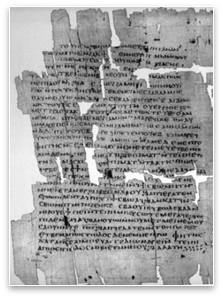
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**Editors:**

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**Editorial**

A writer might think that what s/he writes is important and worthy; s/he might think it will secure them a name after they have departed this mortal coil. This has obviously happened for the writers that are studied in school or college, but then only for the ‘literature’ that is written. But clearly these are a hallowed few compared to the many writers that publish and whose fate it is to be forgotten. It is not as if this is not known: “For of the wise man as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten” (Ecc 2:16 RSV). When it comes to religious writing, the prospects of remembrance are even more remote; when it comes to academic biblical writing, the best that can be expected is a mention in some footnotes that are not followed-up. The proof of this is all the unknown names today in the footnotes of the academic commentaries of the Victorian age. The lesson seems to be that if a person thinks they have written something, let them know this: they have written nothing much in particular, for “if any one imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know” (1 Cor 8:2 RSV).

An angry young person might rail against the system; it is less likely that an older person will do so, for as Alec Guinness says in *Lawrence of Arabia*, “it is the virtue of young men to fight wars, but of old men to make peace”. Writing is a medium that people use to ‘change the system’ and these days the Internet is the place for what would have been tracts, pamphlets, and leaflets in former generations. You can be reasonably sure that very few people today have read the ‘controversy literature’ of a division in the community that happened, say, in the nineteenth century. Those writers no doubt thought that what they were writing at the time was important and should be read, but it was of the moment, and it has passed into the archives of fastidious private collectors of religious memorabilia, hardly ever now to be read.

The ephemeral nature of writing can be seen everywhere today and more so on the Internet where websites come and then go; where a forum discussion is archived and difficult to retrieve; where scrolling down a thread through four days of posts is too much bother; and where downloaded PDFs are skimmed and then filed away to be forgotten on a hard disc. The volume of information coming at anyone today from the Internet makes this an inevitable result. If the academics of yesteryear become obscure footnotes after a university career, their books eventually consigned to the off-site storage facilities of libraries, the Internet bloggers of today see their ‘important’ posts pass into oblivion within days, digital files resting under a forgotten date and time stamp in a directory never to be read.

It may sound like a counsel of despair, but this is not an epitaph for writing; just recognition that the important work of building the ecclesia takes place *in person* and *with people*, rather than in our magazines, books or on the Internet. Such writing is nothing more than an instrument to be used if it has value, but the Word of God lives and abides forever. **AP**



The Chinese version of **Reasons** is now complete. The main work of translation was done by Sis. Rita Guo Ying with checking of the finished proof done by Bro. Steven Cox. It is now being prepared for publication through Printland for distribution in China and it will also be available on LULU for the rest of the world.

**Articles**

***Agapaõ* and *Phileõ:* use and abuse in the gospels**

**P. Evans**

**Introduction**

Love is one of the central themes of the Scriptures. The glorious hope of everlasting life that we share is a gift from our Heavenly Father, whose *love* was the prime motivation in sacrificing his son for us (John 3:16). A recognition of this fact naturally leads *us* to demonstrate love to one another. The apostle John says as much in his first epistle:

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:10-11)[[1]](#footnote-1)

Readers have a passing familiarity with two of the common Greek words behind the English term “love” in the New Testament: *agapaō* and *phileō*.[[2]](#footnote-2) Common wisdom is that two different kinds of love are intended whenever these words appear:

* *agapaō* denotes a divine, self-sacrificial love, exemplified in God’s offering of his Son
* *phileō* denotes an ‘inferior’ human love, more akin to a warm, friendly affection

Jesus’ threefold questioning of Peter in John 21:15-19 is frequently appealed to as the ‘proof-text’ supporting this distinction.[[3]](#footnote-3) Armed with this, the temptation then is to assume that every New Testament occurrence of “love” neatly conforms to one of these definitions. It is not uncommon, for example, to hear exhortations to ‘move on’ from a *phileō* love in order that we might *agape* one another, with the assumption that this is the ‘preferred’ love that God wishes us to show.

The aim of this study is to demonstrate that:

* These common characterisations of *agapaō* as ‘divine love’ and *phileō* as ‘human love’ are not as clearly delineated in the Biblical text as is often assumed.
* The ideas expressed by the two terms enjoy substantial overlap (especially in John’s gospel), and in many instances are virtually synonymous.
* John’s usage of *agapaō* and *phileō* in John 21 can more likely be attributed to stylistic reasons rather than any real distinction in meaning.

**Human or Divine?**

If we insist that *agapaō* always refers to divine love, we start to encounter problems as soon as Matthew Chapter 5, where Jesus says:

For if you love (*agapaō*) those who love (*agapaō*) you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? (Matthew 5:46)

The context of this passage is the exhortation to love one’s enemies. Jesus explains that this requires an attitude that goes beyond mere reciprocation, and uses the hated tax collectors as an example of how *not* to demonstrate this. Yet the word for “love” used in both instances is *agapaō*, which in this context can hardly refer to the love of God.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The following passages show the other six instances where *agapaō* is used in a negative sense:[[5]](#footnote-5)

Woe to you Pharisees! For you love *(agapaō)* the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. (Luke 11:43)[[6]](#footnote-6)

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved *(agapaō)* the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. (John 3:19)

…for they [the Pharisees] loved *(agapaō)* the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. (John 12:43)[[7]](#footnote-7)

For Demas, in love *(agapaō)* with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica… (2 Timothy 4:10)

Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved *(agapaō)* gain from wrongdoing. (2 Peter 2:15)

Do not love *(agapaō)* the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves *(agapaō)* the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (1 John 2:15)

Each of these examples demonstrates the difficulty in restricting the Greek word *agapaō* to a “good” love or a sacrificial love or a divine love.

**John’s Usage**

In considering the theme of love in the New Testament, the apostle John tends to become a focus, and for good reason. Considering *agapaō* alone, John’s writings include one-third (68) of the total occurrences, 37 of which appear in his gospel; *phileō* likewise receives the most generous usage by John, occurring 13 times in his gospel (more than the three synoptic gospels together).

We have already seen that the commonly-assumed distinction between the two words cannot always be upheld across the gospels as a whole. But what of John’s writings specifically? The following table surveys the various ways in which he uses both words:

|  | ***phileō*** | ***agapaō*** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **The Father’s love for the Son** | John 5:20 | John 3:35 |
| **Jesus’ love for his friends** | John 11:3 | John 11:5 |
| **The love of God for men** | John 16:27 | John 17:23 |
| **The love of men for Jesus** | John 16:27 | John 8:42 |
| **Jesus' love for John** | John 20:2 | John 21:7 |

These examples show that John uses both words more-or-less synonymously, a point agreed on by virtually all modern commentators, from whom we can cite two examples:

To make firm distinctions between *phileō* love and *agapaō* love is incorrect, for the meanings of the two words overlap…In Jn 21:15–27, some people make a distinction between the two words for love, *agapaō* and *phileō*. But these words do not have distinctly separate meanings, and John is famous for using virtual synonyms without any difference in meaning; he often switches between words merely for the sake of variety.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Many scholars, however, including J. H. Bernard, J. Moffatt, C. K. Barrett, L. Morris, and G. Stählin, have doubted whether any distinction is intended in such places as Jn. 21:15–17, where Jesus used both terms while questioning Peter about his loyalty. Morris demonstrated convincingly that such variation is a consistent feature of John’s style (Studies in the Fourth Gospel [1969], pp. 293–319).[[9]](#footnote-9)

Though some persons have tried to assign certain significant differences of meaning between ἀγαπάω, ἀγάπη and φιλέω, φιλία, it does not seem possible to insist upon a contrast of meaning in any and all contexts. For example, the usage in Jn 21:15–17 seems to reflect simply a rhetorical alternation designed to avoid undue repetition.[[10]](#footnote-10)

To insist upon a rigid definition for either term is an over-simplification, and often cannot be supported by the text.

This is not to say that both words are *completely* synonymous in every instance, but rather that their meanings substantially overlap. The point is that simply appealing to the underlying Greek word in order to determine meaning is fallacious. Meaning is determined by context, which should be uppermost in our minds when studying *any* word.[[11]](#footnote-11)

**“Do you love me?”**

This leads us finally to a consideration of the well-known exchange between the apostle Peter and Jesus in John 21:15-19. The relevant verses are as follows:

15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.”

16 He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.”

17 He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

The pattern of Greek words is shown in the table below:

| ***Jesus’ question*** | ***Peter’s response*** |
| --- | --- |
| *agapaō* | *phileō* |
| *agapaō* | *phileō* |
| *phileō* | *phileō* |

A great deal has been made of John’s usage of these words here. Those who note the shift and assume it to be theologically significant usually interpret the passage in a way similar to the following:

Jesus asks Peter if he loves him unreservedly with a divine, self-sacrificing love. Peter replies that he does love his Master, but only with a natural, human affection. Jesus asks the question again, with Peter’s response remaining the same. By the third time, Jesus has realised that Peter is not ready to commit to the divine standard of love that he desires, and so he relents and agrees to a compromise with Peter, recognising that his disciple, whilst faithful, is still a ‘work in progress’.[[12]](#footnote-12)

This interpretation should be rejected on a number of grounds:

* It relies on the assumption that *agapaō* and *phileō* are intended toconvey different meanings which, as demonstrated, is not correct in the context of John’s gospel.
* It does not propose any reason for Jesus questioning Peter three times. If Jesus’ intention was simply to force Peter to capitulate and profess the ‘correct’ kind of love, then he has failed without comment.
* The conversation most likely took place in Aramaic, not Greek. Therefore the choice of words here are John’s rather than those of the original participants in the conversation.
* John uses three other pairs of words in this passage: *boskō* and *poimainō* (‘feed’ and ‘take care of’ the sheep), *arnia* and *probata* (‘lambs’ and ‘sheep’), and *oida* and *ginōskō* (both rendered ‘you know’ in v. 17). These other pairs are rarely the subject of detailed theological exposition, so it is curious why *agapaō* and *phileō* should be.[[13]](#footnote-13)
* The claim is sometimes made that the Biblical writers invested *agapaō* with special theological meaning, because no other term existed to adequately express the love of God.[[14]](#footnote-14) However, diachronic[[15]](#footnote-15) study has disproved this, showing that the word was in common usage in Greek literature from the 4th century BC onwards.[[16]](#footnote-16)
* John’s *very own* summary in v. 17 discounts the possibility of a variance in meaning. “Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love (*phileō)* me?”” This is technically untrue - Jesus had only used this word once, not three times, giving further evidence for John’s synonymous usage of the terms.

**Conclusion**

If we accept that John’s usage of *agapaō* and *phileō* in this chapter are *not* intended to impart some deep theological insight into the love of God, how then are we to understand the passage? Perhaps an historical over-emphasis on word meanings in this instance causes mis-reading.

As many commentators note, the incident is a parallel of Peter’s earlier threefold denial of his Lord, even down to some of the finer narrative details, for example, the charcoal fire in John 18:18. Having bravely followed Jesus on that fateful night (when all others had fled), Peter’s lapse in faith must have left a mark on his conscience that is difficult to for us to fathom. Matthew and Luke both record that he “wept bitterly” (Matthew 26:75; Luke 22:62). John’s own emphasis in v. 17 is not on the shift in words used, but rather the *number of times* Jesus asked Peter the same question. He appears to be deliberately mirroring Peter’s earlier failure.[[17]](#footnote-17) By the third question, Peter would doubtless have recognised the connection.

H. A. Whittaker rejects this view, seeing it as inconceivable that “Jesus would torture his apostle in this fashion”, adding that “this is not the Jesus of the gospels”.[[18]](#footnote-18) However, far from seeing this as “torture”, could it not equally demonstrate the gentle compassion of Jesus in allowing Peter to make amends for his past failings? Here is an opportunity for him to confess a love for his Lord not once, but three times. And in so doing, Peter is given the opportunity to ‘undo’ the guilt and shame which must have been his companions for many restless nights after the betrayal.

In conclusion, none of this is to say that there is nothing special about the love of God. On the contrary, scripture teaches us that there is great deal that is special about it. But to appeal to a single word as exclusively expressing all the qualities of divine love is illegitimate, and should be avoided in our study of scripture.

Suppose you do some concordance work on the Bible text and you have some thoughts. You share them and someone says, “Ah, but the consensus of scholars thinks otherwise”. What do you do? You could seek out the minority of scholars who have demurred, for there will always be some, or you could just ask your interlocutor for the logic of the scholarly consensus to see if it holds up and your own logic is wrong. Truth is established with logic and not by the number of people repeating the same logic. *AP*

**What did the New Testament writers mean by calling Jesus the “Son of God”?**

**T. Gaston**

**Introduction**

Today if someone says that Person X is the son of Person Y, they would usually mean that Person Y is blood parent to Person X. There are some other less common uses of the phrase “son of” that do not imply genetic relationship. Person Y might be an adoptive parent, or a step parent; those relationships imply the same responsibilities of parenthood, though that relationship is of a different origin. In addition, “son of” might be used in metaphorical contexts, not implying any sense of a parental relationship.

Similarly in first century Greek, there were a range of uses of the phrase “son of” in addition to the most common and natural meaning of being natural born child of someone. As well as adoptive and honorific sonship, the phrase “son of” could also be used in a metaphoric sense. For example, Paul says that one could be a “son of disobedience” (Eph 2:2) or a “son of destruction” (2 Thess 2:3). Therefore when one considers the use of the phrase “Son of God” as applied to Jesus in the New Testament it is not conclusive from the use of the words alone that God was responsible for Jesus’ birth.

The question of what “Son of God” means is made all the more significant by virtue of the claims that it does not primarily derive its meaning from Jesus’ miraculous conception. One familiar claim is that Jesus was the Son by virtue of proceeding eternally from the Father and that it is to this relationship that the New Testament writers refer. An alternative claim is that “son of God” was a status ascribed to the Davidic king (cf. Psalm 2; 2 Samuel 7) and was thus ascribed to Jesus by virtue of his Messianic claims. Whether this latter claim has any substance depends, in part, on whether any pre-Christian usage of “son of God” in reference to the messiah can be attested. J. Collins concludes “’Son of God’ was not widespread as a messianic title, insofar as we now know, but it is attested”.[[19]](#footnote-19) This judgment is based on Jewish texts like 4Q174 and 4Q246, and possibly 4 Ezra 13. R. N. Longenecker, though dismissing some references as post-Christian (e.g. 1 Enoch 105:2; 4 Ezra 13), concedes that 4Q174 shows that the association between sonship and messiahship was “just” coming into use by the time of Jesus.[[20]](#footnote-20) In contrast, in the Psalms of Solomon (c. 40 BC), though the author calls the faithful ‘sons of their God’ (17:27), never uses the phrase “son of God” when referring to the Messiah (17:21). J. van Brussen comments “in pre-New Testament Judaism we do not encounter the link between these two terms. Here we are faced with a development in terminology that is quite new”.[[21]](#footnote-21)

It is not the purpose in this article to explore the background of the phrase “son of God” in pre-Christian Jewish texts. Regardless of the relative merits of these claims, it is clear from the OT texts like Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7 that the referent of those texts, that is the Davidic king and latterly the Messiah, was, in some sense, understood to have a father-son relationship with God. The question I wish to explore is whether this is what the NT writers meant when they described Jesus as the Son of God, or whether their usage of that phrase had a wider compass. Or, put another way, can “Son of God” be understood narrowly to just mean “Messiah”, or in its NT usage does it presuppose the virgin birth?

**Pauline Epistles**

Already, when Paul was composing his epistles, the word “Christ” was used as a unique identifier for Jesus such that Jesus and Christ could be used more or less synonymously. Similarly “Christ” was frequently used in close conjunction with Jesus (e.g. “Jesus Christ”). For Paul there is no question as to the identity of the Messiah, nor is there any expectation that this title will now ever be ascribed to another. The referent of “Christ” is Jesus. Yet, for Paul, there is also no question that Jesus is God’s son. The referent of “Son of God” is also Jesus. In this sense it would be unsurprising to find a level of symmetry in the usage of “Christ” and “Son” (cf. Eph 4:13).

However, it seems clear that for Paul “Son of God” does not mean “Christ”. In several places he uses “Jesus Christ” in such as way as to identify the reference of “Son”. For example, in Rom 1:3 Paul writes, “Concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made ...”; here “Son” and “Christ” are not synonymous but Paul equates them as having the same referent (cf. 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 1:19).

Given then that “Son” and “Christ” have the same referent for Paul, it is not obvious how one can distinguish alternative meanings for the uses of these words. For example, in 1 Thess 1:10 Paul writes that believers “wait for his Son from heaven”. Adela Collins argues that Paul bases this upon Q (the hypothetical gospel source), specifically on the Son of Man sayings regarding a return from heaven; Paul, she argues, has updated “Son of Man” to “Son of God” for a Gentile audience. [[22]](#footnote-22) But given that “Son of Man” was not synonymous with “Messiah”, at least not in pre-Christian usage, it does not seem convincing to argue that here Paul is using “Son” as equivalent to “Messiah”. More plausibly, he simply believes both that Jesus is the Son of God and that Jesus will return from heaven.

One important passage is Rom 1:1-5 where Paul contrasts Jesus as descendent of David, “according to the flesh”, and Son of God, “according to the Spirit”. To call Jesus a descendent of David is almost certainly an allusion to his being the messiah and so, by implication, “Son of God” would not be a reference to his being the messiah. Adela Collins attempts to avoid this implication by arguing that Paul is contrasting Jesus’ status as messiah designate, during his lifetime, and his status as messiah in a stronger sense, following his resurrection.[[23]](#footnote-23) Yet this is not the contrast Paul is making in these verses. He is explicitly making the contrast between what Christ is “according to the flesh” and “according to the Spirit”. The most obvious reading is that Paul is contrasting Jesus’ natural descent from David with his sonship according to the Spirit of God. Of course there are ways that one might be a “spiritual” son of God that do not necessitate being conceived of by the Spirit so these verses in isolation cannot be taken as proof that Paul knew about and believed in the virginal conception. Nevertheless, it does seem clear that for Paul being the Son of God means something more than being the Messiah and heir to the Davidic dynasty.

Later in Romans Paul says that God sent “his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom 8:3). Read against the background of an incarnation Christology, “sent” implies pre-existence yet sent is the verb commonly used for the sending the prophets so it does not in itself imply some descent from heaven. Yet the use of “Son” here is interesting. It is difficult here to read Paul as saying that God sent the Messiah to condemn sin as that is not a function of the Messianic role. Rather, Paul is highlighting that there was something special about Jesus as Son so that he could achieve in his coming what the Law could not. We find a similar theme in Galatians 4 where Paul says that God sent his Son to redeem those under the law (Gal 4:4-5). Again, Paul draws on the mode of Jesus’ coming (“in the likeness of sinful flesh” Rom 8:3; “born of a woman, born under the law” Gal 4:4) as integral to what he achieved. It is not that a human man was appointed Messiah and could then redeem mankind, rather something about Jesus’ nature from birth was necessary for God’s plan.

In Galatians, as elsewhere, Paul himself uses the imagery of adoption with reference to believers. He says, “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom 8:14) and, quoting the OT, “you shall be my sons and daughters”, says the Lord’ (2 Cor 6:18; also see Rom 8:19; Gal 4:5-6; Phil 2:15). Yet, the very fact that Paul describes believers as the adopted children of God demonstrates that he does not regard Jesus Christ as the adopted Son of God (cf. Gal 4:4-6; Rom 8:29). When “God sent forth his Son”, he did so by making him of a woman (Gal 4:4). The verb here, *ginomai,* is not the usual word for ‘to be born’ (*gennao*) but for ‘creation’. Whilst it is possible to use *ginomai* as indicating a state of becoming, it is more often indicates origins. The implication is that God sent his Son by creating his Son. J. D. G. Dunn attempts to avoid any reference to Jesus’ birth by arguing that “born of a woman” refers only to “Jesus’ ordinary humanness”. [[24]](#footnote-24) Though Dunn is right, that Paul is emphasising the humanity of Jesus so that he could redeem those “in bondage under the elements of the world” (Gal 4:3), Paul is also emphasising that God sent his Son at a specific time and that conditions what he says about Jesus being “made of a woman”.

The other factor in evaluating the sonship of Jesus in the writings of Paul is considering how Paul evaluates the relationship between God and his Son. The familiarity of that relationship is emphasised by Paul: Jesus is God’s ‘own Son’ (Rom 8:3, 32) and ‘his dear Son’ (Col 1:13). Paul writes, ‘if God did not spare his own Son’ (Rom 8:32) – emotive language such as this hardly fits a merely titular usage. Paul frequently identifies God as ‘the Father of our Lord’ (Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3, 11:31; Eph 1:3, 3:14; Col 1:3) and this fatherhood is distinct from the adoption of believers. Jesus is not nominally or adoptively the Son of God. Paul expresses their relationship as being personal, familiar and, apparently, literal.

**Mark**

Mark’s gospel is usually regarded as being the earliest and therefore often given primacy when considering the synoptic tradition. Jesus is referred to as the Son of God in 9 verses in Mark’s gospel (one of these is parabolic). This, in itself, does not indicate that the evangelist was not interested in sonship, nor that other titles were of greater significance for him. Even if his opening line (Mark 1:1) is judged to be inauthentic,[[25]](#footnote-25) the announcement at Jesus’ baptism and the centurion’s acclamation at his crucifixion form an *inclusio,* indicating the significance of the theme of sonship for Mark.[[26]](#footnote-26)

I have considered the question of whether Mark intends to present Jesus’ baptism as the moment of adoption elsewhere. I don’t think the case is very strong. It is worth mentioning that Mark introducing John’s ministry quotes from Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3, implying that John is preparing the way for someone of special significance. John himself says that the coming one is mightier than he is and will be coming to baptize in the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:7-8). Even before his baptism, Jesus has special significance.

Two incidents in Mark’s gospel describe how the “demons” knew Jesus’ identity as the Son of God (Mark 3:11-12; 5:7). Whatever else is going on in these events, it is clear that these “demons” are presented as having special knowledge of Jesus’ identity. One might take the implication that Jesus is in some sense operating on the same plain as these “demons”. This isn’t messianic activity. This is the stuff of one who has spiritual authority.

A similar implication about the specialness of Jesus’ identity can be taken from the account of the transfiguration. For the voice of God himself to declare from heaven “this is my beloved Son” (Mark 9:7) implies that this was special knowledge, not simply deduced from one’s Davidic descent.

The parable of the wicked vinedressers marks out Jesus as the beloved son of the owner, not a mere servant (Mark 12:6). One might argue that the “heir” of the owner is the heir to the throne of God’s appointed regent, which is the Davidic throne. Yet it is significant that this beloved son is coming for the first time, not as the successor to a long line of regents. This son is unique in the history of the “vineyard”.

The declaration of Jesus that neither men, nor angels, nor even the Son knows the “day and hour” (Mark 13:32) places Jesus as the head of an impressive hierarchy, above the angels. Whilst he is noticeably distinct from the Father, he is second only to the Father in the list. The fact that it is specifically stated that the Son does not know, indicates that he is not regarded as man or an angel in respect of knowledge but as someone transcending both.

Arguably, the only occasion where Mark comes close to equating ‘Son of God’ with ‘messiah’ is Mark 14:61, the confrontation with the High Priest. The High Priest asks “are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”, perhaps indicating an equivalence (in his mind at least) between messiah and Son of God. Jesus responds affirmatively and couples this with a reference to the coming of the Son of Man. There seems to be a three way equivalency being made here. Collins argues that this shows “the assumption the audience would understand and accept it”.[[27]](#footnote-27) Yet this, in itself, proves very little. Mark’s audience were Christians (or else potential Gentile converts); by this time the equivalency between Son of God, Son of Man and Messiah was already established in the person of Jesus. In any case, were it relevant, it would prove too much; the Son of Man was not considered equivalent to the Messiah prior to Jesus’ claim to be both. Nevertheless, it does seem likely that the High Priest’s question implies that sonship was entailed in the concept of Messiah. But Jesus, having proclaimed himself both Son and heir openly in his parable in Jerusalem, may already have been associated with both claims and making this dual accusation only heightens the threat in the High Priest’s question.

The final incident is the centurion’s acclamation “truly this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39). Collins argues “the reason for the centurion’s affirmation in the narrative logic of the scene is somewhat obscure”. [[28]](#footnote-28) Yet this is presumably because on no interpretative stretch could such events be considered consistent with a claim to be the Messiah. One cannot be the Davidic Messiah and be dead. Yet the logic of the narrative is straightforward: Jesus cries out, the veil of the temple is torn, the centurion acclaims. Now, of course, the centurion could not have seen the veil torn but presumably there was some other visible sign, such as the earthquake recorded in Matthew’s gospel that linked the tearing of the veil with Jesus’ cry. Whatever the intended narrative logic, it is clear that the centurion is not prompted to affirm that Jesus is the Messiah but that this man was someone of supernatural significance. Mark’s *inclusio,* (1:1; 15:39)therefore, proclaims the special sonship of Jesus through both divine and human voice in recognition of Jesus’ special status. Messiahship alone simply won’t do.

**Matthew**

The majority “solution” to the synoptic problem is that both Matthew and Luke depend upon Mark. This chronological primacy has implications for how we understand the theme of sonship in Matthew and Luke. If Mark understood sonship as equivalent with messiahship then we might expect some remnants of that understanding in the passages taken wholesale from Mark (if indeed this is how Matthew or Luke composed their gospel). What we would not expect is for Matthew or Luke to introduce this more primitive understanding at this (*ex hypothesi*) later stage, especially since both Matthew and Luke are explicit in explaining Jesus’ sonship as a direct consequence of his miraculous birth.

Matthew makes the link between the virgin birth and the sonship of Jesus explicit with his quotation from Hos 11:1, “out of Egypt I called my Son”. There is some element of the recapitulation of the experience of Israel here in Matthew’s account. Yet to identify Jesus with the experience of Israel is not to impute to him the eschatological role of Messiah, as Collins claims.[[29]](#footnote-29) Were this the implication then there are plenty of OT quotations to hand to play up the Messianic significance. Instead, for Matthew the key point of comparison is that Jesus’ sonship was foreshadowed in Israel.

For some reason Collins tries to explain Matthew’s “introduction” of a virgin birth story as being prompted by pagan mythology; “the best explanation is that the author of Matthew and his predecessors were aware of Greek and Roman stories about great men being fathered by deities with human women”.[[30]](#footnote-30) I do not know in what possible sense this can be considered the “best explanation”, except perhaps that it explains the otherwise inexplicable fact that Matthew wants to attribute Jesus’ sonship to a miraculous birth rather than to his role as the Messiah (as Collins believes he should). But this is simply reveals the hole in Collins’ agenda. Were the equivalency between “son of God” and “messiah” clear and uncontested amongst early Christians, then there would be no need to add a virgin birth narrative - it adds nothing. Only if it was considered that the sonship of Jesus was unexplained does it make sense for Matthew (or Luke for that matter) to include an explanation. And, all things considered, inventing a story that by any stretch might seem even remotely close to paganism is just too much of an embarrassment for an early Christian to do on a whim.

In Matt 11:27, Jesus makes a remarkably statement of his intimacy with the Father, that he has received “all things” from the Father and that he alone reveals the Father. Collins argues that the implication is that Jesus only exercises this authority after the resurrection.[[31]](#footnote-31) Yet this is not how it reads. Matthew places these words prior to the crucifixion. The implication is that Jesus had that intimate relationship with his Father “at that time” (Matt 11:25). This relationship goes beyond Messiahship.

It is potentially significant that in Peter’s confession in Matt 16:16, we have coupled “Christ” with “Son of the living God”. Collins writes, “the close association of the two epithets here makes clear that they are equivalent for Matthew”.[[32]](#footnote-32) Longenecker argues, from a traditio-historical perspective, that Peter’s confession should be viewed as part of a “symbolic whole” that includes the exaltation of the Messiah to be the elected king who is the Son of God.[[33]](#footnote-33) Yet, however we understand Peter’s confession, when viewed in the context of the synoptic problem it cannot be evidence that the early Christians understood “Christ” and “Son of God” to be equivalent. The epithet “Son of God” is not included in the parallel in Mark’s account (Mark 8:29). If Mark is the earlier, and if Matthew depends on Mark, then Matt 16:16 is not evidence of an early Christian equivalency. And given that Matthew clearly traces the sonship of Jesus to his virgin birth then whatever Matthew’s purpose in including this second epithet, it is not to propose some other explanation for that sonship. A better explanation is that Peter’s confession in Matthew is disclosing a fuller sense of Jesus’ identity rather than trying to explicate the meaning of “Christ” with an additional epithet.

**Luke**

The same logic applies for Luke’s gospel as for Matthew’s. If Luke depends on Mark (or on Matthew and Mark, as some suppose) we would not expect Luke to introduce an equivalency between “Christ” and “Son of God”, which was absent in Mark. Rather, Luke, like Matthew, clearly understands the sonship of Jesus as a consequence of his virgin birth (Luke 1:35). The angel Gabriel reveals that Jesus will be both “Son of the Highest” and will sit on “the throne of his father David” (Luke 1:32). Yet far from suggesting an equivalency between these two concepts, [[34]](#footnote-34) Luke’s narrative suggests that these two ideas are brought together only in the person of Jesus as a consequence of his dual parentage. Once again, Collins proposes that Luke might be prompted by pagan stories to invent his virgin birth narrative. Yet she acknowledges that whilst “the designation of Jesus as ‘son of the Most High’ could call to mind stories about Zeus fathering sons by human women”, the more plausible context is Jewish as “the name ‘Most High’ applied to God is biblical”.[[35]](#footnote-35)

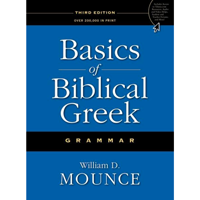
One occasion in Luke’s gospel where we do find an equivalency between Son of God and Messiah is in the recognition of the demons: “you are the Christ, the Son of God” (Luke 4:41).[[36]](#footnote-36) It is significant that in Mark’s gospel the demons identify Jesus only as the Son of God. Whatever the reason for Luke’s dual epithet here, it is not because he believes Jesus’ sonship is the same as his messiahship.

**Conclusion**

Collins concludes that “the early Christian proclamation of Jesus as Son of God must be seen in this context of Jewish messianic expectation”[[37]](#footnote-37) but this brief study of sonship in the New Testament reveals a very different conclusion. Rather than “Son of God” being a mere synonym for Messiah, or else the sonship of Jesus developing out of the conviction that he was the Messiah, we have found that being the Messiah and being the Son concerns two different concepts that meet in Jesus. Longenecker finds six instances where “Christ” and “Son of God” might be read as equivalent (Matt 16:16, Matt 26:63; Luke 4:41; John 11:27; John 20:31; Acts 9:20-22).[[38]](#footnote-38) In each instance he finds no strong evidence of equivalency. Instead he concludes: “there is no reason to assume in the above instances that Son of God is used either as a synonym for or to supersede the title Christ”[[39]](#footnote-39)

Longenecker presents a different explanation than Collins for the sonship of Jesus. “The evidence from his use of ‘Father’ for God indicates that divine sonship was the basic datum for Jesus in his ministry”.[[40]](#footnote-40) Claiming to be the Son of God, Jesus was not alluding to his Davidic descent or claim to be the future king, but was expressing his real relationship with God as his Father. When the early Christians used the phrase “Son of God” “it was probably used in a more functional manner by the earliest Jewish believers to denote Jesus’ unique relationship with God the Father and his obedience to the Father’s will”.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Though neither Paul nor Mark give an account of Jesus’ birth, both describe his sonship in terms of that filial relationship. Matthew and Luke, whilst adding something to what these others writers have given, they are in many ways just making explicit what Mark and Paul took for granted: that Jesus was actually the Son of God.



For anyone learning NT Greek, the website [www.teknia.com](http://www.teknia.com) is worth a visit for the free resources available to the learner.

**Logical Topics (1)**

**A. Perry**

This issue of the EJournal sees the start of a series of short articles on logical topics. Logic is roughly defined as the study of reasoning. We will not be concerned with formal logics such as the propositional calculus or predicate calculus, but rather we will be looking into reasoning in a more informal way. Our first topic is *ad hominem* arguments.

One of the spiritual problems affecting the community today is the adversarial nature of posts and forums on the Internet. *Ad hominem* arguments are a common characteristic of such forums.

An *ad hominem* argument is one that attacks the person rather than what the person is saying. There are good and bad examples. If someone objects, ‘What are your qualifications for saying that?’ we likely have an *ad hominem* argument, but it doesn’t seem unreasonable, unless the question is just a debating or rhetorical ploy. Of course, a person’s qualifications do not affect the truth-value of what s/he is saying, and so any challenge on this score doesn’t add to the argument.

There is a broader point; the person in front of you is there making an argument and whether you ask about their qualifications or not, you know some of their background. They may have expertise and this affects how you evaluate what they say, even if this is done sub-consciously. If they are saying something contrary to your existing beliefs, this creates a kind of conflict in your mind. You might seek another expert opinion, which is a kind of *ad hominem* reaction. In any case, my point is merely that what you know about *the person* is affecting your appraisal of an argument one way or another, whatever you do or how you react; **they** loom large in your decision-making.

You may not know that you have shifted your thinking from the argument to the person in any debate. For example, suppose a person puts forward a new interpretation of a text contrary to your own reading. Instead of attacking the detail of that interpretation, its nuts and bolts, you may react by saying, ‘*You* are handling the text dishonestly’ or ‘That’s just *your* interpretation’. What gives the game away in these reactions is the prominence of the personal pronoun which will often be stressed. These reactions shift from the argument about the text to the person making the argument. However, they do not move any discussion forward.

Biblical interpretation deals in texts, but a charge of dishonesty can be made at any time, for example, about your handling of archaeological data ‘to suit your own purpose’. If someone says this against you, they have shifted from the actual handling of the data to ‘you’ and ‘your’ intentions. It’s very easy to do; it can seem very innocent, after all, it is you doing the actual handling of the data, but it can also be part of a subtle *ad hominem* strategy. What should be happening here instead is a focus on the data: thus, you might say that ‘the data is not amenable to that interpretation because of *xyz*’. You keep your gaze on the data and the interpretation and away from the person and their motivations, despite what you may suspect about them.

By focusing on the argument, the reasoning, the text and the data, and **not** the person, you stand the best chance of persuading your opponent of the merits of your case. Perhaps this is a rose-tinted view of human nature, but the less ‘person-directed’ language you use, the less opportunity there is for ego to become involved. It may be that a tendency to use *ad hominem* arguments is an expression of the other’s person ego. No doubt, speculating about an opponent’s psychology is best left to private thoughts.

On Internet forums, *ad hominem* argumentation is rife. Posts often ‘go for’ the person and not the argument. The situation is often adversarial and not co-operative; people may be watching the forum and those who post may want to be seen to ‘win’ the argument. *Ad hominem* arguments can be very effective as persuasive tools, but they don’t actually address the logic and facts of the case under discussion. To do this, there has to be a focus on the sentences and the reasoning.

How do you handle *ad hominem* arguments against yourself? It will be tempting to do the same against your opponent. You will certainly find yourself wondering why your opponent has turned the spotlight on you, and it will make you wonder whether their other *non*-*ad hominem* reasoning can be trusted. These are private thoughts. The best way to handle an *ad hominem* argument is to label it as such and leave it at that. It is a technical expression and well-documented. You will know if your opponent is making an *ad hominem* argument if they start using personal vocabulary a lot (‘you’, ‘your’), words referring to your motivations, your intentions, your prejudices, and any personal reasons why you are saying something.

Labelling an argument ‘ad hominem’ on an Internet forum may cause the discussion to halt or falter. Nevertheless, it is a valuable thing to do, especially if you see someone frequently attacking the person rather than the argument. The forum thread might be on a controversial topic, but unless it is **co-operative** and not adversarial, it will likely prove to be nothing more than noise. Forums in use in the community should be co-operative conversations and not adversarial. One of the spiritual problems affecting the community today is the adversarial nature of posts and forums on the Internet. *Ad hominem* arguments are a common characteristic of such forums.

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The first issue of *Journal of the Jesus Movement in Its Jewish Setting: From the First to the Seventh Century* (*JJMJS*) is available online. *JJMJS* is a peer reviewed, open-access journal published in collaboration with Eisenbrauns, offering high quality research free of charge to a global audience. The journal aims to advance scholarship on this crucial period in the early history of the Jewish and Christian traditions when they developed into what are today known as two world religions, mutually shaping one another as they did so.

**The Genealogy of Genesis 5**

**A. Perry**

**Introduction**

This article[[42]](#footnote-42) is concerned with the genealogy of Genesis 5. The sceptic baulks at the high ages and the total number of years that s/he calculates for the creation of Adam and Eve. Both young earth and old earth creationists read the chapter in a non-consecutive way, unless the young earth creationist is a strict literalist. Our interest in the genealogy is in finding the reason why the age of the father is given for the birth of the ‘son’ along with that for his death; why are there **two ages** rather than one or even none?[[43]](#footnote-43)

**Patterns in the Ages**

We can infer that everyone after Adam and Eve lived for hundreds of years, even though the genealogy of Genesis 5 shows nothing more than the ages recorded for a few individuals. Although no ages are recorded in Cain’s genealogy, it too requires long lifespans, because Cain is credited with building a settlement; this detail implies sufficient undocumented population growth to support ‘building’ a settlement. Since this happens between Cain and Enoch, it implies a greater lifespan for Cain in order for there to have been several generations of children. Cain names the settlement[[44]](#footnote-44) after his son Enoch, and rapid frontier population growth is implied with multiple lineages. (Outside the genealogy of Cain, rapid undocumented population growth is also implied by the fact of Cain’s wife.) The genealogy of Genesis 4 is not our topic in this paper, but it is worth noting that its incidental detail from the start implies that it is **not a consecutive record** of fathers and sons.

Scholars have long compared the high ages and the ten generational pattern of Genesis 5 to the Sumerian King List (SKL)[[45]](#footnote-45) and used Babylonian sexagesimal mathematics to interpret the numbers.[[46]](#footnote-46) The hypothesis has been that the ages are the results of an algebraic formula working to a sexagesimal base. The consequence of these comparisons is that the high ages at death come down, but to exactly where is a matter of supposition about the underlying formula. Scholars have their eye on natural lifespans today in setting a formula as well as later patriarchal ages (c. 70 or 200) which is why they offer different formulae.

If we assume today’s natural lifespan for the genealogies of Genesis 4 and 5, we do not have the necessary framework for the population growth implied by the incidental detail in Genesis 4. A formula that yields a high age is required by the details in Genesis 4, which is overlooked by scholars puzzling over the mathematics of Genesis 5. We do not have the formulae and we might be tempted to dismiss the whole strategy, but we cannot assume that the numbers are a simple record of two ages because they do betray certain patterns. That the numbers are not random but chosen for a reason might be suspected by their mostly ending in ‘0’ or ‘5’. The natural cycles in procreation would suggest a more random distribution of ‘birth’ ages if this was the intent of the genealogy.[[47]](#footnote-47) Another indication that the ‘birth’ ages are chosen for a reason other than ‘birth’ is the age of Noah at the ‘birth’ of his sons; this is of a different order (500) to the other ‘birth’ ages in the genealogy.

Moreover, with the Flood happening when Noah was 600 (Gen 7:6), it is significant that the ages of Shem reverse this 500+100 pattern, with Shem being 100 when he begat Arphaxad and then living after that for another 500 years. After Shem, in the Genesis 11 genealogy, the ages plummet in two stages by a factor of 200 years each time. The first stage is associated with the Flood, with Arphaxad born two years after the Flood; the second stage happens with Peleg in whose days the earth was divided (Gen 10:25, Babel). The pattern here is that the decrease in age from 900 to 400 and then to 200 **marks major historical happenings**.

The genealogy of Genesis 5 is often read as a simple father-son genealogy, but the above patterns[[48]](#footnote-48) show that the genealogy reflects **history** and is co-ordinated to something more than the year a father had a son or the lifespan of the patriarch.

**Forbears**

We might say that where there is no detail in the record of the father giving his son a name, there might be intervening **forbears** between the father and the ‘son’. A naming of the son is recorded for Seth in Gen 5:3 and for Noah in Gen 5:29 but not for the other ‘sons’ (Enosh is named outside the genealogy in Gen 4:26). There may therefore be a number of generations in the middle of the genealogy.

The Genesis 5 genealogy is ‘the book/scroll of’ the generations of Adam (Gen 5:1). This reads the *Toledot* formula here forwards, which is the most natural reading. The phrase ‘the book of the generation of’ is quoted in Matt 1:1 in relation to Jesus’ genealogy (reading forward). Jesus’ genealogy is stylised according to a 14 generations pattern which complements the 10 generations pattern of Genesis 5. The point of comparison here is not that genealogical practice was the same for the recorder of Genesis 5 and Matthew (hundreds of years later), but that Matthew is **quoting** a feature of the Genesis 5 genealogy as a whole. In the light of this, it is significant that Matthew’s genealogy has forbear gaps (Matt 1:8).

If there are forbear gaps in the Genesis 5 genealogy, what would be the reason for recording the age of the father at the birth of the ‘son’? The genealogy of Genesis 5 records that Enoch ‘walked’ with God for 300 years after he begat Methuselah. The detail of ‘walking with God’ suggests that there has been a renewal of a covenant and a **prophecy of a son**. The same connection of ‘walking’, a prophecy, the birth of a son, and the mention of the age of the father, is found in the episode of Abram and Sara and the prophecy of the birth of Isaac. At the age of 99, God invited Abraham to walk before him and promised that he would be a father (Gen 17:1f). A covenant was made and a son was promised (Gen 17:16f). This is what the genealogy of Genesis 5 is indicating in its brief remark about Enoch ‘walking’, the mention of his age, and the birth of the ‘son’. We should note too for Noah, that he ‘walked’ with God but he begat three sons (Gen 6:9-10); this is the same close association of ideas as with Enoch.

The Enoch record provides the key to the genealogy: each of these patriarchs is given a prophecy of a son. That prophecies underlie the genealogical records is also shown in there being a prophecy to Adam regarding Seth which told Eve that God had appointed her another seed instead of Abel (Gen 4:25), and in there being a prophecy to Lamech concerning Noah which included a promise about comfort (Gen 5:29). In fact, it is also implied that there had been a prophecy about Abel, that he was the seed, because Eve talks of ‘another’ seed (and possibly even Cain, who Eve acknowledges as from the Lord – Gen 4:1). Finally, a prophecy is implied by the birth of Enosh because men began to call upon the name of the Lord at that point.

It is not just a speculation then to suppose that there might have been intervening forbears before the birth of some of the ‘sons’ that are recorded. Cain and Abel are not forbears to Seth, but they do intervene before him and are unrecorded in the genealogy. What then about the **two** ages noted in the records?

**Two Ages**

The characteristic of the record that is really distinctive is not the high ages of the patriarchs at death but the fact that there are **two** ages. Take the inclusion of the age of the patriarch at the birth of the ‘son’. In the case of Levi and Kohath, in a Levitical genealogy, their duration of life is given, but not their age at the birth of a son (Exod 6:16-25). Except for Genesis 11, later genealogies like the one at the end of Ruth, don’t even give a duration of life, and so this Levitical genealogy is distinctive for also including the duration of life of the father.

The record of Noah might appear an exception to the ‘two ages’ pattern, there being only the ‘birth’ age (Gen 5:32), and as the last generation to be recorded, this might be set aside in our analysis as an exception. However, the death formulae of the genealogy are actually carried forward for Noah, but to Gen 9:28-29 – ‘lived after’ and ‘all the days of’ are picked up and re-used. On the other hand, instead of there being one ‘son’ recorded at the age of the patriarch, Noah has three sons listed at his age of 500 years.[[49]](#footnote-49) This raises the question of when Shem, Ham and Japheth were each born (Gen 10:21). This implies that the ‘begat’ ages in the genealogy do not have to be about the year of birth. It could be the age at which the prophecy of the ‘son’ was given. The episode of Abram and Sara supports this reading. The ‘son’ may follow after a year, or a few years in the case of Shem, Ham or Japheth, or it may be longer if there were a number of forbears.[[50]](#footnote-50)

The age of Noah is of a different order to all the other ages at ‘birth’ in the genealogy. Such a difference strongly suggests that a prophecy about three sons marks this time, and that they are chosen because the Flood is shortly going to happen and that they are to re-populate the land. However, the three sons of Noah are not equally the chosen seed and this also breaks the pattern of the genealogy. In their case, the prophecy which selects the chosen line is subsequent to the Flood, when Shem is signalled out from his brothers (Gen 9:26). The line of descent is shown at this time.

We have enough textual evidence here to infer that the ‘sons’ of Genesis 5 are the appointed seeds and the subject of prophecy. The age of the father at the birth of the ‘son’ can signal the time of the prophecy rather than actual birth which may follow years later. **It is also a device that allows the genealogy to pass over forbears in making a record**.

The ante-diluvian patriarchs had many sons and daughters. Of these there is a chosen line periodically identified through prophecy. How then does the family record the fulfilment of the prophecy when it occurs? It can do so through the preservation of a genealogical record passed down orally through the generations and augmented from time to time. It wouldn’t be necessary to record the age of the father if a prophecy was always fulfilled immediately through a first generation son and the son was named (though it could be a redundant detail). It would however be necessary to identify the chosen seed by reference to the age of the father if there had been forbears and he was not a first generation son; this would tie the fulfilment of the prophecy to the father and the right forbear at the same time as identifying the son. It would simultaneously exclude the other first generation sons of the father, and their lines of descent, while identifying the line of descent from the ‘son’ back through the generations to the father. The prophecy was about a father and a son, and specifying the ‘son’ and relating him to the father at a certain age therefore records how the prophecy was fulfilled.

The pattern of giving the age of the patriarch at the birth of the ‘son’ and the duration of life subsequently continues for Seth’s genealogy in Genesis 11 and for Abram, Isaac and Jacob; and there are prophecies involved (Gen 25:26; 25:7; 35:28). The pattern stops with Jacob.

The Genesis 5/11 genealogies are unique. Cain’s genealogy doesn’t have the ages recorded. The notion of there being a ‘son of prophecy’ is established in Gen 3:15 and this explains why the age of the father at the birth of the ‘son’ is given in Genesis 5/11 – it is on ongoing expression of hope in that promise. Lamech’s words are poignant and pertinent, “This *same* shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.” This tells us the point of the genealogy at the end of the genealogy (or in its middle if we include Genesis 11 and the birth prophecies and notices of Abraham Isaac and Jacob). The purpose of the genealogy is to identify who it was hoped would be the one to relieve the curse, i.e. the named ‘son’.[[51]](#footnote-51)

Someone might say that the purpose of the two ages in these genealogies is to allow the calculation of the date of creation, particularly the date of the making of Adam. Certainly, Jewish and Christian commentators since have used the ages in this way, ignoring the possibility of forbears in the process. Whether patriarchs up to the time of Jacob were ever concerned with the date of the making of Adam is another matter about which we might be doubtful.[[52]](#footnote-52) There is practical value in recording the age of the father at the birth of the ‘son’ – **it secures the Edenic faith**; but what is the practical value in a calculation about the date of creation?

**The Age at Death**

Recording the age of a person when they died is not exceptional, and this data may carry no significance, whether for dating creation or anything more personal. On the other hand, if there is significance in recording how long a patriarch lived it is likely that it is in the reasoning behind the refrain ‘and he died’, which is noted for all the patriarchs in the genealogy including Noah (Gen 9:29), with Enoch the only exception. This refrain is unique to this genealogy.

The significance of ‘and he died’ is set by the narrative story up to this point and the leading information that the reader has is the pronouncement to Adam and Eve about their dying. Dying is important to the purpose of the genealogy as well as the birth of the ‘son’ of promise. They counter-balance each other. The genealogy of Genesis 11 does not have this refrain, and so we are being directed to think of Genesis 5 in connection with the reality of Adam’s punishment. The relevant intertextual link is ‘all the days of’, another refrain of the genealogy, which is quoted from Gen 3:14, 17 and particularly from the **curse** **on the ground**.[[53]](#footnote-53)

The ages that are given mostly cluster above the 900 mark—just short of a thousand years. Lamech’s life is cut short just before the Flood and Enoch is a special case, but otherwise the 900 +/- pattern is carefully chosen, because the choice of a “thousand years” as a limiting period isn’t arbitrary. In the “Prayer of Moses”, it is said that, “…in your eyes a thousand years are like yesterday that quickly passes, or like one of the divisions of the night time” (Ps 90:4). The comment is, no doubt, a simile for the passage of time and how God marks the ages. The New Testament writer Peter makes a comment on this verse when he says, “Now, dear friends, do not let this one thing escape your notice—that a single day is like a thousand years with the Lord and a thousand years are like a single day.” (2 Pet 3:8).

This language is relevant to Genesis 5 because, in Genesis 2, God had declared that were Adam to sin, he would die in **the day** that he sinned (Gen 2:17). If the divine perception of time expressed in the Prayer of Moses is at work in Genesis 5, the limitation of the antediluvian ages to just under a thousand years is another way in which the Edenic faith is expressed. Alongside the record of the ‘son’ of promise, there is an inner-biblical exegesis going on of the curse on the ground. If a thousand years are as a day in God’s eyes, all these men did die in the kind of “day” that God had decreed for Adam’s dying. The ‘and he died’ of Noah (Gen 9:29) is the end of this pattern, which significantly coincides with the promise after the Flood that “I will not again **curse the ground** any more for man’s sake” (Gen 8:21).

Scholars do not dismiss the genealogy as lacking historical value. Rather, they seek to explain the *use* of large numbers in the genealogy. The best suggestion is that the numbers are **notional** and based on an underlying algebraic formula[[54]](#footnote-54) which produces the high age as a product. This device serves the purpose of structuring an unknown long period of time while at the same time preserving the ancestry through which the Edenic faith was transmitted across the ‘missing’ generations of forbears. The history was constructed and recorded in a scroll. R. R. Wilson, reviewing studies on the genealogies concludes,

Although we have seen no anthropological evidence indicating that genealogies are created for the purpose of making a historical record, genealogies may nevertheless be considered historically accurate in the sense that they **frequently express actual domestic, political, and religious relationships**. They are, therefore, potentially valuable sources for the modern historian. However, the nature of genealogy requires that the question of historiographic worth be asked in each individual case, for only in this way can the complexities of genealogical form and function be taken into account. In dealing with the issue of the historiographic value of genealogy, no generalizations are possible. [[55]](#footnote-55) [My Emphasis.]

Although the history in the genealogy is about recording the line of descent through which the Edenic promise will be fulfilled, there is a qualification to add. The detail in Genesis 4 presupposes unrecorded population growth and this in turn requires that the ages of the ante-diluvian patriarchs be high; any formula we suggest needs to reflect this fact.

**Conclusion**

Our conclusions are two in number: (i) the intertexts of the genealogy do not validate the use that later Jewish and Christian commentators have made of it, viz. **to date the creation of Adam and Eve**. Their creation is indeed historically recent, but we cannot date this event using this genealogy, because the purpose of the genealogy is different: the genealogy is about continuing and validating the Edenic faith. (ii) The device of giving the age of the father at the birth of the ‘son’ marks the time of the prophecy that there would be a son (there being sons and daughters before and after the age that is given), and it is a necessary device if some of the genealogy omits forbear(s) when connecting the ‘son’ of a prophecy to the father.

**Doubts of Scale**

**A. Perry**

A lot of religious doubt is about scale. The sceptic will ask: How can God hear everyone who is praying at the same time? How can God be everywhere? How can a single person be all-powerful? How can someone live forever? How does God know all things? How can God be from everlasting to everlasting? The thing that these doubts have in common is an ‘every-all’ aspect and these are expressions of scale. Someone with faith might well say that when they think about these questions, they don’t know how to respond.

Thinking about these questions can lead to loss of faith altogether. This happens because they are perceived to have no answer, and because of this the concepts they express lose their force in a person’s life. So, people end up responding by saying that God isn’t everywhere; he doesn’t hear prayer; he is limited; people can’t live forever; and God can’t know all things.

One way to tackle doubt is to challenge the framework in which the doubt is expressed. If a person doubts that *p*, change the *p* to *q* so that they do not feel the same doubt about *q*. Often people with doubt do not see beyond the doubting of *p* to the possibility of faith in *q*. We have analysed this species of doubt as a ‘doubt of scale’ and this characterization is in itself a start to our handling doubt. Is it reasonable to have doubts of scale and, if so, is it reasonable to lose faith on account of such doubts? Often people are just caught up in the doubt and lose faith because they lose control of the intellectual framework of their faith.

This loss of faith is a loss of an intellectual framework and an emotional commitment to that framework. People don’t express it in these terms and are more likely to just say something like ‘I no longer believe in God’. But they have gone from belief in *p* to a belief in *not-p* rather than to a belief in *q*.

The most common defence to doubts of scale is to stop the thinking. People will quickly say, God is greater than our finite minds and we cannot grasp these things. They move their thinking away from dwelling on the doubts while retaining the belief that God does hear everyone’s prayer. Is this a reasonable and sensible response? The person experiencing doubt and continuing to experience doubt has not done this or maybe tried to do it and failed. What are they to do? If they cannot switch off the doubt, are they in effect the walking dead?

As we have said, one way to stop doubt is to change *p* to *q*. Another way is to have self-understanding about doubt and ‘live with it’. A better way is to stop doubting and have the facility of mind to do so; many have this facility. And of course, for many, doubts of scale do not arise in the first place and this is a good thing. But our concern in this article is with the doubt and what it means to change *p* to *q*.

Are doubts of scale rational? The question here is about the scale of our religious thinking. What should that scale be? We are individual human beings and persons; should the scale of our religious thinking be personal? The point here is that it is irrational to suppose that our spiritual thinking could be anything other than personal in scale because that is the scale of our existence. It is unreasonable for God not to have taken our scale into account in revealing himself to us. A spiritual scale of thinking that is not bound to our scale is unreal.

The best illustration of this point is prayer. We are not concerned here with the loss of an ability to pray when someone says that prayer is difficult or that they no longer pray. This is a different situation to one where someone asks the question how God can hear the prayers of everyone who is praying at the same time, say, a million people across the world. The person who genuinely asks this question is in a very different place to the one who has stopped praying.

The key element in the question is the expression ‘at the same time’. We can hear a few people at the same time but the mind boggles at hearing a million and this thought engenders the question and the doubt. But of course it is at this point that the doubt falls away because it assumes that time is the same for God as it is for us. It is at this point that the *p* becomes a *q* because we cease to doubt that God can hear all prayers made *at the same time* because **for God** they are not made at the same time. Two people praying at the same time on earth are heard at different times in heaven; we don’t know how God intersects with our time. Since God is from everlasting to everlasting, he has a lot of time from which he can allot time to each one of us.

This response is really all about validating the human scale for prayer, namely, that God hears our prayers, i.e. God hears ***me***. It is irrational to suppose that *my* God does not hear *my* prayer. Prayer necessarily has a one-to-one dimension because we are persons. Of course, since God is a person, this reinforces the scale in which the spiritual life is conducted. The doubt that God cannot hear the prayers of everyone made at the same time is therefore misconceived and accordingly irrational.

Another way to see that the human scale is appropriate for our religious understanding is to think of our own standards in dealing with children, which are that we speak to them on their level. We have a scale and they have a scale and we choose to relate to them in terms they understand. That God is *our father* only shows that the Bible is **consistently scaled** to the human person and indeed the human family.

It is at this point that the doubt of scale adapts and the sceptic asks whether God is or can even be a person. Does it make any sense to suppose God is a person? Philosophers provide alternative concepts of God that are more abstract and have a different scale. For example, an existentialist might say that God is the ‘ground of all being’ or ‘that which is ultimate’; a deist might say that God is ‘the originating force behind all things and beyond the universe’, *and so on*. It doesn’t matter what is being offered here because they are all attempts to make God transcendent and give ‘him’ a bigger scale.

There is a prejudice at work here, and the counter-question to pose to the sceptic is whether there is some reason s/he has for saying that God *cannot* be a person. Is there something wrong with the idea that God is a person? The first reply here is likely to be that the persons we know are all limited in various ways and God is supposed to be unlimited. How can he be a person **and** be everywhere, or have all power, or be all-knowing?

That God is a person is a first principle of Scripture, but we are not invoking Scripture in this discussion. Rather, the philosophical point is that since persons are somewhere, have some power and some knowledge, there is nothing inherent in these concepts that make them inapplicable in our description of what it is to be a person. The problem here is that we look at **ourselves** as persons and take ourselves as the paradigm. This is the root cause of the problems of scale that give rise to doubt. Either we think God is completely *other* to us, and has an infinite scale, or we struggle to think of God as **like us**, like a person. A person doubts God can be a person and adopts a more abstract and distant view of God. Essentially, if belief in God as a person is *p*, the doubt here is *not-p*.

However, if we reverse the paradigm, and say that we are like God, an image of God, we dissolve the doubt. We say that God is the paradigm of what it is to be a person and that it is we who are scaled-down persons. This is actually changing the spiritual thinking so that we believe in *q* rather than *p*. We shift the source of the trouble from ‘how can God be **one of us**’ to ‘how is it that we are **like him**’ and this latter question is answered in Scripture, for we are made in the image of God. The problem is not how can God be a person but how can we be persons when we are so limited. In philosophical terms, we are doing nothing more here than shifting our philosophy from Aristotle to Plato.

Doubts of scale are philosophical problems that arise naturally and they don’t depend on our having studied philosophy. They share a lot in common; they tend to be doubts about the personal aspects of faith.

**The Woman taken in Adultery**

**P. Wyns**

This passage is often referred to as the *Pericope de Adultera* and has caused controversy amongst textual critics because it is omitted from some of the earliest manuscripts. Some argue that it was a later addition (not by John) and others that it is early but was deliberately omitted in some manuscripts because it was embarrassing for the church. This article will not examine the merits (or otherwise) of the text critical evidence[[56]](#footnote-56) but takes an approach that demonstrates through intratextual/intertextual analysis that the pericope is *integral to the wider narrative.* Our analysis is therefore literary-intratextual/intertextual rather than text critical.

**The Testing of Jesus**

The narrator informs us that the incident was manufactured in order to “tempt” (peira,zw) Jesus (KJV) or more accurately, “to test Jesus...that they might have *something* of which to accuse Him”(John 8:6 NKJV). The Law was quite clear that the punishment for adultery was death by stoning. It is obvious that the Pharisees anticipated that Jesus would allow the woman to go free; this would offer them the perfect opportunity to accuse Jesus of breaking the Law.

Jesus had repeatedly taught his disciples and the wider public about practising the forgiveness of sins, but how could Jesus claim the prerogative to forgive sins on God’s behalf? Surely this privilege belonged only to God? Later in his ministry Jesus would bestow this licence on his disciples allowing them the right to “bind and loose” on earth and in heaven (Matt 16:19); essentially any judgement they made would receive the divine fiat. This was possible because the apostles were endowed with the Spirit - Jesus himself had received the Spirit without measure at his baptism. Moreover, Jesus could say, “Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me” (John 8:15-16).

The manufactured test (trap) was more complex than simply forcing Jesus into an anti-law, pro-liberal theological stance. The remainder of the chapter is concerned with the legitimacy of Christ (as is much of the Fourth Gospel) and there is a nasty subtext about Jesus’ origins. The “Jews” claim that they are “Abraham’s children” (implying that this was not the case with Jesus) they accuse him of being a “Samaritan” (a half breed Jew with a false religion) and imply that he was “born of fornication” (vv. 39, 41, 48).

In other words, they are indicating that they are aware of the rumours concerning his mothers’ unusual pregnancy (John 6:42). Mary became pregnant while she was betrothed to Joseph. As they could not attack Jesus on his personal integrity, they schemed to cast aspersions on his origins. He was illegitimate – a bastard and not even a Jew! Moreover, *his mother was an adulterer.* This would end his Messianic claims for no Jew would follow a Messiah whose parentage (and therefore race) was questionable.

In this clever (and nasty) scheme the woman was “caught in the act” which indicates that the situation was a “set-up” as her lover (a Pharisee?) was not detained for judgement. The Pharisees had prepared the perfect trap. If Jesus had condemned the woman they would have responded with the challenge; “What about your mother then? Are you going to judge her for adultery?” On the other hand, if he had instructed them to free the woman as an act of mercy they would have responded; “You are doing this because your own mother committed adultery.”

**The Children of Abraham**

It could be argued that the above explanation is a classic example of eisegesis – “reading into” the text information that is simply not present. This would be true were it not for the fact that the remainder of the chapter supports this conclusion. In the discussion (argument) that follows between Jesus and the “Jews”, they emphasize their descent from their “father” Abraham. They are establishing their credentials as “true Jews” descendants of the patriarch. The choice of Abraham is poignant as he had two prominent sons; his firstborn was Ishmael the son of his concubine (bondwoman) Hagar and his heir was Isaac the son that he had with his wife Sarah.

Isaac was the “son of promise” the one through whom the covenants would achieve fruition. His birth was “miraculous” in that Sarah was barren and past the age of child bearing. The story in Genesis depicts tension between the two women. Sarah was so upset with the situation that she asked Abraham to send Ishmael and Hagar away and her decision was supported by Yahweh!

Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: *but* the Son abideth ever (John 8:34, 35).

The “servant”, the son of the “bondwoman” (Hagar) was sent away but the son (Isaac) remained in the house with his father. Likewise, the Jews would be sent away from the house (temple) into exile but Jesus (the true heir) would remain with the Father. However, the “Jews” ridiculed the necessity to be “set free” they were not bondservants and had never been in bondage to any man (v. 33). This was patently untrue as Abraham had been told that his descendants would serve as slaves in Egypt (Gen 15:13) and now they were serving under the bondage of the Law (while enduring Roman occupation).

**Legitimate Sonship**

The Abrahamic Genesis narrative features large as the background of John 8. At the core of the dispute is the notion of legitimacy. Who was the legitimate heir of the Abrahamic covenants? One might enquire why Sarah was so upset that she had to send away Hagar and her son Ishmael. In Genesis we are informed that Sarah was disturbed because she observed Ishmael ‘mocking’ Isaac (Gen 21:8-9). This occurred during a feast to celebrate the “weaning” (no longer breastfed) of Isaac, which (in those days) would make him about 3-4 years old and Ishmael about 12-13 years old. Significantly, in Mosaic times, a lad of Ishmael’s age was considered a “son of the Law”.

Ishmael was teasing and mocking his younger half-brother Isaac, no doubt at the instigation of his mother Hagar. The text suggests that the basis of the hurtful mocking was the allegation that Isaac was not truly Abraham’s son. The subtext is; “I (Ishmael) am Abraham’s son and his heir, you (Isaac) are illegitimate, you are a bastard conceived in the tents of Abimelech”. Most exegetes miss the connection because of the chapter division between Genesis 20 and 21:

Genesis 20

17 So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare *children*. 18 For the Lord had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham’s wife.

Genesis 21

1And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken. 2 For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

Sarah had been acquired as an addition to Abimelech’s harem and during the time she was there God prevented Abimelech from “touching her” and his harem was plagued with infertility. *Immediately* upon her release she became pregnant! This is what prompted Hagar to allege that Isaac was not Abraham’s son. Hagar wanted her son Ishmael to be recognised as the true heir instead they were sent into exile.

Jesus is therefore the true heir (the promised son) and the “Jews” despite their Abrahamic descent are (like Ishmael) sons of the “bondservant” enslaved by sin under the “bondage” of the Law. Jesus had come to liberate them but they (like Ishmael) mocked his legitimacy – he was a bastard and his mother an adulterer – he was probably not even a Jew! But they (like Ishmael) would be sent into exile –away from the “house” while Jesus (the true heir) would remain in the Father’s presence.

**Abraham saw Jesus’ Day**

The Abrahamic theme continues to the end of John 8 with the declaration that Abraham saw “my day”:

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad.

An obvious reference to Isaac is made with the choice of “rejoicing” and being “glad” as the name of Isaac means laughter and rejoicing (contrast the mocking laughter of Ishmael). Furthermore, reference to “seeing” (saw my day) is integral to the Abraham narrative as after the sacrifice of Isaac the place was called: *Yahweh Yireh* **or Yah will be seen** (Gen 22:14). The sacrifice of Isaac was therefore a foreshadowing of the crucifixion an event in which the salvation of Yah could demonstrably be seen (Jesus =Yah saves). Moreover, the **r-h** combination in Yireh is one that is repeated throughout the narrative –

.....and Abraham saw (*rāāh*) the place afar off (Gen 22:4)

Abram and Sara are even renamed as Ab**r**a**h**am and Sa**r**a**h** in order to emphasize the revelatory aspect of the narrative – Abraham and Sarah are able to “see” the day of Yah – the eye of faith allows them insight into Messiah’s day.

**Jesus’ Response**

How did Jesus respond to this ugly situation? At first he ignored them and wrote in the dust; “But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not” (v. 6). We are not told what he wrote but might it have been Jeremiah 17: 10, 13,

I the Lord search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings....O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, *and* they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters.

When they persisted he challenged them with “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” and then he continued writing. Perhaps he wrote the names of those working behind the scenes, the instigators of the plot. Perhaps he transcribed the names and (hidden) sins of particular individuals. The result was that each man was condemned by his own conscience and left the presence of the Lord.

Jesus was left alone with the woman....all her accusers had gone. The pericope concludes with the words, *Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.* This is what Jesus says to each of us at the breaking of bread.

**Conclusion**

The *Pericope de Adultera* is integral to John 8 and fits the theme of legitimacy found in the remainder of the chapter. It was an attempt to smear Jesus on the basis of his parentage, to question his very identity as a Jew and to delegitimize him as the Messiah. Not just the pericope but the whole chapter carries the stamp of historical authenticity as this is the sort of dispute we would expect in the first century rather than the depiction of the deified Christ of subsequent centuries.

**Columnists**



**Exegesis/Analysis**

**Benedict Kent**

*Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 4.32-5.11)*

This column continues our discussion from October 2014 of Luke’s language of judgement.

Like many Lukan narratives, the first part of the pericope introduces some key themes of what’s to follow.

With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. (Acts 4. 33).

The pericope emphasizes the centrality of the apostles in the narrative by repeating *apostolos* five times. It reveals that the apostles have authority both outside of the community (by giving their testimony with power) and within (as believers lay their proceeds at the apostles’ feet). The previous pericope has already confirmed that it is the Lord Jesus who is the source of the apostle’s power (4.10) and that the apostles are filled with his spirit (4.8) and so the first section of this pericope simply reconfirms these elements with the assurance that ‘great grace was upon them all.’

Also, the community are said to be ‘of one heart’ (4.32) which the text demonstrates by matching the description of the communal giving up of possessions with the individual Barnabas’ laying down of proceeds. This background information sets up the reader for a conflict that will provide the drama of the story.

The second part of the narrative deals with the apostles’ reaction to Ananias and Sapphira who have sold a piece of land, ‘kept back some of the proceeds, and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles’ feet.’ (5.2).

3.a εἶπεν δὲ ὁ Πέτρος· Ἁνανία,

3.b διὰ τί ἐπλήρωσεν ὁ Σατανᾶς τὴν καρδίαν σου, ψεύσασθαί σε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον καὶ νοσφίσασθαι ἀπὸ τῆς τιμῆς τοῦ χωρίου;

4.a οὐχὶ μένον σοὶ ἔμενεν καὶ πραθὲν ἐν τῇ σῇ ἐξουσίᾳ ὑπῆρχεν;

4.b τί ὅτι ἔθου ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου τὸ πρᾶγμα τοῦτο;

4.c οὐκ ἐψεύσω ἀνθρώποις ἀλλὰ τῷ θεῷ.

But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back *some* of the price of the land? While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

(Acts 5.3-4, NASB)

Peter’s speech to Ananias is notable by his style of direct address. Luke-Act’s Peter begins by addressing Ananias by his name. This naming functions to isolate Peter and Ananias from amongst the onlookers for the readers’ attention. The word ordering that closely positions Peter and Ananias’ names in the first line functions to foreground the two characters. However, the text’s syntax positions Peter in the dominant position. It is Peter who actively names Ananias. Instead of the text describing Peter as speaking *to* Ananias (which would put the characters in a balanced syntactical position), it reads: ‘Then Peter said “Ananias […]”’, thus establishing Peter in dominance over Ananias.

The structure of Peter’s speech to Ananias lends itself to the drama of Peter’s judgement. Having named his addressee, Peter asks three rhetorical questions, each one shorter than the one before, until he delivers his judgement. These three rhetorical questions heighten the suspense for the audience, with their shortening sentence length altering the rhythm of the speech, causing the speech to become sharper and snappier. The rhetorical questions are then contrasted with the final, shortest sentence, emphasized by its simplicity and balanced syntax:

‘οὐκ ἐψεύσω ἀνθρώποις ἀλλὰ τῷ θεῷ.’

You have lied not to men but to God

The text also employs repetition to further emphasise Peter’s direct address. The second person pronoun is repeated five times in the forms of ‘σου’, ‘σε’, ‘σοι’, ‘σῆ’ͅ and ‘σου’. This repetition further emphasises Peter’s direct form of speech and focuses attention firmly on his opponent.

In regards to the speech’s phonetics, the text also uses consonance and sibilance. Repeated sigmas across ‘σου, ψεύσασθαί σε’ and ‘νοσφίσασθαι ἀπὸ τῆς τιμῆς’ (5.3), as well as the alliteration of ‘τῆς τιμῆς τοῦ χωρίου’ functions to hold the text together as a unit. The repeated sounds in Peter’s speech also help to increase its fluidity as it crescendos towards its climax. If words have power then it is their phonetics that give them elegance.

Peter’s rhetorical questions introduce some key themes that will be repeated in Acts 8.9-25 and 13.6-12. Firstly there is the presence of the Satan in the apostle’s opponent (5.3):

διὰ τί ἐπλήρωσεν ὁ Σατανᾶς τὴν καρδίαν σου.

The text employs parallelism to compare Ananias, who is filled by the accuser, and Peter who is known from the co-text to be ‘filled with the holy spirit’ (4.8). The parallelism works similarly to the text’s word ordering in Peter’s address, functioning to position Ananias as Peter’s antagonist.

A second theme is the impurity of the opposition’s heart. καρδίαν is repeated three times in the pericope. Ananias’ heart is ‘filled’ by Satan, which contrasts to the apostles who, along with the rest of the believers are ‘of one heart’ (4.32). As previously mentioned, the harmony of the believers in the introduction sets up the narrative for a conflict, inviting readers to question what happens to those in the community who are not of the same heart. Peter’s rhetorical question presupposes that he has insight into peoples’ hearts, a very God-like ability, which places Peter in the tradition of the prophets.[[57]](#footnote-57)

A third theme that will be repeated in Acts 8.9-25 is ‘μέρος’ (portion). Luke-Acts describes Ananias as laying ‘only a part’ of his proceeds at the apostle’s feet (5.2). Ironically, the text details that Sapphira dies at Peter’s feet (5.10), in the same place as the money was laid. The text uses irony to imply that in bringing ‘only a portion’ to the apostles, Ananias and Sapphira lose their portion in the community of believers.

The final, declarative sentence in Peter’s speech is something of a punch line. However, it does not issue a punitive instruction or threat. This may be a reason why some scholars would be reluctant to label the speech as a curse. Instead, it is a verdict and incrimination: οὐκ ἐψεύσω ἀνθρώποις ἀλλὰ τῷ θεῷ. However, after the crescendo of rhetorical questions, Peter’s verdict functions like a punch line the effect of which suggests it carries an implicit judgment. The two clauses that make up the sentence give the line balance, with θεος mirroring ἀνθρώπος. The assonance of repeated ‘ω’ sounds creates a musical quality as well as binding the clauses into a solid unit. In the statement, Ananias is judged to have committed a crime of both deceit and greed. Through the structure and style of the text, Luke-Acts establishes the potent form of Peter’s words.

Luke-Acts also suggests the potency of Peter’s words by emphasising the immediacy of their effect. The text’s use of participles draws readers’ attention the simultaneous aspect of cause and effect. ἀκούων δὲ ὁ Ἁνανίας τοὺς λόγους τούτους πεσὼν ἐξέψυξεν (5.5) The text positions ‘hearing’ and ‘falling’ in apposition with one another, emphasizing their close relationship. Secondly, the text uses the modifier ‘at once’ in ἔπεσεν δὲ παραχρῆμα (5.10), when describing Sapphria’s reaction to Peter’s words. Thirdly, Peter himself employs the lexicon of immediacy when he uses the order ἰδου (5.9). This emphasis on immediacy by the text’s narrator and protagonist strongly suggests that Peter’s words cause the death of the Ananias and Sapphira.

The reaction of those who hear about Ananias and Sapphira’s demise also testifies to the power of Peter’s words. Their reaction of ‘great fear’ (5.5, 11) and ‘high esteem’ (5.13) strongly suggest that readers are meant to understand Peter as causing the couple’s deaths.

The end of the episode leaves audiences with a vivid visual image. Sapphira is dead at Peter’s feet, an image of submission to the apostles. The text repeats the downwards spatial movement in 5.5 and 5.10, which is juxtaposed with the upwards movement of the young members of the community (5.6). Not only do the community bring their gifts to the apostles’ feet but the rebellious and defeated Ananias and Sapphira also end up there.[[58]](#footnote-58)

The Coptic and Greek curse spells from late Antiquity provide a helpful insight into how curses were used and understood in the wider Mediterranean world. Whilst they mostly date later than the NT texts, they provide a picture of some of the common emotions, desires, punishments and phrases that made up cursing practices. While they have a different cultural setting, shown in their mix of pagan, Jewish and Christian deities, they also show some intriguing similarities.

Significant differences between the two types of text include their narrative perspective and performance setting. The curse spells are all written from the first person perspective, addressed to a deity or spirit of a dead person, and can be presumed to have been performed in private. In contrast the curse-like judgements of Luke-Acts are all delivered in public, addressed to the accused, and are described by a third person narrator.

One of the immediately apparent parallels between the curse spells and Peter’s words is the desire for the deity to ‘strike’ the spell caster’s target. Spell texts such as text 29 instructs the deity:‘[…] strike Philadelphe and her children’**.[[59]](#footnote-59)** Text 89 commands: ‘You must strike him […]’ (189). Other spells implore: ‘Father strike them [...]’, and ‘You must strike Prestasia and Tnounte and Eboneh, quickly, deservedly.’ [[60]](#footnote-60) Whilst Peter’s speech does not include any threat or instruction to God to strike his opponents, the effect is one that suggests they have been struck by the invisible hand of God. The text emphasises this effect through repetition of πίπτω in the description of Ananias and Sapphira immediately falling down (5.5, 10). The spatial movement of descent can be further compared to some of the curse texts that repeatedly urge the deity to bring their opponents down, in social standing and in health. Spell text 101 pleas: ‘You must bring him down’ (208). Text 88 commands: ‘You must bring [them] down from their heights […]’ (188). This shared spatial dynamic reveals a desire for the spell-caster, or the power that they represent to be shown as of a higher, superior status

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Many of curse spells are characterised by the spell caster’s impression that their intended target has wronged him or herself. They frequently identify themselves as the victim in their opening passages. Text 28 begins: ‘[…] avenge me on the one who opposes me and on the one who has driven me from my place’ (51). Text 89 introduces its speaker with: ‘I am a poor widow [with] orphaned children and a burned… in my hand’ (189). Text 91 starts: ‘I am Jacob, a miserable, wretched person’ (192). Peter’s ‘curse’ contrasts to this sense of victimisation as he explicitly pronounces God to be the victim of the Ananias and Sapphira’s crime (5.4c). This conviction that God is the injured party affirms the text’s earlier description of God who, by his spirit, dwells in the community of believers (4.33). Thus, a sin against the community is ultimately against God.

An intriguing similarity between certain curse spells and Peter’s ‘curse’ is the belief that the spell-caster’s opponent is possessed by a demon. Text 88 says of its victim: ‘He is acting like a demon’ (187). Text 92 also suggests his opponent is behaving in a demonic manner by its instruction to, ‘[…] quickly afflict him with what a demon deserves’ (195). Whilst the Satan figure is not quite the same as a demon in the NT, Peter shares the concept that his opponent is filled by a malevolent force.

The two types of text also share a sense of urgency and desire for immediate action from the deity. The curse spells are almost all characterised by their demands to act quickly. Text 89 urges: ‘Bring judgement on our behalf, quickly’ (189). Text 90 (191), 91 (192), 108 (219) all echo this instruction with the adverb ‘quickly!’ Another common phrase is ‘At once, at once!’[[61]](#footnote-61) In Acts 4.32-5.11, as previously discussed, the text uses specific lexicon and participle moods to emphasise the immediate effect of Peter’s words. This shared emphasis on instant effect suggests that people in the ancient Mediterranean identified successful curses through their immediate impact, and that Luke-Acts depicts Ananias and Sapphira’s deaths as the direct effect of Peter’s words.

Through literary analysis of the Ananias and Sapphira pericope, considerations of the co-text of Acts and comparison with Greek and Coptic curse texts, we have explored what the language of judgement in Luke-Acts tell us about the text’s attitude towards opposition, and matters of deceit, money and ‘magic’.

**Start a book club**: ecclesial libraries are neglected shelves of Christadelphian books old and new. With the demise of the reading of books on and about the Bible by Christadelphian authors, one way to reverse this is to start a ‘book club’ that goes through a book by chapter or section and discusses it over coffee once a week. **AP**



**History**

**Andrew Wilson**

The columns this year (2015) are developed from research I undertook, over an 18 month period. They will be four reviews of books that in part deal with the topic of the identification of Tharshish.[[62]](#footnote-62)

My approach in reviewing these books will be the same throughout: I shall be concerned with process, rather than outcome. Further, I shall attempt to apply the same analytical criteria in assessing the various writers' skills. Certainly, I believe there are, in many – indeed all the vital – Biblical issues a 'right' and 'wrong'. However, there is also a 'right' and a 'wrong' way to go about reasoning, and if we set off on the wrong foot with our reasoning, it will be unsurprising that we achieve wrong outcomes.

At the end of these reviews, perhaps in 2016 (DV) I will set out my own conclusions on the identity of Tarshish, along with those of the other agencies in *Ezekiel* 38, historically/Biblically-derived, with indications, at least, of how I have reached the conclusions come to.

*Review 1*

George Smith [1800 – 1868]'s *The Cassiterides: an Inquiry Into the Commercial Operations of the Pha“Nicians in Western Europe, With Particular Reference to the British Tin Trade* [published by British Library Publishing, London, in its 'History Collection' ].[[63]](#footnote-63)

Smith, a Methodist, was born and lived his life in Devon and Cornwall, UK. Educated as a child in the British & Foreign Schools, Smith's major learning was acquired through self-tuition. He was able to read Latin and Greek. By the end of his life, he had written 16 books, on a range of topics from Biblical studies, such as *An attempt to ascertain the True Chronology of the Book of Genesis* [1842] to histories, like his *History of Wesleyan Methodism* [3 volumes, 1857-1861]. His final volume, on the life of David, was completed in the year he died. The Cassiterides opus was written in 1863. Smith, clearly a polymath, was a Member of the Royal Asiatic Society, Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, of the Royal Society of Literature and of the Irish Archaeological Society. He was created an Ll.D in 1859 in New York.

Smith's treatise of 154 pages on Tharshish is written as a seamless exposition, with no chapters, nor other headings. The reader has to decide for himself how to assess its thrust.

Smith had always, along with most Bible students of his acquaintance, understood Tharshish as being identified with Great Britain. Recently – to his own day - detractors, for whom Smith previously had respect, had ventured to demolish the accepted view. These detractors included Sir George Cornewall Lewis (1806-1863). Lewis was an experienced Oxbridge-educated QC, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Privy Councillor. The self-taught Smith showed no bashfulness in tackling what he perceived as the knight's mistaken views on this matter. Other detractors from a traditional stance on Tharshish who came in for Smithsonian analysis also included the controversialist William Desborough Cooley (1795-1883). Cooley's passionate advocacy of his views on a range of issues – mainly to do with Africa - rushed some of his readers into too readily accepting his conclusions, though his views were later largely discredited. Smith, however, not over faced by a statesman like Lewis, was not likely to be put off by a controversialist, like Cooley, and, in fact, was not! Smith set out clearly and fairly what Cooley had proposed. He then comprehensively demolished it.

The third section of Smith’s book examines a variety of ancient authorities' views on the identity of Tharshish – beginning in *Ezekiel*, proceeding through Herodotus, Julius Caesar, Diodorus the Sicilian [aka Diodorus Siculus], Strabo, Justin Martyr and Pliny.

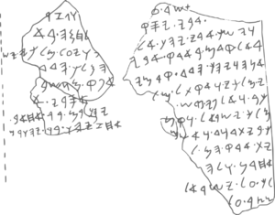
Smith then examines the rise of Tyre and Sidon, and their associated allies. He uses contemporary Middle Eastern sources, such as Herodotus, Cicero, Tacitus, Palaephatus, Strabo and Josephus, and blends this with his own learned contemporaries - students of esoteric aspects of the Past, such as Prof. William Hales (1747-1831), Prof. A. H. L. Heeren (Heeren was a Professor at Gottingen, contemporary with J. G. Eichhorn and J. F. Blumenbach), Prof. John Kenrick (1788-1887), Abbe Antoine Banier (1673-1741), Conrad Malte-Brun (1775-1826), and the Oxbridge academic Jacob Bryant (1715-1804).

Smith then turns his attention to the supportive testimony of the archaeology of Malta, Carthage and Melarteria [as expounded by Samuel Bochart (1599-1667) in *Geographia Sacra seu Phaleg et Canaan,* Caen, 1646]. He focuses on the details of the materials from Phoenicia which they traded both with “Tharshish”, and with Britain, showing the similarities involved – and thus arguing for the common identity of Britain and Tharshish.

In the penultimate section, Smith surveys the history of Phoenicia, from its glory days in the 8th century BC to its decline, in the mid-4th century BC.

Does the writer seem to have a thorough grasp of Biblical data?[[64]](#footnote-64)\* In Smith's case, the answer to this question is a very firm “Yes!” [A complication with Smith is that, throughout his book, being the polymath he undoubtedly was, Smith cannot resist being drawn off into - interesting and related though they might be – issues which are clearly *side*-issues: the history of the Belgae, the inter-relationships between mythology, idolatry and Euhemerism, and so forth.

On the whole, however, Smith argues his case precisely, very minutely and overall very persuasively. That case is that: “between B.C. 1500 and B.C. 1200 the Phoenicians sailed into the Atlantic, discovered the mineral fields of Spain and of Britain, and enjoyed a monopoly of this commerce for several centuries, trading directly with both countries”. The alternative view – the denial of “old popular tradition of Phoenician intercourse with Britain”, Smith describes, as it was expounded by the protagonists against whom he contended, as “a barren declaration of disbelief” [Smith, op. cit. p. 153].



**Archaeology News**

**Kay McGrath**

We commence our quarterly with brother Ritmeyer’s Blog, **Ritmeyer Archaeological Design,** which was not reported on in the last e-Journal.

From early-May to mid-October 2014 brother Ritmeyer’s Blog remained silent, reigniting in October, writing about the Temple Mount’s recent turmoil[[65]](#footnote-65) at the same time advising why he and sister Kathleen had not blogged for a while due to being “very busy updating two of our previous books and also writing a new Guide Book to the Temple Mount, called “*Jerusalem – The Temple Mount, A Carta Guide*”.”

Brother Ritmeyer reporting more fully on the new Guide “*Jerusalem – The Temple Mount, A Carta Guide*”[[66]](#footnote-66) (update[[67]](#footnote-67)), with new drawings advised in subsequent posts:

* New drawings of the Development of the Temple Mount.[[68]](#footnote-68)
* The Temple Mount in Jerusalem during the Jebusite period[[69]](#footnote-69)
* The Temple Mount in the time of Solomon[[70]](#footnote-70)
* The Temple Mount during the time of King Hezekiah[[71]](#footnote-71)
* The Temple Mount during the times of Ezra and Nehemiah[[72]](#footnote-72)
* The Temple Mount during the Hellenistic and Hasmonean periods (332-37 BC)[[73]](#footnote-73)
* The Temple Mount in the Herodian period (37 BC-70 AD)[[74]](#footnote-74)
* The Temple Mount during the Roman Period[[75]](#footnote-75)
* The Temple Mount during the Byzantine period (324-638 AD)[[76]](#footnote-76)

General interest items blogged:

*Ritmeyer Archaeological Design* is now on Facebook.[[77]](#footnote-77)

*Building violations and illegal construction on the Temple Mount* – again! Reporting on an article by Shimon Cohen and Tova Dvorin of israelnews.com “Jordanian Waqf is assembling a generator on the Temple Mount without permits”.[[78]](#footnote-78)

*Harbours of the Sea of Galilee,* an article on “Ferrell Jenkins runs a travel blog and today [December 04, 2014] wrote a post on the *Ports of the Sea of Galilee*[[79]](#footnote-79) which has some excellent photographs of the Church of the Primacy of Peter at Tabgha.”[[80]](#footnote-80)

Two further blogs by brother Ritmeyer saw out the end of year in relation to celebrations by both Christians and Jews:

*Bethlehem – the Manger and the Inn* “People have asked me where I think Jesus was born. I reply that Scripture and archaeology show that the place was not a randomly chosen cave in Bethlehem, but a location that was prepared centuries earlier for this purpose.”[[81]](#footnote-81)

*Where on the Temple Mount was Jesus During Hanukkah?* “There are some unique locations in the Land of the Bible where you really get a sense of place. One of these is inside the Eastern Wall of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Here the record of Jesus’ visit to the Temple precincts in John 10.22-39 comes to vibrant life.”[[82]](#footnote-82)

Bringing in the New Year, a post on *The Western Wall was not destroyed by an earthquake![[83]](#footnote-83)*

“Walking on the Herodian street alongside the Western Wall in the Jerusalem Archaeological Garden and Davidson Centre, one sees an enormous pile of Herodian stones that clearly came from higher up the wall” addressing an article in Haaretz Premium Subscription, Archaeologist: *Western Wall stones result of earthquake, not Roman demolition* “Prof. Shimon Gibson says the huge stones near the Western Wall may have been caused by major earthquake in 363 B.E.”[[84]](#footnote-84)

The **Israel Antiquities Authority** has reported more remarkable finds:

*A Rare 2,000 Year Old Commemorative Inscription Dedicated to the Emperor Hadrian was Uncovered in Jerusalem* (October 2014) “According to Dr. Rina Avner, excavation director on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority, “This is an extraordinary find of enormous historical importance”[[85]](#footnote-85)

*An Impressive 2,800 Year Old Farm House was Uncovered in Rosh Ha-’Ayin* (December 2014) found “In Archaeological Excavations of the Israel Antiquities Authority Prior to an Initiative by the Ministry of Construction to Expand the City”.[[86]](#footnote-86)

The Authority has also released:



DIG QUEST: ISRAEL[[87]](#footnote-87) - for children

*“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”* (Genesis 1:1)

“The Dead Sea Scrolls, the most important archaeological discovery of the 20th century, are now available on your iPhone and iPad as the Israel Antiquities Authority launches its first App featuring archaeology games and puzzles for kids.”

Still in **Israel** *Israeli Wine Researchers Aim to Revive Ancient Libations* “Matching indigenous grapes with archaeological finds, Elyashiv Drori hopes to recreate the drinks enjoyed by King David”[[88]](#footnote-88) which also entails finding a “living sample” of 3000-year-old grapes.

At the *Valley of Elah Road Construction* a 2nd Temple Period Mikveh has been rediscovered in with comment “Archaeologists amazed to find 75 yr-old inscription by 2 Australian soldiers from World War II into a rock of 1,900 yr-old Jewish ritual bath.”[[89]](#footnote-89) See also Israel Antiquities Authority “Press Office” So *Corporals Walsh and Scarlett, Who Are You?* (October 2014)[[90]](#footnote-90)

LiveScience reported on a find at the Tel Burna site: *Storm God Worship: Ancient Cult Complex Discovered in Israel with comment “*The archaeologists said they aren’t sure who was worshipped at the complex, though Baal, the Canaanite storm god, is a possibility. “The letters of Ugarit … suggest that of the Canaanite pantheon, Baal, the Canaanite storm god, would have been the most likely candidate,” Itzhaq Shai, a professor at Ariel University who is directing a research project at Tel Burna, told Live Science in an email.”[[91]](#footnote-91) Further reading can be found at Phys.org *Archeologists Unearth 3,300 Year Old Complex in Israel*[[92]](#footnote-92)

At the Hippos-Sussita excavation conducted by the University of Haifa, ScienceDaily report *Silent evidence of the earthquake of 363 CE* in Summary: “Silent evidence of a large earthquake in 363 CE – the skeleton of a woman with a dove-shaped pendant – was discovered under the tiles of a collapsed roof by archaeologists from the University of Haifa during this excavation season at Hippos-Sussita. They also found a large muscular marble leg and artillery ammunition from some 2,000 years ago. “The data is finally beginning to form a clear historical-archaeological picture,” said Dr. Michael Eisenberg, head of the international excavation team.”[[93]](#footnote-93)

More on Hippos-Sussita can be found at Popular Archaeology[[94]](#footnote-94), *Archaeologists Excavate Earthquake-Devastated Roman City.*[[95]](#footnote-95)

In December, Flinders University (Australia) reported on *Underwater Excavation Reveals Lost Levantine Village* (excavation near Haifa) “A 7,500-year-old underwater water well that has been partially excavated from a site on Israel’s Mediterranean coast near Haifa will give important insights into the Neolithic society that once lived there.”[[96]](#footnote-96)

Mississippi State University archaeological team have announced a *Major Archaeological Find* on December 15, 2014 advising that “Six official clay seals found by a Mississippi State University archaeological team at a small site in Israel offer evidence that supports the existence of biblical kings David and Solomon.”

Further commenting:

“Many modern scholars dismiss David and Solomon as mythological figures and believe no kingdom could have existed in the region at the time the Bible recounted their activities. The new finds provide evidence that some type of government activity was conducted there in that period.”[[97]](#footnote-97)

The Jerusalem Post advised of the *Remains of 8,000-Year-Old Olive Oil Found in Lower Galilee* “The earliest evidence of the use of olive oil in the country, and possibly the entire Middle East, was unearthed at an excavation site in the Lower Galilee, the Antiquities Authority announced Wednesday.”[[98]](#footnote-98)

Still in December, The Hebrew University announced a *Unique Entry Complex Discovered at Herodian Hilltop Palace* “Archaeologists from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem’s Institute of Archaeology have discovered a monumental entryway to the Herodian Hilltop Palace at the Herodium National Park. The unique complex was uncovered during excavations by The Herodium Expedition in Memory of Ehud Netzer over the past year, as part of a project to develop the site for tourism.”[[99]](#footnote-99)

Back at LiveScience they report on an *Ancient Glass Bracelet Decorated with Menorahs Found in Israel* discovered in Mount Carmel NationalPark“Archaeologists in Israel recently unearthed a glass bracelet decorated with a timely design. The ancient piece of jewellery is engraved with a seven-branched candelabrum, or menorah — the symbol of the Hanukkah holiday.”[[100]](#footnote-100)

Of interest, the Washington Post, on January 04, 2015, reported on the possible site of Jesus’ trial - Archaeologists *Find Possible Site of Jesus’s Trial in Jerusalem -* “It started 15 years ago with plans to expand the Tower of David Museum. But the story took a strange turn when archaeologists started peeling away layers under the floor in an old abandoned building adjacent to the museum in Jerusalem’s Old City.”[[101]](#footnote-101)

**In Brief**

**Egypt**

*New Health Scans Provide Data on Ancient Mummies -* “A mummy rolled down hospital hallways here on Sunday. Amen-Nestawy-Nakht, a 3,000-year-old Egyptian priest, was getting a CAT scan at Barnes-Jewish. It was probably his second. The last one was a couple of decades ago, when technology wasn’t what it is now.”[[102]](#footnote-102)

*Legend of the Sesostris Canal -* “There is no historical evidence for the existence of the ancient Sesostris Canal that was once said to link the Nile to the Red Sea, writes Al-Sayed Mahfouz.”[[103]](#footnote-103)

*Arthritis Rediagnosis in Egyptian Pharaohs* - “Four ancient Egyptian pharaohs, thought to have suffered from a disabling form of arthritis, may have been misdiagnosed. In a paper published online today in Arthritis & Rheumatology, researchers propose that Amenhotep III (portrayed in an ancient relief above) and three other pharaohs had an often asymptomatic form of arthritis known as diffuse idiopathic skeletal hyperostosis (DISH), rather than the more debilitating ankylosing spondylitis (AS) originally deduced from x-rays taken of their mummies in 1980.”[[104]](#footnote-104)

*Slandering Tutankhamun?* - “The results of a virtual autopsy on the mummy of the boy king Tutankhamun have triggered the anger of Egyptian Egyptologists, writes Nevine El-Aref”[[105]](#footnote-105)

*King Thutmosis III’s Temple Found by Accident* – “3,400-year-old pharaonic temple found under a house in southern Cairo”[[106]](#footnote-106)

*2000-year-old Youth Organization* - “In Roman Egypt, 14-year-old boys were enrolled in a youth organization in order to learn to be good citizens.”[[107]](#footnote-107)

Related: *Tiny Voices From the Past: New Perspectives on Childhood in Early Europe* - “The project (2013-2016) studies the lives of children and attitudes to childhood at a culturally formative stage of European culture: Antiquity and the Early/High Middle Ages. The project covers the period from the fifth century BC to the twelfth century AD, but with an emphasis on the period from the first to the eight century.”[[108]](#footnote-108)

*Archaeologist leads the first detailed study of human remains at the ancient Egyptian site of Deir el-Medina* - “Ancient Egyptian workers in a village that’s now called Deir el-Medina were beneficiaries of what Stanford Egyptologist Anne Austin calls “the earliest documented governmental health care plan.”[[109]](#footnote-109)

*Ancient Egyptian Mummy Wearing Jewels Found* - “Spanish archaeologists digging in Egypt have unearthed a female mummy still wearing her jewels.”[[110]](#footnote-110)

*Why Pharaohs Worshipped Dung Beetles* - “As the sun rose and set in the skies of long-ago Egypt, it rolled across the horizon courtesy of the sun god Khepri, a scarab.”[[111]](#footnote-111)

*The Sarcophagus of god Amun’s Singer Unearthed* – “The sarcophagus of god Amun’s singer unearthed in a tomb at Assassif area on Luxor’s west bank”[[112]](#footnote-112)

*Danish Bronze Age Glass Beads Traced to* Egypt - “Analyses of glass beads found in Denmark give us new knowledge of Bronze Age trade routes … trade routes between Denmark and the ancient civilisations in Egypt and Mesopotamia in the Bronze Age 3,400 years ago.”[[113]](#footnote-113)

From the Smithsonian: *The Controversial Afterlife of King Tut* - “A frenzy of conflicting scientific analyses have made the famous pharaoh more mysterious than ever”[[114]](#footnote-114)

**Iraq**

*“No harvest was reaped”: demographic and climatic factors in the decline of the Neo-Assyrian Empire -* Published online: 4 November 2014 – Abstract (In Part)- “In the 9th century BC, Assyrians based in northern Iraq started a relentless process of expansion that within two centuries would see them controlling most of the ancient Near East. Traditional explanations for the decline of the Neo-Assyrian Empire in the 7th century BC have emphasized the role of military conflict, and especially the destruction of the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, by a coalition of Babylonian and Median forces in 612 BC.”[[115]](#footnote-115)

**Turkey**

*The Jews and Anatolia: 2,500 Years of History* – “While the Ottoman Empire famously welcomed Jews fleeing the Reconquista in Iberia in the 1400s, the community has a much longer history in Anatolia and Thrace, stretching back to the period before the Common Era”[[116]](#footnote-116)

*New Details Emerge in Massive Ancient Underground City Discovery in* Cappadocia - “New details have been revealed about the massive ancient underground city discovered in Turkey’s Central Anatolian province of Nevşehir … The tunnels of the underground city are located under a conical-shaped hill and are wide enough for a car to pass through.”[[117]](#footnote-117)

**General**

LiveScience Reports on: *Ancient Stone Circles in Mideast Baffle Archaeologists* - “Huge stone circles in the Middle East have been imaged from above, revealing details of structures that have been shrouded in mystery for decades … Archaeologists in Jordan have taken high-resolution aerial images of 11 ancient “Big Circles,” all but one of which are around 400 meters (1,312 feet) in diameter. Why they are so similar is unknown but the similarity seems “too close to be a coincidence” said researcher David Kennedy.”[[118]](#footnote-118)

*Mega Wave Hit Oman’s Coast 4,500 Years Ago* - Muscat: “Geologists from GUtech, in cooperation with archaeologists from the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, have dug up evidence of a tsunami or severe storm that hit Ras Al Hadd about 4,500 years ago.”[[119]](#footnote-119)

**Biblical Archaeology Review (BAR)**,Bible History Daily email notification has linked to some thought-provoking articles and other newsworthy items. Some articles have been selected which may interest e-Journal Readers – in brief (a taster), linked to articles in full:

*First Person: Life Was Not So Bad for Smelters*

As published in the January/February 2015 Biblical Archaeology Review

“Mohammad Najjar and Thomas Levy have been excavating at an ancient copper mining and smelting site in the Faynan district of Jordan for more than 20 years. They describe it as “hell on earth.” The mines are in the midst of an inhospitable desert, not far from the lowest spot on earth. The heat can be intolerable, and water is scarce. People have been mining copper here for 12,000 years, and they have been smelting the extracted copper since the Chalcolithic period, 4,500 years ago. In the Biblical period, this area was part of Edom; later it was part of the Nabatean kingdom. For most of this time, Najjar and Levy tell us, “The copper was mined and smelted by slaves and war captives. They were supervised either by soldiers or by contractors to whom the slaves were leased.” In the Roman period, as punishment, criminals and persecuted Christians were in effect sentenced to death by work in the mines—damnatio ad metalla, condemned to the mines, was the punishment.”[[120]](#footnote-120)

*Did Jesus Exist? Searching for Evidence Beyond the Bible*

Lawrence Mykytiuk’s feature article from the January/February 2015

issue of BAR with voluminous endnotes

Lawrence Mykytiuk • 08 December 2014

“THE MAN CHRIST JESUS. Did Jesus of Nazareth exist as a real human being? Outside of the New Testament, what is the evidence for his existence? In this article, author Lawrence Mykytiuk examines the extra-Biblical textual and archaeological evidence associated with the man who would become the central figure in Christianity. Here Jesus is depicted in a vibrant sixth-century C.E. mosaic from the Basilica of Sant’Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, Italy.

After two decades toiling in the quiet groves of academe, I published an article in BAR titled “Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible.”[[121]](#footnote-121) The enormous interest this article generated was a complete surprise to me. Nearly 40 websites in six languages, reflecting a wide spectrum of secular and religious orientations, linked to BAR’s supplementary web page. Some even posted translations.

I thought about following up with a similar article on people in the New Testament, but I soon realized that this would be so dominated by the question of Jesus’ existence that I needed to consider this question separately. This is that article.”[[122]](#footnote-122)

*The Archaeological Quest for the Earliest Christians*

Part one of a two-part examination - Douglas Boin • 01 December 2014

“The race for the next spectacular artifact is on. Ancient bone boxes, lost manuscripts encoded with secret messages about Jesus, even fragments of crumbled papyrus—some no bigger than the receipts we stuff in our pockets—promise hope of a brave new world in Biblical studies. The assumption seems to be that if we just look a little harder, if we just dig a little bit deeper, one day we’ll find the one piece of evidence that will take us back to the earliest age of Jesus and his followers. To many, it’s an urgent archaeological mission with profound implications for the history of faith.”[[123]](#footnote-123)

*The “Philistines” to the North*

The Philistines in the Bible and the northern Sea Peoples - Robin Ngo • 13 October 2014

“To accuse someone of being a philistine today implies that that person is crass, unintellectual and lacking in culture. Where did this term come from? Who were the Philistines? In the Bible, the Philistines were the enemies of the Israelites. The Biblical conflict is well-attested, from Samson’s slaying of a thousand Philistines (Judges 15) to David’s battle with the Philistine giant Goliath (1 Samuel 17) to King Saul’s impalement on the walls of Beth Shean[[124]](#footnote-124) at the hands of the Philistines (1 Samuel 31). Through archaeology, however, we have learned that the Philistines were just one tribe of Sea Peoples who invaded Canaan in the 12th century B.C.E. and settled along the coast. The Bible refers to all of these tribes collectively as the Philistines.

The Philistines established the famous Pentapolis—Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath and Ekron—in the southern coastal plain. Archaeological excavations at each of these sites, save for Gaza (due to the modern buildings constructed atop its tell), reveal a rich material culture with origins in the Aegean. The Philistines were far from lacking in culture as the modern derogatory term suggests.”[[125]](#footnote-125)

Also @ Biblical Archaeology (BAR)

*Top 10 Biblical Archaeology Discoveries in 2014*

“Check out the archaeological finds that thrilled us this past year”[[126]](#footnote-126)

**Correspondence**

Dear Editor,

I have been pleased to have read this article from EJournal 2014.3 (A. Perry, “Inspiration and Interpretation” pp. 52-58) a couple of times and found that it clearly states a number of useful points - the layers in the text, the primacy of intertextual searching, etc.

Two comments arising therefrom:

First:

“These features of the Bible [viz. poetry, figures of speech et al.] are well in evidence in other literary texts and dealt with in school education. It is therefore an odd complaint to say that they are the cause of our misunderstanding.”

For what it is worth, my experience of teaching teenagers how to ‘read’ literature - poetry, figures of speech, *et al*. - suggests that this type of reading is often initially rejected as ‘stretching it’, as ‘not what the author intended’, that understanding what you read is just a matter of ‘common sense’. It can take a couple of years, up to adulthood, of working with examples, to get them reading on these lines. I wonder how many Bre. and Sis. react similarly to the interpretation of the scriptures which focuses on such features as a level of meaning. Some do. More generally, I wonder how many are alienated from such interpretative approach by an unproductive experience of such things in school, and the manifest similarity between some Christadelphian teaching contexts and their experience of schooling in the world. But I wonder if modelling searching the scriptures on schooling (e.g. Sunday school) may have had a more positive response in the 19th C.

The ‘common sense’ model of reading sees a text as a window onto ‘reality’. A text does nothing other than act as an opening in space to look through at something that is not the text. Whereas, perhaps, God’s word creates and forms the ‘events’ described, and without it these events do not exist. That is not to say that Abraham did not lead a rich and varied life. But the significance (and profit) of Abraham's life is accessible only by reading the scriptures.

Second:  
  
I think that it is likely that an historico-social approach to the interpretation of scriptures underlies dynamic equivalence translations, whereas an intertextual one is supported by and supports a formal equivalence translation method. **NM**

**News**

**Society of Old Testament Study Meeting, Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, Jan 2014**

About a hundred people gathered at Fitzwilliam College for the winter meeting of this society. The usual faces were once again present with fresh PhD students in attendance. The opening address was a talk on “The Bible in the University: SOTS and the Academy” by Prof. Hans Barstad, who was unable to attend and had to have his paper read by Prof. Graham Auld his colleague at Edinburgh. The president for the evening introduced Prof. Barstad as an ‘original’ scholar which is code for holding views that break with the consensus. This is true as Barstad is an Isaiah specialist and has been instrumental in changing opinion on Isaiah 40-66 since the 1980s. I was looking forward to hearing him, as we had met at Durham in 2006, and so I was disappointed. There was nothing in his paper to report here.

Dr Anya Klein gave a paper on “Praying Biblical History: The Phenomenon of History in the Psalms”. Sadly, she had a high-pitched voice and spoke quickly in a German-English accent which made hearing difficult. The psalms she chose (78, 105, 106, 135, 136) were placed in a post-exilic context in which she asserted that the basis of national identity had shifted from the state to the text. It seemed to be a descriptive talk and the president challenged her post-exilic dates. SOTS is a fairly liberal society in the way it treats the text and so its not often that you get illuminating talks.

Dr Kris Sonek gave a talk next on “The Abrahamic Traditions of Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity: A Window into the Past”. His text was Gen 15:5,

And he brought him forth abroad, and said, ‘Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, so shall thy seed be’.

The early Rabbis used this text to condemn the worship of the stars but the early church fathers used it in a typological way to affirm that the stars were the children of Christ. In the text Abraham was Jesus and the stars were his descendants. What was missing in the talk was the connection that Abraham’s descendants would be those baptised into Christ, following Galatians, which means that in this text Abraham is not a type of Christ.

The next talk was Dr George Nichol “The Bible as a Document of the Church” which was a typical Anglican liberal presentation of the value of the Bible. We needn’t rehearse his talk here except to say that he thought that the Internet made preaching the ‘Bible is true’ message untenable. He stated that he believed the Bible was a “human construct” and we need say no more.

The only decent talk of the conference was by Dr Christopher Thomson (Cambridge) “Was the Exile a Payment of Debt? The Supposed רצה II in Lev 26 and Isa 40:2”. This is a presentation of the lexical semantics of רצה in Isa 40:2. A typical translation of this verse is,

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for (רצה), that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins. (NIV)

Thomson’s question was does רצה (Niphal) have its usual sense ‘accept’, ‘receive favourably’, and ‘be pleased with’, or can it mean ‘pay or ‘pay for’ as in the NIV? He argued that there was no second sense of ‘to pay for’ and that the lexical arguments usually put forward for this sense were flawed. His talk was therefore centred in lexicons. Since he was arguing that the clause is ‘her sin/punishment has been accepted’, we were happy to agree since this is the translation favoured in my commentary on Isaiah 40-48. What Thomson was unable to do, and we talked about it afterward, was to contextualize the accepting of the sin/punishment: Isa 40:2 is about Jerusalem’s sin being accepted by the Suffering Servant (see Lev 1:4; 7:18; 19:7; 22:23, 25, 27). He said he would go away and think about this idea.

SOTS might be named after the Old Testament but it often has talks that have nothing to do with the Old Testament such as that by Dr. Nathan Macdonald “Priestly Families and the Hasmonean Revolt”. If this is not your interest, you just have to grin and bear it, usually as the scholar ‘corrects’ some nuance of the consensus view on some matter. There will usually be an archaeology talk and these are slide-aided. This year we had an amusing talk on inscriptions in which Dr. Judith Hadley entertained the audience with tales of false reporting of discoveries (e.g. in the Reader’s Digest) and how forgery affects the scholarship (particularly in bullae).

With the Hollywood film, *Exodus: Gods and Kings* on release, there was a talk on “Why the Exodus could not have been in the 15th century BCE (if there was an Exodus)” by Prof. Lester Grabbe. He is a minimalist and proceeded to argue that the Exodus could not have been in the 15th century because Egypt dominated Canaan at that time. What he didn’t do is ask what the Exodus *was* that couldn’t have happened which seemed to me to be a bit of a flaw in his talk.

The last talk to report on is the star attraction of Prof. Alexander Rofé from Jerusalem on “Sectarian Corrections in Biblical Manuscripts: Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots”. Sadly, Prof. Rofé is in his eighties and speaks with a thick Jewish accent and so it was difficult to follow.

Conferences are like fraternals: the main reason for attending are the discounted books and the academic chit-chat after the talks; seldom is the reason the talks being given by the speaker(s); but now and again you do get a really good one.

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**Postscript**

An isolationist approach to the acquisition and development of biblical knowledge in the community is not possible now that the Internet Age is upon us. That is, you can certainly bury your head in the sand, if you want to, but we are counselled to live **in the world** while not being of the world.

Perhaps in the past isolationism was possible, since people would have to spend a lot of time acquiring knowledge through extensive book reading, doing academic research in libraries, at the same time as holding down a job and/or raising a family. Some certainly did this labour. Hence, people relied on Christadelphian authors and speakers for their knowledge as recently as the late 1980s, precisely because of the personal labour involved in knowledge acquisition. This has now changed forever because of the Internet and because of computer aided bible tools.[[127]](#footnote-127) People read less print material (books and magazines), but access more ‘knowledge’ on the Internet. Hence, writers and speakers in the community have a different kind of younger audience today. It is an audience among whom there is much more varied ‘knowledge’ sloshing around.

Speakers face younger audiences (<40) which read and listen to many competing voices. They can no longer assume that the audience will rely on them for knowledge, nor can they assume that their audience has the same background in reading (i.e. a similar range of Christadelphian books and magazines). They may very well know more than them and already know what they say before they have begun to speak. Having good oratorical skills is not enough; it may even be that with the age of YouTube, the platform has lost its role.

While all levels of material are needed in the community, because of the ephemeral nature of the writing product, an editorial policy today that publishes *only* introductory level material and devotional material is a mistake. It fails to address the freely and easily available advanced material on the Internet; it supposes that this source of information is not being used in the community, whereas in reality it is now prominent among the younger audience. The policy also leads to isolationism and an inability to engage with the world in preaching. While all levels of material are needed in a community, it is *always* a mistake to exclude the publication of more advanced material from the output of the community. If people are not being fed with advanced material from within the community, they will look elsewhere.

The community in the UK became more isolationist during the mid to late 1980s and this was reflected in its writing output at the time changing to a focus on more introductory and devotional material. This was reinforced by a corresponding change in the level of content delivered by speakers. The mistake at the time was to give up the responsibility that we have to do the more advanced writing needed (and scripturally warranted) by our being in the world and having to combat the thinking around us. The mistake was to give up the work of advanced study and give in to an anti-intellectualism. The balance that the immediate post-war generation had maintained (of publishing advanced **and** introductory material) fell away. Had this mistake not been made, we would be in a better position today to combat error as it comes to us through the Internet. Why it happened is difficult to know; perhaps, it was the increasing time needed at work in pursuing a career; perhaps it was the greater pursuit of leisure activities; perhaps it was because studying became harder to do once it fell into abeyance; or perhaps an ideology took root in which only the simple gospel was valued along with good works.

Things change; fashions come and go; and circumstances often come about that highlight the mistakes of a former generation. This is not to say that the new generation will not have its mistakes exposed in the future should the world turn. The Internet Age has exposed **the mistake of the former generation** in turning the community exclusively towards the introductory (ever-repeated) and towards the devotional (ever lesson-based). There is today a need to change the approach, so that there is a new balance that also includes more advanced thinking, writing and speaking. Isolationism may be a comfortable choice, and people will still make that choice, but it will not secure **our identity in the world**. Faith always will have to be held against the thinking of the Serpent. Whether the new generation can undo the mistakes of the outgoing generation or whether it follows them remains to be seen.

**AP**

**Supplement**

**Naming Cyrus**

In the October 2007 issue of the EJournal (pp. 35-57, A. Perry and P. Wyns had a ‘discussion’ on the issue of whether Cyrus was named in Isaiah. Perry took the affirmative position and Wyns took the negative position. This supplement revives the debate with changes and/or additions in argument on both sides.

The eighth century interpretation of Isaiah 40-66 is more or less unique to the Christadelphian community,[[128]](#footnote-128) with church scholarship, conservative and critical, following the lead of the 19c. German Higher Critics in adopting an exilic and post-exilic interpretation. Within scholarship a minority of scholars have taken the view that the mention of Cyrus in the text is not original; Wyns follows this group of scholars but argues the case from an eighth century perspective. The majority of scholars regard the mention of Cyrus as original; Perry takes this line and argues that case within an eighth century perspective.

**The Cyrus Debate**

**P. Wyns**

**Introduction**

In an earlier paper,[[129]](#footnote-129) it was suggested that “Cyrus” was a re-vocalisation of the Hebrew for “craftsman” or “workman” (vrx), as an allusion to the craftsman (Bezaleel, Exod 31:2), who was endowed with the spirit of wisdom in order to construct the Tabernacle. This follows the suggestion made by J. W. Thirtle, who proposes that “Cyrus” is a corruption of the text from *chârâsh* to *kôrêsh* as follows:

The process of reasoning would be something like this: *First,* the passage would be *applied* to Cyrus, who, in presence of the people, realized parts which in some measure corresponded with those set forth in the passage about the Lord’s anointed. *Second*, Cyrus was hopefully regarded as the workman, or artificer vrx whom Jehovah had empowered to do great things in the interests of the Jews. *Third*, seeing that the word vrx thus implied, or stood for Cyrus, it would seem right or desirable to conform the letters to a more correct representation in Hebrew of the Persian word – hence vrk, afterwards vrwk, and then by pointing vr,AK. By these measures and mutations the word came to speak of King Cyrus and of him only. There was no intention to introduce disorder into the text –only a purpose to reduce the spelling to a form which was believed to be right. In the judgment of some leader, or leaders, of the people, vrx was intended to indicate vrk, and effect was given to this belief by the alteration of the initial letter. Thus a common appellation was made into a proper name, and a seed of misunderstanding was sown in the Isaiah prophecies.[[130]](#footnote-130)

The “craftsman” of Isa.45:1 was called on to “build my city” (v. 13); this “craftsman” is contrasted with the “craftsman” who builds idols (Isa.44:11), who holds a lie (idol) in his right hand (Isa.44:20), in contrast with the “craftsman” whose right hand Yahweh holds (Isa.45:1). The idea that a pagan king who worshiped idols would be addressed in Davidic terms as Yahweh’s anointed runs contrary to the thrust of the text. This paper provides further background to this approach.

**Keeping Cyrus**

My reading has been opposed by A. Perry[[131]](#footnote-131) who observes the following (briefly summarised):

1. The undeniable correspondence between Isaiah 45 and forms of expression found in the *Cyrus Cylinder* – this suggests some sort of relationship between them.
2. The case for “Cyrus” being a scribal/editorial change is examined and proposals such as “the inheritor”, “the crushed one” or the “craftsman” are explored.
3. The case for “Cyrus” being an interpolation[[132]](#footnote-132) which is suspected because of possible changes in the poetic metre is examined and the possibility of later editorial editions by Jeremiah is explored.

After exploring the alternatives, Perry rejects editorial work or later interpolation as explanations and accepts that “Cyrus” is integral to the text and offers the following arguments:

1. Despite Jerusalem resisting the Assyrian blockade, there is evidence that damage was done to the outer defensive works of the city and damage to the Temple (thus necessitating rebuilding).
2. Sennacherib himself boasts that he took captives during this campaign.
3. Cyrus is identified with *Kūrush* (Cyrus I?) a possible *contemporary* of Isaiah and not the king who was still 150 years in the future (Cyrus II of Daniel)
4. The Babylonians sent an envoy to Hezekiah to establish diplomatic and military allegiances and to offer building materials (Perry) for repairing the Assyrian war damage.
5. Cyrus did not *know* Yahweh indicating that he was a foreign prince.

Thus, according to Perry, Isaiah 45 functions as a rhetorical irony against Babylon *and* Hezekiah. The counsel and help of Merodach-Baladan are rejected and, at the same time, Hezekiah is being castigated. Therefore, the oracle is directed towards one of the accompanying princes in the Babylonian delegation, presumably the eighth century *Kūrush*[[133]](#footnote-133) (Cyrus I?) and at the same time against Merodach-Baladan and Hezekiah.

If this scenario is correct then an Elamite (?) prince is chosen and ironically lauded in Davidic terms in order to teach Merodach-Baladan *and* Hezekiah a lesson. Moreover, this Cyrus would act as a template for the future restoration of Jerusalem from Babylonian exile by Cyrus II, who conquered Babylon some 150 years later. The setting of this oracle is therefore around 700 BCE (aftermath of the Assyrian crisis) and the incident of the Babylonian envoys (2 Kgs 20:12-19; 2 Chron.32:31), after which Hezekiah acknowledged his sin, humbled himself, and was given a reprieve.

*Discussion*

Although the background of the oracle is realistic (the Babylonian envoys) the ironic reading suggested by Perry is not. Even if the case for identifying *Kūrush* (Cyrus I?) with “Cyrus” in Isa.45:1 can be established and even if this Cyrus was an Elamite prince with the Babylonian delegation, no reason is given as to why he should receive the privilege of being distinguished from the other delegates.

Why Yahweh should choose one pagan idol worshiper above another is not explained. Presumably Merodach-Baladan presented a unified policy position which represented all the princes in his coalition, why then single out a particular prince for unique treatment? It is not apparent from this oracle that “Cyrus” would somehow betray Babylon and pursue a different policy towards Jerusalem.

All the envoys had a friendly (but ulterior) motive, namely, they all wanted to increase Babylonian influence in the region. They had identified Hezekiah as a useful ally against Assyria and wanted his support. Any pacts or treaties made would be *quid pro quo*; you help me and I will help you. Yahweh’s objection was in turning to the counsel of *any foreigners* (and their gods). Yahweh had saved Jerusalem *without any help* and did not need either the Babylonians or the Elamites or *any other princes from any other nation*—nor did he need the assistance of their “gods”.

In fact, Yahweh (through the prophet Isaiah) is reminding the Babylonians (and Hezekiah) that he has already raised up (metaphorically from the dead) his own master-craftsman to do the work. The message to the Babylonians is ‘we don’t need your help’. The message to Hezekiah is that his *pride* and Babylonian *flattery* had seduced him and made him forget that his accomplishments *were not his own*. Yahweh had *chosen him*, and Hezekiah’s work as a “suffering servant/craftsman” was but a pale reflection of the work of the promised Davidic Messiah, not the work of some unknown Elamite prince or even of Cyrus II who failed miserably to restore the postexilic Temple.

In essence, Hezekiah had turned away from the voice of wisdom, crying in the wilderness (Prov 8:1; Isa.40:3) and become one of the “simple ones” who listened to the smooth words of the strange woman. It was Yahweh who had counsel and sound wisdom (Prov 8:14) and it was by his forbearance that “princes rule, and nobles, *even* all the judges of the earth” (Prov 8:16). Hezekiah’s foray into diplomacy was foolish: “he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death (Prov 8:36)”. Yahweh knows the “beginning from the end” and these “Babylonian friends” would one day in the not too distant future destroy Jerusalem and exile Judah. And Hezekiah was so foolish that he had allowed them to catalogue all his wealth and note how he organised his kingdom – he had freely offered the intelligence and strategies necessary for the Babylonians to overthrow Judah! Hezekiah (*Yah is my strength*: hyqzx) had forgotten the meaning of his own name! Yahweh reminded him of this in Isa.45:1, “whose right hand I have holden” (qzx; whom-I-hold-fast/strengthen). Yahweh was behind Hezekiah’s success and there was no need to appeal to foreigners and their “dead gods” (cf. Isa 26:14).

**The Problem of the Destruction of the Temple**

Perhaps the biggest problem encountered when dating the oracles of Isaiah 40-66 is the mention of the destruction/damage of the Sanctuary which tends to automatically suggest a post 586 BCE date, as the only recorded destruction of the Sanctuary is by Nebuchadnezzar.[[134]](#footnote-134) This would be a major argument against my position by critical commentators who believe Isaiah 40-66 is exilic and post-exilic in origin.

H. A. Whittaker suggests[[135]](#footnote-135) that Ahaz allowed the Assyrian king to garrison troops in the temple precinct and that these troops vandalised the Sanctuary when they were expelled by Hezekiah. They point to 2 Chron 28:21 where the chronicler records, “Ahaz took away a portion *out* of the house of the Lord......and gave *it* unto the king of Assyria”,but this means nothing more than that he “gathered riches” (‘valuable items’, NLT/ ‘took part of the treasures’, NKJV) in order to curry favour with the Assyrian king.

However, a valid point is made by G. Booker on Ps 74:5-7 where the “thick trees” are associated with “the house of the forest of Lebanon” (1 Kgs 7:1-5; 10:17, 21; Isa 22:8) which was built with imported cedar from Lebanon.[[136]](#footnote-136)

*A man* was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers. They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled *by casting down* the dwelling place of thy name to the ground. (Ps 74:5-7)

The Psalm is obviously describing an act of vandalism against the royal armoury (house of the *forest* of Lebanon; cf. Isa 37:24) and against the Sanctuary. Although the history in Kings/Chronicles does not describe such an act, a plausible scenario can be reconstructed when the Assyrian records are taken into consideration.

Consider A. O. Oppenheim’s translation of Sennacherib’s record of the Assyrian siege,

Hezekiah himself, whom the terror-inspiring splendor of my lordship had overwhelmed and whose irregular and elite troops which he had brought to Jerusalem, his royal residence, in order to strengthen (it), had deserted him, did send me later, to Nineveh, my lordly city, together with 30 talents of gold..... (ANET, 288)

The inscription is extensively discussed by William R. Gallagher who offers an alternative translation that suggests that the mercenaries (Arab troops?) did not desert, but were sent (along with booty) by Hezekiah as tribute after Sennacherib withdrew.[[137]](#footnote-137) The Assyrian account is highly suspicious and sounds like propaganda, trying to turn a defeat into a victory. Gallagher comments, “The claim that Hezekiah sent tribute after Sennacherib is unique in Assyrian inscriptions. Sennacherib had been at Lachish. Why did Hezekiah not come out, present his tribute, kneel down and kiss Sennacherib’s feet like the other kings had done at Ushu? Why did Hezekiah stay in Jerusalem and merely send a messenger to Nineveh to pay Sennacherib homage?”[[138]](#footnote-138)

The account in Kings (2 Kgs 18:16) describes how Hezekiah himself plundered the temple in order to pay tribute to Sennacherib but this is counter intuitive to the portrayal of Hezekiah’s character. Moreover, despite this payment, Sennacherib continued to lay siege to Jerusalem. The accounts in 2 Kings 18-19 seem contradictory and scholars have detected different sources behind the accounts.[[139]](#footnote-139)

Whatever the merits of a source critical reconstruction might be, it is clear that something unusual is being reconstructed by these texts. The divergences in the accounts can be explained by positing that elements within the royal circle took advantage of Hezekiah’s illness and acted on his behalf. These elements could well have instructed the Arab mercenaries to strip the temple and deliver the booty to Sennacherib. The Assyrians were masters at psychological warfare and intelligence gathering[[140]](#footnote-140) and would soon be aware that Hezekiah himself was facing death (‘my splendour overwhelmed him’) and that the offer of tribute was a desperate delaying tactic. Rabshakeh was therefore sent to instigate further instability – to drive a wedge between those who faithfully resisted and those who wished to capitulate.

The “royal steward” (prime minister), Shebna was apparently a Phoenician who somehow worked his way into this very influential position.[[141]](#footnote-141) He is called a “steward” (NASB) which is a Phoenician loan word for “governor”. In Isaiah’s rebuke, he repeated the word “here” three times, indicating that he is a foreigner and did not belong in the courts of Judah (Isa 22:16). There is no mention of his father which, if he was a Judean, would be the case (cf. 2 Kings 18:18).

As a foreigner, probably he would not be interested in the spiritual matters of the kingdom or seeking the Lord’s direction in times of trouble. Thus, he did not have a positive influence on the decision-making in the courts of Hezekiah (Isa 22:15-19). As scribe, he still had influence in the court of Judah. There he tried to persuade the people of Jerusalem to surrender to the Assyrians. Isaiah admonished Hezekiah to trust the Lord for the deliverance of the city from the hands of the Assyrians. Shebna’s influence, at least with the people, seemed to prevail, and he convinced the people to surrender. As he was leading the Jerusalemites out the city gate, the angel Gabriel (so goes the tradition; Sanhedrin 26a) shut the city gate behind him. Alone and embarrassed by this turn of events, he told the Assyrians that the rest of the people had deserted him. Not to be taken for fools, they put holes in his feet and dragged him over thorns and thistles, apparently to a far country and his death, thus fulfilling the words of Isaiah the prophet (Isa 22:17-18).

It is certainly feasible that the vandalism of the sanctuary in Ps 74:5-7 is recounting an event that occurred during the Assyrian crisis rather than the complete destruction meted out by the Babylonians in BC 586, especially in light of v. 8, “They said in their hearts, ‘Let us destroy them altogether’. They have burned up all the meeting places of God in the land”. Their *intention* was complete destruction of the Jerusalem cult, but in reality they could only obliterate outlying meeting places (sometimes translated ‘synagogues’).[[142]](#footnote-142)

Even though the city did not fall, it is quite probable that the temple suffered damage and most certainly the outside defensive walls of Jerusalem. It is also undeniable that other cities in Judah were extensively damaged (Micah 1).

**Yahweh and the Foreign Gods**

Another argument that critical commentators pose against my approach is based on the similarities that exist between the Cyrus oracles and the Cyrus Cylinder. Their argument is that Isaiah is dependent on the cylinder.

There is a striking parallelism between Isa 44:28 and the *Cyrus Cylinder* where Cyrus II is described as a shepherd:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Cyrus Cylinder** [[143]](#footnote-143) | **Isaiah** |
| **12** He [**Marduk**] took the hand of Cyrus, king of the city of Anshan, and called him by his name, proclaiming him aloud for the kingship over all of everything. | **45:1** Thus says **Yahweh** to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held -- To subdue nations before him And loose the armor of kings… |
| **18**…governors, bowed down before him and kissed his feet….. | **45:23**…That to Me every knee shall bow, Every tongue shall take an oath. |
| **13**…he [Cyrus] shepherded in justice and righteousness | **44:28** Who says of Cyrus, ‘*He is* My shepherd….’ |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Cyrus Cylinder [[144]](#footnote-144)** | **Isaiah** |
| **31**…the sanctuaries across the river Tigris - whose shrines had earlier become dilapidated, **32**...the gods who lived therein, and made permanent sanctuaries for them. I collected together all of their people and returned them to their settlements…. | **44:28**…saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. |
| **15**…like a friend and companion, he walked at his side | **41:8**…The descendants of Abraham My friend. |

The similarity in language between the *Cyrus Cylinder* and Isaiah can be partially explained by a shared milieu and shared oriental motifs. For example, many oriental rulers are depicted as shepherds. The royal staff or, sceptre is a common accessory for kings in the Ancient Near East and was itself a form of shepherd’s rod. It became a symbol of protection, power and authority. Even in Egypt, a divine symbol of kingship was the shepherd’s crook.[[145]](#footnote-145)

Nevertheless, if shared vocabulary and generic motifs are discounted, the resemblance between the *Cyrus Cylinder* and Isaiah is striking. Critical scholars will draw the conclusion that this is proof that a Deutero-Isaiah was a contemporary of Cyrus II – but what prevents Cyrus’ record being influenced by Isaiah? Isaiah is a thematically complex literary development, making the direction of influence from Isaiah to the cylinder more likely. One can imagine the Jews showing Cyrus the prophecy written 150-200 years previously and suggesting that he is the “workman” chosen by their God as liberator. The similarity between *ch-r-sh* and *K-r-sh* eventually hardened into a direct naming of Cyrus and this in turn influenced the monumental inscribers. It is likely that the Isaiah prophecy was known in Babylonian scribal circles shortly after it was written because soon after his recovery Hezekiah entertained a diplomatic envoy from Babylon and he was so flattered that he showed them everything (Isaiah 39), which probably included the prophecies concerning himself. Cyrus demonstrated tolerance to many of his conquered peoples (as indicated by the *Cyrus Cylinder*). Hence, the restoration of the Jewish exiles in whatever *limited form* under Cyrus was not due to any particular sympathy with monotheism, but was rather the polity of the monarch towards all his conquered subjects.[[146]](#footnote-146)

Shared ANE motifs probably account for the similarities between Isaiah and the *Cyrus Cylinder* **but dependency of the cylinder on Isaiah cannot be excluded**. Isaiah 45 does show awareness of Egyptian gods;

Thus saith the Lord, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, *saying*, Surely God *is* in thee; and *there is* none else, *there is* no God. Verily thou *art* a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour. (Isa 45:14-15).

This passage about Egypt refers to *a God that hidest thyself*, which is polemic against the Egyptian god Amun who was the “hidden one”. The name “Amun” (*imnw*) suggests imperceptibility in and of itself and derives from the verb *imn*, meaning both “to conceal” and “be hidden”. Its vocalization is said to belong to the same noun-class as the name “Atum”.[[147]](#footnote-147) In the New Kingdom, the epithet “he whose name is hidden” (*imn-rn.f* or *imn-rn*) was commonly used as an etymology of “Amun”. Several of these New Kingdom “etymologies”, as well as Hymns to Amun from Papyrus Leiden (I 350), speak of Amun as “concealing Himself”. Amun also functioned as a “personal god” and saviour;

You are Amun, Lord of the Silent, who answers the cry of the humble. I cry unto you because I am afflicted, and already you come and save me. You who gives breath to he who lacks it! Save me, I, who am in distress. You are Amun-Re, Lord of Thebes, who even saves the one who is in the netherworld.[[148]](#footnote-148)

The relevance of this text to the life of Hezekiah is apparent. Hezekiah cried to Yahweh and was rescued from death (the netherworld). This is polemic against the “gods” of Egypt – for although Yahweh is hidden and transcendent (like Amun-Re) he chooses to make himself visible and manifests himself to (and through) his “suffering servant”- even the Egyptians would come to “know” Yahweh when he revealed himself in his salvific acts (Isa 19:21-25), he was not hidden to those who faithfully sought him; “I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right” (Isa 45:19).

Moreover, the Hebrew for ‘verily’ (*'aken*) is probably a parody on Aken, who in ancient Egyptian mythology was the patron and custodian of the boat named “Meseket” that carried the souls of the dead into the underworld. Apparently, he remained in a deep sleep when he was not needed, and had to be woken by the Ferryman, Mahaf, when the dead required his services. He was generally depicted as a sailor standing in the stern of a papyrus boat. He was not the focus of worship, and had no cult centre but is referred to a number of times in the Book of the Dead. The twin themes of concealment and death are appropriate to the larger narrative of Isaiah 45 and the mortal illness of Hezekiah.

It is also possible that Isa 45:7 addresses the dualism found in Zoroastrianism; “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these *things*”. There are therefore no deities of good and evil, no dualities, only the one God in control of everything. This (possible) allusion to Zoroastrianism, the ancient religion of Persia has some scholars argue for a postexilic date of Deutero-Isaiah (during the reign of Cyrus II), however the majority of scholars seem to favour dates around 1000 BC for Zoroaster, which would place him as a contemporary, at least, of the later Vedic poets.[[149]](#footnote-149) It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that dualistic religion from Media (not Persia) had already penetrated the ANE long before the exile. If that is the case, then Isaiah 45 presents polemic against Babylon, Egypt and Media. It is not necessary to present polemic against Assyria because the Assyrian “gods” have already been defeated!

There were therefore, “no gods” beside Yahweh (Isa 45:5, 6, 21); only “wisdom resided” with Yahweh (Prov 8:30) and Yahweh is able to pour the spirit of wisdom upon his servants who then remain hidden (protected) by him (Bezaleel=hidden with God). Therefore, this chapter and the previous one speak strongly of the incomparability of Yahweh – the counsel, wisdom and help of foreign princes (and their gods) is rejected. Their “gods” are vanity, nothing, lumps of wood and molten metal fashioned by pagan craftsmen.

**Knowing Yahweh**

**Our argument** in favour of treating ‘Cyrus’ as a corruption of the original text is based on the **inappropriateness** of the so-called ‘Cyrus’ oracles as oracles of Cyrus the Great. Our **first example** of this argument is based on a consideration of what it is to know God.

“....though thou hast not known me” (Isa.45:4)

“....though thou hast not known me” (Isa.45:5)

The question of “knowing” or “not knowing” Yahweh has nothing to do with awareness of Yahweh as the God of Israel. There were many Israelites who did not “know” Yahweh and Hezekiah *should* have “known” Yahweh but his behaviour with the Babylonian envoys demonstrated that he had forgotten the important lessons that he had learned. The question of “knowing Yahweh” is directly linked with Exod 6:3,

And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by *the name of* God Almighty, (*El Shadday*) but by my name *Yahweh* was I not known to them.

The context is the covenant with the patriarchs and the promise to Moses to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage. The sad fact is that throughout Israel’s long prophetic history the name of Yahweh was *unknown* (cf. Isa 52:6; Jer 16:21; Ezek 39:7) in the sense that the Jews were ignorant to the inherent purpose and character revealed in the Yahweh name.[[150]](#footnote-150)

Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore *they shall know* in that day that I *am* he that doth speak: behold, *it is* I. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!(Isa 52:6-7)

The “name” is linked with God manifestation and salvation. Therefore *knowing Yahweh* is concerned with intimately experiencing the self-revelatory salvific acts of Yahweh. Hezekiah had experienced the self-revelatory manifestation of Yahweh in the role of the “suffering servant” pointing forward to the time when Yahweh would reveal himself in the Messiah. And yet, despite this encounter, despite “knowing Yahweh” Hezekiah still acted as one of the ignorant “simple ones” in the incident of the Babylonian envoys. The language employed in Isa.45:8 is the language of resurrection and this is applicable only to Hezekiah and the Davidic Messiah who he prefigured:

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it. (Isa 45:8).

This is linked with the sign that Ahaz refused, a sign concerning the establishment of the Davidic dynasty:

Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. (Isa.7:14)

This “messianic sign” was referred to by Jesus during his discourse about being “born again” (born from above): “If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you *of* heavenly things?” (John 3:12). The Jews (like Ahaz) refused to believe the sign concerning Jesus’ origins and his destiny (resurrection from the depths = new birth). It is impossible that this language would be applied (even as ironic rhetoric, *contra* Perry) to a pagan idol worshiper. This language could only be applied to a Davidide –only a descendant of David could typify the Messiah – especially one who had taken on the role of the suffering servant and who nearly died and was raised on the third day (2 Kgs 20:5).

**Psalm 107 and Isaiah**

Our **second example** of the inappropriateness of the Cyrus oracles to Cyrus the Great is based on a comparison with Psalm 107.

Perry notes that Ps 107:16 is quoted in Isa 45:2 and he relates this to the release of captives.[[151]](#footnote-151) Yahweh will “open the double doors” for the anointed, “so that the gates will not be shut”....and will “break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron” (Isa 45:1b, 2b). The phrase occurs only in Psalm 107, a Psalm that is intertextually linked with Isaiah because its background is the reign of Hezekiah:[[152]](#footnote-152)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Isaiah 38** | **Psalm 107** |
| **10.** In the prime of my life I shall go to the **gates of Sheol** | **18.** Their soul abhorred all manner of food, and they drew near to the **gates of death**. |
| **2.** Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord  **3.** And Hezekiah wept bitterly | **13.** Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble..... |
| **4-5.** And the word of the Lord came to Isaiah, saying, Go and tell Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years’. | **20.** He sent His word and healed them, And delivered *them* from their destructions. |
| **17.** ...You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back. | **16.** **For He has broken the gates of bronze, and cut the bars of iron in two**. |
| **20.** The Lord was ready to save me; Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments All the days of our life, in the house of the Lord. | **15.** Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men! |

The individual suffering of Hezekiah has a collective dimension (*They* cried out....Ps 107:10); as the king (the Suffering Servant) lay on his deathbed, the faithful remnant in the city fasted (*Their* soul abhorred all manner of food and they drew near to the gates of death. Ps 107:18); God heard the nation’s distress caused by the Assyrian siege which coincidentally (sic) coincided with the mortal illness of their king. The “breaking in pieces of the gates of bronze and the cutting of the bars of iron” is a metaphor for the bonds of death. Hezekiah is resurrected from his death bed and is called into the presence of the high priest “call *my servant* to Eliakim the son of Hilkiah”[[153]](#footnote-153) were he is clothed with priestly garments and receives a prophetic pronouncement about his descendant, the Messiah, who will possess the “key of the house of David”[[154]](#footnote-154) and is able to open the doors of death and “none shall shut” (Isa 22:22 cf. Rev 3:7). Peripeteia is the motif of the chapter - a sudden reversal of fortunes. Shebna had been planning to replace the Davidic dynasty and had used the illness of Hezekiah and his childlessness as an opportunity to curry favour with the Assyrians. Shebna had established himself as a “nail in a sure place” but his nail would be removed in *that day* (Isa 22:25) and replaced with Hezekiah’s nail. Shebna built himself an ornate tomb amongst the kings of Judah (1 Kgs 2:10; 2 Chron 32:33) betraying his dynastic aspirations. Instead, Shebna would suffer an ignominious death and Hezekiah who was at death’s door (with him died the Davidic dynasty) would be raised. In *that day*, one “nail” would be hammered home and another “nail” would be removed – a complete reversal of fortunes.

These prophecies **have nothing to do with Cyrus** and the “gates” that Yahweh will break open have nothing to do with the gates of Babylon; “....on this rock[[155]](#footnote-155) I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18).

**Treasures of Darkness**

Our **third example** of the inappropriateness of the ‘Cyrus’ oracles to Cyrus the Great is based on the motif ‘treasures of darkness’.

The treasures of darkness (Isa 45:3) are related by Perry to Hezekiah’s “treasures” which he displayed to the Babylonian envoys. They are “dark” because they are Assyrian plunder and therefore contaminated with false thinking etc. and the fate of this treasure was the darkness of Babylonian captivity. Accordingly, the use of “dark treasure” is ironic. However, these treasures are not necessarily plunder they are more likely tribute,[[156]](#footnote-156) but even this can be discounted as these treasures are not accumulated by Hezekiah or even *given* to Yahweh (by the nations; they are treasures *given by Yahweh to Hezekiah* to demonstrate that Yahweh is the God of Israel. Therefore the “treasures” are linked with revelation. A literal reading of this verse (3a) is:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| and I give | to you | treasures of | darkness | and buried goods of | concealments |

The main idea behind the verse is *concealment* – something hidden, buried covered etc. by darkness – something secret is about to be revealed.[[157]](#footnote-157)

The word ‘darkness’ (Höºšek) first occurs in the creation narrative in Genesis 1. It then reappears in the Exodus account of the plagues when the nation is saved where it is a “darkness *which* may be felt”(Exod 10:21). It also appears in the account of the theophanic revelation at Sinai as “thick darkness” (Deut 4:11). In these texts supernatural darkness is associated with the salvation and creation of the nation.

‘Darkness’ is used 26x in Job, almost exclusively in association with death; 4x darkness is used in combination with the phrase “the shadow of death” (Job 3:5; 10:21; 12:22; 34:22). Perry noted that Isa 45:1b, 2b cites Ps 107:16; “For He has broken the gates of bronze, and cut the bars of iron in two”, but v. 10 of the Psalm adds, “Such as sit in darkness (Höºšek) and in the shadow of death, *being* bound in affliction and iron”.

Metaphorically, northern Israel was the “land of the shadow of death” under the shadow of the Assyrian winged sphinx, until Hezekiah appeared on the scene as a light (Isa 9:2). However, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (Ps 91:1). This is similar to dwelling under the “wings” of the cherubim, the “hidden ones” (Ps 83:1), and alludes to Bezaleel (‘in the shadow of God’). Ultimately, Isa 45:3a is about being concealed (hidden) in the darkness of death – like buried treasure. The argument is that God is not only associated with light, but also with darkness – Yahweh controls darkness as well as light (Isa 45:7), but he does not speak in dark hidden places when he deals with Israel (Isa 45:19). Unlike Amun, Yahweh was not hidden (even though Israel thought he was); Yahweh revealed himself in salvific acts – opening the earth (Isa 45:8) and resurrecting his “buried treasure”. In the first instance this text is concerned with Hezekiah,

Thy dead *men* shall live, *together with* my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew *is as* the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (Isa 26:19)

The “resurrection” of Hezekiah heralded the resurrection of the nation from the yoke of Assyrian tyranny and the prison house of captivity. However, Isa 45:3 promised more than this because its ultimate focus is messianic - Yahweh would give the Messiah authority over death; the Davidic Messiah would have authority over his dead saints (buried treasure).

**Psalm 2 and Isaiah 45**

Our **fourth example** shows how appropriate Isaiah 45 is to a Davidide in its use of Psalm 2; the argument is that it is not appropriate to a pagan emperor.

Psalm 2 is, in the first instance, a Davidic Psalm - the key to it is 2 Samuel 8, for as soon as David was established in Jerusalem, the kings of all the surrounding nations rose up against him as one man: Philistines, Moab, Zobah, Syria, Ammon, Amalek, Edom. But David defeated all of these, and found himself with an empire acquired virtually overnight.

This Psalm serves as a co-text for Isaiah 45, and was probably edited by Hezekiah’s men when the Psalms were collected. Thirtle ascribes the Psalm to Hezekiah, and says,

Some verses (1, 2) of the second part have been attributed to David-Acts 4.25, 26. To question this relation would be to ignore the great extent to which Hezekiah’s men availed themselves of Davidic material in the making of their own psalms. Yet it is possible that the name ‘David’ in the passage in question means no more than ‘the Psalmist’, as the well-known quotation in Heb.4.7, introduced by the words ‘saying in David’ –that is, in the Psalter. However, if not by actual writing, at least by adaptation, this psalm delineates incidents which arose in the time of Hezekiah.[[158]](#footnote-158)

Thirtle summarises Psalm 1 and 2 as follows:

Pss.1, 2. Prefixed to the oldest Davidic collection in the reign of Hezekiah. The division known as Ps.1 was addressed to the people of Jerusalem while the Assyrians were at the city walls, and Rabshakeh the scorner was tempting the unwary to make peace with him (2 Kings 18. 31, 32). The first part of Ps.2 (*vv.* 1-6) applies to the invaders; the second part (*vv*. 7-9) is the king’s rehearsal of the Divine decree in raising him from mortal sickness to a life of prosperity and victory; the third (*vv*. 10-12) is an appeal to the rulers of the city and the land to leave their evil ways (Isa. 28.14, 15; and see treatment of both psalms, pp.140-5 *ante*).[[159]](#footnote-159)

Modern scholarship associates Psalm 2 with enthronement festivals held at the New Year and it is quite possible that it was employed in such a liturgical setting or perhaps as a parody of the Babylonian festivals, where the “hand of the god” (idol) was held. The use of Psalm 2 as a co-text in Isaiah 45 suggests such a possibility (ironic polemical usage). Further, the NT citation of Psalm 2 is against a background of human resistance (the trial and crucifixion of the Messiah=anointed) and the subsequent resurrection of the Messiah (“this day I have begotten thee”), which approximate the Hezekiah situation. In the final instance, it does not matter whether it was authored by David, or written by Hezekiah, or authored by David and then adapted by Hezekiah. It is a Messianic psalm about a Davidide and the fact that it was chosen by Isaiah and forms the woof and weave of Isaiah 45 demonstrates its relevance (if not authorship) to the Hezekiah period.

It seems highly unlikely that a Messianic Psalm about a Davidide, one that functions as a co-text for Isaiah 45, would in any way be related to a pagan king; especially when the psalm is cited by the Apostles and applied to Christ.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Isaiah 45** | **Psalm 2** |
| .....all that are incensed against him (45:24) | Why do the heathen rage (2:1) |
| Thus saith the Lord to his anointed (45:1) | .....against the Lord, and against his anointed (2:2) |
| ....to subdue nations before him (45:1) | Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron (2:9) |
| Tell ye, and bring *them* near; yea, let them take counsel together..... (45:21) | ........the rulers take counsel together (2:2) |
| I will loose the loins of kings (45:1) | ...O ye kings: be instructed....Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling (2:10-11). |
| Ask me of things to come concerning my sons....45:11) | Thou *art* my Son.... (v.7) |
| What begettest thou? (45:10) | .... this day have I begotten thee.(2:7) |
| *Let* the potsherd *strive* with the potsherds of the earth. (45:9) | .....dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel (2:9) |
| ....be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.... (45:22) | ....the heathen....and the uttermost parts of the earth (2:8) |
| That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.(45:23) | Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way (2:12) |
| In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified (45:25) | Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him.(2:12) |

**The Abrahamic Covenant**

Our **fifth example** shows the appropriateness of Isaiah 45 to Hezekiah, and in this debate, its inappropriateness to Cyrus.

Woe unto him that saith unto *his* father, ‘What begettest thou?’ or to the woman, ‘What hast thou brought forth?’ (Isa 45:10)

The father and the woman (mother/wife, depending on the translation) are Abraham and Sarah: “Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah *that* bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him” (Isa 51:5). Isaac was the first to be born into the Abrahamic covenant and his “unblocking” of Abraham’s wells parallel the “wells of salvation” (Isaiah 12) of Hezekiah’s era. It reflects the re-establishment of covenantal relationships with northern Israel (and the literal building of the water tunnel). The reaction to Hezekiah’s reformation is mirrored by the reaction of Ishmael to Isaac, namely, questioning his legitimacy as the true heir of the Abrahamic covenants. Some of the northern tribes responded with mocking and scorn (like Ishmael, 2 Chron 30:10; cf. Gen 21:9) at Hezekiah’s attempt at reformation. Moreover, Hezekiah was not “desired” (Isa 53:2) he was “despised and rejected” (Isa 53:3) – who was this “great king”? He was brought low with a mortal illness and his city was besieged. So much for his reformation and acting as Yahweh’s legitimate spokesman; what had Abraham and Sarah brought forth....what had they given birth to?

**Cyrus in Isaiah 44:28**

The other mention of ‘Cyrus’ is in Isaiah 44:28 and here our **second argument** for eliminating the name is that this verse is evidently about an eighth century situation.

That saith of Cyrus, *He is* my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

A straightforward reading seems to undeniably point forward to Cyrus II as temple builder and shepherd of Israel. However, this rendering of the Hebrew is tendentious and a slightly different emphasis points to Hezekiah rather than Cyrus. Moreover, the inconvenient fact (often ignored) is that Cyrus did not lay the foundation of the temple (more on this *anon*). On these grounds alone the naming of Cyrus should be rejected. The verse reads literally as follows:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The one saying | to Cyrus | one being  shepherd of me | and all of |
| desire of me | he shall perform | and to say of | to Jerusalem |
| She will be built | and temple | she will be  established |  |

(1) Firstly, there are two word-plays in the verse which make sense in an eighth century context. There is a word-play between ‘Jerusalem’ and the verb ‘to perform’ (~lv/~l;vwry); and there is word-play between the word for ‘pleasure’ and the name of the wife of Hezekiah (#px/hb-ycpx) which was also the “nick-name” given to Jerusalem: “Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married” (Isa 62:4).

(2) Secondly, the word for ‘foundation’ is not a noun but a verb ‘to found’, it does not necessarily mean the laying of a foundation it can simply mean “established” or “founded” as in the YLT translation: “Thou art founded”. This is a statement: “So as to say of Jerusalem, Thou art built, and of the temple, Thou art founded” (YLT).

R. Oosting observes,

The exegetical literature on Isa 44:24-28 shows that the syntactic structure of v. 28 requires particular attention. In current studies, notice is frequently taken of two syntactic difficulties that are found in this verse. The first problem concerns the relation between the imperfect dswt and the noun (lkyh) at the end of the verse. The form of the verb (ni.) dsy (‘to be founded’) is either a second person singular masculine or a third person singular feminine, whereas the gender of the noun is masculine (cf. BDB 228). The second syntactic difficulty concerns the question of how to link the expression rmalw (‘and to say’) in v. 28d to one of the previous clauses. The connection of the infinitive to the preceding clauses is not only interesting at the level of syntax; it also touches on the question at discourse level of who is speaking in the second part of Isa 44:28.[[160]](#footnote-160)

After analysis of various alternative proposals and after noting that the Hebrew employs either the Pual or Hophal stem when speaking of the foundation of the temple (p. 84) Oosting concludes with his own emendation,

The syntactic structure of the last clause of Isa 51:12 provides a foundation for arguing that the noun (lkyh) in Isa 44:28 does not function as subject but as adjunct. The subject of the last clause should be the proper noun Jerusalem taken from the previous clause. The gender of the proper noun Jerusalem agrees with the third person feminine verbal form in the last clause. As a result, the latter part of Isa 44:28 reads:

…and to say of Jerusalem “She will be rebuilt and she will be founded as a temple.[[161]](#footnote-161)

This is the preferred rendering in the context of Hezekiah and the aftermath of the Assyrian invasion. Yahweh would “delight” in Jerusalem like Hezekiah is his new bride (Hephzibah) – the whole city would be holy- established as a temple – and Yahweh is speaking these words to his “shepherd” (the Davidide) his “master-craftsman” - vrx (ch-r-sh) instead of vrk (k-r-sh).

**Cyrus not the temple builder**

Reinforcing this second argument, our **third argument** is that what we can gather from the records in Daniel and Ezra about Cyrus do not show a ‘fulfilment’ of the Isaiah Cyrus oracles.

None of the court tales in the book of Daniel is set during the reign of Cyrus, and although he is mentioned three times in Daniel (Dan 1:21; 6:28; 10:1), his name only functions as a chronological marker. Darius the Mede is often proposed as the missing Cyrus, but why would Daniel (who was obviously familiar with Cyrus and with the Cyrus prophecy of Isa.45:1 and 44:28) refer to him as ‘Darius the Mede’ instead of ‘Cyrus king of Persia’ (cf. Dan.10:1)? Darius the Mede is depicted as the ‘King’ able to approve and enact the ‘law of the Medes and Persians’ (Dan. 6:8, 12, 15) which then becomes statutorily binding for everyone in the realm (including the king himself). A subordinate (governor) might well propose a new law but only a monarch with absolute power could approve such a draconian decree. Any proposal that regards ‘Darius the Mede’ as an agent, or substitute for Cyrus fails to meet the criteria that the story requires (regardless of whether the story is historical or not), namely, that the monarch who has absolute power is powerless to alter his own words!

In Dan 10:1, the name of Cyrus functions as an introduction to a 21 day delay (Dan 10:13). It is proposed that this equates to the 21 year delay in the release of the captives – the difference between the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus and the conquest of Babylon and commencement of temple building under Darius Hystaspis, which occurred 21 years later.

Daniel’s retirement in the first year of Cyrus (Dan 1:21) proved to be premature because the temple was not built under Cyrus. Instead, Daniel receives a vision in the third year of Cyrus about a twenty one year delay (Dan 10:1) that serves to introduce an even longer period of desolation (Daniel 11). Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian (Dan 6:28), but it is only in the reign of Darius that Daniel is metaphorically “resurrected” from the Lion’s den. The fate of Daniel in the Lion’s den mirrors the fate of the exiles (also facing envy and opposition) who find their hope of restoration frustrated under Cyrus but revived under Darius. The name of Cyrus is therefore strategically positioned to emphasize frustrated hope.

The discrepancy between what Cyrus was supposed to do and what he actually accomplished is noted by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus who attempts to harmonise the accounts. According to Josephus it was Darius Hystaspis who returned the temple vessels and did “all that Cyrus intended to do before him, relating to the restoration of the temple”(*Ant*. 11.3.8; Josephus probably used 1 Esdras 4: 4.42-57 as his source) thus contradicting his earlier statement that “Cyrus also sent back to them the vessels of God which king Nebuchadnezzar had pillaged out of the temple, and carried to Babylon.” (*Ant.* 11.1.2). Cyrus’ restoration did not apparently amount to anything more than a decree that got “lost”[[162]](#footnote-162) in the Persian archives (Ezra 5:17; Ezra 6:1-3) and a return of some of the vessels with nowhere to house them. Surely the temple would be constructed *before* the vessels were returned?

The *crux interpretum* is, of course, the prophecy in Isa 45:1 and 44:28 which depicts Cyrus as Yahweh’s “anointed”, a term reserved for the Davidide and employed in typological fashion for the messiah. Cyrus becomes the builder of Jerusalem, the “shepherd” (cf. David) of the people and the one who lays the foundation of the temple.

If the prophecy in Isaiah is taken at face value then all that can be said is that Cyrus failed and the prophecy failed. Cyrus did not rebuild Jerusalem and the foundation stone was not laid until the reign of Darius. For the prophecy to be historically accurate Isa 45:1 and 44:28 should name Darius as the “anointed”.[[163]](#footnote-163)

Commenting on Cyrus’ proclamation in Ezra 1:1-5, E. Gruen sums up the anomaly as follows:

To begin, the discrepancy between Cyrus’ pronouncements on the one hand and his failure to implement them on the other stands out starkly. The king’s pious pronouncements about building the Temple, exhorting subjects to supply the means for construction, and restoring the sacred objects once pilfered by Nebuchadnezzar proved to be quite empty. When Darius came to the throne nearly two decades later, no Temple existed.[[164]](#footnote-164)

C. C. Torrey goes so far as to argue that all references to Cyrus and Babylon in Isaiah should be removed as they are later additions.[[165]](#footnote-165)

Most scholars accept the name of Cyrus as original to Isaiah and interpret the title “anointed” as a simple commissioning to perform the office of a king which is not thereby conferring messianic status.[[166]](#footnote-166) Exegetical conclusions are influenced by the assignment of Isaiah 40-55 to *Deutero-Isaiah*, a prophet who supposedly wrote during the Babylonian captivity. For this reason many exegetes assert that references to Cyrus are central to the theory of history presented in the Book of Isaiah.[[167]](#footnote-167)

Even for exegetes that accept the centrality of Cyrus to *Deutero-Isaiah* as the promised “redeemer”, it is thought necessary to qualify the “anointing” as a temporary office, because it is unacceptable that an unconverted pagan king is understood as the “Messiah”.[[168]](#footnote-168) Thus, the name of Cyrus creates a vicious circle – the prophecies are late because they name Cyrus as the “anointed”, *and* because Cyrus is the “anointed”, *Deutero-Isaiah* is differentiated from earlier material. Others regard the anointing of Cyrus as the end of the Davidic monarchy – Cyrus acts as a kind of proxy for the Davidides.[[169]](#footnote-169)

It might be objected that Cyrus is referred to in sympathetic terms by Ezra:

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord **by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah might be fulfilled,** the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. (Ezra 1:1-2)

Gruen comments,

It is not easy to accept this text as the genuine article. The composition in Hebrew immediately makes it suspect. The language of the Persian Empire was Aramaic. And an open proclamation to the entire realm that the Jewish god had vouched safe Cyrus all the kingdoms of the world can hardly be imagined.[[170]](#footnote-170)

It is, however, not necessary to regard the proclamation as inauthentic, but simply as a paraphrase of the sort of policy that is already found on the Cyrus Cylinder. This was Cyrus’ general policy and he did allow some of the Jews to return – the problem is that neither the temple nor the city was rebuilt!

Thirtle says very little about this passage but remarks:

Meantime, it is necessary to observe that no such language as is found in Isa.44.28, 45.1-4 is used in any other of the Hebrew writings in regard to Cyrus. We meet the name in 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Daniel, and the style is sometimes ‘the king of Persia’, at another time ‘the king of Babylon,’ yet again, baldly, ‘Cyrus the Persian’ or ‘the king.’ [[171]](#footnote-171)

Ezra does not apply any of the magnificent epithets found in Isaiah 44-45 to Cyrus (‘the Lord’s anointed’, ‘His shepherd’, the one ‘strengthened’, ‘called by name’ etc.). More importantly, **the prophecy of Jeremiah is referred to** **and** **not the prophecy of Isaiah.** If Isaiah speaks so powerfully (in messianic terms) of the divine purpose embodied in Cyrus, then why does Ezra (or anyone else) neglect to mention it? It is conspicuous by its absence. “The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus” is hardly the equivalent of “I have called thee by thy name”.

Although this is an argument by omission (*argumentum ex silento*), it provides circumstantial evidence that Cyrus was not in the original text of Isaiah. This supports Thirtle’s suggestion that the word ‘Cyrus’ in Isa 45:1 was originally adopted for political reasons and that it slowly hardened into a textual variant that was then uniformly accepted and incorporated.

It is obvious that although a *reading* of Isa 45:1 may have been presented to Cyrus as corroborative evidence that **he** was the king chosen to release the Jews after seventy years exile (as spoken by Jeremiah the prophet), even at the later period of Ezra it had not yet solidified into the *textual* form that we now have.

Cyrus was known for his religious tolerance towards all his conquered peoples and his treatment of the Jews was not exceptional. Cyrus claimed to be the agent of Marduk, the god who had been shamefully wronged by Nabonidus, when he conquered Babylon (this was an attempt to ingratiate himself with the local population for Nabonidus had been absent in Arabia for much of his reign and had neglected his religious duties, including the New Year Festival in Babylon). J. Curtis comments,

In matters of religion Cyrus does seem to have been remarkably tolerant. About his own beliefs we can say little: he may have been an early follower of the prophet Zoroaster, or he may have supported the ‘daivas’, the old Iranian gods of war and strife rejected by Zoroaster. The evidence is inconclusive. In any event, he does not seem to have forced his own views on any of his subject peoples, but of course this religious tolerance may well have been dictated by political expediency. For it seems to have been the hallmark of Cyrus’s rule to observe local customs wherever he went, to preserve local institutions if possible and in general to avoid creating disruption.[[172]](#footnote-172)

Moreover, the prediction of the return of the exiles under Cyrus is again conspicuous by its absence in Isaiah’s reprimand to Hezekiah: “Of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they (the Babylonians) take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon” (Isa 39:7; cf. 2 Chron 33:11-13). He did not, however, add that they would be released by ‘the Lord’s anointed Cyrus.’ Even Jeremiah, when reminding the people of the destruction of Zion prophesied by Micah the Morashite (a contemporary of Isaiah), does not mention Cyrus (Jer 26:18).

**Cyrus and the Suffering Servant**

Perhaps the strongest and **fourth argument** against reading ‘Cyrus’ in Isaiah 45 is the “Suffering Servant” prophecy of Isaiah 53 *that finds its original fulfilment in the life of Hezekiah.*

It is the New Testament hymn in Philippians that connects the motif of the “Suffering Servant” of Isaiah 53 with the Cyrus prophecy of Isaiah 45, by citing Isaiah 45:23: “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:10, 11).

We might well ask who it was that functioned as a messianic prototype. Was it Cyrus the pagan king and idol worshipper, or, Hezekiah the faithful descendant of David – the man who embodied the covenant promises and rose from his sickbed on the third day – the man who carried the burden of the nation that he attempted to reform – the man who was delivered at Passover (together with the nation) – the man whose birth was prophesied by Isaiah – the man whose name was Immanuel? Hezekiah was the mediator; the “Suffering Servant” who acted on behalf of the faithful remnant (Jacob who was also Yahweh’s servant; “Israel whom I have chosen”; Isa 44:1); and *who also* acted as God’s agent (Immanuel – God with us –named by God; Isa 45:4; cf. 7:14) to the faithful remnant. Thus, Hezekiah *represented* both parties – Yahweh to the people and the people to Yahweh. Thirtle comments:

The New Testament application of these great words is by no means called in question by the immediate (or initial) interpretation. Holy Scripture continually shows its distinctive vitality and inspiration in the fact that its statements are capable of applications that are far-reaching beyond anything suggested by their primary purpose. All the same, it is important to observe the immediate reference, even in forms which are of the deepest significance when viewed in their relation to the larger unfolding of the Divine plan.[[173]](#footnote-173)

Who then functioned in an archetypical messianic role – Hezekiah or Cyrus?

**A Final Note: Why did ‘Cyrus’ get into the text?**

Gruen asks and answers the question,

How did Cyrus hit upon the idea of liberating the Israelites and ordering the reconstruction of the Temple?....He got it from reading the book of Isaiah…[[174]](#footnote-174)

Thirtle also relates historical examples where prophetic writings were used to influence Gentile authorities. The high-priest Jaddua won favour for the Jewish people by meeting Alexander the Great as he approached Jerusalem and showing him the Daniel prophecies. Similarly, Onias IV, the high-priest (*ca.* 150 BCE) acquired permission from King Ptolemy and his Queen Cleopatra to build a temple at Leontopolis in Egypt by referring to Isa 19:19.[[175]](#footnote-175)

In more recent times we might think of political-Zionism whose justification for the possession of the land and return of the Jews is often supported (by both Jews and Christians) by prophetic passages. The British Diplomat Sir Charles Webster who knew Chaim Weizman (the second great leader of the Zionist movement) described his diplomacy in promoting the Zionist programme as follows:

With unerring skill he adapted his arguments to the special circumstances of each statesman. To the British and Americans he could use *biblical language* and awake a deep emotional undertone; to other nationalities he more often talked in terms of interest. Mr Lloyd George was told that Palestine was a little mountainous country not unlike Wales….” [[176]](#footnote-176)

We can therefore concur with Thirtle’s statement: “That the Jews should have sought a political favour by calling the attention of Gentile authorities to the things written by the prophets of their nation, need not surprise us.[[177]](#footnote-177)

**Conclusion**

The anointed of Isaiah 44-45 is none other than Hezekiah the “suffering servant”. Cyrus should be excised from this account. Only a Davidide could represent the Messiah and ironic rhetoric (*contra* Perry) does not offer an explanation of this phenomenon. The modern translations of Isa 44:28 and 45:1 are tendentious and have been influenced by reading “Cyrus” into the text in the same way that the ancient versions read “Cyrus” into the text for reasons of political expediency. There was only one “craftsman” and like Bezaleel he was “hidden by God” and given the spirit to build a holy habitation – in this he typified the carpenter from Nazareth.

**Cyrus – A Case Study in Prophecy**

**A. Perry**

**Introduction**

In an earlier paper,[[178]](#footnote-178) we argued that the Cyrus oracles are partly an ironic criticism of Hezekiah. In this paper, we oppose that argument and present another line of interpretation.

In his paper, “Cyrus the Great”, in this issue, P. Wyns criticizes my approach to the Cyrus oracles as set out in my book *Isaiah 40-48*. After summarizing my material in his own words, he says that I present Cyrus as an Elamite prince “ironically lauded in Davidic terms in order to teach Merodach-Baladan *and* Hezekiah a lesson.” This is partly incorrect. In my book, I present the **irony** as one directed towards Hezekiah and not Merodach-Baladan.

In this paper, we will agree with Wyns that the Cyrus oracles are not ironic as regards to Hezekiah, arguing instead that they are partly ironic for the leaders of Judah who sought an alliance with Babylon. The reason for this judgment lies with Isaiah 42 and its declarations in favour of the Servant, Hezekiah. Ironic criticism of Hezekiah a few oracles later does not fit with this approval. However, repentance and acknowledgement of Hezekiah, the Suffering Servant, by the Jerusalem elite, does not come until Isaiah 53, and so any partial irony in the Cyrus oracles would be directed at them.

Irony is some sort of reversal. However, irony may be perceived by a reader because of background knowledge that s/he brings to the text. This kind of ironic attribution can be confused with irony that is derived from the internal dynamics of a text as that text reflects a situation on the ground. Thus, a reader today may ‘see’ that a messianic Cyrus is ironic in the light of the Davidic theology of the Psalms or Deuteronomy; but this attribution includes the reader in the claim of irony; s/he has become part of the discursive space that sets the irony. We do not deny this wider irony; we are denying that there is an irony directed towards Hezekiah in the immediate situation behind the text.

**The Nature of Prophecy**

Wyns’ first objection to making an initial application of the Cyrus oracles in Isaiah’s day is “if this Cyrus was an Elamite prince with the Babylonian delegation, no reason is given as to why he should receive the privilege of being distinguished from the other delegates.” This objection fails because no reason has to be given in the oracles for the choice of *any* individual; it can just be a choice.[[179]](#footnote-179) Yahweh is free to choose anyone to fulfil his purpose.

Our case is one of historical method: the Cyrus oracles are ***primary evidence*** for there being a ‘Cyrus’ in the party of Babylonian princes. This construal of the oracles has more probability than the alternative supposition that the oracles are from a Second Isaiah commenting on Cyrus the Great. This is because of the testimony of the superscription to the book (1:1) and the evidence of Second Temple Judaism. This evidence favours Isaiah of Jerusalem as the author, and since prophets prophesy to their own generation in the first instance, it follows that the Cyrus oracles have a contemporary catalyst.[[180]](#footnote-180)

The nature of prophecy is such that it has relevance to the original audience. This is true of biblical prophecy as well as other ANE prophecy. (We place to one side Daniel.) Prophecy is essentially political; we interpret it in relation to matters of state and society. N. K. Gottwald defines politics in this way: “politics will be viewed as the public exercise of power, coupled with the legitimation of its use, within a given social and territorial space”.[[181]](#footnote-181) This is Isaiah’s concern—how is power being exercised in Judah; what decisions should be taken; what mistakes are being made; what is Yahweh’s plan and purpose for the people; and how he has validated his will by declaring beforehand the things that happen to the nation.

J. Blenkinsopp states of Isaiah 40-55,

The author of 40-55 is doing what prophets during the time of the kingdoms were doing—that is, commenting and making judgments on contemporaneous international affairs from a specific theological perspective.[[182]](#footnote-182)

The political character of Isaiah’s ministry can be seen in many features of the book: the naming of his children; the inclusion of burdens against the nations; the personal dealings with Ahaz and Hezekiah; symbolic acts like walking naked; as well as the terms of his oracles which are concerned with the well-being of the people and the direction of policy. We see his concern for policy in his advice against an alliance with Egypt or rebellion against Assyria. Hence, as M. De Jong states, “A further recurrent element within the Isaianic material is the emphasis on the imminence of fulfilment of the announcements (see 7:16; 8:4; 10:25; 18:5; 28:4).”[[183]](#footnote-183) So, while De Jong is only commenting on Isaiah 1-39, we would apply his observation to Isaiah 40-66.

The Cyrus oracles have relevance to Isaiah’s audience which consists of the Babylonian princes as well as the Jerusalem court and the people. Given that Yahweh addresses Cyrus **and anoints him**, the best explanation is that he is a member of the party in Jerusalem. Given that Merodach-Baladan is about to be finally defeated by Sennacherib (or just has been), the nomination of Cyrus as the one who will say to Jerusalem ‘She will be built’ and to the temple, ‘You will be founded’ is entirely plausible prognostication against Merodach-Baladan who had sent the party of envoys. Events were overtaking their mission even as they entered into an alliance with Hezekiah.

Commentators of all persuasions use the well-known history surrounding Cyrus the Great to identify the ‘Cyrus’ of Isaiah without **first evaluating** whether and how an eighth century prophet could prophesy about an eighth century prince called ‘Cyrus’. The point here is not the familiar conservative riposte that critical scholars reject the possibility of divine inspiration; rather, it is the methodological point that we should first ask whether there could have been a catalyst in a situation that Isaiah of Jerusalem faced that can account for the mention of a ‘Cyrus’. Our proposal is that the Cyrus oracle units are primary evidence that there was a ‘Cyrus’ present in the Babylonian party that visited Hezekiah and that he was a prince of Anshan/Parsumash, a region then allied to Babylon against Assyria. Thus, Isaiah’s prophecy refers to Cyrus the Great *through* the forbear that was in the Babylonian party.

It is surrealistic to suggest that Isaiah thought himself into the circumstances of the exiles and presented a lively engaged dialogue between Yahweh and the people of the exile who did not as yet exist. This kind of writing is unknown amongst the pre-exilic prophets who represent Yahweh’s engagement with the people **of their day** (likewise, for ANE prophecy generally).

Wyns raises the question as to whether God would have involved a Cyrus in the building of Jerusalem and the founding of the temple. Did God ‘need’ any help from foreigners? The question is loaded but the theological answer is that the involvement of Gentiles in the building of the tabernacle/temple is an established typological pattern, as we see with the tabernacle and Solomon’s temple. Oracles that specifically identify a Gentile who will supply materials for Hezekiah’s work on the temple, or in the construction of a new temple, fit this pattern.

The Cyrus oracles refer only to the founding of the temple rather than its building. This is important if, in Hezekiah’s day, he was concerned with first extending the temple mount for a new temple. The invocation of this prophecy in Ezra (1:2-3, 6:3; cf. 2 Chron 36:23) refers to building and foundations; Cyrus the Great applied the prophecy to himself (rightly) but this does not mean that there was not an earlier fulfilment by one of his ancestors who supplied materials for foundation work on temple mount and the rebuilding of Jerusalem after 701. The point is not that this happened, but rather that it could have happened; it is a plausible oracle in the context of the aftermath of the Assyrian invasion. That Hezekiah would be the ‘builder’ (Isa 45:13) is not contradicted by this reconstruction; kings build, but supplies come from traders. The archaeological and textual argument for major work after 701 on the temple mount has been laid out by L. Ritmeyer.[[184]](#footnote-184)

**Hezekiah’s Building Programme**

Ritmeyer comments that “Major building activities took place in Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah.”[[185]](#footnote-185) With the demise of the Northern Kingdom, the flow of refugees south in the 720s, we can surmise that the population expanded and this would lead to the extending of the city walls—the ‘broad wall’ (Neh 3:8, 12), as well as repair of the city walls (Isa 22:9-10). Ritmeyer comments, “In the light of these building activities, it appears reasonable to suggest that the Temple area would not have been neglected.”[[186]](#footnote-186)

Extending the temple mount, strengthening it, repairing the platform, with a view to rebuilding the temple or its associated buildings, could reasonably be described as a work of ‘founding’. Textual evidence for this work includes:

1) The expression, ‘the mountain of the house of the Lord’, comes into use in the eighth century (Isa 2:3; Mic 4:1-2; cf. 2 Chron 33:15). This may not be a matter of geography but a metaphorical description of the raised and extended Temple platform. We can infer that discussion about the state of the temple and the extending of the temple mount was going on in Ahaz’ day,

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. Isa 2:2 (KJV); cf. Mic 4:1-3

This is a prophecy of Isaiah (‘word’, rbd, Isa 2:1), an editorial note that supplies the answer as to ‘who quotes whom?’ Micah has the same prophecy (Mic 4:1-3) but this note tells us that he is quoting Isaiah, whose utterance dates from Ahaz’ day (and his co-regent period with Uzziah).

Confirmation of this direction of dependency is indicated by Jeremiah who incidentally ties Micah’s prophesying of the destruction of Jerusalem to an ‘entreaty’ of the Lord by Hezekiah (Jer 26:18-19). This ‘entreaty’ (hlx) of the Lord averts the destruction. We can date this beseeching to the time of Hezekiah’s sickness which coincided with the Assyrian invasion because of the homonym used to describe that ‘sickness’ (hlx, 2 Chron 32:24). This dates Micah’s prophesying, recorded in Micah 3, to a period when Assyria was a threat (Mic 3:12). This is certainly as early as Hezekiah’s rebellion in 705, but the prophesying could have begun earlier with Sargon II’s expeditions to the Levant in 711.

The quotation of Isaiah by Micah (Mic 4:1-3) immediately follows the prophecy of destruction (Mic 3:11-12), and the KJV correctly connects the two prophecies with a ‘But’,

But (w) in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. Mic 4:1 (KJV)

Here, Micah is quoting Isaiah’s prophecy from Ahaz’ day at just the point in his book that it becomes relevant as grounds for hope. In this way he signals that the Assyrian threat will be removed. This tells us that ‘the last days’ of Isa 2:2 are those that relate to the Assyrian invasion and the subsequent restoration, i.e. the last days of the Assyrian hegemony over Judah.

Thus, Isaiah and Micah describe the ‘establishment’ of ‘the mountain of the house of the Lord’ in a restoration of Jerusalem and Judah. This language could well indicate that new building work would ‘establish’ the temple mount (the ‘mountain’) and its temple as that to which all peoples should flow. The prophecy would be encouragement for Hezekiah to undertake work in relation to the temple and its courts.

2) The size of the area containing the temple and its two courts is not recorded in the Bible (2 Chron 4:9). The Mishnah (*m.middot* 2.1) records a size of 500 cubits[[187]](#footnote-187) square for the ‘mountain of the house’—but this description does not connect to the account in Kings and Chronicles for Solomon’s temple but, rather, to the temple mount of the eighth century. Josephus records that after Solomon the temple area “in future ages the people added new banks, and the hill became a larger plain” (*War*. 5.184-185).[[188]](#footnote-188) This agrees with the biblical record which records Jehoshaphat’s ‘new court’ (2 Chron 20:5), which was not an additional third court, but in some sense a replacement for one of the existing two courts (2 Chron 33:5). The proposal of an expansion of the temple area and the establishment of a new ‘mountain of the house’ (temple platform) is therefore consistent with other evidence.

In view of (1) and (2) above, Ritmeyer concludes, “We therefore suggest that the construction of the square Temple Mount took place during the reign of Hezekiah, a time of extraordinary architectural activity towards the end of the eighth and at the beginning of the seventh century BC.”[[189]](#footnote-189) Our modification to this proposal is that the extension and construction was either started or, more likely, re-started after 701. This reflects the rhetoric of the Cyrus oracle, that he would say that the temple will be founded rather than Merodach-Baladan.[[190]](#footnote-190)

**Naming Cyrus**

Someone might say (not Wyns) that naming individuals in prophecy is quite rare; it is unlikely that Isaiah would have named a foreign prince in the Babylonian party let alone an emperor-king one hundred and fifty years in the future. What can we say about this argument?[[191]](#footnote-191)

Isaiah does name individuals in his oracles (as opposed to his narrative history, including Shebna and Eliakim,

Then it will come about in that day, that I will summon my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and I will clothe him with your tunic and tie your sash securely about him. I will entrust him with your authority, and he will become a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. I will drive him like a peg in a firm place, and he will become a throne of glory to his father's house. So they will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, offspring and issue, all the least of vessels, from bowls to all the jars. Isa 22:21-24 (NASB)

This oracle is about the replacement of Shebna with Eliakim and it bears some comparison with the Cyrus oracle in being about the placement of an individual in government. Hephzibah is another individual that is named (Isa 62:4) and Meshullam,

Who *is* blind but my Servant? And deaf like my messenger I send? Who is blind like Meshullam? And blind like the servant of Yahweh? Isa 42:19

The name here is the representation of the Hebrew word ~lvm (MT: *mešullām*). Commentators are divided in how to treat the word; they naturally resist reading a proper name in an oracle because it is a very particular detail. The problem for commentaries is that the word occurs *everywhere* *else* as a proper name (17x, e.g. 2 Kgs 22:3). From our point of view, in typological terms, the naming here of the messenger who goes before the Arm of the Lord is duplicated in the naming of John the Baptist who went before Christ.

The naming of Cyrus is all part of an *anointing*,

It is I who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd! And he will perform all my desire.’ And he will declare of Jerusalem, ‘She will be built,’ and of the temple, ‘Your foundation will be laid’. Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus… Isa 44:28-45:1 (NASB revised)

The oracle in vv. 1-7 addresses the Lord’s anointed (v. 1), and the word ‘anointed’ is fairly common (37x), although it is rare in the prophets (3x). Its principal usage is in relation to priests (e.g. Lev 4:3) and the Davidic king (e.g. Lam 4:20; Hab 3:13), and the classic example of its use is found in Psalm 2:

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, *saying*… Ps 2:2 (KJV)

It is over-interpretation to see a reference to a (the) messiah in Isa 45:1. The expression ‘to Cyrus’ is a separate clause and the same explanatory structure is present in 2 Sam 22:51 and Ps 18:51,

vrwkl wxyvml (‘to his anointed, to Cyrus’)

dwdl wxyvml (‘to his anointed, to David’)

These expressions arrest the attention of the reader because ‘to Cyrus’ has replaced ‘to David’ (or the name of a Davidic king). The point of the citation is precisely the variation of ‘to Cyrus’ for ‘to David’, and this is to give Cyrus a comparable status to that of David.

The statement indicates more than that God has raised-up a foreign conqueror to execute his purpose; it implies that Yahweh had ***actually anointed*** Cyrus. This point is supported by the double allusion to David being a shepherd and then being anointed by God by a prophet to be king; likewise, Cyrus was God’s shepherd and his anointed. In the Jerusalem of Isaiah’s day, there could well have been an anointment by Isaiah of the ‘Cyrus’ among the Babylonian envoys, but not of Cyrus the Great, who was not (as far as we know) anointed by an Israelite prophet. The historical precedent for a prophet anointing a foreign king would be that of Elijah anointing Hazeal to be king of Syria (1 Kgs 19:15).

While we can relate the terms of Isa 45:1-7 to Cyrus the Great; we can also relate them to Cyrus, a prince in the Babylonian party, once we recognise him to be Teispes/Shishpish (675-640), the king who established the Achaemenid dynasty in Anshan/Parsumash.[[192]](#footnote-192) This could be the initial and partial fulfilment of the words of Isaiah’s oracle, which is about subduing nations.

**Excising Cyrus**

Wyns favours J. W. Thirtle’s explanation of how ‘Cyrus’ came to be in the text.[[193]](#footnote-193) The text of Isa 45:1 has been changed from vrx ‘craftsman’ (Isa 44:12, 13) to vrwk. This would make Yahweh originally assert, “…to his anointed, to the craftsman”. Given that x sounds like k, the letters could have been *intentionally* changed with w added to give the vowel sound.[[194]](#footnote-194) However, such a change is not trivial because while the letters have similar sounds, their orthography is quite different, and w cannot be just be added as the vowel unless it was suitable to represent the vowel sound of vrx.

(1) Thirtle says, “*First,* the passage would be *applied* to Cyrus, who, in presence of the people, realized parts which in some measure corresponded with those set forth in the passage about the Lord’s anointed.”

The question to ask here is: why would the Babylonian exiles do this, if for 150 years they had been accustomed to applying the passage to Hezekiah? What opinion of Scripture does this proposal imply about the exiles who exercised leadership? Suppose Cyrus was thought to be God’s craftsman, why would this interpretation of Isaiah motivate Jewish leaders to *alter the text* to use Cyrus’ name rather than just tell Cyrus that he was ‘the craftsman’ of the prophecy? There is sufficient in the prophecy to apply to Cyrus as ‘the craftsman’ without altering the text for political purposes. For example, Cyrus had subdued nations and perhaps already shown tolerance towards foreign gods and their temples.

(2) Thirtle says, “*Second*, Cyrus was hopefully regarded as the workman, or artificer vrx whom Jehovah had empowered to do great things in the interests of the Jews.” This is just repeating the first point in a different way: to apply the craftsman passage to Cyrus is just to show where your hopes lie in the situation.

There is a further point: the oracles have predictions (‘She shall be built’; ‘It will be founded’), but these are not indicative of a craftsman; they show the decision making of a king. This king-like quality of the oracles is reinforced by talk of subduing nations, the loins of kings, opening gates, *and so on*. It doesn’t seem likely that the two oracles originally had the notion of ‘craftsman’; it doesn’t fit.

(3) Thirtle says, “*Third*, seeing that the word vrx thus implied, or stood for Cyrus, it would seem right or desirable to conform the letters to a more correct representation in Hebrew of the Persian word – hence vrk, afterwards vrwk, and then by pointing vr,AK.”

The question to ask here is: why would the exiles not just add ‘Cyrus’ to the text and retain the mention of ‘the craftsman’? In English, the result might then have been ‘to the craftsman, to Cyrus’. The point that this suggestion raises is that Thirtle is not being clear on what the original text had in place before the change. The poetic rhythm of (the unchanged) ‘to his anointed’ suggests the original would have been ‘to **his** craftsman’ (not ‘to the craftsman’) and this means that vrxl was not the form in the text but rather wvrxl.

Thirtle proposes that the initial change was to vrk and then “afterwards” to vrwk. This is a spelling change, but Thirtle gives no rationale for the change or a reason why vrwk was not the original spelling when the textual change was made; variable spellings of Hebrew names is a characteristic of early and late biblical books.[[195]](#footnote-195)

There is no correspondence in meaning between the Hebrew word for ‘craftsman’ and ‘Cyrus’. ‘Kūrush’ (Cyrus) is now thought to be an Elamite name, meaning, ‘He who bestows care’ or ‘He gives fortune’.[[196]](#footnote-196) So, if Thirtle is right, the exiles received no help making their textual change from the meaning of Cyrus’ name. In fact, Thirtle is formally wrong in his proposal: vrk is not a “more correct representation” than vrx in Hebrew of Cyrus’ name in Persian/Elamite (*Kūrush*), because vrx is not a representation of Cyrus’ name in the first place.

(4) Thirtle says, “By these measures and mutations the word came to speak of King Cyrus and of him only. There was no intention to introduce disorder into the text –only a purpose to reduce the spelling to a form which was believed to be right.”

This supposes that the issue is a matter of spelling, but this is false; it is a matter of *word change* and the deletion of a word that has a completely different meaning to the Persian, whose representation is being introduced.

(5) Thirtle concludes, “In the judgment of some leader, or leaders, of the people, vrx was intended to indicate vrk, and effect was given to this belief by the alteration of the initial letter. Thus a common appellation was made into a proper name, and a seed of misunderstanding was sown in the Isaiah prophecies.”

The scenario that Thirtle paints looks simple, but making a common appellation into a proper name that is the equivalent of a Persian/Elamite name is not a trivial change to the text. It is not simply altering one consonant; it is introducing a name with an unrelated meaning and likely dropping the pronominal suffix (‘his craftsman’). We might well ask: why wasn’t the text changed back after Cyrus died?[[197]](#footnote-197) It is all very well suggesting some leader(s) of the people made such a change, but how were the scrolls of the scriptures being kept? How many were there; in Babylon; in the homeland? Were scribes likely to make such a change at the command of a leader with a political agenda? Would such a change be duplicated? Why is there no evidence of an alternative tradition in the history of the text?

**Cyrus – A Throne Name**

Our case is that ‘Cyrus’ is integral to the text of Isaiah. We have a prophecy that has an initial application to a ‘Cyrus’ in the Babylonian party and a secondary application to Cyrus the Great. This is possible because of divine inspiration and the fact that God is in control of history. The first Cyrus is an ancestor of Cyrus the Great, a prince of the Achaemenid dynasty, which had its base in Anshan. The prophecy came to have a dual fulfilment; i.e. what was not fulfilled by Cyrus the Prince, was fulfilled through Cyrus the Great and *vice versa*.

In terms of the historico-critical method, the most likely hypothesis is that there was a Cyrus the Prince. In the narrative of Isaiah 36-39, there is a visit of Babylonian envoys (princes) from Merodach-Baladan, king of Babylon, happening at the time. Babylon is known from the *Assyrian Annals* to be allied to southern Elamite tribes, and ‘Cyrus’ is a common name of that region. If the Babylonian envoys had such a prince among their number, it makes sense as prophetic counter-rhetoric to assert that a ‘Cyrus’ would say to Jerusalem, ‘Thou shalt be built’, and of the temple, ‘It shall be founded’, **rather than Merodach-Baladan**.

Our proposal is that ‘Cyrus’ became a throne name for the Achaemenids with Cyrus I and Cyrus II because of the prophecy that was made to the Cyrus in the Babylonian party.[[198]](#footnote-198) The prince, we suggest, was Teispes,[[199]](#footnote-199) the father of Cyrus I, who reigned from 675-640.[[200]](#footnote-200) He is mentioned under the name ‘Cyrus’ in the Nassouhi Prism which is dated to 646.[[201]](#footnote-201)

Anshan and Parsumash (Parsua) are lands noted separately in Sennacherib’s annals, but they are always *together* (e.g. in Sennacherib’s campaign against Elam in 691, *Annals*. 43). Moreover, as R. N. Frye comments “From the time of Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.) until the rise of the Achaemenids we find reference to the Par-su-ma-aš or Parsu (both presumably for Parsua) only in the south.”[[202]](#footnote-202) On this basis, we can say that Anshan and Parsumash were closely associated and in the south; Yamauchi’s judgment is that ‘Anshan’ was an archaic name for Parsumash.[[203]](#footnote-203)

**Predictions**

The predictions that Isaiah makes about Cyrus fit the known history in 700. Hezekiah has a building programme; supplies were needed. Trade between Babylon and Judah could well have been on the agenda. That an alliance is at the heart of the visit of the Babylonian envoys is suggested by Josephus, in *Ant*. 11.2.2, “But the king of Babylon, whose name was Baladan, sent ambassadors to Hezekiah with presents, and desired he would be his ally and his friend”. Isaiah’s counter rhetoric is perfectly plausible in this context: looking at Cyrus, he says that he would arrange supplies (and even labour) for the building work in Jerusalem. The point here is not that stone blocks and timber would be sent from Mesopotamia, but that (possibly) Babylonian traders in Northern Israel[[204]](#footnote-204) would deliver these supplies because of Cyrus’ contacts.

However, equally, the words ‘Thou shalt be built’ and ‘It shall be founded’ are fulfilled either wholly or partly by Cyrus the Great. Biblical evidence has it that Cyrus gave a decree to build the temple (2 Chron 36:23/Ezra 1:2-3), and to lay its foundation (Ezra 6:3), but there is no record of a decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Isa 44:28).[[205]](#footnote-205) The absence of evidence for a decree to rebuild Jerusalem could mean that this part of Isaiah’s oracle was fulfilled by Cyrus the Prince, or it could be that such a decree was made by Cyrus the Great, but we have no corroborating record; what we do have is a decree about the temple. Cyrus’ general policy was to restore the gods to their home cities and “repair their dwelling places”.[[206]](#footnote-206)

The principle here is that we may not have historical records showing an oracle was fulfilled; in the case of Cyrus the Great we have confirmation of some fulfilment but not all; in the case of Cyrus the Prince, we have no conformation at all. This lack of confirmation doesn’t cast doubt on the plausibility of Isaiah having uttered an oracle about Cyrus. That question should only be settled by looking at the circumstances in which the oracles are purported to be uttered. Are there elements of Isaiah’s situation which make his uttering the oracles plausible?

The other predictions about Cyrus are about what Yahweh will do:

* Subdue nations
* Loosen the loins of kings
* Open gates
* Straighten paths
* Break down doors
* Bestow treasure

These are, on one level, perfectly general things that a god might say in an anointment ceremony for a prince who will be a king one day. They are not implausible in an ANE royal court. They are exceptionable when they take place in Jerusalem and are things uttered by an Israelite prophet of a foreign prince. They are exceptionable, not from the perspective of the theology of Isaiah or the traditions of Israel, because Israelite prophets have anointed foreign kings in the past. They are exceptionable from the point of view of the Babylonian envoys and Cyrus.

It is straightforward to show that some of these things are fulfilled in Cyrus the Great. According to the Chronicler (2 Chron 36:23), there is recognition by Cyrus of a personal charge from Yahweh in the words, “the Lord God hath given me”; he is not acknowledging a general prediction about his reign. This reflects the language of personal address in the Isaiah oracles: ‘thus saith the Lord…to Cyrus’. Further, Cyrus acknowledges that the Lord God has given him kingdoms; this is the aspect, “to subdue nations before him” (Isa 45:1). Also, Cyrus mentions the commission to build a temple (2 Chron 36:23; Ezra 1:2), and in the second record of the decree, the foundations of the temple are noted (Ezra 6:3), in accordance with Isa 44:28. Further, Cyrus acknowledges that the Jews are the people of the Lord, and this is a feature of the oracles (Isa 45:4).

Turning our attention back to Cyrus the Prince, one of the reasons that the envoys came to Judah was to enquire about the “wonder that was done in the land” (2 Chron 32:31). This enquiry may have led to an understanding of the faith of Israel and the power of the God of Israel. Any openness on their part and that of Cyrus would engage Isaiah and explain why Yahweh addresses Cyrus in personal terms. It would further explain the choice of Cyrus and why it is he that would come to know the God of Israel. Offers to supply materials for the temple and Jerusalem might just have been a business matter, but it may also have been a newly fostered recognition of Yahweh on the part of Cyrus. This kind of encounter with Isaiah would explain the actions of Cyrus the Great, and his recognition of the God of Israel, which extended to a knowledge of the building dimensions for the new temple (2 Chron 36:23; Ezra 1:2). The oracle of Isaiah might well have been preserved with the Achaemenid family through the generations. Would this prophecy have contributed to infighting among the envoys? Possibly; such an objective would be reasonable for Isaiah.

Yahweh was going to work through Cyrus “for the sake of Jacob/Israel” (Isa 45:4). This has an obvious fulfilment in Cyrus the Great who was responsible for the return from Exile. But we should not overlook God’s work with Cyrus the Prince as also being for the sake of Jacob/Israel, because he is the ancestor which established the Achaemenid dynasty of which Cyrus the Great was to be its greatest king.

**Identifying Oracles**

One of the problems in the interpretation of Isaiah is the recognition of distinct oracle units and deciding ‘what goes with what’. Scholars regard Isa 44:24-28 and 45:1-7 as the oracle units that pertain to Cyrus. There are good reasons for this and we should not assume that the rest of Isaiah 45 is about Cyrus, although scholars often also say that Isa 45:13 is about Cyrus. It is worthwhile collecting examples of this problem ‘in action’ from this debate.

(1) Isaiah 45:13 is often applied to Cyrus, but “he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives” is not true of Cyrus the Great; Isa 44:28 is very clear: Cyrus **says** something about Jerusalem, namely, it will be built; it does not have Cyrus **building** Jerusalem. In Isa 45:13, the statement is instead that ‘the man’ *builds* the city. Cyrus did not build Jerusalem, and whereas we can infer that he said Jerusalem should be rebuilt, the actual work of building was obviously still stalled in Haggai’s day (Hag 1:1, 9).

The key to identifying this ‘new Adam’ is the verb ‘to raise up’; this is used of the One from the North (Isa 41:25) and it is he, the Arm of the Lord, who will send liberated Judahites to go and build Jerusalem. This is not just a literal fulfilment, but a metaphorical one also, as the liberated Judahites *become* the New Jerusalem. (The catalyst for the later talk of a ‘new Jerusalem’ is this rebuilding work.)

The issue of price and reward (or bribe) is not relevant to Cyrus the Great’s injunction to the exiles of Babylon to go home and rebuild the temple. He was the absolute power and there was no comparable Judahite state willing or able to pay a price or bribe for the return of exiles. But it’s possible that the Babylonian envoys had sought payment for the release of Judahite captives in Babylon and this is the contrast. In 701, Judahite captives had been sold on through the sea ports and to the surrounding nations; we know this because they were to return from all points of the compass. The contrast is being made that the Arm of the Lord would not seek reward for his exploits liberating Judahites; such captives would just be ‘sent’ (xlv[[207]](#footnote-207)) to Jerusalem.

(2) Wyns comments on Isa 45:8, observing that it is about the resurrection, and remarks that, “It is impossible that this language would be applied (even as ironic rhetoric, *contra* Perry) to a pagan idol worshiper.” The obvious reply to this comment is that Isa 45:8 is not part of the Cyrus oracle which is normally taken to extend from vv. 1-7. The motif of ‘let the earth open’ might very well refer to the resurrection, but this is coupled with a bestowal of the Spirit in the motif ‘Drop down, ye heavens, from above’.[[208]](#footnote-208)

We have in Isaiah 45 a clear example of how readers can be misled. The tone of the chapter changes from v. 8 onwards and we cannot assume that the oracle units of vv. 8-25 come from the same week or month as the Cyrus oracle of vv. 1-7. The association of material in the same chapter misleads readers into making it all apply to the time of Cyrus. Furthermore, whereas the Cyrus oracle in vv. 1-7 had two specific addressees, Merodach-Baladan and the Jerusalem leaders, vv. 8-25 are oracles addressed to a sudden gathering and influx of Judahites from some region to which they had been deported (Isa 45:20).

The return of those deported and sold on by Sennacherib no doubt happened in waves and from different points of the compass. Some would have needed to escape; others would have been liberated in local uprisings; yet others will have returned with the agreement of those places where they had been relocated. Isaiah would no doubt proclaim the word of the Lord to those who returned. In the oracle units of vv. 8-25 we shift our vantage point from the royal court and the argument of ambassadors (vv. 1-7) to the market-place and the countryside.

The battle for the hearts of the returnees is with those who look to idols for guidance, both those returning with their idols and those in the land who look to other gods. We know this is a theme of these oracle units because they have typical anti-idol motifs: there is the asking of Yahweh about the future (v. 11) and there is the contrast between God as a maker and those who make idols (vv. 9, 12, 16, 18, 20). The theme connects with the oracle discourse that follows in that Bel and Nebo are said to have already bowed the knee before Yahweh (Isa 45:23; 46:1).

The oracle units in vv. 8-25 are relatively clear. The opening verse (v. 8) is a celebration of the spring rains of 700 and the bestowal of the Spirit. Two ‘Woes’ follow (vv. 9-10) which address those who doubted Yahweh intentions and purpose with Judah. In vv. 11-13 we have described God’s new creation with the land in which has raised up another ‘Adam’ who will build Jerusalem (v. 13; Isa 41:25). Another ‘Thus saith the Lord’ (v. 14) gives contextual detail relating to Ethiopia, Egypt and the Sabeans, which can only have relevance to Hezekiah’s day as these groups were involved in the military campaigns of 701. The next unit, vv. 15-19, is about God’s providential knowledge of what will happen in the land and among the nations. Those in the nations and among Israel who seek such knowledge from idols will be ashamed. This address is particularly relevant to those that have been deported to the nations and are now returning. In vv. 20-25, they are told to assemble and draw near and hear what Isaiah is saying: the returnees were not to look to other gods for guidance but to Yahweh (v. 22), for it is only in Yahweh that the seed of Israel can be justified (v. 25).

(3) Failure to demarcate the limits of the Cyrus oracle (vv. 1-7) also vitiates Wyns’ comparison with Psalm 2. Here he makes eight connections with Isaiah 45 that come after v. 7 and three connections with v. 1. Only the connections with v. 1 are relevant to this debate. These are ‘his anointed’, the subduing of the nations, and the mention of kings.

Of these connections, the only strong one is the phrase ‘his anointed’. The other two links are lexically weak (just ‘kings’). It may beg the question to say so, but Psalm 2 is about nations and kings local to Judah, whereas Isa 45:1-7 is about Mesopotamia and the military events and politics of empire. This language of ‘anointing’ may be just coincidental. We will return to this question below.

(4) Lastly, two other intertexts that Wyns cites to establish the Davidic character of Isaiah 45, namely v. 10 (an Abraham and Sarah type) and v. 23 (Suffering Servant), also fail to address the question of whether ‘Cyrus’ is original to Isa 45:1 because they are not part of the Cyrus oracle unit of vv. 1-7.

**Historical Contextualization**

Does removing ‘Cyrus’ from the text work? Does the prophecy work as a prophecy about Hezekiah, the master-craftsman? The answer is that to some extent it does work, but this is the point about our historical contextualization of historically indeterminate prophecies: some details may fit, but what doesn’t fit so easily may be what breaks our hypothesis. The details that don’t readily fit Wyns’ hypothesis are,

* There is no reason why Hezekiah should be reminded that he is God’s anointed; he has been sole king for 15 years (45:1).
* There is no reason why Hezekiah should need to know that Yahweh is the God of Israel (45:3); he knew God, which is not what the prophecy says (45:4, 5).
* Once we remove the name ‘Cyrus’, there is no reason for the emphases ‘called thee by name’ and ‘surnamed thee’ (45:4). The title ‘craftsman’ is not a name and Hezekiah knew that he was the Servant (42:1).

If we place Cyrus back into the text, is there anything that doesn’t fit? Wyns avers that God would not have sought ‘help’ from a foreign conqueror, but this isn’t a very strong objection. Cyrus’ role is in Mesopotamia and not Judah; furthermore, God did seek help from local nations to liberate Judahites after 701, but found none, and so raised up his own redeemer (Isa 41:28; 50:2; 63:5); and of course, he has recently used Sennacherib to bring judgement on Judah.

**Intertextual Connections**

Another problem for interpreters is in making the right intertextual connections. Some connections may involve the socio-historical context rather than the intertexts of Isaiah’s own scriptures. For example,

(1) The act of holding the king by the right hand is part of the Babylonian rituals involving Marduk and the New Year Festival. An eighth century example of this language would be the eponym record of Tiglath-Pileser III taking the hand of Bel in 729 and 728.[[209]](#footnote-209) But it is not only an idiom associated with ritual, but a way of describing the divine choice of the king. Thus, in the Berlin ‘Merodach-Baladan Stele’ Merodach-Baladan claims,

He (the god Marduk) looked (with favour) upon Marduk-apla-iddina (II), king of Babylon, prince who reveres him, to whom he (the god Marduk) stretched out his hand, legitimate eldest son of Erība-Marduk, king of Babylon, who has made firm the foundation(s) of the land.[[210]](#footnote-210)

Isaiah’s point in Isa 45:1 is that Yahweh has not held Merodach-Baladan by the hand; he will hold *Cyrus* by the hand. This connection shows that it is wrong to make a contrast with the “craftsman” who holds a lie (idol) in his right hand (Isa.44:20), with the one whose right hand Yahweh holds (Isa.45:1).

(2) A significant point of difference with Wyns is the treatment of Psalm 107. The individual suffering of Hezekiah has a collective dimension insofar as he suffered on behalf of the people for their peace, but this doesn’t mean that the people did not suffer and that it is not their suffering which is the topic of Psalm 107. This psalm is replete with a plural emphasis (‘they’, ‘their’, ‘them’). An individual is their redeemer, but it is **they** who are behind gates and bars needing redemption.

Wyns says that “The ‘breaking in pieces of the gates of bronze and the cutting of the bars of iron’ is a metaphor for the bonds of death.” It is more likely a literal description of the taking of cities. Whereas ‘the gates of death’ is a figure, it is difficult to see why bronze would be an apt characteristic of the gates of death. The gates are different.

The psalmist is speaking of Yahweh breaking down the doors of brass and bars of iron in order to release men from prison, who were sitting in darkness and bound by chains (Ps 107:10, 14; cf. Isa 42:22). Yahweh is predicting that Cyrus will do the same, i.e. Cyrus will take cities and release men from prison. The doors of brass are not prison doors but those that would adorn temples and palaces; they would have bars of iron securing them in place.[[211]](#footnote-211) To liberate those in prison an army would break through the city gates, assault the brass doors of the palace and cut asunder their bars of iron (‘bars’, Ps 107:16; Job 38:10).

Yahweh states that he will do these things through Cyrus, but the fact that they need doing suggests that there is an historical context involving prisons.

But this is a people robbed and plundered, they are all of them trapped in holes and hidden in prisons; they have become a prey with none to rescue, a spoil with none to say, ‘Restore!’ Isa 42:22 (RSV)

This doesn’t fit the end of the exile, when the exiles were living a peaceful life, but it does correspond to the possibilities of the situation in Babylonia in 700 where Judahites had been deported by Sennacherib. The nobles deported by Sennacherib might well have been in prison houses and Cyrus the prince could well have had a role in the release of such prisoners. Nevertheless, we might also say that Cyrus the Great would ‘liberate’ the exiles and these should be thought of as in a metaphorical ‘prison’, being exiles. The choice of the figure is motivated by the circumstances of Isaiah’s day rather than the actual conditions of the exile.

The release of prisoners was not only a function for Cyrus in Mesopotamia; it was a role appointed to the Servant in the Levant, who was also to bring out “‘those that sit in darkness” ($vx ybvy, Isa 42:7; Ps 107:10).

(3) ‘Darkness’ (Höºšek) is a very common word, and so it would not be surprising if it was associated with death and the grave. But in Isaiah there are two aspects to ‘darkness’: i) Assyria was a military ‘darkness’ over the land (Isa 5:30); and ii) idolatry and divination were the ‘darkness’ of false religion (Isa 9:1; 29:15, 18; 42:7; 59:9; 60:2). This suggests that the ‘treasures of darkness’ are Assyrian plunder and tribute. This reading is supported by the parallelism, ‘hidden wealth’ of ‘secret places’, terms which are used of places where people hide their money and valuables (e.g. Gen 43:23; Ps 10:8-9; Lam 3:10). To make ‘treasures of darkness’ a metaphor for resurrected people, either for Hezekiah in the form of the revived nation, or for the Messiah in the future, has no intertextual support: the terms for ‘treasure’ and ‘hidden wealth’ are not used elsewhere in typological contexts denoting people. The ‘secret places’ are also not used elsewhere as figure for the grave.

In Isaiah’s day, the treasures of Assyria are being promised to Cyrus, presumably from any military actions taken by him in Mesopotamia; this is slightly ironic in that Hezekiah had showed off his ‘treasure of darkness’ that he had re-acquired as plunder in the immediate aftermath of the Assyrian invasion. But, on the other hand, following the principle of dual fulfilment, with regard to Cyrus the Great, Hezekiah’s treasures were taken to Babylon (Jer 20:5), and would have ended up in the possession of him also when he took Babylon.

**A Davidic Prophecy?**

On the basis of intertextual connections cited above, Wyns’ main argument is “The idea that a pagan king who worshiped idols would be addressed in Davidic terms as Yahweh’s anointed runs contrary to the thrust of the text.” We have removed some of Wyns’ intertexts on the grounds they are not part of the Cyrus oracles (i.e. the intertexts of Isa 45:8ff), but the question still remains: if we do not simply dismiss the Davidic overtones of Isa 44:28 and 45:1 as coincidence, what do they signify and could they have been applied to Cyrus the prince/Cyrus the Great?

The problem of method here is like listening to someone on the telephone and only hearing one side of the conversation; you construct what the other person is saying on the basis of that side of the conversation you are hearing. This illustration shows why mirror-reading the text is legitimate. So, the other side of the conversation underlying the Cyrus oracles is likely to be one that is advocating a king and a shepherd and moreover one that is lauded as capable of subduing nations and taking cities.

The obvious candidate is Merodach-Baladan, who is introduced as ‘the king of Babylon’ (Isa 39:1) even though this status is questionable, Sennacherib having deposed him in 703. Yahweh’s own argument to the envoys is that there was ‘no throne’ (Isa 47:1) for Babylon. This argument contextualizes the language that ‘looks’ Davidic as just comprising coincidental shared motifs. The only other candidate is Hezekiah, but we have noted details in Isa 45:1-7 that do not fit him.

**Isaiah 44:28**

Wyns favours a new translation of Isaiah 44:28 from R. Oosting,[[212]](#footnote-212)

…and to say of Jerusalem “She will be rebuilt and she will be founded as a temple”.[[213]](#footnote-213)

The more normal translation is,

And he declares of Jerusalem, ‘She will be built,’ and of the temple, ‘Your foundation will be laid.’ (NASB, cf. RSV, KJV, NET, etc.)

The verb used for ‘founding’ is dsy (44x) and BDB (413) gives its range of meaning as ‘to establish, found, fix’. There is an ambiguity in the pronominal suffix for the verb dsy. The suffix attached to the verb ‘to establish, found, fix’ could be a feminine third person or a second person masculine singular.[[214]](#footnote-214) The third person feminine singular would be rendered,

…saying of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be built,’ and of the temple, ‘She shall be founded’. Isa 44:28 (RSV revised)

The noun lkyh is masculine and elsewhere used with masculine verb forms, so it would be exceptional to treat it here as a feminine form.[[215]](#footnote-215) This in turn suggests that dsy is a second person masculine singular, giving, ‘You shall be founded’, which is followed by most translations.

Oosting argues that on the basis of the lack of a definite article attached to lkyh, and the fact that the verb is in Niphal here rather than Pual or Hophal, that the noun has an adjunct sense, giving,

…and to say of Jerusalem, “She will be rebuilt and she will be founded as a temple.”

Oosting cites Isa 51:12 as a parallel where a noun without the definite article is coupled with a Niphal verb giving, ‘…is made like grass’ (NASB), allowing him to propose for Isa 44:28 ‘founded as a temple’.

The proposal has several difficulties. First, Oosting pitches his argument at the level of the syntactical understanding of the Massoretes, rather than at just the consonantal text, but their pattern for the noun is masculine and not feminine. Second, his parallel example of Isa 51:12 has a ‘conjunction+noun-phrase+noun+verb’ clause, and it may be *this* combination, rather than just the verb form (Niphal) and an anarthrous noun ‘grass’ (rycx) which is syntactically significant, giving the ‘like grass’ sense; Oosting doesn’t consider this explanation.; the clause in Isa 44:28 is just ‘conjunction+noun+verb’. Third, the quotation of Isa 44:28 elsewhere is in the context of founding the temple, rather than the building of Jerusalem. Ezra 3:6 is the case in point because it has the only other occurrence of lkyhw in Hebrew and the same verb dsy, albeit in Pual (‘the foundation of the temple of the Lord had not been laid’). The inner-biblical exegesis of the consonantal text of Isa 44:28 is therefore in terms of a reference to the temple and not the city.[[216]](#footnote-216)

**Cyrus and Darius**

The identity of Darius the Mede in Daniel is a well-known problem and beyond our scope. Wyns assumes the solution of Darius Hystapsis but there are other proposals including Cyrus the Great.[[217]](#footnote-217) It would seem that any argument that Cyrus the Great was not a temple builder, because Darius Hystapsis was the temple builder, depends on a distinction being made between Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Great. Nevertheless, regardless of how we solve the problem of the identity of Darius the Mede, Wyns’ argument is flawed because Isaiah only states that Cyrus will **say** to the temple, ‘Your foundation will be laid’. This is specifically picked up in Ezra 6:3 which details that both the temple **and the foundations were subject to decree** (e.g. NASB, KJV, NET,).

Whether the foundation was laid during Cyrus’ reign is a moot point; Isaiah’s prophecy is all about what will be said. The mirror reading of the prophecy is simply that there was talk in Jerusalem about extending the temple mount and laying the foundation of a temple. Fulfilment by Cyrus the prince and Cyrus the Great is entirely plausible, even though we have only evidence of fulfilment by Cyrus the Great in his decree. That Cyrus made such a decree is supported directly by Josephus (Ant. 11.1.1) and indirectly when he says of Darius I that he did “all that Cyrus intended to do before him, relating to the restoration of the temple”(*Ant*. 11.3.8). That the foundation was laid, in part or full, is supported by the record of a ‘foundation-laying’ ceremony in Ezra 3:10-13. It is therefore a mis-reading to affirm as Wyns does, “If the prophecy in Isaiah is taken at face value then all that can be said is that Cyrus failed and the prophecy failed.”

We might well ask, with Wyns, as to why Isaiah’s prophecy about Cyrus is not mentioned by Ezra, when he does mention Jeremiah’s seventy year prophecy (2 Chron 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). The question calls for speculation, and Wyns’ answer is that ‘Cyrus’ was not in the text of Isaiah. This answer has a sting in the tail because Wyns’ believes that Isaiah’s prophecy (without ‘Cyrus’) **was being used at the time**; so the question for Wyns is really, why did ‘Cyrus’ end up in Isaiah but not in Ezra? Why should the name get interpolated in Isaiah but not Ezra, a historical record that was being written at the time?

We can make two points: the first is that the prophecy-fulfilment structure of 2 Chron 36:22-23/Ezra 1:1-4 doesn’t allow for a reference to Isaiah’s prophecy, because Ezra’s historical record relates to the return of the exiles and the **building** of the temple rather than the foundation of the temple. We cannot legitimately complain that Ezra has chosen to record Cyrus’ decree about the temple rather than its foundation because the decree concerning the temple is the larger fact which he has rightly recorded.

The second point is that Ezra does record historical material about the foundation of the temple (Ezra 3/6), but without mentioning Isaiah, and this is because the structure and point of his record is not that of ‘prophecy-fulfilment’. The fact that Ezra does record a foundation laying ceremony (Ezra 3) is unexceptionable, but the mention of the foundations in Ezra 6:3 as part of Cyrus’ decree is noteworthy, because Darius’ concerns have been about the temple and not any foundation; the mention of a foundation in the decree is more information than the context demands. This is evidence that Cyrus knows of Isaiah’s prophecy about the temple’s foundation.

**Conclusion**

A liberal commentator on Isaiah 40-66 believes in a Second Isaiah and would probably say of this debate, ‘a plague on both your houses’. There have been a few liberal scholars who have deleted ‘Cyrus’ from the text, but the overwhelming majority retain ‘Cyrus’. A conservative commentator needs to explain why ‘Cyrus’ would have featured in a prophecy of Isaiah of Jerusalem. One or two have deleted ‘Cyrus’ from the text; but most simply assert that Isaiah was divinely inspired to prophesy about Cyrus without answering the question as to how the prophecies were relevant to the Judah of his day. This is a failing on their part.

Keeping ‘Cyrus’ in the text is not just a matter of textual integrity; it is a task for historical contextualization. This in turn is a matter of mirror-reading the prophecies for the other side of the ‘conversation’. When we do this, something like the exegesis presented here is the most likely eighth/seventh century context for Isaiah’s oracles and written record.

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1. All quotations from the English Standard Version. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A third word is *storgē.* Although it does not appear in the New Testament, we find a related adjective, *philostorgos*,in Rom 12:10 where it refers to a kind affection. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “Jesus uses the word for love which is characteristic, in the New Testament, of the highest love there is, the love with which God loved the world, the love which prompts a man to lay down his life for his friends.” A. Norris, *Peter Fisher of Men* (Birmingham: CMPA, 1982). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The parallel account can be found in Luke 6:32, where “tax collectors” has been replaced by “sinners”. This strengthens the argument that *agapaō* is not always divine love. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Note also the negative usage of the word in the Septuagint: 2 Samuel 13:15 (lust); Isaiah 1:23 (greed). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This instance is especially revealing when we consider Matthew’s parallel account. He records almost the exact same saying of Jesus, but uses *phileō* instead. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. “Just glance at 12:43, where it is said that the Pharisees “loved the praise of men” and realize that the verb there is *agapaō*! That verse alone should dispel poor exegetical patterns of interpretation among preachers!” G. L. Borchert, *The New American Commentary Volume 25 B - John 12-21*. (Nashville: B & H Pub. Group, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. W. D Mounce,. *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. G. W. Bromiley, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.b. Eerdmans, 1979). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. J. P. Louw, and E. A. Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. “The best English example is simply the verb *love*. One may use it for sexual intercourse, platonic love, emotional love, the love of God, and more. The context defines and delimits the word, precisely as it does the verbs for love in the pages of holy Scripture.” D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2000). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. “[Peter] will keep his profession of loyalty at the lowest level a man can claim, but the highest of which he can be sure.” Norris, *Peter Fisher of Men*. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. “But in this context, it is difficult to see a fundamental theological or linguistic or syntactical reason for the changes. We seem to be in the realm of slight variation for the sake of vague things like “feel” or “style.” In any case, my point is that it is rather strange to insist on a semantic distinction between the two words for “to love” in this context, and not on small distinctions between other pairs of words in the same context.” D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Carlisle, U.K.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Paternoster ; Baker Books, 1996). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. “Moreover, it was argued, the reason the [agapaō] word group became extremely popular in the Septuagint and subsequently in the New Testament is that writers in the biblical tradition realized they needed some word other than those currently available to convey the glorious substance of the love of the God of Judeo-Christian revelation; so they deployed this extremely rare word group and filled it with the content just described, until it triumphed in frequency as well as in substance.” Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Diachronic study is the study of how languages change over time. Its ‘opposite’ is synchronic study, which examines a language at a particular point in time. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. “Agape describes many types of love, having a range of meaning similar to that of the English word “love,” so one should not place exegetical weight on an author’s use of agape/agapao as opposed to other words available to him—it was simply the general, all-encompassing word for love.” R. L., Pratt, Jr. *I & II Corinthians* (Holman New Testament Commentary; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. “Imagine again the scene as the evangelist framed it: a charcoal fire and three questions about Peter’s relationship to Jesus. It hardly takes a genius to relate this event to that of the denial. Facing up to oneself is a traumatic experience.” G. L. Borchert, *The New American Commentary Volume 25 B - John 12-21*. (Nashville: B & H Pub. Group, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. H. A. Whittaker, *Studies in the Gospels* (Cannock: Biblia, 1984). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Adela Y. Collins & John J. Collins, King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Jakob van Brussen, *Jesus the Son of God; The Gospel Narratives as Message* (trans. Nancy Forest-Flier; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. J. D. G. Dunn, Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origin of the Doctrine of the Incarnation (2nd ed.; London: SCM Press, 1989), 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Bernhard W. Anderson, “The Messiah as Son of God: Peter’s Confession in Traditio-Historical Perspective” in *Christological Perspectives: Essays in Honor of Harvey K. McArthur* (eds. Robert F. Berkes & Sarah A. Edwards; New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1982), 157. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Anderson, “Messiah as Son of God”, 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Collins, *King and Messiah*, 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Longenecker, *Christology of Early Jewish Christianity,* 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Longenecker, *Christology of Early Jewish Christianity,* 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Longenecker, *Christology of Early Jewish Christianity,* 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Longenecker, *Christology of Early Jewish Christianity,* 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. It follows on from A. Perry, “Pre-Historic Genealogies” *CeJBI* (Oct, 2010): 29-35; it takes that article forward. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. The numbers given are different in the MT, LXX and the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP); we offer no comments on these differences except to say that the LXX and SP are early examples of the re-working of the system of numbers in the Hebrew. This is indicated by the three traditions agreeing on the numbers for Noah but generally not the rest, suggesting Noah’s numbers are a foundation for calculation. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Translations opt for ‘city’ but the term covers the range of human settlements. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. ANET, 265; K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 439f. This is not to say that the Genesis genealogy is based on or derived from the SKL; it is after all a genealogy and not a king list; see G. F. Hasel, “The Meaning of the Chronogenealogies of Genesis 5 and 11” *Origins* 7/2 (1980): 53-70, for a young earth creationist critique of the view that Genesis 5 is to be compared to the SKL. [Online.] And see T. C. Hartman, “Some Thoughts on the Sumerian King List and Genesis 5 and 11B” *JBL* 91 (1972): 25-32, for further critique. He concludes, “The possibility seems real, indeed, that the number of ten antediluvians is more closely tied to this West Semitic (Amorite) penchant for a ten-generation pattern than it is to inspiration arising from the Sumerian King List” (32). However, R. R. Wilson, “The Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research” *JBL* 94/2 (1975): 169-189, provides further research that questions Hartman. The arguments between scholars here do not countermand our general point that a restricted generational pattern and high ages are evidenced in the broad ANE context. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. The principal advocate lately has been D. W. Young, “On the Application of Numbers from Babylonian Mathematics to Biblical Life Spans and Epochs” *ZAW* 100 (1988): 331–361; “The Influence of Babylonian Algebra on Longevity among the Antediluvians” *ZAW* 102 (1990), 321–335; “The Sexagesimal Basis for the Total Years of the Antediluvian and Postdiluvian Epochs” *ZAW* 116 (2004): 502-527. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. J. L. Hayward and D. E. Casebolt, “The Genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11: A Statistical Study” *Origins* 9/2 (1982): 75-81. “The concept of statistical nonrandomness which we are postulating states only that the numbers appear biased, suggesting that the Genesis genealogical age data fail to provide a defensible basis upon which to construct a precise-pre-Abrahamic chronology of the world.” [Available Online] [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. See the earlier article for other patterns. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. There is no notice of many sons and daughters being born unto Noah. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. The Genesis 11 genealogy also ends with three sons and with the same formula, “And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.” However, Abram was born 60 years after Terah was 70 (Gen 12:4; Acts 7:4). Each genealogy is not about adding the age of the father to the son and so on, because both end with three sons. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. The purpose of the genealogy is social and serves the purposes of recording the promise made to the *generations* of Adam. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. There is no totalling of the years at the end of the genealogy. We do have totalling of years in some other texts such as Gen 15:13; Exod 12:40; and 1 Kgs 6:1. Moreover, **anthropological studies** would suggest that such a use for the genealogy would be unlikely; see Wilson, “The Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research”, 178f. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. It is significant that ‘all the days of’ is not duplicated in the Genesis 11 genealogy, and so this totalling in Genesis 5 is significant and demarcates the fulfilment of the curse, which was alleviated after the Flood (Gen 8:21). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. We should note that sexagesimal mathematics is rejected by some scholars; see R. K. Harrison, “From Adam to Noah: A Reconsideration of the Antediluvian Patriarchs’ Ages” *JETS* 37/2 (1994): 161-168. This dispute does not affect the point that patterns of calculation can be seen in the numbers. Kitchen notes the evidence for taking this approach lies in the SKL and certain lines which have mathematical glosses, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 445, who also rejects a sexagesimal interpretation, (446). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Wilson, “The Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research”, 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Wikipedia provides an excellent summary of the textual evidence: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus\_and\_the\_woman\_taken\_in\_adultery

    A complete website (with mirror web sites) is devoted to the subject listing all the evidence and arguments: http://pa-john.freehostia.com/ [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. See 1 Sam 16.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Also alluding to punishment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram whose whole households fall into the earth in Num 16.15, 28, and 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. M. W. Meyer, and R. Smith, eds. *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Text 91 in Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 192; text 90 in Meyer and Smith, 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Text 91 in Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 192; see also texts 92 (195), 95 (199), 98, and 112 (225). [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. I acknowledge the help given by Dr. Cara Sheldrake, who had recently completed a Ph.D. on Tharshish & Phoenicia for Exeter University, UK [2013]. She has uploaded the ancient sources to www.academia.edu. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Available on Amazon. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. \* [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. http://www.ritmeyer.com/2014/10/17/jerusalem-the-temple-mount/ [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. http://www.ritmeyer.com/2014/10/18/jerusalem-the-temple-mount-a-carta-guide-book/ [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. http://www.ritmeyer.com/2014/11/03/temple-mount-guide-book/ [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. http://www.ritmeyer.com/2014/10/23/new-drawings-of-the-development-of-the-temple-mount/ [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. http://www.ritmeyer.com/2014/10/27/the-temple-mount-in-jerusalem-during-the-jebusite-period/ [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. http://www.ritmeyer.com/2014/10/31/the-temple-mount-in-the-time-of-solomon/ [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. http://www.ritmeyer.com/2014/11/13/the-temple-mount-during-the-time-of-king-hezekiah/ [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. http://www.ritmeyer.com/2014/11/15/the-temple-mount-during-the-times-of-ezra-and-nehemiah/ [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. http://www.ritmeyer.com/2014/11/18/the-temple-mount-during-the-hellenistic-and-hasmonean-periods-332-37-bc/ [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. http://www.ritmeyer.com/2014/11/24/the-temple-mount-in-the-herodian-period-37-bc-70-ad/ [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. http://www.ritmeyer.com/2014/12/02/the-temple-mount-during-the-roman-period/ [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. http://www.ritmeyer.com/2014/12/09/the-temple-mount-during-the-byzantine-period-324-638-ad/ [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. https://www.facebook.com/pages/Ritmeyer-Archaeological-Design/1492310034363128 [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. http://www.ritmeyer.com/2014/11/26/building-violations-and-illegal-construction-on-the-temple-mount-again/ [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. https://ferrelljenkins.wordpress.com/2014/12/04/ports-of-the-sea-of-galilee/ [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. http://www.ritmeyer.com/2014/12/04/harbours-of-the-sea-of-galilee/ [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. http://www.ritmeyer.com/2014/12/14/bethlehem-the-inn-and-the-manger/ [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. http://www.ritmeyer.com/2014/12/19/where-on-the-temple-mount-was-jesus-during-hanukkah/ [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. http://www.ritmeyer.com/2015/01/05/the-western-wall-was-not-destroyed-by-an-earthquake/ [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. http://www.haaretz.com/news/features/.premium-1.635160 [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. http://www.antiquities.org.il/Article\_eng.aspx?sec\_id=25&subj\_id=240&id=4086 [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. http://www.antiquities.org.il/article\_eng.aspx?sec\_id=25&subj\_id=240 [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. http://www.antiquities.org.il/about\_eng.aspx?Modul\_id=14 [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. http://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-wine-researchers-aim-to-revive-ancient-libations/ [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. http://www.israelandstuff.com/2nd-temple-period-mikveh-rediscovered-in-valley-of-elah-road-construction [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. http://www.antiquities.org.il/article\_eng.aspx?sec\_id=25&subj\_id=240&hist=1 [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. http://www.livescience.com/48262-ancient-cult-complex-discovered.html [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. http://phys.org/news/2014-10-archeologists-unearth-year-complex-israel.html [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/10/141023100430.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. http://popular-archaeology.com [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. http://popular-archaeology.com/issue/fall-09012014/article/archaeologist-excavate-earthquake-devastated-roman-city [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. http://blogs.flinders.edu.au/flinders-news/2014/12/09/underwater-excavation-reveals-lost-levantine-village/?utm\_source=rss&utm\_medium=rss&utm\_campaign=underwater-excavation-reveals-lost-levantine-village [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. http://www.msstate.edu/web/media/detail.php?id=6985 [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Culture/Remains-of-8000-year-old-olive-oil-found-in-Lower-Galilee-384966 [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. http://new.huji.ac.il/en/article/24542 [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. http://www.livescience.com/49240-glass-bracelet-menorah-decorations.html [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\_east/archaeologists-find-possible-site-of-jesuss-trial-in-jerusalem/2015/01/04/6d0ce098-7f9a-45de-9639-b7922855bfdb\_story.html [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. http://phys.org/news/2014-10-health-scans-ancient-mummies.html [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/7397/47/Legend-of-the-Sesostris-Canal-.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. http://news.sciencemag.org/health/2014/10/arthritis-rediagnosis-egyptian-pharaohs [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/7610/47/Slandering-Tutankhamun-.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. http://gulfnews.com/news/region/egypt/king-thutmosis-iii-s-temple-found-by-accident-1.1405869 [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. http://www.hf.uio.no/ifikk/english/research/news-and-events/news/2014/2000-year-old-youth-organization.html [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. http://www.hf.uio.no/ifikk/english/research/projects/childhood/ [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. http://phys.org/news/2014-11-archaeologist-human-ancient-egyptian-site.html [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. http://news.discovery.com/history/archaeology/ancient-egyptian-mummy-wearing-jewels-found-141121.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2014/nov/29/museum-exhibit-scarabs-dung-beetles-wall-egyptians/ [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/9/40/117458/Heritage/Ancient-Egypt/The-sarcophagus-of-god-Amuns-singer-unearthed.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. http://sciencenordic.com/danish-bronze-age-glass-beads-traced-egypt [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/controversial-afterlife-king-tut-180953400/?no-ist [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10584-014-1269-y/fulltext.html [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/the-jews-and-anatolia-2500-years-of-history.aspx?pageID=238&nID=75833&NewsCatID=438 [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/new-details-emerge-in-massive-ancient-underground-city-discovery-in-cappadocia.aspx?pageID=238&nID=76257&NewsCatID=375 [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. http://www.livescience.com/48532-big-circles-archaeological-mystery.html [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. http://www.timesofoman.com/News/42136/Article-Mega-wave-hit-Omans-coast-4-500-years-ago [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ancient-cultures/daily-life-and-practice/first-person-life-was-not-so-bad-for-smelters/ [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. http://members.bib-arch.org/publication.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=40&Issue=2&ArticleID=4 [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/did-jesus-exist/ [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/archaeology-today/biblical-archaeology-topics/the-archaeological-quest-for-the-earliest-christians/ [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. http://members.bib-arch.org/publication.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=38&Issue=2&ArticleID=2 [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ancient-cultures/ancient-israel/the-philistines-to-the-north/ [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/news/top-10-biblical-archaeology-discoveries-in-2014/ [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. An earlier reason for the change would be the spread of higher education since the 1960s to a far greater percentage of the population. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. The only recent commentary is G. V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66* (New American Commentary Series; Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009), which entertains far more eighth century readings of the oracles. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. P. Wyns, “The Cyrus Problem” *CeJBI* 1/4 (2007): 43-57 (45-46). [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. J. W. Thirtle, *Old Testament Problems*, (London: Henry Frowde, 1907), 254-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. A. Perry, *Isaiah 40-48* (First Edition; East Boldon: Willow Publications, 2010), 245-284. [ED AP: The book is soon to be in its third edition.] [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. A marginal note or footnote incorporated into the body of the text. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Possibly identified on the *Nassouhi Prism*. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Temple desecration occurred under Antiochus Epiphanes, which is why it became fashionable in the nineteenth century to assign some of these Psalms to the Maccabean period. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. H. A. Whittaker & G. Booker, *Hezekiah the Great/Songs of Degrees* (Birmingham: CMPA, 1985), 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. G. Booker, *Psalms Studies* (2 vols; Austin, Texas: Published by the Author), 2:433. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. W. R. Gallagher, *Sennacherib’s Campaign to Judah: New Studies* (Brill: Netherlands, 1999), 132-139. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Ibid, p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Divergences can possibly be attributed to royal annalists and temple annalists. The texts suggests friction between a "pro-Assyrian" party (i.e., Shebna, Ahaz? *et al*) and a "Yawhist" party (the Priests and Hezekiah). For source critical reconstruction see, P. S. Evans, *The Invasion of Sennacherib in the Book of Kings: A Source-Critical and Rhetorical Study of 2 Kings 18-19* (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 125; Leiden and Boston: E. J. Brill, 2009), 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. # See; P. Dubovský, *Hezekiah and the Assyrian Spies: Reconstruction of the Neo-Assyrian Intelligence Services and Its Significance for 2 Kings 18-19* (Gregorian Biblical Book Shop, 2006).

     [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. N. Avigad, “Epitaph of a Royal Steward from a Siloam Village” *IEJ* 3 (1953): 137-152 (151-152). [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. J. Day comments, “The old view that Ps. 74.8’s *mô`ádê-´ël*, ‘meeting places of God’, must refer to synagogues, and so presuppose a later date, has been rightly rejected by Gelston (1984)” in “How Many Pre-Exilic Psalms Are There?”, *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel: Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, (ed., John Day, London: Continuum, 2004), 225-250 (240). [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Excerpts are from the translation of the text on the *Cyrus Cylinder* by I. Finkel (Assistant Keeper, Department of the Middle East, the British Museum) cited August 2010 online@

     http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/article\_index/c/cyrus\_cylinder\_-\_translation.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Excerpts are from the translation of the text on the Cyrus Cylinder by I. Finkel (Assistant Keeper, Department of the Middle East, the British Museum) cited August 2010 online@

     http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/article\_index/c/cyrus\_cylinder\_-\_translation.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. J. J*.* Davis, The Perfect Shepherd; Studies in the 23 Psalm,(Baker House; Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1979),51 [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Thirtle, *Old Testament Problems*, 247-248. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. J. Osing, *Die Nominalbildung Des Agyptischen*, (2 vols; Mainz: Philipp von Zabern Verlag, 1976). [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Prayer of Nebre, Stela 23.077 of the Berlin Museum, XIXth Dynasty; the Pharaohs of the 19th dynasty ruled for approximately one hundred and ten years: from BC 1292 to 1187. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. M. Boyce and F. Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism* (3 vols; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975-82), 1:190-191; for further reading and bibliography see the Encyclopædia Iranica at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/zoroastrianism-i-historical-review [cited June 2014]. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. See P. Wyns, “**The Unknown God”, *CeJBI*, (Vol., 5 No.2, 2011) and** P. Wyns, “El Shadday”, *CeJBI*, (**Vol., 4 No. 2, 2010).**  [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Ibid, 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. For inter-textual links between Psalm 107/Isaiah *and* Psalm 107/Job, see Booker, Psalm *Studies*. Perry presents a parabolic reading of Job which he regards as a theatre dramatization of Hezekiah’s situation in A. Perry, *Job* (Sunderland: Willow Publications, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. H. A. Whittaker, *Isaiah* (Cannock: Biblia, 1988), 249, notes the similarity between the Hebrew phrasing in Isa 22:20; wüqäräº´tî lü`abDî lü´elyäqîm Ben-Hilqiyyäºhû (call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah) and 1 Kgs 1:32 (qir´û-lî lücädôq), where the prepositional prefix *l’* is also repeated; “call **to me** Zadok the priest.” Whittaker proposes that Isa 22:20 should be understood in the same manner: “call my servant **to** Eliakim the son of Hilkiah.” [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. This is royal language not priestly terminology, moreover the phrases in Isa 22:21-23 are inter-textually linked with the Messianic Immanuel (God with us) prophecy in Isa 7:14 and 9:6-7 “government”/ “father” etc. regarding the *throne of David.* Hezekiah acts as a proto-type of the Messiah and in Isaiah 22 he is clad in priestly garments and functions as a priest-king (Melchizedek) like his ancestor David. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. The rock is a reference to Peter’s Messianic statement (You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.) and not to Peter himself (a small stone or pebble) and is therefore not a pronouncement on Apostolic succession. Shebna built a “habitation for himself in a rock” (Isa 22:16) but unlike Peter, Shebna refused to accept Yahweh’s anointed as his rock. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. “And many brought gifts unto the Lord to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth” (2 Chron 32:23). [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. “The things hidden *are* to Jehovah our God, and the things revealed *are* to us and to our sons -- to the age, to do all the words of this law” (Deut.29:29, YLT). [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Thirtle, *Old Testament Problems,* 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Ibid, 311 (Appendix). [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. # R. Oosting, *The Role of Zion/Jerusalem in Isaiah 40-55: A Corpus-Linguistic Approach* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2012), 82-83.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Ibid, 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. E. Gruen states, “The very fact that the decree (albeit in much altered form) had to be read out once more, thirty years after its issue, only reminded the audience how valueless it had been”. E. Gruen, “Persia through the Jewish Looking-Glass” in *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers* (eds. T. Rajak, S. Pearce, J. Aitken and J. Dines; University of California Press, 2007), 53-75 (61). [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. J. Goldingay and D. Payne find the substitution of Cyrus with Darius in Isa 45:1 as “inherently implausible…It is easier to believe that a prophet who said Cyrus would mean Cyrus and that a prophet who meant Darius would say Darius.” J. Goldingay, D. Payne, *Isaiah 40-55* *Volume I: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Gruen, “Persia through the Jewish Looking-Glass”, 60-61. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. C. C. Torrey, *The Second Isaiah* (New York: Scribner's, 1928), 3–52; idem, “Isaiah 41” *HTR* 44 (1951): 121–36; see also J. D. Smart, *History and Theology in Second Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 35, 40–66* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 115–34; and Jürgen van Oorschot, *Von Babel zum Zion* (New York: de Gruyter, 1993), 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. For example, C. R. North, *The Second Isaiah* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), 150; R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40–66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 104; J. D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66* (WBC 25; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987), 156; and B. S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 353–54. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. For example, C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 10, 159; Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; 2 vols.; London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 2:238–62; J. L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), lxvi; and J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40–66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 197. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 160–61; J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2002), 248–49. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. ## For example, K. Baltzer in *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40–55* (trans. Margaret Kohl; ed. Peter Machinist; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), Cyrus becomes the new David albeit in a limited capacity; and L. S. Fried suggests that the Deutero-Isaianic writer wrote as a contemporary of Cyrus, and that he wrote to legitimize him as the Davidic monarch, heir to the Davidic throne in “Cyrus the Messiah? The Historical Background to Isaiah 45:1” *HTR* 95/4 (2002): 373-393.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Gruen, “Persia through the Jewish Looking-Glass”, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Thirtle, *Old Testament Problems*, 247. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. J. Curtis, *Cyrus the Great,* *100 Great Lives of Antiquity*, (ed., John Canning, Guild Publishing London, 1985), 97-98. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Thirtle, *Old Testament Problems*, 249. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Gruen, “Persia through the Jewish Looking-Glass”, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Thirtle, *Old Testament Problems* 256-257. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. Sir Charles Webster, “The Art and Practice of Diplomacy” *The Listener,* 28 February 1952. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Thirtle, *Old Testament Problems*, 255-256. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. A. Perry, “An Ironic Cyrus” *CeJBI* 1/4 (2007): 36-43 (36). [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. However, if Cyrus were the leading prince in the envoy’s party, this would explain his choice. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. This argument is specifically opposed by J. N. Oswalt in “Isaiah 40-66: Addressed to People during and after the Exile” in his book of essays, *The Holy One of Israel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 75-87. The essay is significant because it opposes the position of G. V. Smith’s NAB commentary on Isaiah 40-66 on this matter and confirms that Smith’s commentary is breaking the mould of conservative scholarship on Isaiah 40-66. Oswalt’s defence of the traditional conservative view that Isaiah of Jerusalem entered into imaginary dialogue with the exilic community is weak. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. N. K. Gottwald, *The Politics of Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 7. See the discussion in D. J. Reimer, “Isaiah and Politics” in *Interpreting Isaiah* (eds. D. G. Firth and H. G. M. Williamson; Leicester: Apollos, 2009), 84-103. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55* (AB 19A; New York: Doubleday, 2002), 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. M. De Jong, M. de Jong, Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets: A Comparative Study of the Earliest Stages of the Isaiah Tradition (VTSup 117; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2007), 350. [Available Online as a PhD thesis.] [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. L. Ritmeyer, *The Quest: Revealing the Temple Mount in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2007), 189-194. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. In Ezek 40-41 a 500 cubit square temple is described. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. This translation and subsequent ones are taken from W. Whiston, *The Works of Josephus* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987) [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. How much damage to the temple was sustained during the siege, or earlier during the rebellion of 705, is another factor. The temple was stripped of silver vessels, and gold (1 Kgs 18:15-17), but this ‘booty’ was not taken by mercenaries, but by Levites responsible for the temple vessels (Isa 52:11-12). [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. We will not repeat here the information in A. Perry “Naming Cyrus” *CeJBI* 2/2 (2008): 3-8; we are adding considerations to the argument of that article. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. E. M. Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. J. W. Thirtle, *Old Testament Problems* (London: Henry Frowde, 1907), 252-253; see the discussion of Thirtle in R. E. Manahan, “The Cyrus Notations of Deutero-Isaiah” *Grace Journal* 11 (1970): 22-33 (27). [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Thirtle, *Old Testament Problems*, 254-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. For an overview see J. Barr, *The Variable Spellings of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 161-167. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. A. Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period* (London: Routledge, 2010), 48; compare the older views in Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 72, none of which are about building work. The spellings of the name in Old Persian, Elamite and Akkadian are very close. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. From the point of view of the liberal critic, Thirtle’s proposal would be implausible because it is not part of a systematic editorial layer in the text. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. E. Gruen, “Persia through the Jewish Looking-Glass” in *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers* (eds. T. Rajak, S. Pearce, J. Aitken and J. Dines; Berkley: University of California Press, 2007), 53-75, considers the favour shown to the Jews by Cyrus as unlikely; contrawise, we might say that the primary evidence of favour is explicable on the assumption that the Achaemenid dynasty had a tradition of respect for Jewish prophecy. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. The Greek name is ‘Teispes’ (from Herodotus) and the old Persian name is ‘Shishpish’ (from the Cyrus Cylinder) for this ruler of Anshan. It is significant that Cyrus II lists his dynasty from Teispes in the *Cyrus Cylinder*—ANET, 316. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. On this see Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 71, and Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire*, 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. For the text see, Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire*, 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. R. N. Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran* (Munich: C. H. Beckische, 1984), 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Yamauchi, Persia and the Bible, 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. A substantial Babylonian population was resettled after 722 in the north by Sargon. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. The relationship between the pronouncements of Ezra 1 and 6 is discussed in E. J. Bickerman, “The Edict of Cyrus in Ezra 1” *JBL* 65 (1946): 249-275. His thesis is that Ezra 1 has the royal proclamation and Ezra 6 has a memorandum to the royal treasurer (253). [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. ANET, 316; Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 91, notes that he repaired the Eanna temple at Uruk and the Enunmah temple at Ur, as well as the temples in Babylon. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. The Piel verb is commonly taken in the sense of a ‘sending away/forth’ not a ‘release’. The Arm of the Lord would send captives back to Jerusalem. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. The resurrection fulfilment is future but ‘opening’ the earth is also an agricultural promise (Isa 28:24). [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. J. K. Kuan, *Neo-Assyrian Historical Inscriptions and Syria-Palestine* (Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary, 1995), 137. Another example, with different gods, is that of Nabonidus: “He will lead Sin, Ningal, Nusku and Sadarnunna in solemn procession into the temple of Ehulhul”, ANET 561; or again, The *Cyrus Cylinder*—ANET 315. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Cited from R. J. van der Spek, “Cyrus the Great, Exiles and Foreign Gods: A Comparison of Assyrian and Persian Policies on Subject Nations” in *Extraction and Control* (eds. M. Kozuh, W. F. M. Henkelman & C. E. Jones; Chicago: University of Chicago, 2014), 233-264 (253). [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. J. W. Behr, *The Writings of Deutero-Isaiah and the Neo-Babylonian Royal Inscriptions: A Comparison of Language and Style* (Pretoria: Pretoria University Press, 1937), 24, notes that the practice of overlaying doors with bronze came into use during Sennacherib’s reign. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. R. Oosting,*The Role of Zion/Jerusalem in Isaiah 40-55: A Corpus-Linguistic Approach* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2012), 82-83. [Available online as a doctoral thesis.] [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Ibid, 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Ibid. 82-83. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. Oosting notes that it would be “exceptional” (ibid. 84) but still opts for this syntactical choice. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. See L. S. Tiemeyer, “Review of Oosting, Reinoud, The Role of Zion/Jerusalem in Isaiah 40-55: A Corpus-Linguistic Approach” *JHS* 13 (2013), who disagrees with Oosting and suspects that his analysis is “influenced by his desire to see Jerusalem as associated primarily with the rebuilding of the city”. [Available online.] [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. See T. E. Gaston, *Historical Issues in the Book of Daniel* (Oxford: TaanathShiloh, 2009), chap. 8, for a survey and discussion of opinion. Gaston’s conclusion is that “The two most likely candidates are Ugbaru and Cyrus.” (p. 131). [↑](#footnote-ref-217)