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**Editorial**

This issue sees the close of another volume of the EJournal, the eighth year. As usual the whole year is available on [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)/willowpublications as an ‘Annual’ for those who like books (as I do). This year has seen the publication of the sequel to *Reasons* entitled *More Reasons*, another multi-author volume of essays advocating that people should consider the case for belief in God and the Bible. God-willing, in the forthcoming year, there will be another multi-author book of essays, *Mortalism*, which will cover the topics of life-after-death and the mortality of man. The history of this doctrine in the hand of the Church, its biblical basis, and the so-called ‘difficult passages’ are considered. This book is now more or less at the stage of its first full draft. Essays have the advantage of being short and condensed and, with several authors, they have wider appeal.

Each year the EJournal writers decide whether to commit for another year (DV) or whether it is time to call a halt to this project which, God-willing, we will do one day. We have decided to continue for another year because we see a continuing need for peer-reviewed advanced study materials within the community. There are two broad types of Bible study: one is historico-critical study and the other is intertextual and literary study. Of these two types, the best historico-critical Bible study is being practised within scholarship and so we try and bring this into the community; the picture for the best intertextual and literary study, however, is not so clear cut; there is good and bad material inside and outside the community.

Journals attached to secular universities accept material that meets scholarly standards without regard to the conclusions being drawn. The EJournal follows this principle, but where there is likely to be disagreement within the community, it publishes such material in ‘discussion’ format, so that arguments for and against can be weighed. Another difference with academic journals is that we add editorial footnotes to articles that alert readers to alternative lines of interpretation. In this way material can be published with contrary points of view referenced in footnotes for follow-up research. Our editorial view is that a homogenised approach to producing a bible interpretation journal is not possible in these days of the Internet. A final difference with academic journals is that we also publish non-academic material, usually intertextual items, but also we include some opinion pieces.

As another volume closes, we say goodbye, with our thanks for his contributions, to Bro. Richard Benson, who has to give time to an MA, but, God-willing, for the next year, we will be welcoming a new columnist, Bro. Andrew Wilson, who will be writing in his professional area of history. **AP**

**Articles**

**Analysing the Songs of Degrees (Part 2)**

**P. Wyns**

**Introduction**

The table below presents a summary analysis of the *Psalms of Degrees* (Ascent). Of course, one cannot hope to do justice to the psalms in such a short piece but the objective is not an in-depth exegesis but, rather, a consideration of the main arguments for and against the late dating of these psalms. This article (and the previous article) places the *Psalms of Degrees* in the reign of Hezekiah with the Assyrian crisis forming the background to the Psalms.

**Dating the Old Testament**

Many arguments for a late date (postexilic) are based on linguistic grounds and the table column below ‘Post-Exilic Dating’ reproduces Craig Davis’ comments found in *Dating the Old Testament*, (New York: RJ Communications, 2007) pages 355-360. Davies summarises the most important scholarly arguments regarding the date of the psalms.

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| **Ps.** | **Post-Exilic Dating** | **The Reign of Hezekiah** |
| **120** | The author speaks with the voice of a Jew in the Diaspora, away from Jerusalem. This first Psalm of Ascents sets the stage for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem described in the subsequent Psalms. This suggests a post-exilic date. | This is thought to be a pilgrimage psalm because it mentions “dwelling in Meshech and the tents of Kedar” (120:5). This assumes that the Psalm is concerned with deportees to regions beyond Babylon but apart from the fact that this also occurred during the Hezekiah’s period,[[1]](#footnote-1) most commentators ignore the poetic intent of “Meshech”, which means “drawing out” the same root is used to describe the drawing out of the Passover Lamb (Exod. 12:21) and for “drawing out seed” (Ps 126:6). Kedar is associated with “darkness” and “mourning” (tents of darkness). The picture emerges of being *drawn out* for *death* like the Passover Lamb and the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. The situation describes an individual (Hezekiah) advocating peace (120:7) while his opponent (Sennacherib) wants war (2 Kgs. 18:14, 19; 2 Chron. 32:1-3; Isa. 36:3, 5; 38:17). The Psalmist is in distress and facing illness, blasphemy, deceit and internal betrayal. The context of the Psalm **is war** not pilgrimage. Nothing in the Psalm suggests a post-exilic date.  |
| **121** | There is no setting for this Psalm, except that it is a Psalm of Ascents looking forward to a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The phrase, “Maker of heaven and earth” (v. 2) ties this Psalm in with other Book 5 Psalms (115:15, 124:8, 134:3 and 146:6) | Psalm 121 is thematically similar to Isaiah 40; Lift up your eyes (40:26; 120:1); comfort (40:1); help (Ps. 121:2); creator (40:28), maker of heaven and earth (121:2); faint and weary (40:28), sleep and slumber (121:4); a shepherd (40:11), thy keeper (121:5). The switch between first (‘I” and ‘my’ vv. 1, 2) and third person singular (‘thee’ and ‘thy’ vv.3-8) pronouns in psalm 121 makes it probable that Isaiah himself is speaking in 121:3-8. Thematic Isaiah connections point to the Hezekiah period. |
| **122** | Some Septuagint mss. do not assign Psalm 122 to David. The phrase “house of David” in v. 5 sounds like a pre-exilic but post- David phrase. Thrones and palaces in Jerusalem sound pre-exilic, and the idea of multiple tribes going up to Jerusalem (v. 4) does seem to fit with the united monarchy period more than any other. In v. 4 we have the first appearance in Psalms of an attached Hebrew “shin” particle (X) used as a relative pronoun. The early spelling of ‘David’ (dwID') is used in the attribution, but the later spelling is used in v. 5. The evidence on this Psalm is mixed, so we date it tentatively to the latter part of David’s reign, based on the attribution and the mention of multiple tribes, with a later rework in the post-exilic period. | The phrase “house of David” could well have originated with David (cf. 2 Sam. 7:26, “house of thy servant David”) and the phrase “house of the Lord” could refer either to the Tabernacle (David’s era) or the Temple (Hezekiah’s era). The plural “thrones of the house of David” (122:5) probably refers to priestly judgement thrones established by the Davidic dynasty to administer justice (Deut. 17:8-9; cf. 2 Chron. 19:8). Isaiah associates Jerusalem with the teaching of the law and justice (Isa. 2:3-4).[[2]](#footnote-2) The Hebrew “shin” particle (X) is not necessarily an indicator of “lateness”[[3]](#footnote-3) but of northern Israelite origins, similarly the alternative spelling of ‘David’ indicates a northern Israelite dialect.[[4]](#footnote-4) It seems then that we have a Davidic psalm that has been reworked by Hezekiah’s men (Prov. 25:1), who included northern Israelite scribes from “agrarian” and “border areas” such as Galilee of the nations (Isa. 9:1) and Ephraim and Manasseh (2 Chron. 30:1). Hezekiah themes include cult centralization and tribal unity and Isaiah’s prayer for *the peace of Jerusalem* (Isa. 62:6-7) which echoes Ps. 122:6. Hephzibah in Isa. 62:4 is the name of Hezekiah’s bride in 2 Kgs. 21:1. |
| **123** | Psalm 123 is dated to the exile due to God being enthroned in heaven (v. 1 –but not Zion), and because the Psalmist sees the community as being “greatly filled with contempt” (v. 3). An attached “shin” particle is in v. 2. | The argument by omission is weak as enthronement of God in heaven does not exclude enthronement in Zion, Solomon understands that the *shekinah* is present in both places *simultaneously* as the earthly cherubim is a symbolic depiction of the heavenly throne and even the “heaven of heavens” could not contain God (1 Kgs. 8:27, 30). Therefore reference to “enthronement in heaven” does not imply that the Temple has already been destroyed. When Hezekiah received the letter from Sennacherib’s messengers he went to the house of the Lord (the throne in Zion) and prayed; “O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, who art enthroned above the Cherubim. Thou art the God, thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Thou hast made heaven and earth...” (Isa. 37:16). Compare Ps. 123:1; “...**to thee I lift up my eyes**, O thou who art enthroned in the heavens”. The contempt in this Psalm refers to the ridicule and blasphemy perpetrated by Rabshakeh,“Against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and **lifted up thine eyes on high?** Even against the Holy One of Israel? (2 Kgs. 19:22; Isa. 37:23). |
| **124** | Psalm 124 is attributed to David and has no significant evidence for dating. The existence of three “shin” particles implies that this Psalm was reworked in the post-exilic period into its current form. VV. 3-5 and 7 have 7 perfect tense verbs and no imperfects, a ratio representative of Classical rather than Early Biblical Hebrew. The phrase, “maker of heaven and earth” (v. 8) ties this Psalm in with other Book 5 Psalms (115:15, 121:2, 134:3 and 146:6). | The attribution may possibly be generic (i.e. for the Davidide). The existence of “shin” particles indicates northern influence[[5]](#footnote-5) and the verb ratio is inconclusive for dating purposes.[[6]](#footnote-6) The phrases are descriptive of the Assyrian crisis: “The Lord... was on our side” (124:1); “Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14; 8:8, 10) – “God is with us” (124:2); “men rose up against us” (124:3); “their wrath was kindled against us” (124:5); “the proud waters” (cf. Assyrian ‘flood waters’ in Isa. 8:7, 8) and (124:7); “Our soul is escaped **as a bird** out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped”. The cylinder, or prism, of Sennacherib has the following statement: “Hezekiah himself like a ***caged bird***, within Jerusalem, his royal city, I shut in.” |
| **125** | This Psalm’s perspective on the immovability of Mt Zion and God’s protection of his people there could fit with a pre-exilic time, perhaps after the failed Assyrian invasion. However, it is assigned to Haggai in the Peshitta, an early Aramaic translation, and it is unlikely (though not impossible) that a tradition of later authorship would develop over an earlier text. The Hebrew for “upright in heart” in v. 4 (~twblb ~yrXyl) is not an expected form and probably late, as the earlier Psalms which have the same meaning use a construct form (7:10 [Heb 7:11], 11:2, 32:11, 36:10 [Heb 36:11] and 94:15). Earlier passages that say “cannot be moved” (v. 1) use “bal” (lb) instead of “lo” (al) as a negation (Pss 10:6, 46:5 [Heb 46:6], 93:1, 96:10, Prov 12:3). | Zion emerged inviolable from the Assyrian crisis but was destroyed by Babylon therefore this Psalm cannot be post exilic. The “rod of the wicked” (125:3) is the Assyrian rod mentioned by Isaiah; “O my people that dwell in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: *he shall smite thee with a rod*... for yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease” (Isa. 10:24, 25). Those who turn aside (125:3), refers to the supporters of Shebna (a Phoenician). In Isaiah’s rebuke, he repeated the word “here” three times, indicating that Shebna was a foreigner and did not belong in the courts of Judah (Isa. 22:16). According to Rabbinic tradition (Sanhedrin 26a), Shebna the scribe, influenced the royal court and attempted to persuade the people of Jerusalem to surrender to the Assyrians. Whatever the validity of the tradition, it is obvious that there were elements in the royal court who took advantage of Hezekiah’s illness. *Peace* (125:5) *shall be upon Israel* fits Hezekiah’s times (see 2 Kgs 20:19; Isa. 39:8). The idiom “in (the) heart” appears 114x in the OT, 24x in the Psalms alone. The phrase “upright in heart” is found 9x in the Psalms (out of 14 occurrences in the OT) but the form for “upright in their hearts” is only found in Ps. 125:4. It may be an example of northern usage rather than an indication of lateness:“To negate nouns and verbs, Phoenician/Punic used ya ***’y****/’****īl*** and lb ***bl***/***bal***/ (along with the compound lbya ***’ybl*** /*’****ībal***/), as opposed to Hebrew al ***lō***. For a Hebrew example from a prophet active in the north, see ‘Wrm.ayO\*-lb;W~b'êb'l.li *ù-bal-yōmrù li-lbäbäm* ‘and they do not say in their hearts’ (Hos. 7.2).”[[7]](#footnote-7)  “…..scholars have long noted that Deuteronomy has a strong preference for *lebab* as “heart,” while Jeremiah strongly prefers *leb*. Jeremiah’s preference is shared by, among others, Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Judges and Samuel, and hence is not obviously a sign of “lateness.” Among the LBH books, Chronicles and Daniel align with Deuteronomy in preferring *lebab*, whereas the other LBH and LBH-related books prefer *lebab*……this data cannot be used in support of the chronological theory, it has been generally ignored by language scholars.”[[8]](#footnote-8) |
| **126** | This short Psalm can be dated with high confidence. The reference to a return from captivity (v. 1) while knowing that the exile is still a reality for many (v. 4) places this Psalm in the early post-exilic period. This Psalm is also assigned to Haggai in the Peshitta | The “returned captives” may refer to the release of the 200,150 deportees with the defeat of Assyria, but more probably the phrase “turn again our captivity” (126:1, 4) is intended figuratively as the RSV/NIV/NRS/NIB versions render the Hebrew dynamically as “restore our fortunes”. Those who were held “captive” during the siege of Jerusalem or held “captive” by death (Hezekiah) had *their fortunes restored*.[[9]](#footnote-9) The reference to sowing, reaping and *precious seed* (126:6) was literally applicable to the devastated land (2 Kgs. 19:29; Isa. 37:30; v. 31 a Jubilee? cf. Lev. 25:10) but *restoration of fortunes* was particularly relevant to Hezekiah who nearly died without an heir to the throne which would have invalidated the Davidic covenant; “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand” (Isa. 53:10). The returnees had ‘songs of joy’ (126:2 NIB/NIV) on their tongues; “The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs (Hezekiah’s) to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord” (Isa. 38:20). |
| **127** | This Psalm is attributed to Solomon and leaves virtually no additional evidence for dating. | The prepositional prefix *l’*is the same as the ascription *of David*in the title of Psalm 124. The ascription indicates the content (concerning Solomon) and not necessarily the authorship of the Psalm. The phrase “so he giveth his beloved sleep” (127:2) echoes Solomon’s throne name (2 Sam. 12:25) *Jedidiah* (‘beloved of Yahweh’) and 127:1 is stylistically similar to Proverbs (cf. Prov. 8:15; 16:9; 21:30, 31), but that is not unexpected, as Proverbs was edited by ‘Hezekiah’s men’ (Prov. 25:1). Psalm 127 is a reflection on 2 Samuel 7, where David’s desire to build a “house” for God was countered by Yahweh establishing a covenant concerning “David’s house”. Although the initial outworking of the covenant was satisfied by Solomon the promise presaged far reaching **dynastic** (and messianic) outcomes: “thou hast spoken also of thy servant’s house for a great while to come” (2 Sam. 7:19) and, “bless the house of thy servant that it may continue forever before thee” (v. 29). However, the reign of Hezekiah almost saw the end of the dynastyand the **annulment of Davidic hope**. This Psalm speaks in dynastic terms of (127:1); *building the house* (127:4); *the* *heritage of children* and of children supporting their father when he *speaks in the gate with his enemies* (127:5); a luxury denied Hezekiah when he was childless and dying (cf. “answer him not” in 2 Kings 18:36; Isa. 36:21).  |
| **128** | This Psalm looks to be connected to Psalm 125 due to the repeated blessing, “Peace be upon Israel” (125:5 and 128:6) and the use of Zion and Jerusalem together (125:12 and 128:5) | Psalm 128 sets a scene of tranquility, prosperity and peace in the aftermath of the Assyrian crisis. Despite the prediction that his children would serve as eunuchs in Babylon, Hezekiah believed that Yahweh would suspend his sentence (Isa. 39:7-8) and he expresses the desire to live long enough to see his descendants prospering (128:6): “Yes, may you see your children’s children” (NKJV) and, “may you live to see your children’s children” (NIB). Hezekiah saw the birth of a son (Manasseh) but not his grandchildren. The idiomatic “*eating* the labour of thine hands” (128:2) refers to Jacob’s trials: “God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee **yesternight**” (Gen. 31:42). Unlike Laban the Syrian, who was warned not to speak either ‘good or bad’ to Jacob (Gen. 31:29), Assyrian propaganda threatened Jerusalem with both eating faeces and drinking urine during the siege (2 Kgs. 18:27), or surrendering and eating figs and drinking clean water (v. 31). Yahweh “saw their affliction’ (like he did with Jacob) and rebuked the Assyrian **overnight** (2 Kgs. 19:35), instead of defeat, the people of Jerusalem would *eat the labour of their hands*. |
| **129** | This Psalm gives few clues as to its date. Psalms 129 131 seem to be connected, as they all contain exhortations directed to Israel. “Shin” relative pronouns appear in vv. 6 and 7. | A comparison with Isaiah establishes the Assyrian crisis as the context of Psalm 129: “Let all those who hate Zion be put to shame and turned back. Let them be **as the grass *on* the housetops**, which withers before it grows up, with which the reaper does not fill his hand, nor he who binds sheaves, his arms” (Ps. 129:5-7). Compare: “Therefore their inhabitants *were* of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were *as* the grass of the field, and *as* the green herb, ***as* the grass on the housetops**, and *as corn* blasted before it be grown up.But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me” (Isa. 37:27-28). The Assyrians had “ploughed” the land with their burnt earth policy (cf. Joel 2:3) and sown a harvest of devastation, Hezekiah empathised with the plight of his people and lying on his death bed it felt like the Assyrian “plough” had cut furrows down his very back (129:3). However, it is poignant that the Psalm ends (129:8) with the *harvest blessing* pronounced by Hezekiah’s ancestor Boaz (Ruth 2:4) demonstrating that Yahweh is able to raise seed, even to the dead. |
| **130** | This Psalm gives few clues as to its date. The address to “Israel” alone (not Judah) in v. 7 argues against a divided kingdom or a Judah-alone pre-exilic date. | Hezekiah’s reformation sought a united Israel with the cult centralised in Jerusalem, so this Psalm fits the time period. Moreover, the Psalm could almost be a summary of Hezekiah’s crisis:**1.** Hezekiah’s sore weeping (Isa. 38:3; 2 Kgs. 20:3), as from out of a grave or pit (Isa. 38:18).**2.** “Remember now, O Lord....” (Isa. 38:3; 2 Kgs. 20:3). “Bow down thine ear and hear” (2 Kgs. 19:16).**3-4.** “For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back” (Isa. 38:17).**5-6.** The certainty in Hezekiah’s mind that, unless God intervene, his life will end by the morning (Isa. 38:12-13, RSV).**7.** Hezekiah’s personal hope is the nation’s hope as well. “Deliver thou us out of his hand” (2 Kgs. 19:19).**8.** “The Lord was ready to save me” (Isa. 38:20) and “the remnant that are left” (2 Kings 19:4).  |
| **131** | This short Psalm is dated to the time of David based solely on the attribution. We are also assigning this Psalm to the collection of reworked Psalms due to this Psalm’s association with Psalms 129 and 130. Notice the phrase “O Israel hope in the Lord” in 131:3 and 130:7. | The association of this Psalm with 129 and 130 would place it in the same context as those Psalms (Hezekiah). The psalm also seems to correspond with the historical situation of David related in 1 Samuel 16-18, but the sentiments are also wholly appropriate to Hezekiah. We are most certainly dealing with original Davidic material that has been reworked to fit the circumstances of Hezekiah. |
| **132** | This Psalm is clearly post Davidic, due to the prayer asking the Lord to remember David (v. 1 and following). It is also clearly pre-exilic, with the emphasis on the Davidic covenant and the mention of the Ark of the Covenant in v. 8 (the ark disappears during the exile). The older short spelling of David’s name is used throughout the Psalm. The early relative pronoun “zo” (wz) appears in v. 12. The phrase “Mighty One of Jacob” from vv. 2 and 5 is also in Isa. 49:26 and 60:16 (and Gen. 49:24). | The context clearly demands a time somewhere between David and the exile (as suggested by Davis). The appeal to “remember David” employs the same Hebrew *l’* prefix as the attribution *of David* suggesting reference to the content (not the authorship) of the psalm. Psalm 132 is a remembrance by Hezekiah of past Davidic glory under a united kingdom, a lament for present distress, and a prophecy of future blessing. The early relative pronoun “zō” (wz) confirms the early origins of the psalm and possible northern influence.[[10]](#footnote-10) The phrase “Mighty One of Jacob” employed by Isaiah confirms the time period (Hezekiah) as does the tribal affiliation of the original blessing.[[11]](#footnote-11) |
| **133** | This is one of the Psalms that we put in the category of Davidic/reworked. The reference to Mount Hermon in v. 3 supports the idea that the Psalm originated with David, since Hermon was lost to the Davidic monarchy as early as the time of Rehoboam (931 BCE). The two “shin” relative pronouns in vv. 2 and 3 are evidence of later language. | This is probably a “Davidic/reworked” psalm but the reference to Hermon is not necessarily an anachronism as it is intended as a northern counterweight to the southern Zion. The Psalm encompasses the land from north to south with the Hezekiah thematic of unity and brotherhood of worship (at Zion). The original Davidic setting seems to be a year of Jubilee blessing and the anointing of a new high priest (Zadok?) which corresponds with the Jubilee sign accorded Hezekiah. [[12]](#footnote-12) |
| **134** | This short Psalm gives few clues as to its date of writing. The phrase, “Maker of heaven and earth” (v. 3) ties this Psalm in with other Book 5 Psalms (115:15, 121:2, 124:8 and 146:6) | The phrase “Maker of heaven and earth” (v. 3) reflects Hezekiah’s response to Rabshakeh’s blasphemy (2 Kgs 19:12): “Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; **thou hast made heaven and earth***”* (2 Kgs 19:15; 2 Chron. 32:19; Isa. 37:36). This, the concluding psalm of the fifteen Songs of Degrees, deals with a night of service by the priests in the Temple. Note the progression,Psalm 132: Blessing **for** ZionPsalm 133: Blessing **in** ZionPsalm 134: Blessing **from** Zion |

**Conclusion**

 J. W. Thirtle proposed that the *Psalms of Degrees* all belonged to the Hezekiah era and that many of the Korah Psalms also belonged within the same time frame.[[13]](#footnote-13) His work has more recently been progressed by G. Booker and H. A. Whittaker in their commentary on the Psalms. The contextual arguments for dating these psalms to Hezekiah are powerful, whereas the linguistic arguments for dating these psalms long after Hezekiah are unconvincing. On contextual evidence alone we can safely date these psalms to Hezekiah. The linguistic evidence is at best open to interpretation and even if linguistic forms can sometimes be proven to be of later origin that does not exclude updating as no language is static, and despite the sanctity of the copyists’ remit for a literal transcription, the clarification of archaic language or syntax by copyists or updating for liturgical purposes (think here of updating hymn books) cannot be discounted.

**Using Biblical Hebrew to Date the OT**

**P. Wyns**

**Introduction**

In a previous article we highlighted the fact that Biblical Hebrew is often employed to assign a date to OT books and we highlighted several methodological problems with this approach.[[14]](#footnote-14)

A basic premise behind linguistic dating is that as languages evolve over time, they develop new words or syntax and incorporate loan words; in theory this allows a chronological time line to be established, which then can be used to date a specific piece of writing. This is important as it allows scholars to accord several biblical books a “late” date.

Books such as Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Job and many of the Psalms (and other books) are perceived to be “late” books, that is, they are dated after the burning of the temple (in 586 BCE) and after the Babylonian exile. Usually they are said to be dated in the Persian period (Ezra/Nehemiah) or even later. Does this matter? If the intertextual and contextual evidence of a Psalm or an OT book points to an earlier date then we have a problem. If the Hebrew language suggests a late date and the context suggests an earlier date then one of the two is wrong and this makes it impossible to reconstruct the original setting. For example, if the language of a Psalm suggests a “late” date of composition, but the context and ascription attributes a Psalm to David we face a “contradiction”.

The discipline of Biblical Hebrew linguistics includes philology, semantics, syntax, etymology, morphology etc. and is specialised and therefore the layperson is dependent on conclusions drawn by others. However, recent studies demonstrate that the scholarly consensus on the conclusions of linguistic dating is being challenged and starting to shift. The impetus for writing this article is as background for the two articles on the Songs of Degrees, or Songs of Ascent (Psalm 120-134); many of these Psalms are dated to the postexilic period, despite intertextual evidence for a much earlier date.

For example, the OT scholar, John Day, employs a linguistic argument to determine a late date for many of the Songs of Ascent:

An interesting example concerns the use of the Hebrew relative particle *še* instead of the normal classical Hebrew form *’ášer*. Whilst this can be early, as its presence in Judges 5 suggests (cf. v.7), the fact that it became the regular relative particle in Mishnaic Hebrew proves that it could also be a late form, and such it surely is when it occurs in the Psalter. It appears there in some of the Psalms of ascent or steps (Pss 122.3; 123.2; 124.1, 2, 6; 129.6, 7; 133.2, 3), as well as in Pss 135.2, 8, 10; 136.23, 137.8, 9 and 144.15. Of these Psalms 124, 133 and 144.12-15 already appear in Hurvitz’s list of indubitably late psalms and Psalm 135 has been adjudged post-exilic above on the basis of its reference to the ‘house of Aaron’ in v.19 (cf. Ps.133.2), whilst Psalm 137 clearly reflects the experience of exile. Add to this the observation that all the instances of *še* in Psalms occur in the last third of the Psalter, where cumulative evidence indicates that a large number of late psalms are concentrated, and the case becomes overwhelming that all psalms containing *še* are no earlier than the exile, and apart from Psalm 137[[15]](#footnote-15) are very likely post-exilic.[[16]](#footnote-16)

The classical study on this topic referred to in scholarship (see Day above) is by Avi Hurvitz, who examined the linguistic signature of much of the OT literature and devoted a study to the Psalms published in the Hebrew language.[[17]](#footnote-17) This is the foundational study for Hurvitz’s method of identifying “Late Biblical Hebrew” (LBH). A summary, focusing on methodology, was published in English.[[18]](#footnote-18) More recently Hurvitz’s methodology has been challenged by G. A. Rendsburg,[[19]](#footnote-19) I. Young,[[20]](#footnote-20) R. Rezetko, and M. Ehrensvärd.[[21]](#footnote-21) Whereas the traditional opinion, represented by Avi Hurvitz, believes that Late Biblical Hebrew was distinct from Early Biblical Hebrew (EBH) and thus one can date biblical texts on linguistic grounds, the more recent view argues that Early and Late Biblical Hebrew were merely stylistic choices through the entire biblical period. Young and Rezetko state,

LBH [is] merely one style of Hebrew in the Second Temple and quite possibly First Temple periods. Both EBH and LBH are styles with roots in preexilic Hebrew, which continue throughout the postexilic period. ‘Early’ BH and ‘Late’ BH therefore, do not represent different chronological periods in the history of BH, but instead represent coexisting styles of literary Hebrew throughout the biblical period.[[22]](#footnote-22)

 Moreover, the situation is complicated by dialect, colloquialisms and archaisms.

**The “shin” particle**

We will look at a case study on the “shin” particle *še* (שׁ) as this is often employed for dating purposes in the scholarly literature (again, see Day above). Many of us read the KJV version of the Bible; the language is beautiful, as it is the English of Shakespeare. Unfortunately, many of the terms are archaic English as the meaning of the word has changed in the evolution of the language. Let us say that we found a few lines of a poem that used the pronouns “thee” and “thou” instead of “you”. Could this poem be contemporary with Shakespeare? Yes, it might be, but it could also be a deliberate stylistic choice. The poet may be introducing “archaisms” for stylistic reasons. Then again it might be written by a native Yorkshire man from the older generation who still uses “thee” and “thou” in everyday speech. In that case we are speaking of a dialect or a colloquialism.

We have chosen the “shin” particle *še* (v) as a case study as it is frequently referred to in scholarly literature as an indicator of a “late” post-exilic date. The comments below are a synopsis from two articles by R. D. Holmstedt and the reader is referred there for a comprehensive treatment of the subject.

The data suggests that *’ášer* was gradually replaced with *še* and therefore occurrences of *še* suggest a late date. While there are about 5,500 *ášer* clauses in the Hebrew Bible, there are only 139 occurrences of *še*. Of these, 68 are in Qoheleth and 32 are in Song of Songs;[[23]](#footnote-23) 21 are in various psalms from Psalm 122 onward, and the remaining 18 are scattered in the Hebrew Bible, literally, from beginning to end.[[24]](#footnote-24) In his 2006 study Holmstedt argues that *ášer* has a single function throughout ancient Hebrew: to nominalise clauses,

In other words, in relative clauses *ášer* nominalises a clause so that it may function as an adjective-like modifier of a noun (e.g., the man **that**....), and in complement clauses *ášer* nominalises a clause so that it may function as a complement noun (e.g., the fact **that**...) or verb (e.g., he swore **that**...).[[25]](#footnote-25)

Holmstedt concludes that,

Concerning the extreme few examples of *ášer* that are often analysed as something other than relatives or complements, all but a handful can be analysed as relatives (either simple, null-head, or extraposed). And second, it does not appear that there are any demonstrable changes in the use of the word from the earliest attested stage of Hebrew through to the Mishnah; in other words, ancient Hebrew *ášer* did not undergo reanalysis.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Perhaps his most important observation is the following:

In fact, given the numerous recent challenges to the three-stage model, as well as the greater interest in identifying remnants of a northern dialect of Hebrew in the biblical material, we should perhaps refrain from making any strong statements on the supposed grammaticalisation of *ášer* from the early to the later stages.[[27]](#footnote-27)

In other words the introduction of *še* (from northern origins) did not change the use of *ášer* (no grammaticalisation) either in early or late Hebrew. It would seem then that *ášer* and *še* were employed side by side (interchangeably?) without necessitating syntactical transformation (which we would expect with a substitution). On the origins of *še* Holmstedt has the following to say,

Accounting for the variation between rva and v typically weaves diachrony, dialect, and stylistics together. Since Gotthelf Bergsträsser’s (1909) “*Das hebräische Präfix* v,” it has been the scholarly consensus to trace the etymology of Hebrew v from the Akkadian relative *ša*. It has since become generally accepted that the route between Akkadian *ša* and what we find in the Hebrew Bible goes through northern Canaanite (for example, Phoenician) and then northern Hebrew. The northern connection has been suggested in particular to account for the appearance of v in Judges 5–8 (5:7; 6:17; 7:12; 8:26), as well as the single occurrence in 2 Kgs 6:11. By combining the northern origin view with diachrony, the following reconstruction is common: v became the relative word of choice (perhaps originally by borrowing from Phoenician), by change and diffusion, within some Hebrew grammar in the north (which presumably also already had rva), from which it influenced some southern grammar, particularly after 722 B.C.E., so that eventually it replaced rva (see Kutscher 1982: 32, §45; Davila 1990; Rendsburg 2006; compare Bergsträsser 1909).

Alongside the dialectal and diachronic perspectives (and in some tension with them) are the register and style proposals. For register, some have identified v as the colloquial Hebrew relative word and dva as the literary choice (Bendavid 1967: 77; see also Joüon 1923: 89; Segal 1927: 42–43). Taking this a step further, Gary Rendsburg has situated this variation within a diglossia analysis, suggesting that rva reflects the “High” variety and v reflects the Low” variety that had somehow made its way into a formal, written context (Rendsburg 1990: 116–18; Davila 1994). For style, Davila has suggested that the use of both rva and v is a literary device: “the impression we get [of the author of Qoheleth] is that he was a proud iconoclast, and it is not hard to imagine him as a sage who insisted on talking like real folks and not the highbrows in Jerusalem” (Davila 1994). In Young and Rezetko 2008, the stylistic analysis is taken a step further: the use of v is identified as “substandard” Hebrew in the service of the “unconventional writing” of an “unconventional thinker” (2008: 2.65) and denied any diachronic relevance (2008: 1.214, 227, 247)”.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Holmstedt employs biblical and extra biblical sources (such as Qumran, Mishnah etc.) to plot the distribution of v and a typical S-curve emerges (see Figure 3 below).

For the purpose of his analysis Holmstedt has split the Psalms into three different groups (Ps-A, Ps-B and Ps-C) and as we can see Ps-B and Ps-C groupings appear late on the S-curve. This seems to confirm his argument that, for example, the grouping of Ps-C is of late origins as it contains nearly the same percentage of “shin” particles as the Mishnah (MSH), which is known to be a late writing. Ecclesiastes (Ecc) and Songs (Sng) also seem to be “late” postexilic books. However, there are problems with the methodology and with the interpretation of the data. If the biblical data is weighed and analysed[[29]](#footnote-29) as a PDF (Probability Density Function; see diagram below) a skewed platykurtic form of the normal distribution emerges demonstrating that both high and low occurrences of *ášer* fall within a standard population range and therefore do not indicate an increasing trend in the usage of *ášer* .[[30]](#footnote-30)

**Conclusion**

Although linguistics is a useful tool and is probably helpful in establishing *relative* dates (books that are prior), without accompanying intertextual and socio-historic evidence, it cannot establish *absolute* dates. The available data is open to interpretations other than diffusion and care must be taken to avoid methodological errors that bias the presentation of the data. Using the same data we conclude that the emergence of the “shin” particle was not due to a slow diffuse process but rather by a rapid adoption of northern Israelite scribal practices (by Judean scribes) caused by the influx of northern refugees after the fall of Samaria and the Assyrian crisis during Hezekiah’s reign.[[31]](#footnote-31)

**Adoptionism in Early Christianity**

**T. Gaston**

**Introduction**

What did the early Christians mean by the claim that Jesus was the Son of God? Trinitarian Christians understand the sonship of Jesus through his supposed eternal procession from the Father. Biblical unitarian Christians understand the sonship of Jesus through his birth of a virgin. However, the view proposed by the early 20c. German scholar, Adolf Harnack, and affirmed by many scholars since, is that the earliest Christians understood Jesus’ sonship to be adoptive, that Jesus was an ordinary man **chosen** by God to be called his son.[[32]](#footnote-32) It was only later that Christians added the idea that Jesus’ sonship was not purely adoptive but ontological through his miraculous birth.

This proposal is appealing to scholars for a number of reasons. Firstly, if you view the historical Jesus as being an ordinary man (say, an apocalyptic prophet) then it is inconvenient to think that Jesus might have actually claimed to be the Son of God (or indeed to actually have been the Son of God). The claim that early Christians first viewed Jesus’ sonship as adoptive and only later as actual creates a logical narrative for the transition from this view of the historical Jesus to later Christological developments.[[33]](#footnote-33) Recently, the American scholar Bart Ehrman has popularised this view in his book *How Jesus Became God,* theorising that Jesus claimed to be the messiah during his lifetime but that after his death the earliest Christians came to the view that Jesus was adopted to semi-divinity at his resurrection. As time went on, Ehrman argues, this moment of Jesus’ divinization was pushed earlier: to his baptism, then to his birth, then to before his birth. [[34]](#footnote-34)

Secondly, an adoptive sonship might seem more consistent with Old Testament precedent. The kings of Israel and Judah were described as sons of God (Pss 2:7; 89:26; 2 Sam 7:14); a status, it is argued, that the king acquired at his coronation. Whether this new status is best understood as adoptive is disputed,[[35]](#footnote-35) but clearly these kings were not actual sons of God. For those who understand Jesus’ sonship to be synonymous with (or else originating from) his claim to be the Messiah (i.e. the future king of Israel) then it makes sense for his sonship to be analogous to that of the kings of Israel. The idea that Jesus’ sonship was as a consequence of his birth would thus be a later embellishment on his claim to be the Messiah.

Thirdly, the existence of groups like the Ebionites in the second century AD (and perhaps earlier) who denied the virgin birth and, arguably, viewed Jesus as being adopted at his baptism, has led some to suggest that perhaps these groups preserved something of the earliest Christology.

However, the convenience of a theory is not the same as evidence for that theory. The sonship of Jesus was connected with the virgin birth by Matthew and Luke no later than c.80 AD and since both record it, seemingly independently, then this view clearly did not originate with them. This means that the view that Jesus was adopted must have flourished, withered and been supplanted within a single generation, if it was the view of the earliest Christians. Or if, as seems likely, Paul held that Christ was more than the adoptive son of God, then this must be squeezed into an even tighter timeframe, since Paul’s letters date from the 50s and 60s. This requires us to believe that those eyewitnesses to the life and sayings of Jesus did not object to these Christological developments, or else were not consulted, or else were somehow convinced to adjust their memories.

When it comes to the evidence for this adoptionist Christology that, supposedly, predates the NT texts, this evidence is not the NT texts themselves but, what are known as, pre-literary traditions, that is, sayings, creeds or formulae that pre-date the NT texts but were incorporated within them. In terms of such pre-literary texts that are supposed to proclaim the adoption of Jesus, there are only a handful. J. Knox refers only to Acts 2:36.[[36]](#footnote-36) Ehrman, who has no reason for restraint on this issue, cites only four texts that might support the idea that Jesus was adopted as his resurrection (Acts 2:36; 5:31; 13:32-33; Rom 1:3-4). He cites a further two as evidence that Jesus was adopted as his baptism (Mark 1:9-11; variants of Luke 3:22).[[37]](#footnote-37) J. C. O’Neill, who carefully considers all possible allusions to adoptionism, would add only Acts 4:24-27 to this list.[[38]](#footnote-38) In this essay I will analyse each of these proposed evidences and argue that none of them support the view that adoptionism was the Christology of the earliest Christians.

Before proceeding, however, it will be useful to note some interpretative issues. When considering the question of adoption, it is important to ask “adopted to what”. In this essay, I am considering the view that Jesus’ sonship was adoptive; that Jesus may have acquired new status at his resurrection, say, is not equivalent. For example O’Neill argues that “all the terms that have been taken to imply God ‘adopted’ or ‘chose out’ Jesus for a new dignity refer without exception to his enthronement as King”.[[39]](#footnote-39) He reasons that the words used in these passages do not imply a change in the relationship between Jesus and God, but refer to “the public promulgation of his power”.[[40]](#footnote-40) He attempts to show that behind all the verses taken as indications of adoptionism are four Old Testament passages that are all to do with the Israelite king.[[41]](#footnote-41) Interestingly, Adela Collins would agree with O’Neill about the OT precedent whilst disagreeing with his conclusion. Both O’Neill and Collins connect Jesus’ sonship with his kingship, but O’Neill would argue that the earliest Christians had a high Christology. It is evident that the NT writers believed that Jesus did ascend into heaven and that his status was, in this sense, changed. Therefore it is not sufficient to identify texts, pre-literary or not, that state that Jesus acquired new authority, power or status by his ascension. The issue is the sonship of Jesus and from whence that derives.

The other consideration to bear in mind is that one’s interpretation will differ depending on whether you believe being the Son of God is synonymous with being the Christ. Given William Wrede’s early 20c. thesis that Jesus did not claim to be the Messiah is now thoroughly discredited and dismissed, if you regard “Christ” and “Son of God” as synonyms then you must regard Jesus as being Son of God prior to his resurrection. If, on the other hand, you think that these titles are not synonyms then any passage that mentions only messianic status will be irrelevant to the question of sonship.

**Acts 2:36**

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified (Acts 2:36 ESV)

Luke ascribes these words to Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14), but regardless of whether these words can be attributed to Peter (denied by some), they are regarded as pre-dating Luke’s composition of Acts. These words are taken to affirm that Jesus was made Lord and Christ after his resurrection and ascension (Acts 2:32-33). The aorist tense of “made” is ambiguous and does not require that Jesus was made Christ after his ascension. Nevertheless the logic of the passage would seem to be that the one murdered by the Jewish authorities has now been elevated to this new status.

Now this verse says nothing of sonship and so would only be evidence of adoptionism if “Christ” and “Son of God” are synonyms. Yet in either case, this verse surely claims too much because no-one wants to say that Jesus did not claim to be Christ during his lifetime. When Peter says Jesus has been made Christ, he cannot mean that he was not Christ before.

This verse comes at the end of Peter’s speech in which he has argued that Jesus fulfilled the promise to David that one would sit on his throne (Acts 2:30), and that this one would sit at the right hand of God (Acts 2:34-35; cf. Ps 110:1). When Peter says Jesus has been made Lord and Christ, the most plausible reading is that Peter means that Jesus has now fulfilled that promise to David, and fulfilled his status as messiah, by now ascending to be enthroned at the right hand of God. Peter does not mean that Jesus was not messiah before his ascension but that his messiahship was fulfilled by his ascension. Nothing like adoptionism is implied.

**Acts 5:30-31**

The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. (Acts 5:30-31 ESV)

Again, in the early preaching of Peter, we find these words about Jesus being exalted to the right hand of God. Once again, these verses have nothing to do with sonship. Neither do these verses explicitly state that Jesus has become Leader and Saviour; merely that Jesus is Leader and Saviour. The emphasis of these words is on Jesus being exalted for the forgiveness of sins; if Peter thinks that Jesus has become a saviour by his exaltation, he means that by his exaltation, Jesus has saved people from their sins. This has nothing to do with adoption.

**Acts 13:32-33**

And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’ (Acts 13:32-33 ESV)

These words ascribed to Paul in Acts 13 are part of a speech where Paul seeks to demonstrate that the resurrection of Jesus fulfilled Scripture. One might there think it odd that Paul should use Ps 2:7, which speaks of birth, as though it spoke of resurrection. This gives grounds for the adoptionist reading: Paul is saying that the day of Jesus’ resurrection was the “today” on which Jesus was “begotten” as the Son of God.[[42]](#footnote-42)

There is something odd about the proposal that these verses are evidence of adoptionism. Those who make this proposal know that the author of Acts does not believe that Jesus became the Son of God by adoption. Nor do they think that the “real” Paul (i.e. the Paul of the epistles) believed that Jesus became the Son of God by adoption. The proposal is that Luke (or the anonymous author of Acts, if they prefer) composed the speech that he attributes to Paul but incorporates within that speech this pre-literary adoptionist tradition. Yet this seems peculiar. Either Luke knew that this was an adoptionist tradition but borrowed it anyway, or he did not know that this was an adoptionist tradition and failed to spot that when he was copying it. Either case requires us to believe that Luke was very sloppy and did not take time or trouble to compose this speech about a central aspect of the gospel with care. Given the evident implausibility of such a procedure, it would be irresponsible to accept this proposal unless there really was no other explanation forthcoming.

Simon Gathercole argues that the adoptionist reading is to interpret the words “woodenly” and fails to do justice to the way the NT writers cite the OT. He argues that the NT writers do not always quote the OT for a literal fulfilment but for “suggestive similarities”. In this case the suggestive similarity between the reversal of David’s fortunes when he became king and Christ’s reversal of fortunes when he was resurrected.[[43]](#footnote-43) Interesting as this analysis is, it doesn’t really explain why Paul should choose Ps 2:7 in addition to his quotations from Isa 55:3 and Ps 16:10, which speak more explicitly about the parallels with David.

A more satisfying explanation is forthcoming if we see Acts 13:33b-41 as a recapitulation of Acts 13:23-33a. Thus, when Paul introduces his quotation from Ps 2:7, he is not suggesting that this was fulfilled by the resurrection. After all, Paul explicitly introduces his next quotation as referring to the resurrection. Instead, his quotation of Ps 2:7 is fulfilled by what Paul says in Acts 13:23, i.e. that God raised up a saviour for Israel. Whether Paul here is primarily thinking of Jesus fulfilling Psalm 2 with regard to its ascription of divine sonship or its messianic aspect, there seems no reason for us to understand Paul as endorsing adoptionism.

**Romans 1:3-4**

... concerning his Son, who was descended from Davidaccording to the fleshand was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 1:3-4 ESV)

Scholars have long suspected that within these verses there is an early Christian creed, given the closely paralleled structure of the six clauses. Ehrman presents these as follows:

 A1 Who was descended

 A2 from the seed of David

 A3 according to the flesh,

 B1 who was appointed

 B2 Son of God in power

B3 according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead*[[44]](#footnote-44)*

Other clues that this creed may not have originated with Paul are those elements of discontinuity with the rest of Paul’s writings: the phrase “Spirit of holiness”, which contrasts with Paul’s preferred “Holy Spirit”, and, it is argued, the descent of Jesus from David. This latter idea does not seem a particularly strong indication of discontinuity since Paul undoubtedly understood Jesus to be the messiah and thus undoubtedly believed Jesus to be of the line of David (even if he doesn’t explicitly mention this elsewhere). Nevertheless that these clauses may have been a creed that pre-dated Paul’s composition of *Romans* is plausible.

This creed would seem to imply adoptionism. The word ὁρισθέντος (“appointed”) implies that Jesus was given the status of Son of God at his resurrection. Most translations avoid this implication by translating this word as “declared”, implying that the resurrection only confirmed or manifested his sonship. C. E. B. Cranfield objects stating that “no clear example, either earlier than, or contemporary with the NT, of its [i.e. ὁριςο] use in the sense ‘declare’ or ‘shown to be’ has been adduced”. He favours the translation ‘appoint’ or ‘install’.[[45]](#footnote-45)

An early interpretation of this phrase, attested by the textual variant προὁρισθέντοῦ, is “preordained to be the Son of God” (cf. TDNT 5:453), that is Jesus did not become Son of God at his resurrection but was designated to that role earlier by the Holy Spirit. An alternative is argue that through the resurrection Jesus achieved the recognition of humanity: that it was humanity (not the Holy Spirit) that designated Jesus Son of God at his resurrection. Neither solution does full justice to these words.

One solution advocated by several commentators focuses on the attribute of the Son: “with power (δύναμις)”. Jesus was already the Son of God - as implied by the previous clause “concerning his Son”- but after his resurrection he was “appointed the Son of God with power” (cf. TDNT5:453n). P. Stuhlmacher concurs suggesting that Rom 1:4 relates to passages that talk about Christ’s exaltation to the right hand of God (e.g. Ps 110:1). He paraphrases the verse as saying, Jesus “was appointed to that appropriate sovereign rule which appertains to the Son of God”.[[46]](#footnote-46) Given that it was a common belief amongst the New Testament writers that Jesus was granted (greater) power from God after his ascension[[47]](#footnote-47) (or after his resurrection; Matt 28:18, δύναμις), it is not unreasonable to suppose this was Paul’s meaning. Adela Collins, who takes both sets of clauses (“seed of David”; “Son of God”) as referring to Jesus as Messiah, argues that these verses imply that “Jesus was indeed the messiah of Israel during his lifetime, but only a messiah designate”.[[48]](#footnote-48) She argues that “Paul considers the epithet ‘Son of God’ to apply to Jesus in a stronger sense from the moment of his resurrection”.[[49]](#footnote-49)

A number of scholars, including Ehrman, have argued that the original creed did not include the words “in power”, that these were added by Paul to avoid the adoptionist implication of the creed. Gathercole rightly describes the argument here as viciously circular: the words “in power” are assumed to be an insertion because they disrupt the adoptionist reading, the very thing that is in question.[[50]](#footnote-50) It might be argued that the words “in power” lessen the contrast between the clauses A2 and B2, so that the original is less likely to have included them. Yet by the same logic the words “by his resurrection from the dead” should also be seen as a later addition and so we might reconstruct the creed as follows:

 He was descended from the dead of David, according to the flesh

 He was appointed the Son of God, according to the Spirit of holiness

 Jesus Christ our Lord.

This reconstruction seems at least a plausible as any other (and the exercise is a matter of conjecture however one slices it) but is not adoptionist as it does not make the sonship of Jesus contingent on any one event. Therefore to find a pre-Pauline adoptionist creed in these verses is requires predetermining one’s conjecture. Once again, there is something significantly odd about the idea that Paul wilfully incorporates an adoptionist creed into his text after sanitizing it change its implication. Was Paul really so feeble a rhetorician that he needed to borrow words from traditions he manifestly disagreed with?

The contrast in these verses is between Jesus “according to the flesh” and “according to the Spirit”. Elsewhere Paul uses this contrast in two ways. One is about a way of life, either “according to the flesh” (i.e. following the promptings of sinful human nature) and “according to the Spirit” (see Rom 8:4ff). The other is the contrast between Ishmael, “born according to the flesh” (Gal 4:23) and Isaac “born according the Spirit” (Gal 4:29) or according to the promise (Gal 4:23); that is, one was born according to the natural way of things, and the other was born according to the plan and purpose of God. We find a similar contrast elsewhere in Romans where Paul describes Jews as “my kinsman according to the flesh” (Rom 9:3) and Christ as being descended from the Israelites “according to the flesh” (Rom 9:5). The implication is that as well as natural Jews, there are spiritual Jews; those who are Jews, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit (that is, by the will of God). The contrast Paul affirms in Rom 1:3-4 is that Jesus fulfilled the criteria of Messiahship by natural descent but, more than that, was Son of God by the will of God.

Regardless of whether a pre-Pauline creed is the foundation of Rom 1:3-4, there is no evidence for adoptionism here.

**Mark 1:9-11**

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:9-11 ESV)

It is sometimes argued that Mark presents Jesus as being adopted as Son of God at his baptism. Some measure of credence might be given to this proposal from the fact that a number of heretical groups from the late first or early second century seem to have identified Jesus’ baptism as the moment when an ordinary man became something special, though usually by the descent of a spiritual being into Jesus.

The adoption of Jesus as Son of God at his baptism does not find precedent in the OT usage since Jesus’ baptism was not his coronation. Adela Collins argues that “you are my beloved Son” is an allusion to Ps 2:7 and this allusion carries the implication that “God thus appoints Jesus as messiah at the time of his baptism by John”.[[51]](#footnote-51) However, given that the baptism was not a coronation and given that none of the other words in the psalm are used, it is not clear how one can securely identify “you are my ... son” as an allusion. Which words would God have used if he was *not* alluding to Psalm 2? If Mark was seeking to present an allusion to Psalm 2, he surely would not have added “beloved”.

An allusion to Psalm 2 would have made the baptismal account appear adoptionist, implying that day was the “today” when God begat Jesus. But the absence of any such allusion, the account is neutral as to adoptionism. To read God’s declaration from heaven as a statement of adoption goes beyond the text. God does not say to Jesus “I am making you my son” or “today you have become my son” but simply “you are my son”, says nothing about when Jesus became the Son. It is arguable that the emphasis of God’s declaration rests on the second part, “I am pleased with you” and it seems implausible that you would use these words of one who had only just become your son.

The only redeeming feature of the adoptionist reading of Mark’s baptismal record is that Mark’s gospel does not provide any alternative explanation for how Jesus became the Son of God. It is simply affirmed that this is the case.

**Luke 3:22 [variants]**

…and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.”

This variant is attested by one Greek manuscript (*Bezae Cantabrigiensis* [D]), seven Old Latin manuscripts, and a selection patristic quotations.[[52]](#footnote-52) The variant is, therefore, not strongly attested and is often explained as a unconscious substitution of the original reading with the words of Ps 2:7. Ehrman makes the case for this variant been the original. Firstly, amongst the patristic sources of the second and third centuries this is virtually the only reading found. Secondly, the majority reading can be explained as an attempt to harmonize Luke with the other gospels. Thirdly, Ehrman attempts to argue that the variant reading is more consistent with Luke’s theology but inconsistent with later orthodox theology.[[53]](#footnote-53)

Yet regardless of whether this variant was original or not, it is manifestly not evidence for adoptionism. Luke is commonly held to have drawn from Mark’s gospel, and Mark’s account of Jesus’ baptism did not include this quotation of Ps 2:7. If this variant was original then Luke has consciously changed the account to make God’s declaration a quotation of Ps 2:7. And if he did that, it was not because he believed Jesus was adopted as the Son of God at his baptism because Luke believes that Jesus was the Son of God as a consequence of his birth. In any case, if this variant was original then it was original to Luke’s gospel and so represents what Luke thought at the point of composition. Because it differs from what Mark said earlier (and from what Matthew records) it clearly does not represent the views of pre-Lucan Christians. So whatever the case with this variant, it provides no evidence for early Christian adoptionism.

**Acts 4:27**

For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel (Acts 4:27 ESV)

One final passage to consider is Acts 4:27, where the apostles say that Jesus was anointed of God. Collins presents this as a reference to Jesus’ baptism.[[54]](#footnote-54) This verse says nothing of sonship or adopted. It says only that Jesus was anointed by God - something that it is unsurprising given that Jesus was called the Christ, the anointed one. These verses do not allude to Jesus’ baptism, nor give any chronological marker for his anointing. Even if these verses are referring to Jesus being anointed with Holy Spirit at his baptism, there is no support for adoptionism in that.

**Conclusion**

In this essay I have reviewed all the purported evidence that is adduced for the claim that the earliest Christians believed Jesus became the Son of God by adoption. None of the proposed evidence stands up to scrutiny. The sum total of the evidence for the claim is therefore nil and a claim that has nil evidence holds no weight.

If the earliest Christians did not believe that Jesus became the Son of God by adoption then they must have had some other derivation for that status or else accepted it as a bald fact.

**Tyre**[[55]](#footnote-55)

**A. Perry**

**Introduction**

The major problem in the interpretation of Isaiah 23 is how to correlate the ‘destruction’ of Tyre with history. The archaeologist, Maria Eugenia Aubet, says, “The fact is the disaster foretold by the prophet did not happen.”[[56]](#footnote-56) Is this the right judgment? Aubet applies the prophecy to the time of Sennacherib’s invasion of Phoenicia, commenting that, “Some authors relate the destruction thus announced to the conquest by Asarhadon in 677 BC, although most experts prefer to connect the oracle of Isaiah with the campaign of Sennacherib against the coast and with his victory over king Luli of Tyre in the year 701 BC, or with Assurbanipal’s offensive (668-626 BC).”[[57]](#footnote-57) The challenge she poses then is that the disaster, as Isaiah describes it, did not happen.

The ‘Burden of Tyre’ is Isaiah’s last ‘burden’ and as the first one was about Babylon (Isaiah 13-14), so too the last mentions the land of the Chaldeans (v. 13); and just as it is the Assyrian who is the king of Babylon in the first burden (Isa 14:4, 25), in this last burden it is the Assyrian who had just founded Chaldea as a land for wild creatures. In this rhetorical way, Isaiah closes the ‘book of burdens’.

The structure of the discourse has a clear division at v. 15, with v. 14 “Howl ye ships of Tarshish’ being a repetition of v. 1 and acting as an *inclusio*. V. 15 has the common opener for a new oracle unit of ‘And it shall come to pass in that day’. We should therefore evaluate Aubet’s judgment separately for vv. 1-14 and vv. 15-18; they are not the same oracle unit, although they are part of the same discourse. Although she does not say so, it is possible that it is vv. 15-18 and its ‘seventy year prophecy’ that is the target of her judgment.

The dating of the two oracle units to the invasion of the Levant by Sennacherib is plausible given the position of the oracles in Isaiah. The politics of the invasion and the question of alliances is the topic in Isaiah 22; the Isaiah Apocalypse (chaps. 24-27) is arguably a vision of the Assyrian invasion; finally, there is a consensus amongst scholars for reading Isaiah 28-33 against this backdrop.

**Vv. 1-14**

With poetic description of political/military events, it is difficult to sustain the judgment that *things could not have happened (or did not happen) that way* in Isaiah 23. The contemporary records of Sennacherib do not have the detail to contradict the biblical account. Sennacherib attacked Phoenicia in his third campaign before turning his attention to Philistia and Judah. Luli, the king of Tyre, who had rebelled with Hezekiah against Assyria, was forced to flee Tyre and the whole of Phoenicia fell to Sennacherib (*Annals*, 29).[[58]](#footnote-58) In typical propaganda, Sennacherib describes the Phoenicians as terrified by the ‘weapon of Assur’.

There is nothing particularly difficult in the first oracle unit. The oracle is told from the perspective of the trading ships of Tarshish (v. 1); there has been destruction of the mainland city and the harbour could not be entered (v. 1). The people on the island had been under siege and receiving supplies from Sidon (v. 2). Sidon was now dismayed at the news about Tyre just as they had been at the report of Egyptian support failing to come in time (v. 5). The hinterland of Tyre and Sidon has been destroyed (v. 10). All this is consistent with what we know from Assyrian sources.

The problem verse in the unit is v. 13,

Behold the land of the Chaldeans; this people has ceased to be (hyh al); Assyria has founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness [i.e. wild beasts]: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof; and he brought it to ruin. (KJV revised; cf. NIV and NET paraphrases)

Although there is the mention of Chaldea, this isn’t implying that it was the Chaldeans that Tyre had to fear. Rather, they are warned to look at the land of the Chaldeans, and contemplate the prospect for their own land. They were a people who were ‘not’ - and the warning here is that Tyre were to become a people who would be no more. When the Chaldeans were a people, the Assyrians had brought the land to ruin, raising siege towers and destroying palaces. This refrain of ‘there no longer being a people’ refers to the Assyrian policy of deportation. Commentators plausibly think the references are to the Assyrian victories over Merodach-Baladan.[[59]](#footnote-59)

Our conclusion therefore is that there is nothing in vv. 1-14 to sustain Aubet’s judgment.

**Vv. 15-18**

The last verses of this chapter are another oracle unit and refer to a period of seventy years of obscurity according to the days of one king. At the end of this period the fortunes of Tyre would be restored. This time period dovetails quite nicely with the time of Judah's captivity under the Babylonians.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as an harlot. Isa 23:15 (KJV)

Accordingly, some commentators take the view that this chapter *as a whole* relates to the overthrow of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah supplies the overall picture:

Behold I will send and take all the families of the North, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all the nations round about, and will utterly destroy them...and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Jer 25:9ff

This passage sets up the historical scenario: Nebuchadnezzar was to subjugate the surrounding nations who would serve the king of Babylon for seventy years. Such a fact is too attractive not to tie in with Isaiah’s declaration that Tyre would be forgotten for seventy years. One king was to subjugate Tyre for seventy years, and all the surrounding nations, i.e. their many and constantly changing kings were to be replaced by the rule of the one king of Babylon.

Since no one individual king had a reign for seventy years, either Assyrian, Babylonian or Phoenician, the reference to ‘one king’ is a reference to rule by a foreign **monarchy** and the proposal is that this is Babylonian. A variation of this proposal addresses the question of how Tyre was ‘forgotten’ for seventy years. The answer is that the prediction is about a seventy year abeyance in the traditional alliance between Jerusalem and Tyre.[[60]](#footnote-60)

We might add a couple of further points in favour of this reading. The first is that ‘It shall come to pass in that day’ (v. 15) is a vague time reference appropriate for a prophecy that is more distant in fulfilment. Thus, whereas Isaiah prophesied of Tyre’s immediate fate in vv. 1-14, he shifted focus to the more distant future in the second oracle unit. The second point is that Ezekiel 26 has the same structure in that it is about the siege of Nebuchadnezzar (v. 7), but it includes detail more appropriate to the siege of Alexander the Great and his building of a causeway from the rubble of the mainland city to the island of Tyre (v. 12).

**The Nature of Prophecy**

The problem with the above interpretation is that it uses **the benefit of hindsight**. It fails in the task of reading vv. 15-18 *for Isaiah’s day* because there is an ‘easy reading’ just over a hundred years down the road. It mixes a contemporary reading for vv. 1-14 with a later day reading for vv. 15-18. Dual (and sometimes multiple) fulfilment of prophecy is an established principle of interpretation, but it can often happen that we overlook the contemporary application because a later application of the prophecy is more obvious or easier.

A contemporary reading of vv. 15-18 is suggested by the intertexts of ‘And it shall come to pass in that day’ which is a common enough expression in Isaiah (13x), and which has application to the Assyrian invasion of Judah and what happened afterwards. The table below notes the details of these intertexts that show that ‘in that day’ is the end of the eighth century and the beginning of the seventh.

|  |
| --- |
| **‘And it shall come to pass in that day’** |
| 7:18, 21, 23 ‘the Lord shall hiss for the fly (Egypt) and the bee (Assyria)’  |
| 10:20, 27 ‘remnant of Israel’ ‘escaped’ ‘return’ ‘be not afraid of the Assyrian’ ‘his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder’ |
| 11:10, 11 ‘root of Jesse’ ‘ensign’ [=Arm of the Lord Isa 59:19] ‘remnant from Assyria’ |
| 17:4 ‘at eveningtide trouble and before the morning he is not’ |
| 22:20 replacement of Shebna prophesied but he was still in power at the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem |
| 23:15 ‘Tyre forgotten seventy years’ |
| 24:21 ‘punish the kings of the earth’ |
| 27:12, 13 ‘gathered from Assyria’ |

The pattern that this table shows is that we cannot make the **initial** **fulfilment** of vv. 15-18 the Babylonian Invasion of the Levant by Nebuchadnezzar. It may be a secondary fulfilment; it is not a primary fulfilment.

Aubet comments, “The year 701 marks the end of the powerful unified state of Tyre-Sidon. In a very little while, Tyre lost Sidon and the greater part of her mainland territory, and her inhabitants were deported to Nineveh. Meanwhile, the throne of Tyre passed into the hands of pro-Assyrian monarchs and governors”.[[61]](#footnote-61) This marks a suitable start date for an initial fulfilment of a seventy years prophecy during which Tyre was handled effectively by the king of Assyria. This would make the end-date around 730 BCE when Josiah had been on the throne for 10 years. Given Josiah’s faithfulness to Yahweh and Manasseh’s corresponding hostility, this is the first reign in which trade with Tyre for supplies to repair the temple would have occurred (v. 18), especially with the breakdown of the Assyrian Empire now under way. The ‘forgetting’ of Tyre is not that she ceased to trade as a seaport in the Assyrian Empire after 701, but that her historic covenant with the Davidic king (1 Kgs 5:12) to support the temple would be ‘forgotten’.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Josiah’s reign began around 640 BCE and from 632 BCE he “began to seek after the God of David his father”, i.e. when he was about 16 years old. He began repairs to the temple at some point after this because it was during such repairs the book of the Law was found. This gives us a seventy year period and a plausible end-date for Tyre to be ‘remembered’, i.e. she would now supply materials for the repair of the temple in the reign of Josiah starting around 630 BCE.[[63]](#footnote-63)

**Dual Fulfilment**

Someone might ask: How can a prophecy have a dual fulfilment? If we can see an initial application, surely it is just wishful thinking or even dishonest to posit another fulfilment? Or again, if we cannot see an initial fulfilment, isn’t it more honest to say that the prophecy had no fulfilment rather than say that there is a fulfilment a hundred years later or even still to come?

One way in which dual fulfilment works is through there being two levels of meaning in a text. A prophecy may be understood **literally** in its first application and the same language could be read **metaphorically** in a secondary fulfilment. For example, this is the case for aspects of the Suffering Servant of Isa 52:13-53:12. The point here is that as a matter of logic, two levels of meaning sustain two applications.

Another way to see how dual fulfilment is possible is to consider how changing a reference transforms a text. This works in a similar way to the perception of duck-rabbit pictures. By concentrating on one detail, the picture looks like a duck because that one detail changes our perception of the picture; contrawise, focus on another detail and the picture transforms into a rabbit. This kind of change is not about the difference between a metaphorical and literal sense in a text but about **reference**.

A further factor underpinning dual fulfilment lies in the nature of **sense**. Ambiguity in the sense of some terms is not necessarily a matter of *our* not knowing whether an expression means *a* or *b*; rather, ambiguity can be inherent to the text. If we think of the duck-rabbit pictures again, we can see that a particular point in the picture could be either the rabbit’s ears or the bills of the duck. The picture is inherently ambiguous in how it determines its reference; it isn’t just a matter of our not knowing whether the picture is a duck or a rabbit. Lexicons document the different senses that a word can have, but our point is that a given use of an expression might carry more than one sense, thus allowing a dual application.

Another theoretical reason why dual fulfilment of prophecy is not arbitrary is the simple fact that expressions have a range of use and this is documented by lexicons when they list the various different **tonal** meanings that a term can convey in its use. A secondary fulfilment therefore can utilize a nuanced meaning from the semantic range of a term.

The complex and multi-levelled nature of language is best seen in poetry. R. Alter, a literary professor who has written extensively on the Hebrew Bible, says, “Since poetry is our best human model of intricately rich communication, not only solemn, weighty, and forceful but also densely woven with complex internal connections, means, implications, it makes sense that divine speech should be represented as poetry.”[[64]](#footnote-64) This explains why a lot of material in the Prophets is poetic in form.

The answer to the sceptic’s charge that dual fulfilment is just wishful thinking is therefore that it has a theoretical basis **in the nature of meaning in language**. The prophet’s use of language determines the initial application of his words; later use and variation of his words picks up different and legitimate *possibilities* of meaning in the language.

**Conclusion**

The Burden of Tyre is a vison of the end of Tyre, and the intent of the vision is to answer the question: who has brought (will bring) all these things upon Tyre? The answer is that the Lord gave the commandment to the angels against the merchant city (v. 11). But when was the vision to be fulfilled? The terms of the discourse relate to Sennacherib’s third campaign in the Levant and the consequences for Tyre. The seventy years prophecy relates to an abeyance in the supplies from Tyre to the Temple at Jerusalem. The **initial fulfilment** of the prophecy is in the eighth/seventh century.

**Let the prophets speak two or three**[[65]](#footnote-65)

**Ben Dwyer**

**Introduction**

When Paul is teaching the Corinthians about how they should behave when they “come together … in ecclesia (1 Corinthians 14:23)”, he says:

Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. (1 Corinthians 14:29)

What does it mean to “speak two or three”, and why was Paul giving this commandment?

**Texts**

The idea of “two or three” people speaking is a theme that runs through scripture. Paul also makes reference to it in his second letter to the Corinthians:

This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. (2 Cor 13:1); cf. Heb 10:28

This is a reference to the Law of Moses, specifically these two places:

At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. (Deut 17:6)

One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established. (Deut 19:15)

The issue that is being dealt with in Deuteronomy is when a witness “arises” against a man. Will their accusation “arise” (the same word describes the “arising” of the witness as the “establishment” of the word)? If the mouths of two or three witnesses testify against a man, then the “word” “arises”. However, if a false witness arises against a man then both men are made to stand before the priests and the judges, and the judges are to make a “diligent inquisition” about the case.

Jesus also advises the church to follow a similar procedure when one brother has sinned against another:

But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. (Matt 18:16)

These passages demonstrate that in order to establish what is true it is necessary to have two or three witnesses to it. In Deuteronomy, the outcome of the word being made to “arise” is that the person witnessed against is put to death (Deut 17:6), or if the word does not arise the false witness is severely punished (Deut 19:19-21).

In Matthew 18 the case might seem less “vital” – the punishment for this brother is that they “let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican”(Matt 18:17). However, the purpose of the teaching in Deuteronomy is to “put the evil away from among you”(Deut 19:19). Likewise the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 18 is echoed by Paul earlier in his letter to the Corinthians:

For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore **put away** from among yourselves that **wicked** person. (1 Cor 5:12-13)

By treating their brother in this way, the church are putting away evil. By putting their brother “without” they hand him over to God’s judgement, like in Deuteronomy 17 & 19.

**Doubled**

We see a similar pattern in the way that God reveals himself to us. When God gives Joseph dreams, he has two dreams, different in content, but giving the same message (Genesis 37). The same thing happens when God gives Pharaoh dreams – he has two dreams, again different in content, but Joseph says “the dream is one”(Gen 41:25). He also says:

And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. (Gen 41:32)

In order to emphasise how soon the dream will come to pass, God sends it twice, establishing the word in these two dreams.

The same is true of the promises to Abraham:

For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, … Where in God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: (Heb 6:13 & 17-18)

God swore by himself (Gen 22:16), because he could sware by no one greater, and this provided two things which testify of the promises – God himself, and the oath he swore. God emphasises the truth of his promises with “two” things.

God’s word is like this too; some examples:

* God gives extensive details for the tabernacle, and they are repeated when Moses executes them.
* Deuteronomy gives an account of things also covered in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers
* Chronicles describes many of the same events as Samuel and Kings
* The life of Jesus is detailed four times (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John)

This is part of a deeper pattern in God’s revelation which goes right to the heart of how he has written his word. There is an internal resonance in it, in which we see the different parts agreeing together.[[66]](#footnote-66)

**Witnesses**

Thus far the examples considered are about witnessing to sin, but the idea of a witness is much broader as Jesus explains in John 5:31-39:

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. (John 5:39)

Here Jesus appeals to three witnesses to himself – John (v. 36); his works (v. 36); and the scriptures (‘testify’ in v. 39 is the word ‘witness’; see also John 8:13-18). There are also witnesses that testify to the things Jesus said and did, for example Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8; 2:32; 10:39&41 etc. These examples demonstrate that a witness is more than just testifying against a sinner; it is testifying to the truth of what you have seen.

Paul describes himself as a witness:

Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come (Acts 26:22)

This demonstrates that being a witness can be saying things from the scriptures (cf. Rom 3:21). With this broader context for what a witness is, it is easier to see how this teaching relates to the prophets speaking; they should be witnesses to the word by speaking from it and testifying that it is true.

**Symphony**

In the same way that the scriptures agree together, the words that we say should also agree with them, as Peter says:

And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written… (Acts 15:15)

This “agreeing” is also mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 18, just after the passage already considered:

That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. (Matt 18:19)

When two agree, and ask, God does it; when two or three witnesses agree together on judgements made concerning the church, they are “bound in heaven”. Likewise, when two or three witness to the things that the word says, they should agree together, like the word itself does. This phrase “agree together” translates the Greek word “συμφωνέω” from where we get the English word “symphony”. It is built out of the word for “sound” or “voice”. This is supported by what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:

And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For ye shall speak into the air. (1 Cor 14:7-9)

Paul is using the example of musical instruments to demonstrate how the things they say should sound. With the “two or three” background the picture becomes enriched; the things that are said should be agreeing together like musical instruments playing sounds that agree.

**And let the others judge**

Considering Paul’s teaching to the Corinthians with this background some important details surface; “the others” are to judge what is said (the correct translation is “others” plural). This connects with the “judges” in Deuteronomy 19 – the idea is to determine if what is said is true or not. By having more than one person “witnessing” to the things that are spoken, all of the other members of the church are better able to make a judgement about whether the things that are said are true.

This relates back to what Paul has already said to them in chapter 2:

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (1 Cor 2:12-13)

The word “compare” is built out of the word judge (literally “judge with”). The words that they are to speak should be the words that come from God – when comparing the things that they say it becomes clear whether or not this is the case. Similarly, when the prophets speak, the rest of the church should be comparing what they say to the word, and the other things that have been said, to discern what is true.

**Edification, and exhortation, and comfort**

Whereas in Deuteronomy the purpose of the two or three witnesses was to make the word “arise”, in 2 Cor 13:1 it is to make the word “stand”. The similarity is clear, but how does this relate to 1 Corinthians 14, when they “come together … in ecclesia”?

…he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. (1 Cor 14:3)

The things that are said by those who prophesy are edifying, exhorting and comforting; there is a strong emphasis throughout the rest of the chapter on ‘edifying’ a word which is used seven times, compared to ‘exhorting’, once and ‘comforting’, twice. “Edification” or building, is linked to “standing” in other passages:

…every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: (Matt 12:25)

Jesus is making clear the relationship between the unity of the ‘house’ (part of the verb “to build”), and its ability to stand; a house that is divided cannot stand.

The detail about “division” is worth considering in more depth. Jesus says more about the division which he brings:

For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. (Luke 12:52)

Jesus talks about the division of this house in terms of “five” people “divided” into groups of “two” and “three”. Paul uses the same language to describe the process of building the church, not just the “two or three” who are to speak, but also:

I had rather speak **five** words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. (1 Cor 14:19)

In addition Paul says that those who speak in tongues were to do so “by course”, or “by part” (1 Cor 14:27). This is the root of the word “divided” in Matt 12:25/26 and Luke 12:52. It seems that the limitation on those who spoke with tongues was not simply in how many of them could do it (at the most three) but also in how much they could say (by parts). Not everyone in the church would have been able to understand those who spoke with tongues without an interpreter, so the benefit to the church is smaller (*for no man understandeth* (v. 2)), and there is a risk of causing division if the members are hearing different things, rather than being built in unity so that the house is made to stand.

**Double honour**

Similar language is used of a “bishop”, who should be:

One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) (1 Tim 3:4-5)

The word for “ruling” is related to the word for “standing”, and again the word for “house” is part of the word for “edification/building”.

The role of the bishop is to take care of the church of God. Their ability to do this can be perceived by their ability to make their own house to stand. This is because the church is the “pillar” or “standing” of the truth (v. 12); it needs to be “edified” so that it “stands”.

Similarly the elders:

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. (1 Tim 5:17)

The elders should be “ruling” (making to stand) well; the ones who “labour in the **word**” are worthy of “double” honour. This connects with the dreams of Pharaoh which were “doubled” because the **word** was going to come to pass quickly. Elders teach from the word, testifying to its truth, which builds the church in unity, so that it stands; their honour is “doubled” because they labour in the word (See also 1 Cor 9:9).

Because of this double honour, the process of receiving an accusation against an elder is therefore explicitly with care:

Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. (1 Tim 5:19)

The objective of two or three speaking is to make the house (the church) stand; this links with this strong emphasis on “edification” or “building” in 1 Corinthians 14. The reason why Paul is giving them this practice is to ensure that they are building a unified church that will stand, not a divided one. By providing two or three witnesses to the things that they are saying, they are building the church, making it to stand in unity, and not causing division (Division was a problem at Corinth – 1 Cor 11:18.).

Since the context for this teaching is when they “come together … in ecclesia”; it seems particularly important that at this time they focus on unity, putting away the evil from among them and letting “all things be done unto edifying (v. 26)”.

**Let all things be done unto edifying**

The body of Christ is made of many different members, and each has a role to play in ensuring that the church is not divided:

How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. (1 Cor 14:26)

The criteria of who is to able to speak when they come together, is not connected to their role as a bishop or an elder, it is about whether they are able to say words that are edifying. The range of different types of contribution is diverse, reflecting the diversity of the body. It is only by having more than one person speaking that they would be able to fulfil this pattern.

**Ye may all prophesy one by one**

The context for this teaching is in a situation where the members of the church are endowed with “spiritual gifts” (v. 1):

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. (1 Cor 12:28)

There is a clear order to these gifts. The apostles “first” and the tongues last. The number of contributions that were recommended for members with these different gifts matches this order. Those with tongues are to speak “two or **at most** three” (1 Cor 14:27), providing that there is an interpreter (v. 28). Those who prophesy are to speak “two or three”, but also:

For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. (1 Cor 14:30)

There is a clear correlation between the type of gift and how much of that type of speaking was encouraged at this time; lots of prophecy was desirable so “that all may learn, and all may be comforted”; prophecy was able to be understood by all, which tongues were not (1 Cor 14:19).

Since all prophets are encouraged to speak, the command to “let the prophets speak two or three” is not a restriction on the number of prophets who were to speak, as it was with tongues, but rather a reference to this background of raising up truth.

This shows that is it necessary for judgement to be made, not just by those who are listening, about the truth of what is being spoken, but also by those who speak – that they are to speak “words easy to be understood” (v. 9) and that are able to “comfort” those who listen. If the things that are said fulfil the criteria of “edification, and exhortation, and comfort” then it is profitable for “all” to speak (v. 34 indicates ‘brethren’).

There is also a connection between the “all” of those who prophesy and the “all” of those who are comforted; the way to ensure that everyone in the church is comforted is to have “all” prophesy. This seems to connect to the “all” in v. 26, which describes the diversity of different contributions. The body is diverse, not just in the type of contributions they should make but also in things that they find comforting/edifying/exhorting; if the contributions that are made are diverse they are more able to achieve this goal.

**Conclusion**

This background is useful in demonstrating, while the commandment given for two or three to speak is given in the context of the spirit gifts, the principle is much wider and speaks about how we can build the church in unity.

The language Paul uses also helps to show this; he could have said “Let the prophets **prophesy**“. The choice of the word “speak” here demonstrates that this guidance is relevant for a broader range of contribution than prophesying alone. (It also shows that it is scriptural to have “speakers”!).

Today, when we “come together … in ecclesia” we face the same challenge of making judgements about who should speak, what things to say and how to determine if things that are said are true. This passage gives us some clear principles to consider when making these judgements. One of these is that by speaking words of edification, exhortation and comfort, “two or three” can provide a witness to the truth of the word, by speaking from it, and testifying to what the others have said, making the church stand in unity and building it up.

For a selection of studies by Ben see: http://dividingthewordoftruth.wordpress.com

**Columnists**

**Exegesis/Analysis**

**Benedict Kent**

**How does Luke-Acts use the language of judgement in its conflict narratives?**

In Acts, the apostles utter proclamations of judgement on people they encounter on multiple occasions. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 4.32-5.11), Simon the magus (Acts 8.9-25) and Bar-Jesus (Acts 13.6-12) all fall victim to the apostles’ judgment. The next series of columns will use close analysis of the Greek text to demonstrate key links between these three episodes in Acts, exploring elements of curse traditions in the apostles’ speeches. Considerations of co-text will lead to better understanding of the function of curses in Luke-Acts. Having demonstrated some of the common elements in the judgments of the apostles, we will compare these biblical texts with some Greek and Coptic curse texts to further understand Luke-Acts interaction with curse traditions in the ancient Mediterranean.

There is little consensus among scholars over how to define the language of judgement in Luke-Acts. Some admit Paul’s words to Bar-Jesus to be a form of a curse. C. K. Barrett writes that Paul ‘roundly curses’ his opponent.[[67]](#footnote-67) E. Plumacher draws attention to the apostles’ Old Testament style: ‘Even the curses of the apostle sound a biblical note.’[[68]](#footnote-68) H. J. Klauck calls Paul’s words ‘a sharp invective’[[69]](#footnote-69) and L. T. Johnson, ‘a curse in the name of the Lord’, demonstrating Paul to be a genuine prophet.[[70]](#footnote-70)

However, when it comes to the other two narratives, scholars tend to offer a range of alternative labels for the apostles’ pronouncements, despite the evangelist portraying very similar phenomena. Barrett argues that Peter’s words to Ananias and Sapphira are ambiguous, and state only that Peter ‘predicts’ their fate.[[71]](#footnote-71) W. Larkin writes that Peter’s proclamation is ‘prophetic and effective judgment’ but emphasizes it is not a curse.[[72]](#footnote-72) B. Gaventa likewise redirects responsibility from Paul by writing that it is God’s confrontation with Satan that causes Ananias and Sapphira’s deaths.[[73]](#footnote-73) Johnson describes Peter’s pronouncement as a prophetic declaration whose truth is powerful enough to kill.[[74]](#footnote-74) E. Haenchen calls it an ‘announcement’ of imminent death.[[75]](#footnote-75)

Similarly, when it comes to Peter’s encounter with Simon the magus, Barrett refers to a curse as ‘scarcely the right word.’[[76]](#footnote-76) Klauck describes Peter as ‘preaching’,[[77]](#footnote-77) Johnson as ‘rebuking’.[[78]](#footnote-78) Susan Garrett understands Peter’s words in Acts 8.9-25 as a curse but says elements of it depend on how one interprets ‘destruction’.[[79]](#footnote-79) A review of scholarship shows that few group the three incidents together. Rick Strelan is one of the few scholars to label the apostles’ words in these episodes as curses and who writes about these incidents in continuity.[[80]](#footnote-80) Despite the texts in Acts describing very similar phenomena, there is reluctance amongst scholars to label the apostles’ words of power as ‘curses’, possibly coming from an unwillingness to identify the activity of the apostles with a stereotypically ‘magical’ practice. O. Bauernfeind is one of the few scholars to read Peter’s words as reminiscent of magic formula from the Magical Papyri.[[81]](#footnote-81)

For a definition of cursing, this essay will take W. Schottroff’s definition from *Encyclopaedia of Christianity*, in which he describes a curse as being similar to a blessing, describing words of power thought to take effect ‘magically’. It is a materialised force that travels and overcomes (as in Zech 5.1-4, Num 24.9, Ps 140.9-11).[[82]](#footnote-82)

In discussion of curses, we are not interested in questions of whether cursing in Luke-Acts ‘magical’. In future columns, through literary analysis of the three texts, considerations of co-text of Acts and comparison with Greek and Coptic curse texts, we hope to explore what the language of judgement in Luke-Acts tell us about the text’s attitude towards opposition, and matters of deceit, money and ‘magic’.

**Exposition**

**Richard Benson**

**The Case for Christ in John’s Gospel**

The stated purpose of John’s Gospel is this: “these [signs] have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31). John supports this claim using structures, language and motifs reminiscent of a legal process.

**The witnesses**

The claim that Jesus is the Son of God is evidenced through the gospel by a series of witnesses, as demonstrated in the following table. Note particularly the frequent use of testify and testimony.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Primary witness** | **Reference** | **Secondary witness** |
| 1. **John the Baptist**
 | John […] came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but *he came* to testify about the Light. (John 1:6-8) |  |
| John testified about Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’” (John 1:15) | **Confirmed by his disciples:**And they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him.” (John 3:26) |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Primary witness** | **Reference** | **Secondary witness** |
|  | This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” (John 1:19-20) | **Confirmed by his disciples:**You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent ahead of Him.’(John 3:28) |
| John testified saying, “I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. […] I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.” (John 1:32, 34) | **Confirmed by Jesus:**There is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true.You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. (John 5:32-33) |
| 1. **Jesus himself**
2. **his testimony about the Father and the truth**
 | Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. (John 3:11)[Jesus’ testimony in this context is of his knowledge of the Father; yet this itself is evidence of Jesus’ heavenly origins] | **Confirmed by John the Baptist:**What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. (John 3:32) |
| Therefore Pilate said to Him, “So You are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say *correctly* that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” (John 18:37) |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Primary witness** | **Reference** | **Secondary witness** |
| 1. **Jesus himself**
2. **his testimony about him**
 | “If I *alone* testify about Myself, My testimony is not true. (John 5:31)[*NASB addition of* ‘alone’ *reconciles this passage with the following references. The point is not that Jesus did not testify of himself, but rather that Jesus acknowledges that his witness alone would be insufficient to convince them*] |  |
| So the Pharisees said to Him, “You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true.” Jesus answered and said to them, “Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. (John 8:13-14) |
| Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me.”(John 8:17-18) |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Primary witness** | **Reference** | **Secondary witness** |
| 1. **The woman of Samaria**
 | From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all the things that I *have* done.”(John 4:39) | **Confirmed by the Samaritans**Many more believed because of His word; and they were saying to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Saviour of the world.” (John 4:41-42) |
| 1. **The works / signs of Jesus**
 | But the testimony which I have is greater than *the testimony of* John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me. (John 5:36) | **Confirmed by Nicodemus**“Rabbi, we know that You have come from God *as* a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”(John 3:2)**Confirmed by the people**Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.” (John 6:14)**Confirmed by the chief priests and Pharisees:**Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, “What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. (John 11:47) |
| Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me. (John 10:25) |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Primary witness** | **Reference** | **Secondary witness** |
| 1. **The Father**
 | And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. (John 5:37) |  |
| I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me.” (John 8:18) |
| 1. **The Scriptures**
 | You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; (John 5:39) |  |
| 1. **The witnesses to Lazarus’ resurrection**
 | So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify *about Him*. (John 12:17) |  |
| 1. **The Spirit of truth**
 | “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is* the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, (John 15:26) |  |
| 1. **The disciples**
 | and you *will* testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning (John 15:27) |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Primary witness** | **Reference** | **Secondary witness** |
| 1. **John the author**
 | And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.(John 19:35) |  |
| This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things (John 21:24a) | **Confirmed (by the apostles?)**and we know that his testimony is true. (John 21:24b) |

The strength of the case for Christ is seen not only in the number of witnesses, but also that five of the witnesses receive confirmation from secondary witnesses. In the case of the signs, even Jesus’ enemies bear witness of their reality, despite the fact that they do not see them as evidence of his divine Sonship.

**Refutation of false accusations**

The case for Christ rests not only on the evidence of witnesses, but also on the refutation of accusations. In some instances, misunderstandings about Christ are corrected by the words or actions of Jesus. For example, Nathanael says of Jesus, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (1:46), a question which might still have been in the minds of some of John’s readers. Jesus counters his doubt with his miraculous insight into Nathanael’s character, resulting in Nathanael’s declaration, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel” (1:49).

Three specific charges are made against Jesus by the Jewish leaders – charges which (in their eyes) make him worthy of death.

The first is that Jesus is a Sabbath-breaker:

For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. (5:16)

Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, “This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.” (9:16a)

This charge arises in John’s gospel from two miracles of healing: the man at Bethesda pool, and the man born blind (both illustrations of the spiritual state of the Jews). Jesus responds to the charge in three ways. His first reply is “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working” (5:17). Drawing from the record of the institution of the Sabbath where God “rested from all His work” (Genesis 2:3), Jesus declares the redemptive work of the Father continues eternally, and identifies himself with that work. Thus, the work of Christ in doing the works of God is not subject to the Sabbath law. He develops this argument in his second defence. Even the Jews allow circumcision on the Sabbath, so spiritual works ­are permitted: “if a man receives circumcision on *the* Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on *the* Sabbath?” (7:23). On the third occasion that the issue arises, Jesus offers no defence. Instead, he accuses the Pharisees: “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains” (9:41).

The second charge against Jesus is that he is a blasphemer:

For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. (5:18)

The Jews answered Him, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out *to be* God.” (10:33)

The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.” (19:7)

On the first occasion, Jesus responds by explaining the relationship between the Father and Son. The Son can do nothing of himself (5:19, 30), but both work (5:17, 19), both give life (5:21) and both are worthy of honour (5:23). Moreover, the Father has delegated judgment to the Son (5:22), and his divine mission is supported by the fourfold witness of John (5:33), the works (5:36), the Father (5:37), and the Scriptures (5:39). Thus Jesus’ defence forms a key part of John’s case for Christ. On the second occasion, Jesus argues that since the elders of Israel could be called ‘gods’ (10:34, 35; cf Psalm 82:6), there was nothing blasphemous in Jesus claiming to be the Son of God. In both cases, Jesus shows that their allegation is false. He does not make himself equal with God, since he acknowledges his dependence on the Father. He does not make himself out to be God, since he said “I am the Son of God”. Nevertheless, he asserts his right to receive the same honour as the Father, and implicitly to be called God, in the sense used in the Old Testament for God’s agents. On the third occasion, Jesus (as with the first charge) gives no answer, but instead turns the focus on the Jewish leadership: “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin” (19:11).

The third charge is that Jesus is an evildoer. This accusation does not emerge until the trial of Jesus, and may have been used by the Jewish leaders in order to justify bringing Jesus to Pilate. Pilate would have seen the first two charges as strictly under Jewish religious law, whereas a charge of evil doing would fall more readily under his jurisdiction. Nevertheless, Pilate’s verdict is “I find no guilt in Him”, three times (18:28, 19:4, 19:6).

The reason used ultimately by the Jewish leaders to justify the arrest of Jesus is his miraculous signs:

Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, “What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him *go on* like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” […]So from that day on they planned together to kill Him. (John 11:47, 48, 53)

Even in their plot against Jesus, they inadvertently testified to the truth of his claim. They provide further testimony of the works, the fifth witness in the table above.

The subsequent trial of Jesus by Pilate results only in him being declared innocent, and repeatedly proclaimed the king of the Jews (18:39, 19:3, 19:14, 19:15, 19:19).

**Conclusion**

In his gospel, John makes the case for Christ. He calls eleven witnesses to support the claim that Jesus is the Son of God. Five of these are supported by secondary witnesses. John also outlines the main accusations against Jesus, and Jesus’ response to them. Finally, in the record of the final trial of Jesus he shows that even in the plot to kill Jesus, he is confirmed as a worker of miracles, one in whom there is “no fault”, and the king of the Jews.

*Quotations from the New American Standard Bible*

**Archaeology News**

**Kay McGrath**

In this edition of the e-Journal’s ‘Archaeology News’ we travel from Israel and surrounding regions to Sudan, the Kingdom of Kush, stopping momentarily in the Jordan Valley for a free book download.

We commence in **Israel**, at the Kinneret College on the Sea of Galilee, Department of Holy Land Studies, Tel Aviv University, a ‘Milestones’ committee was established in 1970 to “carry out a systematic survey of all the extant remains related to roads, in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the Roman road network in Israel.” More detailed information about this project is available at their website.[[83]](#footnote-83)1

In August, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem reported on the Western Wall, with the headline: *“Western Wall Wearing Away? Discovery of Extreme Erosion Process Could Guide New Preservation Techniques”*[[84]](#footnote-84)2, commenting on the stability of the structure and research undertaken. The research relating to this concern is in the journal *Geology* but behindaPay Wall. The Abstract is available: *Limestone weathering rates accelerated by micron-scale grain detachment.*[[85]](#footnote-85)3

August also revealed the “oldest metal object found to day in the Middles East” a Press Release by the University of Haifa under the title of *“An awl-inspiring find at Tel Tsaf: The oldest metal object found to date in the Middle East”*[[86]](#footnote-86)4 the “awl dates back to the late 6th millennium or the early 5thmillennium BCE, moving back by several hundred years the date it was previously thought that the peoples of the region began to use metals.”

Researchers Andrew J. Kohl, Assaf Yasur-Landau, Eric H. Cline saw publication of their research on *“Characterizing a Middle Bronze Palatial Wine Cellar from Tel Kabri, Israel”.*[[87]](#footnote-87)5On the PLOS One website, the research “opportunity materialized when forty large storage vessels were found in situ in an enclosed room located to the west of the central courtyard within the Middle Bronze Age Canaanite palace.”

At Phys.Org *“Ancient metal workers were not slaves but highly regarded craftsmen”*[[88]](#footnote-88)6 is a conclusion reached from excavations in the Timna Valley which included “unparalleled preservation of organic materials usually destroyed by the march of time: bones, seeds, fruits, and even fabric dating back to the 10th century B.C.E.”

Of more general interest, in an article *“The Land of a Thousand Caves”*, it is said that “The 480 caves of Beit Guvrin-Maresha, [are] Israel’s newest UNESCO World Heritage Site”.[[89]](#footnote-89)7 This reminded me of Harry Tennant’s remark about David, “The labyrinth of caves and the nature of the terrain gave him protection without the need to fight for it.”[[90]](#footnote-90)8

The Israel Antiquities Authority National Treasures Department are worth a look. They are “responsible for the housing, documentation and control of antiquities in Israel”. Their on-line site “offers a selection of published artifacts from the collections of the National Treasures and is available for researchers, curators, students and the general public in Israel and abroad.”[[91]](#footnote-91)9

At Live Science, they also report on a *“Massive 5,000-Year-Old Stone Monument Revealed in Israel.”*[[92]](#footnote-92)10 The structure is not far from the Sea of Galilee. Dated between “3050B.C. and 2650B.C.,” the structure may be “older than the pyramids of Egypt.”

The Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) have advised the discovery of *“An Impressive Compound from the Byzantine Period Containing a Large Oil Press, Wine Press and Mosaics was Exposed in Bet Shemesh.”*[[93]](#footnote-93)11 Irina Zilberbod’s (IAA Archaeologist) comments that the compound is “very likely a monastery”.

Before moving on, if any readers are visiting the Washington D.C. district between October 11, 2014 and June 7, 2015 you may care to look in on an Exhibition to be held at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery[[94]](#footnote-94)12 (Smithsonian Institution) *“Unearthing Arabia: The Archaeological Adventures of Wendell Phillips.”*[[95]](#footnote-95)13 Phillips was a geologist and palaeontologist, and during “1949 to 1951 (with other specialists) … was on a quest to uncover two ancient cities—Tamna, the capital of the once-prosperous Qataban kingdom, and Marib, the reputed home of the legendary Queen of Sheba—that had flourished along the fabled incense road some 2,500 years earlier.” – the Exhibition displays the significant finds of this journey.

**Egypt** continues to give up its hidden treasures and secrets.

Science & Scholarship in Poland (news of Polish Science), in their News report, say that “*Scientists are studying mummies from the Temple of Hatshepsut”*[[96]](#footnote-96)14and using “computed tomography and X-ray to study more than 2.5 thousand years old mummies of the priests of the god Montu.”

At the website Live Science again, a wall painting dating back 4,300 years ago was discovered near the Great Pyramid; see *“Ancient Priest's Tomb Painting Discovered Near Great Pyramid at Giza.”*[[97]](#footnote-97)15

Still at Live Science, an Egyptian carving dating some 3,300 years ago was discovered in Sudan and “bears the scars of a religious revolution that upended the ancient civilization”; see “*Egyptian Carving Defaced by King Tut's Possible Father Discovered.”*[[98]](#footnote-98)16

News at Tulane University under the headline: *“Egyptologist sheds light on Tulane mummies”*[[99]](#footnote-99)17 is that “Answers don’t come easily when the mystery is 3,000 years old. Egyptologist Melinda Nelson-Hurst has spent two years researching the Egyptian artifacts that have resided at Tulane University since 1852. Her work is yielding surprising details about two mummies, two intact coffins and funerary materials that reside in Dinwiddie Hall.”

The magazine ‘Popular Archaeology’, in its Cover Story August 13, 2014,states that *“Egyptian mummification started much earlier than previously thought, say researchers”*.[[100]](#footnote-100)18 They comment that “Researchers from the Universities of York, Macquarie and Oxford have discovered new evidence to suggest that the origins of mummification started in ancient Egypt 1,500 years earlier than previously thought”; traditional theories are also discussed.

The University of Santa Cruz, News Centre, reports (September 08, 2014) a “Study traces ecological collapse over 6,000 years of Egyptian history”[[101]](#footnote-101)19 that “Ancient Egyptian artworks help scientists reconstruct how animal communities changed as climate became drier and human populations grew.”

Back at Live Science, it is reported that *“Ancient Egyptian Woman with 70 Hair Extensions Discovered”*[[102]](#footnote-102)20 showing that this is not just a modern fashion, “More than 3,300 years ago, in a newly built city in Egypt, a woman with an incredibly elaborate hairstyle of lengthy hair extensions was laid to rest.”

Stepping into the **Jordan Valley** momentarily – a free book download, *“Tell Abu al-Kharaz in the Jordan Valley”* is worth a look. The abstract states:“Tell city of Abu al-Kharaz is situated in the central Transjordanian Jordan Valley and excavated by the author from 1989 to 2012. The town flourished in the Early Bronze Age, and after an occupational lacuna of more than thousand years the site was re-occupied in the second half of the Middle Bronze Age and remained permanently occupied until the end of the Iron Age. The new volume is No. III in a series of three (The Early Bronze Age Vol. I, published by the Austrian Academy of Sciences Press in 2008, and the Middle and Late Bronze Ages Vol. II, in 2006).”[[103]](#footnote-103)21

An interesting discovery in **Iraq** is reported at Live Science, *“Remains of Long-Lost Temple Discovered in Iraq,”*[[104]](#footnote-104)22reporting the discovery of “Life-size human statues and column bases from a long-lost temple dedicated to a supreme god have been discovered in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq … The discoveries date back over 2,500 years to the Iron Age, a time period when several groups — such as the Urartians, Assyrians and Scythians — vied for supremacy over what is now northern Iraq.”

On August 7th, 2014, ScienceAAAS reported a “Skeleton in the Closet Identified: Bones from Ancient Ur”[[105]](#footnote-105)23, a skeleton “lay hidden in a crate in the “mummy room” of the museum for decades.” The “mummy room” was located in the Penn Museum (University of Pennsylvania). In September, ‘Popular Archaeology’ further advised on the skeleton: “Ancient 6,500-Year-Old Skeleton from Ur Excavations Gets a Public Audience”[[106]](#footnote-106)24 … “Following an early August announcement of a “rediscovered” find in a Physical Anthropology storage room—a rare, fragile, but largely intact 6,500-year-old human skeleton from the famous Ur excavations in what is now Iraq—the Penn Museum has moved the skeleton to a public space beginning Saturday, August 30.”

*“‘Evil Eye’ Box and Other Ancient Treasures Found in Nile River Cemetery”*[[107]](#footnote-107)25 it was reported at Live Science “A 2,000-year-old cemetery with several underground tombs has been discovered near the Nile River in Sudan … The cemetery dates back to a time when a kingdom called Kush flourished in Sudan.”

‘Popular Archaeology’ similarly has recent news about the Kingdom of Kush in Sudan, *“Kingdom of Kush Iron Industry Works Discovered”*[[108]](#footnote-108)26 … “New techniques developed at the University of Brighton to help archaeologists ‘see’ underground are starting to unlock the industrial secrets of an ancient civilisation … The UCL Qatar research, investigating the iron industries of the Kingdom of Kush in Sudan, is attempting to identify 2000-year-old iron production workshops.”

The following links may also be of interest to e-Journal Subscribers:

**ANE Placemarks for Google Earth**[[109]](#footnote-109)27

“A preliminary set of placemarks (ANE.kmz) for Google Earth of a selection of the most important archaeological sites in the Ancient Near East can be downloaded here (as an alternative try right-click or ctrl-click).

ANE.kmz works with Google Earth, which has to be downloaded (free at earth.google.com). When opened inside Google Earth, ANE.kmz gives, to the left, an alphabetic list of ancient sites and, to the right, on the satellite photo the same sites marked. For the moment, there are some 2500 sites with modern names; among them some 400 have ancient names. Additions of more sites are planned.”

**Manar Al-Athar**[[110]](#footnote-110)28

Free multi-media resource for the study of the Middle East

“The Manar al-Athar website, based at the University of Oxford, aims to provide high resolution, searchable images for teaching, research, and publication. These images of archaeological sites, with buildings and art, will cover the areas of the former Roman empire which later came under Islamic rule, such as Syro-Palestine/the Levant, Arabia, Egypt, North Africa and Spain. The chronological range is from Alexander the Great (i.e., from about 300 BC) through, the Islamic period to the present. It is the first website of its kind providing such material labelled jointly in both Arabic and English. We will also be publishing related material, both online and on paper, in English and Arabic.”

**Marginal Notes**

**Isa 52:15 - AP**

Isa 52:15 in the KJV/NASB has ‘sprinkle many nations’ but later versions like the RSV have ‘startle many nations’, choosing to read a homonym:

So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for *that* which had not been told them shall they see; and *that* which they had not heard shall they consider. Isa 52:15 (KJV)

…so shall he startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they shall see, and that which they have not heard they shall understand. Isa 52:15 (RSV)

The verb translated ‘to sprinkle’ (hzn) is usually used for sprinkling water (Num 19:18) or blood (Lev 16:14) upon a person or object. The choice of ‘startle’ in Isaiah is motivated by (i) the absence of a direct object like blood or water; and (ii) the lack of a preposition like ‘upon’.[[111]](#footnote-111) Consequently, a comparison with an Arabic word leads scholars to suggest a homonym meaning ‘startle’.[[112]](#footnote-112) The question then is whether the text in Isaiah is an exception; can we make sense of the Servant sprinkling many nations?

It could be argued that the verb should not be translated ‘sprinkle’ but ‘spatter’; this option is registered in lexicons and illustrated in 2 Kings:

He said, ‘Throw her down’. So they threw her down; and some of her blood spattered (hzn) on the wall and on the horses, and they trampled on her. 2 Kgs 9:33 (RSV)

Of the 22 occurrences of the verb, this is the only text outside Isaiah where ‘spatter’ is likely. There is one Isaiah text with the verb as ‘spatter’:

I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered (hzn) on my garments, and stained all my apparel. Isa 63:3 (ESV)

However, there is no object such as ‘blood’ in Isa 52:15 and we shouldn’t simply assume an object. The only way to have an object is to treat ‘many nations’ as a **metaphorical object**, i.e. blood. The Servant would spatter the nations upon the ground.

But if the verb is ‘sprinkle’, what could this mean? One use of the verb is related to disease:

And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field. Lev 14:7 (KJV); cf. vv. 16, 27

We might then say that the reason why we have ‘sprinkle’ in Isaiah is to convey who actually was ‘diseased’. The point is that ‘as Hezekiah was known for sickness by many, so too he would sprinkle many’ which expresses an irony in the knowledge of the many – i.e. they were really the ones who were ‘sick’. On this reading, the use of ‘sprinkling’ would be metaphoric for the teaching of many nations (Mic 4:2, ‘many nations’), which in turn implies a bestowal of the Spirit on the Servant.[[113]](#footnote-113) The problem with this proposal is that the ‘as…so’ syntax changes from the second person to the third person across the two clauses vv. 14a, 15.[[114]](#footnote-114) There is a further difficulty in that it is not clear why the kings of the nations would shut their mouths at the Servant teaching the nations.

It could be argued instead that we should associate the sprinkling with the idea of cleansing priests (Num 8:7), so that the idea in Isaiah is that the Servant will take from the nations a new class of ‘Levites’. There is to be a new class of Levites from Northern Israel (Isa 66:21), but is Isaiah introducing the teaching here that this class will include Gentiles (cf. Zech 2:11, ‘joined’)? The sprinkling would again be a metaphor, but this time for the bestowal of the Spirit upon the nations in making priests (cf. Isa 44:3). Again, the problem with this proposal is that it is too theological and too parochial to Judah to explain why the kings would shut their mouths at this happening.

The kings shall ‘shut their mouths’; this idea is replicated in the sister text of Psalm 107:

But he sets the needy securely on high away from affliction, and makes *his* families like a flock. The upright see it and are glad; but all unrighteousness shuts its mouth. Ps 107:41-42 (NASB)

This suggests that the kings are regarded as unrighteous and shut their mouth as they look on what God is doing with the righteous in Zion (cf. the irony in Job 5:16 and the related point in Job 29:9). The ‘needy’ of the Psalm are the needy/poor that receive God’s blessing in texts such as Isa 32:7 and 41:17; this is the bestowal of the Spirit and they are set ‘on high’ in Zion (Isa 33:5 reversing Isa 26:5). But the kings also see something else in addition to what they see happening in Zion. This ‘something else’ is the action of ‘sprinkling many nations’.

‘Sprinkle’ is better than ‘spatter’ even though the nations are ‘blood’ for both verb choices. Isaiah is saying that the nations are ‘blood’ which will be sprinkled by the Servant. But the point is not that their blood will be spattered upon the garments of the Arm of the Lord (Isa 63:3) because that loses the metaphor of **sacrifice** as it is applied in the holy war (cf. Isa 34:6). The point is that the nations will be ‘sprinkled’ as blood upon the ground.[[115]](#footnote-115) This is why the kings shut their mouths; not because they are startled. The RSV and other modern versions that prefer ‘startle’ are failing to see how Isaiah is modulating the metaphor of sacrifice from Isaiah 34. The Servant was a sacrifice and so too would be the nations.

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**News**

**Society of Biblical Literature Conference Vienna 2014 Report by Merrilyn Mansfield**

The SBL International meeting is always a great event. I have been to four since 2010 – in Tartu, London, Edinburgh and now in Vienna. I had not visited Vienna before and was immediately struck with its beautiful architecture, sculpture, gardens and good old German precision in the transport system, to say nothing of the Weiner Schnitzel.

The opening session started in the afternoon of the 6th with representatives from the Viennese Catholic, Protestant and Jewish faiths present, opening remarks by John F. Kutsko and a triplet of musicians playing piano, violin and flute. The memory and shame of anti-Semitism both in wider society seventy years ago and also in scholarship since that time was apparent. Statistics were mentioned about the number of people who thought that the Jews killed Jesus, a view that has led to anti-Semitic acts against Jews in Europe for centuries.

After the opening session concluded, the Mayor of the city of Vienna officially opened the conference in the **Rathhaus – Festsaal at Vienna City Hall** **(Photo)**. The smorgasbord of food and drink and hundreds of attendees in this great hall of this grand old building made the opening truly special. It is here I began to catch up with friends new and old alike, such a big part of the conference is meeting people and sharing ideas and a few drinks.

The following day I gave my first paper in the synoptic gospels section on John the Baptist’s diet being reflective of his preferential option for the poor. This paper argued against James Kelhoffer who said that John’s diet was not reflective of his views on poverty. I wandered around to some other sessions – there is a feast of options – but my favourite I will talk about below.

There were local tours organised by the SBL committee that you can take but Tim and I opted for our own ‘tour’ of the city which always leads to interesting places and experiences. The highlight was randomly walking near the parliament buildings and seeing a group gathered outside the President’s house (Heinz Fischer) and then his car arrived and to the great astonishment of the onlookers he got out to meet and greet the well-wishers. I walked forward and was the only person he posed for a photograph with before his secretary said ‘Mr President, we have to go’. Quite the experience.

My second paper was on the 8th in the Johannine Literature unit and discussed the location of John’s topical designation ‘Bethany beyond the Jordan’ where John the Baptist first baptised. Jesus was there regularly as well. Rainer Riesner had argued that this place lay in Batanaea, on the lower eastern tip of the Sea of Galilee, but I argued instead that the evidence pointed to a southern locale.

My favourite paper was given by a South African scholar in the Prophets section that afternoon. Bill Domeris read his paper ‘Shades of Irony in the Anti-language of Amos’ with great style. Bill argued that Amos was written from an insider perspective and displayed irony in that it exaggerated the evils of the rich towards the poor (as archaeology has not turned up any evidence of oppression of the poor at this time) and also highlighted an insider and outsider perspective evident in the text. Bill said it was the only reading in his view where the text could function easily as a whole. In his paper Amos was in the insider group and was commentating on those in the outsider group. He saw himself as part of the remnant of Israel and outsiders as those who had turned to idols, as oppressors of the poor, etc. There was one right way of returning to God outlined by Amos and those who do not do it his/God's way were doomed. The talk was also given with the use of irony which made me giggle all the way through. He loved my reactions and smiles.

All in all a great time was had and I will hopefully be back next year for more in Buenos Aires. The SBL conferences are open to any postgraduate student or scholar, affiliated with a university or not – just make sure your abstract is great or it will be knocked back. It’s an eclectic group of old and new scholars, students, and interested onlookers.

To celebrate the 60th volume of ***New Testament Studies***, key articles from the journal, selected by the current Editor Francis Watson, can be accessed, downloaded and shared at no cost until 31st December 2014.

<http://journals.cambridge.org/nts>

**EJournal Book Fund**

The EJournal sponsors multi-author books and has published three so far, *Reasons*, *One God, the Father*, and *More Reasons*. These are published through LULU, a print-on-demand website at no cost to the EJournal (apart from expenses). LULU requires a minimum royalty to be imposed and we collect these royalties in the EJournal Book Fund. Royalties mount up over time and it has been decided to more or less clear-out the current funds.

The purpose of the Book Fund is to promote Bible knowledge through the purchase of books through grants (see Website). In keeping with this aim, and in order not to have money sitting around in a building society account, a donation of £1000 (GBP) to the Christadelphian Sunday School Union (CSSU) ‘Magazines’ account has therefore been made from the EJournal Book Fund to support the production and distribution of their children’s magazines.

**British New Testament Society Conference Report by Benedict Kent**

4th-6th September saw the University of Manchester host the British New Testament Society‘s annual conference. Just under two hundred biblical scholars and PhD students attended, mainly from the UK, but a number of international guests were also able to join us.

The key note speakers were Joan Taylor, Judith Lieu and Simon Gathercole. Ten seminar groups were on offer under a range of NT topics, including seminars discussing the Social World of the NT, NT: Use and Influence, NT & Second Temple Judaism, and Early Christianity alongside more traditional areas of study.

As a second-year PhD student at the university I was co-opted in January this year to help plan and coordinate the practicalities of running the event. Preparations began in the months following and an incredible amount of planning went into predicting and preparing for every eventuality. What made planning the event a lot easier was the fact that the schedule for the event stays roughly the same every year; so despite not having attended before, I was well briefed by those knowing what to expect.

The venue was excellent as nearly all the seminar rooms, dining hall, bar, lecture theatre and dormitories were on a single site making it very easy to get around.

Despite having a minor heart attack over some very late-arriving programmes, I felt the conference ran pretty smoothly. Working as steward meant that although we were busy in between a lot of the sessions we were able to get to most of the seminars and key note papers. I led a very hardworking stewarding team who were on board with making the conference a great experience for its delegates.

After welcomes from the U of M and BNTS representatives, Joan Taylor kick-started proceedings with an archeological detective trawl into the geographical origins of Mary Magdalene. Prof Taylor suggested a new reading of ‘Magdalene’ as a nickname (as Simon Peter, and James and John received), perhaps something along the lines of ‘The Tower’!

I managed to slip in late to most of the ‘Paul’ seminars, chaired by my academic supervisor Dr. Peter Oakes, and enjoyed a range of papers engaging with the ‘faith in/faith of Christ’ debate and the place of social identity in Paul’s letters. One of the best sessions was a panel discussion on the theme of the wrath of God in Paul’s letters, involving Francis Watson, Simon Gathercole and Michael Thompson. As someone still relatively new to biblical studies it was interesting to see how scholars engage with each other in person, rather than through their books.

My favorite day was the Saturday in which we led a trip to the John Rylands Library to hear Brent Nongbri speak about the dating of P52 (the long-presumed ‘oldest fragment of the New Testament’). He gave a humorous paper that (somewhat disappointingly) cautioned the imprecision of paleographic dating, suggesting a broader dating of CE 180- 3rd Century CE instead of 125 CE as is currently estimated and publicized.

Simon Gathercole led the key note session with a fascinating paper on what makes the canonical gospels distinctive from the non-canonical. He argued that the canonical gospels all conform to the pre-Pauline creed in 1 Cor 15:3-4, whereas the apocryphal ones don't, ending the conference with a heated discussion.

One thing that this year’s conference missed was the debating seminars of previous conferences, which used to include an audience vote on the field’s controversial topics such as whether the hypothetical Q gospel existed or whether Ephesians was written by the historical Paul.

As well as many other things, I came away with three lessons from this year’s BNTS:

1. It is vital for conference stewards to start the day with a hearty combination breakfast of cereals and chocolate bars.

2. Books are much, much cheaper at conferences.

3. You should not be late to seminars, else you miss the speaker’s thesis and often the hand-outs that explain what they’re saying.

Next year is at St Andrews, which I will look forward to attending as a proper delegate.

**Postscript**

Some years ago now, a Christadelphian brother, who was doing a PhD in Biblical Studies at the time, said to me that the best bible study material was being done by scholars. I replied saying that the best examples of Christadelphian bible study from the past were just as good. He disagreed and the conversation moved on to another subject.

The point I was making was about truthful originality; I wasn’t denying the quality of some scholarship, but rather affirming the point that the community had produced truthfully original contributions to bible knowledge mostly in some key essays that had appeared in magazines over the years, but also in parts of some Christadelphian books. Although they lacked the apparatus of scholarship, these essays and books held their own in terms of their originality because of their intertextual work.[[116]](#footnote-116)

This is not self-congratulatory back-slapping because the amount of material is small compared to scholarship; it is really just a call to recognise the original contributions the community *has made* to bible knowledge. Of course, the writing is not necessarily known now as people read what is produced today, this week or this month, rather than the material of previous decades; this is especially so when it comes to magazines and journals.

Original and truthful thinking comes about through studying and analysing the Bible using lexicon and concordance tools. It also emerges through challenge and conflict. If someone contradicts what you are saying, then this is an opportunity to think through your position more deeply and either meet the challenge or change your position. It is necessary for a magazine or journal to publish articles that carry original analysis of the text as well as contradictory material.

Why is originality important? Various reasons: because the answers are not known; the same questions keep on coming up; the stock ‘answers’ that are out there are not satisfying; doubts surround them; and difficulties are being pushed aside or ignored because they have not been answered. These are the reasons why original thinking is important in Bible study.

Standard advice for a new PhD student in Biblical Studies is to go to the primary texts first (and only those) and work out what you think about them. The reason is simple: PhD supervisors already know the secondary literature backwards on those texts and they want fresh thinking. If you go to the secondary scholarship first, the likelihood is that they will control your thinking about the primary texts.

So, if we want answers for the questions that go round in circles, we need to go first to the text. People can be in a cul-de-sac and not know it; we need to think in reverse (AG), go back to the text and do the concordance and lexicon work to work out the correct answers. Going to his Word first is what God actually wants for his children; not going to this or that church commentary. As another brother (JHB) said to me in my youth when I asked whether he could recommend a book on Acts; he said ‘Just the usual 66’.

**AP**

**Supplement**

**Which Translation?**

1. **Perry**

This is a perennial dinner-table or discussion forum topic for Christadelphians. What are the relative merits and demerits of a particular translation? Often we express opinions on the topic and it is a friendly exchange of points that we have picked up over the years. We might think our views are facts and we might make all sorts of claims or counter-claims for this or that version. Usually the dinner table or forum conversation passes and we move on to another topic. But the business of translation is a professional exercise and the question of the merits and demerits of this or that translation can be and is seriously discussed by scholars. There is a professional journal dedicated to translation called *The Bible Translator* which has been running since 1950.[[117]](#footnote-117)

Critically evaluating translations is a subject that falls within the remit of the EJournal. Scholarly appraisal (both positive and negative) of a version is valuable and helps the Bible student to be discriminating about the text and what it actually is s/he is reading. Ideally, a student uses about three versions with standard editions of the Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek text that underlies the versions.

The articles about translation that you get in journals are far more valuable than opinions knocked about over the dinner table or on discussion forums. This is because articles are a peer-reviewed measured and edited presentation of an argument; discussion forums are brief exchanges of one or two sentences at a time and often polemical, employing the arts of persuasion in order to ‘win’ the argument and look good in front of the audience. When scholars present opposing views in journal articles this can be very valuable for understanding the issues and the choices for a topic. Forums are really *not* the place to do serious thinking.

This supplement is about the question ‘Which translation?’ The case argued is that the KJV has value for the Bible student today and is **sufficiently** accurate for use as a study version in conjunction with other versions. This is a measured opinion piece (reprinted from ‘The Testimony’ (June 2011)) and readers are invited to submit a measured and scholarly article (perhaps in criticism) presenting the case for using one of the other common versions in Bible study.

**A Reliable Translation?**

**For and Against the Accuracy of the KJV**

**Introduction**

Accuracy is relative to a standard of measurement; but standards of measurement in the business of translation are many, so that the accuracy of the KJV is a complicated matter. It is easier to approach the question by thinking of the advantages and disadvantages of using the KJV and its value for a native English speaker today.

As a source text is transformed into the ‘same’ text, but in another language, many aspects of meaning could be translated in the process.[[118]](#footnote-118) We use many descriptive words for such aspects of meaning, such as ‘sense’, ‘reference’, ‘nuance’, ‘metaphor’, ‘figure’, ‘overtone’, ‘emphasis’, ‘stress’, ‘literal’, ‘simile’, ‘poetic metre’, ‘paragraph/sentence/clause construction’, ‘punctuation’, ‘tense’, ‘mood’, ‘passive/active’, ‘aspect’, and so on. Translating some or all of the complex levels of meaning in a text is not a simple process. We cannot make simplistic judgments like “The KJV is less accurate than the NET Bible”, or “The KJV is not very accurate”, or even “The KJV is the most accurate version”. Rather, it is best to identify the good things in the translation, and to value and use it for those reasons. Likewise, it is as well to know its weaknesses.[[119]](#footnote-119)

**No Single ‘Best’ English Version**

The KJV is **sufficiently** accurate for use by a native English speaker, and many people use it as their main version, for devotional reading and for Bible study. The argument put forward here is that the KJV offers a number of benefits to the English-speaking Bible student who has no Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic, and that it should be used alongside two other versions (for example, the Revised Standard Version (RSV, 1952) and the New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1995), so that Bible study is conducted with a working set of three versions. The inclusion of the KJV will give the student several things that are not provided by other versions. (The 1611 KJV translators also included the Apocrypha in their work, but those extra-canonical works will not be considered in this article.)

The topic of versions can generate heated opinion. There have been books advocating the KJV as not only the best version, but also as the only providentially governed version.[[120]](#footnote-120) Similarly, there have been books rebutting this view and advocating the merits of a more modern version.[[121]](#footnote-121) The idea that there is a single best English version is unsustainable, and for several reasons:

* There are various levels of meaning in a given stretch of language, and different versions may be better at capturing some aspects of meaning rather than others;
* The English language is always changing, and it differs for individuals, social groups, regions and countries;
* Scholarship changes its views on matters of comparative philology, so that its understanding of the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek changes.

**Aspects of Accuracy**

This article does not set out to argue that the KJV is the best version or the most accurate; and the same approach would be adopted if the subject of the article was a modern version like the NIV or the ESV. It will be enough to show that the KJV is sufficiently accurate for study, has a lot to offer the Bible student, and is of value for devotional reading.

Given that there are many different aspects to meaning in language, measuring accuracy is difficult and not always objective. Thus, for example, it may be possible to count the number of conjunctions in the Masoretic Text and determine how many have been rendered in the KJV. But how do you measure more subjective aspects of meaning such as the rhythm or cadence of poetry? It is possible to comment here on only a few aspects of accuracy in translation: the base text used for the translation; the use of italics and capital letters; the presence of marginal alternatives; the treatment of tense; lexical considerations; the question of dynamic equivalence; the issue of semantic fields; the approach to metaphor and idiom; the treatment of allusions, echoes and quotations; the presentation of the printed text; style and the use of archaic and modern language. Each of these will be discussed in turn.

**The Greek Text**

The choice of the underlying Greek of the KJV is often criticised. It is a mixture of the printed editions of Stephanus (1550 and 1551 editions) and of Beza (1589 and 1598 editions). The Greek manuscripts used for these editions are not fully enumerated; but they include manuscripts such as the Codex Bezae (dating from the fifth to the sixth century), and the Codex Claromontanus (c. sixth century). One of the reasons why they cannot be enumerated is that Beza used Stephanus, while Stephanus used the Complutensian Polyglot translation of 1514, which did not enumerate the underlying Greek manuscripts that it used from the apostolic library in Rome. Stephanus also used the edition of Erasmus which was based on perhaps half a dozen tenth to fourteenth century manuscripts from the library in Basel. Hence, the textual scholar B. M. Metzger says about the KJV that “its textual basis is essentially a handful of late and haphazardly collected miniscule manuscripts, and in a dozen passages its reading is supported by no known Greek witness”.[[122]](#footnote-122) The spin that Metzger is here placing on the KJV is somewhat negative, and in order to balance it up we need to consider the relative value of the textual basis of the King James Version.

The KJV was not a new translation from the Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic, but rather a version that had regard to the Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic and the best English translations of the day, such as the Bishops’ Bible. One estimate is that 39% of the KJV was translated direct from the Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic. The Greek manuscripts underlying the texts edited by Erasmus, Stephanus and Beza were predominantly Byzantine; but it is important to note that those editions were not simply a reproduction of the Byzantine text, or what is often termed the Majority Text. This is because, for example, the Codex Bezae and the Codex Claromontanus are not Byzantine texts. Thus, it can be said that the KJV New Testament is based on eclectic texts,[[123]](#footnote-123) but that the number of the underlying texts is small and mostly Byzantine.

With regard to the question of the accuracy of its New Testament Greek text, the value of the KJV lies in its being a translation of a predominantly Byzantine text; modern versions are invariably translations based around the critically constructed eclectic text published by the United Bible Societies, or possibly that of Nestle-Aland, with any additional changes preferred by the translators. For the Bible student, having a translation of a Byzantine-like text is a valuable resource, as it will alert him or her to the need to investigate the underlying Greek where a modern version is substantially different from the KJV. This use of a Byzantine-like text is also advisable because there are textual scholars today who argue that the Majority Text is more true to the original than the modern eclectic text.[[124]](#footnote-124) If they are right, this would make the Greek text underlying the KJV more accurate than modern versions; but the matter is beyond the scope of this article.

**The Hebrew Text**

The Hebrew text underlying the KJV Old Testament is a Ben Asher text in the Ben Hayyim edition of 1524-1525.[[125]](#footnote-125) This edition was based on late medieval manuscripts and it remained the standard edition of the Hebrew Bible until the twentieth century. In terms of accuracy, it has been superseded by the use of the tenth-century Ben Asher Leningrad Codex in Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (third edition onwards). While the consonantal texts of Ben Hayyim and of the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia are substantially the same, there are changes in the pointing, in the marginal notes, and in the critical apparatus. Modern translations are based on the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, and take into account the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS), the Septuagint (LXX), and the Ancient Versions in determining the original Hebrew.[[126]](#footnote-126) The KJV translators followed the same policy, but obviously did not have the DSS to take into account. Thus, we can say that the Hebrew text used by modern versions is better than that used by the KJV translators; but because it is substantially the same, the differences have little practical effect for the native English speaker who has no Hebrew or Aramaic.

**Italics and Capitals**

In order to provide a smoother text and to compensate for ‘missing’ words in the source language, the KJV translators used the device of adding words in italics.[[127]](#footnote-127) This is a valuable feature for the native English speaker, since it helps them understand where the translator is more explicitly doing the work of an interpreter. The absence of this device in modern versions is regrettable; and it makes the KJV more accurate in this respect. Another useful feature of the KJV is the rendering of the Divine name YHWH with the capitalised “LORD”. The names and titles used for God in the Bible are many and varied, and distinguishing among them in this way serves to add to the accuracy of the KJV.

**Marginal Alternatives**

Consulting any lexicon will reveal that Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic words have a range of meaning, and the lexicon will cite several verses that illustrate the various uses of a word. While translators are usually certain of their translation, this is not always the case; and the KJV translators acknowledged this by placing alternative translations of words in the margin.[[128]](#footnote-128) In doing this they were being more accurate in how they represented their state of knowledge about the Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic. The absence of marginal alternatives in modern versions does not mean that their translators are now certain about everything; rather, they have made the editorial decision not to include alternatives in the margin of the Bible. For a native English Bible student without Greek or Hebrew/Aramaic, it is obviously valuable to have marginal alternatives, since this indicates those places where the translators were uncertain. The student can legitimately choose to go with the marginal alternative if their own Bible study suggests reasons why it should be chosen.

**Tense**

Hebrew has two grammatical forms that do a lot of the work of carrying tense, namely, the Perfect and the Imperfect.[[129]](#footnote-129) English has more complicated structures for making a distinction between the Simple Past, the Perfect and the Pluperfect for the Past tense.[[130]](#footnote-130) The difference between the relative simplicity of Hebrew and the complexity of English means that translators have to make interpretative choices about how to represent the Perfect in Hebrew: should they choose the Simple Past, the Perfect, or the Pluperfect? The use of three versions in Bible study (as suggested earlier) serves to alert the reader to the choices that the translators are making at this level. The KJV is a useful version to have in this regard, because it tends to be less flexible in translating the Perfect in Hebrew as something other than a past form in English. This does not mean that the KJV is necessarily right, but it signals the presence of the Perfect form in Hebrew more readily than other versions.[[131]](#footnote-131) Bible students will form their own judgment as to how accurate the KJV is in this respect.

**Lexical Considerations**

Hebrew is a simpler language than English in terms of the number of conjunctions, prepositions, relative pronouns and articles. Thus, for example, Bible translators have to make a choice from an array of English conjunctions about which one to use for the corresponding Hebrew. Moreover, since Hebrew frequently uses conjunctions, translators have to consider whether to translate them in all instances. The KJV translates Hebrew conjunctions more often than modern versions, and this contributes to a Hebraic style for its Old Testament prose.

Representing the words of the source language in the target language is a desirable goal; and the KJV is more likely than modern versions to represent the smaller words like conjunctions, articles and prepositions. This is valuable for a Bible student, as it helps them to appreciate how modern translations are smoothing the flow of the text. This is particularly important for the Greek, where a sophisticated theologian like Paul can be making very precise points using a range of prepositions. In this respect the KJV scores points over a version like the New International Version.[[132]](#footnote-132)

One area in which the KJV is lexically weak is in its understanding of difficult Hebrew words. Since the days of King James, comparative philology has progressed, and there is now far greater knowledge of cognate languages. Moreover, the Dead Sea Scrolls have increased our knowledge of Hebrew. It is more likely that a modern version is correct when there is a difficult word in the Hebrew. Here, it is worth following the guideline of using more than one modern version from different translation committees and eras. This is because there are fashions in scholarship, and opinions change on whether or not this or that cognate word illuminates a difficulty in Hebrew. For instance, using the RSV (1952) and the NASB (1995) together helps the native English speaker to locate where the difficult Hebrew words are and to see how two different translation committees have used comparative philology to render the text. So, for example, the New English Bible was particularly influenced by the Dead Sea Scrolls and by North-West Semitic philology. The Revised English Bible (the 1989 successor to the NEB) has, however, made ‘corrections’ in this regard.

In respect of the Greek, the KJV is recognised as having made mistakes arising from the use of grammar and lexicography of Classical rather than Koine Greek. Since the seventeenth century a large number of papyri have been discovered and analysed that contribute to our understanding of Koine Greek. In this regard the KJV is less accurate than modern versions, but the Bible student can make use of lexicons to spot errors and make corrections to the King James translation where appropriate. Lexical weakness in the KJV (Hebrew or Greek) should certainly not lead Bible students to dispense with the KJV, since the number of words involved is small, and the lexicons will still be needed to check on any modern versions used. The Hebrew teaching grammars make it clear, too, that a student needs only some 750 words to be able to read about 80% of the Hebrew Bible; and this relatively small vocabulary was as well understood in the days of King James as it is today.

**Dynamic Equivalence**

There are two philosophies of translation: dynamic equivalence and formal equivalence. Where a translator gives priority to the source language and seeks to render its words and syntactic constructions in the target language, they follow a literal approach to translation. Where a translator gives priority to the target language and seeks to convey the meaning of a source text in natural syntactic constructions of the target language, they are following the philosophy of dynamic equivalence. The KJV is a literal translation in this sense: it more closely follows the syntax of the Greek and Hebrew and, in its rendering of the Old Testament, this contributes to its ‘Hebraic’ style. While both philosophies have their validity, for the Bible student, the KJV is useful and fairly accurate in conveying in English something of the syntactic constructions of the Hebrew and Greek.

**Semantic Fields**

One of the deliberate policies of the King James translators was not to require uniformity of phrasing or the use of the same English words for correspondingly identical Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic. Thus, in translating the Synoptic Gospels, where the Greek was identical for a given saying or narrative detail in Matthew, Mark or Luke, the KJV translators did not use identical English. In this policy, they were favouring the target language and were confident in using synonyms; the principle also embodies the recognition that the words of a source language have semantic fields and that such fields are not necessarily represented in the target language by another single word, but sometimes by several words. The KJV is therefore not a ‘same-word-for-the-same-word’ (literal) translation, and this can be regarded as contributing to its accuracy.[[133]](#footnote-133)

**Metaphor and Idiom**

A standard choice that translators make is whether to favour the source language or the target language in translating metaphor and idiom. This is because the metaphor or idiom in a source language may have no counterpart in the target language. The KJV translators rendered some metaphors and idioms literally; but others they converted to plain language. It is difficult to say whether this makes the translation more or less accurate, though sometimes the idiom or metaphor is given in the margin alongside a plain rendering in the main text.

**Allusions, Echoes and Quotations**

The Bible has a dense intertextual weave and this is recognised by Bible students. The quality of a version can be assessed on how much of this intertextuality the translators embed in the translation (either in the text or by means of marginal cross-references). Critically, this aspect of their work does not depend so much on expertise in ancient languages, but rather it is a function of the translators’ knowledge of the Bible which they have gathered as Bible students. The KJV is a good version in this regard, and it is advisable for Bible students themselves to use only one main version for reading and study, since this will help them to pick up gradually on the intertextuality of the Bible. A literal version like the KJV or the NASB is better for this purpose. [[134]](#footnote-134)

**Presentation**

The KJV is rightly praised for its poetic phrasing in the Old Testament, albeit as a literary work of Shakespeare’s day. Elements of poetry such as rhythm and cadence are aspects of meaning to which a translator must pay attention. In this regard, the KJV can be regarded as a work of high quality. It is not possible, however, to draw any comparison with modern translations, simply because the literary quality of the KJV belongs to its period.[[135]](#footnote-135)

Nevertheless, the KJV did not lay poetry out in verse form in the printed edition, and it chose to retain the verse and chapter divisions of the Bishops’ Bible. This constraint introduced inaccuracy into the translation both for poetry and prose because the larger divisions in the text (such as the stanza, paragraph or discourse) are not represented in a natural way.[[136]](#footnote-136) Nevertheless, readers soon become aware of artificial verse and chapter divisions and compensate for this inaccuracy.

**Style**

Under this category of assessment we should include notions such as the balance of language, elegance, and tone. We should also consider the reading qualities of the translation, which was a particular concern of the King James translators. While Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek have their own reading qualities for a native English speaker, the writings of the Bible would have originally been heard by most people rather than read. Thus, while it is the mark of a good translation if it is ‘good on the ear’, the style and tone of the KJV is probably too literary and too elevated compared with the common language of the market-place and the ordinary letters that we have in the Bible.

**Archaic and Modern Language**

Finally, we should consider the question of ‘out-of-date’ language. From a modern point of view, it is certainly true that the KJV uses archaic language. Some of its English words are obscure; other words have changed their meaning since the days of King James; the phrasing of the KJV is old and not current.[[137]](#footnote-137) Nevertheless, the archaic phrasing of the KJV is closely modelled on the Hebrew; and the same can be said about the Greek, in which the extended punctuation of the KJV reflects the punctuation of the miniscules. A reader without Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic therefore gets at least some access to this aspect of the original languages with the KJV.

Whether a person wants this in their study is a personal choice. A native English-speaking Bible student could decide to put the KJV to one side for reasons of archaism; but the difficulties of reading involved are no greater than those for the learning of Shakespeare, which is regularly taught in schools. There are advantages in learning the style of the KJV, even though familiarity will require time and effort. If a more modern version of the King James is needed, the New King James Version (NKJV) and the Revised Authorised Version (RAV) are available. Modern versions come and go with the changing face of English; to have an enduring version of the Bible in English is of some value for the student.

**Concluding Remarks**

This article has argued that the KJV is a valuable version for the native English- speaking Bible student. It is sufficiently accurate; it translates mainly from the Byzantine (Majority) text and a standard Hebrew consonantal text; and it has useful features such as its italics and marginal notes. The KJV is obviously not a version for use with speakers and readers for whom English is a second language.[[138]](#footnote-138) Within the English-speaking world, it is not the best version for preaching because its language is not current and it requires a fairly sophisticated level of English. Of course, the KJV is still widely used in churches, and so it is sometimes the best version to use with those from other churches. These limitations in the practical use of the KJV do not arise from it being inaccurate, or less accurate, as a translation, but rather because the English is old and not of a suitable grade[[139]](#footnote-139) for preaching. Even after all this time, it remains a useful version for study and should be considered for a default version at ecclesial Bible classes.

**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 the various Christian confessions; defend the biblical principles summarised in the common Christadelphian statements of faith; and subject the published articles to peer review and amendment.

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1. J. Day notes; “G. Kwaakel (2002:221-31) in a recent, thorough discussion of the date of Psalm 44 is inclined to place it in the context of Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah in 701 BCE, which is not impossible. As Kwaakel 2002: 224, 227 notes, v. 12, ET 11 ‘You...have scattered us among the nations’ need not refer to 586 BCE, since Sennacherib claims to have deported 200,150 people from Judah”(p. 237). J. Day, “How Many Pre-Exilic Psalms Are There?” in *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel* (ed., John Day, London: Continuum, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The tradition continued into the days of Josephus. In *Ant*. 4.218, Josephus represents Deut. 17:8-9 as follows: “But if the judges do not understand how they should give judgement about the things that have been laid before them-let them send the case up untouched to the holy city, and when the chief priests and the prophet and the senate have come together, let them give judgement as to what seems fit” (translated by Sarah Pearce, “Josephus as Interpreter of Biblical Law: The representation of the Jewish High Court of Deut. 17:8-12 according to Jewish Antiquities 4.218” *JJS* 46 (1995): 30-42 (32). Although the precise identity of the high court and its relation to the Mosaic model of justice is a matter of debate, it is significant that Josephus’s model assumes that Jerusalem was still the centre of justice. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. G. A. Rendsburg suggests northern origins for some of these Psalms; “There are 36 poems in the Book of Psalms wherein linguistic evidence points very clearly too northern provenance” (G. A. Rendsburg, *Linguistic Evidence for the Northern Origin of Selected Psalms* (SBL Monograph, no. 43; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 104). K. Seybold notes that, “The linguistic evidence, including dialectical elements and a colloquial Hebrew, points to an origin in border areas and in the Diaspora, sociologically in the lower strata.” (K. Seybold, *Die* *Wallfahrtspsalmen* (Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), p. 41). L. D. Crow proposes that the Songs consist of two redactional layers: a nucleus that comes from a north-Israelite, agrarian provenance, and a Jerusalemite redactional layer that deliberately gives the “nuclear” songs a new purpose, namely, to persuade northern Israelites of the Persian period to make pilgrimage to the Jerusalem temple. Among other contributions, the work adds to the corpus of psalms identified as northern and engages several methodological issues associated with the identification of a psalm’s provenance (L. D. Crow, *The Songs of Ascents (Psalms 120-134): Their Place in Israelite History and Religion* (SBL Dissertation Series 148; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), pp. xiii, 226). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. David is found in the same early form (dwID') in Hos. 3:5 and Amos 6:5 both northern prophets being contemporary with Hezekiah’s reign, so this may indicate northern origins. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Rendsburg summarizes his view on the linguistics as follows; “The form se- is found in the following northern compositions: Song of Deborah (Judg 5:7 [bis]), Gideon cycle (Judg 6:17, 7:12, 8:26), Elisha cycle (2 Kgs 6:11 [in the mouth of an Aramean king]), Song of Songs (always, except in the superscription in Song 1:10, and Qoheleth (67 times). All other instances are in Exilic and post-Exilic compositions ....Consequently, we conclude that se- is northern in origin, and did not penetrate southward until the 6th Century B.C.E.”. Rendsburg, *Selected Psalms*, 91-92. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Employing Polak’s technique (Frank H. Polak, “The Oral and the Written: Syntax, Stylistics and the Development of Biblical Prose Narrative”, *JANES* 26 (1998): 59-105) on the WTM Hebrew morphology of Psalm 124 produces a NV (noun-verb) ratio of 0.619 which is clearly within the bounds of **early biblical** composition however the NF (nominal-finite verb) ratio (0.375) is almost as high as the Persian period book of Ezra thus suggesting **a late date** of composition. This may indicate that the Psalm is “transitional” or it may indicate that an early Psalm has undergone redaction (updating) during the Persian period; in any case the results *are hardly decisive either way*; especially as we are dealing with a Psalm that contains only 74 words. The danger is that for such a short selection any number of idiosyncratic usages could skew the statistical analysis. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. G. A. Rendsburg and M. G. A. Guzzo, “Phoenician/Punic and Hebrew” in *The Encyclopaedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (4 vols; ed. G. Khan; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2013), 3:71-77 (75). [Available Online.] [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. I. Young, R. Rezetko, and M. Ehrensvärd, eds., *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts* (2 vols; London: Equinox Publishing, 2008) online [cited April 2013] @ http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/yount357913.shtml. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. [ED AP]: ‘turn…Zion’ occurs in Isa 52:8 and suggests that Ps 126:1 is about the return of Zion’s captives from the various places that they had been deported by Sennacherib. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. “The next relevant item is the fs demonstrative pronoun Az / hzO, which appears in the following northern texts (Rendsburg 2003a:13): 2 Kgs. 6:19 הֹז; Hos. 7:16 וֹז; Ps. 132:12 Az; Qoheleth (6×) hzO. Once more, the attestations span centuries, in this case, from the early-monarchic-period Elisha narrative until the Persian-period book of Qoheleth, with two instances in the interval”. G. A. Rendsburg, “Northern Hebrew through Time: From the Song of Deborah to the Mishnah” in *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew*, (eds. C. L. Miller-Naude and Z. Zevit; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 339-359 (345). However, for a qualification of Rendsburg’s view, D. K. Wilson Jr. says, “With the evidence at hand, has an unquestionable answer been given to the demonstrative aAz (and Az)? Surely, it must be late and based on Aramaic yD. No, it is a northernism based on Phoenician וֹ. Or is it a colloquialism, since וֹז is the prevalent form in Mishnaic Hebrew? Are all northernisms colloquial, or all colloquialisms northern? The verdict is still out”. Douglas Keyes Wilson, Jr., *An Investigation into the Linguistic Evidence and Classification of Dialect Variation in Biblical Hebrew* (Dissertation Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1996), 140. From the authors point of view the most relevant usage of “zo” (wz) is in Exod. 15:13 which we definitely class as early (if not northern). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The phrase occurs in the blessing of Joseph, who did not form a tribe, but whose sons (Ephraim and Manasseh) formed the northern tribes. Those tribes were targeted by Hezekiah’s reformation:“And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover unto the Lord God of Israel”(2 Chron. 30:1). The title “Mighty One of Jacob”, first found in the Pentateuch (Gen 49:24) probably reflects northern tribal usage. Rendsburg observes, “Some poems within the prose text reflect an older stratum of Hebrew and may hark back to a poetic epic tradition. And a few passages, especially those concerning the northern tribes, contain elements of Israelian Hebrew. Most importantly, there are no indications of Late Biblical Hebrew in the Pentateuch”. G. A. Rendsburg, “Pentateuch, Linguistic Layers” in *The Encyclopaedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, 3:60-63 (63). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Compare Lev 25:21, “command the blessing” commencing a Jubilee year on the Day of Atonement (the “full year” of Lev 25:29) with 133:3 “command the blessing”. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. J. W. Thirtle, *Titles of the Psalms* (Morgan & Scott: London, 1904) and *Old Testament Problems* (Morgan & Scott: London, 1907). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See P. Wyns “Song of Songs (Part 1)” *CeJBI* 7/3 (2013): 4-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Day considers that Psalm 137 was written during the exile not afterwards. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. J. Day, “How Many Pre-Exilic Psalms Are There?” in *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel: Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, (ed., John Day, London: Continuum, 2004), 243. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Avi Hurvitz, *The Transition Period in Biblical Hebrew: A Study of Post-Exilic Hebrew and its Implications for the Dating of Psalms*, [Hebrew], (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1972). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Avi Hurvitz, “Linguistic Criteria for Dating Problematic Biblical Texts” *Hebrew Abstracts* 14 (1973): 74-79. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. ##  G. A. Rendsburg is best known for his attention to the northern Hebrew dialects within BH, and what he terms Israelian Hebrew (IH). He extends Hurvitz’ method of analyzing ‘Aramaisms’ to possible dialectal differences between the northern Israelian dialect and the southern Judean dialect. See his “Hurvitz Redux: On the Continued Scholarly Inattention to a Simple Principle of Hebrew Philology” in *Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology* (ed. I. Young; London: T&T Clark, 2003), 104-128.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Young argues against a linear development in his edited volume, *Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology*. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. I. Young, R. Rezetko and M. Ehrensvärd *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts. An Introduction to Approaches and Problems* (2 vols; London-Oakville: Equinox, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Young & Rezetko, Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts. An Introduction to Approaches and Problems, 2:96. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Qoh 1:3, 7, 9 (4×), 10, 11 (2×), 14, 17; 2:7, 9, 11 (2×), 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 (3×), 19 (2×), 20, 21 (2×), 22, 24, 26; 3:13, 14, 15, 18 (šĕ), 22; 4:2, 10; 5:4, 14 (2×), 15 (2×), 17; 6:3, 10 (2×); 7:10, 14, 24; 8:7, 14 (2×), 17 (šel); 9:5, 12 (2×); 10:3, 5, 14, 16, 17; 11:3, 8; 12:3, 7, 9. Song 1:6 (3×), 7 (2×), 12; 2:7, 17; 3:1, 2, 3, 4 (4×), 5, 7, 11; 4:1, 2 (2×), 6; 5:2, 8,9; 6:5 (2×), 6 (2×); 8:4, 8, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Pss 122:3, 4; 123:2; 124:1, 2, 6; 129:6, 7; 133:2, 3; 135:2, 8, 10; 136:23; 137:8 (2×), 9; 144:15 (2×); 146:3, 5. Gen 6:3; Judg 5:7 (2×); 6:17; 7:12; 8:26; 2 Kgs 6:11; Jonah 1:7, 12; 4:10; Job 19:29; Lam 2:15, 16; 4:9; 5:18; Ezra 8:20; 1 Chron 5:20; 27:27. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. R. D. Holmstedt, “The Story of Ancient Hebrew *ášer*” *ANES* 43 (2006): 7-26 (14). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Holmstedt, “The Story of Ancient Hebrew *ášer*”, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Holmstedt, “The Story of Ancient Hebrew *ášer*”, 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. R. D. Holmstedt, “Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew” in *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew*,(eds., Cynthia L. Miller-Naudé and Ziony Zevit, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 97-126 (116-117). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Holmstedt’s non-biblical data has been omitted and the Psalms (although heterogeneous) have been analysed as a group. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. The data is analysed in a spreadsheet which (together with an explanation) is available for download. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The conclusions in this article are based on statistical work; available as an Excel spreadsheet (Aser and Shin Distribution in the OT) on the ‘downloads’ page of the EJournal website. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Adolf Harnack, *History of Dogma* (2 vols; London: Williams & Norgate, 1894), 1:190. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. J. Knox, *The Humanity and Divinity of Christ: A Study of Patterns in Christology* (Cambridge: CUP, 1967), 8-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of the Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (New York: HarperOne, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. See Adela Y. Collins & John J. Collins, King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 20-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Knox, Humanity and Divinity, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 218-241. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. J. C. O’Neill, *Who Did Jesus Think He Was?* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. O’Neill, Who Did Jesus Think He Was?, 14 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. O’Neill, Who Did Jesus Think He Was?, 16 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. II Samuel 7:14 (Romans 1:3-4), Psalm 2 (Luke 3:22, Acts 4:25-26, 13:13, Hebrews 1:5, 5:5, Revelation 19:14), Psalm 8 (Mathew 21:6, I Corinthians 15:27, Ephesians 1:22, Hebrews 2:6-8), Psalm 110 (Matthew 22:44, Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42-43, Acts 2:34-36, I Corinthians 15:25, Hebrews 1:13, 5:6, 7:17-21); O’Neill, *Who Did Jesus Think He Was?,* 14 [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ehrman*, How Jesus Became God,* 226. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Simon J. Gathercole, “What did the first Christians think about Jesus?” in *How God Became Jesus: The Real Origins of Belief in Jesus’ Divine Nature* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 106-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Ehrman*, How Jesus Became God,* 220-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Cranfield, quoted in J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 34. Dunn himself takes a middle ground, stating “what is clear, on either alternative, is that the resurrection of Jesus was regarded as of central significance in determining his divine status” (p. 35). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. P. Stuhlmacher, Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary (John Know, 1994), 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. See Matt 24:30, Mark 13:26, Luke 21:27, II Thess 1:7, Rev 5:12-13 for δύναμις; also see Acts 2:33; Eph 1:20-22, I Pet 3:22. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Collins & Collins, *King and Messiah,* 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Gathercole, “What did the first Christians think about Jesus?”, 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Collins & Collins, *King and Messiah,* 127 [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. R. J. Swanson, *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Luke* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* (Oxford: OUP, 2011),73-79. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Collins & Collins, *King and Messiah,* 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Thanks to Matt, Nick and David, a 1980 prophecy study group, for input to an early version of this article. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Maria Eugenia Aubet, *The Phoenicians and the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. *The Annals of Sennacherib*, (ed. D. D. Luckenbill; Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2005); Aubet has a picture of the bas-relief from Khorsabad that shows Luli’s flight from Tyre. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39* (AB 19; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 345. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. H. A. Whittaker, *Isaiah* (Cannock: Biblia, 1988), 255. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Aubet*, The Phoenicians and the West,* 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. This is one of the idioms of ‘forgetting’ used in Isaiah: either the people forget God or he is accused of forgetting his people (Isa 49:14-15). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. The motif of a seventy year period is not unique to Judahite prophecy. Esarhaddon reversed his father’s (Sennacherib) policy towards Babylon and sought to support the city’s reconstruction after it was sacked in 689 BCE. He cited a prophecy in support: ““The merciful god Marduk wrote that the calculated time of its abandonment (should last) 70 years, (but) his heart was quickly soothed, and he reversed the numbers and thus ordered its (re)occupation to be (after) 11 years.” In E. Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680–669 BC)* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), nos. 104: II 1-9; 114: II 12-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 141. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. I am grateful to Peter Heavyside who originally introduced these findings to me, and Mark Morris for his continual supply of wisdom and insight when putting together this article. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. When we look carefully at the word we see how it is without contradiction, unlike the false witnesses brought again Christ; “their witness agreed not together” (Mark 14:55-59). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. C. K. Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 1:617. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. E. Plumacher, *Lukas als hellenistischer Schriftsteller* in H. J. Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity: the world of the Acts of the Apostles* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Klauck*, Magic and Paganism,* 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. L. T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 226. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Barrett, *Acts*, 270. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. W. Larkin, *Acts* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011), 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. B. Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Johnson, *Acts*, 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles a commentary*(trans. R. McL. Wilson; Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 239. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Barrett, *Acts*, 414. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Johnson, *Acts*, 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Susan Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Rick Strelan, *Strange Acts: Studies in the Cultural World of the Acts of the Apostles* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 198-221. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. O. Bauernfeind, in Larkin, *Acts*, 129, and in Haenchen, *Acts*, 239. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. W. Schottroff, ‘Curse’, in *Encyclopaedia of Christianity: Vol. 1*, (ed. E Fahlbusch *et al*.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 758. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. 1 <http://milestones.kinneret.ac.il/en/> [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. 2 <http://new.huji.ac.il/en/article/22734> [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. 3 <http://geology.gsapubs.org/content/early/2014/07/14/G35815.1.abstract> [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. 4 <http://newmedia-eng.haifa.ac.il/?p=6750> [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. 5 [http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0106406](http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi/10.1371/journal.pone.0106406) [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. 6 <http://phys.org/news/2014-08-ancient-metal-workers-slaves-highly.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. 7 <http://www.israel21c.org/headlines/the-land-of-a-1000-caves/> [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. 8 Tennant, H. (1969). *The Man David* (p. 107). The Christadelphian. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. 9 <http://www.antiquities.org.il/t/default_en.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. 10 <http://www.livescience.com/47835-massive-5-000-year-old-stone-monument-revealed-in-israel.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. 11 <http://www.antiquities.org.il/article_eng.aspx?sec_id=25&subj_id=240&id=4078&module_id#as> [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. 12 <http://www.si.edu/Museums/sackler-gallery> [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. 13 <http://www.si.edu/Exhibitions/Details/Unearthing-Arabia-The-Archaeological-Adventures-of-Wendell-Phillips-5311> [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. 14 [http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/en/news/news,401026,scientists-are-studying-mummies-from-the-temple-of-hatshepsut.html](http://www.naukawpolsce.pap.pl/en/news/news%2C401026%2Cscientists-are-studying-mummies-from-the-temple-of-hatshepsut.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. 15 <http://www.livescience.com/46806-tomb-painting-discovered-near-great-pyramid.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. 16 <http://www.livescience.com/46978-egyptian-carving-discovered.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. 17 <http://tulane.edu/news/newwave/080414_egyptologist_and_tulane_mummies.cfm> [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. 18 <http://popular-archaeology.com/issue/06052014/article/egyptian-mummification-started-much-earlier-than-previously-thought-say-researchers> [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. 19 <http://news.ucsc.edu/2014/09/egyptian-mammals.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. 20 <http://www.livescience.com/47875-ancient-egyptian-woman-with-hair-extensions.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. 21 <http://www.oapen.org/search?identifier=465030> [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. 22 <http://www.livescience.com/46674-remains-of-long-lost-temple-discovered-in-iraq.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. 23 <http://news.sciencemag.org/archaeology/2014/08/skeleton-closet-identified-bones-ancient-ur> [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. 24 <http://popular-archaeology.com/issue/fall-09012014/article/ancient-6-500-year-old-skeleton-from-ur-excavations-gets-a-public-audience> [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. 25 <http://www.livescience.com/47306-nile-river-cemetery-discovered.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. 26 <http://popular-archaeology.com/issue/fall-09012014/article/kingdom-of-kush-iron-industry-works-discovered> [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. 27 <http://www.lingfil.uu.se/staff/olof_pedersen/Google_Earth/> [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. 28 <http://www.manar-al-athar.ox.ac.uk/> [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55* (AB 19A; New York: Doubleday, 2002), 346, says it “does not fit the context” and argues that if it was ‘sprinkle’ it would have a preposition ‘upon’; C. R. North, *Isaiah* 40-55 (London: SCM Press, 1952), 132, says the verb is a sacrificial term and “never used with a direct accusative of object indicating a person or persons (as ‘nations’ here).” [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* (OTL; trans. D. M. G. Stalker; London: SCM Press, 1969), 259, merely says that “it would be better to assume a verb” with the meaning of ‘startle’. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. H. A. Whittaker, *Isaiah* (Cannock: Biblia, 1988), 456, 467. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. The ‘So’ of v. 15a is not related syntactically to the ‘As’ of v. 14a because this is part of a parenthesis; rather, the syntactic connection is with v. 14b ‘his visage was so marred more than [etc.]…so shall he sprinkle’ giving a ‘more than…so many’ syntax. The repetition of ‘so’ at the beginning of v. 14b and v. 15a is the way that the two third person clauses (vv. 14b and 15) are tied together; *contra* Westermann, 258-259. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. This explains why there is no preposition as in ‘sprinkle blood upon’: the sacrifice of the many nations is like giving the firstborn of Egypt for the people and it cleanses the land. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. The reason for this is simple: Christadelphian intertextual study is unencumbered by scholarship and the text is handled in its raw state. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. I was fortunate to inherit a complete run of this journal from its start up until 1983 from a brother many years ago. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. For a philosophical introduction to the business of translation, see: W. Haas, ‘The Theory of Translation’ in *The Theory of Meaning*, edited by G. H. R. Parkinson (Oxford: University Press, 1968), pp. 86-108. For a recent survey of translation theory, see: D. Weissbort and A. Eysteinsson, *Translation: Theory and Practice - A Historical Reader* (Oxford: University Press, 2006). The professional journal is *The Bible Translator* (1950-) which publishes technical and practical articles. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. This is why on a discussion forum it is worthless to simply say that this or that version is more or less accurate than another version and proclaim such opinions as ‘fact’. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. E. F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended* (4th ed.; Des Moines: The Christian Research Press, 1984). [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. J. R. White, *The King James Only Controversy* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. B. M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines ‘eclectic’ as “deriving ideas or style from a broad and diverse range of sources”. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Z. C. Hodges and A. L. Farstad, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* (2nd ed.; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985). [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. E. Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957). [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. A new critical edition of the Hebrew text is being produced - *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* - which is continuing the tradition of reproducing the Leningrad Codex. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. The original printed editions did not use the device of italics; these were used in later editions. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. It was a specific guideline of King James that the translation should have no marginal notes other than strictly linguistic ones so as to avoid doctrinal troubles. This guideline is still good advice, since with study bibles the consensus scholarship they include can often be a source of error. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. 11 C. H. J. van der Merwe, J. A. Naudé and J. H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 2002), 141-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. The grammatical forms used vary and it possible to further distinguish progressive forms of the past tenses. See: M. Swan, *Practical English Usage* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005), 421-5 and 455-60. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. The New American Standard Bible (1995) has this same feature, and is also useful in this regard. From the point of view of this writer, in fact, the NASB is the best version for representing Hebrew tenses. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. See: R. Martin, *Accuracy of Translation and the New International Version* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1989). [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. In fairness, however, a case could be made for the use of the same English for the parallel Greek of the Synoptic Gospels. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. The ‘intertextuality’ of the Bible refers to the multiple (and sometimes very subtle) ways in which parts of the Bible text can only be properly understood by reference to other parts, owing to the presence and use of quotations, allusions or echoes. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. L. Long, *Translating the Bible* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 188. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. The KJV did use a symbol (¶) for marking paragraphs in the Old Testament, but not for the whole of the New Testament (it is speculated that the printer ran out of type). [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. For a full discussion of the archaic nature of the KJV, see: A. C. Partridge, *English Biblical Translation* (London: André Deutsch, 1973), chap. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. For an overview of the typical difficulties that speakers of other languages have with English see: M. Swan and B. Smith, *Learner English* (Cambridge: University Press, second edition, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. The notion of ‘grading’ here is simply about using language appropriate to the audience. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)