double pages. However, on any given double page each manuscript has its own column. If there is no manuscript among the DSS extant, the texts of the MT and LXX are not printed; instead a gap in the vertical synoptic columns is marked. The MT presents the reference text and book sequence; if the ones attested by the textual witnesses diverge, they are marked, while a different LXX verse numbering is added in between brackets. The editors decided wisely to print the textual witnesses in parallel text placement. They thus forgo the exact representation of a manuscript's original lines and spaces, but gain the advantage of easier and quicker comparison of texts. Editorial signs provide papyrological information about the characters (identification and preservation), *lacunae* and *vacats*, and the text.

The comparative analysis of textual witnesses is greatly facilitated by two systems of marking. In the first system, gray boxes in the text show textual differences in the manuscripts within the same language and thus allow a quick overview of textual deviation, while in the second system, black borders around the gray boxes mark the textual witnesses that differ from the reference texts of the MT or LXX. Besides the

arrangement of the texts itself, I consider these markings to be the best feature of the columnar synopsis. Orthographic variants are not highlighted, which indeed would be counterproductive given the sheer number of such variants.

A minor point regarding the layout is that text references are printed in the header near the cut where they function well as reference when readers thumb through the book. The page numbers are printed rather inconspicuously in the footer near the binding of the book, although I would regard it as preferable to print them in the footer outwards near the cut, where they would function better as an additional reference for the readers.

In the Introduction to this volume, the general features of the *Biblia Qumranica* series are explained. It also includes the usual list of editorial signs and abbreviations, as well as a "synopsis of the sequence of the minor prophets in the extant witnesses," listing the sequence in the MT, LXX, 8HevXII gr (the sequence of which agrees with the MT but is included for better comparison with LXX), and 4QXII^a. The most interesting feature of the introduction is a list of 125 disagreements of the transcriptions in the *Biblia Qumranica* with the standard editions (compiled by A. Lange). The synopsis thus makes also a contribution to the transcription of the DSS manuscripts (e.g., E. J. C. Tigchelaar identified two additional 4QXII^a fragments of Mal 3:11-12 and Jon 1:7). Unfortunately, the synopsis does not provide any explanations for these new transcriptions nor references to the pertinent scholarly literature.

There is no text-critical information or apparatus given for any of the transcriptions, which, of course, should not be expected for reasons of space. Hence, the synopsis does not save the text-critic the work of consulting the original editions.

In conclusion, it is safe to say that the *Biblia Qumranica* is an essential reference work for comparing the different manuscripts and identifying the text-critical points of interest. It will be an indispensable tool for those who investigate the textual variety and want to wrestle with the intricate issues of the textual history as raised by the biblical manuscripts of the DSS. I can only wish that the other fascicles will soon follow to complete this valuable series, and I have no doubt that they will be received with similar gusto.

Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen
St. Peter am Hart, Austria

MARTIN PRÖBSTLE

Evans, Craig A, ed. *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004. 280 pp. Hardcover, \$20.95.

This multiauthor volume addresses a number of important questions. How do NT writers make use of the OT? How do the OT writings function in the NT? Which version or versions of the OT served as Scripture for those who wrote the NT? Reflecting on these questions leads to interesting implications for the study of sacred texts today.

According to the editor, Craig A. Evans, the book was designed as an introduction and a reader on the subject of the NT's use of the OT. The book's introduction, written by Evans himself, orients the student (rather than the veteran scholar) to the larger issues and provides a survey of the principal primary and secondary literature. The rest of the book is composed of highly technical scholarly studies that advance the discussion and set forth new ideas.

The main part of the book opens with a pair of studies on how the Aramaic targums of the OT illuminate the meaning of the NT. In contrast to rabbinic literature, the targums are more reflective of the biblical interpretation of the common people in the synagogue. Bruce Chilton shows how the paraphrasing tendencies of the Aramaic OT clarify similar tendencies in the NT. He catalogs four main types of affinity between the targumim and

the NT. While available targumic documents are later than the first century, they retain some traditions familiar to the gospel writers. Evans focuses on the distinctive contribution of the Aramaic Psalter, which he understands to be the body of ancient tradition out of which our Psalms targums emerged. Compared to the Hebrew Psalms, the Aramaic versions exhibited a much greater emphasis on law, temple, prophecy, angels and demons, and the concepts of "redemption" and "redeemer." The Aramaic versions of the Psalms help to clarify the points being made in some specific NT texts.

The next two studies explore the function of the OT Scriptures in the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke. Rikk Watts probes the wider context of Isa 7:14, attempting to show that the name "Immanuel" and the corresponding phrase "God with us" express judgment at least as much as they express salvation. In other words, if the Israel of Matthew's day rejects the baby Jesus, it will suffer the same consequences as ancient Israel, when it rejected the message of Isaiah. Robert Shedinger examines the interpretation of Mic 5:1 in Matt 2:6. He concludes that most examples of seeming misquotation in the NT are probably witnesses to early, pre-Christian textual variants. If that is the case, the Diatessaron and other early NT witnesses, where they quote the OT, can be helpful in the process of OT text criticism.

The two studies that follow examine the function of the OT in the Gospel of Luke. Simon Gathercole investigates the use and interpretation of Lev 18:5 in early Judaism to clarify several allusions to it in Luke, Romans, and Galatians. He challenges the understanding of these texts put forward by James Dunn, N. T. Wright, and Ed Sanders. According to Gathercole, early Judaism, with the apparent exception of Philo, generally taught that obedience was essential to eschatological salvation. He argues that scholars have overlooked the tension in early Jewish literature between gracious divine election and a salvation that is based on obedience. Michael Labahn explores the meaning of Isa 61 for Luke 7, especially in the light of the *Messianic Apocalypse* (4Q521). The Qumran evidence suggests that the proclamation of good news in the context of eschatological salvation was not invented by the early Christians, but has strong Jewish roots. He concludes that the Q document, as far as we can make it out, is more interested in eschatology and the apocalypse than has been generally thought.

Arthur Droge provides the only study on the Fourth Gospel in the book. He offers several examples that to him illustrate a very free hand in the Gospel's quotations of and reflections on the OT. These observations suggest to him that the Revealer of John is not only estranged from the religious leaders of his day, but also from the collection of sacred texts that they share. Droge draws the radical conclusion that the Fourth Gospel's use of the OT is "nothing less than a revolutionary attempt to usurp the meaning of 'the Scriptures'" (176). Whatever one's opinion of this conclusion, Droge ends his piece with some powerful reflections on the way people relate to authoritative texts.

The next two studies explore how the OT is used in the Book of Acts. James VanderKam unpacks the OT background of the Feast of Weeks and its implications for Acts 2. While the festival does not seem especially important in the Hebrew Bible, later Jewish writings assigned much greater significance to it. There is little in Acts 2 that reminds one directly of what the OT says about the Feast of Weeks. Nevertheless, there are a number of points of agreement between Jewish traditions about the Feast of Weeks and the giving of the law on Mount Sinai and various details found in Acts 2. James Kugel notes that, at a number of points, Stephen's sermon recorded in Acts 7 is at variance with the history recorded in the Hebrew and Greek texts of the OT. These variations can often be shown to reflect ancient midrashic debates about problems in OT interpretation. He concludes that early Christian writers almost never approached the text fresh; instead they perceived the text of Scripture through the lens of earlier Jewish interpretation.

The last two studies focus on the Pauline tradition. Brigitte Kahl offers a fresh interpretation of the Sarah and Hagar allegory in Gal 4, grounded in the "headline" and "conclusion" found in Gal 3:28 and 5:13. She suggests that "driving out the slave woman" is not an attack on Jews or Judaism, but is, rather, a call to end the hierarchal division of humanity into superior and inferior, excluded and included, that characterizes the present world order. The point of the allegory is that slavery becomes freedom when one freely exercises slave service toward others. Gary Anderson follows with a study of 1 Timothy's argument relating to Eve's being deceived, while Adam was not deceived. Early Jewish texts like *The Life of Adam and Eve* offer a wealth of information about what early Jews and Christians thought about the story. It appears that the author of 1 Timothy was familiar with traditions reflected in early Jewish expansions of the biblical account of creation and the fall.

The collection of essays is brought to a close with an epilogue by James Sanders. The epilogue considers the implications of the whole book and is geared more toward the student, as was the case with the introduction.

I must honestly say that I found this book to be a challenging read. Although attempts at a common agenda were made, there is much unevenness in the book. Some studies require an understanding of the original languages, others are broader and more theological in approach. Some, such as Droge, seem critical to the point of undermining a faith approach; others, such as Kahl, seemed apologetic as much as exegetical.

While the introduction promises a work of more general interest, the studies themselves are detailed and esoteric enough that I had difficulty following some of the arguments, in spite of the fact that my own dissertation explored these same areas. It required a second reading to appreciate most of the essays. The average reader will not be so patient.

By the time I was a little more than halfway through the book, I would certainly have set it aside had I not agreed to provide a review. I'm not saying that the studies have little value in and of themselves, but that they do not hang together as well as one would like, and the book has the feel of a journal where one picks and chooses and comes back mainly for tidbits of specialized research.

When I got to the article by Droge I was put off by what seemed to be an extreme skepticism in his handling of the Fourth Gospel's attitude toward Scripture. But somewhere in the course of his article I saw deeper possibilities in what he was observing and began to get interested in the book. The remainder of the articles seemed much more fruitful and left me with a more positive feeling about the experience. I would encourage anyone interested in the topic of the NT's use of the OT to read the introduction and conclusion first, then dig into the specific studies that seem most interesting to the reader's research agenda.

In my opinion, the highlight of the book is the conclusion by Sanders. He does his best to reflect on the impact of the essays as a combined whole. First, the evidence presented moves Sanders to the conclusion that searching the Torah for guidance in ever-changing situations was fundamental to early Judaism. Such application did not require careful quotation or adherence to standards of text criticism. What counted was that the community recognized the reference and accepted its authority. Similar passages could be meshed together to create a compelling case for the author's viewpoint. At stake was not the original meaning of the text but how the text's authority interacted with the needs and concerns of the interpreter and his or her community.

A second contribution of the book, according to Sanders, underlined the ancient Jewish conviction that the Torah spoke directly to the end-time situation. Since first-century Jewish communities often believed that they were living in the end times, they

would assume that the Torah could speak directly to their situation. Few Jewish writers of the time were interested in what Isaiah or David really meant. Scripture did not belong to the past, but to the ever-changing present. The essays in the book demonstrate that the writers of the NT followed the same hermeneutic.

Sanders goes on to argue that conservative Christians today derive their hermeneutic from the examples in the Bible. Early Christians put the Prophets rather than the Writings last because they believed that the prophets foretold Christ, that they spoke directly to the situation first-century Christians found themselves in. Following this model today, conservative Christians tend to make creative use of the Scriptures to address social, political, and theological issues of current interest.

This leads Sanders to the probing question: "In what sense, then, can modern critical scholarship speak of the New Testament as the fulfillment of the Old" (256)? Sanders argues in response that modern scholarship serves as a constraint on adapting Scripture to say whatever anyone thinks it ought to say to believing communities today. Whether the viewpoint in question is liberal or conservative, it needs to be subjected to a critical reading of the Bible as a constraining factor in the discernment of its abiding truth. Its relevance for today must derive from a faithful and natural extension of what it originally meant.

In conclusion, it seems to me that devotional and creative readings of Scripture will always be the norm in most churches and synagogues. Such readings should not be discouraged as long as they build up individuals and the community in positive ways. But when the community becomes divided by interpretations of the Scriptures, the scholarly role of exegetical reading is a necessary arbiter to make sure that all players in the discussion are on the same page. Scripture was and is adaptable for life. But scholarship can play a healthy role in guiding such adaptation to the benefit of believing communities.

Andrews University

JON PAULIEN

Gaustad, Edwin S. *Faith of the Founders: Religion and the New Nation, 1776-1826*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2004. 196 pp. Paper, \$24.95.

The increasing influence of the Religious Right on American politics in recent elections and their attempts to break down the wall between religion and politics has created a need among Americans to reexamine the religious traditions of the American nation. This book has helped to answer some of the questions raised by the Religious Right about the role of religion in the formation of the nation. The focus of this book is to examine the faith of the Founding Fathers, namely Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and John Adams during the period 1776 to 1826.

The author, an Emeritus Professor of History at the University of California, Riverside, identifies seven varying perspectives that guided these men. He points out that although some of these perspectives were sometimes contrary, they were not necessarily contradictory. Some were held in creative tension, while others were seen as absolute dichotomies that ruled out neutrality. They all required decisions, judgment, and firm conviction, with the remarkable outcome that American religious life was affirmed and shaped for centuries without the spilling of blood or religious wars that were a common feature of the European landscape.

The first perspective was to view religion as an instrument of establishment and social order. The Founding Fathers viewed God's people as having the task of rescuing humanity from natural brutishness and anarchical selfishness. For them religion created order and stability

The second perspective was like a muted counterpart to the first, for they affirmed

dissent and personal piety in the face of the majoritarian view of religion and its societal priorities. Religion had more to do with the human heart than with councils of state. Its core principles deal primarily with convictions of the heart.

The third perspective proclaimed the inseparable nature of political liberty and religious liberty. This was a revolutionary idea. In the past, civil and ecclesiastical tyranny had traveled side by side, reinforcing each other; but now Americans were simultaneously fighting for liberty on both the political and religious fronts.

The fourth perspective was civil religion and national unity. Although the American people did not chose one religion over any other, they saw themselves as a religious people carrying out a divine mandate similar to that of the chosen Israel of old. This placed them under divine authority and judgment, and they were sustained by divine power.

The fifth perspective was that the religion of the nation must be reasonable and, therefore, devoid of mystery and irrational dogmatism. "It must be a religion worthy of a free nation, a religion emancipated from knavery and deceptions of the past" (8).

The sixth perspective would counterbalance the fifth by arguing that while religion must be reasonable it should steer clear of the excesses of the French Revolution. Anthropology must not replace theology. God must still be acknowledged as our Creator and must be accorded his rightful place in our lives.

The seventh perspective was to use religion as an instrument of vitality in the community. It would act as a civilizing force to banish barbarianism, ignorance, and irreligion. It would inspire the nation with confidence, a purpose and godliness by providing education, establishing schools and colleges, dispatching missionaries, elevating morals, and leading out in reforms.

Contrary to what the Religious Right proclaimed about the simplicity of the nation's religious past, what we encounter is profound complexity. There is confidence in the power of a social order, in the power of personal piety, in religious liberty and the limitless potential of the nation, the reforming potency of reason, the enduring place of divine transcendence and the prophetic voice of vital religion.

Both Thomas Jefferson and James Madison understood much of the bloody history of Europe in terms of how despotic religion had shed the blood of countless thousands: neither wanted anything like this in the new nation they were forming. Madison argued "that generals nor politicians have the right or authority much less the wisdom to be the judge of religious truth" (40). Jefferson would support Madison's position by proclaiming that "Religion had historically been a major means for shackling human minds, not emancipating them. But that age of human history now belonged to the past, along with all the hypocrisy and meanness that had accompanied government bribery and ecclesiastical coercion" (41).

Gaustad quoted Jefferson as saying:

If an all-wise and all-powerful God restrained himself from coercing either the bodies or the minds of men and women, how utterly absurd it must then be for "fallible and uninspired men" to assume "dominion over the faith of others." In this new enlightened age we must recognize "that our civil rights have no dependence upon our religious opinions, any more than our opinions in physics or geometry." Above all else we must have the confidence, the courage, to affirm "that truth is great and will prevail if left to herself, that she is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error, and has nothing to fear from the conflict . . . errors ceasing to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to contradict them" (41).

Although Franklin confessed that theology was not his keenest concern, when pressed about his convictions he had this to say:

Here is my Creed. I believe in one God, Creator of the Universe: That he governs the World by his Providence. That he ought to be worshiped. That the most acceptable Service we can render to him is doing good to his other Children. That the Soul of Man is immortal, and will be treated with Justice in another Life, respecting its Conduct in this. These I take to be the fundamental principles of all sound Religion, and I regard them as you do, in whatever Sect I meet with them (65).

As a practicing Deist he could not countenance any liaison between religion and politics. For him religion was a useful instrument for the betterment of society.

No other Founding Father has been more canonized than George Washington, yet he was a man given to little religiosity. In 1795, he wrote: "In politics as in religion my tenants [*sic*] are few and simple" (76). He used the language of faith and often praised the Grand Architect of the universe. There were other allusions to God, such as "the Governor of the universe," "Higher Cause," "Great Ruler of Events," "Wise Creator," and "Supreme Dispenser of all Good" (77). He saw the hand of Providence in the formation of the American nation, but he scrupulously avoided the endorsement of any religion. In 1789, when some Presbyterian elders protested to Washington that the Constitution lacked any explicit recognition of the only true God and Jesus Christ, the new president calmly replied that the "path of true piety is so plain as to require little political direction" (78).

Edwin Gaustad has proven conclusively that while the Founding Fathers were deeply religious and understood the religious character of the American nation, they all steadfastly opposed any kind of state religion for the nation. They refrained from endorsing publicly any religious group. They all remembered Europe's bloody past when the church and state were united, and they wanted an American nation where church and state were separate. They were not asking that religion be excluded from public discourse or from the arena of public conduct, but that the state, the political arm of the country, stay clear of any kind of alliance with any religious group.

This book is a must-read for those who want to understand American religious roots and the role of religion in the formation of the American nation, as well as for those who want to be aware of the views of the Founding Fathers regarding the relationship of religion and state.

Andrews University

TREVOR O'REGGIO

Kalimi, Isaac. *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, Inc., 2005. xiii + 473 pp. Hardcover, \$44.50.

This book is an expanded revision of the author's earlier work published in Hebrew (*The Book of Chronicles: Historical Writing and Literary Devices* [Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2000]), which was itself an expanded revision of an earlier German work (*Geschichtsschreibung des Chronisten* [Berlin: deGruyter, 1995]). In it, Kalimi deals with the parallels between Chronicles and other passages in the Hebrew Bible, i.e., what he calls "an extensive and enlightening example of a later biblical author's editing and adaptation of earlier literary-historiographical sources available to him" (1). He attempts to identify the forms and techniques employed by the Chronicler in his adaptations of Samuel-Kings incorporated into Chronicles.

In his introduction, Kalimi discusses the two different approaches developed in the nineteenth century regarding the Chronicler's use of sources, i.e., either that the Chronicler used and modified Samuel-Kings or that both used a common source. He sides with the first view, but does not rule out textual differences in the source text available to the author

of Chronicles or to scribal errors either in Chronicles or its sources.

Kalimi states that the study is based on the MT of Chronicles and Samuel-Kings, though he also consulted the fragments from the Judean Desert and the LXX as part of his research. Many scholars will take exception to his statement that “the reading of the Masoretic version is generally to be preferred to that of the alternative” (11). Nevertheless, the MT is a valid choice as a starting point for this study, since there is no general consensus on the history of the textual transmission of the various textual witnesses.

Each chapter explains one specific historical or literary emendation, followed by examples illustrating it. The first two chapters deal primarily with historiographical changes, whereas the next seventeen chapters deal primarily with literary changes. The last chapter deals with three topics: inconsistency in the reworking of an earlier text, alterations resulting in disharmony with other parts of Chronicles or other biblical texts, and historical mistakes stemming from gaps in the Chronicler’s knowledge concerning the period of the monarchy.

In his concluding chapter, Kalimi concisely outlines some brief conclusions based on the data and some suggested areas of research that this study may impact. One of the important implications of this study is that most differences between the parallel texts in Samuel-Kings and Chronicles result from the intentional creativity of the Chronicler, rather than problems of a text-critical nature. He suggests that this “free use” of previous texts may have also occurred in the pre-Masoretic form of other biblical texts. Another conclusion is that the existence of similar features throughout Chronicles “may” support the attribution of the work to one single author, though he cautions that this is “not necessarily certain” (407). Nevertheless, he states unambiguously in his next-to-last paragraph that this “book argues that Chronicles, in the main, represents a unified composition” (412). Another result of this study is that it throws light on the skill and sophistication of the Chronicler as an author as well as a redactor. Also, this study demonstrates that inconsistencies in the final form of a text cannot always be attributed to later additions and redactions. Finally, Kalimi sees some wider application of this study in the investigation of historical writings in the Ancient Near East in general, citing as an example the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions.

For those who like seeing examples, Kalimi’s book is a delight to read. It is replete with examples illustrating the various techniques used by the author of Chronicles. These are well organized, catalogued, and explained. However, there is some inconsistency in his method of citation. That is, although most examples are cited in Hebrew with an English translation, others are cited only in English (e.g., see chaps. 10–11). I assume that this may be partly due to the intended English readership of the book, and partly to a space-saving consideration, such as the example of inclusion in the list of Judah’s sons in 1 Chron 2:3–4 (318–320). Nevertheless, since the author takes the MT as the basis for his study, it would be preferable for all examples, or at least the relevant phrases or sentences, to be cited first in Hebrew.

Kalimi has succeeded in systematically listing and classifying the literary and historiographical adaptations employed by the Chronicler in using source material from Samuel-Kings. The cumulative weight of the evidence presented also makes a strong case for his conclusion that Chronicles consists of a unified composition. Kalimi’s book is an important contribution to the study of Chronicles, and an invaluable reference tool.

Knight, George R., ed. *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine: Annotated Edition*. Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2003. xxxvi + 597 pp. Hardcover, \$29.99.

In response to probing inquiries by evangelicals as to the orthodoxy of their beliefs, Seventh-day Adventists published a 720-page response in 1957 entitled *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*. Written and edited by individuals empowered by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the book was intended as “an objective analysis” of Adventist history and belief, “with particular emphasis in those areas where Adventist teachings differ” from other Christians’ (1). However, when the book was released, most evangelicals continued to view Adventism as a non-Christian cult and regarded the book as an attempt at covering up some real, insurmountable theological barriers that existed between Adventism and evangelicalism. More significantly, *Questions on Doctrine* aroused a passionate outburst of objections from some Adventists, who charged the book with deviating from historic Adventism. Since then, the book has remained a significant, yet highly controversial part of Adventist theological discourses.

The republication of this landmark volume by Andrews University Press, some forty-six years after its original release, seeks to provide “a forthright treatment of explosive issues opened up by *Questions on Doctrine*” and “historical and theological analyses,” in order to shed greater light on the intradenominational theological struggle that has raged since the book’s publication (xi). This purpose is admirably accomplished with the help of the annotations and the historical and theological introduction by George R. Knight, Professor of Church History at Andrews University and a foremost authority on Adventist history.

The republished, annotated edition of *Questions on Doctrine* is to be commended in several ways. First, the completely reformatted text is attractive and reader-friendly. It utilizes a sensibly smaller font than the original and larger-sized pages, which reduces the number of pages, even with extensive annotations, to less than 650 total pages. At the same time, the original page numbers are indicated in bold in the text and between two section symbols, § (e.g., page 45 in the original is indicated as §45§). The annotations by Knight are set off in gray boxes as footnotes. Overall, the visual effect of the new format is quite pleasing.

Second, the “Historical and Theological Introduction to the Annotated Edition” by Knight provides valuable analysis of the events that led up to the publication of *Questions on Doctrine* and the impact that the book has had since 1957. Knight is correct when he introduces the book as “the most divisive book in Seventh-day Adventist history” (xiii). His introduction goes on to explain why the book became so controversial. Though he lauds *Questions on Doctrine* as “a remarkably courageous statement of traditional Adventist doctrinal understanding,” written in a language comprehensible for its intended evangelical audience, Knight finds that the authors of the book were not completely honest in presenting Adventism’s historic understanding of the Trinity and the human nature of Christ (xxix, xxx). Furthermore, he shows that each of the two major intradenominational factions that resulted from the book—L. E. Froom, R. A. Anderson, and W. E. Read (the principal authors of the book) representing one side, and M. L. Andreasen (a retired theologian, who was not included in the publication process) representing the other—contributed to the resulting “disharmony.” He also finds that the aggressive, even combative, approach that the evangelicals took toward Andreasen’s faction further fueled the controversy brewing among Adventists. Throughout the introduction, Knight shows keen sensitivity to the

continuing debate within Adventism and provides a fair, balanced, and objective analysis of the controversy, though some may take exception to this appraisal.

Third, Knight's annotations to the 1957 text, sprinkled throughout the book, provide further background information, clarification of terms, criticism of theological concepts and expressions, and updated understanding of doctrines. As can be expected, the most extensive annotations are reserved for the most controversial portions of the text—those that discuss the Trinity, the divine and human natures of Christ, and the atonement. On the whole, the annotations reveal Knight's laudable—and successful—attempt at providing a fair and honest analysis of these hotly debated issues. Though his personal theological leanings are by no means sympathetic to Andreasen and his last-generation theology, Knight is admirably even-handed in his critique of Andreasen's reactions to the book's treatment of the doctrines of the atonement and the human nature of Christ. In the end, what he offers through these annotations is restoration of the theological balance that was lacking in the original edition and a corrective to the self-contradictory stances that Andreasen took in reaction to *Questions on Doctrine* (though contemporary followers of Andreasen, no doubt, would disagree with this assessment).

The contribution that this new edition makes to the ongoing theological discussions within Adventism would have been further magnified, had more annotations been supplied for those chapters that were not yet controversial in the 1950s but became important in the ensuing decades. One example would be the section on prophecy, Dan 8 and 9, and the 2,300 days. Though Knight does not ignore the section altogether, he could certainly have elaborated much more on the issues that would become key points of debate among Adventist scholars since Desmond Ford's public questioning of the validity of the traditional Adventist interpretation of apocalyptic prophecies. Other sections that could have benefitted from the annotator's attention are the chapters on Ellen White's writings and the remnant church. These are two other "hot potato" issues that have figured prominently since the 1970s. A nod to these more recent developments, which he does not avoid making in several other places, would have been helpful. However, this being said, it should be recognized that Knight's primary interest lay in the issues that have become controversial *as a result of* the publication of *Questions on Doctrine*.

All in all, the republished, annotated edition of *Questions on Doctrine* helps readers gain a more mature, nuanced view of the doctrinal controversy that proceeded from the original publication. Clearly, it is a volume that must be consulted and referenced by anyone seeking a deeper understanding of contemporary Adventist theology.

Pacific Union College
Angwin, California

JULIUS NAM

Pierce, Ronald W., Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee, eds. *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004. 528 pp. Paper, \$25.99.

Everything about this book is massive. It has 528 pages even with a smaller print font, and weighs 1.7 pounds! There are three editors overseeing twenty-nine chapters. Contributors include Ruth Tucker, Walter Liefeld, the late Stanley Grenz, Roger Nicole, William Webb, and Alvera Mickelsen. This line-up requires five pages just to introduce all the authors with their academic profiles.

The volume is a "long read." There is no "fluff" or padding, where one can let go of the argument and relax. Each chapter is carefully thought out and presents a

necessary aspect undergirding and/or explaining the position the editors seek to demonstrate on this still hotly-debated topic of the role of women in the church. In fact, it is the first comprehensive scholarly collection of essays from an egalitarian perspective published in North America in the last three decades.

The book probes a wide range of issues: biblical, theological, historical, hermeneutical, and practical. One finds a whole gamut of thought regarding the roles of men and women, whether in the church, the home, or society at large. Editors Pierce, Groothuis, and Fee have carried out an extraordinary task editing this much-needed volume that, among other things, vanquishes arguments that women in ministry are defying God's mandate in Scripture. The position of universal gender hierarchy is shown to be unscriptural, and thus erroneous and even detrimental to the church. In so doing, the reader is forced to confront the presuppositions or grid with which they interpret the Holy Writ.

Discovering Biblical Equality helpfully provides a single resource that covers the main issues and arguments for biblical equality. It can also be seen as a (nonpolemic) response to *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: Reaffirming the Patriarchy*, edited by Wayne Grudem and John F. Piper, which argues on the other side of the debate. Interestingly, even the cover designs of the two books are similar, except for color.

Careful arrangement of the chapters helpfully organizes the tome's broad themes: "Setting the Stage (The Historical Backdrop)," "Looking to Scripture (The Biblical Text)," "Thinking it Through (Logical and Theological Perspectives)," "Addressing the Issues (Hermeneutical and Cultural)," "Living it Out (Practical Applications)."

As is the case with multiauthored books, each chapter could receive comment. For example, William Webb discusses the important "redemptive movement" hermeneutic that is then applied by I. Howard Marshall. One of the editors, Gordon Fee, in two separate chapters tackles the much-debated Pauline passages of 1 Cor 14 and Gal 3:26-28. Editors Rebecca Groothuis and Ronald Pierce each contribute, respectively, a chapter: "Equal in Being, Unequal in Role" and "Contemporary Evangelicals for Gender Equality," respectively. One also finds chapters on abortion, abuse, and even homosexuality. This is significant since the hierarchical-complementarian position argues that defending egalitarianism leads consequentially to acceptance of homosexuality. However, these authors show that the Bible itself treats these two issues in diametrically different ways.

The many contributors take a consistent stand on "complementarity without hierarchy," as might be expected. However, there is more than one alternative for the roles of men and women, both in marriage and in the church. There is no suggestion of a third possibility for understanding the position of Scripture on this discussion. Since the fall (Gen 3), with its radical results of sin, God revealed in the Garden a way for husbands and wives, both now with sinful natures, to maintain unity in the home, yet never voiding the Edenic ideal. The husband carries the responsibility to shield and protect his wife and the home. Even Paul argues for this role for the husband in the NT. Understanding what "submission" means has always been the problem for both OT and NT texts! However, the husband-over-wife plan is *not* the "model" Paul holds up for the church. He insists that the human body, with its many parts, with Christ as the *head*, is the proper analogy.

Moreover, the issue of "patriarchy" itself needs to be clarified. OT "patriarchs" from whence comes "patriarchy," need to be studied again. In Genesis, "submission" was defined within these venerable families. For example, Sarah is rather assertive—she is the one who suggests Hagar to Abraham. In the next generation, the scriptural record includes much more detail about Rebekah than Isaac, the patriarch. And again, she is

assertive and vigorous. Yes, the patriarchal system grew abusive, but that came later in Israel with the monarchy (cf. Nancy Vyhmeister, ed., *Women in Ministry* [Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1998]).

Overall, *Discovering Biblical Equality* is a winsome apology for the position of “complementarity without hierarchy” that honors the humanity of both sexes warmly and harmoniously. Empowered by the Spirit, both men and women in the church stand before God as full members of the “body” of Christ to pursue the ministries to which God has called and enabled them.

Andrews University

JO ANN DAVIDSON

Smith, Carl B. II. *No Longer Jews: The Search for Gnostic Origins*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004. 317 pp. Hardcover, \$29.95.

Carl Smith, Associate Professor of History and Religion at Palm Beach Atlantic University, has tackled the knotty problem of Gnostic inception. That Gnosticism existed in the early centuries of the Christian church is not disputed. But what Gnosticism is and where it came from is still a source of much debate. Last century’s discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library texts opened further opportunities to rethink Gnostic origins. Was it a distinctive Christian heresy? Was it a competitor of first-century Christianity? Or was it, perhaps, a pre-Christian folk religion traceable to Oriental roots—a popular modern solution to unanswered questions in religious studies? How should one understand the disparate ideas, writings, and practices that are lumped together under the Gnostic rubric?

As Smith sees it, Gnosticism is an antic cosmic dualism between material and spiritual, between the highest God and the Creator. This spawned from Gnosticism’s close relationship with Judaism and Christianity in the late first and early second centuries. He decides that an early second-century dating for the birth of Gnosticism best ties together the historical details of the period, particularly since Egypt, following the Jewish Revolt under Trajan (115-117 C.E.), supposedly provides a ripe context for Gnosticism’s rejection of the cosmos and of the Creator God of the Hebrews. Using Jewish traditions and Scriptures, along with Greek cosmology, Gnostics devised a hermeneutic that resulted in the transposition of Jewish and Christian traditions. Smith writes:

My contention in this book is that evidence regarding the religious and intellectual milieu, geographical context, and chronological sequence of clearly gnostic teachers and documents points to an early second-century rise of the gnostic religion in the Jewish intellectual centers of North Africa. The crisis out of which Gnosticism arose was not that of the Jewish revolts of Judea; rather, it was the lesser-known revolt that originated in Cyrenaica and Egypt in 115-117 C.E. during the reign of the Roman emperor Trajan (4).

The author gives evidence of a thorough survey of secondary materials and competing theories of Gnosticism’s origins. He provides helpful charts, comparing the teachings of different early Gnostic teachers such as Simon, Menander, Cerinthus, Carpocrates, Saturninus, and Basilides. However, he links the main assertions of his case with a series of “ifs” and “it seems.” Other conjectures of Gnostic origins are merely replaced with Smith’s conjectures. Moreover, some of his various interpretations have strong alternative possibilities that weaken his case, such as where he writes that “In the line of Christian polemical writings, Paul’s letters stand as [the] earliest markers along the trajectory toward Gnosticism. Yet, there is no evidence . . . that Paul was concerned with issues related to Docetism” (155). This conjecture in Smith’s mind seems to prevent him

from seeing various remarks Paul includes in many of his letters regarding the nature of Christ. However, as Edwin Yamauchi suggests, on a back-cover endorsement, "Even those who may not agree with Smith's conclusions will appreciate the lucid manner in which he has expounded the issues and the evidences for emergent Gnosticism." I wholeheartedly agree.

Andrews University

JO ANN DAVIDSON

Westerholm, Stephen. *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. xix + 488 pp. Paper, \$35.00.

Westerholm's book revises and updates his earlier work, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters*. In this revised volume, Westerholm draws four pictures of the "Lutheran" Paul in "Part One: Portraits of the 'Lutheran' Paul," a survey and critical assessment of the scholarly renditions that call into question the Lutheran perspectives of Paul. Then in "Part Two: Twentieth-Century Responses to the 'Lutheran' Paul," Westerholm offers his own construal of Paul that incorporates elements of the so-called "new perspective" with Lutheran ones. His synthesis, "Part Three: The Historical and the 'Lutheran' Paul," strives to reappropriate a Lutheran perspective for our day.

Westerholm begins by examining the Pauline interpretations by Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Wesley. Their readings of the apostle are fundamentally "Lutheran" in that they articulate the centrality of the doctrine of justification by faith. On the topics that are currently and vigorously debated in Pauline studies—"human nature in its 'fallen' condition, the nature and function of the Mosaic law, justification by faith apart from works, the place of works in the lives of believers, the role in believers' lives of both the law and the Spirit, the possibility (or inevitability) of believers' sin, and the 'election' of those who come to faith" (xviii)—these four exegetes posit what we now call Lutheran understandings of Paul that are on the whole in essential agreement. Interestingly, given the significant differences that Wesley had with Augustine, Luther, and Calvin (e.g., his appreciation of Pelagius, his perplexity with Luther's dismissal of good works and the law, his abhorrence and denunciation of the "decree of predestination," his understanding of prevenient grace), it might strike one as odd that Wesley would be added to the proponents of the "Lutheran" Paul. Notwithstanding, Westerholm makes a strong case that Wesley proclaimed with enthusiasm the Lutheran message of justification by faith.

In part 2, Westerholm examines the twentieth-century discussion. His analysis is focused primarily on the scholarship that questions Luther's understanding of Paul. Unlike Luther, who argued that Judaism is a religion of "works-righteousness," the literature of Rabbinic Judaism makes it abundantly clear that Judaism is a religion of grace (James Dunn, Ed Sanders, and N. T. Wright). In regard to what Paul finds wrong with Judaism, scholars have argued that the religion of Judaism is not Christianity, i.e., it refused to accept Jesus as the Christ. The claim that Gentiles had to convert to Judaism in order to be a part of the people of God placed the Gentiles at a disadvantage (Sanders). Further, Judaism is characterized by ethnocentrism, i.e., a nationalistic pride that promotes the exclusivistic laws of circumcision, food, and sacred days, which seek to maintain Israel's separation from the Gentile nations (Dunn, Wright).

Luther's understanding of Paul was deeply influenced by his own struggles of a self-questioning and terrified conscience. However, a careful analysis of Rom 7 demonstrates that the rhetorical understanding of the "I" is not to be interpreted as Paul's angst-ridden preconversion experience, but as the moral powerlessness of human beings under the law (Werner Kümmel). Philippians 3 demonstrates that the apostle's

conscience was “robust” in nature. The notion that he suffered from an introspective, guilt-ridden conscience is largely due to Augustine (Krister Stendahl).

The Pauline doctrine of justification by faith is not set in opposition to the law wherein one is “declared” righteous by faith in Christ apart from the works of the law; on the contrary, the doctrine concerns the issue of belonging to the covenant people of God. The “covenant” language of justification promotes a spirit of equality and inclusiveness among Jews and Gentiles (Terence Donaldson, Dunn, Sanders, and Wright). The “works of the law” the apostle opposed are not the good works performed by legalistically inclined human beings with a view of obtaining merit before God; they are rather those works required by the law—circumcision, food laws, and feast days—that Jews boastfully advocated to demarcate themselves as the true people of God; the Jews also insisted Gentile converts must observe such commands. Paul energetically opposed such “works of the law,” for they led to elitist attitudes that erected barriers between Jews and Gentiles (Dunn, Sanders, and Wright). Fundamentally, Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith apart from the works of the law is not related to the notion of how a guilty sinner obtains righteousness from God, but how Gentiles, through faith in Christ without becoming Jews, are incorporated into the people of God. This is “the issue that divides the ‘Lutheran’ Paul from his contemporary critics” (257).

In part 3, Westerholm delineates his own understanding of Paul. He starts by defining the term “righteousness” in the Pauline corpus. The apostle utilized *dikaio-*terminology in numerous ways: “ordinary” righteousness refers to “what one ought to do and what one has if one had done it; it is required of all human beings” (272); “extraordinary” righteousness is the righteousness that is granted to those who are not righteous, i.e., the acquittal of the ungodly; “God’s” righteousness is “the act of divine grace by which, through the sacrificial death of his Son, he declares sinners righteous—thus championing the goodness of his creation” (293). Righteousness should not be understood in a covenantal sense as conveying the inclusion of the Gentiles into the covenant people of God; rather, it indicates what the ungodly lack and need.

While Paul can employ the term “law” (*nomos*) to refer to Israel’s Scriptures and the Pentateuch, his most frequent usage of the term refers to the Sinaitic legislation. This legislation is constituted of laws that need “doing.” Hence the Mosaic code is based on works rather than faith and the phrase “the works of the law” indicates the deeds demanded by such a law code. Romans 3:27 and 9:30-32 disclose this principle that the law is not based on faith, but on works; it is thus appropriate to view the law and gospel in contradistinction to one another. Paradoxically, however, “the *goal of the law* can only be attained *apart from the law*, by faith” (329; emphasis Westerholm). One must not understand Paul’s use of the law, either by itself or in conjunction with works, to mean that he is referring to a perverted use of the law as legalistically misconstrued by Jews (C. E. B. Cranfield); rather, the “notion that the law demands works is a Pauline thesis, not a Jewish misunderstanding” (297). Paul’s usage of *nomos* does not grossly distort the Hebrew word *torah*; quite the opposite. His usage of *nomos* to indicate the obligations imposed upon Israel by the Sinaitic legislation along with the concomitant sanctions is congruous with the understanding of *torah* as found in the Deuteronomistic and later OT literature.

Sanders has argued that the positions of Paul and Palestinian Judaism regarding the relationship between grace and works are essentially indistinguishable. The issue has been put in a pithy and striking manner: “getting in” for the covenant people of God was all of grace and “staying in” was conditioned on obedience to the law. Westerholm argues that a careful reading of the rabbinic literature suggests that the rabbis did *not* construe the relation between grace and faith in such a Sanderian fashion. There are rabbinic statements that indicate that “Israel’s future submission to the commandments is the ‘condition’ God

had in mind *before redeeming them and granting them his covenant*" (350; emphasis Westerholm's). Writing polemically in a post-Holocaust context, Sanders himself has imposed such (Lutheran!) categories upon the Jewish literature. Westerholm's point is well taken: "[W]e do Judaism neither justice nor favor when we claim that it preached 'good' Protestant doctrine on the subject of grace and works" (351).

The revelation of the Son of God compelled Paul to reevaluate and reinterpret Israel's story of divine redemption, particularly the role of the "law in God's scheme." On the one hand, the apostle agrees with his Jewish contemporaries that human beings are dependent upon God and their actions are held accountable by him; that the Mosaic law is God's gift to Israel and expresses the appropriate human response to a life lived in the goodness of God's creation. On the other hand, Paul departs from his Jewish contemporaries when he insists that Adamic humanity cannot submit to God's law nor can they obtain righteousness and life through it. This post-conversion Christian reevaluation of the law was occasioned by the realization that the redemption of humankind required the crucifixion of God's Son. If Jesus' death was a necessity, "then the sinfulness of humankind must be both radical in itself and beyond capacity of existing . . . measures to overcome" (421). Israel's recalcitrance and sinfulness, amply attested in the Deuteronomistic history and prophetic literature, doubtless influenced the apostle's reassessment of the human quandary implicit in the death of Christ.

What, then, is the function of the law? The Christian Paul now recognized that God assigned two purposes to the law: first, he proffers life to those who obey the commands of the law; and second, he utilizes the law to underscore and exacerbate the human bondage to sin so as to magnify the splendor of the salvation which can only be attained in Christ. The arrival of the law "served to *worsen* the human dilemma—partly because it brought definition (as 'transgressions') to wrongs that would have been committed in any case, but partly also because it increased the actual number of sins committed" (426; emphasis Westerholm's). Given that the law emphasizes humanity's sinfulness and is unable to overcome their bondage to sin, the law cannot play any role in the salvation of humankind. Consequently, righteousness can only be obtained by faith in Christ apart from the works of the law; those persons who seek righteousness through the law wrongly believe that their deeds, performed by "unredeemed flesh," are able to be a factor in securing the approval of God. Westerholm recognizes that such a reading of the law's purpose is quite problematic, if not "theologically grotesque," for those who believe in an omniscient Creator and Redeemer. Nevertheless, he maintains Paul's view of God's design for the law is such that "God promises life to those who obey his commands, but has planned from the beginning his remedy for transgressors" (334).

What role does the law play in the Christian life? Paradoxically, Paul states that believers are not "under the law," while simultaneously insisting that they nonetheless "fulfill the law." On the one hand, believers are not under the law in that they are free from its obligations and demands, living a new way of life led by the Spirit. On the other hand, Christians, through love, fulfill the law. Paul's statements of the fulfillment of the law in Rom 8:4, 13:8-10 and Gal 5:14 are *descriptive* not *prescriptive* of Christian behavior and are found in polemical contexts where Paul's opponents are concerned that he is advocating antinomianism. A Spirit-led believer fulfills the law when "the obedience offered *completely satisfies* what is required" (436; emphasis Westerholm's).

The Pauline mission did not require circumcision and other characteristically Jewish laws of Gentile converts; this omission generated the most severe threat to the early church. It was in such a polemical context that Paul formulated the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith apart from the works of the law. The new perspective has rightly emphasized this sociological dimension of the apostle's thought. However,

the requirement for Christians to live as Jews can either be accepted or rejected only on “*theological grounds*” (emphasis supplied): “[T]he first-century issue for both Paul and his opponents . . . was reducible to the theoretical [i.e., theological] question whether the Sinaitic law provided the framework within which God’s people were obligated to live. Those who believed it did not . . . were bound to construe the law’s validity and purpose as limited” (441). Paul was among those who did recognize the most significant shortcoming of the law: its inability to cope with the dilemma of humanity’s sinfulness. The fundamental problem of Judaism is *not* that its adherents were legalistic, or that they distorted the law’s true nature, or were ethnocentric; rather, according to Paul, the problem is that its followers failed to grasp sinful humanity’s inability of doing the good demanded by the law.

Westerholm’s understanding of Paul, particularly with respect to the law, raises a number of important questions. His construal of the apostle’s thought highlights, in a number of ways, the discontinuous features between the Pauline gospel and Israelite religion. Does Paul conceive of Christ’s advent as bringing to fulfillment Israel’s promises and prophecies, or does the apostle understand Christ’s coming to have essentially abrogated the Israelite religion? Does Paul’s new-covenant ministry of the Spirit bring to fruition Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s promises (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:26-27) that speak of YHWH fashioning a people whose hearts are predisposed to obedience, or does the apostle believe that his new-covenant ministry of the Spirit abolishes Moses’ ineffectual old covenant and its law?

Interestingly, in 2 Cor 3:1-18, a passage employed by Westerholm which draws sharp contrasts between the Old and New covenants, there are elements of *continuity*: both covenants were attended by glory; and both covenants were sourced and instituted by God himself. Paul’s clear appropriation of the promises of Jeremiah and Ezekiel in this passage suggests he believed that a new-covenant relationship between God and his people, inaugurated through the death of Christ, was now being realized in his discharge of the new-covenant ministry of the Spirit. One does wonder, therefore, if Westerholm has sufficiently appreciated the covenantal framework of Paul’s thought. Such an appreciation would doubtless lead him to pay closer attention to the lines of redemptive continuity that exist between the Pauline gospel and Israelite faith; it might also lead him to formulate significantly different responses to thorny questions such as: Why did God grant to Israel an ineffective Mosaic law? How is it possible for Abraham to have been able to obtain redemptive faith prior to the coming and death of Christ? Is the law truly temporary, playing no role in the life of the Christian? Perhaps Westerholm could reassess his own cogent analysis of one of the quintessential Lutheran expositors of Paul—Calvin, who argued that the gospel does not supplant the “Mosaic Religion,” but confirms it; and that there can be no conflict between the law and the gospel as “they have the same divine Source, and God cannot be ‘unlike Himself’” (51).

Westerholm’s engaging treatment of Pauline theology, written with a view to reappropriate a Lutheran perspective for our day, not only sketches the overall contours of the ongoing debate in a clear and compelling fashion, but also makes its own provocative contribution to the discussion, significantly advancing the study of Paul’s thought.

Pacific Union College
Angwin, California

LEO RANZOLIN JR.

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS AND REVIEWERS

“Guidelines for Authors and Reviewers” and frequently used abbreviations may be found on our website at www.auss.info, or in *AUSS* 40 (Autumn 2002): 303-306 and back covers, or copies may be requested from the *AUSS* office.

For general English style, see Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th ed., rev. John Grossman and Alice Bennett (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

For exhaustive abbreviation lists, see Patrick H. Alexander and others, eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 68-152, 176-233. For capitalization and spelling examples, see *ibid.*, 153-164.

Articles may be submitted by email, attached document. Queries to the editors in advance of writing are encouraged. See “Guidelines for Authors and Reviewers” for further details.

TRANSLITERATION OF HEBREW AND ARAMAIC

CONSONANTS

א = ’	ה = h	ט = t	מ = m	פ = p	ש = š
ב = b	ו = w	י = y	נ = n	צ = ʒ	שׁ = š
ג = g	ז = z	כ = k	ס = s	ק = q	ת = t
ד = d	ח = h	ל = l	ע = ’	ר = r	

MASORETIC VOWEL POINTINGS

ַ = a	ֵ = e	ֶ = ê	ֹ = ô	ֻ = ô
ָ = ā	ֶ = ē	ִ = i	ֹ = o	ֹ = û
ֶ = a	ֶ = e (vocal shewa)	ִ = î	ֹ = °	ֹ = u

No distinction is made between soft and hard begad-kepat letters; dāgēš forte is indicated by doubling the consonant.

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