**Christadelphian EJournal of Biblical Interpretation**

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**Editorial Policies**: The **Christadelphian EJournal of Biblical Interpretation** seeks to fulfil the following objectives: offer analytical and expositional articles on biblical texts; engage with academic biblical studies that originate in other Christian confessions; defend the biblical principles summarised in the common Christadelphian statement of faith; and subject the published articles to retrospective peer review and amendment.

**Submission of Articles**: Authors should submit articles to the editors. Presentation should follow *Society of Biblical Literature* guidelines (www.sbl.org).

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**Editorial**

This editorial brings to a close the third year of the EJournal. The three years have seen the project expand on several fronts. There are four editors instead of two; the website has expanded with new material, and more is planned for the forthcoming year particularly in the area of “wrested scripture” and the Trinity. Subscriptions continue to grow by word of mouth, and a blog has been started. We have produced another “Annual” of the year’s issues (2009) which is now available from [www.lulu.com/willowpublications](http://www.lulu.com/willowpublications). Indices (Modern Author, Ancient Text, Scripture Text, and Subject) for the three annuals so far produced (2007, 2008 and 2009) has been included in the annual for 2009; it is hoped that this will make the annuals more accessible. In addition, we have added the indices for 2007 and 2008 to the relevant annuals and refreshed the printing file on LULU. The prices on LULU are as follows,

**Annual 2007** (247 pages, ISSN 1755-9227, ISBN 978-0-9526-1922-2) Price £5.48 plus postage and packing.

**Annual 2008** (340 pages, ISSN 1755-9227, ISBN 978-0-9526-1928-4) Price £7.06 plus postage and packing.

**Annual 2009** (294 pages, ISSN 1755-9227, ISBN 978-0-9563-8410-2) Price £8.16 plus postage and packing.

Readers may notice that the Annual 2009 price is higher than the Annual 2008 price for fewer pages. The reason lies in the way that LULU now handles ISBN assigned books. Postage through LULU however has recently fallen in cost.

Some have asked us why we collate and produce a printed “Annual”. There are two answers: first, some people like to read books rather than PDFs; but secondly, if Christ remains away, this project will come to an end, the website will close and the PDFs will be deleted from their homes on hard disks. Books have the longer lifespan and will survive the end of the project. Hence, we collate and produce an “Annual”.

If the Lord wills, we hope to include articles next year on topics such as the role of women in the church, the prophetic framework for the bestowal of the Spirit, the divine name, intertextuality in the scriptures, and the Trinity. Also, we intend to reduce the academic content in favour of an increase in pure exegesis; roughly speaking our aim next year is for a 50-50 split in the two types of content. As always, as we commit to another year of this project, we appeal for articles in the exegetical or academic style.

# The Parting of the Ways

**Tom Gaston**

## **Introduction**

It is well known that Christianity has its roots in Judaism; our question is why Judaism and Christianity parted ways. Was Christianity always destined to be a new and distinct religion? Was it doctrine or circumstances that drove a wedge between Christianity and Judaism?[[1]](#footnote-1)

In this article we will examine the role of early Christianity as a sect amongst many and how that situation changed. We will see how on the one hand Christianity developed doctrinally in ways that drew it apart from other Jewish sects. We will also see how Judaism was reformed and reborn at the end of the first century as Rabbinical Judaism.

## **Early Christianity: A Sect Amongst Many**

It is somewhat of a misnomer to speak about Judaism in the early first century as though it were a single religion. In fact, at the time of Jesus there were various sects each with distinctive beliefs. The New Testament refers to two of these sects, namely the Pharisees and the Sadducees. From Josephus were learn of a third group called the Essenes, often identified with the Qumran covenanters. In addition to these sects, we can also point to Hellenized Jews like Philo of Alexandria who is probably indicative of a wider tendency amongst Diaspora Jews to adopt ideas and practices of their Gentile neighbours. These various sects held different, and sometimes contradictory, beliefs. Famously, Paul uses the difference between the Sadducees and the Pharisees of the over the question of the resurrection to stir up contention in the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:7-9). These groups also differed regarding providence, the Sadducees believing God to be generally disinterested with the world, whilst the Pharisees regarded God as intimately concerned with the dealings of mankind.[[2]](#footnote-2) The Essenes place great emphasis on the role of Fate in preference to free-will.[[3]](#footnote-3) Nevertheless these heterogeneous groups each still retained their identity as being fundamentally Jewish as loosely defined by their belief in one God, their acceptance of the Law and their association (to lesser or greater degree) with the Temple and its rituals.

The earliest groups of the followers of Christ fit within the mould as one more Jewish sect. Jesus himself, of course, was a Jew, circumcised the eighth day (Luke 2:21) and fully engaged with the rituals of the Temple (e.g. Luke 2:41-42, 22:7-13). Though Jesus taught a distinctive doctrine, it is to be questioned whether he intended to found a new religion so much as redirect the energies of the old. After Jesus’ ascension the early apostles continued to behave overtly Jewish, their preaching being centred around the Temple (Acts 3:1f, 5:12, 42, etc.). Although the early Christians were persecuted by the Jewish authorities, it was the synagogues that were the early Christian mission field and their congregations that we their converts. As one writer puts it “there is evidence to suggest the prior presence of Jews in almost every location where we can trace the spread of Christianity in its first two centuries”.[[4]](#footnote-4) It is likely that the early Christian ecclesias were a development from the synagogue system; the world ‘ecclesia’ was sometimes used synonymously for ‘synagogue’. The excavations of early Christian and Jewish buildings in Dura Europos in Syria certainly bear out this comparison.

The Roman authorities did not make any distinction between Jews and Christians. Claudius dispelled Jews and Christians from Rome without discrimination (Acts 18:2). In his account of the expulsion, the Roman historian Suetonius presents the rather muddled idea that the Jews were expelled because of “disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus” (*Life of Claudius* xxv.4). When Paul is brought before the Roman governor Gallio by the Jews of Corinth, Gallio dismisses the case as a purely Jewish matter making no distinction between Jews and Christians (Acts 18:14-16). Regarding the persecution of Christians by Domitian, Dio Cassius records their offence as “Jewish customs” making no mention of the name “Christian” (*Epitome* LXVII.14). Not only did the Roman authorities fail to distinguish early Christians from Jews, it seems that many Jews also regarded the early Christians as fellows. When Paul arrives in Rome he is greeted as a brother (Acts 28:17, 21) and is given a patient hearing (Acts 28:22-29).

## **Early Tensions**

Acts and the letters of Paul attest to two tensions that existed in the early ecclesias. Firstly there was the issue of whether Gentiles could be baptised, and second there was the issue of whether Christians should keep the Law. The first of the issues, though controversial, would not have threatened the association between Christians and Jews. After all Jews preached and Jews made proselytes. The issue was controversial amongst early Christians because the issue was controversial amongst first century Jews, some actively seeking converts, others denying any association with the Gentiles. It was the second issue that marked a significant shift away from Judaism. As we noted above, the various different sects of Judaism were united by their mutual acceptance of the Law. Paul’s teaching that neither Jew nor Gentile in Christ need keep the Law would have driven a wedge between Christians and Jews both doctrinally and socially.

T. Callan seeks to explain the divergence of Christianity from Judaism on this issue of whether or not Christians should keep the Law:

It is conceivable that the Christians might have remained a sect of Judaism if they had not admitted Gentiles to their company without requiring that they keep the Law.[[5]](#footnote-5)

However, though this was what undoubtedly distinguished Christians from Jews in the minds of Christians, it is not clear how successfully this distinction was made in the minds of Jews. The letters of Paul are full of his own efforts to dissuade Christians from keeping the Law and to guard against the influence of those who said Christians must keep the Law. The close kinship between Christians and wider Judaism explains how it was that these Judaizers were able to gain a foothold within the ecclesias. As long there was this group of Jews who wanted to accept Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and yet still keep the Law, there would remain a connection between Christianity and Judaism.

## **The Breaking Point**

The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 could have marked the end of Judaism. The Temple, that provided a central focal point for Jewish consciousness, had been destroyed. The Sanhedrin was dissolved, the Temple was in ruins, the sacrifices and rituals were at an end.[[6]](#footnote-6) The Jewish religion might have disappeared from history. In actuality many Jewish sects did disappear. The Sadducees, who were intimately associated with the Temple, lost all importance. However, the Pharisees, who were associated with the synagogues, were in a better position to survive the loss of the Temple. Though Jerusalem lay in ruins, other Jewish cities and their synagogues survived. At Jamnia (Jabneh), Rabbi Johanan ben Sakkai gathered around him a community of rabbis that gained increasing recognition from the wider Jewish community. This community not only provided a new centre for Jewish religion but also seems to have acted as a court of law.[[7]](#footnote-7) This Pharisaic community was given recognition by the Romans.[[8]](#footnote-8) This recognition meant that the Jamnia community was able to operate with a degree of authority unavailable to any other Jewish community and thus this community became architects of a new Jewish orthodoxy: Rabbinic Judaism.

In an effort to conform adherents to fixed doctrinal outlook, the Jamnia attempted to exclude “deviant Jews”, including the Christians.[[9]](#footnote-9) The antagonism of the Rabbis towards Christians is illustrated in the eighteenth blessing of the *‘Amidah*, which was composed at this time. This so-called ‘blessing of the heretics’ (*birkat ha-minim*) included the line “may the Nazarenes and the heretics perish quickly; may they be erased from the Book of Life” (*berikot* 28b-29a). Justin Martyr also mentions this cursing of Christians in the synagogues (*Dialogue with Trypho* 16). This new increased antagonism towards Christianity from the Jews is probably reflected[[10]](#footnote-10) in Revelation in the phrase “synagogue of Satan” (Rev 2:9, 3:9).

It was almost certainly by the efforts of the Rabbis at Jamnia that the Roman authorities began to distinguish between Jews and Christians. As we have seen, initially the Roman authorities made little distinction between Jews and Christians, and thus the Roman persecutions fell indiscriminately upon both. For instance, Eusebius, the Christian historians, records that the Christians were persecuted under Domitian (HE 3.17-20), whilst the Talmud records that the Jews were also persecuted under the Domitian (*Deut. Rabbah* 2.24).[[11]](#footnote-11) The Christians had little recourse, but the Patriarch of Jamnia, Gamaliel II, had influence in Rome. The Talmud records that in an effort to escape these persecutions Gamaliel travelled to Rome and endeavoured to convince the emperor Domitian that Jews were not Christians, and thus not worthy of persecution.[[12]](#footnote-12) Though we do not have the record of this discussions, we know the eventual outcome as the Jews, for a time at least, were granted tolerance whilst the Christians would continue to be persecuted by the Romans well into the fourth century.

## **Conclusion**

Early Christianity arose and developed within Judaism. Though some of the Christian ideas were novel, they did not exclude the early Christians from their place in the wider Jewish community. However, several developments forced the Christians to part ways from Judaism. Firstly, the admission of Gentiles and freedom from the Law of Moses set Christianity apart from the doctrinal scope of Judaism. Secondly, the reformation of Judaism after the destruction of Jerusalem led to a new form of Judaism emerging that was antagonist towards Christians, condemning them as heretics.

**Fallen Angels**

**Paul Wyns**

**Introduction**

The notion of “fallen angels” is one that is mentioned in Jude and in 2 Peter. For the moment we will leave the question of the relationship between Jude and 2 Peter to one side and we will treat both epistles as essentially identical; addressing the same audience and the same problems.

In this paper, we will sketch the background to the letters and offer an interpretation of the fallen angels of Jude v. 6 and 2 Pet 2:4.

**Background**

The hypothesis presented here is that both epistles were necessitated because certain elements in the ecclesias were deliberately twisting the teachings of the apostle Paul (2 Pet 3:15, 16). This suggestion is not new and it has long been recognised that scepticism about the *return of Christ* (2 Pet 3:4) and *moral libertinism* (2 Pet 1:4; 2:10, 19; Jude vv. 4, 8) form the background problems that necessitated the corrective letters of Jude and 2 Peter.

However, it is possible to be more specific and identify the exact Pauline writings that his opponents were perverting. If we pay careful attention to the counter arguments presented by Jude/2 Peter we can reconstruct the heresy and identify the Pauline sources.

1) The false teachers asserted that they were no longer answerable to the Law, for Jesus had, “spoilt” (distorting Col 2:15) the angels who administered the Law. Christians (like their Lord) have been elevated in status “above the angels” (who administered the Law) and now have similar powers to the angels— therefore the Law is no longer effective or necessary; Christians are not bound by any code of legal morality.

2) They affirmed that they were even now “living and reigning” with Christ (distorting 1 Cor 4:8)—they had the powers of the “new age” and the prophetic visions to prove it (“filthy dreamers”—Jude 8; cf. Deut 13:1-5). The saints had already been judged and were already reigning—the Holy Spirit was proof of the presence of the eschatological age.

3) Jesus had already condemned and judged sin in the flesh—negating the need for a final judgment or for the literal return of Christ (distorting Rom 8:3). Paul was wrong about an imminent *return*—the “fathers” had already died (correcting 1 Thess 4:15).

4) Believers were now not obligated to exercise moral restraint of any kind. In fact their disregard for any normative behaviour demonstrated their superiority and allowed the grace of God to work unimpeded by human presumption or weakness (distorting Rom 6:1). Christians live under grace not under Law – their sins will be forgiven; therefore they do not have to fear judgement or condemnation.

In (1)-(4) above, we have “mirror-read” Jude and 2 Peter in order to get a background: what Peter and Jude criticize constitutes the teaching of the heretics. We can go further and recognise the influence of Enochic Judaism.

**Enochic Judaism**[[13]](#footnote-13)

The main charge made in Jude is that “certain men” were “turning the grace of God into lasciviousness” (v. 4; 2 Pet 2:10). In addressing this situation, Jude states “I will therefore put you in remembrance” (v. 5) and he cites several examples of the judgment of sin. One of these examples relates to fallen angels and it is the use of this example which allows the hypothesis that the false teachers were influenced by Enochic Judaism. In using this example, it is proposed that Jude is turning one of their preferred writings against them in an *ad hominem* way.

G. Boccaccini offers an introductory description of Enochic Judaism:

…it seems that we may now with some confidence talk of Enochic Judaism as a nonconformist anti-Zadokite, priestly movement of dissent, active in Israel since the late Persian of early Hellenistic period (fourth century B.C.E.). At the center of Enochic Judaism was neither the temple nor the torah but a unique concept of the origin of evil that made the “fallen angels” (the “sons of God” also recorded in Gen 6:1-4) ultimately responsible for the spread of evil and impurity on earth.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Such a doctrine would lend itself to the promotion of lasciviousness insofar as it was claimed that moral impurity was not the fault of human beings. Such a teaching would fit with a distorted use of Paul in promoting grace and forgiveness.

The use of the example of fallen angels in Jude and 2 Peter allows the suggestion that such a doctrine is one of the roots of the problems that the two letters address. Even a cursory examination of them (without any knowledge of Enochic Judaism) would suggest that we are dealing with some sort of doctrine concerning angels which might be being used to justify aberrant behaviour.

It has been observed by A. D. Norris that we can align Jude and 1 Enoch.[[15]](#footnote-15) He avers that “Jude, 2 Peter and ‘Enoch’ [are] undeniably in some way interconnected”.[[16]](#footnote-16) He includes a table of connections of which our revised presentation is as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Jude** | **Enoch** |
| And the angels which kept not their first estate (v. 6) | …the watchers of heaven who have abandoned the high heaven 1 Enoch 12:4 |
| …he hath reserved in everlasting chains… (v. 6) | They will put you in bonds…unto all eternity 1 Enoch 13:2; 14:5 |
| …under darkness… (v. 6) | …cast him [the leader] into darkness…cover him with darkness… 1 Enoch 10:4-6 |
| …the judgment of the great day… (v. 6) | …until the great day… 4QEnb IV, 11[[17]](#footnote-17) |
| giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh (v. 7)  | …and defiled themselves with women 1 Enoch 12:4 |
| speak evil of dignities (v. 8) | Enoch was told to reprimand the sons of heaven (1 En.13:8)  |
| filthy dreamers (v. 8) | Enoch was a Dreamer (1 En.13:8) |
| Michael the archangel (v. 9) | Michael accused the Watchers (1 En.9:1-10) |

We can offer this argument for the view that Jude’s opponents were using 1 Enoch as “scripture”. If we combine the warnings in Jude with those of 2 Peter, the mention of the angels that sinned (2 Pet 2:4) is preceded with a reference to those “exploit you with stories that they have made up” (2 Pet 2:3, NIV). This is a perfect lead in to an argument that uses the “story” of an opponent.

His opponents had “wrested” Pauline theology (2 Pet 3:16) and taught falsehood based on the book of Enoch, but (says Jude) “we did not preach cunningly devised fables” [myths] (2 Pet 1:16) or “follow cleverly invented stories” (2 Pet 1:16, NIV). Indeed they had “a more sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet 1:19) than “Enochic fables”. Enoch was supposedly a witness of angelic glory and hearer of God’s words on “the mountain the point of whose summit reached to heaven” (*1 Enoch* 17:1). On the other hand Peter was a living witness of the glory of Christ on the transfiguration mount (2 Pet 1:16-19— “No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 1:20, 21). Prophecy was inspired, not dreamed up by “filthy dreamers”, it was the “more sure word of Prophecy” (2 Pet 1:19).

Accordingly, Norris concludes,

This provides a basis for a reconstruction of the situation in Jude, with regard to the relationship with the Book of Enoch also. Some aggressive and heretical party, we might suppose, had invaded the peace of the congregation with a complex package of false teachings. They taught that freedom in Christ might be used as an excuse for lustful behaviour [.4]; they apparently supported this by exploiting the story in 1 Enoch about the ‘angel marriages’ [.6], and they needed reminding that, even in the teaching of ‘Enoch’ it was unchastity which had brought about the undoing of the angels.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Norris does not hypothesize about how the false teachers “exploited” *1 Enoch*, and we have suggested the hypothesis that the work offered an explanation of the origin of moral impurity in human behaviour. However, there is a problem with this alignment of Jude/2 Peter and *1 Enoch*. This is simply the observation that the promotion of lasciviousness does not sit comfortably with a myth that roundly condemns the behaviour of the fallen angels. This weakness can be seen in Norris’ interpretation of Jude/2 Peter and the words “they needed reminding”—we should give false teachers more credit for understanding such preferred scriptures.

**The Glories**

A better way of understanding the relationship of Jude to Enoch is to consider v. 8,

Yet in like manner these men in their dreamings defile the flesh, reject authority, and revile the glorious ones. v. 8 (RSV), cf. 2 Pet 2:10

This tells us that there was a group within the ecclesia which believed themselves superior to the angels; they insulted and vilified the “glories”. The term “glories” is used for angels in the DSS (1 QH 10:8) and in other writings of the era (2 Enoch 22:7; *Ascension of Isaiah* 9:32; *T. Judah* 25:2).[[19]](#footnote-19) It is also encountered in first-century Philonic literature:

Moses said….I ask you [God] that I may behold the glories that are around you. [*On the Special Laws* 1.45]

The term *might* be grounded in the LXX of Exodus,

Who is like unto thee among the gods O Lord? Who is like unto thee, glorified in holiness, marvellous in glories, doing wonders? Exod 15:11 (LXX)

From our discussion, it is important to note that there is a parallelism to note in Jude v. 8 between “authority” and “glorious ones*”*. The best hypothesis to explain this juxtaposition is that the anti-Law group encouraged and justified fornication with pagan temple prostitutes, and as a corollary reviled those angels that were the guardians of the Law. The Law had been mediated by angels and its observance was supervised by angels (*Jub*. 1:27-29; *Ant*. 15.136; Acts 7:38, 53; Heb 2:2).[[20]](#footnote-20)

The letter of Jude contains **an addressee and a third party**. The addressees are being taught about the punishment of fornication in v. 6; in v. 8 they are being told about the third party - the “these men”. Such men rejected the authority of the Law and reviled the angels. This third party appears throughout Jude:

**Certain men** crept in unawares (v. 4) giving **themselves** over to fornication (v. 7) **these** filthy dreamers (v. 9) **these** speak evil (v. 10)**these** are spots in your feasts (v. 12) And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied **of these** (v. 14)**these** are murmurers (v. 16)**these** be they who separate themselves (v. 19).

Norris is therefore wrong to suggest that such a party “needed reminding” of anything because they are not the *addressee* of the letter.

We can surmise that the group against which Jude delivers his warning in v. 8 believed themselves superior to the angels of the old order, considering themselves at least their equal (Lk 20:36) and a new order. In v. 6, Jude is making a comparison using *1 Enoch*, for the benefit of the faithful, seeing such men as like the Watchers who rebelled from the assembly in heaven and sought women on earth.

**Enoch and Scripture**

Jude describes the antinomians as “dreamers” (“filthy dreamers”, KJV). This language indicates claims to prophetic revelation and it alludes to those who had false dreams (Jer 23:32; Zech 10:2). There is also a likely allusion to *1 Enoch* 99:8 which describes the sinners in the last days having visions and dreams.[[21]](#footnote-21) Certainly, the mention of “defiling the flesh” alludes to the sin of the Watchers which Jude has already referenced in v. 6, as it is a motif in *1 Enoch* (*1 Enoch* 7:1; 9:8; 10:11; 12:4; 15:3, 4)

Along with v. 6, v. 8 raises the question of the status of *1 Enoch* for the diaspora Christians to which Jude addresses his letter. There are two possibilities to sketch.

1) We might imagine how *1 Enoch* was being selectively quoted as authoritative scripture by the antinomians to easily confuse novice gentile converts. The antinomians’ strategy was similar to that of Balaam (Jude v. 11) in the Old Testament, encouraging the people of God to commit fornication. This was a deliberate exercise in subversion; accordingly, Jude uses *1 Enoch* to counter their arguments

2) We might also surmise that the faithful believed the account in *1 Enoch* of the origins of misfortune (the story of the Watchers), and that Jude is using that account in *ad hominem* way to make his points, mixing both the Old Testament and *1 Enoch*.

We have argued against (1), even though there is certainly support in *1 Enoch* for the antinomians if they were looking to validate their visions and dreams. *1 Enoch* would allow them to assert that they were ‘like Enoch’ in having dreams and visions and being guided by angels. The problem with this view is that *1 Enoch* strongly condemns fornication and **if** the book was being used by the antinomians, their beliefs and practices are fatally undermined as Jude demonstrates.

It is more likely that (2) is the case. The diaspora Christians to whom Jude writes venerate *1 Enoch* (it was evidently popular Jewish literature of the day). This does not mean that Jude, an inspired writer, validates the beliefs in *1 Enoch*, anymore than Jesus in the Parable of Dives and Lazarus validates heaven-going; it is an *ad hominem* use of *1 Enoch*.

There are thirty or more references to *1 Enoch* in 1 and 2 Peter and Jude. For instance, Jude vv. 13-15 employs language used in *1 Enoch* about false shepherds of Israel. The wandering stars of Jude v. 13 primarily refer to the “fallen stars” chained up in the underworld prison-house (*1 En*. 18:14; 21:1-10). The word “wanderer” can only be found in an OT description of Jewish errorists (Hos 9:17), and Jude is casting the false teachers themselves in the role of the fallen angels. If we look for allusions in 2 Peter, the following text is an example:

These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. 2 Peter 2:17 (KJV)

The reference to “wells without water” is an allusion to the ‘springs’of *1 Enoch* 48:1, and the ‘waterless clouds’allude to *1 Enoch* 41:2.

**Conclusion**

The Epistle of Jude employs literary-rhetorical conventions and an unusual selection of extra canonical source material. It is in essence a polemical work of great passion written to address genuine pastoral needs. Was Jude lending credence to *1 Enoch*? Or, was he applying polemical techniques such as the *argumentum ad hominem* in respect of his opponents?

**Launching an EJournal**

**Andrew Perry**

The *Christadelphian EJournal of Biblical Interpretation*was conceived in the back garden of a house in Yorkshire, England by P. Wyns and A. Perry at the beginning of a preaching campaign in the autumn of 2006. There were a number of Christadelphian online magazines, two of which were particularly known to PW and AP. PW was running a magazine called *Biblaridion* which was a completely open magazine for download by any individual and had been running for a couple of years. Another eJournal, the *Christadelphian e-Journal of Biblical Studies*, had been launched by J. Bolton and J. Adey at the beginning of 2006 and had by the autumn released one issue. AP had been involved with the peer review process of this journal during 2005 as the first issue was prepared.

The *Christadelphian EJournal of Biblical Interpretation* was launched at the beginning of 2007 to bring together the editorial principles of *Biblaridion* and the *Christadelphian e-Journal of Biblical Studies*. Basically, this meant that the proposed new eJournal would engage academic Biblical Studies (*Biblaridion*) while at the same time maintain the key objective of pure exegesis and exposition of the Scriptures (*Christadelphian e-Journal of Biblical Studies*). On a more practical level, by the autumn of 2006, the *Christadelphian e-Journal of Biblical Studies* had issued only one inaugural journal (Jan, 2006), and the project appeared to be stalled. Having been involved in the pre-publication peer review process, AP believed that the reason for the *Christadelphian e-Journal of Biblical Studies* stalling was the time it took to get articles in the first place, then have them peer reviewed prior to publication, have the reviewer and author bounce e-mails about the article so as to “get it right”, and then collate and publish.

After communicating their intentions to the co-ordinator of the *Christadelphian EJournal of Biblical Studies*, AP and PW decided that a new eJournal might work if the peer-review process was taken out of the equation and given to editors, and then after initial publication, readers could act as peer reviewers. As an online magazine, there was no reason why articles could not be edited after publication when comments were received and accepted as valid corrections. It was also realised that the new eJournal would only work and not “fizzle out” if the editors were avid readers and writers themselves, so that if no one else ever wrote for the new journal, they would always have a steady supply of material.

On this basis, the new eJournal was launched. PW had expertise in web site management and set the website up; AP was happy to be relieved of the need to learn this skill and act as the co-ordinating editor. When starting a project, it is important to have spiritual reasons, and the opening statement of the *Christadelphian e-Journal of Biblical Studies* provided a good summary:

**The e-journal provides an opportunity for:**

Growth in scriptural understanding through speaking one to another about the Bible, or about Biblically related issues, directed by its terms, values and viewpoint (e.g., modelled on Luke 24:25-32,44-47, Acts 17:11, 22-31, or 1 Cor. 15);

Biblical study that presents us approved to God (2 Tim 2:15);

Increasing our love of God through his words being written in our heart (Deut 6:5-9; 2 Cor 3:3) through handling his word for the manifestation of the truth (2 Cor 4:2).

Aside from these scriptural principles, it was also important to have some practical and realisable goals. It was decided to publish quarterly and to not advertise the eJournal; the aim was to produce 50 pages or so for each issue. The expectation was for a small subscriber list which would build slowly over time and have very few contributors. This last expectation (very few contributors) was not pessimistic; just a realistic expectation based on the observation of the Christadelphian community and its magazine history. Christadelphians have an extensive back catalogue of print magazines with a few writers; they sprang up, lived for a few years, and died. (An excellent example of this would *The Bible Student* in the UK.) Consequently, the expectation for the eJournal from the start was to live a few years and leave on the internet a resource of articles. How many years—this was not known.

The justification for an eJournal was given some thought, and the reason given by the *Christadelphian e-Journal of Biblical Studies* is a sound basis:

A journal has no direct scriptural basis. However, since it is a vehicle which facilitates speaking "as and from the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11) "one to another" (Malachi 3:16) "unto edifying" (1 Corinthians 14:3-5,12,26), albeit in a non-ecclesial context, its existence is justified.

The manner in which the journal is put together reflects scripture's teaching that we being "many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Rom 12:5) and consequently we must "speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another" (Eph 4:25), following the example set by the work of the holy spirit in the first century ecclesia, "as every man has received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet 4:10): thus the journal is accomplished by brethren and sisters working together to produce material, which (re)commended by peer review, will be edifying and uplifting.

The journal is therefore the production of fellowlabourers in the gospel that we might all be of the same mind (Phil 4:2, 3).

On this basis, it was felt that the eJournal would share the goals of all community magazines, but provide a vehicle for material that might not otherwise be published in other magazines, material that engaged academic biblical studies, had a focus in exegesis and exposition, and also that was perhaps of a more technical nature.

**The Issue of Authority**

**J. Burke**

**Introduction**

Considerable debate has raged over the last twenty years over the meaning of a single Greek word in 1 Tim 2:12 and its application to the role of women in the church (*authenteō*, “authority”). A selection of versions is given in the table below:

|  |
| --- |
| English Bible Translations of *authenteō* |
| **Version** | **Translation** |
| KJV | But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to **usurp authority** **over** the man, but to be in silence. |
| RSV | ﻿I permit no woman to teach or to **have authority over** men; she is to keep silent. |
| GNB | ﻿I do not allow them to teach or to **have authority over** men; they must keep quiet. |
| NIV | I do not permit a woman to teach or to **have authority over** a man; she must be silent. |
| CEV | They should be silent and not be allowed to teach or **to tell men what to do**. |
| NASB | ﻿But I do not allow a woman to teach or **exercise authority** **over** a man, but to remain quiet. |
| NLT | I do not let women teach men or **have authority over** them.﻿ Let them listen quietly. |
| NET | But I do not allow a woman to teach or **exercise authority** over a man. She must remain quiet. |

The Greek word in question, translated in various ways (represented in bold type) is used by Paul in the present infinitive active form *authentein*. The precise meaning of this word in this particular context is of importance in understanding exactly what Paul was forbidding to women.

The difficulty involved in understanding the word is complicated by two factors. The first is that the lexical history of this word is long and complex. W. Liefeld, an egalitarian writer,[[22]](#footnote-22) describes briefly the word’s problematically broad semantic range:

A perplexing issue for all is the meaning of *authentein*. Over the course of its history this verb and its associated noun have had a wide semantic range, including some bizarre meanings, such as committing suicide, murdering one’s parents, and being sexually aggressive. Some studies have been marred by a selective and improper use of the evidence.[[23]](#footnote-23)

The issue is compounded by the fact that this word is found only once in the New Testament, and is not common in immediately proximate Greek literature. Nevertheless, English Bible translations over the years have been generally in agreement when rendering the word.

Given the substantial agreement among these representative translations (from archaic to modern, formal equivalence to paraphrase), the average Bible student would wonder why such a disagreement exists over this word within the scholarly world. In fact, the meaning of the word was not seriously disputed until 1979, when C. Kroeger asserted the meaning “to engage in fertility practices”.[[24]](#footnote-24) Although the claim was rejected by scholars, debate over the meaning of the word had been opened, and Christians affirming an egalitarian view of the role of women in the church continued to contest the meaning of the word *authenteō*.

**Lexicons**

Reference to a Bible dictionary or lexicon is a standard method of determining word meaning. On this subject readers should note the importance of the lexicons listed below, as lexical tools used commonly in our community (such as Thayer’s, Strong’s, Young’s, and Vine’s), are little respected by modern scholarship, and are considered inadequate for serious study and citation with regard to word meanings.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Abbreviation**[[25]](#footnote-25) | **Lexicon** |
| Abbott-Smith | G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament.* (3rd ed; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1937). **A student lexicon with useful correlation of the NT, LXX and the Hebrew**. |
| ANLEX | T. Friberg, B. Friberg, and N. F. Miller, eds., *Analytical lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003). **This student lexicon provides the reflex forms of the Greek alongside a simplified analysis of meanings**. |
| BDAG | F. W. Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, (3rd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). **This standard technical lexicon includes extensive references to extra-Biblical usage.** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Abbreviation** | **Lexicon** |
| GELS | J. Lust, E. Eynikel, and K. Hauspie, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint.* (2 vols; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003). **This standard technical lexicon is the principal lexicon for the LXX.** |
| Lampe | G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968). **This standard technical lexicon has a focus on the Greek Fathers.** |
| L&N | J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., G*reek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: based on Semantic Domains*, (2 vols; 2nd ed.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1990). **This lexicon is aimed at translators working in the field.** |
| LS | H. G. Liddell and R. Scott *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). **This standard technical lexicon mainly indexes words appearing in the non-Biblical Greek literature, between approximately 600 BC and 600 AD. The focus is on classical and attic forms.** |
| Moulton & Milligan | G. Milligan & J. H. Moulton, Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997). **A standard technical lexicon that has an emphasis in Greek papyri**. |

Differing in scope, depth, and presentation, the above are some of the Greek lexicons in English recognized and used in the scholarly literature. The aim of lexicons is to document usage and consensus opinion.

**Dictionaries**

The difference between a lexicon and a dictionary can be roughly characterized in terms of the amount of explanation that is given surrounding a word. Dictionaries may begin with a linguistic focus but they extend into domain of theological interpretation. Often a dictionary will be concerned with concepts rather than lexemes. Consequently, there are many lexicons which have dictionary characteristics; by the same token, there are dictionaries which have lexicon characteristics.

The field is narrower in the area of New Testament dictionaries, with one work constantly cited and used as a matter of course in research (TDNT). The prominence of this work is such that it should not be compared to other dictionaries which have yet to become established (EDNT, TLNT) or shorter works (not listed) which are aimed at a popular market, seminary students and clergy. .

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Abbreviation** | **Dictionary** |
| **TDNT** | G. F. Kittel, ed., (1964-c1976). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (10 vols; trans. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965-1976). **This is the main dictionary cited in scholarship**. |
| **EDNT**  | G. Schneider and H. Balz, eds., *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990). S**horter reference dictionary which attempts to update TDNT and serve as a supplement**. |
| **TLNT**  | C. Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (trans. J. D. Ernest; 3 vols; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994). **A popular theological dictionary aimed at clergy rather than scholars.** |

Of the lexicons and dictionaries listed above, the following definitions of *authenteō* are given and cited here with the usual abbreviations of sources kept in place (though not explained[[26]](#footnote-26)):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Lexicon** | **Definition** |
| ANLEX | ‘αuθεντέω strictly, **of one who acts on his own authority; hence have control over, domineer, lord it over** (1T 2.12).’ |
| BDAG | ‘αuθεντέω (s. αuθέντης; Philod., Rhet. II p. 133, 14 Sudh.; Jo. Lydus, Mag. 3, 42; Moeris p. 54; cp. Phryn. 120 Lob.; Hesychius; Thom. Mag. p. 18, 8; schol. in Aeschyl., Eum. 42; BGU 1208, 38 [27 b.c.]; s. Lampe s.v.) to **assume a stance of independent authority, give orders to, dictate to w. gen. of pers.** (Ptolem., Apotel. 3, 14, 10 Boll-B.; Cat. Cod. Astr. VIII/1 p. 177, 7; B-D-F §177) avndro.j, w. διδάσκειν, **1** **Ti 2:12 (practically = ‘tell a man what to do’ [Jerusalem Bible]**; Mich. Glykas [XII a.d.] 270, 10 ai` gunai/kej αuθεντοuσι τ. ανδρον. According to Diod S 1, 27, 2 there was a well-documented law in Egypt: kurieu,eiν th.n gunai/ka, avndro.j, cp. Soph., OC 337–41; GKnight III, *NTS* 30, ’84, 143–57; LWilshire, ibid. 34, ’88, 120–34).—DELG s.v. auvqe,nthj. M-M.’ |
| EDNT | ‘αuθεντέω authenteō rule (﻿vb.﻿)﻿\*﻿ **1 Tim 2:12: women should not rule over men** (﻿gen.﻿). cf. G. W. Knight, “Αuθεντέω in Reference to Women in 1 Tim. 2,12,” ﻿*NTS*﻿ 30 (1984) 143-57.’ |
| GELS[[27]](#footnote-27) | ‘αuθέντης,-ου+ N1M 0-0-0-0-1=1 Wis 12,6 **Murderer** Cf. LARCHER 1985, 710’ |
| Louw/Nida | ‘37.21 ‘αuθεντέω: to control in a domineering manner—‘to control, to domineer.’ gunaiki. ouvk evpitre,pw … auvqentei/n avndro,j ‘I do not allow women … to dominate men’ 1 Tm 2.12. ‘To control in a domineering manner’ is often expressed idiomatically, for example, ‘to shout orders at,’ ‘to act like a chief toward,’ or ‘to bark at.’ |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Lexicon** | **Definition** |
| LS | authenteō, A. **to have full power or authority over**, tinos **I Ep.Ti.2.12**; pros tina **BGU1208.37**[[28]](#footnote-28) **(i B. C.)**: c. inf., Lyd.Mag.3.42. 2. **commit a murder**, Sch.A.Eu.42.’ |

It will be noted that 30 years of dispute over the meaning of *authenteō* has had little to no effect on the scholarly consensus. Within the lexical community there is no controversy over the lexical range of this word, and none of the standard lexicons have accepted the novel definitions suggested by egalitarians such as Kroeger. Nevertheless, the debate over its precise meaning in 1 Tim 2:12 has resulted in a refinement of scholarly understanding of the word and its usage in Greek literature.

**Studies**

The following key studies of *authenteō* have been undertaken over the last 30 years. Such studies typically involve comprehensive searches of the largest available databases of Greek literature, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG),[[29]](#footnote-29) and the Duke Databank of Documentary Papyri.[[30]](#footnote-30) These databases enable researchers to study the word in context, as it is used in a wide range of documents over a long period of time.

(1) G. W. Knight III’s (1984) study is the modern starting point for research into the meaning of *authenteō*. He studied all uses known to him, but the TLG database was not complete at the time. His conclusion was that it meant “**have authority**”.[[31]](#footnote-31) [My emphasis]

(2) L. Wilshire (1988) modified Knight’s position using the TLG database. He agrees that that *authenteō* means “**exercise authority**” and not “domineer” in 1 Tim 2:12. His study focuses on the papyri evidence and the use of the early church fathers.[[32]](#footnote-32) [My emphasis]

(3) C. and R. Kroeger (1992) in a study of the religious background of Ephesus proposed the innovative rendering of *authentein* as “**to represent herself as originator of man**”.[[33]](#footnote-33) [My emphasis]

(4) A. Perriman’s (1993) study concludes,

While it would be hazardous to speculate on the exact course of the term’s semantic evolution, this sense of ‘**acting authoritatively**’ must at least be considered as an available and significant nuance alongside those of ‘perpetrating a crime’ and ‘having authority’. In fact, to introduce the idea of ‘authority’ into the definition at all may be misleading if it is taken to mean a derived or ordained authority: it is ‘authorship’, not ‘authority’, that is at the heart of the meaning of auvqente,w.[[34]](#footnote-34) [My emphasis]

(5) H. S. Baldwin (1995)[[35]](#footnote-35) studied 85 occurrences of *authenteō* and proposed a range of possible meanings for 1 Tim 2:12 of “control”, “dominate”, “assume authority over”, or perhaps “flout the authority of”.

(6) A. Wolters’ (2000) study concludes,

With respect to the meaning of auvqente,w in 1 Tim. 2.12, my investigation leads to two further conclusions. First, the verb auvqente,w should not be interpreted in the light of auvqe,nthj ‘murderer’, or the muddled definitions of it given in the Atticistic lexica. Instead, it should be understood, like all the other Hellenistic derivatives of auvqe,nthj, in the light of the meaning which that word had in the living Greek of the day, namely ‘master’.

Secondly, there seems to be no basis for the claim that auvqente,w in 1 Tim. 2.12 has a pejorative connotation, as in ‘usurp authority’ or ‘domineer’. Although it is possible to identify isolated cases of a pejorative use for both auvqente,w and auvqenti,a, these are not found before the fourth century AD.135 Overwhelmingly, the authority to which auvqe,nthj ‘master’ and all its derivatives refer is a positive or neutral concept.[[36]](#footnote-36)

**Papyri**

Attention has been particularly focused on two early papyri using the word *authenteō*:[[37]](#footnote-37)

I [Trypho] considered that Antilochos having thrown out the goods and subcontracted to his advantage counting with that termination of purchase and this not having altered the dispute in any particular. So **exercising my authority** on him (the man who hired the boat) that he pay fully to Calatytis the boatman to his fare in the hour, to which he [Antilochos?] yielded.[[38]](#footnote-38) [My emphasis]

Of Protogenos and Isidoros being bookkeepers of Leonides and being in charge of the memorandum and written-testimony of the clerk Leonides. Through the not-yet transmitted-items books done is at the risk of those bookkeepers **having authority** and he was in charge of his own portion, through-he himself Leonides being-present of one of those **having authority** bookkeepers.[[39]](#footnote-39) [My emphasis]

These two papyri are significant not only because they are proximate to Paul’s own usage of *authenteō*, but because they both use *authenteō* with a sense which is in agreement with the recent studies by Baldwin and Wolters. The Tebtunis papyrus in particular indicates a usage which cannot mean ‘usurp authority’ or ‘domineer’, nor can it have any negative connotation (bookkeepers are supposed to have authority over their accounts, and it makes no sense to speak of them ‘dominating’ accounting records).

**Syntactical Studies**

The lexical data was later supplemented by a large scale contextual study of the passage by A. Köstenbereger in 1995,[[40]](#footnote-40) which argued that the syntactical construction *ouk* *didaskein oude authentein* (‘not teach nor have/exercise authority’) requires that both *didaskein* and *authentein* have a positive sense. Köstenbereger examined fifty two examples of the same *ouk...oude* (‘not... nor’), construction in the New Testament, as well as forty eight extra-biblical examples covering the third century B.C. to the third century A.D. His conclusion was that the syntactical construction has two patterns. Either both activities referred to must be positive (the first pattern), or both activities must be negative (the second pattern). Köstenbereger summarises his research in a review the work of L. L. Belleville as follows:

The forty-eight syntactical parallels to 1 Tim 2:12 in extrabiblical literature (as well as the one exact parallel in the NT, Acts 21:21) identified in this study all feature the construction “negated finite verb + infinitive + *oude* + infinitive” and in every instance yield the pattern positive/positive or negative/negative. This yields the conclusion that 1 Tim 2:12 is to be rendered either: “I do not permit a woman to teach [error] or to usurp a man’s authority” or: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have (or exercise) authority over a man,” **the latter being preferred owing to the positive connotation of *didaskein* elsewhere in the Pastorals**.[[41]](#footnote-41) [My emphasis]

W. Grudem summarized Köstenbereger’s own analysis in this way:

Some examples of pattern 1 are Matthew 6:28 (they neither labor nor spin); Matthew 13:13 (they neither hear nor understand, but both hearing and understanding are viewed as desirable activities); Luke 12:24 (they neither sow nor harvest); or Acts 4:18 (neither speak nor teach). These activities are all viewed positively in their contexts. Examples of pattern 2, where both activities are viewed negatively, are Matthew 6:20 (neither break in nor steal); John 14:27 (neither be troubled nor afraid); Philippians 2:16 (neither run in vain nor labor in vain), and Hebrews 13:5 (neither leave nor forsake).[[42]](#footnote-42)

Köstenbereger concluded that teaching has a positive meaning in such passages as 1 Tim 4:11; 6:2, and 2 Tim 2:2. The force of the *ouk... oude* construction would therefore mean that *authenteō* likewise has a positive meaning, and does not refer to domineering but the positive exercise of authority.

Reception of Köstenbereger’s study by the scholarly community was overwhelmingly positive. The majority of both complementarian and egalitarian scholars agreed, many considering that the contextual meaning of *authenteō* in 1 Timothy 2:12 has been conclusively determined by Köstenbereger. Köstenbereger lists the following endorsements:[[43]](#footnote-43)

Peter O’Brien, in a review published in Australia, **concurred with the findings of this study**, as did Helge Stadelmann in an extensive review that appeared in the German *Jahrbuch für evangelikale Theologie*. **Both reviewers accepted the results of the present study as valid**. [My emphasis]

Another egalitarian, Craig Keener, in a review that appeared in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, says that while (in his view) the principle is not clear in all instances cited in the present study, “the pattern seems to hold in general, and this is what matters most.” Keener concurs that the contention of the present essay is “**probably correct that ‘have authority’ should be read as coordinate with ‘teach’ rather than as subordinate** (‘teach in a domineering way’).” [My emphasis]

Following my identification of the pattern as from specific to general, Mounce concludes that “**Paul does not want women to be in positions of authority in the church; teaching is one way in which authority is exercised in the church**.” [My emphasis]

Köstenbereger notes other egalitarians who agree with his syntactical analysis, but there is no need to duplicate the tenor of the quotations we have just offered.

**Conclusion**

Thirty years have passed since the first egalitarian challenge to the meaning of *authenteō*. Throughout that time considerable lexical study of the word has been undertaken, and scholarly understanding of the word has been refined. However, the consensus over its lexical range has not been overturned. None of the standard lexicons have adopted the new meanings suggested by egalitarians. Meanings in the lexicons attributed to Paul’s usage in 1 Tim 2:12 include either a negative sense of domineering or a more positive sense of exercising authority’, though the most recent studies incorporating textual evidence not previously available to some of these lexicons (such as the studies of Baldwin and Wolter), substantiate the more positive sense.

Significantly, Kostenberger’s syntactical study has received wide acceptance from both complementarian and egalitarian scholars, substantiating the case for a positive sense of *authenteō* in 1 Tim 2:12, whilst the egalitarian interpretation of *authenteō* as having a negative sense such as ‘domineer’, has been rejected by the majority of egalitarian and complementarian scholars. Standard modern Bible translations typically continue to render the word in its positive sense of having or exercising authority, which remains the most attested meaning in context.

**Solomon and the Sons of God**

**Paul Wyns**

**Introduction**

The fulfilment of the Davidic covenant promises lie in a ‘human’ descendant. In the first instance this descendant or ‘Son of God’ was Solomon:

I will be his father, and he shall be my son. (2 Sam.7: 14)

There is of course a qualitative *and* quantitative difference between the ‘sonship’ of Jesus and that of Solomon, nevertheless, the Davidic covenant model has Solomon as the first realization. This poses a problem because of Solomon’s apostasy towards the end of his reign. It is however often argued that Solomon repented before he died with the book of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs often cited as supportive evidence and Jesus’ supposedly positive mention of Solomon in the NT.

**Did Solomon Repent?**

If we limit our investigation solely to the historical chronicles the conclusion must be that Solomon did not repent. On other occasions when the kings of Judah sinned it is clearly stated that they repented, or that they were acceptable to Yahweh:

Now when he was in affliction, he implored the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord *was* God. (2 Chron 33:12-13)

Solomon’s father David is a good example of finding acceptance despite having sinned (but then we know that David repented):

Nevertheless for David's sake the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, by setting up his son after him and by establishing Jerusalem;because David did *what was* right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. (1 Kgs 15:5)

The assessment at the end of Solomon’s reign is negative and it is found in 1 Kgs 11:9,

So the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. (1 Kgs 11:9)

Solomon used polygamy as a deliberate tool of statesmanship. From a human perspective such a policy was astute as marrying into the dynasties of the surrounding Kings would ensure stability and peace for his kingdom. However, compromise always comes at a price and the political policy that he pursued would need to have been cemented with covenant agreements, including the “freedom of worship” thus enabling the foreign wives that he acquired to import their cults into Israel. Inevitably, the triumph of human reason over divine wisdom led to the downfall of Solomon. Solomon was in fact doing what the nation (God’s firstborn son) had been explicitly warned not to do – intermarry and make covenants with the surrounding nations (Deut 7:3-6).

**The sons of God and the Daughters of Men**

A tabular comparison of corresponding Genesis motifs demonstrates an undeniable connection to the Solomon narrative:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Genesis** | **Solomon**  |
| Let us make man in our image, after our likeness (Gen 1:26) | I will be his father and he shall be my son (2 Sam 7: 14) |
| Tree of the knowledge of Good and evil. Ye shall be as Elohim knowing **good and evil** (Gen 3: 5) | WisdomGive therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between **good and evil**….(1 Kgs. 3: 9) |
| The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. (Gen 6:2) | Solomon loved many strange women (1Kgs 11:1) |
| **Namaah** (Gen 4:22; the daughter of Lamech) | **Namaah** (1 Kgs 14: 21; the mother of Rehoboam) |

The Genesis account anticipates divine “kingship” where the king acts as God’s agent. Of particular interest in this connection is the “knowledge of good and evil” motif. In the case of Solomon, the mention of Namaah is a paralleling narrative device.

The acquisition of the “knowledge of good and evil” is initially what made Adam (God’s “son”) god-like (like *elohim*). This “knowledge” is associated in the Old Testament with passing judgment and therefore also has a connection with the heavenly divine council whose primary function was to implement righteous judgment. This is why David was likened to the angel of God in his function as judge—his insight was recognised as the product of divine guidance not of human reasoning:

For as an (the) angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad: therefore the Lord thy **God will be with thee** [cf. Emmanuel]. (2 Sam.14: 17)

The Genesis account (4:23-25) has Lamech usurping the prerogative of “discerning good and evil” and boasting that his own judgment on wrongdoers will be 77 times more severe (without mercy) than God’s. The insertion of the Lamech poem at this point in the Genesis narrative and his boast to his wives comes directly after the mention (v. 22) of Lamech’s daughter Naamah whose name means something like “pleasant one”. This linkage between a daughter and “pleasant” anticipates Gen 6:2,

The Sons of God saw the daughters of men that they **were fair;** and they **took them** wives of all which they chose. (Gen.6: 2)

The Lamech episode is not an independent literary unit inserted randomly in the narrative, nor is the mention of Naamah coincidental; rather it is imperative to understanding the “Sons of God” incident. Lamech was the first polygamist, thus breaking the divine wish for man to be a monogamous creature. He is also found boasting to his wives of passing judgment and avenging himself because a young man had hurt (dishonoured) him. He was proud of his disproportionate response. What had this young man done? Reading between the lines, the context implies that he had dishonoured Lamech by **taking his daughter –** which explains the mention of her name (the mention of females in a generation list is a very unusual feature) and also why he addressed his warning **to his wives**.[[44]](#footnote-44)

The parallels between Solomon’s reign and Genesis are not coincidental. Solomon engaged in polygamy (like Lamech) and married an Ammonite woman with a similar name to Lamech’s daughter (because she was fair?), and therefore Solomon sinned like the sons of God in Genesis. Furthermore Solomon fulfilled all the negative stereotypes of monarchism that are warned against in 1 Sam 8:11-18, so much so that the people did indeed, “cry out in that day because of your king” [[45]](#footnote-45) (v. 18):

Your father [Solomon] made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you.(1 Kgs 12:4)

Divine displeasure with Solomon was such that the kingdom was divided by rebellion as soon as his son Rehoboam ascended to the throne. Finally we note that the amount of wealth acquired by Solomon in one year of trading;

The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold. (1 Kgs 10:14), cf. Rev 13:18

The number six is constantly associated with Solomon’s reign and used to describe his trading, his throne, his chariot, his decorations (1 Kgs10; 16, 19, 20, 29); we are left in no doubt that his promising reign, that began with the privilege of being a “Son of God” ended with Solomon as the “Son of Adam”. Solomon’s reign was debilitated by compromise leading to apostasy and self-glorification. Solomon’s divine wisdom had degenerated into perverse human wisdom.

When Jesus mentions Solomon it is by way of comparison and contrast. The “lilies” are arrayed with more “glory” than Solomon (Matt 6:29//Lk 12:27) and a “greater” than Solomon is present (Matt 12:42//Lk 11:31) to dispense judgment (the eschatological judgment). The sayings are neutral and cannot be interpreted as an endorsement of Solomon, merely as a reference to his past “glory” and his “greatness” (juridical wisdom), which were ultimately both compromised and temporary in nature (unlike that of Christ cf. John 17:5; 5:22). Only the commencement of Solomon’s reign realized a functional messianic typology, particularly when the queen of Sheba is introduced; thereafter it rapidly deteriorates.

**Conclusion**

Therefore you, O son of man, say to the children of your people: “The righteousness of the righteous man shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall because of it in the day that he turns from his wickedness; nor shall the righteous be able to live because of *his righteousness* in the day that he sins.” (Ezek 33:12)

Although it is not for us to judge “another man’s servant”, we should be careful in asserting that Solomon repented and refrain from holding him as a paragon of virtue when Scripture is at the very least ambivalent towards his reign. Moreover, we should hesitate at the unchallenged acceptance of attributing Solomonic authorship to Ecclesiastes and Songs.

**Marginal Notes:**

**The “Jews” in Luke-Acts - AP**

The term “Jews” (VIoudai/oi) is used seldom in Luke but frequently in Acts. Moreover, it occurs frequently in the latter part of Acts (after Acts 9) but seldom in the early chapters (only Acts 2). This distribution is significant: the term is used when foreigners or foreign places are involved in the story-line. Thus the term is part of the narrator’s description of the Centurion’s thinking (Luke 7:3); it is used by Pilate (Luke 23:3); and it is used in the title of Jesus nailed to the cross by the Romans (Luke 23:37-38). Finally, it is used to denote the city of Arimathaea as a “city of the Jews”—this designation reflects the author’s awareness of the need to explain to non-Jewish readers such as Theophilius the geographical location and native inhabitants of Arimathaea (Luke 23:51). These examples from Luke’s gospel establish the sense of “Jews” to be a contrasting identification of a nation. This may be an obvious point, but its significance lies in what “Jews” does not connote—it is not imbued with the sense of “enemies of the Gospel”, or “opponents of the apostles”, or “a rejected people”, *and so on*. The term does not carry an anti-Semitic sense; rather, it is a term naturally used in contexts where different nationalities or places outside the land of Judea are in the story.

In Acts, the same pattern of usage is evident: the reason why the term is frequent in the latter part of Acts lies in the fact that the Diaspora missions of Paul are the focus of the story. In foreign climes, an increase in the use of “Jews” is to be expected in a story that indentifies the different nationalities that the apostles’ encounter. Even in Acts 2, the same pattern is manifest—here the term is used in the account of Pentecost to identify the nationality of the crowd as comprising “Jews” from many different places; that is, they are ex-patriots or foreign-born Jews attending the feast. Examples of this pattern include the following episodes:

* Cornelius was a centurion of Italy (Acts 10:1), living in Caesarea; his servants, most likely foreigners, addressed Peter and praised their master as having a good report among the “nation of the Jews” (Acts 10:22). Peter replies to them and talks about his nationality (Acts 10:28), and later talks to Cornelius about the “land of the Jews” (Acts 10:39).
* Once preaching to Gentiles is started, Luke includes detail about preaching audiences. Thus in Acts 11:19, he records that missionaries had preached only to Jews.
* Herod, an Idumean, is well aware of ethnic groupings in his cities and sought to please the Jews in his persecution of the church (Acts 12:3).
* Jews formed communities in many cities of the Roman Empire.

There is another reason why “Jews” becomes frequent in the latter part of Acts. The Gentile missions produce converts and the church itself becomes comprised of Jews and Gentiles. Hence, it was a natural development in the speech of the apostles to refer to “Jews”.

Our conclusion therefore is that while some have argued that “Jews” is a pejorative term in Luke-Acts, it is in fact a term that is naturally distributed in the story when foreigners and foreign climes are involved.

**New Internet Resources**

(1) The old editions of the ICC Commentary series have now been put online at this [location](http://www.archive.org/search.php?query=critical%20and%20exegetical%20commentary%20AND%20collection%3Atoronto).

(2) R. R. Ottley’s *Book of Isaiah According to the Septuagint (Codex Alexandrinus)*, (2 vols; Cambridge University Press, 1904-1906). This is a handy little work that contains valuable textual notes on the Greek text of Isaiah (in vol. 2). The first volume contains an English translation of Isaiah, according to Alexandrinus, presented in parallel with a translation of the Hebrew text. The PDF consists of images scanned at a fairly high resolution. The English text has been OCR’ed and bookmarked. The file is available for download [here](http://www.archive.org/details/IsaiahAccordingToTheSeptuagint) (54MB).

**Supplement**

**The Translation of Exodus 3:14a**[[46]](#footnote-46)

**Andrew Perry**

**Introduction**

The interpretation of the Hebrew ’*ehyeh* ’*asher* ’*ehyeh* [[47]](#footnote-47) (‘I AM that I AM’, KJV, Douay, JPS, etc.) has been the subject of contrary opinion in journal articles and commentaries in the latter half of the twentieth century with some scholars opting for a meaning something like “I AM the one who is/exists” (or “I AM he who is/exists”); this proposal is known as the “existential” reading as it sees the significance of the assertion in terms of God’s being or existence. The proposal has been most fully defended in Hebrew philological scholarship in the 1954 article of E. Schild, “On Exodus iii 14 — ‘I AM that I AM’”.[[48]](#footnote-48) As a proposal for the translation of the Hebrew of Exod 3:14, it is supported in the LXX rendering (“And God spoke to Moses, saying, I am the Being [’*ehyeh* ’*asher ’ehyeh* translated by egō eimi ho ōn]; and He said, Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: The Being has sent me unto you”: Brenton, 1851) and so it is quite an old idea.[[49]](#footnote-49) As a proposal in Hebrew grammar, however, it was refuted by B. Albrektson in his 1968 article “On the Syntax of ’*ehyeh* ’*asher* ’*ehyeh* in Exodus 3:14”.[[50]](#footnote-50) Nevertheless, the theological proposal that the assertion has something to do with God’s existence or being continues to dominate scholarship looking for coherence in Exodus 3, and it has also influenced Christadelphian writing. Most translations retain ‘I AM that/who I AM’ (KJV, RV, RSV, NIV, NASB, and ESV); some include a marginal note offering ‘I will be that/who/what I will be’ (RV, RSV, NEB, NIV, and ESV). For a Bible student without Hebrew, this weight of supporting testimony is significant. The only question that s/he faces is whether to read the verb as a present “I AM” or a future “I will be”, or perhaps juggle both in their mind.

The purpose of this article is to consider the correct translation. The problem with this task is that the philology of the expression has been carried out by commentators with an eye on the theology of the expression, and this has influenced what they have said about the syntax and linguistics. An obvious illustration of this would be the curious capitalization, ‘I AM’, which the translators do not follow for the verb elsewhere. The two jobs—linguistics and theology—can and ought to be separated. We should consider the grammar before we look at its broader theological significance, and in this article we will restrict theological proposals to our “Conclusion” section where will sketch directions for further study. It is not our purpose to criticize contrary recent Christadelphian writing on this clause;[[51]](#footnote-51) in any event, older Christadelphian writing takes the same view as our paper;[[52]](#footnote-52) our interest is solely with the question of translation.

**Description and Pattern**

On a syntactic level, philology is the study of patterns in sentences and an observed pattern is abstracted and turned into a rule of grammar. The construction ’*ehyeh* ’*asher* ’*ehyeh* is one that is comprised of a verbal form, ’*ehyeh*, with an embedded (prefixed) pronominal element, and a relative clause with the same verbal form and the relative expression ’*asher*. The main clause contains no explicit noun or pronoun, and is not, as such, a nominal clause; likewise, the relative clause does not contain a nominal expression.

The above description of Exod 3:14a (“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM”, KJV) is unexceptionable and the question that concerns us is: what else might we say about the construction? While accepting the theoretical possibility of alternative systems of grammar, grammatical description within the discipline of Hebrew Philology seeks to be simple and straightforward and simply a matter of observing patterns of usage. We will start our analysis with two uncontroversial patterns about ’*asher*.

***Pattern 1***

The classic reference Hebrew grammar, Gesenius-Kautzsch (GKC),[[53]](#footnote-53) identifies **dependent relative clauses** and separates main clauses where the governing substantive (e.g. a noun in the main clause) is the subject of the relative clause from those where governing substantive is the object of the relative clause. Such clauses stand subordinate to the main clause and attribute a quality, state or verbal idea to the main clause.[[54]](#footnote-54)

1) Examples where the governing substantive is the subject of the relative clause:

…the water which (’*asher*) was below the firmament… Gen 1:7 (KJV)

This statement has two clauses and it is clear that the subject of the main clause “the water” is the subject of the relative clause.

2) Examples where the governing substantive is the object of the relative clause:

And on the seventh day God ended his work which (’*asher*) he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which (’*asher*) he had made. Gen 2:2 (KJV)

This statement has two sentences each with a main clause and a relative clause dependent on the main clause; each sentence relates a noun/object ‘work’ to a verbal form ‘he had made’.

The above subject/object distinction is one pattern of usage for ’*asher*; it is not controversial or difficult. It is simply that ’*asher* can relate two clauses in a relationship of dependency and the governing substantive may be implied or stated in the subject or object position of the relative clause. We might add that where the governing substantive is a person, ’*asher* might be translated as ‘whom’ as in ‘the woman whom thou has placed with me’ (Gen 3:12); likewise, if the governing substantive is about a place, ’*asher* might be translated ‘where’, *and so on*.

***Pattern 2***

Another pattern is one where there is a pronoun implied or stated in the subordinate clause, for example,

Every moving thing where it (is) alive (’*asher hu*’*hay*) shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. Gen 9:3 (KJV revised)

We have revised the KJV here to indicate where the pronoun ‘it’ is in the Hebrew, which brings out its “subject” role. GKC notes that the pronoun is more often present in subordinate negative clauses.[[55]](#footnote-55) Schild observes that it is this feature—the use of a retrospective or resumptive pronoun that shows ’*asher* itself is not a pronoun.[[56]](#footnote-56) Notice in Gen 9:3 the translators have translated ’*asher* as ‘where’ following the lead of the verb in the relative clause, which indicates a circumstantial qualification of every moving thing—where they are alive.

GKC constructs the rule that for ’*asher* constructions, “...if the governing substantive forms part of a statement made in the first or second person, the retrospective pronoun (or the subject of the appositional clause) is in the same person”.[[57]](#footnote-57) A typical example would be:

I *am* the Lord that (’*asher*) brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees Gen 15:7 (KJV)

Here, after the ’*asher*, the verbal form for ‘brought’ is in the first person to agree with the substantive main clause, ‘I (am) the Lord’. This rule (the rule of concord) is perhaps trivial, but it is nevertheless a pattern of Hebrew usage. Notice here that the translators have translated ’*asher* as ‘that’ because they see a stress on the fact of “the bringing out of Ur” in the assertion.

Schild qualifies GKC by observing that the agreeing retrospective pronoun need *not* be the subject of the appositional clause. For example, take Gen 45:4:

I am Joseph whom (’*asher*) you sold—me Gen 45:4 (KJV revised)

Schild observes[[58]](#footnote-58) that the implied subject of the relative clause in Gen 45:4 is “the brothers” and the Hebrew is a verbal form of the second person, ‘you sold’. The relative clause has a first person pronoun ‘me’ which picks up the first person reference of the main clause, ‘I AM Joseph’, but the ‘me’ is in the object position. GKC therefore needs to be modified so that it no longer stipulates that the retrospective pronoun is the subject of the appositional clause (i.e. the bracketed qualification needs to be removed). Hence, Schild proposes a revision to GKC: “If the governing substantive is the subject of a relative clause and is, in the main clause, equated with, or defined as, a personal pronoun, then the predicate of the relative clause agrees with that personal pronoun”.[[59]](#footnote-59)

***Pattern 3***

The first two patterns describe dependent relative clauses. We can see that supplementary information is given in the subordinate clause about the subject of the main clause. Another pattern, the *idem per idem* pattern, has instead a focus on ’*asher*.[[60]](#footnote-60) There are several examples of this idiom in the Hebrew Bible:

1 Sam 23:13

…[they] went withersoever (*ba*’*asher*) they went (KJV revised)

2 Sam 15:20

I (am) going where (’*asher*) I (am) going (KJV revised)

Exod 33:19

I will be gracious to whom (*eth* ’*asher*) I will be gracious (KJV revised)

This pattern repeats the verb on either side of ’*asher* and with the same person (1st, 2nd, 3rd person). The statement as a whole is indefinite and the focus is on the relative word ’*asher*. This will be translated according to the sense that best fits the verb either side of ’*asher* (going/where; being compassionate/whom, etc.). This pattern, unlike the first two patterns, is not about further delimiting a governing substantive (e.g. a noun) in the main clause; rather the pattern involves an **independent relative clause** insofar as **t**he verbs on either side of ’*asher* are distinct statements and the two statements are related by ’*asher*. As a further illustration of the distinctiveness of this pattern, we can compare Exod 3:14a with 1 Chron 21:17.

**1 Chron 21:17**

I (am) he (’*ani hu*’) who (’*asher*) has sinned and done very wickedly (NASB revised)

**Exod 3:14a**

I AM (’*ehyeh*) that (’*asher*) I AM (KJV)

In Chronicles we have a personal pronoun ‘I’ coupled with another personal pronoun ‘he’ in what is a common pattern ‘I-he’; translators read this as a simple copula pattern ‘I am he’. As Albrektson observes,[[61]](#footnote-61) the pronoun ‘I’ (’*ani*) serves as a kind of antecedent which governs the verb of the relative clause; Exod 3:14a has no such element, being just a first person verbal form.

In the Chronicles example, ’*ani hu*’ is a nominal clause with a verbal subordinate clause (predicate). Albrektson’s observation is that in Hebrew where the main clause is a nominal clause, and the subordinate clause is a predicate, the antecedent has an explicit noun or pronoun and not just a pronominal concept embedded in a verbal form;[[62]](#footnote-62) accordingly, Exod 3:14a is not part of this pattern whereas 1 Chron 21:17 is part of this pattern.

Schild proposed ‘I am the one who is’ as the translation for Exod 3:14a and this makes the relative clause into a predicate. In such a case, the patterns of use in Hebrew would lead us to expect a noun or pronoun in the main clause, but we do not have either element. Accordingly, Schild is wrong[[63]](#footnote-63) and the best pattern for understanding Exod 3:14a is the conventional *idem per idem* pattern. This is why B. S. Childs states in his commentary on Exodus, “Schild’s denial of the circular *idem per idem* construction is not convincing”.[[64]](#footnote-64)

An attempt to rescue Schild has been made by D. J. McCarthy. He concedes that “Albrektson may be right in terms of normal grammar”, and he observes that the sentence, ‘I am the one who is’ would properly be ’*ani hu*’ ’*asher* ’*ehyeh*.[[65]](#footnote-65) However, he speculates that the first ’*ehyeh* in ’*ehyeh* ’*asher* ’*ehyeh* has replaced the normal ’*ani hu*’ to form an assonance pattern with *Yahweh* in Exod 3:15. Accordingly, we should read the meaning “I am the one who is” even though the grammar is wrong for this meaning.

McCarthy’s 1978 article hides a speculative assumption about assonance, namely that another ’*ehyeh* is needed and that the first ’*ehyeh* in Exod 3:12 and the second ’*ehyeh* of Exod 3:14a is not enough to strike a play on words with Exod 3:15 and its *Yahweh*. The choice before the exegete is therefore that God either used normal grammar and an *idem per idem* form or that God felt the need for three uses of ’*ehyeh* in quick succession and that normal grammatical rules should be sacrificed. The argument is one from silence and the assonance is struck with three forms; it is just that there is no intended “I am the one who is”.

**Existential and Non-Existential Readings**

We can be certain that the correct syntax of the Hebrew is as the English translations have it: either ‘I AM that/what/who I AM’ or ‘I will be who/what I will be’. The rendering ‘I AM the one who is’ is an error based on insufficient analysis of the syntactic patterns of Hebrew. The LXX, ‘I AM the Being” (Brenton), is also incorrect for the same reason as it does not translate the Hebrew but is some sort of interpretative guess at the underlying point of the expression.[[66]](#footnote-66) This leaves the question to be answered: are the margins or the main text of the translations right, or are both options right?

There are two issues: the tense of the verb (I am/I will be) and the rendering of the relative word ’*asher*; we will first consider the relative word ’*asher*. The choice of ‘what/that/who’ is between an existential and non-existential reading and some have even argued that both readings are legitimate; we now need to explain this choice. In choosing ‘that’ or ‘what’ to translate ’*asher* in ‘I AM that/what I AM’ translators direct a reader to think of the assertion in existential terms—God is making a statement about his nature and/or his existence; the assertion is about God’s person. The alternative rendering ‘I will be what I will be’ shifts the focus of the reader to the future and *what God will be* but it is still a statement about his existence/nature.

This is a rough characterization and it is worth qualifying what we mean by “existence/nature”. It appears *nothing* *specific* is said by ‘I AM that/what I AM’ and the speaker instead relies on what is already known by the other party to the conversation. Hence, nothing is *specifically said* about God’s manner of existence or his attributes—his nature. It is a mistake therefore to **select a quality** about God and affirm that he is saying something about that quality. Thus, while God can affirm his existence saying ‘I exist’ using the Hebrew verb “to be”, this is not what he does in ‘I AM that/what I AM’. Further, we might remember that when God wants to affirm that he is the only true God, he does so in Isaiah by saying something like, “I am the Lord, and there is none else” (Isa 45:18).[[67]](#footnote-67) Similarly, we cannot expand our analysis and say God is here affirming his “self-existence” or his “eternal existence”. This may be good exhortation and true but it is not **exegesis** of ‘I AM that/what I AM’ simply because it violates the *indefiniteness* of this statement by adding *our specification* of what is said in philosophical and theological terms. If we translate the Hebrew as ‘I will be what I will be’ we can still make the same mistake if we specify the meaning of the assertion in terms of God’s existence or nature; we might mistakenly affirm that God is saying he will always be God, the existent One.

The same point applies if we eschew the notion of existence and think of God’s attributes or character, but here the point is more obvious. If we said that by ‘I AM that/what I AM’ God was saying that he was all-knowing, it would be clear that we were violating the *indefiniteness* of ‘I AM that/what/who I AM’ by selecting and adding ourselves the attribute “all-knowing”. We can see that ‘who’ readily lends itself to the translation of ’*asher* when we read the assertion in terms of God’s character, but the mistake is the same as when we use ‘what/that’ and read the assertion about God’s existence or nature.

Existential readings violate the indefiniteness of the *idem per idem* form and they do this by taking a cue from the verb “to be” and offering a gloss along the lines of God’s being or existence. This may be good theology, and it can be found in church commentaries, but it is not an exegetical approach. A non-existential reading respects the indefiniteness of the syntactic form and looks to the context to establish the meaning of the relative word ’*asher* and the meaning of the assertion as a whole, and this is a quite different approach to the text.

In translating an *idem per idem* form, the relative word ’*asher* is rendered in the way that is considered a best fit with the verb; hence, we might have “I will go *where* I will go” or “I will create *what* I will create”, *and so on*. The verb “to be” (*hyh*) would fit with ‘who’, ‘what’ or ‘that’ depending on the context; syntax alone cannot settle the correct rendering.

Exodus 3:14 is an answer given by God to Moses in reply to his expectation that the Israelites will not believe or accept him as a messenger. Moses anticipated that the Israelites would challenge his claim to speak on behalf of God. The anticipated question, ‘What is his name?’, suggests that he expects they might not accept him as one of their own (John 1:11). The first answer that Moses is given to say involves the verb “to be”: “So shall you speak to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you’…” (v. 14b, KJV). The second answer is parallel to the first, “So you shall say to the Israelites, ‘*Yahweh*…has sent me to you’…” (v. 15, KJV revised).

The first answer, ‘I AM has sent me to you’ is unusual in placing a verbal form into the position where a name or title might be expected. However, in conversation, a play on words easily accounts for this happening. The play is obvious from the parallel—’*ehyeh* and *Yahweh* are the two words with which God constructs a play. Hence, it is a mistake to assert that ’*ehyeh* is a name; lexically, it is a verbal form—nobody says that it is a name in other places. The name of God is *Yahweh*, but it is beyond the scope of this essay to elaborate upon this play on words and the meaning of the divine name. Our point is simply the observation that there is a play on words in a conversation between Moses and God. This conversational dynamic is set up by the initial ’*ehyeh* ’*asher* ’*ehyeh*, and this reply is given in response to Moses’ hesitancy and self-effacing stance. Such a stance is all about *who* is Moses that he should be sent to Israel. Hence, the reply of God is focused on *who* he can be and spoken to Moses it asserts that God *can be Moses*.

This analysis of the context is not existential; we have not noted elements in the conversation that concern God’s existence or his nature. That God is from everlasting to everlasting, that he is self-existent, eternal; that he is good, kind or gracious – none of these aspects figure in the conversation. Accordingly, ’*asher* should not be translated by ‘what’ or ‘that’ but by ‘who’ and in this choice there lies an ambiguity.

In situations of representation and delegation a person acts for and represents another person. In colloquial speech we might say, “You can be my eyes and ears” or “You can act for me and speak for me in court”, *and so on*. In such a situation, the person selected to be a representative, say a junior clerk, might be self-effacing and hesitant. To such a person, a senior solicitor might say, “I can be who I want to be in court; you are to act for me”. The ‘who’ embraces both the senior solicitor and the junior clerk in a relationship of representation, and on this non-existential reading Exod 3:14a is an assertion that states *God can be Moses*.

To sum up: the existential reading elaborates ’*ehyeh* ’*asher* ’*ehyeh* in terms of God’s existence or nature; the non-existential reading leaves ’*ehyeh* ’*asher* ’*ehyeh* indefinite and seeks to specify the ’*asher* from context, and this shows a concern with **who is Moses** and whether and how he can represent God.[[68]](#footnote-68)

**Verbal Aspect**

The verbal form ’*ehyeh* is not uncommon (55x, BibleWorks), and it is usually translated as “I will be”, as it is in Exod 3:12 (KJV). This statistical preference for a future rendering on the part of translators makes this the preferred choice for Exod 3:14a unless there is a reason in the context to prefer “I am”.

In teaching grammars, ’*ehyeh* will be classified as an “Imperfect” with regard to **aspect** and we need to understand this concept. In their reference grammar (2002), C. H. J. van der Merwe, J. A. Naudé and J. H. Kroeze state,

Not all languages possess a grammatically realized tense system. In some languages verbs conjugate primarily to indicate whether an action is complete or incomplete. Languages which have the *grammatical* means of indicating that an *action is* *complete or incomplete* are described as having an *aspect system*.[[69]](#footnote-69)

Hebrew is described as having a two aspect system and ’*ehyeh*, as an Imperfect, is characterized as signifying incomplete action (with Perfect verbs signifying complete action). However, Van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze are careful to state that,

Various opinions exist as to whether BH [Biblical Hebrew] has a tense or an aspect system. Older Jewish grammarians, like the more recent grammarians, are of the opinion that BH verb system is primarily a tense system.[[70]](#footnote-70)

On this way of describing matters, the Perfect refers to past time and the Imperfect refers to the present and future or “non-past” time. This is how Van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze proceed in their grammar and state that “It is not clear whether in BH it is time that assumes aspect, or aspect that assumes time”, and “BH speakers and narrators had a choice of describing either the aspect or the time of an action”.[[71]](#footnote-71)

The viewpoint presented by Van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze is important for our examination of the verb “to be” in Exod 3:14a because commentators, relying on older reference grammars such as GKC, or an older teaching grammar, may mislead by implying that the Hebrew Verb System is all about aspect and not about tense. For instance, the older but still used teaching grammar by J. Weingreen states,

In Hebrew thinking, *an action* is regarded as being either *completed or incompleted*. Hebrew, therefore, knows of no past, present, or future tenses, but has instead a *Perfect* and an *Imperfect* (which, in a context, lend themselves to a variety of shades in meaning).[[72]](#footnote-72)

This is misleading in that it might cause a reader to deny the presence of tense in the Hebrew Verb System. Hence, a more modern teaching grammar by J. F. A. Sawyer (1976) states,

Because of this, it is not uncommon to find grammarians nowadays making only one distinction, namely, that between “past” and “non-past”.[[73]](#footnote-73)

Accordingly, we can say on a grammatical level that there is tense in the Hebrew Verb System as well as aspect, and that context (and other grammatical features in the context) assists the reader in discriminating the “non-past”. Sawyer associates the Imperfect with the “non-past” (present/future) and the Perfect with the “past”,[[74]](#footnote-74) but it is important to realise that this is a simplification appropriate in a teaching grammar. B. T. Arnold and J. H. Choi give a fuller picture of the Imperfect and identify that it is also used for customary and habitual action in the past.[[75]](#footnote-75) The tense that the Imperfect contributes towards and participates in could be past or non-past (present or future).

**The Verb “to be” in Hebrew**

The verb “to be” is very common (3576x, BibleWorks). It might be queried whether this verb is like other verbs; after all, other verbs have been characterized above in terms of *action*, and the verb “to be” does not appear to be a *kind of action*. We should not assume that general descriptions of the Hebrew Verb System apply directly to the verb “to be”. Some teaching grammars may single out the verb for special comment. T. O. Lambdin did so in his 1971 grammar,[[76]](#footnote-76) but a full study is that of G. S. Ogden in a 1971 article in *Vetus Testamentum*, “Time, and the Verb *hyh* in O. T. Prose”.[[77]](#footnote-77) His opening analysis for the Imperfect of “to be” is interesting:

In the Semitic languages it is generally understood that the Imperfect represents actions, events, or conditions which are incomplete in themselves. Temporally they may be located in past, present or future time (normally the latter two) but as it is the nature of the action that is more important, the time of its occurrence takes second place.

The examples of *hyh* in the Imperfect upon examination reveal a temporal reference which is future and in which the nature of the action involved is of considerably secondary importance—in other words, a reversal of the traditional values—for the Imperfect functions primarily as a Future Narrative tense.[[78]](#footnote-78)

Ogden’s analysis is useful as a corrective to those who might argue that the verb “to be” is not about tense but about aspect; it is also useful as a corrective to those who argue that the Imperfect cannot be precise with tense: Ogden’s conclusion is that it is **primarily a future narrative tense**. In this regard, his conclusion about the Imperfect as a customary and habitual past tense is informative. On this he says “One might therefore be permitted to conclude that this frequentative [his terminology] aspect arises not from within the verb but by association with others”.[[79]](#footnote-79) This observation helps to explain the past tense association of some Imperfect forms of “to be” while allowing his conclusion about its primary role as a future tense to stand.

In any analysis of ’*ehyeh*, we should tabulate the sentence fragments in which the form occurs in translation (except for Exod 3:14), and this we do for the KJV in the following table.[[80]](#footnote-80)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Passage** | **Sentence fragment** | **Speaker** |
| Gen 26:3 | and **I will be** with thee | **God** |
| Gen 31:3 | and **I will be** with thee | **God** |
| Exod 3:12 | **I will be** with thee | **God** |
| Exod 4:12 | **I will be** with thy mouth | **God** |
| Exod 4:15 | **I will be** with thy mouth | **God** |
| Deut 31:23 | **I will be** with thee | **God** |
| Josh 1:5 | **I will be** with thee | **God** |
| Josh 3:7 | **I will be** with thee | **God** |
| Judg 6:16 | **I will be** with thee | **God** |
| Judg 11:9 | …shall I be your head? | Jephthah speaking |
| Ruth 2:13 | …though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens | Ruth speaking |
| 1 Sam 18:18 | …that I should be son in law to the king? | David speaking |
| 1 Sam 23:17 | I shall be next unto thee | Jonathan speaking |
| 2 Sam 7:6 | …have walked in a tent | **God** |
| 2 Sam 7:9 | I was with thee withsoever thou wentest | **God** |
| 2 Sam 7:14 | **I will be** his father | **God** |
| 2 Sam 15:34 | I will be thy servant | Hushai speaking |
| **Passage** | **Sentence fragment** | **Speaker** |
| 2 Sam 16:18 | ... his will I be | Hushai speaking |
| 2 Sam 16:19 | ... so will I be in thy presence | Hushai speaking |
| 2 Sam 22:24 | I was also upright before him | David |
| 1 Chron 17:5 | …have gone from tent to tent | **God** |
| 1 Chron 17:8 | I have been with thee withsoever thou hast walked | **God** |
| 1 Chron 17:13 | **I will be** his father | **God** |
| 1 Chron 28:6 | **I will be** his father | **God** |
| Job 3:16 | I had not been | Job speaking |
| Job 7:20 | …so that I am a burden to myself | Job speaking |
| Job 10:19 | I should have been | Job speaking |
| Job 12:4 | I am *as* one mocked of his neighbour | Job speaking |
| Job 17:6 | I was as a tabret | Job speaking |
| Ps 50:21 | I was altogether *such an one* as thyself | David speaking |
| Ps 102:8 | …and am as a sparrow | David speaking |
| Prov 8:30 | I was by him | Solomon speaking |
| Prov 8:30 | I was daily his delight | Solomon speaking |
| Song 1:7 | why should I be as one that turneth aside | Solomon speaking |
| Isa 3:7 | I will not be an healer | Anonymous |
| Isa 47:7 | I shall be a lady for ever | Babylon speaking |
| Jer 11:4 | **I will be** your God | **God** |
| Jer 24:7 | **I will be** their God | **God** |
| Jer 30:22 | **I will be** your God | **God** |
| Jer 31:1 | …**will I be** the God | **God** |
| Jer 32:38 | **I will be** their God | **God** |
| Ezek 11:20 | **I will be** their God | **God** |
| Ezek 14:11 | **I may be** their God | **God** |
| **Passage** | **Sentence fragment** | **Speaker** |
| Ezek 34:24 | **I** the Lord **will be** their God | **God** |
| Ezek 36:28 | **I will be** your God | **God** |
| Ezek 37:23 | **I will be** their God | **God** |
| Hos 1:9 | **I will not be** your *God* | **God** |
| Hos 11:4 | I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws | **God** |
| Hos 14:6 | **I will be** as the dew unto Israel | **God** |
| Zech 2:5 | For **I**, saith the Lord, **will be** unto her a wall of fire round about, and **I will be** the glory in the midst of her | **God** |
| Zech 8:8 | **I will be** their God | **God** |

While we have chosen to represent the KJV in this table, a similar pattern would be presented if we chose, say, either the RSV or the NASB. Examining the table, it is worth observing first the frequency of ‘I will be’ when God is speaking, and it is perhaps not surprising to see that God would often want to utter ‘I will be with you’ or ‘I will be your/their God’. A second observation is that translators have sensed a tense other than future a few times in the poetic works of Song, Psalms and Job. Thirdly, we have highlighted the five texts when God uses ’*ehyeh* for continuous action of the past: he was continually walking in a tent and with the people wherever they went (2 Sam 7:6, 9; 1 Chron 17:5, 8); and he treated the people with compassion, like the herdsman that takes the yoke from off the oxen (Hos 11:4).

The five texts where God uses ’*ehyeh* for continuous action of the past are worth further comment. These are waw consecutive forms and the past tense is partly set by the Perfect verbs in the conversational context:

I have not dwelt…since the time…even to this day… (2 Sam 7:6; 1 Chron 17:5)

…wherever you went/walked (2 Sam 7:9; 1 Chron 17:8)

God had taught Ephraim (Hos 11:3)

Looking at this table as data for the character portrayal of God in the Hebrew Scriptures (under inspiration), we would have to say that God’s idiom in speaking using ’*ehyeh* is for the future narrative tense unless there are past tense indicators in associated verbs and/or temporal words like ‘since’ or ‘until’.

If we consider the context of Exod 3:14a, its future and forward looking character is apparent:[[81]](#footnote-81)

And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, Certainly I will be (’*ehyeh*) with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I will be (’*ehyeh*) who I will be (’*ehyeh*): and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I will be (’*ehyeh*) hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Yahweh…hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations. Exod 3:11-15 (KJV revised)

This future cast is set by the conversation being about Moses ***going***to Egypt. Accordingly, even if we were to propose that God could equally have said ‘I AM with you’ rather than ‘I will be with you’ in his use of ’*ehyeh* in Exod 3:12, the cast of the conversation makes ‘I AM with you’ have an idiomatic future sense. In terms of translation practice it would be obtuse to propose ‘I AM with you’ just because ’*ehyeh* can be associated with a present tense meaning. The same point would apply if we were to claim that God was saying ‘I have always been with you’, which would equally be an assurance about the future situation that will face Moses in Egypt.

L. M. Pákozdy notes that the Hebrew equivalent for ‘I AM who I AM’ would be (better, ‘could be’[[82]](#footnote-82)) *’anoki hu’ ’*asher *’anoki hu’* or *’anoki howah ’*asher *’anoki hu’* rather than ’*ehyeh* ’asher ’*ehyeh*.[[83]](#footnote-83) He prefers ‘I shall be that which I shall be’ but usefully draws in the parallel of Hos 1:9 in support of the future tense rendering of Exod 3:14a as it is the only other comparable use of a verbal sentence with ’*ehyeh*. It says, *’anoki* *lo* ’*ehyeh* *lakem* which the KJV has rendered “I will not be your *God*”. The word ‘God’ is not in the Hebrew as indicated by the KJV italics and Pákozdy offers ‘So I shall not be present for you’. What seems clear is that Hos 1:9 echoes Exod 3:14a in its use of ’*ehyeh* without an object word such as ‘God’. With the end of the Northern kingdom being prophesied by Hosea, it is appropriate that Hosea would signal the end of God’s relationship with his people by reversing the promise implicit in ‘I will be who I will be’ by saying ‘I will not be present for you’.[[84]](#footnote-84)

**Philosophy of Translation**

We have argued that the correct translation of ’*ehyeh* ’asher ’*ehyeh* is ‘I will be who I will be’. Moreover, the context of Exod 3:14a is a conversation that revolves around Moses and not the nature of God. Moses’ opening question is ‘Who am I?’ and it is this question of identity that controls the conversation and dictates the rendering of ’asher as ‘who’ in ‘I will be *who* I will be’. Accordingly, ‘I will be *who* I will be’ is the translation suggested by context rather than ‘I will be *what* I will be’ (or even ‘I AM *that* I AM’).

There are philosophical mistakes that can be made when discussing translation. For example, it is commonplace and uncontroversial to quote foreign language authors in translation. Thus we might affirm something like, “Descartes **said** ‘I think therefore I am’”. Notice we have used the notion of *saying* here and no one marking an essay on Descartes would object, “He did not say that; he wrote in French”. Likewise, when discussing ’*ehyeh* ’asher ’*ehyeh* we would make a mistake if we stated that God did not **say** either ‘I am that/what I am’ or ‘I will be what/who I will be’ because he said something in Hebrew.

In the same way, we would be overly sceptical towards language if we held the view that languages could not in principle be translated. Obviously the industry of translation is successful and the discipline of translating dead languages is very much alive and well. Hebrew has a simpler verbal system than English, but this does not mean that translators do not succeed in mapping English tenses to Hebrew tenses. Furthermore, translators may not claim to capture nuance and all the richness in a target language, but they do endeavour to capture basic senses, and it is the basic sense that is disputed when translators propose ‘I am that/what I am’ and ‘I will be what/who I will be’ as alternatives for ’*ehyeh* ’asher ’*ehyeh*. Whether God intended a future sense, a present tense, or both, is a definite question which is capable of determination by examining the evidence of context, the import of the conversation, the grammatical form of the verbs that God used, the syntactic form of his expressions, and the wider pattern of his speech. All these points we have laid out in this paper in favour of ‘I will be who I will be’.

It is therefore a mistake to argue that there are many aspects of meaning contained in the Hebrew verb “to be” and that these aspects are somehow there in the word as it exists in any sentence. A lexicon will highlight the range of meaning for the verb (its “fulness”), but it is a fallacy to import this range into each use of the verb. As the verb is used in a context there are selective factors at work which determine the meaning of the verb. As interpreters and translators we have to make this determination, and as we do the work of translation it is not the case that many aspects of meaning remain “in the word” when we have done the work of translation. The standard dictum is that a word has meaning in a context of use and it is the truth of this dictum that highlights the fallacy of bringing a lexical range of meaning to bear on each use of the verb.

The above fallacy is noteworthy in the argument for an existential reading of Exod 3:14a because the lexical range of meaning for the verb “to be” embraces usage with the past, present and future tense. So, it might be thought, in this connection, that Rev 11:17 is a translation of God’s use of the verb “to be” in Exodus because it reads, “O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come” (KJV). This is not a translation of the divine name nor is it a translation of the verb “to be” in Hebrew or the form ’*ehyeh*, and this is simply because the contextual use of the verb in Exod 3:14 is specific as to tense (let alone the absence of any “coming” element in the Hebrew verb or the dubious KJV rendering of the Greek).

The expression of the future tense in Hebrew is a function of grammatical form, context, and associated verbs. The future tense in Hebrew is not an English future tense; it would be nonsense to say so as an English future tense is an English future tense. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise the future tense in a Hebrew sentence when we have it and translate it appropriately into English. This is where the table of occurrences of ’*ehyeh* is important in conveying the likelihood that ’*ehyeh* is used in a future sense in Exod 3:14a. There is no *proof* to be had in such tables (to say so would be an error), just an indication of **likelihood** (to deny this is also an error); to this we should add considerations from the context. In this way we can avoid the fallacy that because a Hebrew verbal form is not *sufficient* to determine tense, Hebrew does not register a distinction between the past, present and future.

Translators will range in their translation from the literal, almost word for word, to the more free kind of paraphrase. If translators thought that there was a clear meaning in ’*ehyeh* ’asher ’*ehyeh* which was about being, existence, eternal existence, self-existence, uncreate existence, then they could have paraphrased accordingly. They did not have to adopt either a future or present tense in their renderings (i.e. I AM/I will be). They could have paraphrased as follows: ‘I AM the one who was, who is, and who will be’. It is a significant counter-argument to the “God is, was and always will be” interpretation that they have given two alternative choices in the main text and in the margin.

We might ask *why* it is that the translators we have selected have placed ‘I AM that/who/what I AM’ in the main text and ‘I will be that/who/what I will be’ in the margin or as a footnote. There isn’t an explanation in the versions we have examined and the margin/footnote is presented as an **alternative**. This practice of putting alternatives into the margin/footnote of the Bible is well established. We should note that the margin/footnote is presented as an alternative and this excludes our speculating that the margin/footnote is there because ’*ehyeh* ’asher ’*ehyeh* is not fully comprehended in either the main text or the margin/footnote on their own. If we want to know why translators have made their choices, we have to examine their translators’ notes, or in the absence of any specific notes,[[85]](#footnote-85) commentaries and journal articles will supply discussion of the issues at stake from which translators have made their choice.[[86]](#footnote-86)

The influence of church tradition and philosophy should not be discounted in investigating why ‘I AM that/who/what I AM’ is in the main text. Pákozdy speculates that it is due to the influence of the LXX upon the church fathers that led to their linkage of the divine name with the concept of Being.[[87]](#footnote-87) McCarthy sketches examples from church theology and observes,

The passage [Exod 3:14, LXX] “served as the proof text for Christian ontology,” and though this may at times have led to an emphasis on static being, there was still plenty of play for the active aspect: God gave because He supremely was.[[88]](#footnote-88)

McCarthy is supportive of the existential approach and says, “The text has a history not only in the scriptures but in the church, and this has not falsified but enriched the meaning of the text”.[[89]](#footnote-89) Childs notes that “it was the philosophical implications of the passage which evoked such intense interest in Ex.3.14”,[[90]](#footnote-90) and he offers a brief summary of its use in the theology of Eusebius, Augustine,[[91]](#footnote-91) Aquinas[[92]](#footnote-92) and then the Reformers. The Vulgate translates as *EGO SUM QUI SUM*—‘I AM who I AM’ and this has influenced subsequent church tradition.[[93]](#footnote-93) Moreover, we should also not discount the influence of the Johannine ‘I am’ statements.

It is entirely plausible to attribute the choice of ‘I AM’ in the KJV (and later English versions) with the capitalization to such a history of church doctrine. What is surprising is that ‘I will be who I will be’ has made it back into the margins and footnotes of translations in the modern era. It is a testimony to the strength of the Hebrew patterns of use that this has happened. We might attribute this to the strength of the historico-critical method and its counter-influence to church tradition on the work of translation today.

The church tradition within which a Bible translator works is a potential influence on his/her translation. The same point is true of Christadelphians today who may be influenced by their forebears in their translation of Exod 3:14a. They may lean towards ‘I will be who I will be’ because of a desire to confirm Christadelphian tradition. Against both church and Christadelphian tradition it is worth briefly noting the Old Greek and Aramaic translations.

We have registered the LXX interpretation “I AM the Being”. The early Greek translations of Aquila (mid second century C.E.) and Theodotion (late second century C.E.) render ’*ehyeh* ’asher ’*ehyeh* with the future Greek tense esomai hos esomai. In doing this, and unlike the LXX, they have produced a translation that is true to the Hebrew text, both with respect to the *idem per idem* form and the future tense.[[94]](#footnote-94) If we examine the Jewish Targums,[[95]](#footnote-95) the situation is mixed. Most editions of *Onkelos* do not translate but merely reproduce the Hebrew. Some editions of *Onkelos* have the translations, ‘I will be concerning that which I will be’ or ‘I will be with whomsoever I will be’. *Neofiti* leaves the phrase untranslated while *Pseudo-Jonathan* has, ‘He who spoke and the world was, spoke, and all of it came about’.[[96]](#footnote-96)

In the 20c., M. Buber (a German-Jewish translator) affirmed,

*Ehyeh* in our passage means precisely what it means in the same story both before (3:12) and after (4:12 and 15): to be present to someone, to be with someone, to assist someone—except that here the verb is used absolutely, without any specification of *whom* the one-who-is-there is there for. God does not by this make any theological proposition that he is eternal or self-sufficient; rather he offers to the creature he has made, to his person and his people, the assurance that they are in need of and that renders all magical feats both void and superfluous.[[97]](#footnote-97)

Buber’s perspective is not quite our view but it is close and one way of expanding our view. We have said that God is saying *he will be Moses*, i.e. manifest himself in Moses. Clearly, this can be expanded in terms of fellowship: God will be *with* Moses. This is explicit in Exod 3:12 but the change of expression in Exod 3:14a suggests to us God-manifestation and not just redemptive fellowship.

And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Exod 7:1 (KJV)

Where there is a choice in translation it can be difficult to make that choice. Some may suggest instead that both choices are valid. It may be argued that ’*ehyeh* ’asher ’*ehyeh* has both a future and a present tense—it says *God is* and *God will be*. It might appear that this is an easy option, a way out of conflict, but it is a difficult position to establish in the case of Exod 3:14a. Several obstacles present themselves. First, ambiguity in language use is indicated by context and readers pick up on ambiguity. We cannot just assert that ’*ehyeh* ’asher ’*ehyeh* is present and future, we have to show how ’*ehyeh* is conveying an ambiguous tense to readers. It is not enough to observe that the Imperfect can carry the non-past, because this general rule is instantiated in instances that are either present or future. Second, are there other examples of uses of ’*ehyeh* where it is both present and future? The table above does not list any such cases on the part of the translators of the KJV. This question concerns pattern—if there is **no pattern of ambiguity** in which ’*ehyeh* ’asher ’*ehyeh* participates as a present and a future tense statement, how can we begin to establish that the tense in Exod 3:14a is both present and future? Finally, the wide ranging semantic values of the verb “to be” (*hyh*) in Hebrew cannot be cited to establish an ambiguous tense in Exod 3:14a. Any word can have a range of basic senses and a range of subtle overtones, but such are selected in the use of language. It may be good theology to affirm that God is and that God will be, that he self-exists and is always becoming, but this is not strictly linguistic.

By way of a conclusion to our discussion of the philosophy that hangs around grammar, we can say that there are two mistakes to avoid in a discussion of ’*ehyeh* ’asher ’*ehyeh*: we should not rely on grammatical form alone (’*ehyeh*) to assert a future tense; and neither should we rely on the tense ambiguity associated with a grammatical form across a semantic field to argue for the necessary presence of a tense ambiguity in a particular instance of that field, i.e. Exod 3:14a.

**Conclusion**

In this paper we have argued that the correct translation of ’*ehyeh* ’asher ’*ehyeh* is ‘I will be who I will be’ (obviously). This translation fits the focus of God’s conversation with Moses, which from our perspective is about **identity** rather than existence and nature. From this point it would be possible to expand on this basis and show how the idea of God being with someone and being that person through God-manifestation is fulfilled in other figures in Israelite history and pre-eminently in Jesus Christ. In this sense Moses is a type of Christ. It would also be possible, separately, to show how the name of God, *Yahweh*, is related to the verbal form ’*ehyeh*. These are subjects for other papers. What we can offer is a contrast—a contrast between the philosophical theology that is imposed on a text, a theology about existence and being, (as if God is concerned to make these points with his servant Moses; that this is *his* need), and an assurance that He *will be* with his servant and in him through the Spirit. This was correctly emphasized in older Christadelphian writing, and it should not now be diminished in favour of the church tradition that Exod 3:14a is about existence and being.

**END**

1. The modern standard introduction to this topic is J. D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways* (London: SCM Press, 1991). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A. J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1988) 290; D. Flusser, “The Jewish Religion in the Second Temple Period” in *Society and Religion in the Second Temple Period* (eds. M. Avi-Yonah & Z. Baras; London: W. H. Allen, 1977) 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. G. Vermes & M. Goodman, *The Essenes according to the Classical Sources* (Sheffield: JSOT Press 1989) 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. J. M. B. Barclay, “The Jews of the Diaspora” in *Early Christian Thought in its Jewish Context* (eds., J. Barclay & J. Sweet; Cambridge University Press, 1996), 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. T. Callan, *Forgetting the Root: The Emergence of Christianity from Judaism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. G. B. Caird, *The Apostolic Age* (London: Duckworth 1975), 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Caird, *Apostolic Age,* 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. P. Carrington, *The Early Christian Church,* (2 vols; Cambridge University Press, 1957), 1:241. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Callan, *Forgetting the Root,* 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. [Ed AP] Or foreshadowed, depending on your view of the date of Revelation. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. M. B. Lerner, *The World of Sages: Rabban Gamaliel of Jabneh* (Tel-Aviv: Everyman’s University Press, 1984) 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. S. Sandmel, *Judaism and Christian Beginnings* (Oxford University Press, 1978) 248. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The term “Enochic Judaism” is a scholarly construct for a strand within first century Judaism that gave rise to the writings ascribed to Enoch. For a brief overview see G. Boccaccini, “Introduction; From the Enoch Literature to Enochic Judaism” in *Enoch and Qumran Origins* (ed., G. Boccaccini; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Boccaccini, “Introduction; From the Enoch Literature to Enochic Judaism”, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. For the texts of Enochic Judaism, see J. H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols; New York: Doubleday, 1983-1985). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. A. D. Norris, *Acts and Epistles* (London: Aletheia Books, 1989), 763. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The adjective ‘great’ is found only in the DSS fragment, R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC; Waco: Word Books, 1983), 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Norris, *Acts and Epistles*, 763. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Bauckham, *Jude,* 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Bauckham, *Jude,* 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Bauckham, *Jude,* 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. The debate about the role of women in the church is between complementarians and egalitarians. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. W. Liefeld, “Women and the Nature of Ministry” *JETS* 30 (1987): 49-61 (51). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See the 2005 report from the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Commission on Theology and Church Relations, “*Authentein*:Response to a Request from the Atlantic District on the word ‘authentein’ (to have authority over) as used in 1 Tim. 2:12”, 1-18 (3-4), available online at [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org) [cited 7/9/2009]. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Where possible, abbreviations follow the standard set out in *The SBL Handbook of Style* (ed. P. H. Alexander, et. al.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. The point of the table is not to identify the sources for readers (except in one case), but to represent the range of meanings for *authenteō*. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Note that the definition here is very short, and contains only one sense, as this word is only used once in the LXX and only with this meaning; this usage was obsolete by the 1st century A.D. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. The reference ‘BGU1208.37’ (1c. A.D.) cited as an example of the use of the word with the meaning ‘to have full power or authority over’ (which is cited as the meaning of the word in 1 Timothy 2:12), refers to line 37 of papyrus 1208 in volume 4 of the *Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen (later Staatlichen) Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden* (4 vols; Berlin: Weidmann, 1895-1912), abbreviated as BGU. This is the standard collection of papyri and volumes are periodically added under the publishing arm of Walter de Gruyter. The papyrus is dated to 27/26 B.C.; it is from Herakleopolite in Egypt, and the relevant line speaks of a man who ‘exercised authority’ over another to have him pay a ferryman. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. A very large database of Greek literature from approximately 850 B.C. to 1500 A.D.; it is online at [www.tlg.uci.edu](http://www.tlg.uci.edu) [Cited 9/9/09]. Public access is granted only to a small selection of the texts. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. A database of around 500 Greek papyri; it is online at [www.papyri.info](http://www.papyri.info) [cited 9/9/09]. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. G. W. Knight III, “ἈΥΘΕΝΤΕΩ in Reference to Women in 1 Timothy 2:12” *NTS* 30 (1984): 143-57. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. L. E. Wilshire, “The TLG Computer and Further Reference to ΑΥΘΕΝΤΕΩ in 1 Timothy 2:12” *NTS* 34 (1988): 120-34 (131). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. R. C. Kroeger and C. C. Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in the Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 103, 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. A. Perriman, “What Eve did, What Women shouldn’t do: The Meaning of AUQENTEW in 1 Timothy 2:12” Tyndale Bulletin 44 (1993): 129-142 (138). Available online at [www.tyndalehouse.org](http://www.tyndalehouse.org) [cited 9/9/09]. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. A. J. Köstenberger, T. R. Schreiner and H. S. Baldwin, eds., *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. A. Wolters, “A Semantic Study of auvqe,nthj and its Derivatives” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (2006): 44-65 (54). Available online at [www.cbmw.org](http://www.cbmw.org) [cited 9.9.09]. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Translation by Bro. Steven Cox. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Papyrus BGU 1208 (c.27 BC). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Papyrus Tebtunis 15 (c.100 AD). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. A. J. Köstenberger and T. R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. A. J. Köstenberger, “‘Teaching and Usurping Authority: 1 Timothy 2:11-15’ (Ch 12) by Linda L. Belleville”*,* *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (2005): 43-54 (44-45). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. W. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Sisters: Multnomah Publishers, 2004), 315. Available as a PDF at [www.efbt100.com](http://www.efbt100.com) [cited 9/9/09]. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Köstenberger, “’Teaching and Usurping Authority: 1 Timothy 2:11-15’ (Ch 12) by Linda L. Belleville”*,* 47-48. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. We might speculate at this point that the “young man” was a ruler with a harem. The forcible recruitment of female concubines to the royal harem was a common practice in the A.N.E.; witness the problem that Abraham had with Sarah and Isaac with Rebecca. Some interpreters have seen the “sons of God” of Gen 6:2 in the same light, as rulers: see D. J. A. Clines, “The Significance of the ‘Sons of God’ Episode (Genesis 6.1-4) in the Context of the ‘Primeval History’ (Genesis 1­-11)” in his *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays 1967-1998* (JSOTSup 292; 2 vols; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 1:88-94. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Unlike Saul this was not a king that “they had chosen”; nevertheless Solomon fulfilled all the negative attributes of oppressive kingship. Notice also that “crying out” to God is what the Israelite slaves did in Egypt. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. There is a website devoted to the verse: [www.exodus-314.com](http://www.exodus-314.com), presumably written by an orthodox Christian; this paper was written in response to another website, [www.dianoigo.com](http://www.dianoigo.com), written by a Christadelphian seeking to promote more orthodox views about the nature of Christ. [Cited 9/9/2009]. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. In this article we will transliterate all Hebrew (including that which is used in the citations from and the titles of articles according to *The SBL Handbook of Style* (eds. P. H. Alexander, *et. al*.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. E. Schild, “On Exodus iii 14 — ‘I am that I am’” *VT* 4 (1954): 296-302. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Philo, *Life of Moses*, 1.75; C. D. Yonge, *The Works of Philo* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. B. Albrektson, “On the Syntax of ’*ehyeh* ’*asher* ’*ehyeh* in Exodus 3:14” in *Words and Meanings* (eds., P. R. Ackroyd and B. Lindars; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 15-28. At SOTS 2007, I spoke to Albrektson and ascertained that the views expressed in his article had remained the same over the years. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. A. H. Nicholls, *The Name That is Above Every Name* (Birmingham: CMPA, 1983), 38, “The idea they represent is not so much that of “being” anyone or anything, but of *the absolute existence of Him* who only hath immortality”. A. D. Norris, *What is his Name?* (London: Aletheia Books, 1986), 68-74, “...‘I am the One with Being’ is a sound, if perhaps limited, understanding of what God said to Moses...” (71). More recently, M. Vincent, “The Exodus: A Commentary on Exodus 1-15, D. Moses’ commission – Exodus 3-4 (Part 2)” *The Testimony* (2001): 305-310, “God’s name is a verb, not just of being, but also of becoming” (308). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. J. Thomas, *Phanerosis* (Centenary Edition; West Beach: Logos Publications, 1969), 59-60; C. C. Walker, *Theophany* (Birmingham: CMPA, 1967), 22-23, 48-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. W. Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar* (ed. E. Kautzsch; trans. A. E. Cowley; 2nd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910); hereafter, GKC. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. B. T. Arnold and J. H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 184. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. GKC, 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Schild, “On Exodus iii 14 — ‘I am that I am’” 297. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. GKC, 138d. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Schild, “On Exodus iii 14 — ‘I am that I am’”, 298. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Schild, “On Exodus iii 14 — ‘I am that I am’”, 298. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 185-186. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Albrektson, “On the Syntax of ’*ehyeh* ’*asher* ’*ehyeh* in Exodus 3:14”, 21, 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Albrektson, “On the Syntax of ’*ehyeh* ’*asher* ’*ehyeh* in Exodus 3:14”, 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. For the same critique, see A. Gibson, “Our Man in Hell (1)” *The Testimony* (1971): 348-352. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. B. S. Childs, *Exodus* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1974), 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. D. J. McCarthy, “Exod 3:14: History, Philology and Theology” *CBQ* 40 (1978): 311-322 (316). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. [Ed. JWA] H. B. Swete, the Septuagintalist, in *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (Rev. Ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914) believed that “The translators frequently interpret words which call for explanation . . . . Occasionally a whole clause is interpreted rather than translated; e.g., Exod. iii. 14 *egō eimi ho ōn*” (326-327). Indeed, there are well-known cases of ‘relics of ancient exegesis’, not direct translation of the Hebrew Bible, in the LXX. Later (446-447), Swete cites Exod 3:14 as one of many examples listed which “serve to illustrate the exegesis of the LXX in the historical books”. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. [Ed JWA] Assertions of ‘being’, that He is, or exists, by God are rare in the Bible. God affirms promises on the fact that He lives (e.g., Num 14:21); when He does so he uses the verb ‘to live’, rather than ‘to be’. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. For a discussion of representation, see N. Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), ch. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. C. H. J. van der Merwe, J. A. Naudé and J. H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 141-142. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press (Clarendon), 1939), 56. This is the current teaching grammar at Durham University and has been for many years under its current Professor of Hebrew. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. J. F. A. Sawyer, *A Modern Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (London: Oriel Press, 1976), 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Sawyer, *A Modern Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1971), 55-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. G. S. Ogden, “Time, and the Verb *hyh* in O. T. Prose” *VT* 21 (1971): 451-469. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Ogden, “Time, and the Verb *hyh* in O. T. Prose”, 456. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Ogden, “Time, and the Verb *hyh* in O. T. Prose”, 458. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. This table is a list of the straightforward occurrences of ’*ehyeh* as given in BibleWorks. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Ogden, “Time, and the Verb *hyh* in O. T. Prose”, 457, gives the same analysis for Exod 3:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. This change in the modal from ‘would’ to ‘could’ avoids giving the impression that Hebrew is inflexible. It would be a mistake to argue that exactly the same Hebrew form (’*ehyeh* ’asher ’*ehyeh*) **would** be used to express ‘I am what I am’, ‘I am the one who exists’, or ‘I will be what I will be’. Pákozdy shows that Hebrew has alternative ways to express these sentences. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. L. M. Pákozdy, “I shall be that which I shall be” *The Bible Translator* 7 (1956): 146-148 (147). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. A. Phillips and L. Phillips, “The Origin of ‘I Am’ in Exodus 3.14” *JSOT* 78 (1998): 81-84 (82) offer the more literal rendering of the Hebrew as “I a no-’*ehyeh* to you” which strikes the link clearly and might be a better option if we wanted to indulge in Engrew or Heblish. [Ed: JWA] Or, given ‘*Lo-ruhammah*’, this could be ‘*Lo-ehyeh*’: “I am ‘*Lo-ehyeh*’ to you” (or: “I am ‘Not-I will be’ to/for you”). [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. For example, L. A. Weigle et al, *An Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1952); T. W. Chambers *A Companion to the Revised Old Testament* (London: H. E. Jerrard, 1885); nothing is noted in these volumes. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. In addition to the articles discussed in this paper, the April 1984 issue of *The Bible Translator* has a series of practical papers on translating divine names and titles. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Pákozdy, “I shall be that which I shall be”, 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. McCarthy, “Exod 3:14: History, Philology and Theology”, 318. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. McCarthy, “Exod 3:14: History, Philology and Theology”, 318. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Childs, *Exodus*, 84-87 (85). [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. See also S. Macdonald, “The Divine Nature” in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (eds. E. Stump and N. Kretzmann; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 71-90 (82). [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. *Summa Theologica*, Part 1, Q.13, Article 11 in *St Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologica, Latin Text and English Translation* (ed. T. Gilbey *et al*; London: Blackfriars, 1964), 3:91-93. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. See R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 476. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. F. Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875), 85. I thank J. W. Adey for this point. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. For a review of Jewish interpretation including the Mishnah, Talmud and Rabbah, see the papers of K. J. Cronin on [www.exodus-314.com](http://www.exodus-314.com); this is his website. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. *Targum Onqelos* (ed., B. Grossfield; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 8-9. For a discussion, see M. Buber and F. Rosenzweig, *Scripture and Translation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 102-104, 190-191, 192-195. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. M. Buber and F. Rosenzweig, *Scripture and Translation*, 194-195. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)