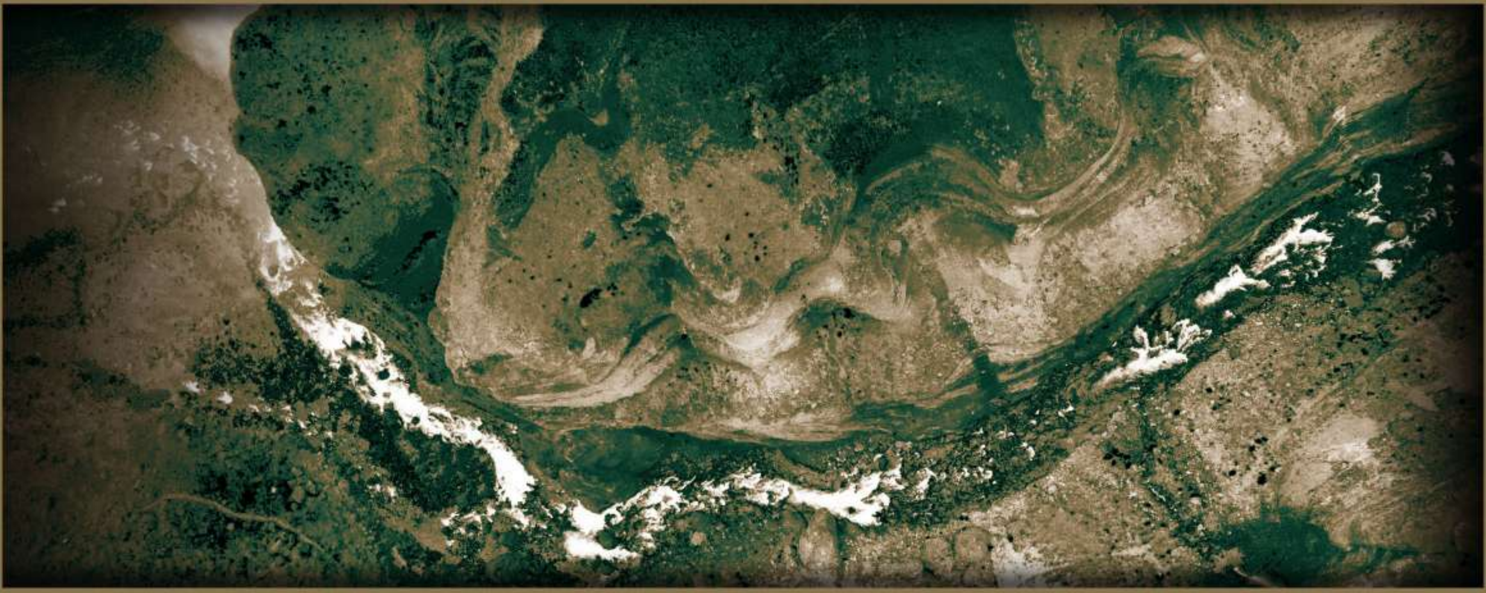
Conspectus

The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary



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Editorial

Batanayi I. Manyika and Cornelia van Deventer

The year 2020 will go down as one of the most volatile years in living memory. From a virus that brought the world to a standstill to global reactions to racial injustices, we have all been thrown into the realm of the unknown due to forces much greater than us. Despite such upheaval, the mission of God continues, and the church remains the locus and agent of God's redemptive acts in our world. Cognizant of God's sovereignty, we the editors of *Conspectus* would like to sketch the contours of how the journal has developed amidst great disruption and how, by God's grace, we are positioning it for growth in seasons to come.

In March 2020, the leadership of the journal was handed over to a team of editors led by Dr. Batanayi Manyika. On the team is Dr. Cornelia van Deventer (Associate Editor), Prof. Dan Lioy (Content and Book Review Editor), Dr. George Coon (Copy and Book Review Editor), and Mr. Izaak Connoway (Proofreader and Administrator). Tasked with establishing new systems and procedures, aimed at optimizing *Conspectus's* editorial processes, the Editorial Team is glad to report that *Conspectus* 29 and 30 herald a new status quo in the journal's operations. Key to this development is the new Editorial Policy—the journal's regulating document—capturing the values, scope, and aims of *Conspectus*.[1] Launching from SATS's threefold distinctives of "Bible-based, Christ-centered, and Spirit-led," the journal values interdisciplinary theological discourse, confessional emphases, representational input, and a foregrounding of the Majority World.

In addition to the Editorial Policy, new Author Guidelines were drawn up based on the SBL Handbook of Style (2014).[2] In November 2020, Conspectus's Editorial Board convened for the first time. The board consists of scholars from across the globe, tasked with the oversight and professional outlook of the journal.

While *Conspectus* was founded to showcase SATS's research outputs, it has since grown to serve contributors and readers beyond the seminary. For this reason, the Editorial Team has identified formal accreditation of the journal as a mid-term priority. As we labor towards this goal, diversifying our offerings is at the forefront of our agenda. Regulated by the paramenters of a Bible-based theological conviction, the church remains central to Conspectus's objectives. Our goal is to serve Christian practitioners, academics, and students with rigorous scholarship that is broadly evangelical.

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[1] An abridged version of the Editorial Policy has been included in this publication (see p. 117).

[2] The Author Guidelines are included in this publication (see p. 120).

2020 has indeed been an unpredictable year and while there is no guarantee that the turbulence will subside, our trust remains anchored in God. Our prayer is that *Conspectus* will continue to grow, serving the church and influencing the guild through God-honoring scholarship.

In Christ,
Dr. Batanayi I. Manyika (Editor)
Dr. Cornelia van Deventer (Associate Editor)

Conspectus
The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary

Re-oralizing the Word for Empowerment: A study of re-translation in Chichewa, with special reference to Psalm 124

Ernst R. Wendland

Abstract

Chichewa is a major Bantu language widely spoken as a primary or secondary mode of communication in many areas of south-east Africa. Three major translations of the Bible were produced in this language during the twentieth century: the Protestant *Buku Lopatulika* (1922), the Catholic *Malembo Oyera* (1966), and the Interconfessional *Buku Loyera* (1998). The present study briefly investigates the different methods of translation that were employed for these Bibles in order to suggest how the last-mentioned ecumenical version has served to greatly "empower" the people, readers and hearers alike, with regard to their language, culture, theology, and a broader sense of Christian community. To illustrate this claim, selected aspects of the short Psalm 124 in these three versions are comparatively analyzed. This leads to a consideration of several additional strategies that might be implemented in order to further improve this version's essential comprehensibility on the one hand, and its oral-aural quality, or audience-engaging popularity, on the other. In conclusion, some possible implications of this research for preparing a future enhanced, multimodal re-translation of the Chichewa Bible is proposed.

Keywords
Bible translation, contextualization, orality, theology, performance, empowerment, Chichewa

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1. Introduction

In keeping with the main theme of the 2019 European Society for Translation Studies Congress in Stellenbosch, entitled *Living Translation: People, Processes, Products*, I wish to briefly explore one of the assembly's designated subtopics: "Translation as empowerment—new Bible (re)translations." I will do this with special reference to Psalm 124 by means of a short survey of Bible translation history in Chichewa (hereafter, "Chewa"), which is spoken as a first or second language by some 15–20 million people in the SE African nations of Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe.[1] During this overview we will consider the three major Bible translations that have been produced over the last century in order to see how, after an initial long period of inactivity, the Chewa-speaking people were progressively empowered through a program of (re)translation that featured new principles and procedures along with some new products that made a new version more widely and readily available to the masses. In conclusion, we will reflect on some further measures and means that can keep this process of sociocultural and scriptural revitalization going in the twenty-first century.

2. Three Chichewa Bible Translations

In this section I will sketch the history and nature of the three major Chewa Bible (re)translations that have been published and widely used to date.[2]

2.1. Buku Lopatulika (BP)

Work on this ground-breaking initial Chewa translation was begun in the 1880s by a team consisting of several missionaries (David Clement Scott, Alexander Hetherwick) of the Church of Scotland Mission and their Chewa-speaking language assistants (only Che Ndombo named).[3] The New Testament was published in 1886, but people soon realized that this version needed revision, a task that was undertaken around the turn of the century by a newly-established joint Bible Translation Commission. A missionary team working under the leadership of Dr. Hetherwick and another gifted linguist, Rev. W. Murray of the Dutch Reformed Mission, assisted by two unnamed African teachers, finally completed their work which was published by the Bible Society of Scotland in 1906.[4]

Work on the Old Testament began shortly thereafter, but progress was delayed for various reasons (administrative burdens, inadequate funding, and WWI) until at last Rev. Murray's expanded team, consisting of missionaries and national translators, was able to complete the full

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[1] Chichewa is arguably the most widely-spoken "second-language" in this entire region. It used to be the "national language" of Malawi; for Zambia, as an "official language" it is referred to as Cinyanja, or more colloquially as "Nyanja" (see Ohannessian and Kashoki 1978, 40, 134, 206, 220, 232, 234, 380).

[2] For additional information about each one of these translations, see Wendland (1998, ch. 1).

[3] The names listed above were the most prominent in the sources that I referenced; however, other persons are found on the internet, for example: "Murray, William Hoppe, 1866–1947; Napier, R. H.; Ndombe (sic), Che; National Bible Society of Scotland; British and Foreign Bible Society; Union Nyanja Translation Committee; Dutch Reformed Church Mission; Church of Scotland Mission" https://archive.org/details/bukulopatulikand00murr/page/n4).

[4] It may be significant to point out that in these early years of colonial history, it was largely Protestant and Catholic missions that took the lead in establishing, funding, and maintaining various educational and other training institutions at the basic and advanced level for local people.

Chewa Bible in 1919. Several more years of typesetting and proof-reading were required, with the texts being slowly shuttled back and forth by land and sea mail between Africa (Nyasaland) and Europe (Scotland), before the full Bible finally appeared in published form in 1922.[5] This eagerly-awaited version was called the *Buku Lopatulika* ("Sacred Book") and subtitled, *ndilo Mau a Mulungu* ("it is the Words of God"). Following the prevailing method of the time, the BP was a formal-correspondence version, one that generally followed the original wording of the Hebrew and Greek texts as closely as legible Chewa wording would allow. In addition, the initial drafts were made by non-mother-tongue missionaries, a factor that undoubtedly contributed to the periodic unnaturalness of lexical and syntactic usage that the text exhibits. However, this version has served the Protestant churches of Malawi (formerly Nyasaland) admirably well over the years, right up to the present day where it functions, in effect, as the "KJV" Bible in Chewa (Nyanja in Zambia). Minor revisions of the text and paratext (supplementary features, e.g., cross-references, section headings) were undertaken in 1936 and 1966 until a major revision was carried out more recently by national staff of the Bible Society of Malawi. This two-year project was completed in 2016 and features the following seven improvements:[6]

- The adoption of current Chichewa orthography rules throughout the text, e.g., *pfuko > fuko; bvuto > vuto; ciyambi > chiyambi;*
- Greater consistency in the use of key words and technical terms, e.g., sanctuary, linen;
- Replacement of archaic words, e.g., *makumbi > makonde, likole > chipinda; cholowera > chitole, maguta > makoma, cimbudzi > pamwamba penipeni;*
- Clarification of erroneous and ambiguous translations, e.g., James 2:1;
- Explanation of several textual problems, e.g., Matt. 17:21; Mark 7:16;
- Reduction of overly long paragraphs and sections;
- Addition of a glossary, table of weights and measures, parallel references, and book introductions with main themes and outlines.

So how, or in what significant ways did this particular translation of the Bible operate as a notable means of empowering Chewa-speaking people and enriching their language and culture? Leaving aside its principal spiritual or religious use, the BP was the longest piece of literature, other than dictionaries and similar reference works, available in the Chichewa language, that is, until the next translation appeared nearly forty-five years later. In audio or printed form, the verbal patterns of this Bible have also to a greater or lesser extent intertextually influenced a host of other verbal works, oral and written, sacred and secular, over the years—poems, short stories, novelettes, plays, songs, magazines, newspapers, school textbooks, radio broadcasts, and so forth.[7]

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[5] This was a joint publication venture of the Bible Society of Scotland and the British and Foreign Bible Society.

[6] This information was made available at the Bible Society of Malawi website (accessed on 21/03/2019: http://biblesociety-malawi.org/index.php/2016/02/24/buku-lopatulika-has-been-revised/).

[7] Such influence occurred through actual citation, indirect allusion, or the adoption of certain of its familiar key-terms and unnatural linguistic peculiarities—i.e., Chibaibulo "Bible-ese"). In order to promote the Chichewa language, a number of out-of-print and hard-to-find publications have been posted at the following website: https://sun.academia.edu/EWENDLAND/Chewa-Nyanja-and-Bantu-Languages.

2.2. Malembo Oyera (MO)

If the *Buku Lopatulika* was the standard "church Bible" of Protestant speakers of Nyanja-Chewa, the *Malembo Oyera* ("Holy Letters/Writings") performed that service for Catholics living in the same region of Africa. In further contrast to the BP, the MO translation was largely the product of the lifelong work of one man, Fr. Louis Villy of the White Fathers. Having learned Cinyanja during his early missionary years in Nyasaland, Fr. Villy completed a translation of the four Gospels and Acts in the 1930s. A severe illness prevented any progress in his work for many years until he was finally able to resume it twenty years later when he completed a translation of the entire New Testament (early 1950s).[8] Fr. Villy carried on with the Old Testament and Deuterocanonical books which were finished in draft stage about a decade later. He then undertook a revision of his complete manuscript, but now with the capable assistance of a linguistically-gifted Malawian priest, Fr. Patrick Kalilombe, who later became the Bishop of Lilongwe, the country's capital city.[9] The full Bible was finally published by the Episcopal Conference of Malawi in 1966 and immediately became the officially recognized translation for all Chewa-speaking Catholics in this region of Africa. In addition to being somewhat more idiomatic stylistically than the *Buku Lopatulika*, the MO includes several other important features that distinguish it from the BP: for source texts, it is based largely on the Vulgate Latin version and the French La Sainte Bible; in addition, it includes individual book introductions as well as many helpful expository footnotes throughout the text.

2.3. Buku Loyera (BL)

The pair of translations surveyed above, the BP and MO, served their respective macro-church communities, Protestant and Catholic, very well over the years. But in the 1960s, when the spirit of ecumenism was especially strong throughout the world, some crucial questions arose in many parts of Africa, including the SE macro-region. For one, why do Christians still continue to rely on older missionary versions of the Scriptures in their language? And related to this, why can Christians not cooperate to produce a common version that might be used in all of their churches? Taking on this challenge, the Bible Society of Malawi, in conjunction with their colleagues in Zambia, decided to produce an "ecumenical version," one that would be widely acceptable as a liturgical Bible by Catholics and Protestants alike, thus creating a much broader Christian community based on a common Scripture text.[10] This was also intended to be a completely new translation that would highlight and enrich the Chichewa (Cinyanja) language since it was drafted and produced by mother-tongue speakers, the most capable and experienced national experts that could be found for the work to serve as translators and reviewers. This broadly-based enterprise was undertaken in the mid-1960s and resulted in the publication of the *Buku Loyera* New Testament (*Chipangano*

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8 Unfortunately, I was not able to find specific completion dates for many of these early publications, Catholic or Protestant, prior to the appearance of the full Bible.

9 This latter detail is significant since many national priests, pastors, or professors who assisted in the work of Bible translation, whether in Chewa or other languages, Protestant or Catholic, were unable (or not permitted) to devote their full time to the task, but more often than not had to share this work with many other church-related duties. This unfortunately limited their potential contribution in diverse respects and to varying degrees, thus also making the continued assistance of expatriate advisors necessary.

10 This aim did not include a vision of a unified theology; thus, the new translation would be carefully, sometimes specifically, worded so that it would not deny or exclude the teachings of any of the major churches that sponsored and supported this joint project. For further details regarding the organization of this project, see Wendland (1998, 26–58).

Chatsopano) in 1977.[11] It took another twenty years for the full Bible to be completed (1998) and then published by the Bible Society of Malawi,[12] in two separate versions—that is, with the Catholic edition including the Deuterocanonical Books.[13]

In addition to its ecumenical (Catholic-Protestant) foundation, there are a number of other important qualities that characterize this retranslation and distinguish it from the two earlier versions; the following is a listing of some of these distinctive features:[14]

- The BL is a "popular language," meaning-orientated version, that is, composed as a dynamic "functional equivalent" of the original Hebrew/Greek text (Nida and Taber 1969, 14)[15] in natural (idiomatic) "contemporary language in a form that is shared by the entire population that speaks it" (Wonderly 1968, 3).[16] This necessitated the establishment of a detailed set of translation principles and procedures that would guide the diverse aspects of production and also serve as a means of progressively evaluating the work (Wendland 1998, ch.3).
- Similar to a "common language" version, the BL specifies its primary target audience as having a special focus on the following: lay-Christians (being intelligible to them); the younger child-bearing generation (20–35 years old); and women (who often do not have as much opportunity as men for education or travel and dialect expansion).[17]
- Another major concern for the target audience is BL's focus on the needs of those who may only be listening to the biblical text, not reading it, with respect to typographical features that are unavailable to hearers for clarifying meaning, such as capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and other aspects of the page format (Nida and Taber 1969, 29–30).
- On the other hand, for readers, certain features that increase the clarity of the printed text have been introduced, such as a larger, more legible typeface, shorter paragraphs with indents, more readable footnotes, and other types of reference, like verse numbers.
- The introduction of periodic illustrations, tables, and charts is a prominent visual educative supplement for readers of the BL, while a glossary provides an explanation of important biblical concepts and technical terms.
- The project organization of the BL was much more elaborate and extensive than that of its predecessors, with a full-time translation team of three members (two Protestants and a

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[11] Note the compromise even in the name of this new Bible: *Buku* ("Book," from the Protestant *Buku Lopatulika*) and *Loyera* ("Holy," from the Catholic *Malembo Loyera*).

[12] The involvement of the present writer began in the early 1970s and focused mainly on the translation of the Old Testament plus a subsequent revision of the New Testament.

[13] After the appearance of the Catholic edition of the BL, no further publications of the MO were made.

[14] This is a summary listing excerpted from the much longer description and discussion in Wendland (1998, chaps. 2-3). There is also an overview of this translation from a "frames-of-reference" perspective in Wilt, ed. (2003, 259–262).

[15] As a "dynamic equivalence" (DE) translation the BL greatly differed from both the BP and the MO, which were essentially more literal, "formal correspondence" (FC) versions. Nida and Taber's classic definition of DE translating is that it "consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style" (1969, 12 and further explained in 13–28). "Meaning" is defined with special reference to the "informative," "expressive," and "imperative" functions of language (1969, 24–27).

[16] This type of version is closely related to what is termed a "common language" version, that is, composed in language found in "the 'area of overlap' of usage common to both upper and lower classes—a variety of language which, while *acceptable* to the former, is *accessible* to the latter" (Wonderly 1968, 4, original italics). The social differences in dialect that call for the limitations of a common language translation are not as extreme in a popular language setting, and so greater freedom and flexibility is available to translators in their "use of fully contemporary language" that avoids "unnatural and unfamiliar expressions" (ibid., loc cit.).

[17] These audience-defining characteristics are further described and exemplified in Nida and Taber (1968, 31–32).

Catholic) being assisted by a rather large group of reviewers, both professional (focusing on various technical aspects of the translated text) and public (laypersons who concerned themselves largely with language usage and intelligibility). Thus, a significant number of the target audience were both aware of and engaged in the process of translation from beginning to end. This greatly "democratized" the BL version and enabled future readers to give critical input regarding its production along the way, well before final publication (Wendland 1998, ch.2).

- The new translation being produced was also regularly tested for popular feedback by means of occasional one-book sample publications, by printed drafts that were widely circulated among the churches, and through periodic workshops that brought laypersons and clergy together to meet the translation team for discussions on all manner of issues pertaining to the work. Selections were also made available for broadcast on the radio and for special major public events such as annual church or synod conventions.

After the preceding overview of the three most important Bible translations in Chichewa,[18] we are ready to undertake a comparative study of their differing styles in order to discern firsthand and in some detail how the process of re-translation has progressively improved the relative understandability of the biblical text, thus making it clearer and more comprehensible, hence potentially useful, to an ever widening circle of the general reading and listening public.

3. Psalm 124: A Comparative Textual Example

This section first sets out the Hebrew text of Psalm 124 accompanied by the English Standard Version. Next, the psalm is reproduced as translated into Chichewa and formatted in each of the three versions described above; alongside, a more or less literal back-translation into English is presented. Footnotes will provide more detailed information concerning the Chewa translation and/or its English back-translation. After each translation several more general critical and/or comparative comments are given, and these will form the basis for a concluding summary and prospect for the future.

3.1. Psalm 124 in Hebrew and literal English (ESV)

1 שִׁ֥יר הַֽמַּעֲל֗וֹת לְדָ֫וִ֥ד
לוּלֵ֣י יְ֭הוָה שֶׁהָ֣יָה לָ֑נוּ
יֹֽאמַר־נָ֝֗א יִשְׂרָאֵֽל׃
2 לוּלֵ֣י יְ֭הוָה שֶׁהָ֣יָה לָ֑נוּ
בְּק֖וּם עָלֵ֣ינוּ אָדָֽם׃

3 אֲ֭זַי חַיִּ֣ים בְּלָע֑וּנוּ
בַּחֲר֖וֹת אַפָּ֣ם בָּֽנוּ׃
4 אֲ֭זַי הַמַּ֣יִם שְׁטָפ֑וּנוּ

Song of Ascents—of David
1 If it had not been the LORD who was on our side—
let Israel now say—
2 if it had not been the LORD who was on our side
when people rose up against us,
3 then they would have swallowed us up alive,
when their anger was kindled against us;
4 then the flood would have swept us away,

---

18 Several other Chewa translations have appeared over the years, but these may be comparatively shown to have "borrowed" rather heavily from either the earlier published BP or BL versions. Copyright laws are not often enforced in this part of the world, thus making such infringement a ready option for new "start-up" translation projects. In 2017, for example, one of these derivative versions was publicly advertised as being "the first ever Chichewa full Bible" https://www.mnnonline.org/news/chichewa-full-bible-first-malawi/. More recently, a new Zambian "Nyanja" re-translation project was undertaken, with the hope of publishing the NT in 2021 (Rev. Gift Nyirenda, Translation Advisor, Zambia Bible Society; personal correspondence 20/08/2020). It remains to be seen whether this version will be more SL-based or TL-oriented in style.

נַ֝חְלָה עָבַ֥ר עַל־נַפְשֵֽׁנוּ׃
5 אֲ֭זַי עָבַ֣ר עַל־נַפְשֵׁ֑נוּ
הַ֝מַּ֗יִם הַזֵּידוֹנִֽים׃
6 בָּר֥וּךְ יְהוָ֑ה שֶׁלֹּ֥א
נְתָנָ֥נוּ טֶ֝֗רֶף לְשִׁנֵּיהֶֽם׃
7 נַפְשֵׁ֗נוּ כְּצִפּ֥וֹר נִמְלְטָה֮
מִפַּ֪ח י֫וֹקְשִׁ֥ים הַפַּ֥ח
נִשְׁבָּ֑ר
וַאֲנַ֥חְנוּ נִמְלָֽטְנוּ׃
8 עֶ֭זְרֵנוּ בְּשֵׁ֣ם יְהוָ֑ה
עֹ֝שֵׂ֗ה שָׁמַ֥יִם וָאָֽרֶץ׃ [19]

the torrent would have gone over us;
5 then over us would have gone
the raging waters.
6 Blessed be the LORD,
who has not given us as prey to their teeth!
7 We have escaped like a bird
from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken,
and we have escaped!
8 Our help is in the name of the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

3.2. Buku Lopatulika

Mulungu yekha walanditsa *anthu ace.*	*God alone delivers* *his people.*
Nyimbo yokwerera: ya Davide	Song for climbing up: of David[20]
1. Akadapanda kukhala nafe Yehova, Anene tsono Israeli;	1. If he had not been with us Jehovah,[21] So let him speak Israel;[22]
2. Akadapanda kukhala nafe Yehova, Pakutiukira anthu:	2. If he had not been with us Jehovah, When people rose up against us:[23]
3. Akadatimeza amoyo, Potipsera mtima wao.	3. They could have swallowed us alive, Burning against us in their heart.[24]
4. Akadatimeza madziwo, Mtsinje ukadapita pa moyo wathu;	4. That water could have swallowed us,[25] A stream might have gone [up]on our life;[26]
5. Madzi odzikuza akadapita pa moyo wathu.	5. Proud water might have gone upon our life.[27]
6. Alemekezedwe Yehova, Amene sanatipereka kumano kwao tikhale cakudya cao.	6. May Jehovah be praised, Who did not deliver us to their teeth (that) that we might be their food.[28]

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[19] Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: with Westminster Hebrew Morphology (2001) (electronic ed., Ps 1241–1248 (inclusive range)). Stuttgart; Glenside PA: German Bible Society; Westminster Seminary. The ESV text was made available at the following website: https://www.biblestudytools.com/esv/psalms/24.html.

[20] This heading does not make much sense, either in Chewa or in English.

[21] It would have been more natural in Chewa as well as English for the subject, Yehova, to have been placed at the head of the first clause to begin the psalm; the present word order would work for the repetition in v. 2a (see the PR version below).

[22] This clause is as unclear in Chewa as the English back-translation suggests.

[23] There is no reason for the use of a colon here; it simply renders the text more difficult to understand.

[24] The idiom "burning against us in their heart" is good and graphic, but it does not connect well semantically with the preceding line.

[25] The referent of "that water" is not clear, though it might possibly be construed as a metaphor referring to the "people" of vv. 2–3.

[26] This is another unnatural lexical collocation, lit. "water going [up]on"; note that the hyphen actually breaks the pronoun "our" in Chewa.

[27] The apparent figure "proud water[s]" might be an attempt to render the literal Hebrew (adjective זֵידוֹן), but the result is opaque in Chewa.

[28] This verse sounds as clumsy in Chewa as it does in English.

7. Moyo wathu unaonjoka ngati mbalame mu msampha wa msodzi; Msampha unatyoka ndi ife tinaonjoka.	7. Our life escaped like a bird in (the) trap of a fisherman.[29] A trap broke and we escaped.[30]
8. Thandizo lathu liri m'dzina la Yehova, Wolenga kumwamba ndi dziko lapansi.	8. Our help is in the name of Jehovah.[31] Creator in heaven and earth below.[32]

Following the tradition of Scripture publications of the time (a century ago, but often continuing up to the present day), the text of the BP translation is set off in two columns of print on the page that are strictly regulated in terms of horizontal length, resulting in many awkward poetic line breaks and periodic hyphenation. Artificial typographical procedures such as this, plus overly long sentences (increased as a result of misuse of the semicolon), detracts from legibility and hence makes reading of the text rather challenging, especially when performed orally in public. The difficulty for readers is significantly increased due to the literal nature of the translation itself, coupled with the use of occasional unnatural (foreign-sounding) lexical or grammatical constructions and irregular lexical usage, as pointed out in the footnotes above. Characteristic of the Chewa version is its transliteration of the so-called "Tetragrammaton" (YHWH) by *Yehova*, a term for God's name that was (is) not used by Catholic Christians at all (see below).

3.3 Malembo Oyera[33]

Kuthokoza Ambuye Mpulumutsi	**Thanking the Lord Savior**
1. Nyimbo yokwerera. Ya Davide. Yahve adakapanda kukhala nafe, Ndimo Israele anenere tsopano,	1. 1 Song for climbing up. Of David If Yahve had not been with us,[34] That is how Israel should speak now,[35]
2. Yahve adakapanda kukhala nafe, M'mene anthu anali kutiukira, Adakatimeza amoyo.	2. If Yahve had not been with us,[36] While people were rising up against us,[37] They could have swallowed us alive.
3. M'mene ukali wao unali kutayikira Madzi adakatimiza;	3. While their rage was being thrown out at us, Water could have submerged us.[38]

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[29] There is an obvious semantic clash here involving the concepts of "bird" and "fisherman."

[30] The Chewa word for "trap" (*msampha*) requires an appropriate demonstrative back-reference.

[31] This is a typical "biblicalism" in both Chewa and English that laypersons would have difficulty in explaining or, indeed, understanding in the first place.

[32] This translation wrongly suggests that Yahweh is creating in heaven and earth.

[33] This is numbered as Psalm 123 in MO, which follows the Vulgate numeration.

[34] The subject Yahve is correctly placed in terms of word order at the beginning of the clause (cf. BP).

[35] Similar to the BP, this line is very difficult to understand as rendered in the MO.

[36] The MO uses a non-standard Chewa form of the contrary-to-fact conditional infix on the verb, thus reversing BP's *-kada-* to *-daka-*.

[37] As in the BP, the "people" being referred to are not clearly defined as to who they might be.

[38] The semantic relationship between the two lines of this verse is ambiguous in the translation.

4. Mfleni udakapitirira pa ife, Madzi otupa adakapita pa ife.	4. A stream could have gone past upon us,[39] Swollen water[s] could have gone [up]on us.
5. Ngwodala Yahve, amene sanatipereke Kuti tikhale cakudya ca mano ao.	5. Blessed [be] Yahve, who did not give us over That we might be food for their teeth.
6. Mzimu wathu anauonjola ngati mbalame, Mu msampha wa anthu osaka.	6. Our spirit he released like a bird, In a trap of hunters.[40]
7. Msampha unasweka, Ndipo ife tinapulumuka.	7. [The] trap broke,[41] And we were rescued.
8. Cithandizo cathu ciri m'dzanja la Yahve, Amene anapanga dziko la kumwamba ndi dziko la pansi pano.	8. Our great help is in the hand of Yahve,[42] Who made the land of heaven[43] and the land of here below.

On the one hand, the text of the MO is easier to read because of the complete lines (no breaks); on the other hand, in order to achieve this, the font size of the published Chewa text had to be reduced to a point where it is hardly legible on the printed page. A more natural lexical and syntactic Chewa style is generally manifested in the text (more than in the BP), but as described in the footnotes, many difficult readings still remain due to the basically literal rendering of the original text and usages that point to a non-MT translator. Finally, the use of *Yahve* for YHWH ("Yahweh") clearly marks this as a Bible for Chewa-speaking Catholic Christians!

3.4. Buku Loyera

Mulungu, Mpulumutsi wa anthu ake	**God, Savior of his people**[44]
Nyimbo ya Davide yoimba Pokwera ku Yerusalemu	A song of David for singing When climbing to Jerusalem
1. Chauta akadapanda kukhala pa mbali yathu, Israele anene choncho tsopano,	1. If Chauta had not been on our side,[45] Israel, speak like this now,[46]
2. Chauta akadapanda kukhala pa mbali yathu, pamene anthu adatiwukira,	2. If Chauta had not been on our side, when people rose up against us,
3. bwenzi atatimeza amoyo, muja mkwiyo wao udatiyakira,	3. then they might have swallowed us alive, since their anger had ignited against us,
4. bwenzi chigumula chitatisesa, madzi amkokomo atatikokolola,	4. then a flood might have swept us away, thunderous water might have carried us,

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39 Besides being unclear, the term stream/watercourse/canal (*mfuleni*) also has an unwanted homonym—a castrated ram/bull/hog! It is also a dialectal (Ngoni) word—not "pure" Chewa.

40 The MO shifts the agency of the main verb "escape" from "we" to "he" (i.e., *Yahve*); however, the object of the verb is also changed—from the expected "us" to "our (ancestral) spirit" (*mzimu*), which greatly confuses the intended meaning of this verse.

41 It is not clear whether the trap "broke" fortuitously of its own accord, or whether it was broken by Yahweh.

42 The change from Yahweh's "name" (BP) to his "hand" in MO is somewhat clearer, but it still sounds rather unnatural.

43 The qualifier "land" (*dziko*) works for earth, but not in parallel also with the preceding "heaven."

44 The heading should state, more precisely: *Chauta* for "YHWH," rather than *Mulungu* "God."

45 *Chauta* is the name used to refer to the traditional Creator-God of the Chewa people (see further below).

46 Though more understandable than either the BP or MO, the sense of this line in the BL is still puzzling.

5. bwenzi madzi amphamvu atatimiza.	5. then powerful water might have submerged us.[47]
6. Atamandike Chauta, amene sadatipereke kwa anthuwo kuti atiwononge.	6. May Chauta be praised, who didn't hand us over to those people so that they could destroy us.
7. Taonjoka ngati mbalame mu msampha wa osaka, msampha wathyoka, ndipo ife tapulumuka.	7. We escaped like birds in a trap of hunters, [the] trap broke, and we were delivered.
8. Chithandizo chathu chimachokera kwa Chauta, amene adalenga kumwamba ndi dziko lapansi.	8. Our help comes from Chauta, who created [in] heaven and the earth.[48]

Even in translation (via English), readers can readily discern that the BL is a more meaningful, "user-friendly" translation of the original Hebrew psalm of thanksgiving[49] than its two predecessors, the BP and MO. More natural, contemporary lexical usage and syntactic constructions are manifested throughout the text, which results in a translation that is more "readable"—that is, orally—and hence also understandable audibly alone, namely, without reference to the written text. There is still a problem posed by the lineation since width restrictions resulting from the dual-column format cause unnatural breaks and carry-overs in the text of the translation. On the other hand, the two distinct portions of Psalm 124 are clearly indicated by a line-space between verses 5 and 6. A major feature that distinguishes the BL, not only from its two predecessors but also from most Bibles throughout the world, is its use of *Chauta* to designate the Tetragrammaton, Yahweh. This was a strategic and well-considered decision, based on these major factors: (a) *Chauta* is the popular (familiar) and specific Chewa name for the Creator-deity (hence analogous to Yahweh) and thus distinct from the generic classifying noun "God" (~ *Elohim*); (b) neither *Yehova* (BP) or *Yahve* (MO) could be used so that the translation team would not be accused of favoring either Protestants or Catholics respectively; (c) typical English (and other) language ways of dealing with this issue—e.g., use of the term "LORD" in small caps—encounters the same problems, namely, referential ambiguity in certain biblical contexts and in a Chewa sociolinguistic setting, where the term *Ambuye* (a plural of the singular noun *Mbuye*) may refer to: (a) most frequently, the Lord [Jesus Christ], as in the NT, (b) a lord/master in a socially-superior sense, (c) a grandparent or clan leader, and (d) one's maternal uncle.[50]

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[47] A more current and natural form of the contrary-to-fact conditional construction is marked by the initial word bwenzi at the onset of the "then" portion.

[48] As in the BP, the reference *kumwamba* is ambiguous; it would naturally mean "in/at heaven" (lit., "to up above"), but it is obviously intended to mean "the heavens" (as an object of the verb "create"), which is, more accurately expressed, *zakumwamba* "the things up above" (see the PR below).

[49] A "psalm of thanksgiving" typically praises the Lord God (vv. 6–8) for having delivered the psalmist, and in this case also his people (a "communal" psalm), from some dire situation in life (e.g., illness, death), or a dangerous enemy (vv. 1–5).

[50] For more background information on the choice of *Chauta* to designate YHWH and explanation concerning other key biblical terms as translated in the BL, see Wendland (1998, ch. 4).

4. Towards Further Re-oralization in Translation

We have concluded that the *Buku Loyera* Chichewa translation is a version that may rightly be characterized as being democratically "of, by, and for" the people in the sense that this project was largely planned, administered, managed, composed, as well as published by, and intended for, the majority of mother-tongue speakers of the language. It is undoubtedly a "re-translation" because the translation team made continual reference to both the BP and the MO versions as they carried out their work, especially when dealing with difficult or challenging passages of Scripture and corresponding key biblical-theological terms, such as, sin, law, grace, mercy, save, baptize, and so forth. As a result, this ecumenical version has also "empowered" the people in various important ways, for example: by promoting a better understanding of the Bible and the Christian religion; by acting as a model for contextualizing, or localizing, key biblical concepts; by serving as the basis for new musical (hymns) and liturgical resources; by serving as an important resource text for the purposes of evangelism as well as in catechetical and theological training; and—significantly, moving now beyond the boundaries of Chichewa—by being utilized as a "model version" for other (related) Bantu language Bible translation projects in the region (e.g., Sena and Tumbuka of Malawi; Tonga and Bemba of Zambia).[51]

However, the preceding overview of Psalm 124 in the BL has also revealed several ways in which this version might be revised, or re-translated again, with a view towards improving its communicative potential in these respects, through introducing: (a) a more legible, "readerly" typographical format, (b) a more poetic literary style in Chichewa,[52] and (c) a translated text that that readily lends itself to an oral-aural articulation in public performance. This new "poetic rendition" (PR, displayed below) was prepared with the assistance of seminary students who participated in my Psalms exegetical course (2019).[53]

4.1. Poetic Rendition (PR)—Spoken

Chauta ndiye Mpulumutsi wa anthu ake	**Chauta he is [the] Savior of his people**
Nyimbo ya Davide yoimba opembedza okwera ku Yerusalemu	*A song of David for singing worshippers climbing to Jerusalem*
1. Chauta akadapanda kukhala nafe, (Aisraele onse inu, muvomeretu!)	1. If Chauta had not been with us, (may all you Israelites respond!)
2. akadapanda Chauta kukhala nafe, pamene adani athu adatiwukira,	2. if he, Chauta, had not been with us, when our enemies rose up against us,
3. bwenzi iwowo atatimeza amoyo, muja mkwiyo wao uja udatiyakira.	3. then those ones would have swallowed us alive, Since that rage of these [people] had burned against us.

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[51] As a Translation Consultant for the United Bible Societies in this sub-region for over 30 years, I can attest to this wider, interlinguistic usage of the BL in many other translation projects that I was responsible for overseeing. Having such a reliable model version available in a major Bantu language makes the drafting of texts in any related language much easier and generally more accurate than the use of English versions, which frequently are not very well understood by the translators.

[52] My study of traditional and modern Chichewa poetry (*ndakatulo*) and its application to Bible translation is documented in Wendland (1993, ch. 3; 2017, ch. 7).

[53] I prepared the initial draft which was printed out and critiqued by the students; the most helpful comments and suggested revisions were offered by David Kalimankhoma (see also below).

4. Bwenzi chigumula chitatisesadi— madzi amkokomo atatikokolola,	4. Then a watery flood would have swept us away—thunderous waters might have carried us along,
5. bwenzi mafunde aatali atatimiza.	5. then high waves would have submerged us.
6. Atamandike Chauta, Mpulumutsi, amene sadatipereke kwa adaniwo kuti ationonge ifetu kungoti psiti!	6. May Chauta be praised, Savior, who did not hand us over to the enemies so that they might destroy us—completely!
7. Inde, ife tinaonjoka nga’ mbalame mu msampha wa osakawo, komaa— msampha adauthyola, tapulumuka!	7. Yes, we escaped like unt[o] birds In a trap of those hunters, but— [the] trap broke, we escaped!
8. Amene amatilanditsa ndiye Chauta, Wolenga zakumwamba ndi pansipo.	8. The one who delivers us is Chauta, Creator of the things above and below.

We note how the PR has been “re-oralized” and made readable to a much greater degree than even the BL, for example, with respect to these two principal features: (a) individualized poetic “lines” with no overlapping, which creates natural “utterance units,” and (b) a larger typeface accompanied by standard punctuation (e.g., not capitalizing every line). In addition, the text has been further “poeticized” linguistically in several important respects, including: (a) a balanced, rhythmic lineation, (b) introduction of more demonstratives and emphatic or intensifying words and enclitics, (c) a more flexible word order and lexical combinations to highlight the audible “soundscape” of the text, and (d) an increased use of literary devices, such as: authorial parenthesis [v. 1b], verbal specification [“enemies” for “people,” v. 2b], figurative language [v. 5], ideophone [v. 6c], intensifier plus abbreviation [v. 7a], enjambment [v. 7b], and more specification [v. 8a].

4.2. *Poetic Rendition—Sung*

One of the students in the Psalms class, Mr. David Kalimankhoma, produced a hymned version of Psalm 124 as a paraphrase of the *Buku Loyera* version above. The text of this hymn, which is sung to a traditional Chewa melody, is as follows:[54]

Atamandike Mulungu Wathu	**May Our God Be Praised**
1. Atamandike Mulungu wathu potiteteza ife. Sanaloletu kuti adani, ationongetu.	1. May our God be praised for protecting us. He never allowed our enemies to totally destroy us.
Akanapanda kukhala nafe *pomwe anthuwo ‘natiukira,* *bwenzi atatimeza amoyo—* *‘we Israyeli, imba!* *[chibwezero]*	*If he had not been with us* *when those people rose against us,* *they would have swallowed us* *alive, O you Israel, sing!* *[refrain]*
2. Ndi mkwiyo wao ‘datiyakira, bwenzi atatisesa. Madzi amphamvu atatimiza ndikutikokolola.	2. With their rage burning against us, they would have swept us away. Mighty waters would’ve submerged us and carried us away.

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[54] A recording of Mr. Kalimankhoma’s sung performance of this psalm may be heard at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QRdXNpnQjc.

3. Taonjakatu ngati mbalame; taomboledwa ife. Msampha watyoka, tapulumuka mu gonga la oipa.	3. We completely escaped like birds; we have been delivered. The trap broke, we've been saved from the snare of wicked people.
4. Thandizo lathu limachokera kwa Chauta wa m'mwamba, Wolenga zonse ndi kuzisunga— atamandike Yahweh!	4. Our help comes from Chauta of heaven, Creator and Keeper of all things— may Yahweh be praised!

It is difficult to appreciate the preceding written version in silence—and even when recited aloud, it does not greatly impress. But when the text of this rendition is combined in song with its familiar melody, it conveys a powerful, impactful message indeed. The words of this lively psalm thus find their proper, most likely intended medium of communication.

5. Greater Audience Engagement via Enhanced Multimodal Translation

To conclude, in this short study we have seen a progression in (re)translation technique that has moved slowly over the years, right up to the present day and towards a greater measure of communicability in overall message transmission. These developments have involved aspects of form, content, and function—for example, with respect to the format of the translated text for increased legibility;[55] a translation methodology that seeks greater linguistic naturalness and clarity of meaning in the target text;[56] and the ideal goal of producing an ecumenical translation (one serving the entire Chewa-speaking Christian community) that is more easily read and heard in public performance, which in the case of the Scriptures is the most frequent venue of usage. A more participatory, context-perceptive, listener-oriented version of this nature has the additional aim of educating as well as empowering the people by promoting increased access to the Word of God in terms of both clearly understanding the biblical text and applying it locally within their contemporary social and religious environment.

Nowadays, with the increased technologies and means of communication that are available, it should be possible to make much faster progress in these, and other areas, through "multimodal" translation (Kress 2010). This is a translated text conveyed more manifestly through several media virtually simultaneously (e.g., audio and visual) and by making various paratextual aids available for immediate oral or written access (e.g., descriptive-expository notes,[57] introductions, intertextual cross-references, a glossary, lexical concordance, pictures, illustrations, graphs, charts, and so forth). There are many electronic tools available today for creating such multimodalized texts and also for transmitting them,[58] whether in some local setting of worship and Bible study—or worldwide via the internet using ubiquitous cellphone technology. Through such diverse means it is also possible to encourage more widespread audience personal engagement, and thus also greater "enablement," via online feedback mechanisms that can make people's concerns, criticisms, and contributions immediately available to the translation's producers (and subsequent revisers) for serious consideration, corrective action, and in the end, greater responsibility and accountability with respect to their envisaged typical "consumers" of God's Word.[59]

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[55] This might include the use of novel formatting and design features that highlight the structural contours of a printed text, for example, the chiastic structural arrangement of the second portion of Psalm 124, i.e., (A) praise Yahweh (6), (B) reason: escape from snare (7a); (B') reason: broken snare allows escape (7b), (A') reason: praise Yahweh! (8) (see Kress and van Leeuwen 1996; Wendland and Louw 1993).

[56] For example, the application of a literary functional-equivalence (LiFE) translating approach (Wendland 2013, 64–66; 2017, 289–294).

[57] Such notes would be carefully contextualized to apply the biblical text at hand to the local sociocultural setting of the primary consumer audience (Wilt and Wendland 2009, passim; 2017, 371–372, 415, 432–433).

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[58] For example, a multifaceted website could be created that could display new (draft) poetic translations of the Psalms (or selected psalms) accompanied by links to sound recordings (YouTube—e.g., Psalm 6 in Chewa: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZA-glP2FP5c), varied visual aids, and background study notes that pertain to both the original Hebrew text and its TL translation. Electronic devices also make periodic revised or even new (re)translations more feasible in terms of time, cost, and staff involvement (of translators, reviewers, technical consultants, and text producers).

[59] Though conveyed by a mass medium of communication, a translation should still be targeted as much as possible in terms of a specific group of potential users—for example, a more dynamic poetic rendition of Psalm 124 with Christian youth groups in mind, for their adaptation to song and/or oral recitation.

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God, Our Rock (Deut 32:1–43): Reading the Metaphor in its Pentateuchal Context

Bill Domeris

Abstract

The metaphor of God as the Rock, with its nascent imagery of stability, strength, and protection, is a popular refrain in the Hebrew Bible, especially in the book of Psalms, and with some interesting additions in the book of Deuteronomy. The analysis here focuses on the Song of Moses (Deut 32:1–43), where its associated text and imagery portrays God, who is represented as the Rock, as a source of faithfulness and righteousness, who gives birth to Israel, judges her, and saves her. Such attributes belong to God and not to the metaphorical rock. Using the cognitive approach to metaphors, this article offers an understanding of God our Rock and of the poet's intended reorientation associated with the use of the metaphor. The article finds the origins of the metaphor of the rock, as in Deuteronomy 32, in the Pentateuchal context of the desert *leitmotif* and the events at Horeb/Sinai. This conclusion challenges the view that the metaphor and its associated attributes was borrowed from Canaanite mythology.

Keywords
God our Rock, metaphor, cognitive approach, Deuteronomy, Song of Moses, Yahwism.

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SATS
Bible-based. Christ-centred. Spirit-led.

Because we live so close to the biblical text, we often fail to note its generative power to summon and evoke new life.
(Walter Brueggemann 1989)

1. Prelude

Throughout history, there have been sacred rocks, immortalized in song and story, which have inspired human communities. Since the first human beings walked this earth, rocks (caves and rock-shelters) have supplied places of refuge and safety. The metaphor of God as a Rock, with its nascent imagery of stability, strength, and protection, is a popular refrain in the Hebrew Bible, especially the book of Psalms, and in the Song of Moses (Deut 32:1–43). Generally, the Rock is associated with further metaphors like fortress, tower, and hiding place and historical moments like David's desert escape to the wilderness or the Exodus from Egypt. Using a form of the cognitive approach to metaphors, this article examines the use of the metaphor, God our Rock, and underlines the poet's intended reorientation implicit in the use of the metaphor. The focus of the article[1] is Deuteronomy 32, the Song of Moses or the Witness Song (Deut 31:19, 21; McConville 2002, 436), where we encounter several references to the Rock as an epithet for God.

The study of biblical metaphors has attracted considerable attention in recent decades (Weiss 1984; Nielsen 1989; Brettler 1989; Jindo 2010; Foreman 2011; Fernandes 2018; Cho 2019). Most biblical metaphors grow out of the world of nature, whether agricultural (plants, seeds, trees, and harvest) or the wild (animals, birds, streams, and mountains). Such metaphors occur regularly in the context of poetry (Brueggemann 1989; Alter 1985). But it is when metaphors are used of God that the power of the poetic metaphor becomes most striking. Brueggemann (1989) stresses the ability of poetry to engage with the mystery of God in a way which narrative is unable to do, while Brettler (1989) recognizes the consistent use of metaphor in speaking about God.

Brettler (1989) divides divine biblical metaphors into two groups, namely familial (e.g., king, father, husband) and impersonal (e.g., eagle, rock). In the last few decades, the academic study of the impersonal rock metaphor has focused primarily on the book of Psalms (Brettler 1989; 1998; Labahn and Van Hecke 2010; Fernandes 2018). The focus of this article is on Deuteronomy 31, which also represents the only occurrences of the rock metaphor in the Pentateuch. An earlier study by Knowles (1989) on the metaphor in Deuteronomy 31 argues that the metaphor was borrowed from earlier Ancient Near Eastern mythology (1989, 316). In this regard, Knowles (1989, 310, 314–316) follows the earlier view of Albright that the Hebrew term used for the rock was a common name for deity in the Ancient Near East (Albright 1959, 345; 1968, 164, 188). Knowles (1989, 314–316) further believes that Deuteronomy 31, especially verse four, has a polemical intent challenging the common pagan use of the metaphor. This article takes issue with both claims, namely the pagan origin of the metaphor and consequent polemical intent of Deuteronomy 31, pointing instead to a source for the metaphor much closer to home.

The Song of Moses and its images of a rocky crag aligns comfortably with the Exodus traditions. The deserts of southern Sinai (or north-western Arabian Peninsula; Smith 2001) are remembered in the biblical tradition as the place of Israel's primary encounter with the deity Yahweh (Talmon 1978, 436; Albertz 1994, 51; Day 2002; Hess 2007, 172–175; Noll 2013, 135). From the outset, mountains and wilderness and the occasional rock play a crucial role in the wilderness narrative. According to the opening chapters of Exodus, Moses encountered the mysterious deity Yahweh, in the form of a theophany, in a desert region close to Mount Horeb, the mountain of God (Exod 3:1). There God revealed himself as Yahweh (Exod 3:14), and connected this name with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (v. 15). The next occasion where Horeb is mentioned is in Exodus chapter seventeen, the account of water coming from a rock. Significantly, in verse six, Yahweh (cf. v. 5) stands upon the rock or *sûr* [צוּר], which is at Horeb. Here is the first connection between God and a specific צוּר which may well be the source of the metaphor, God our Rock. Horeb and Sinai share an ambiguous relationship in the exodus wanderings, with Exodus preferring to speak of Sinai as the name for the mountain where Moses receives the commandments (Exod 19:20) and Deuteronomy (Deut 5:2) choosing Horeb for that event.

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[1] This paper was presented at the "Deuteronomy–Today" e-Conference hosted by the South Africa Theological Seminary in April 2020. My thanks go to my colleagues for their helpful and insightful comments on that occasion and with the editing of this article.

2. The Desert *Leitmotif*

The various Horeb/Sinai events are part of the desert-motif or better *leitmotif*[2] , since it functions at the metalevel (see Baldick 2001, 162), and binds much of the Pentateuch together. Talmon, who has written extensively on the desert-motif, defines a motif as "a representative complex theme which recurs in the Hebrew Bible in varying forms and configurations," which come from some "common experience" familiar to the audience (1966, 121). The desert motif occurs in several ancient poetic fragments which describe God's early relationship with Israel. In the Song of Moses (Deut 32:10), the poet[3] writes, "He [God] found him [Israel] in a desert land, and in the howling waste of a wilderness; He encircled him, he cared for him" (see Goldingay 2003, 454). In Isaiah, we read, "Behold the name of the Lord comes from a remote place; Burning is his anger and dense is his smoke" (Isa 30:27a).[4] Habakkuk (3:3a) reads, "Eloah comes from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran." The two named locations are both in desert regions: Teman is in Edom (Jer 49:20) and Paran is one of two mountains mentioned in the setting of Deuteronomy in the Arabah (Deut 1:1). Smith concludes that the origins of the belief in a desert deity known as Yahweh may be found in the "southern sites of Seir/Teman/Sinai … located by many scholars today in the north-western Arabian Peninsula east of the Red Sea" (2001, n.p.; cf. Day 2002, 15–17).

3. Holy Mountains

A further important motif, and one closely related to the desert *leitmotif*, is that of sacred mountains (Talmon 1987, 117–123). Holy mountains are to be found across the ancient Near East (Cross 1973, 247–249). For example, the Egyptian text of Nefer-abu, addressed to a mountain peak which towered over the necropolis opposite Thebes, reads "Giving praise to the Peak of the west, honouring her Ka (spirit)" (Votive stele of Nefer-abu line 1; in Beyerlin 1978, 35). In this remarkable instance, the deity and the mountain are perceived to be identical. More commonly, however, the mountain is conceived as the chosen location of a specific deity. An examination of select Ugaritic[5] texts makes this clear. Baal and El were both associated with the mountain of the North (Zaphon). For example, we read of “Baal who dwells in the peaks of the mountains of the north” (CTA Col. I, 20); or “In the midst of my mountains, the god of Zaphon” (CTA3 Col. III–IV, 25). In the Ugaritic texts Mount Zaphon referred to Mount Cassius in Syria (Dahood 1966, 289), but the name is also found in the biblical text in relation to Yahweh (Pss 48:2; 89:13; Isa 14:13; Job 26:7). Dahood explains the connection as “Mount Zion is to Yahwism what Mount Zaphon is to Canaanite religion” (1966, 289–290). This connection has caused some scholars to speculate about a direct case of borrowing (see references in Dahood 1966, 290).

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[2] The word *Leitmotif* is used in this paper to describe the overarching desert motif, which forms a backdrop to the book of Deuteronomy following Baldick's definition (2001, 162).

[3] I use the term "poet" to refer to the various writers of Hebrew poetry.

[4] All Bible quotations in English are taken from the New American Standard Version (1963).

[5] The translations for the texts used here are from the edition of Beyerlin (1978).

When dealing with the study of symbols (semiotics) such as sacred mountains or sacred rocks, the caution expressed by Barr (1961) takes on a special significance. Barr’s concern arose as a result of his reading the theological dictionaries of the time and the way in which each occurrence of a Hebrew word was treated as having the identical meaning, often regardless of context. For Barr, this transference of meaning, might in certain circumstances result in “an illegitimate totality transfer” (1961). The warning is even more appropriate for the transfer of symbols. A case in point is the regular appeal, when mountains are mentioned in the biblical text, to the omphalos myth or the idea of the cosmic mountains and mythical primal rocks (Fabry 2003, 317–318; Haag 1999, 276–277; Keel 1997, 181). To interpret a symbol or metaphor out of the context of a specific biblical text is to run the risk of transferring both form and content, precisely what Barr was afraid of. More specifically, Selman (1997, 1052) warns that the commonalities with other religious traditions should be limited to “literary stereotypes” and not extended to “mythological views about mountains.” Noll warns that most Ancient Near Eastern traditions contained “a perpetual flux of myths and even gods” (2013, 323). These views simply reaffirm the wisdom of Barr (1961), not least with reference to biblical metaphors.

The biblical text employs geographical epithets like the Mountain of God (Elohim) in Exodus (3:1; 4:27; 18:5; 24:13) and the Mountain of Yahweh in Numbers (10:33). Indeed, Yahweh is known simply as “the One from Sinai” (Judg 5:5–6 and Ps 68:8–9; see Albertz 1994:51–54). Albertz, who is a great champion of the idea that Yahwism originated in a desert context, writes, “The [G]od who appears to Moses in the wild mountainous country of Southern Palestine mobilizes a whole column of conscript labourers to dare to seek their liberation” (1994:52). Even the enemies of Israel are afraid because the God of Israel is a “God of the mountains, and not of the plains” (1 Kings 20:23, 28).

Mountains like Sinai or Horeb or Mount Zion are deemed to be the locations for the divine theophany; however, the relationship between God and these mountains is a complex one. Noll (2013, 342) speaks of the mountain where God “promised to be ‘immanent,’ just as God was present in the Ark of the Covenant.” Talmon (1978, 436) correctly affirms that it is the association with the God of Israel which makes a location holy. Thus, in the book of Exodus, the expression “the mountain of God” is applied in turn to Mount Horeb (Exod 3:1; 4:27; 18:5) and from chapter 19 onwards to Mount Sinai (24:13 cf. 19:1–2, 11), without a clear distinction being made, suggesting that the same mountain or range of mountains is intended (Moberly 1983). Later Jerusalem, itself depicted as a mountain, will become known as the place of God’s presence. Psalm 68 explains, “The Lord is among them as at Sinai, in holiness” (v. 17b).

4. *Ṣûr*, the Hebrew Term

The Hebrew term צוּר or *ṣûr* is found seventy-four times in the Hebrew Bible and twice in the Aramaic sections (Dan 2:35, 45; see Fabry 2003, 314). *Sûr* is usually rendered in translation as rock, boulder, cliff face (Hill 1997b, 793; Fabry 2003, 312; BDB 1972, 840). Possible cognates for *ṣûr* within the North West Semitic region include the Ugaritic *ǵr* meaning mountain (Dreyer 1971; Fabry 2003, 312), and the Aramaic *tûr* for mountain (Hill 1997b, 793). *Ṣûr* appears also in some Aramaic and Amorite personal names (Fabry 2003, 311). Dreyer (1971), in a comprehensive article, suggested that the Ugaritic root *ǵr* formed the basis for an entire semantic domain, which included several Hebrew words, like *har* (mountain), *‘r* (city), and the noun *ṣûr* I (rock), although this view has been challenged (Thiel 2003, 306–311). In the Hebrew Bible, *ṣûr* appears in some theophoric names (Num 1:6; 2:2; 3:35; see Fabry 2003, 313). When joined to a name, it may be used of particular rocks like the Rock of Oreb, named after a Midian leader (Judg 7:25) and the Rock of Rimmon (Judg 20:45).

The synonym used most often with *ṣûr* is *selaʿ* [סלע]. The noun *selaʿ* is found sixty-three times in the Hebrew Bible (Haag 1999, 270; Hill 1997a, 267), often in poetic parallels with *ṣûr* (e.g., Deut 32:13). Like *ṣûr*, *selaʿ* is also used metaphorically of God our Rock (4x), but in contrast to *ṣûr*, *selaʿ* is regularly translated by the NASV as cliff (8x) or crag (5x) in addition to rock (44x). The semantic domain of rocks, crags and mountains includes various cognate forms, of which the most common are the terms mountains (105x *har* הַר) and hills (*gibʿâh* גִּבְעָה) (Talmon 1978; Selmon 1997, 1051–1055). *Har* is used of individual peaks like Sinai and for mountain ranges (Selman 1997, 1051–1052). On a smaller scale we have the common word for stones, namely *‘eben* [אֶבֶן] found regularly (Heb. 260x and Aram. 8x; See Hill 1997c, 248–250). The term *‘eben* is used also of idols (Deut 28:36) and standing stones in temples, like the Israelite temple in Arad (see Aharoni and Amiran 1975, 86–87). In addition, *‘eben* is used of the stone tablets on which the ten commandments were inscribed (Exod 24:12).

In terms of visualizing the noun *ṣûr*, in the biblical text, various references suggest that while sometimes used of smaller rocks, it is used consistently for large rocks even cliffs and crags. Both mountain (*har*, see Isa 30:29) and hill (*gibʿâh*, see Num 23:9) are found in poetic parallel with *ṣûr*. For example, in a chapter which starts with a lament regarding the destruction of human hope, Job speaks of the power of God to change nature, even the seemingly unchangeable like the mountains. The poet writes, “But the falling mountains [lit. the mountain] crumble away; and the rock (*ṣûr*) moves from its place. Water wears away stones (*‘eben* in the plural), its torrents wash away the dust of the earth; So Thou dost destroy man’s hope” (Job 14:18–19).

In the first part of the stanza, *har* and *ṣûr* are in parallel. This suggests that *ṣûr* is in some way comparable with mountains, and a translation such as crag would be more suitable. In the second part of the stanza, the poetic parallel is between stones [*‘eben*] and dust (perhaps gravel). One may imagine the crumbling of the mountains, even the rocky crags, the washing away of the river stones, even the gravel of the streambeds. In this way the poet expressed the erosion of human hopes. In general, the literary evidence suggests that ṣûr means more than a large rock or boulder and is closer to the image of rocky crag, pinnacle, or spire. This does not mean that the terms should always be rendered as mountain (as Albright 1968, 16–18; Dahood 1966, 105 fn. 3), but rather that, depending on the context, crag or some similar noun might be warranted, just as its synonym *sela’* is often so rendered.

5. *Ṣûr* the Metaphorical Rock

The metaphor of God the Rock (*ṣûr*) occurs with striking regularity throughout the poetic sections of the Hebrew Bible, most often in the Psalms (28x), and there are a few other scattered references, like in Isaiah (4x). Knowles writes,

> Thus, at least in statistical terms, the occurrence of ṣûr in the Hebrew scriptures as a metaphor or title descriptive of God equals, if not slightly outnumbers, instances in which the word is applied more prosaically to details of landscape or geography. (Knowles 1989, 307)

Most biblical scholars assume the classical definition such as that found in Baldick who defines metaphor as an important literary form.

> In which one thing, idea, or action is referred to by a word or expression normally denoting another thing, idea, or action, so as to suggest some common quality shared by the two. (Baldick 2001, 153)

By this definition, metaphor is first and foremost a literary device. By joining tenor (God) and vehicle (the Rock), the writer implies a sharing of content between the two, such as elements of stability, while yet retaining their separate identities. Keel (1997, 181), in his extensive study of the symbolism of the biblical world, suggests that in the use of natural metaphors like the Rock, the "Psalmist has in mind particular features of the Palestinian mountain country" and in the case of the Rock of my heart (Pss 73:26) to which the Psalmist holds, "the attribute is illustrated by the unyielding, indestructible firmness of rock" (1997, 183).

Taking the comparison to another level of metaphor, Jindo writes,

> The relationship between the two things (A and B) is that they belong to *different* frames or conceptual domains ("man" belongs to the domain of THE HUMAN WORLD whereas "wolf" to the domain of THE ANIMAL WORLD). (Jindo 2010, xiv-xv; caps in original)

In this case, the rock belongs to the conceptual domain of natural phenomena (the created world in biblical understanding), while God belongs to the domain of the divine. So, there is a shared sense of similarity which nevertheless cannot obscure the vast difference in domain. The metaphor might derive its intrinsic meaning from either side of the metaphorical comparison. This becomes apparent from a study of the Rock in the book of Psalms.

Alter (2004, 1089 fn. 41) writes, "This epithet for God, with the obvious sense of bastion or stronghold, is common in the Psalms." Wright (2012 on Deut 32:4) refers to "its obvious metaphorical force (stable, dependent, unmovable, safe)." When we think of God the Rock, as pictured in the Psalms, the focus might be on an innate sense of the strength of a great crag or peak. Studies of the rock metaphor in Psalms have occupied a central place in scholarly circles (Brettler 1989; 1998; Cho 2019; Fernandes 2012; Van Hecke and Labahn 2010). Such attention is quite justified as the following examples show: Psalm 31:3 reads, "For Thou art my rock and my fortress" which occurs in the introductory verses of a psalm of supplication (cf. Pss 71:3). Psalm 94:22 reads, "But the Lord has been my stronghold, and my God the rock of my refuge."

Wright (2012 on Deut 32:4) deems the metaphor of the rock to be "appropriate in times of historical danger and change." Images like fortress, stronghold, and refuge are natural associations for places of safety (Block 2012, 611). For example, "O come let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the rock of my salvation" (Pss 95:1). Here "the Lord" and the "rock of my salvation" are in parallel. Psalm 95 goes on to extoll the greatness of God, and to remind the people of their failings at Meribah and Massah in the wilderness (v. 8). Psalm 18:2[3] proclaims, "The Lord is my rock (*selaʿ*) and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock [*ṣûr*] in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn [peak] of my salvation, my stronghold." This Psalm also appears as David's psalm sung in celebration of his deliverance from the hand of Saul (2 Sam 22:3). In Psalm 19:14, at the conclusion of the psalm, the writer acknowledges that God is "my rock and my redeemer."

Albright (1959, 1968) first speculated about the pagan origins of the Hebrew term *ṣûr* which he rendered as mountain and connected to the deity El and the Canaanite mythology of sacred mountains (1959, 345; 1968, 164). The idea of *ṣûr* as a generic term for deity surfaces in the study by Knowles (1989, 316) who writes, "it would appear that a certain amount of 'borrowing' is going on here," although he concedes that "some modification" has taken place. Albright speaks in terms of synonym (1959, 345; 1968, 164), while Knowles extends his understanding of Canaanite influence to include the actual rock metaphor (1989). Is this a necessary conclusion? Guarding against what Barr (1961) has termed "the illegitimate transfer of content," this article suggests that the characteristics of the rock metaphor are simply too general (strength, stability, safety, and shelter) to be positively identified with some unspecified Canaanite mythology of sacred mountains. For this reason, it is necessary to delve more deeply into the realm of metaphor.

6. Redefining a Metaphor (the Cognitive Approach)

The theoretical understanding of the cognitive approach to metaphors arises from the thinking of Lakoff and Johnson (2003), who first propounded the idea that metaphors are not simply literary devices but powerful images which impinge on our daily lives, and are embodied in our worldview, hence the title of their book, Metaphors we live by. The cognitive approach has been successfully applied to the Hebrew Bible by Kotze (2004) and more recently by Jindo, who writes,

> The aim of this approach is to offer a possibility of treating the phenomenon of poetic metaphor in biblical prophecy not only as a stylistic component, but also as a cognitive device, through which the text orients, or reorients, the perception of the reader. (Jindo 2010, ix)

Beyond the simple metaphorical aim of comparison, the metaphor aims to bring about a change in perception, as one's reality is transformed through the comprehension of the meaning of the metaphor. The metaphor has a dynamic which brings about a change in the thinking and reality of the reader. For the reader sharing an experience of God the rock, finds that their own faith is challenged and that in this metaphorical picture there is a pattern to be emulated.

> Metaphor has a cognitive value, and it thereby orients our perception of the object it describes. It presents not only a proposition but also a specific perspective, or orientation, through which to perceive that proposition. (Jindo 2010, 44–45)

The rock metaphor, understood in the sense of "a metaphor we live by" (Lakoff and Johnson 2003), and in terms of the cognitive approach, takes us from literary device into the life of faith. So, in the context of the wilderness, a notable, especially water-bearing rock takes on a natural meaning of security and shelter and so the rock metaphor would make sense. However, correctly understood, God our Rock goes beyond the simple idea that God and the rock share a common quality—what Jindo terms, "the proposition." The poet intends that by identifying with the metaphor, a change will occur in the mind and imagination of the reader—what Jindo (2010, 44–45) terms an orientation or reorientation. The readers will desire to enter more deeply into the poetic world and to know for themselves the safety and security of this rock. In the words of Jindo (2010, 45), they will come to "perceive relations and distinctions" they had not previously seen.

7. The Song of Moses (Deut 32:1-43)

In contrast to Knowles (1989) who saw the rock metaphor as borrowed from some Canaanite source, this article reasons that the Song of Moses, including its metaphors, should be read in the context and light of the Exodus. To establish the source of the metaphor of the rock, one needs to go no further than the environs of the Exodus wanderings and the desert motif found in the narratives of the Pentateuch. This conclusion is immediately clear from the following semantic study.

In the song (Deut 32), the term rock [*ṣûr*] is found eight times (vv. 4, 13, 15, 18, 30, 31 [twice], and 37). As an epithet for God, it is found six times (vv. 4, 15, 18, 30, 31, and 37). As a reference to some other unnamed deity, it is found twice (vv. 31, 37), although verse 37 might be an ironical reference to Yahweh. Once *ṣûr* refers apparently to the natural rock (v. 13). There is only one other occurrence of ṣûr in Deuteronomy and that is in reference to the water-bearing rock (Deut 8:15; cf. Exod 17:6). In dealing with the six uses as an epithet for God, there is a remarkable diversity in the names used for God (El, Eloah, and Yahweh). Throughout the chapter, the Rock functions as both an epithet and as a metaphor, meaning that the line between the attributes of God and the metaphorical elements of the rock may become confused.

7.1. El the Faithful (Deut 32:4)

In verse four, God [El] is linked to a set of striking values. McConville (2002, 448) suggests that we should understand the first word in the sentence as a casus pendens, and so standing alone, "The Rock!" (see NASV), rather than making Rock the subject of the sentence and inserting a clause using the verb to be, "He is the Rock …" (see NIV). The text then reads, "The Rock! His work is perfect, for all his ways are just. A God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is he" (Deut 32:4). However, if one reads the text in this way, one should guard against the notion that the metaphorical imagery of the rock includes attributes like faithfulness, which so clearly belong to God alone. Such is the purpose of reading verse four, as an "antiphonal response" to the cry, "Ascribe greatness to our God" (in v. 3; see Knowles 1989, 310 fn. 7).

While accepting that the Rock serves as a figurative synonym for God, as first recognized by Albright (1968, 188), there is also the wider metaphorical element to be found, namely a sense of strength, stability, and dependence, which is drawn from the domain of rocks and crags and which gives added substance to the metaphor of God the Rock. The pattern of part-epithet and part-metaphor, means that often the reader is obliged to supply the metaphorical elements, as is illustrated by the following three quotations, where I have included the relevant parts in italics. Merrill (1994) speaks of the generic meaning of the rock as a "foundation and fortress," but adds, "As the Rock, God is utterly dependable, empty of any wrong-doing, the very foundation of all integrity and justice." Similarly, Wright concludes that Yahweh as the Rock is "The very foundation of all integrity and justice" (2012 on 32:4). Nelson (2002, 370) calls verse four "the theological axiom which governs the poem," and then speaks of the Rock as providing "the bedrock of justice and righteousness for what is to follow" (2002, 370). Terms like foundation (Merrill 1994; Wright 2012) and bedrock (Nelson 2002, 370) are not found in verse four and so are simply conjectural, which suggests that one needs to draw a line between those qualities implicit in the metaphor of the rock and those qualities which belong exclusively to God, like justice and faithfulness

At a metalevel when one reads the verse contextually, there is the sense of the desert-leitmotif of the wilderness wanderings and specifically God's presence at Mount Horeb and the covenant made there and reaffirmed at the edge of the promised land. Wright (2012), commenting on Deuteronomy 32:4, affirms, "And what makes God distinctive is not merely God's power as the refuge and deliverer of God's people, but God's moral character and absolute justice—precisely the Sinai attributes affirmed in this verse." Wright's mention of "Sinai attributes" is important because it alerts us to the forensic elements which, as has become clear, informs the reading of the Song, and of its metaphors (cf. Deut 32:37). There is an invitation into the world of the poet as expected in a cognitive reading of the metaphor, but often missed in discussions of the Rock as metaphor. The rhetorical intent of the poet seeks to influence and even alter the mindset of the reader by persuading them to experience the faith in the Rock which empowers the Song.

7.2. *Eloah, Maker, and Savior (Deut 32:15)*

In verse fifteen, God (Eloah) is seen as both a creator (maker) and savior. The text reads, "Then he [Jeshurun] forsook God, who made [עָשָׂה] him and scorned the Rock of his salvation [יְשׁוּעָה]" (Deut 32:15). The two parallel verbs connected with Eloah relate to the covenantal relationship between Israel and God and emphasize Israel's indebtedness to her overlord (following the *rîb* pattern; see Thiessen 2004). Israel has been made by God who is also Israel's savior; such metaphorical themes connected to the Rock are to be found elsewhere in Deuteronomy (Deut 20:4) and in extratextual instances in the Hebrew Bible in connection (Isa 51:1; 2 Sam 22:47).

The unusual term used here for Israel, Jeshurun, is found twice in the Blessings of Moses (Deut 33:5,) where it refers to a location, in 33:26 as a name for Israel, and once in Isaiah (Isa 44:2).[6] The name Eloah or *'ĕlôah* [אֱלוֹה] is found only here in this chapter in Deuteronomy (Deut 32:15 and 17), and is uncommon in the Hebrew Bible, outside of Wisdom sections like Job (41x) and the Psalms (4x). Perhaps it is an archaic reference for Yahweh (see Day 2002, 18), and there is certainly a strong case to connect it to the desert wanderings (Hab 3:3). The theme of God creating Israel goes back to the meta-narrative of God's quixotic relationship with Israel (cf. vv. 6–14) and prepares the reader for verse eighteen. The desert *leitmotif* is already present in verse ten, which reads, "He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of a wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the pupil of His eye."

7.3 El our Mother (Deut 32:18)

The name El returns in verse eighteen, a verse which in many ways is rather remarkable. Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh is associated with the idea of making human beings (Gen 1:27), calling them from the womb (Jer 1:5), but there is always a human medium (mother and father) involved. Here in Deuteronomy, the poet strikes a different note, by linking the metaphor of birth directly with God (McConville 2002, 456). There is no human agent involved as an intermediary. In addition, the poet raises the sense of the ingratitude of Israel (McConville 2002, 456).

The metaphorical imagery of protective care and parental discipline as a father is found earlier in the book (Deut 1:31 and 8:5). The poet writes, "Is not he [El] your Father who has made you? He has made you and established you" (Deut 32:6). Such imagery is not unusual in the Pentateuch (see Num 11:12; Exod 4:22), but here uniquely God is represented as a mother. In addition, there is the double metaphor as the metaphor of birth is joined to the metaphor of the Rock. Two verbs are used in parallel describing God (El) giving birth. The poet writes (32:18) "You have neglected the God (El) who begot you [ילד]; and you forgot the God (El) who gave you birth [חיל]." The first verb *yâlad*, rendered often in translations of this verse as "begat," is common in genealogies to connect a child directly with his or her father (Gen 4:18; 10:8; 1 Chr 1:10; Owens 2011, 100). Outside of genealogies, *yâlad* is only rarely used of a father (Prov 17:21; 23:22; Dan 11:6). In the predominance of instances, a mother is the intended subject (McConville 2002, 456). The second verb *ḥi'el* [חיל] carries a literal meaning of dancing or writhing (as in birthing pains), and is clearly intended to represent a mother giving birth, and so is correctly rendered as "gave birth." Most likely, both parts of the verse embody the metaphor of a mother giving birth. For these reasons, Fabry's translation is admirable: "You were unmindful of the Rock (*ṣûr*) that bore you; you forgot the God who gave you birth" (2003, 319; see Wright 2012 on Deut 32:18).

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[6] Isaiah 44 also has the only reference in Isaiah to God the Rock (v. 8).

The feminine imagery is not restricted to this verse. Earlier, in verse 13, the verb *yânaq* is used to refer to Israel suckling from the rock [*selaʿ* and *ṣûr* in parallel] for honey and oil (see Domeris 1997, 473). The honey and oil represent the bounty of the promised land, on which Israel feasts. Knowles (1989, 318), in reference to the verb *yânaq*, remarks that "nowhere else is God the subject" of this verb . Truly a singular metaphor is at work here.

7.4. Yahweh the Judge (Deut 32:30)

In the context of the *rîb* pattern (see Thiessen 2004), it is not surprising to encounter the judgment of God on Israel. Verse thirty parallels God (Yahweh the Rock) selling Israel (cf. v. 28) and shutting them up (literally, giving them up). The text reads in part, "Unless their Rock had sold them, and the Lord (Yahweh) had given them up." Here is another of the rare connections between the name Yahweh and the metaphor of the Rock, and the only instance in Deuteronomy. The theme of being sold, presumably into some form of bondage, reminds us of an earlier passage in Deuteronomy, where the people of Israel are sent back to Egypt as slaves, but ironically there are no buyers (Deut 28:68; Domeris 2018, 51). Now the theme of being sold returns and this makes sense in the context of the judgement underlying the Song of Moses, so grounding God's action vis-à-vis Israel within the covenantal framework that frames the Song (the meta-narrative of Horeb). Watts (1995) concludes, "As in the past, so in the future, Israel holds the key to its own fortunes in its observance of the law." One hears the rhetorical appeal inviting the reader to enter into the world of the faith espoused by the poet and in so doing to make a choice for life (Deut 30:19) and to disassociate from the "other" implicit in the Song.

7.5. Their Rock is not like our Rock (Deut 32:31)

The text reads, "Indeed their rock is not like our Rock" (Deut 32:31a), which introduces a contrasting element into the equation. Such an intent is manifest in *rîb* pattern and underlines the failure of Israel to follow Yahweh and to be obedient to his covenant (Knowles 1989, 311–313; Merrill 1994). Here is clear evidence of what Stulman (1995) called insider/outsider language and which is a regular feature of the prophetic literature. One mark of such language is the juxtaposition of two worlds, side by side, and the appeal to belong to one of these domains and to distance oneself from the other. Often such language is accompanied by irony, which naturally divides the audience (Caird 1997, 104–105) and is a regular feature of this chapter (Knowles 1989, 313).

The poet reaches a climactic moment here in this verse, namely the presentation of a choice between two worldviews, represented metaphorically as "our Rock" and "their rock." It matters very little whether "their rock" envisages the encroachment of other religions (cf. Deut 7:5, 30; 12:2, 30; 28:36; 29:18, 26; see Knowles 1989, 314–316) or some form of Israelite syncretism such as emerged in the time of the monarchy (cf. Hess 2007, 297–335; Day 2002; Smith 2001). The intended contrasting faiths remain the same. "Their rock" may even be an ironic thrust against the standing stones [*'eben*] like those found in the Israelite sanctuary at Arad, later destroyed by Hezekiah (Aharoni and Amiran, 1975, 86). From the poet's perspective, Yahweh stands alone (Knowles 1989, 320), in what Goldingay (2006, 36–40) describes as "mono-Yahwism."

8. The Incomparability of Yahweh

In a remarkable book by Labuschagne (1966), entitled *The Incomparability of Yahweh*, the theme of God's uniqueness, beginning with images like the Rock is spelt out across the texts of the Hebrew Bible. One such example is the passage under review in this article. Vividly the poet, in declarative assertions throughout the Song (Deut 32:4–43) and in diverse ways incorporating both metaphors and motifs, has presented an unforgettable picture of the symbolic world of God, our Rock. The Song functions as a witness to call on Israel to hold to a sense of the incomparability of Yahweh and to forsake all other rocks. It is the rhetorical intention of the Song, best understood from the perspective of the cognitive approach to the metaphors, which gives an urgent note to that call. Here a reminder of what Jindo refers to as that "cognitive device, through which the text orients, or reorients, the perception of the reader" (2010, ix) is appropriate.

This Rock, given context by the desert leitmotif was probably a typical sandstone crag, of the desert regions like Edom or Sinai/Horeb—stark and lonely. McConville confirms that "Rock is a natural metaphor in a hot and dangerous land, offering both shade and hiding" (2002, 453). While concurring with this assessment, one needs to take this connection a stage further. In the context of the exodus narratives as found in the Pentateuch, and specifically in the Horeb/Sinai traditions, the rock is an appropriate symbol for Yahweh who first manifested his awesome power in the desert.

Metaphorically, the term may conjure up a craggy monolith wreathed in wisps of cloud, a place of mystery and awe, a refuge where one might find shelter from a storm, or stand aloft and gaze down at one's enemies, as David did in the region of Ein-Gedi. Guarding against what Barr (1961) has termed "the illegitimate transfer of content," this article argues instead for an Israelite source. The characteristics of Rock are simply too general (safety and shelter) to be positively identified with the wider Canaanite world of sacred mountains as argued by Albright (1959, 1968), Dahood (1966), Cross (1973), and most recently Knowles (1989), but belong instead to the Pentateuchal motif of the desert wanderings.

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Who is to Blame for God's Prohibition against Moses Entering the Promised Land?

Dan Lioy

Abstract

Proponents of higher criticism have fallen short in offering a convincing and satisfactory explanation for three interrelated, unsolved issues in the Pentateuch, as follows: (1) the precise nature of Moses's transgression of the Lord's command; (2) whom to hold most responsible for the infraction; and, (3) the juridical basis for God's resultant prohibition against the lawgiver entering the promised land. Three biblical texts, specifically, Deuteronomy 1:37–40, 3:23–29, and 4:21–24, present Moses's claim that it was the Israelites' fault. Oppositely, three other passages, namely, Numbers 20:1–13, 27:12–14, and Deuteronomy 32:48–52, put forward God's assertion that his bondservant shouldered most of the liability for his iniquity. This essay addresses the preceding interpretive issues and articulates a workable solution to each one, affirming the inspiration and authority of Scripture.

Keywords
Numbers, Deuteronomy, Moses's disobedience, Moses's ban from the promised land, higher critical method, historicity of the Pentateuch

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1. Introduction

The laws, purposes, and character of God are intriguingly portrayed in Numbers and Deuteronomy. Throughout the discourse of these two books, readers learn how the Lord blessed and admonished those whom he had chosen to be his representatives to the surrounding nations. Numbers and Deuteronomy, along with the rest of the Pentateuch, show that for the Creator it was not enough to deliver the Israelites out of the oppressive hands of their Egyptian taskmasters. God also wanted his chosen people to thrive under his rule in the promised land.[1]

The Israelites' freedom did not mean they could do whatever they wanted, regardless of the consequences; instead, the Lord was summoning them to covenantal faithfulness. His will for them included following his sacred laws, serving his divine purposes, and reflecting his holy character to their pagan neighbors. For his part, the Creator pledged to protect his people as long as they remained loyal to him. By living as his consecrated people, the Israelites would be prepared to flourish in Canaan.

The historical accounts recorded in Numbers and Deuteronomy reveal the many ways the Israelites tested God's patience, broke his laws, and violated his covenant with them. In concert with the narration appearing in Exodus and Leviticus, Numbers 13–14 and Deuteronomy 1:19–46 reiterate how, despite the Lord's directives, the first generation of Israelites who left Egypt refused to enter and subdue Canaan. For their insubordination, the Lord condemned them to live out the rest of their lives in the desert of Sinai. Only when all of them (except for Joshua and Caleb) had perished in the wilderness did the Creator permit their children, the second Exodus generation of Israelites, to return to the eastern border of the promised land.

God even banned Israel's esteemed lawgiver, Moses,[2] from entering Canaan; yet, there seems to be a lack of clarity within the Pentateuchal narratives about three interrelated, unsolved issues, as follows: (1) the precise nature of Moses's transgression; (2) whom to hold most responsible for the infraction; and, (3) the juridical basis for the Lord's resultant prohibition against the lawgiver entering the promised land. In particular, Moses claimed it was the people's fault, something he repeated three times in Deuteronomy 1–4 (1:37–40; 3:23–29; 4:21–24).[3] In contrast, the narrator of Numbers 20:1–13,[4] as well as God in Numbers 27:12–14 and Deuteronomy 32:48–52, indicated that the infraction was Moses's fault.

The preceding dissimilarity affirmed in this essay is contra Block (2012, 780), who thinks the "contradictions in attribution of blame for Moses not being able to enter the promised land" are "more apparent than real." Also, while it is valid for Block to maintain that the sets of passages in question present "Yahweh's point of view" (on the one hand) and Moses's "own negative disposition toward his people" (on the other), it is dubious to assert that both perspectives are simultaneously "true." Even a critical scholar such as Kissling (1996, 67) maintains that within Deuteronomy, "Moses is in clear conflict with the narrator over the reason for Moses's exclusion from Canaan."[5] Equally, Lee (2003, 218) asserts that one should "neither choose one tradition at the expense of the other, nor harmonize or collapse the two into one."

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[1] It is beyond the scope of this essay to undertake a detailed analysis of foundational background issues related to the literary origin, structure, flow, and themes found within the Pentateuch. For an incisive treatment of these and other related topics, see Allis (2001); Blenkinsopp (1992); Fretheim (1996); Hamilton (2015); Sailhamer (1995).

[2] Arden (1957, 50) refers to Moses as a "model theocrat."

[3] Mann (1979, 481) describes these three passages as "retrospective, autobiographical statements" made personally by Moses.

[4] Kok (1997, 1) labels Num 20:1–13 as the "locus classicus concerning the transgression of Moses."

[5] For Kissling, the "narrator" is an all-inclusive reference to the presumed redactor(s), editor(s), and so on, of the Deuteronomic text.

The above three issues within the Pentateuch have been adjudicated in academic literature primarily through the postmodern, skeptical lens of higher criticism. Propp (1998, 36) explains that contemporary "scholarship detects in the Torah multiple literary strata," which were "composed in different social and historic situations," as well as "joined together in stages." Likewise, Ska (2009, 226) claims that "it is difficult to maintain that the Pentateuch or the Deuteronomistic History were written at one go by one author." Reputedly, "several hands were at work and we have enough proof of this." According to Chavalas (2003), some specialists think that either "searching for the historical Moses is an exercise in futility" or that the "Moses of the OT is confined to folk tales."

In its most extreme forms, the critical approach is best described as methodological atheism. Allegedly, factual, stylistic, and theological contradictions found between competing narratives within the Pentateuch are due to numerous scribal redactors who operated independently of one another.[6] Noteworthy in this regard is Mann (1979, 483), who draws attention to the supposed, "sharp theological distinction between the priestly and deuteronomic explanations of Moses's denial." The reason for this, Cairns (1992) submits, is that the "Priestly (P) writing" was "compiled more than a hundred years after the Deuteronomic history." Similarly, Man (2017, 3) attempts to "explain" Moses's exclusion from Canaan by examining the presumed series of layered, embellished, and "complex redactions of Deuteronomy."

While the tools of higher criticism are appreciated for their potential usefulness in clarifying the erudition and complexity of Scripture, the main objective of the current essay is not to ferret out, often in a subjective manner, the presumed sources (whether oral or written) and redactions of biblical texts under consideration; instead, the goal is to exegete the final canonical form of God's Word.[7] In this essay, the divine inspiration, veracity, and authority of God's Word are acknowledged. Also, rather than adopt a hermeneutic of suspicion, in which the above Old Testament passages are regarded as filled with fabrications and contradictions, the interpretive approach to Scripture adopted here is affirmatory in disposition, in which the antiquity, coherence, and lucidity of God's Word are recognized.

The preceding theological stance is best described as being evangelical, creedal, and sacramental. Moreover, it is within the context of the above hermeneutical approach that the present essay sets out to explore and attempt to resolve the above three matters. To that end, the second section provides a descriptive analysis of Numbers 20:1–13, 27:12–14, and Deuteronomy 32:48–52 (in which the Lord placed the culpability on Moses), while the third section shifts the focus to Deuteronomy 1:37–40, 3:23–29, and 4:21–24 (in which Moses blamed his fellow Israelites). The fourth section undertakes an objective deliberation of the biblical data. The fifth and final section puts forward a salient wrap-up of the essay's major findings, including the articulation of a workable solution to the three issues in question, while at the same time affirming the inspiration and authority of Scripture.

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[6] For an assessment of divergent, irreconcilable attempts within critical scholarship to interpret the passages explored in this essay, see Lim (2003); Man (2017).

[7] In Lee's deliberation of Moses's "exclusion from the promised land" (2003, 239), the author makes use of "conceptual analysis," which is defined as an "exegetical approach to explain the text on its own terms and in its own right."

2. A descriptive analysis of Numbers 20:1-13, 27:12-14, and Deuteronomy 32:48-52

As noted in section one, Numbers 20:1–13, 27:12–14, and Deuteronomy 32:48–52 leave readers with the impression that Moses was at fault for his infraction of God's directive. The following three subsections deal, respectively, with each of these passages.

2.1. A descriptive analysis of Numbers 20:1–13

Numbers gives the historical account[8] of the Israelites' breaking camp at the foot of Mount Sinai and renewing their wandering in the wilderness.[9] The book closes at a point about thirty-eight years later, with the Israelites on the plains of Moab by the Jordan River poised to enter the promised land. Woven into the narrative of the Israelites' wanderings are God's laws for both the priests and the people in general (1:1–10:10). Also braided into this account are the ways in which the Israelites tested and broke those laws and their covenant with God (10:11–25:18).

Milgrom (1990, 164) surmises that the reference to the "first month" (20:1)[10] is in relation to the spring of the fortieth year of the Israelites' wanderings in the wilderness.[11] It was at that time that Aaron died (20:22–29; 33:38–39). Also, by then most of the Hebrews who were at least twenty years old when the Lord freed them from Egypt, had died (14:20–25). They were replaced by a new generation of God's people to begin the next stage of his plan for the covenant community,[12] namely, the conquest and settlement of Canaan.

Numbers 32:10–13 recounts the tragic episode that resulted in the Lord's judgment decades earlier. Moses reminded a new generation that the Creator would not be silent concerning the tribes' disobedience. Moses described to the tribal leaders God's reaction when their parents had refused to enter Canaan. Then, the lawgiver explained how the Lord had grown angry and had vowed that the Exodus generation would not see the land he had promised to the nation's patriarchs (vv. 10–11). The only exceptions to God's vow were Caleb and Joshua, because they "wholeheartedly followed" (v. 12) the Creator and spoke against the rebellion. The Lord kept his oath, for during the forty years of wandering in the desert, all the insurrectionists perished (v. 13).

Much of what took place during those dreary decades is passed over without comment in the biblical record. Undoubtedly, there was not much of significance that occurred in relation to the advancement of God's redemptive program. The Hebrews would have traveled from one place to the next. They also established camp wherever they found adequate amounts of water and possibly meager amounts of vegetation. Of course, the Lord kept the people alive by his generous provision of manna. Perhaps now and then over those long years, the covenant community would circle its way back to Kadesh Barnea, the spot where they first rebelled against the Creator (Deut 2:14).

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[8] Even a critical scholar such as Beegle (1972, 300) concedes that there is "no reason to doubt the essential historicity of the event" narrated in Num 20:1–13.

[9] The Hebrew noun, *miḏbār* (Num 20:1), is variously rendered as either "wilderness" or "desert." According to Thompson (2015), the term denotes an "arid land" having "little or no vegetation" along with being "wild and uninhabited."

[10] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are the author's personal translation of the respective biblical texts being cited.

[11] For differing interpretive views regarding the chronological and geographical referents in Num 20:1, see Allen (1990, 665–6); Ashley (1993, 375–6); Dozeman (1998, 158–9); Levine (1993, 483); Wenham (1981, 16–17, 148).

[12] Num 20:1 literally refers to the "sons of Israel," as well as the "whole congregation." Both phrases are in apposition (grammatically parallel) to one another, as conveyed by the EHV: "the people of Israel, the entire community."

According to Numbers 20:1, the new generation of Israelites established camp one final time at Kadesh.[13] This oasis of several springs in the Desert of Zin was located south of Canaan and within relatively close proximity to the river of Egypt.[14] The Desert of Zin was situated on the western fringe of the Sinai Plateau, as well as adjacent to and north of the Desert of Paran. The entire region was a dry and inhospitable place. The topography included barren mountain cliffs, rock-covered valleys, and sandy dunes. Aside from the infrequent wadi, the region had little water and vegetation. Only the hardiest of desert plants survived the arid climate (for example, salt-loving bushes and acacia trees found in the beds of the wadis).

Numbers 20:1 notes that while the second generation of Israelites was encamped at Kadesh (possibly for several months), Miriam, the older sister of Moses,[15] passed away and was buried there. Miriam is first mentioned in Scripture in the episode involving the infant Moses and the daughter of Pharaoh (Exod 2:1–10). Moses's Levite parents, Amram and Jochebed, had at least two children—Miriam and Aaron—when they became parents of Moses (6:20; 15:20). Miriam is also mentioned in the celebration that occurred after the Lord safely brought the Israelites through the Red Sea (15:20–21). At this time, Miriam must have been in her nineties, since she was a young girl when Moses was born (and Moses was then in his eighties).

Numbers 12 recounts the challenge to Moses's leadership from Aaron and Miriam (Deut 24:9). Moses's siblings opposed him because he had married a Cushite (Nubian), but jealousy over his leadership was probably what motivated their criticism. God warned them against opposing his bondservant and struck Miriam with leprosy. Then, for seven days, Miriam was shut out of the Israelite camp. After God healed Miriam's leprosy, the first generation of Israelites continued their journey toward Canaan. Despite Miriam's shortcomings, she played a constructive and influential role in the formative years leading up to the Israelite conquest of Canaan.

Nearly forty years later, while the second generation of Israelites were encamped at Kadesh, their supply of water ran out. Like their renegade parents, the "community" (Num 20:2),[16] feeling unsettled, "assembled,"[17] which means they rebelled against Moses and Aaron; however, the explicit reference to Moses in verse 3 indicates that he was the primary target of the people's grievance, which they framed as a legal complaint or lawsuit against him.[18] The agitators quipped that it would have been better[19] for them to die[20] in front of the tabernacle,[21] forty years earlier, with the original cohort of Israelites who left Egypt (v. 3), and whom God previously had struck down in judgment.[22]

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[13] Ashley (1993, 386–387) draws attention to the "play on the place-name Kadesh" in Num 20:1, which shares the same Hebrew root as the "word holy in vv. 12 and 13," namely, "*qāḏēš*, from *qdš*, the same root as *haqdîš*, to hold as holy." As the narrative reveals, the Israelites and their leaders, including Moses and Aaron, failed to uphold "Yahweh as holy."

[14] That is, the Wadi el-Arish; cf. Num 34:4–5; Ezek 47:19; 48:28.

[15] Cf. Num 26:59; 1 Chr 6:3.

[16] In Num 20:2, the Hebrew noun, *ʿēḏā(h)'*, can also be rendered as "congregation" or "assembly," though "community" best fits the setting in which an ill-defined "group of people … collected together" (Thompson 2015).

[17] In Num 20:2, the usage of the Hebrew verb, *qhl*, does not point to a benign or innocuous gathering or assembly of people; instead, the double usage of the preposition, *ʿăl*, signals that it was more of an enraged, mob formation.

[18] The juridical sense is conveyed by the presence of the Hebrew verb, *ryb* (Num 20:3), which in this context denotes the presence of quarreling or contending that is deliberate, focused, and unrelenting in disposition; cf. Limburg (1969, 291–292 (inclusive numbering)); De Regt and Wendland (2016).

[19] In Num 20:3, the rendering of the Hebrew adverbial conjunction, *lû*, as "if only" conveys the sense of "oh that" or "would that." It points to the presence of an underlying intense desire for a real or imagined outcome, which in this case was death.

[20] Num 20:3 twice uses the Hebrew verb, *gwʿ*, which is rendered as "died" or "perished."

[21] Num 20:3 is literally translated, "in the presence of the LORD."

[22] Cf. Num 14:22; 16:31–35.

The present generation of ingrates asked why[23] Moses led the entire covenant "community" (v. 4) into the "wilderness." Was it, as the riffraff suggested, so that they would perish in the desert, along with their "livestock?"[24] More generally, the malcontents asked why[25] Moses would bring them out of Egypt to such a dreadful place[26] where virtually nothing grew. Indeed, in the absence of water, the region was barren of such produce as grain, figs, grapes, and pomegranates (v. 5).

It is noteworthy that almost four decades earlier, the previous generation of Israelites also complained to Moses about the lack of water at Repidim (Exod 17:1–2).[27] The lawgiver, being frustrated by the people's lack of faith, responded by asking the Israelites why they constantly wanted to test the Lord. In response, the people of that doomed cohort turned their complaint back to Moses, apparently refusing to concede that their quarrel was actually with the Lord. Once more, they demanded to know why Moses had led them into the wilderness to perish from extreme and prolonged dehydration (v. 3).

Moses, though perplexed by the short memory of the antagonists, cried out to the Lord (v.4). God told Moses to take some of Israel's elders with him and leave the crowds behind. Moses was to walk to nearby Horeb, where he had earlier encountered the burning bush, and strike a particular rock with his staff. God promised that when Moses did so, enough water for all the people would come out of the rock (vv. 5–6). As the elders watched, Moses struck the rock, and water began gushing out of it. Because the people argued with Moses and tested God at that place, Moses called the site Massah, which means "testing," and Meribah, which means "quarreling" (v. 7).

As noted earlier, like the first generation of Israelites the Lord led out of Egypt, the second generation pummeled Moses with a litany of peevish, heated complaints (Num 20:4–5). Moses, along with Aaron, responded by turning away from the agitators. Next, the two walked toward the "entrance" (v. 6)[28] of the tabernacle.[29] Then, the two threw themselves down with their faces to the ground in what Cole (2000) describes as a "position of entreaty and intercession." There the Lord's glorious[30] presence was manifested before them.[31]

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[23] In Num 20:4, the Hebrew interrogative, *mā(h)'*, coupled with the preposition, lā, carries the sense of "to what end" or "for what purpose."

[24] The Hebrew noun, *beʿîr* (Num 20:4), is variously rendered as "beasts" (NASB), "animals" (NKJV), "cattle" (KJV, ESV, NET), or "livestock" (NRSV, NIV, CSB, Lexham, EHV, NLT).

[25] See fn 23 regarding the use of the Hebrew interrogative, *mā(h)'*, coupled with the preposition, *lā*, which appears in Num 20:5.

[26] In Num 20:5, the Hebrew adjective, *rā*ʿ, modifies and describes the noun, *māqôm*. The portrayal is of a detestable locale without any redeeming qualities. The Israelites' indictment, which they hurled at Moses, ultimately was a formal charge against the Creator, whom the lawgiver represented and served.

[27] Wenham (1981) draws attention to the view espoused by Noth (1968, 144) and other critical scholars that "Exodus and Numbers accounts are really duplicate versions of the same incident" (Wenham 1981, 149); however, as Ashley (1993, 378) surmises, a "detailed comparison of the stories indicates that the similarities between the two" are mainly superficial, whereas the "differences" are "more striking." For a granular demarcation of the major and minor anomalies between the two accounts, see Kok (1997, 90–105). On the one hand, the author affirms that "both texts share formal and thematic features"; yet, on the other hand, it is the "dissimilarities rather than the affinities that stand out predominantly."

[28] In Num 20:6, the Hebrew noun, *pěʼṯăḥ*, is variously rendered as "door" (KJV, NKJV), "doorway" (NASB, CSB, Lexham), and "entrance" (NRSV, ESV, NET, NIV, EHV, NLT).

[29] Num 20:6 uses the Hebrew noun, *'ōʼhěl*, which is literally rendered as "tent." The Israelites carried this portable structure during their wilderness wanderings. The term is coupled with another noun, môʿēḏ, to designate a sacred gathering place.

In verses 7–8, God commanded Moses to pick up his "staff,"[32] which Wildavsky (2015, 175) identifies as a culturally recognizable "symbol of power." Then Moses and Aaron were to assemble the covenant community. Next, in the sight of the entire gathering, Moses was to speak to a nearby "rock."[33] When the lawgiver did so, the Lord promised that water would gush out[34] of the rock. In fact, so much water would be produced[35] that it would supply enough to satisfy the drinking needs of the entire community and their livestock.[36]

First Corinthians 10:1–5 refers to this and other episodes from Israel's years of wandering in the desert to depict the Messiah as the spiritual "rock" of God's people. Previously in Paul's letter, he warned the Corinthians not to engage in idolatry. Specifically, he discussed eating food sacrificed to idols.[37] In chapter 10, the apostle used illustrations from Israel's exodus from Egypt and wandering in the Sinai wilderness to show what overtakes people who reject God by succumbing to idolatry. The first generation of Israelites whom Moses led out of Egypt had unparalleled opportunities to witness the majesty of God and grow strong in their faith.

In an extraordinary act of deliverance, the Lord led all his people through the Red Sea.[38] Each day they received divine guidance from the "cloud" (v. 1) that went before them. The abiding presence of the "cloud" (v. 2) indicated that the Hebrews were under the Creator's leadership and guidance.[39] Through those events, that Exodus generation became identified with Moses. Being in a sense "baptized into Moses," the Israelites were under the submission of this aged leader in a way similar to the manner in which believers are submitted to the Messiah through baptism.

Furthermore, God miraculously fed the Israelites every day with manna (v. 3).[40] On more than one occasion, he caused water to gush from rocky formations to satisfy the multitude and their livestock.[41] The people understood that they were eating and drinking out of God's merciful and loving hand (so to speak). The manna and gushing rock represented the grace that would appear fully and personally in Jesus of Nazareth, the Rock (v. 4). Put another way, the crucified and risen Savior was the one who provided deliverance for the Israelites.

Regrettably, though, the Exodus generation did not live up to its venerable heritage. Most of these Hebrews died in the "wilderness" (v. 5) because they rebelled against God, which provoked his displeasure and judgment against them. Possibly some Corinthian believers assumed they could get away with certain sins, such as "idolatry" (v. 14), because they had been baptized and were participating in the Lord's Supper (vv. 16–17). That would explain why Paul wrote as he did, describing long-ago events in terms of the two Christian sacraments.

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[30] *Kāḇôḏ* is the Hebrew noun rendered "glory" (Num 20:6). When applied to God in Scripture, "glory" refers to the luminous manifestation of his being; put differently, it is the brilliant revelation of himself to humanity. This definition is borne out by the many ways the term is used in the Bible. For example, "glory" is often linked with verbs of seeing (Exod 16:7; 33:18; Isa 40:5) and of appearing (Exod 16:10; Deut 5:24), both of which emphasize the visible nature of God's glory.

[31] Cf. Exod 19:9, 16; 33:9–10; Num 9:15.

[32] The Hebrew noun, *măṭṭĕ(h)* (Num 20:8), is variously rendered as either "staff" (NET, ESV, NIV, Lexham, CSB, EHV, NLT) or "rod" (KJV, NKJV, NASB).

[33] "Rock" (Num 20:8) translates the Hebrew noun, *sĕ'lă*ʿ, which can also be rendered "crag," especially to denote a rugged or steep formation.

[34] In Num 20:8, the Hebrew verb, ntn, is literally translated "give" (cf. Lexham). In this context, the term is variously rendered as "give forth" (KJV), "pour forth" (NEB), "pour out" (NIV, EHV, NLT), and "yield" (NKJV, NASB, NRSV, ESV, CSB).

[35] The Hebrew verb, *yṣ'* (Num 20:8), which is the Hifʿîl, second person, masculine, singular form, has Moses as its subject. The implication is that it would be through him that an abundance of "water" would originate (literally, "come or go out") from the rock formation.

[36] Cf. Pss 114:8.

[37] Cf. 1 Cor 8.

[38] Or "Sea of Reeds"; cf. Exod 14:16, 22, 29; Num 33:8; Josh 24:6; Ps 66:6; Isa 43:16; 63:11.

[39] Cf. Exod 13:17–14:31.

[40] Cf. Exod 16.

[41] Cf. the discourse in this essay concerning Exod 17:1–7 and Num 20:1–13.

The apostle was warning his readers that baptism and holy communion would not automatically protect the Corinthians from God's judgment, just as the miracles he performed at the Red Sea and in the Sinai wilderness did not shield the Israelites from destruction (v. 21–22). If the believers at Corinth were astute, they would "flee from idolatry" (v. 14). It was not enough for Paul's readers to know that the veneration of idols was wrong. They had to intentionally abhor the practice in all its forms.[42] The apostle was urging not only Christians with weak scruples to abandon this sin, but also believers with strong consciences whose actions might cause their more self-doubting peers to spiritually stumble.

Returning once more to the main narrative recorded in Numbers 20, just as the Lord directed,[43] Moses went and picked up his "staff" (v. 9). It was stored at the tabernacle, where the Lord manifested his sacred "presence." Based on the preceding information, one option is that the staff was the budding and blossoming rod of Aaron that produced almonds.[44] A second option is that the item was Moses's personal rod, which he previously used to strike the waters of the Nile,[45] as well as to strike a rock in a previous complaint episode involving the first generation of Israelites.[46] In any case, Moses and his brother, Aaron, summoned the second generation of Israelites to gather around the designated "rock" (v. 10). What followed deviated significantly from God's original command recorded in verse 8.

Sailhamer (1995, 396) asserts a prominent view that the "author has deliberately withheld the details" of how Moses failed, which supposedly creates uncertainty about the precise nature of his infraction; yet, the present essay's "careful reading of the text" indicates that it is possible to discern "what Moses and Aaron did to warrant God's displeasure." In contrast to Sailhamer, Burnside (2017, 113) observes that the "specificity of the text" implies Moses's conduct was not "intended to be obscure." Indeed, a thoughtful and substantive analysis indicates that Moses and Aaron committed an "act of open rebellion against" (2017, 111) the Lord. Cole (2009, 371) equates the lawgiver's "actions" to those of an "idolatrous pagan magician," wherein Moses attributed "miraculous, almost god-like powers to himself and Aaron."

Allen (1990, 867) notes that Moses allowed four decades of pent up "anger and frustration" to prompt him to speak rashly.[47] Fernando (2012, 672) assesses that the lawgiver "took matters into his own hands and did things his way." Arden (1957, 52) goes further in labeling Moses's conduct as a display of "astonishing egoism." Specifically, he urged those present to "listen"(v. 10) carefully,[48] or pay close attention, to his words; yet, in doing so, he failed to heed the Creator's original directive. Furthermore, the lawgiver chided this new cohort of God's people, in a tone filled with "condescension" (Arden 1957, 52), for being a group of "rebels";[49] yet, as Emmrich (2003, 57) indicates, the deep "irony" is that Moses's own speech and conduct were laced with sedition.[50]

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[42] Cf. 1 Thess 1:9; 1 John 5:21.

[43] "Commanded" (Num 20:9) renders the Hebrew verb, ṣwh, which has the sense of charging "someone to do something" (Thompson 2015) specific. In this case, every aspect of the Lord's directive to Moses was mandatory, not optional.

[44] Cf. Num 17:6–13.

[45] Cf. Exod 7:19–20.

[46] Cf. Exod 17:1–7, which is recounted above.

[47] Cf. Pss 106:32–33. It is beyond the scope of this essay to explore the preceding passage in detail. It reiterates the episode at the "waters of Meribah" involving Moses and the Israelites. The psalmist articulated the view that God's people "provoked" or "angered" him and consequently Moses "suffered" (or experienced "harm"). Furthermore, the Masoretic text reads, "they rebelled against his spirit," while two other Hebrew manuscripts (along with the LXX, Syriac, and Jerome translations) read, "made his spirit bitter." In either case, the outcome for Moses was the same, namely, that his "lips" uttered "words" that were "rash" or "reckless."

Next, Moses upstaged God—who alone has the right to act as Judge over his people[51]—by asking whether it was necessary for the lawgiver and his brother to somehow get "water" (v. 10) to come out of the "rock" in front of the assembly.[52] Milgrom (1990, 165) observes that there is no mention of the Creator bringing about the miracle through his emissaries. Lim (1997, 85) adds that Moses's declaration and conduct were "tantamount to a serious desecration" of the Lord's "name." Of particular interest is that, in a violent act of indiscretion, Moses lifted up his staff[53] and, instead of just speaking to the "rock" (v. 11),[54] he used his rod to pound the craggy formation twice. Despite Moses's flagrant transgression of God's instructions,[55] a large stream of water came out abundantly from the rock, enabling all the people and their livestock to drink.

Instead[56] of trusting[57] that the Lord's will was appropriate and good, Moses openly violated it. Lim (1997, 155) argues that the lawgiver was also guilty of "exceeding the divine mandate." In doing so, Moses, in partnership with Aaron, had offended the Lord, debased his holiness, and failed to credit to him the miracle that had occurred.[58] The Hebrew verb, *qdš*, which is rendered "holy" (v. 12), means "to be separate," "to be distinct," or "to set apart."[59] As Leviticus 11:44 reveals, God is incomparable in his majesty and absolutely pure in his moral virtue; yet, tragically, when

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[48] Num 20:10 uses the imperative form of the Hebrew verb, *ṣm*ʿ (to "listen" or "hear"), along with the emphatic particle, *nā(')* ("surely"), to intensify the all-important nature of what Moses articulated.

[49] The underlying Hebrew verb in Num 20:10 is mrh and points to a "recalcitrant" (Thompson 2015) spirit that defies "authority."

[50] Cf. Num 20:24.

[51] Cf. Matt 7:1–5; Jas 4:11–12.

[52] Num 20:10 is literally translated, "out of this rock must we bring for you water." The placement of the Hebrew noun, *sĕ'lă*ʿ, at the beginning of Moses's question draws attention to the craggy formation in front of the group. On the one hand, the verb, *yṣ'*, could be rendered with the future modal sense of "shall we" (NASB, NRSV, ESV); yet, on the other hand, the verb most likely has a compulsory shade of meaning, as seen in the rendering, "must we" (KJV, NKJV, Lexham, CSB, NET, NIV, EHV, NLT).

[53] Num 20:11 is literally rendered, "Then Moses raised his hand." As he did so, the lawgiver acted against the Lord in a manner filled with presumption, contempt, and defiance. Specifically, it was "with a high hand" (15:30) that Moses intentionally violated God's clear directive. Along the same lines, Burnside (2017, 131) states that the uplifted, "clenched fist" is a "stock image for public acts of aggression in the Hebrew Bible."

[54] Cf. Num 20:8.

[55] As noted earlier, Paul revealed in 1 Cor 10:4 that "Christ" was the "rock" that "accompanied" the Israelites in the wilderness (cf. Pss 18:2, 31; 31:3; 42:9). This being the case, Moses's offense was ultimately against the Messiah, about whom the lawgiver prophetically wrote (John 5:45–47).

[56] In Num 20:12, the Hebrew noun, *yăʿăn*, is used adverbially to signal the underlying reason for the Lord's prohibition, and so is rendered, "because."

[57] In Num 20:12, the underlying Hebrew verb, *'mn*, conveys the sense of believing or trusting (Thompson 2015). From the Creator's perspective, Moses and Aaron failed to demonstrate sufficient faith, as seen in the renderings, "trust me enough" (NIV, EHV, NLT), "trust in me enough" (NEB), and "had not enough faith in me" (BBE).

[58] Kok (1997, v) broaches the question, "what is the transgression which Moses is supposed to have committed?" Kok then candidly acknowledges that this "Pentateuchal puzzle has elicited considerable scholarly discussion," yet it has "resulted in nothing close to a consensus." For a spectrum of differing explanations, see Allen (1990, 868); Anisfeld (2011, 219–220); Ashley (1993, 383–384); Baker (2008); Brueggemann (1994); Budd (1984, 218–219); Bush (1981, 291–292); Cole (2000); De Regt and Wendland (2016); Dozeman (1998, 159–160); Emmrich (2003, 53–55); Gray (1986); Kahn (2007, 88–89); Kalland (1992, 217–218); Keil and Delitzsch (1981, 130–131); Lee (2003, 222–223); Levine (1993, 490); Milgrom (1983, 251–252, 264–265); Noth (1968, 146–147); Olson (1996); Propp (1988, 26); Sakenfeld (1995); Wenham (1981, 150–151); Wildavsky (2015, 175–177, 186–188).

[59] In Num 20:12, various English translations nuance the rendering of the Hebrew verb, *qdš*, differently to articulate its notional sense, as follows: "to show" (NRSV, NEB); "to treat" (NASB); "to uphold" (ESV); "to regard" (Lexham); "to honor" (NIV, EHV); "to keep" (BBE); "to demonstrate" (CSB, NLT).

Moses acted in a rash and violent manner, he left the covenant community with the false notion that God is temperamental, fickle, and pugnacious—in other words, as emotionally flawed as human beings.

Moses and Aaron, by not displaying sufficient reverence for God in the presence of the second generation of "Israelites" (Num 20:12), were forbidden[60] from leading the covenant community into Canaan. This outcome serves as reminder that not even persons as great as either Moses or Aaron were exempt from the Lord's discipline. As noted earlier, among the original cohort of Hebrews who had experienced the exodus from Egypt, only Joshua and Caleb were permitted to enter the land the Creator had promised to give to the descendants of the patriarchs.

The "waters of Meribah" (v. 13) became the name of the place where the Israelites argued[61] with the Lord, and where his holiness was demonstrated and maintained among the people by judging Moses and Aaron.[62] As noted earlier, the Hebrew noun rendered "Meribah," which is used in both Exodus 17:7 and Numbers 20:13, means "quarreling." It can also convey the notions of complaining, strife, and contention. In reflecting on this historic incident, Psalm 95:8 exhorted later generations of God's people not to harden their hearts as the second Exodus generation did "at Meribah." Even in such a regrettable situation as this, the Lord proved himself to be holy and maintained his honor in the presence of the entire covenant community (Lev 10:3).

2.2 A descriptive analysis of Numbers 27:12–14

The first twenty-five chapters of Numbers deals with the initial generation of Israelites who departed from Egypt. Despite their preparations to enter Canaan (1:1–10:10), this privileged cohort rebelled against the Creator and perished in the wilderness for their insurrection (10:11–25:18). Chapters 26:1–36:13 spotlight the following generation of Israelites and the events leading up to their conquest of the promised land. The narrative includes the second census of the Israelites recorded in chapter 26, which parallels the first census detailed in chapters 1–4. Beginning in chapter 27, the historical account shifts the focus to the preparations the new cohort of God's people undertook as they made their way to Canaan. Part of getting ready included passing the baton of leadership from Moses to Joshua.

Verses 12–14 offer the Lord's explanation concerning why he commissioned Joshua to replace Moses. The rendition is prefaced by God's command to Moses to journey up a "mountain" located with the "Abarim" range. An examination of Numbers 34:47 and Deuteronomy 32:49[63] indicates that "Nebo" was the specific mountain the Creator referred to in Numbers 27:12.[64] Abarim was located east of the Jordan River in the Transjordan region. The range extended from the heights of Mount Nebo in the north to the much lower elevation northeast of the Dead Sea in the south.

Mount Nebo rose about 4,000 feet above the Dead Sea and sat approximately 2,700 above sea level. On a cloudless day, a person could view much of the promised "land" (Deut 34:4), which the Lord had pledged to give to the patriarchs and their descendants, the Israelites, as their inheritance. According to verse 1, Nebo was identified with “Pisgah.” Either Nebo and Pisgah referred to the same peak or to two different mountains within proximity to one another. Regardless of which option is preferred, Nebo/Pisgah provided a vista that extended from Gilead to the town of Dan in the north, included all of Naphtali, the territories of Ephraim and Manasseh, the land of Judah extending west to the Mediterranean Sea, the Negev, and the Jordan Valley up to Zoar (vv. 2–3).

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[60] In Num 20:12, the Hebrew adverb, *lāḵēn*, is used to indicate the consequence resulting from Moses and Aaron's insubordination and so is rendered "therefore."

[61] The same Hebrew verb, *ryb*, is used in both Num 20:3 and 13.

[62] Both Num 20:3 and 13 state that the Israelites took it upon themselves to quarrel, first with Moses (v. 3) and second with the Lord (v. 13). Since Moses served as God's spokesperson, to contend with the lawgiver was tantamount to being argumentative with the Creator. In a similar vein, when Moses transgressed the Lord's command, it became imperative for him to adjudicate and judge Moses (along with Aaron) in the eyes of the Israelites.

[63] Deut 32:48–52 is covered in the next section of this essay.

[64] The LXX version of Num 27:12 adds, τοῦτο τὸ ὄρος Ναβαύ ("which is Mount Nebo").

The Creator stated in Numbers 27:13 that after Moses had an opportunity to gaze at a distance upon the entirety of Canaan, he would literally be “gathered”[65] to his “people.” Cornelius, Hill, and Rogers (1997) explain that this idiomatic expression broadly referred to a person’s physical death, in which one joined other deceased family members and peers, whether in the grave or Sheol.[66] As stated in 20:22–29, this is the same fate that Aaron, Moses’s older brother, previously experienced somewhere on Mount Hor.[67] God explained that because both Moses and Aaron defied the Lord’s authority[68] at the “waters of Meribah,” he would not permit either of the brothers to enter Canaan. As noted in 27:14, this was a time of acute strife[69] involving the entire covenant community; nonetheless, God singled out Moses and Aaron for failing to uphold the Lord’s holiness[70] in the presence of their Israelite peers.

2.3. A descriptive analysis of Deuteronomy 32:48–52

In Deuteronomy, Moses recorded his final words to a new generation of Israelites. He delivered these oracles while God’s chosen people camped on the plains of Moab and prior to their invasion of Canaan. The famed lawgiver sought to prepare the Israelites for the upcoming challenge facing them. He urged them to recall the laws and experiences of their forebearers. Moses also emphasized those ordinances that were especially needed for the people to make a successful entrance into Canaan.

Beginning in Deuteronomy 31, Moses told the Israelites that he was no longer capable of leading them. He urged them to be strong and courageous, especially as they advanced into the promised land. Then, after instructing them to submit to Joshua’s leadership, Moses presented the written law to the priests and told them to read it regularly to the Israelites. Moses also foretold that, soon after his death, God’s people would rebel against him (vv. 1–29). Next, all the Israelites were summoned to hear Moses[71] recite the words of a song, which praised the Lord and warned the people to remain faithful to him (31:30–32:47).

As noted in Lioy (2013, 4), there is no scholarly consensus concerning the organizational scheme of the Song of Moses. One proposed option is that the passage opens with a Prologue (31:30) and closes with an Epilogue (32:44). In this arrangement, God’s summoning of witnesses (32:1–3) is paralleled by his call for songs of praise (v. 43). Within the main portion of the ode, God’s accusation of Israel’s disloyalty, loving actions on Israel’s behalf, indictment of Israel’s rebellion, and decision to punish Israel (vv. 4–25) are paralleled by God’s censure and punishment of Israel’s foes, his vindication of Israel, and his execution of justice (vv. 26–42).

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[65] “Gathered” (Num 27:13) renders the Hebrew verb, ʾāsap.

[66] In ancient Israel, Sheol (Hebrew, *šeʾôl*) denoted the underworld or realm of the dead (Swanson 2001).

[67] While Num 20:23 states that “Mount Hor” was near the Edomite border, the exact location remains disputed among specialists.

[68] As in Num 20:10, the underlying Hebrew verb in v. 24 is *mrh*.

[69] *Merîḇā(h)* is the underlying Hebrew noun in Num 27:14 and indicates the presence of intense quarreling and contention.

[70] As in Num 20:12, the underlying Hebrew verb in 27:14 is *qdš*. The form is second masculine plural.

[71] Deut 32:44 indicates that Joshua (literally, Hoshea) was with Moses as he recited the Song to the Israelites; cf. Num 13:8.

The Song of Moses is followed by a narrative interlude in verses 45–47. The lawgiver exhorted the second generation of Israelites to scrupulously heed "all the words" recorded in the Mosaic Law. Furthermore, they were to teach their children to adhere just as conscientiously to these same commands.[72] After all, none of what Moses recited in the Song, along with all that he reiterated in Deuteronomy, was either "idle" or "empty" statements; instead, what was recorded in the Torah occupied the nexus of the Israelites' corporate and individual existence.[73] Accordingly, for upcoming generations of God's chosen people to flourish in the promised land, it was imperative for them to remain faithful to his covenant stipulations.[74]

What follows in verses 48–52 is a record of the Lord's final words to his bondservant, Moses.[75] Christensen (2015, 827) surmises that the Hebrew phrase rendered, "that same day" (v. 48) "looks back to 1:3," namely, the "first day of the eleventh month"[76] of the "fortieth year" following the Israelites' "exodus from Egypt."[77] This observation indicates that after Moses finished addressing the Israelites, on exactly that same day, his life came to an end.

The Commander of heaven's armies directed Moses to ascend "Mount Nebo" (v. 49). As noted in the previous section, Nebo was part of the "Abarim" range within the "land of Moab" and across from "Jericho" on the eastern side of the Jordan River in Canaan. Moab was bounded on the west by the Dead Sea and on the east by the Arabian Desert, while Moab's northern and southern borders were formed by the Arnon and Zered rivers, respectively. Jericho was an ancient fortified city located about 10 miles northwest of the Dead Sea and around 17 miles northeast of Jerusalem. Canaan denotes the territory bounded on the west by the Mediterranean Sea and on the east by the Jordan River. Canaan's northern and southern boundaries were formed by Phoenicia and Wadi of Egypt, respectively.

The Lord permitted Moses to look out across the promised land, which the Israelites would receive as their tangible and longstanding "possession."[78] Then, as the Creator had previously revealed,[79] he would bring to an end the temporal life of his bondservant and cause him to join[80] his departed ancestors.[81] Deuteronomy 32:50–51 reiterates what God declared in Numbers 27:13–14, namely, that in the presence of the Israelites, both Moses and Aaron were guilty of acting unfaithfully or treacherously.[82] As observed by Brueggemann (2001, 282), their flagrant transgression falsely signaled to God's chosen people that his directives could be flouted and his holiness[83] profaned with impunity. For this reason, the Creator declared that neither of the brothers would ever enter Canaan, the land God had pledged to give the Israelites as an enduring inheritance; yet, as a divine concession, Moses would be allowed to look from a long way off at the promised land spread across the horizon.[84]

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[72] Cf. Deut 4:9; 6:7, 20–25; 11:19; 31:9–13.

[73] Cf. Lev 18:5; Deut 4:1; 8:3; 30:20.

[74] The testimony of Scripture is that later generations of Israelites flouted Moses's words of admonition, which in turn led to their banishment from Canaan for seventy years; cf. 2 Kgs 17:7–17; 2 Chr 36:15–19.

[75] Cf. Num 12:7; 34:5; Josh 1:1–2; Ps 105:26.

[76] The "eleventh month" (Deut 1:3) would be Shebat in the sacred Hebrew calendar of ancient Israel and mid-January to mid-February in the Gregorian calendar used throughout the modern world.

[77] According to an early dating of the Exodus, the fortieth year would be 1446 BC. Also, Deut 1:2 states that the excursion from "Horeb to Kadesh Barnea" usually took only eleven days to complete.

[78] "Possession" (Deut 32:49) renders the Hebrew noun, *ʼăḥŭzzā(h)ʼ*.

[79] Cf. Num 20:12.

[80] The Hebrew verb rendered "will die" is in the Qal imperatival form to rhetorically indicate that, by divine decree, it was necessary for Moses to perish on Mount Nebo.

[81] As in Num 27:13, Deut 32:50 is literally rendered, "be gathered to your people."

[82] In Deut 32:51, the Hebrew verb, *mʽl*, conveys the lexical sense of acting "unfaithfully" (Thompson 2015). This connotation indicates an outright betrayal of one's "legal obligations." The second masculine plural form of the verb indicates that God was referring to an act of disloyalty on the part of both Moses and Aaron.

[83] As in Num 20:12 and 27:14, the underlying Hebrew verb in Deut 32:51 is *qdš*. The form is second masculine plural.

Centuries later, an episode involving the Creator’s rejection of Saul as Israel’s first king provides theological insight concerning God’s prohibition against Moses (and Aaron) entering the promised land. In 1 Samuel 15, Saul claimed that he heeded the Lord’s directive to completely exterminate[85] the Amalekites;[86] yet, his assertion was contradicted by his own admission that he spared the enemies’ king, Agag, and allowed the Israelite troops[87] to remove from the plunder what they regarded as the choicest sheep and cattle (vv. 20–21). These acts also violated God’s command that Saul, as the Lord’s designated agent, was to utterly wipe out the Amalekites, whom he regarded as “sinners” (v. 18).[88] In light of the preceding context, the Creator regarded Saul’s transgression as being “evil” (v. 19).[89]

In response to Saul, Samuel rhetorically asked whether Israel’s God obtained greater delight[90] from a person’s “burnt offerings and sacrifices” (v. 22) than from heeding his “voice.” Samuel signaled through the use of the Hebrew interjection[91] rendered “behold,” along with a synonymously parallel construction, the answer to his query. Specifically, there was no moral equivalency between obeying the Lord and offering sacrifices. Likewise, there was no ethical comparison between heeding God and bringing him the “fat of rams.” In both cases, submitting to the Creator’s will eclipsed performing costly religious rituals.

Verse 23 is even more incisive in explaining the outrage connected with all forms of sedition against the Lord, such as those connected with Saul and Moses.[92] Samuel declared that such attempts at insurrection were morally equivalent to transgressions[93] involving “divination” or “witchcraft.”[94] Moreover, displays of obstinance[95] were ethically comparable to the abhorrent practice of venerating idols.[96] The inference is that both Saul and Moses were guilty of insolence. This led them to value their own preferences and priorities more than the will of the Creator, which made both idolaters. Because Saul treated with disdain[97] the Lord's clear and specific injunctions, the Lord would respond in kind by spurning Saul as Israel's king. As for Moses's apostasy and denial of God's authority, the lawgiver's fate was being excluded from the Israelite cohort whom the Lord enabled to enter and take possession of Canaan.

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[84] Deut 32:52 uses the Hebrew noun, *nĕ’ḡĕḏ*, which, according to Clines (2001), denotes what is “opposite” or “in front of” a person or object.

[85] In 1 Sam 15:18 and 20, the Hebrew verb, *ḥrm*, is used to denote what, by divine decree, is placed under a ban and devoted to destruction. During episodes involving military conflict, a “city and its inhabitants” (Naudé 1997) could be set apart (or consecrated) in a “permanent and definitive” manner for “total annihilation.” In keeping with the ancient Near Eastern understanding of reality that forms the backdrop of the Conquest narrative in Joshua, the Lord was removing Canaan (i.e., its inhabitants, towns, and objects) from profane human possession and usage. God’s unique initiation and unrepeatable sanctioning of violence (sometimes referred to as “Yahweh war”), then, was for covenantal and ethical, not ethnic (or racially motivated), reasons.

[86] Mare (2009, 142) concisely describes the Amalekites as an “ancient marauding people” from the southern portion of Canaan, as well as the Negev. They were “fierce enemies of Israel, particularly in the earlier part of its history”; cf. Deut 25:17–19; 1 Sam 15:1–2.

[87] As in 1 Sam 13:11–12, Saul’s statement in 15:21 was a feeble and unconvincing attempt to shift some of the blame for his disobedience to the soldiers under his command.

[88] “Sinners” (1 Sam 15:18) renders the Hebrew noun, *ḥăṭṭā(’)*, which metaphorically depicts people, in their thoughts, words, and actions, missing the “mark” (Luc 1997) or failing to attain the high ethical standard found in God’s Word.

[89] “Evil” (1 Sam 15:19) translates the Hebrew noun, *ră‘*, which here conveys the notional sense of what is “morally objectionable behavior” (Thompson 2015).

[90] In 1 Sam 15:22, the underlying Hebrew verb is *ḥē’pĕṣ* and denotes the presence of “extreme pleasure or satisfaction” (Thompson 2015).

[91] The Hebrew interjection, *hinnē(h)*, carries the adverbial force of “behold” (KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV), “look” (CSB, Lexham), “surely” (NRSV), “certainly” (NET), “know this” (EHV), or “listen” (NLT).

[92] The Hebrew noun, *merî* (1 Sam 15:23), points to a bitter, contentious spirit that refuses to accept God’s “authority” (Thompson 2015).

[93] The underlying Hebrew noun in 1 Sam 15:23 is *ḥăṭṭā(’)*.

[94] In 1 Sam 15:23, the Hebrew noun, *qĕ’sĕm*, refers to a “pagan form of foretelling” (Thompson 2015), along with “declaring secret or obscure knowledge,” especially through the use of “signs, omens,” and/or presumed “supernatural powers.”

[95] The Hebrew verb, *pṣr* (1 Sam 15:23), conveys the notional sense of “recalcitrance” (Thompson 2015), and is variously rendered as “stubbornness” (KJV, NKJV, NRSV), “insubordination” (NASB), “defiance” (CEB), “presumption” (ESV, NET), and “arrogance” (NIV, EHV, Lexham).

3. A descriptive analysis of Deuteronomy 1:37-40 3:23-29 and 4:21-24

As noted in section one, Deuteronomy 1:37–40, 3:23–29, and 4:21–24 leave readers with the impression that it was the Israelites' fault for Moses transgressing the Lord's command. The following three subsections deal, respectively, with each of these passages.

3.1. A descriptive analysis of Deuteronomy 1:37–40

Moses began Deuteronomy 1 with a summary of Israel's journey north from the Sinai peninsula to Kadesh Barnea, which was a large oasis located at the southern extremity of the promised land (vv. 18–25).[98] There the Israelites allowed their worst fears to squelch their faith in God's abiding presence, power, and provision. In turn, the entire covenant community rebelled against the Lord's command by refusing to enter Canaan (vv. 26–33). For this reason, the Creator vowed that he would not permit one individual from the Israelite cohort to enter the promised land. He would, however, exempt Caleb and Joshua from this outright ban, for they alone remained completely loyal to the Lord (vv. 34–36).

In verse 37, Moses redirected his comments to his own situation nearly four decades later when he impetuously transgressed the Lord's directive.[99] Not even[100] the illustrious lawgiver would escape God's prohibition of entering Canaan. On one level Moses acknowledged that the Creator was "angry" with his bondservant; yet, on another level, Moses glossed over the precise reason for the Lord's intense displeasure.[101] The lawgiver stated that his misfortune was due to the insubordination of his Israelite peers.[102] One could imagine Moses emphatically declaring to the assembled cohort, "It was because of you that God became enraged with me!"

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[96] In 1 Sam 15:23, two different Hebrew nouns are used, namely, *'ā́wĕn* ("iniquity," "wickedness") and *terāpîm'* (figurine-sized, household idol). When grammatically distinguished, the terms convey the sense of "having useless idols and consulting household gods" (EHV). Oppositely, when grammatically taken together, they convey the sense of the "evil of idolatry" (NET, NIV).

[97] The Hebrew verb, *mā'as* (1 Sam 15:23), conveys the notional sense of "to reject with contempt" (Thompson 2015) and is commonly translated as "rejected" (KJV, NKJV, NRSV, NASB, ESV, CSB, Lexham, NET, NIV, EHV, NLT).

[98] The events recounted in Deut 1 are detailed in Num 13–14.

[99] Deut 1:37 begins with the Hebrew adverb, *găm*, which carries the sense of "even me" in reference to Moses (cf. NRSV, ESV, Lexham). Contra Craigie (1976, 105, 127), Driver (1986, 26–27), Tigay (1996, 19, 425), and Weinfeld (1991, 150), this essay understands Moses to be speaking about the episode recorded in Num 20:1–13.

[100] The second half of Deut 1:37 again uses the Hebrew adverb, *găm*, which carries the sense of, "not even" (cf. NASB, Lexham, NLT).

[101] "Was angry" (Deut 1:37) renders the Hebrew verb, *'ānap*, which etymologically refers to one's nose or nostrils (Struthers 1997a). It points to an "intense emotional state," due to breathing hard, and denotes being infuriated. With respect to the Creator, his "anger" remained "rational and controlled."

[102] In Deut 1:37, Moses used the Hebrew preposition, *gālāl*, which conveys the sense of "because" or "on account of." Contra Merrill (1994), there is little ambiguity in the wording to suggest that Moses only seemed to hold his peers liable for his "predicament." Also, given the chronological reference in v. 3, it is doubtful that, contra Christensen (2014, 31), Moses was "taking the blame" for the prior generation of Israelites' "failure" and, as their "leader," was shouldering the "consequences" of their unfaithfulness four decades earlier.

[103] Cf. Exod 24:13; 33:11; Num 11:28; Josh 1:1.

Block (2012, 780) remarks that the Lord would not tolerate Moses's "blame game." Likewise, Fernando (2012, 77) points out that "Moses had to bear the responsibility for his own action." The divine decree included Moses's appointment and commissioning of Joshua as the lawgiver's successor. The Lord literally referred to Joshua as he who "stands before" (v. 38) or "in the presence of" Moses. As both Tigay (1996, 20) and Weinfeld (1991, 151) elucidate, the idiomatic expression depicts Joshua serving as Moses's aide-de-camp or high-ranking, personal assistant.[103] Joshua, then, not Moses, would have the privilege of leading the new generation of Israelites into Canaan. God directed Moses to "encourage"[104] Joshua as he oversaw the efforts of the chosen people to "inherit" the promised land. The lawgiver could do so before his death by offering Joshua moral support and verbal affirmation.

Verse 39 shifts the focus to the previous generation of Israelites. According to Numbers 14:3, they questioned the Lord's wisdom in rescuing them from Egypt so that their enemies might murder them and carry off their families—both wives and children[105]—as plunder. In Deuteronomy 1:39, Moses accurately conveyed this sense,[106] while at the same time nuancing his observations to make a distinction between the families' infants and their older siblings. The lawmaker seemed to refer especially to the various clans' preadolescent sons and daughters. Thirty-eight years earlier, they did not yet have the requisite insight and awareness—which was derived from parental training and life experience—to discern the difference between moral right and wrong.[107]

The Creator declared through Moses that the entire cohort of the new generation of Israelites would be offered the privilege of entering Canaan. The Lord would give the promised land to them, as well as enable them to begin the process of taking full possession of it.[108] God alone was responsible for graciously deeding Canaan to his chosen people as their legitimate, enduring inheritance. In contrast, God ordered the first Exodus generation,[109] including Moses, to "turn around" (v. 40)[110] and head back[111] in the direction of the "wilderness" toward the "Red Sea."[112] There death would be the wages paid for their individual and collective insurrection.[113]

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104 "Encourage" (Deut 1:38) translates the Hebrew verb, *ḥzq*, which conveys the notional sense of "to inspire with confidence" (Thompson 2015), "to give hope," or "to give courage"; cf. the EHV rendering, "strengthen."

105 In Num 14:3, the Hebrew noun, *ṭăp*, collectively denotes "children" (KJV, NKJV, NIV, CSB, NET, EHV), especially those of early age (e.g., "little ones"; NASB, NRSV, ESV, Lexham, NLT). In Deut 1:39, Moses used the same noun in a more focused manner to refer to "infants" (NET) or "toddlers" (EHV), and then added a reference to their older siblings ("children"; KJV, NKJV, NRSV, ESV, NET, NIV, EHV, NLT).

106 Both Num 14:3 and Deut 1:39 use the Hebrew verb, *băz*, which denotes "valuables" (Thompson 2015), such as "people or goods," which are "taken by violence," particularly in military conflict.

107 Deut 1:39 is literally rendered, "who do not know today good or bad." Moses used a figure of speech known as a merism, in which contrasting words denoted the entire spectrum of ideation between two extremes. According to Bratcher and Hatton (2000), at the time of the infraction recorded in Num 14:3, the "younger generation" of Israelites were not yet able to ascertain clear enough distinctions between thoughts, words, and actions characterized by either virtue or vice.

108 Deut 1:39 uses the Hebrew verb, *yrš*, which has the notional sense of "to take possession" (Thompson 2015), "including future endowments by claim of right."

109 The Hebrew personal pronoun, *'ăttěm'* ("you"; Deut 1:40), is in the second person, masculine, plural form.

110 Deut 1:40 uses the Hebrew verb, *pnh*, which conveys the notional sense of changing "orientation or direction" (Thompson 2015).

111 In Deut 1:40, the Hebrew verb, *ns*', imparts the image of the Israelites pulling up their tent pegs and starting on a journey taking them "along the route to the Red Sea" (NIV).

112 Or "Sea of Reeds."

113 Cf. Rom 6:23.

3.2. A descriptive analysis of Deuteronomy 3:23–29

As noted above, the first cohort of Israelites who left Egypt rebelled against the Lord. Consequently, they wandered in the desert for thirty-eight years, until a whole generation perished (Deut 2:1–23). Verse 14 explicitly mentions all the warriors who were old enough to fight in battle. This fulfilled what the Creator announced decades earlier in Numbers 14:29, namely, that these combatants, along with the corpses of the entire first Exodus generation of their peers, would carpet the Sinai desert.[114] Also, to reiterate what was previously observed, verse 30 lists Caleb and Joshua as the only exceptions to the preceding ban, due to their insistence on remaining faithful to the Lord, despite the rest of the community's treasonous intent.[115]

Next, in Deuteronomy 2:24–3:20, Moses described Israel's victories over the Amorites, whose kingdoms east of the Jordan were granted to the Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassites. Moses also explained that God had chosen Joshua to lead a new generation of Israelites into the promised land. The divine Warrior pledged to fight on behalf of his chosen people and enable them to overcome their pagan, Canaanite foes (3:21). For this reason, neither Joshua nor the forces under his command were to become immobilized by fear at the prospect of going into battle; instead, they were to remain valiant and vigilant, knowing that the Lord would enable them to triumph over their enemies (v. 22).[116]

Verses 23–28 are of particular interest to the central question being explored in this essay. In a petition that Block (2012, 104) candidly labels as being "embarrassingly self-serving," Moses recounted ardently imploring the Lord to be compassionate[117] by relenting from his earlier decision to ban the lawgiver from entering Canaan (v. 23). Moses literally referred to the Creator as the "Lord GOD" (v. 24),[118] which conveys the notional sense of "Sovereign LORD."[119] The lawgiver drew attention to the fact that the divine Warrior was at the headwaters of disclosing[120] his "greatness"[121] and "strong hand"[122] to his bondservant,[123] particularly in the Exodus event and bringing two generations of his chosen people through almost forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

Moses realized there were many more significant events to unfold for God's chosen people, and the lawgiver coveted the possibility of playing a central role in them. Consequently, Moses petitioned[124] the Lord for the opportunity to journey with the rest of the Israelites across the Jordan River to experience Canaan firsthand (v. 25). The lawgiver used the same Hebrew adjective[125]

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114 Num 14:29 uses the Hebrew verb, *lwn*, to refer to the Israelites' incessant grumbling and acrid complaining against the Lord. Psalm 78:22 reveals that the entire Exodus generation neither had faith in God nor believed he would continue to watch over, provide for, and deliver them from their plights. Verse 40 further discloses that as a result of their unbelief, discontentment, and murmuring, they spurned the Creator and defied his authority, as indicated by the presence of the Hebrew verb, mrh; cf. Num 20:10.

115 Cf. Num 14:6–9.

116 Cf. Josh 1:5–9.

117 Deut 3:23 uses the Hebrew verb, *ḥānan* I, which conveys the notional sense of "earnestly requesting compassion" (Thompson 2015). This includes entreaties from the supplicant for God to take pity and display his favor (Fretheim 1997).

118 The Hebrew phrase in Deut 3:24 is *'ăḏōnāy' yhwh*.

119 Cf. NET, NIV, NLT.

120 Deut 3:24 uses the Hebrew verb, *r'h*, which conveys the notional sense of "to reveal" (Thompson 2015) or "to cause to see."

121 In Deut 3:24, the Hebrew noun, *gō'ḏĕl*, points to the Creator's "outstanding importance" (Thompson 2015) and "eminence."

122 The idiomatic expression, "strong hand" (Deut 3:24), draws attention to God's uncontestable might and absolute "authority" (Thompson 2015).

123 *'Ĕ'ḇĕḏ* is the underlying Hebrew noun used in Deut 3:24.

124 In Deut 3:25, Moses used the emphatic Hebrew particle, *nā(')*, which can be translated as either "surely" or "please."

125 The Hebrew adjective, *ṭôḇ*, appears two times in Deut 3:25.

to refer to the entire promised "land," as well as the "hill country" and "Lebanon" mountain range. In general, Canaan was fertile territory, and even the elevated regions were lush. This depiction mirrored the material abundance the Israelite spies initially had reported seeing nearly four decades earlier, using the idiomatic expression of the land "flowing with milk and honey" (Num 13:27).[126]

Next, Moses stated that the Creator responded with righteous indignation[127] to the lawgiver's petition (Deut 3:26). While this observation was somewhat valid, Moses's claim as to the reason why differed sharply from God's perspective. The lawgiver stated that the divine ban was "on account of" or "due to"[128] the recalcitrance of the Exodus generation of Israelites. Put differently, Moses placed the blame on his cohort peers for why the Lord would not "listen" to and grant his bondservant's request. The Creator went even further in forcefully directing Moses to desist from making any additional petitions about the issue.[129] Any effort to the contrary would be counterproductive and deleterious for the lawgiver.

God, in his grace, would permit Moses to ascend to the summit of Mount Pisgah and from there visually examine the promised land in every direction of the compass.[130] As the NET, EHV, and NLT paraphrase verse 27, the Lord permitted Moses to "take a good look" at Canaan; nonetheless, the Creator would not permit his bondservant to travel across the Jordan River with the rest of the Israelite cohort. This remained the case, regardless of Moses's attempt to hold the Israelites at least partially responsible for his earlier transgression.

The lawgiver's final task was to pass the baton of leadership[131] over to Joshua, as well as infuse him with inner fortitude and determination (v. 28).[132] Under his command, the Israelites would pass through the Jordan River.[133] Likewise, Joshua would enable them to "inherit"[134] the entirety of the promised land Moses looked out upon. As Wakely (1997) observes, the Israelites' newly-installed commander could overcome the presence of "anxiety, inadequacy, fear, and despair" by focusing on the Lord's abiding, "powerful presence." In verse 29, Moses explained that the preceding priorities were the reason why the entire covenant community encamped in the "valley" facing[135] the town of "Beth Peor."[136]

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[126] Block (2012, 106) postulates that Moses's "description" might be "passionately hyperbolic." After all, "to anyone who had been wandering around the desert of Sinai for forty years, the landscape across the Jordan would have seemed Edenic."

[127] The use of the vav-consecutive at the beginning of Deut 3:26 signals the Lord's strong aversion to Moses's entreaty. Also, the Hebrew verb commonly rendered "angry" is *ʿābar*, and conveys the notional sense of feeling a strong "aversion or antipathy for something" (Thompson 2015). Its root form is the same as the verb, *ʿābar*, Moses used in v. 25, which is usually translated as "cross over." The latter is likewise related to the noun, *ʿēʹḇĕr*, which refers to the region across from or beyond the Jordan River; cf. Harmon (1997); Struthers (1997b). As Woods (2011) observes, these literary aspects rhetorically signal the strong contrast between what Moses desired and God decreed.

[128] In Deut 3:26, the Hebrew prepositional phrase is *lemăʿăn*. Miller (1990, 43) interprets the phrase to mean that it was "for the sake of the people" that Moses bore the divine "judgment." Allegedly, the lawgiver "identifies with and gives his life for the many." Similarly, Christensen (2014, 66) asserts that while Moses was personally "blameless," it was necessary for him to "accept responsibility for the rebellious generation at Kadesh-barnea." Thompson (1974, 101) counters that "it is difficult to argue" that the prepositional phrase is "unambiguously used" to mean "instead of." Also, when taking into account 32:51, it is "difficult to accept the view that Moses's suffering was vicarious" (p. 305). Furthermore, Mann (1979, 486) explicates that "vicarious suffering" denotes someone enduring agony "in place of another." Meanwhile, Israel's lawgiver experienced deep personal loss "because of the people," not on behalf of them. Additionally, his demise did not "provide" his peers "with any hope of salvation." Kissling (1996, 12) puts a fine point on the "innocent suffering mediator" depiction of Moses by indicating it is "somewhat simplistic and idealizing."

[129] Deut 3:26 uses the idiomatic expression, *răḇ-lāḵʾ*, which is literally translated "much to you" and might be more loosely rendered, "enough of that from you" (Lexham).

[130] Deut 3:27 literally says, "lift up your eyes toward the west and north and south and east."

[131] The use of the vav-consecutive at the beginning of Deut 3:28 signals a strong contrast and is commonly rendered as "but." Furthermore, the Hebrew verb, *ṣwh*, conveys the notional sense of "charging someone to do something" (Thompson 2015). In this case, the Lord directed Moses to appoint or commission Joshua as the Israelites' new leader; cf. Num 27:18–23; 31:14.

[132] In Deut 3:28, the Hebrew verb, *ḥzq*, conveys the notional sense of to "inspire with confidence" (Thompon 2015), along with giving "hope or courage." The closely correspondent verb, ʼmṣ, emphasizes the necessity of being "resolute" (Wakely 1997), even in the midst of intense opposition; cf. Deut 31:6–7, 23; Josh 1:6, 7, 9.

[133] Deut 3:28 literally says that Joshua would "cross over before (or at the head of) this people."

[134] In Deut 3:28, the Hifîl, imperfect form of the Hebrew verb, *nḥl*, conveys a causative sense. Moses was transferring his authority to Joshua and empowering him to be successful as Israel's new leader.

3.3. A descriptive analysis of Deuteronomy 4:21–24

In Deuteronomy 4, Moses again warned the new generation of Israelites to heed the stipulations of their covenant with the Lord. Their faithfulness to observe his statutes and ordinances was the basis for their entering and flourishing within the promised land (vv. 1–14). Moses also reminded God's chosen people not to compromise their ethical integrity by venerating idols. This included revering objects depicting humans, as well as extolling the creatures of the earth and the celestial objects in the sky.[137] After all, the Creator made and designated these entities for the benefit of all humankind (vv. 15–19).[138]

In verse 20, Moses shifted and narrowed his focus from the heathen nations to his Israelite peers. He reminded them that God, in his grace, had rescued the preceding generation from Egypt. The lawgiver metaphorically depicted Egypt as an iron crucible[139] where intense heat was used to remove impurities from metal being smelted. In a similar way, the Lord used the fiery trials the Hebrews endured in Egypt,[140] as well as their epic journey through the Red Sea, to so refine them that they literally became the "people of his inheritance."[141] This idiomatic expression emphasized that God highly prized and protected the present generation of Israelites.

Moses redirected his comments[142] in verse 21 to himself by categorically stating that the Lord was infuriated[143] with his bondservant due to[144] the transgressions of the Israelites. In turn, Moses noted that the Creator solemnly vowed[145] that the lawgiver would neither cross over the Jordan River with the new generation of God's people nor enter with them into the land of Canaan. Moses added that the divine Warrior had pledged to give this fertile land to his chosen people as their special, enduring "inheritance."[146] Just as the Israelites were the Lord's valued possession, so too he wanted them to regard Canaan in the same way.

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[135] Deut 3:29 uses the Hebrew noun, *mûl*, which is commonly rendered "opposite" (NKJV, NRSV, ESV, NASB, NET, EHV).

[136] Beth Peor was located in Moab east of the Jordan River (Deut 4:46). Somewhere in the surrounding valley, the Creator buried Moses (34:6).

[137] Cf. Deut 4:16–17; Ps 106:20; Jer 2:11; Acts 17:29; Rom 1:18–23.

[138] An alternative view is that, according to Gen 10–11 (involving the tower of Babel episode and its tragic aftermath) and Deut 32:8–9, the Creator judged rebellious humankind by abandoning them to the folly of quarreling. He also caused them to become fractured and geographically dispersed. In the aftermath, they wallowed in the veneration of innumerable and contradictory pagan deities.

[139] Deut 4:20 uses the Hebrew noun, *kûr*, which refers to a "metal-smelting furnace" (Swanson 2001).

[140] Cf. 1 Kgs 8:51; Isa 48:10.

[141] "Inheritance" (Deut 4:20) translates the Hebrew noun, *nǎḥălā(h)*, which depicts Israel as the Creator's "special, permanent, and precious possession" (Wright 1997).

[142] The use of the vav-consecutive at the beginning of Deut 4:21 is variously rendered as "but" (NET, EHV, NLT), "and" (Lexham), "now" (NASB), or "furthermore" (KJV, NKJV, ESV).

[143] "Was angry" (Deut 4:21) renders the Hebrew verb, *'ānap*, which etymologically refers to one's nose or nostrils (Struthers 1997a).

[144] Deut 4:21 is literally translated, "because of your matter," and variously rendered as "for your sakes" (KJV, NKJV), "because of you" (NRSV, ESV, NET, Lexham, NIV, NLT), "because of your words" (EHV), or "on your account" (NASB, CSB).

[145] The Hebrew verb, *šāba*`, conveys the notional sense of "to promise solemnly" (Thompson 2015).

[146] As in Deut 4:20, in v. 21, "inheritance" translates the Hebrew noun, *nǎḥălā(h)*.

Concerning Moses, he bluntly affirmed[147] that he would soon die on the east side of the Jordan River in Moab. His demise—the reason for which he placed squarely on the shoulders of God's people—ensured that Moses would not venture into the promised land (v. 22). Meanwhile, his cohort peers, under Joshua's military leadership, would make their incursion into Canaan and begin the process of laying claim to its abundance.

Moses then reiterated his earlier admonitions, namely, that the Israelites were to remain vigilant[148] in recalling their binding agreement[149] with the Lord, along with shunning all forms of idolatry (v. 23). The lawgiver provided additional incentive by comparing the sovereign Creator to a "fire" that is "consuming" or "devouring."[150] Likewise, Moses declared that the Lord maintained a holy zeal[151] for the unwavering devotion of his chosen people.[152] As Moses learned on the hard anvil of personal experience, God did not look with favor upon any acts of sedition, which both challenged his authority and were laced with idolatrous intentions.

4. An objective deliberation of the biblical data

As broached in section one, there seems to be a lack of clarity within the Pentateuchal accounts about three interrelated, unsolved issues, as follows: (1) the precise nature of Moses's transgression; (2) whom to hold most responsible for the infraction; and, (3) the juridical basis for God's resultant prohibition against the lawgiver entering the promised land. Section two presented a descriptive analysis of Numbers 20:1–13, 27:12–14, and Deuteronomy 32:48–52, respectively, in three separate subsections. In each case, the consistent portrayal is that the nexus of blame for the lawgiver's transgression rested principally with him, notwithstanding other extenuating factors. Section three presented a descriptive analysis of Deuteronomy 1:37–40, 3:23–29, and 4:21–24, respectively, in three separate subsections. In each case, Moses held his Israelite peers mainly responsible for his dereliction of duty.

The preceding, then, constitute two differing and potentially contravening narratives of an agreed upon central, historical event. In undertaking here an objective deliberation of the biblical data, one option delineated in section one is to maintain that there are two contradictory streams of oral tradition embedded within the Pentateuch that differing groups of scribal redactors spliced together over centuries of editorial development. Allegedly, the competing accounts deviate considerably in their separate renditions. The notion of antithetical and Deuteronomic explanations for Moses's banishment from the promised land serves to undermine the doctrine of Scripture's inspiration and authority. Indeed, it might be affirmed that the collection of passages examined in sections two and three, respectively, illustrate how the Judeo-Christian canon is

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147 Deut 4:22 begins with the Hebrew conjunction, *kî*, which here has an explanatory force and might be roughly paraphrased, "this means that" (MSG). The verse is followed by the explicit use of the first person, personal pronoun, *ʾānōḵî*'.

148 Deut 4:23 uses the Hebrew verb, šmr, which conveys the notional sense of "to be attentive or focused" (Thompson 2015) on a matter of upmost importance.

149 The Hebrew noun, *berîṯ* (Deut 4:23), refers to a "contractual agreement between God and a person" (Thompson 2015). Exodus 24:7 refers to it as the "Book of the Covenant"; cf. 2 Kgs 23:2, 21; Heb 9:19.

150 Cf. Gen 15:17; Exod 3:1–6; 13:21; 19:18; 20:18; Lev 9:24; 10:2; Num 11:1–3; 1 Kgs 18:38; Heb 12:29.

151 Deut 4:24 uses the Hebrew adjective, *qănnā(')*, which is commonly rendered as "jealous" and conveys the notional sense of being "fiercely protective and unaccepting of disloyalty" (Thompson 2015); cf. Exod 20:5; 34:14; Deut 6:15. As Merrill (1994) notes, there is no trace within the Creator of a "petty, selfish envy."

152 Later in Deut 6:15, Moses exhorted the new generation of Israelites to exclusively worship the Lord. As in 4:24, the lawgiver stressed that because the Creator was "jealous," his "anger" would erupt against his chosen people should they forget him, abandon their covenant with him, and venerate pagan deities (vv. 10–14).

primarily a humanly-produced, culturally-conditioned, ancient document that makes no inherent claims to its veracity and accuracy.

From the theological and hermeneutical vantage point espoused in section one, the preceding scenario is neither convincing nor necessary to make sense of the differing portrayals appearing in the two sets of passages being deliberated here. In fact, the above view is undermined by being too conjectural, overly complex, and lacking in any consensus among its adherents. The preceding includes unrelenting scholarly doubt and disagreement over fundamental questions. A more cogent and nuanced option, then, is in order, one that does sufficient justice to the biblical data appearing in the two groups of passages being considered, while at the same time affirming and preserving the doctrine of Scripture's inspiration and authority.

For instance, in all likelihood, both sets of accounts faithfully report and truthfully portray God's view of the commonly-affirmed incident, as well as Moses's perspective. Similarly, neither rendition attempts to harmonize nor gloss over the disparities in the assumptions, claims, and conclusions put forward by the Creator and his bondservant regarding the tragic event and its outcome. From this standpoint, then, the respective Pentateuchal narratives present sensible and compelling summations of what actually happened, along with the differing views of the Lord and Moses. This line of reasoning serves to uphold the veracity and accuracy of what appears in the passages being deliberated here.

A key goal remains, namely, to sort out in an objective manner the ambiguity in the respective biblical texts about the locus of blame connected with Moses's sin. This, in turn, forms the juridical basis for God's resultant prohibition against the lawgiver entering the promised land. The occurrence of his infraction is commonly acknowledged in each of the passages. Likewise, it seems reasonable to affirm, rather than doubt, the underlying historical integrity of the narratives presented in Numbers and Deuteronomy. So, then, how might one account for the unmistakable discrepancy in the views held by God and Moses regarding the nexus of culpability?

An evenhanded assessment of the respective, biblical texts suggests that it was Moses, not the Creator, who was incorrect regarding where to place the blame for the lawgiver's infraction. Also, as previously noted, this sheds light on the basis for the Creator forbidding his bondservant from entering Canaan with his Israelite peers. Scripture accurately conveys, rather than tries to elide or distort, Moses's flawed interpretation of the episode in question. This includes his overstepping of his authority, failing to exactly follow God's directive, and either doubting or casting doubt on the Lord's power.

The preceding observations serve as a sobering reminder that even the best of persons—including such an Old Testament luminary as Moses—are still sinners. From a New Testament perspective, fallen human beings are saved only through the merits of the Messiah, for redemption comes solely by the Father's grace through the gift of faith in the Son.[153] A further deliberation of the biblical data serves to place a twofold perspective on Moses. First, while he was a prophet, he was just as prone to iniquity as anyone else, including the sin of idolatry. This remained the case, even though the lawgiver enjoyed the wonderful opportunity of being in the sacred presence of the Creator, including extended sessions when, as Olson (1996) points out, they spoke in a "direct and unmediated way."[154] Second, Moses remained just a human being (albeit a highly privileged one) who represented the Lord to his chosen people. Against this backdrop, the stark disagreement about Moses's blame, as well as the basis for God barring the lawgiver from Canaan, accentuates the reality of his fallen nature.

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[153] Cf. Eph 2:5, 8–9.

[154] Cf. Num 12:6–8.

5. Conclusion

As noted in sections one and four of this article, proponents of higher criticism have fallen short in offering a convincing and satisfactory explanation for three interrelated, unsolved issues in the Pentateuch, as follows: (1) the precise nature of Moses's transgression; (2) whom to hold most responsible for the infraction; and, (3) the juridical basis for God's resultant prohibition against the lawgiver entering the promised land. Three Pentateuchal texts, specifically, Deuteronomy 1:37–40, 3:23–29, and 4:21–24, present Moses's claim that it was Israelites' fault. Oppositely, three other Pentateuchal texts, namely, Numbers 20:1–13, 27:12–14, and Deuteronomy 32:48–52, put forward God's assertion that his bondservant shouldered most of the liability for his iniquity. Sections two and three provided a descriptive analysis of these passages, followed by section four with its objective deliberation of the biblical data. The present (fifth and final) section puts forward a salient wrap-up of the essay's major findings, including the articulation of a workable solution to the three issues in question, while at the same time affirming the inspiration and authority of Scripture.

With respect to the first issue, it was argued that Moses was guilty of flagrantly transgressing God's command. Also, rather than trust that the Lord's will was just and good, his bondservant openly violated it. One outtake is that the lawgiver offended the Creator, debased his holiness, and failed to credit the miracle that occurred to him. A second outtake is that when Moses acted in a rash and violent manner, he left the covenant community with the false notion that God is temperamental, fickle, and pugnacious—in other words, as emotionally flawed as human beings.

Concerning the second issue noted above, it was argued that both sets of accounts faithfully report and portray God's view of the commonly-affirmed, historical incident, as well as Moses's perspective. Also, when all the evidence is evenhandedly assessed, God's bondservant bore the brunt of the culpability for his infraction. This remained the case, despite his flawed interpretation of the episode in question and recurring attempts to shift the blame to his Israelite peers.[155]

Finally, regarding the third issue mentioned at the beginning of this section, the Creator's barring Moses from the promised land was not a travesty of justice. Similarly, the Lord was not being excessively harsh in his prohibition. As was argued in section two, displays of obstinance are ethically comparable to the abhorrent practice of venerating of idols. Just as insidious is the fact that Moses valued his own preferences and priorities more than God's will. Consequently, the Lord was fully justified in prohibiting his bondservant from entering Canaan. Even then, God displayed enormous grace and mercy in allowing Moses to glimpse the entirety of the promised land before he died on the heights of Mount Nebo in Moab.

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[155] Kalland (1992, 46) opines that Moses's "repetitious reference to the Lord's prohibition reflects" the lawgiver's "keen disappointment."

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The Proximity of Yahweh in Deuteronomy: A Study of Key Phrases and Contexts

Izaak J. L. Connoway and Johannes Malherbe

Abstract

Name Theologians[1] have long argued that Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomist relocated Yahweh from earth to heaven and that only his “Name” remained on earth. In the last couple of decades, some (e.g., Wilson, Richter, and Vogt) have challenged this position, arguing that there is more to Yahweh’s presence in Deuteronomy than what Name Theologians have acknowledged. While these and other studies have argued well that Yahweh is present on earth in Deuteronomy, this article aims to take the discussion further by looking at the portrayal of the proximity of Yahweh in Deuteronomy. This aim is reached by inspecting key phrases (e.g., שָׁכַן, לִפְנֵי יְהוָה) by which, and contexts (e.g., Horeb, war camps) in which Yahweh is portrayed as proximate to Israel. Through the article, we show that Deuteronomy does indeed portray Yahweh as not only present on earth but proximate to Israel as well.

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[1] “Name Theologians” refers to those who believe that Deuteronomy portrays יהוה as being present in heaven while only his Name was present on earth (Wilson 1995, 3).

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Bible-based. Christ-centred. Spirit-led.

1. Introduction

In considering where Yahweh is situated in the book of Deuteronomy and responding to Name Theology's idea that Deuteronomy moves Yahweh from earth to heaven, one could focus on divine presence. However, the focus of "the proximity of Yahweh" was preferred for this study for two reasons. First, much has been written in response to Name Theology that has proved that Yahweh is situated on earth in Deuteronomy. So, while we survey this in the literature review, the making of this point is not the primary aim of this article. The other reason is that in reading the Hebrew text of Deuteronomy we found some phrases that portray Yahweh as proximate to Israel. The focus of this article is to study the use of these fifteen phrases and the seven contexts in which they occur.[2] We have considered only occurrences of the phrases in contexts where there are certain levels of physicality and literality to the context.

We begin with a literature review, furnishing readers with a basic understanding of Name Theology and summarizing the views of three of its significant recent critics. The seven contexts within which the fifteen phrases occur are inspected next to provide a framework for the discussion of the phrases. We identify the contexts, indicate why they are significant, and analyze some verses that fall within each context. The ten most significant of the fifteen phrases are discussed in detail after that. We discuss the semantic nature of these phrases as it relates to divine proximity, and also look at some verses in which these phrases occur. In the final major section, we do exegesis on one of the pertinent texts for each of the seven contexts. We do exegesis on these texts as a sample exercise, to indicate that in Deuteronomy Yahweh is indeed portrayed as proximate to Israel.

2. Literature Review[3]

Much of the discussion concerning divine proximity in Deuteronomy revolves around Name Theology since Name theologians have claimed that, while Yahweh's Name dwells on earth in Deuteronomy, he himself dwells in heaven (Wilson 1995, 3). Name Theology has a long history, many facets, and many adherents. A full survey of these would fall outside the scope of this article, but two key proponents are included in the literature review. After a look at these two scholars, the views of Wilson (1995), Richter (2002), and Vogt (2006), who are Name Theology's most able critics (Block 2015, 235), are presented in summary form.

In 1943 Martin Noth first proposed the idea that the books that span from Deuteronomy to Second Kings were finished off by a single hand (Richter 2002, 1). This theory was based on the fact that these books share certain theological themes (Wilson 1996, 2). This prepared the way for Gerhard von Rad to propose the idea of the deuteronomistic corrector. He proposed that Deuteronomy moves away from the "old crude idea" of Yahweh being physically present at the cult site (Richter 2002, 8, 26), which was an older and more popular idea (Wilson 1995, 3). Von Rad (1975, 184) proposed that Deuteronomy and the deuteronomistic literature opposed this idea. Instead, Deuteronomy portrays a severance, Yahweh himself as being in heaven, while his Name "lives" at the place of worship in a near material way, almost as a being in its own right. The positioning of the Name at the cult site indicates a paradigm shift in Israel's theology. Deuteronomy, so it is said, is less anthropomorphic and immanent than the Yahwistic and Elohistic sources, and more abstract, demythologized, and transcendent than the Priestly sources (Richter 2002, 7). Deuteronomy moves away from the Yahwistic and Elohistic sources of lawgiving that portray Yahweh as being present on earth, and from the Zion tradition that believed he lives in Jerusalem (Wilson 1995, 3). Various suggestions are made as to why this change took place, whether it was a desire not to limit Yahweh to the sanctuary, or some historic reason (Wilson 1995, 6). The nature of the presence is also debated, whether it was a forwarding station for prayers or some kind of representative presence that is something like a hypostasis (Hundley 2009, 534).

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[2] We have identified 15 phrases that appear a total of 140 times in 70 verses. Some statistical information is provided in footnotes as the article progresses.

[3] While it may have made sense to include insights from some of the historical and contemporary giants of Old Testament Theology, limited space necessitated a narrowed focus. This led to our limiting our literature review to the views of two significant players in the formation of Name Theology and three of its most able critics.

Name Theology has not, however, gone unchallenged. There have been other suggestions for the meaning of the Name formulae found in Deuteronomy. The three most significant are (1) that it signifies the actual presence of Yahweh (Mayes, Rennes, Myers), (2) that it signifies Yahweh taking possession of the sanctuary (McConville, Braulik, Wenham, de Vaux), and (3) that it signifies the proclamation of Yahweh's Name in the cult (Braulik, Weippert, van de Woude; Wilson 1995, 8, 9). The Name dwelling at the sanctuary and Yahweh being in heaven are two major data points that Name theologians have used, and they have also made use of other Ancient Near East (ANE) material. However, there is more to the biblical data on the presence of Yahweh in Deuteronomy than just these two data points. Some scholars have rejected Name Theology based on biblical evidence. The biggest point of data that has drawn Name Theology into question is the presence and pervasion of in לִפְנֵי יְהוָה Deuteronomy. This is taken to mean "in the presence of Yahweh" and indicates proximity (Wilson 1995, 9, 10). Wilson (1995, 11) argues that Name theologians have not sufficiently answered the problems that לִפְנֵי יְהוָה causes for them. According to Block (2015, 235) the idea that Deuteronomy's portrayal of Yahweh's presence is a later theological abstraction of an earlier understanding of Yahweh's presence has been ably challenged, particularly by Wilson (1995), Richter (2002), and Vogt (2006), whose views are now presented in summary form.

Wilson (1995, 12) has found that there are references to Yahweh's presence on earth in both the historical (chs. 1–3, 4–5, 9–10) and legal (chs. 12–26) parts of Deuteronomy. The legal material is important because it comments on the place from which Yahweh is supposed to be absent. The historical material is important because it is thought to clearly show the hand of the Deuteronomist, who supposedly espouses Name Theology, so these parts ought to have a more transcendent portrayal of Yahweh's presence (Wilson 1995, 12, 13). Yet what one finds is that the presence of Yahweh is referred to in Deuteronomy in ways that are similar to the Exodus/Numbers accounts, and there are indications of divine presence in Deuteronomy that are not even found in the Tetrateuch. Many of these comments are also found in parts that source critics ascribe to the Deuteronomist, which shows that even the Deuteronomist could not have been committed to a purely transcendent picture of Yahweh (Wilson 1995, 217). After carefully inspecting the occurrences of לִפְנֵי יְהוָה (before Yahweh)[4] in the legal section (chs. 12–26), Wilson (1995, 217) finds that the reasons put forth for why these references should not be understood literally are unconvincing. Careful consideration of Deuteronomy does, it seems, lead to the conclusion that Yahweh is portrayed as present on earth (e.g., at Horeb, the cult, the war camp) as well as in heaven (Wilson 1995, 215, 216).

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[4] Unless otherwise indicated translations of the Hebrew text are our own translations.

In preparing for her PhD research, Richter noticed that all studies on the temple in the Deuteronomistic history assume some form of Name Theology. She was also aware that Name Theology was a vestige of Wellhausen's model for the development of Israel's theology. Since she considered Wellhausen's model to have been well critiqued before, she decided to challenge the centrality that Name Theology is afforded (Richter 2002, v). In her assessment of Name Theology, she drew from ANE philology and archaeology (2002, 1). The Priestly material uses the verb שָׁכַן (to dwell) as a technical theological term for Yahweh dwelling in the midst of Israel, housed in his מִשְׁכָּן (tabernacle). She argued that in light of this it is not difficult to see how Deuteronomy's juxtaposition of the Name and שָׁכַן (to dwell) could have been understood as Yahweh dwelling in the sanctuary (Richter 2002, 12). Targum Onkelos translates any reference to the person or dwelling of God as "Shekinah," so it seems as though they thought that "the Name" was another word for Yahweh . Proponents of Name Theology have assumed there is a universal concept for "name" throughout the ANE, but they have failed to see this idiomatic expression (the Name formulae) as an idiom. In response to this, Richter recalls how James Barr warned that lexicographic research should focus on the semantic meaning of a word in context, rather than seeing a word as a linguistic reflection of theological realities (Richter 2002, 37, 38).

Vogt (2006, 5) says that over time it was found that Deuteronomy's theology on the presence of God is much more complex than what was initially thought. The idea that Yahweh is only present in heaven and not on earth has been successfully challenged (2006, 121). While the Horeb theophany does not have much of an emphasis on visual phenomena, the fact that קוֹל (voice/sound) is qualified by דְּבָרִים (words) shows that the audible phenomenon was intelligible speech (2006, 119). There are multiple indications in Deuteronomy that the people were in close proximity to Yahweh when the Decalogue was declared. Yahweh is portrayed as actually present (2006, 121). It could be said that Deuteronomy conveys Yahweh's invisible presence since "noncorporeality [sic]" and invisibility does not necessarily equate to absence (2006, 122). Exposure to the fire and the voice from the midst of the fire is also portrayed as dangerous and frightening in a real way. If Yahweh was only present in heaven and not in the fire, then there would be no need for the fire to shield him from being seen. Deuteronomy portrays Yahweh as being present both on earth and in heaven (2006, 126). The accounts of the theophany are different in Exodus and Deuteronomy because Deuteronomy is a sermon proclaimed to the people. Hence, there is a greater emphasises on their experience (2006, 123, 127).

In writing on the discourse on the Chosen Place (Deut. 12), Vogt (2006, 192) says that since לְשַׁכֵּן שְׁמוֹ (to cause his Name to dwell) is a fixed form, it should be taken as an idiom. Following Mayes, he holds that references to Yahweh causing his Name to dwell at the sanctuary are indications of Yahweh's actual presence (2006, 192). Support for this is found in that the discourse on the establishment of the Name is often found in the context of the phrase לִפְנֵי יְהוָֹה (before Yahweh; 2006, 193). Also, failure to consider the literary context of the instructions on the Chosen Place has led to misinterpretations of the phrase לְשַׁכֵּן שְׁמוֹ (to cause his Name to dwell). The term שֵׁם (name) is first used in verse 3 with reference to the Canaanite gods (2006, 194). The juxtaposition of the occurrence of שֵׁם (name) in verse 3 with the occurrence in verse 5 is deliberate and contrasts the presence of the Canaanite gods with the presence of Yahweh, following the destruction of the places where the Canaanite gods are worshiped (2006, 195).

3. Contexts

In inspecting the portrayal of the proximity of Yahweh in Deuteronomy we have identified seven contexts[5] in which the fifteen phrases that indicate divine proximity occur 140 times. The contexts we have identified are (1) "Horeb," (2) "The Chosen Place," (3) "Israel gathered," (4) "in the midst of Israel," (5) "Israel on the move," (6) "in the war camp," and (7) "individuals."

3.1. "Horeb"

"Horeb"[6] is an important context because it was the place where Yahweh gave the law. At Horeb, Israel stood before Yahweh (4:10) and heard his voice (4:12)[7] as he spoke to them face to face (5:4).[8] They heard his voice so clearly that they were terrified (18:16).[9] Moses is also portrayed as standing by Yahweh (5:31)[10] and lying prostrate before him (9:18, 25).

3.2. "The Chosen Place"

"The Chosen Place"[11] was an important cultic site, which makes it worth investigating. It is the place where Moses said Yahweh would place his Name and make his dwelling (12:5).[12] Through the literature review, it was shown that the placing of the Name does indeed relate to divine presence. At the Chosen Place priests stand to minister (18:7) and worshipers make confessions when they make offerings (26:5) "before Yahweh."[13] The Chosen Place is also the site where, during festivals, the Israelites were to appear before Yahweh (16:16; 31:11).[14]

3.3. "Israel gathered"

The category "Israel gathered"[15] is one we constructed for verses where members of the Israelite community were gathered for various purposes. Examples of this are when they are gathered for judgement (19:17),[16] or just as a religious assembly (23:1–3, 8),[17] or to renew the covenant before crossing the Jordan (29:10[9], 15[14]), or to sacrifice a peace offering after crossing the Jordan (27:7).

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[5] "Contexts" here refers to physical contexts, i.e., places where or situations in which the potential indications of proximity occur.

[6] Horeb is the name for Mount Sinai that is used in Deuteronomy (Barry et al., 2016, Mount Horeb). Of the seventy verses inspected, 31% of the verses occur in the context of "Horeb." The percentage breakdown of the phrases that are used for this context is *דבר 21%, מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ 15%, שָׁמַע 15%, קוֹל 12%, עָמַד 7%, *קהל 7%, רָאָה 5%, פְּנֵי יְהוָֹה 4%, *קרב 4%, עִם 4%, פָּנֶה 3%, בֵּין 3%.

[7] The statement that Israel came near and stood at the foot of the mountain is formal court language, since, for the moment, Horeb was transformed into the throne room of Yahweh (Block 2012, 126).

[8] "Face to face" means Yahweh spoke directly to the people of Israel (Christensen 2001, 113).

[9] This is a reference to when the people requested that Moses mediate because they were afraid of dying (Christensen 2001, 409).

[10] The people were sent back to their tents, but Moses continued in God's presence (Craigie 1976, 145) for another forty days and nights (Christensen 2001, 135).

[11] Of the seventy verses inspected, 30% of the verses occur in the context of "The Chosen Place." The percentage breakdown of the phrases that are used for this context is פְּנֵי יְהוָֹה 53%, שָׁכַן 22%, רָאָה 10%, שִׂים 9%, עָמַד 6%.

[12] In light of the importance of divine presence in ANE and Israelite thought, it is safe to assume an expression like "place the name" does relate to divine presence (Hundley 2009, 543).

[13] The phrase לִפְנֵי יְהוָֹה can mean "in the presence of Yahweh" and is an indication of Yahweh's proximity (Wilson 1995, 9, 10).

[14] In the ANE, temples were not merely monuments but were thought to be the dwellings of deities. The frequency with which "the place that Yahweh will choose" occurs in the context of לִפְנֵי יְהוָֹה (before Yahweh) reinforces this interpretation (Block 2015, 235).

[15] Of the seventy verses that were included in the study, 12% of the verses occur in the context of "Israel gathered." The percentage breakdown of the phrases that are used for this context is *קהל 55%, פְּנֵי יְהוָֹה 22%, עָמַד 9%.

3.4. *"In the midst of Israel"*

"In the midst of Israel"[18] is the context for verses that refer to Yahweh being in the midst of Israel as a community, whether at a particular time or as a principle truth. The chronologically finite verses involve them losing a battle (1:42)[19] and facing many troubles (31:17)[20] because Yahweh was not in their midst. We also encounter them weeping before Yahweh (1:45). Verses that speak of Yahweh being in their midst as a principle truth involve him being near when they call on him (4:7),[21] and him being zealous for them in their midst (6:15)— including him being ready to discipline them if they wander off.

3.5. *"Israel on the move"*

The context "Israel on the move"[22] refers to verses that portray Yahweh as proximate to Israel while they were travelling. Reference is made to Yahweh leading them (1:33;[23] 8:2)[24] personally (4:37)[25] and being with them (2:7; 31:6)[26] on the way as they went.

3.6. *"In the war camp"*

"In the war camp"[27] is the context for verses where Yahweh was present in the camp as they marched out to Holy War. Moses says it is Yahweh who goes before them (1:30),[28] is in their midst (7:21),[29] and is with them (20:1, 4).[30] But he also warns that his presence in the camp requires sanctity (23:14[15]).[31]

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[16] Two parties engaged in litigation were to stand before Yahweh. This was, however, not at a sanctuary, but in front of one of the priests living in their towns that were charged with judicial duties (Tigay 1996, 184).

[17] The noun קָהָל (assembly) was used for non-religious assemblies at times (Lewis 1980, 790). However, according to Craigie (1976, 262) the "assembly of the Lord" refers to the covenant community of Yahweh, especially when they are gathered in his presence.

[18] Of the seventy verses that were included in the study, 7% of the verses occur in the context "in the midst of Israel." The percentage breakdown of the phrases that are used for this context is *קרב 67%, פָּנֶה 17%, פְּנֵי יְהוָֹה 16%.

[19] Without Yahweh's presence, the Israelites could not win a Holy War (Christensen 2001, 33).

[20] Having forsaken Yahweh and his covenant, Yahweh would also forsake them, and they would come to realize that it is due to his absence that they are suffering harm (Craigie 1976, 334).

[21] The gods of the polytheistic religions were noted for being distant, but Israel's God, though transcendent, was at the same time near and ready to be called upon (Hall 2000, 95).

[22] Of the seventy verses that were included in the study, 7% of the verses occur in the context "Israel on the move." The percentage breakdown of the phrases that are used for this context is הָלַךְ 43%, עִם 29%, רָאָה 14%, פָּנֶה 14%.

[23] The cloud and the fire were constant, visible signs of Yahweh's presence with them ever since they had left Egypt (Tigay 1996, 18).

[24] Moses instructs the people to remember that Yahweh was present with them in the desolation of the wilderness as well (Craigie 1976, 162).

[25] The noun פָּנֶה is used here in the sense of Yahweh's own presence (HALOT 1999, 941).

[26] This is an exhortation to the people before he addresses Joshua (31:1). With full confidence in the presence of Yahweh in their midst, the army could be confident that they would be successful (Craigie 1976, 332).

[27] Of the seventy verses that were included in the study, 7% of the verses occur in the context "in the war camp." The percentage breakdown of the phrases that are used for this context is הָלַךְ 37%, *קרב 25%, עִם 25%, רָאָה 25%.

[28] This text promised Israel that Yahweh would go before them to protect them (Tigay 1996, 17).

[29] Moses here shifts the focus to Yahweh's awesome presence (Block 2012, 216). In 6:15 the awesomeness of Yahweh's presence in the midst of Israel is meant to be a deterrent to sin (Tigay 1996, 81). Here it is a reminder of the awesomeness of his presence among them that is meant to put them at ease (Block 2012, 216).

[30] The priests were to remind the people that there was no need to be anxious about the outcome of the battle because Yahweh their God would be present with them (Craigie 1976, 240).

[31] Yahweh is portrayed as the Divine Warrior that marches in the midst of Israel to save them (Yamoah 2015, 157).

3.7. “Individuals”

The context “individuals”[32] refers to verses in which Yahweh’s proximity to individuals is in focus. There are some verses from Horeb where Moses alone is in focus, but these were left with the other Horeb verses. If the verses from Horeb that are focused on Moses are left out, most of the remaining verses focus on Joshua. Moses tells Joshua Yahweh will be with him (31:8).[33] Yahweh appears in the tent of meeting (31:15)[34] to address Joshua[35] and to say that he will be with Joshua (31:23).[36] One verse focuses on Yahweh’s proximity to Moses, whom he knew face to face (34:11).[37]

4. Phrases

In inspecting the portrayal of the proximity of Yahweh in Deuteronomy we have identified fifteen phrases that occur 140 times in the 70 verses that we identified. In this section, we provide some notes on the semantic character of the ten most significant ones, stating why they are significant to the study of the proximity of Yahweh. We also indicate some of the verses in which these phrases are used.

4.1. פְּנֵי יְהוָה (Before Yahweh)[38]

The most important phrase for this study is פְּנֵי יְהוָה (face of Yahweh). Multiple authors (HALOT 2000, 941; van Rooy 1998, 639; van de Woude 1997, 1012) indicate that when פָּנֶה is qualified by יְהוָה it is a reference to the personal presence of Yahweh and thus an indication of proximity. The phrase לִפְנֵי יְהוָה did not reach the point of being an independent theological construct in the Hebrew Bible (van Rooy 1998, 638). There was no intermediary designated פָּנִים (face), but its use corresponds to the profane use in that פָּנִים is used for personal presence (van der Woude 1997, 1005). Thus, it signifies Yahweh himself. It is used in multiple places as a reference to Yahweh’s presence. It does not focus on Yahweh’s face, but rather on the locus of his presence (1997, 1012). Where פְּנֵי יְהוָה is the active subject of a verb it can be assumed the statement has theological significance (1997, 1004). For example, in Deuteronomy 4:37 the phrase וַיּוֹצִאֲךָ בְּפָנָיו[39] (and he brought you out by his own presence) is an indication that Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt by his own presence, or by himself (HALOT 2000, 941). In Deuteronomy 5:4 the expression “face to face” (פָּנִים בְּפָנִים) is also used to describe a personal encounter (van Rooy 1998, 639). Beyond that, the preposition לִפְנֵי can also be used with Yahweh for actions that are performed before Yahweh, like eating or crying (HALOT 2000, 942).

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[32] Of the seventy verses that were included in the study, 6% of the verses occur in the context of “individuals.” The percentage breakdown of the phrases that are used for this context is פָּנֶה 50%, רָאָה 25%, עִם 25%.

[33] Here Moses repeats to Joshua what he said to the people, stating that Yahweh will go before him and be present with him, and tells him to be courageous (Block 2012, 723).

[34] Yahweh’s presence was experienced in the pillar of cloud standing at the door of the tent (Craigie 1976, 334).

[35] Admittedly Moses was also present, but it was a private ceremony that followed the public address at which Yahweh first addressed Moses and then Joshua (Craigie 1976, 334).

[36] Yahweh himself makes the same promise that Moses made in v. 8, that Yahweh would be with Joshua (Christensen 2001, 776).

[37] Moses had direct, unmediated contact with Yahweh and was more intimately acquainted with Yahweh than any other prophet (Tigay 1996, 340).

[38] The expression פְּנֵי יְהוָה means “face of Yahweh,” but its idiomatic meaning is often “before Yahweh.” The phrase occurs 25 times in 22 of the 70 inspected verses. Of the 140 times that these 15 phrases occur in the 70 verses, it accounts for 18% of the phrases.

[39] Because of how closely related the applicable occurrences of פָּנֶה are to פְּנֵי יְהוָה some notes on it are included in the discussion on פְּנֵי יְהוָה However, the statistical information in the above footnote refers to פְּנֵי יְהוָה on its own.

Moving on to some specific verses, the expression פְּנֵי יְהוָה occurs in many of the contexts that we have identified. It is used for when Israel was assembled to appear before Yahweh at Horeb (4:10).[40] At certain times, like at the three major festivals(16:16),[41] Israel had to appear before Yahweh at the Chosen Place.[42] Israel assembled before Yahweh to renew the covenant before they crossed the Jordan (29:10[9]) and they were to sacrifice a peace offering before Yahweh after they crossed the Jordan (27:7).

4.2. דבר (Speak/Word)*[43]

The phrase דבר*[44] is another indicator of the proximity of Yahweh in Deuteronomy. The verb (דִּבֶּר) focuses on the action of speaking out with sound being heard (HALOT 2000, 66; Gerleman 1997, 327; Swanson 1997, #1819). It contrasts with verb אָמַר in that אָמַר often signifies the content of the communication, while דִּבֶּר signifies the act of speaking (HALOT 2000, 66). The noun דָּבָר does not simply mean "word" but also signifies the content of what is communicated (Gerleman 1997, 329).

The phrase דבר* is only used in the context of "Horeb." Examples of this kind of communication include Yahweh letting Israel hear his words (4:10)[45] and Yahweh speaking to Israel face to face when he gave them the Decalogue (5:4).[46] After the people indicated a desire for Moses to mediate, Yahweh instructed Moses to stand by him so that he could tell Moses the commandments (5:31).[47]

4.3. מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ (From the midst of the Fire)[48]

Another phrase that is significant for an inquiry into the proximity of Yahweh in Deuteronomy is מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ (from the midst of the fire). In the formation of the religious tradition of Israel, fire plays an important role in theophanies (Stolz 1997, 185). Multiple books in the Hebrew Bible portray Yahweh as manifesting himself through fire theophanies (Naude 1998, 535), but in Deuteronomy, the fire theophanies at Horeb have a unique nuance in the conceptual framework. Deuteronomy conveys the idea of the mountain burning with fire because of Yahweh's presence (4:11; 5:23; 9:15) and also the concept of Yahweh speaking from the midst of the fire (4:12, 15, 33, 36; 5:4f, 22, 24–26; 9:10; 10:4; 18:16; Stolz 1997, 186).

The phrase מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ (from the midst of the fire) is only used in the context of "Horeb." The words of Yahweh are heard from heaven and the midst of the fire (4:36).[49] Yahweh's voice was also heard from the midst of the fire (5:23)[50] and he spoke from the midst of the fire (9:10).[51]

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[40] The communication that Israel received from Yahweh was meant to instil in them a lifelong reverence (Tigay 1996, 46).

[41] The Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths.

[42] Temples were thought to be the dwellings of deities and here a conviction is betrayed that Yahweh lived at the Chosen Place (Block 2015, 235).

[43] The phrase דבר* occurs 16 times in 14 of the 70 inspected verses. Of the 140 times that these 15 phrases occur in the 70 verses, it accounts for 11% of the phrases.

[44] The asterisk indicates phrases for which both the verbal and nominal forms were considered. For the phrase דבר both the Piel form of the verb (דִּבֶּר) and the noun (דָּבָר) were taken into consideration.

[45] Cf. footnote 42.

[46] "Face to face" here means Yahweh spoke to Israel directly (Christensen 2001, 113).

[47] Cf. footnote 11.

[48] The phrase מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ occurs 11 times in 11 of the 70 inspected verses. Of the 140 times that these 15 phrases occur in the 70 verses, it accounts for 8% of the phrases.

[49] The emphasis here is on the spoken word of God. Some see two different traditions brought together here, with the one seeing Yahweh speaking from heaven and the other seeing him speaking from the earth. But this verse reflects the struggle in dealing with the transcendence and immanence of Yahweh (Hall 2000, 107).

[50] Here (5:23–27) Israel's fearful response to the theophany that occurred when they heard the decalogue themselves is recorded (Hall 2000, 126).

[51] The words that they heard Yahweh speak were the Ten Commandments, which they heard themselves (Christensen 2001, 187).

4.4. *שָׁמַע (to Hear)*[52]

The verb שָׁמַע (to hear) is also found in some verses where divine proximity is indicated. While it can have the meaning of, for example, hearing in the sense of obeying or understanding (HALOT 2000, 1570), it can also be used for physically hearing something (HALOT 2000, 1570; Aitken 1998, 175; Schult 1997, 1376; Swanson 1997, #9048; Austel 1980, 938). The verb שָׁמַע is used for hearing God's voice in natural phenomena (Aitken 1998, 175), but also for people (directly and indirectly) hearing divine statements (Schult 1997, 1378). In Deuteronomy 4 and 5, it refers to physically hearing Yahweh's voice (Aitken 1998, 176) and throughout Deuteronomy, it refers to hearing Yahweh's commandments (Shult 1997, 1979).

All the verses from Deuteronomy that contain שָׁמַע in the context of divine proximity occur at Horeb. The Israelites hear the words of Yahweh (4:10);[53] they hear the voice of Yahweh (4:33);[54] they sent Moses to go near to hear what Yahweh would say (5:27).[55]

4.5. *קהל* (to Assemble/Assembly)*[56]

The phrase קהל[57]* is also important in certain verses that indicate divine proximity. The verb קָהַל is used for summoning an assembly (HALOT 2000, 1079). The noun קָהָל is used for various assemblies, but especially ones that are held for religious purposes (Lewis 1980, 790). In these cases, it refers to the cultic community (Müller 1997, 1119) and could be used in the combination קְהַל יְהוָה (assembly of Yahweh; HALOT 2000, 1079). In these cases, the reference to the cultic community has a firmly demarcated membership. Day of assembly (יוֹם הַקָּהָל) is used for Israel's theophanic encounter with Yahweh at Horeb (Müller 1997, 1123) when they received the Law (Carpenter 1998, 889).

The phrase קהל is used in a variety of contexts. It is used when Moses is instructed to gather Israel to Yahweh (4:10).[58] The day that Israel gathered at Horeb to receive the Law is called the day of assembly (10:4).[59] There were also regulations which determined that certain individuals were not allowed in the religious gatherings (23:1–3 [2–4]).[60]

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[52] The phrase שָׁמַע occurs 11 times in 10 of the 70 inspected verses. Of the 140 times that these 15 phrases occur in the 70 verses, it accounts for 8% of the phrases.

[53] In verse 9 they are told to remember and in verse 10 Moses refers to the time Yahweh assembled them (Block 2012, 126) to give them the Law (Christensen 2001, 81).

[54] The belief that seeing Yahweh could be fatal was often expressed (e.g., Gen 32:21; Exod 33:20–23; Isa 6:5), and this passage seems to imply that hearing Yahweh might be similarly dangerous (Tigay 1996, 55).

[55] Yahweh's fiery presence made them realize that he is indeed a living God, but they were afraid of the danger it holds, so they sent Moses to act as a mediator by going near (Block 2012, 174).

[56] The phrase קהל* occurs 11 times in 9 of the 70 inspected verses. Of the 140 times that these 15 phrases occur in the 70 verses, it accounts for 8% of the phrases.

[57] Both the verbal form (קָהַל) and the nominal form (קָהָל) were taken into consideration for this study.

[58] Cf. footnote 55.

[59] The language used here is again the language of theophany (Christensen 2001, 192).

[60] The noun קָהָל (assembly) was used for non-religious assemblies as well (Lewis 1980, 790). However, according to Craigie (1976, 262), the "assembly of the Lord" refers to the covenant community of Yahweh, especially when they are gathered in his presence.

4.6. *רָאָה (to See)*[61]

The phrase רָאָה occurs in some verses where Yahweh is portrayed as proximate to Israel. The verb refers to seeing something physically with one's eyes (Naude 1998, 1006; Culver 1980, 823). One of the theological uses of the verb is for Yahweh seeing people (Naude 1998, 1009), but another use is also for people seeing him (Vetter 1997, 1179). In the cultic realm, there were some references to people seeing the face of Yahweh, but this was changed from the Qal stem to the Niphal stem (appearing before the face of Yahweh) for doctrinal reasons, based on Exodus 33:20 (1997, 1179). For non-Israelites, seeing the face of a deity meant going to the temple to look at the idol. Israelite worship did not involve looking at an idol. However, when used for the Israelites this expression should not be understood in merely spiritual, as opposed to sensory, terms (1997, 1180). The face of Yahweh denotes the very person of Yahweh (Naude 1998, 1010), so this should be understood as an encounter between Israel and Yahweh in the real world (Vetter 1997, 1180).

The verb הרָאָ is used in a variety of the identified contexts. It is used for Yahweh showing his glory to Israel and speaking to them as mere humans (5:24).[62] Three times a year Israel was meant to appear before (or see) the face of Yahweh (16:16).[63] Yahweh was able to see indecent things in the war camp (23:14 [15]).[64] Yahweh also appeared at the tent of meeting to commission Joshua (31:15).[65]

4.7. *קוֹל (Voice)*[66]

The noun קוֹל (voice/sound) also occurs in some verses that portray Yahweh as proximate to Israel in the Book of Deuteronomy. The noun קוֹל basically refers to anything that can be perceived acoustically (Labuschagne 1997, 1133), like voices and noises (Domeris 1998, 898). It is used in such expressions as קוֹל יְהוָה (the voice of Yahweh; HALOT 2000, 1084) and קוֹל אֱלֹהִים (the voice of God; 2000, 1085), and sometimes with the sense of being audible (2000, 1084). Throughout the Hebrew Bible קוֹל most often refers to intelligible sound, of which the revelation of God's voice through visions and aural experiences takes precedence (Domeris 1998, 898, 901). While God's voice is sometimes identified in the Hebrew Bible with natural phenomena like thunder, Deuteronomy distinguishes between Yahweh's voice and natural phenomena (Labuschagne 1997, 1135, 1136). The Hebrew Bible also indicates that Yahweh can hear people's voices (Deut 1:34, 35; 5:28; 26:7; 33:7; 1136).

In the context of divine proximity, the noun קוֹל occurs only in the Horeb narratives. Examples of this include Israel hearing the sound of Yahweh's words (4:12)[67] and Israel also hearing Yahweh's voice (5:24).[68]

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[61] The phrase רָאָה occurs 10 times in 9 of the 70 inspected verses. Of the 140 times that these 15 phrases occur in the 70 verses, it accounts for 7% of the phrases.

[62] The people asked Moses to be their representative because they were apprehensive, due to their experience of Yahweh's presence (Craigie 1976, 145).

[63] Cf. footnote 44.

[64] Yahweh's presence in the camp is a prerequisite for military victory, and the verse portrays him as a divine commander that is inspecting the camp and who will abandon the camp if he finds anything indecent (Block 2012, 538).

[65] A pillar of cloud was a common manifestation of Yahweh's presence during the wilderness period and was a continuation of his presence at Sinai (Hall 2000, 460).

[66] The noun קוֹל occurs 9 times in 8 of the 70 inspected verses. Of the 140 times that these 15 phrases occur in the 70 verses, it accounts for 7% of the phrases.

[67] Cf. footnote 8.

[68] Cf. footnote 64.

4.8. *קרב** (to Draw Near/ Near /Midst)*[69]

The phrase קרב*[70] also occurs in some pertinent texts that portray Yahweh as proximate to Israel. The basic meaning of the Semitic root קרב is to be near or approach (HALOT 2000, 1132). The verb קָרַב means to come near and indicates approaching in a spatial sense (Kühlewein 1997, 1165) to the nearest and most intimate proximity (Coppes 1980, 811). The adjective קָרוֹב connotes spatial proximity (Arnold 1998, 976) and the preposition קֶרֶב means middle or midst (HALOT 2000, 1135). The preposition קֶרֶב is used for Yahweh being in the midst of Israel in the Hebrew Bible (2000, 1136). The phrase קרב is also used in the cultic setting (Kühlewein 1997, 1165). The adjective קָרוֹב is used for Yahweh being near to humans and the verb קָרַב is used for humans approaching Yahweh (Arnold 1998, 976). Sometimes there is an accompanying reason for moving closer, like when Moses approached Yahweh to hear his words as a representative of the people (1998, 977).

The phrase קרב occurs in a variety of the identified contexts. Yahweh can be absent from the midst of Israel at a specific time (1:42).[71] Yahweh is near at hand and ready to help Israel if they cry out for help (4:7);[72] Israel sent Moses to go near to Yahweh and hear his words for them (5:27)[73]; Israel is told that Yahweh's nearness has consequences (6:15)[74] and requirements (23:14[15]).[75]

4.9. *עָמַד (to Be Stationed)*[76]

The verb עָמַד occurs in some verses where divine proximity is described. The verb means "to stand," but when used with the preposition לִפְנֵי it can mean to stand respectfully before (HALOT 2000, 841). One theologically significant sense in which עָמַד is used is for standing before Yahweh (Allen 1980, 673). This use most often applies to the Levites, though in Deuteronomy it is also used for Israel (4:10) and Moses (5:5; Amsler 1997, 923). This sense of standing before Yahweh is a common motif, and it signifies standing in Yahweh's presence (Martens 1998, 432). In the context of litigation, עָמַד is also used for two parties that stand before Yahweh for judgement (19:17; Allen 1980, 674).

The verb עָמַד is used in a variety of the contexts that we have identified. Israel stood before Yahweh at Horeb (4:10);[77] the Levites stand before Yahweh (10:8) to minister;[78] Israel stands before Yahweh to renew the covenant (29:15[14]).[79]

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[69] The phrase קרב* occurs 9 times in 9 of the 70 verses that were inspected. Of the 140 times that these 15 phrases occur in the 70 verses, it accounts for 6% of the phrases.

[70] For this phrase, the verb (קָרַב), adjectival (קָרוֹב), and noun (קֶרֶב) forms were inspected.

[71] Cf. footnote 20.

[72] The polytheistic gods were noted for being distant, but Israel's God, though transcendent, was at the same time near and ready to be called upon (Hall 2000, 95).

[73] Cf. footnote 57.

[74] Yahweh is in the midst of Israel and he was zealously seeking their good, so if they were to act like the Canaanites, he was ready to treat them like Canaanites by destroying them for their wickedness (Block 2012, 193).

[75] Here Yahweh is portrayed as the Divine Warrior that marches in the midst of Israel to save them, so they had to maintain purity (Yamoah 2015, 157).

[76] The phrase עָמַד occurs 9 times in 9 of the 70 verses that were inspected. Of the 140 times that these 15 phrases occur in the 70 verses, it accounts for 6% of the phrases.

[77] Cf. footnote 8.

[78] To stand before Yahweh here means to minister before Yahweh (Hall 2000, 194).

[79] Both those who were present and those of future generations were considered to be present and binding themselves to God by this covenant (Tigay 1996, 278).

4.10. שָׁכַן (to Dwell)[80]

A verb that often features in the discussion of divine presence in Deuteronomy is שָׁכַן. It means "to dwell" and in one-third of all the occurrences of this word, it has Yahweh as subject (Wilson 1998, 109). At times, it is used in the sense of dwelling "in the midst of." This use occurs in the Piel stem and it applies to the times that Moses said that Yahweh would make his Name dwell somewhere (Görg 1997, 701). There are several interpretations of the meaning of the expression, "making the Name dwell." One of these interpretations is that it refers to Yahweh's personal presence that manifests itself with regards to the cultic procedures (HALOT 2000, 1499). The verb שָׁכַן allows Yahweh to retain his freedom and transcendence, while also allowing him to be immanent and still present among his people (Wilson 1998, 110).

All the occurrences of שָׁכַן are used in the context of the Chosen Place. Yahweh promises to make his habitation at the Chosen Place (12:5)[81] and to make his Name dwell there (12:11).[82]

5. Exegesis of Pertinent Texts

In this section, we provide exegesis of seven pertinent texts in canonical order—each from the seven contexts that have been identified for this study. The hope is that through exegeting these seven texts from these seven contexts, further evidence will be provided that Deuteronomy does indeed contain indications of Yahweh's proximity to Israel.

5.1. Deuteronomy 4:37 (Israel on the move)

וְתַ֗חַת כִּ֤י אָהַב֙ אֶת־אֲבֹתֶ֔יךָ וַיִּבְחַ֥ר בְּזַרְע֖וֹ אַחֲרָ֑יו וַיּוֹצִֽאֲךָ֧ בְּפָנָ֛יו בְּכֹח֥וֹ הַגָּד֖ל מִמִּצְרָֽיִם׃
"He loved your fathers and chose their offspring after them, therefore he brough you out of Egypt himself, by his great power."

Multiple authors (Block 2012, 143; Christensen 2001, 96; HALOT 2000, 941; van der Woude 1997, 1004; Tigay 1996, 57) agree that בְּפָנָיו (by his face) here indicates that Yahweh himself delivered Israel from Egypt. Van der Woude (1997, 1004) states that when פְּנֵי יְהוָה is the subject of a verb it usually occurs in theologically significant statements. According to Tigay (1996, 57), this metaphor indicates that Yahweh did not use an intermediary to bring Israel out of Egypt and that this is one of many verses that indicate Yahweh's direct involvement with the Exodus event. Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt so that they would know that there is no God besides him (4:35; Christensen 2001, 96).

5.2. Deuteronomy 5:4–5 (Horeb)

פָּנִ֣ים ׀ בְּפָנִ֗ים דִּבֶּ֨ר יְהוָ֧ה עִמָּכֶ֛ם בָּהָ֖ר מִתּ֥וֹךְ הָאֵֽשׁ׃
אָֽנֹכִ֞י עֹמֵ֨ד בֵּין־יְהוָ֤ה וּבֵֽינֵיכֶם֙ בָּעֵ֣ת הַהִ֔וא לְהַגִּ֥יד לָכֶ֖ם אֶת־דְּבַ֣ר יְהוָ֑ה כִּ֤י יְרֵאתֶם֙ מִפְּנֵ֣י הָאֵ֔שׁ וְלֹֽא־עֲלִיתֶ֥ם בָּהָ֖ר לֵאמֹֽר׃ ס
"Yahweh spoke to you face to face on the mountain out of the midst of the fire. I stood between Yahweh and you at the time so that I could declare his words to you, because you were afraid of the fire and would not ascend the mountain."

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80 The phrase שָׁכַן occurs 7 times in 7 of the 70 inspected verses. Of the 140 times that these 15 phrases occur in the 70 verses, it accounts for 5% of the phrases.

81 The Chosen Place was where Yahweh's habitation was to be and where God was to meet with humans (Craigie 1976, 191), where Yahweh was accessible for worship and where he focused his attention (Tigay 1996, 120).

82 This was Yahweh's chosen sanctuary where they were to rejoice before him (Craigie 1976, 192).

The phrase פָּנִים בְּפָנִים could be translated “face to face” and multiple authors (Block 2015, 277; Cook 2015, 60; Block 2012, 155; Woods 2008, Deut 5:4–5; Vogt 2006, 140; Christensen 2001, 113; HALOT 2000, 941; Tigay 1996, 61; Kalland 1992, 52; Craigie 1976, 128) support seeing this as an indication of a personal, intimate encounter between Yahweh and Israel. This does not require that Israel actually saw Yahweh’s face since it is an idiom (Craigie 1976, 128). But this is an explicit indication of proximity, such that even Weinfeld (as a proponent of the demythologization school)[83] argued that this idea is foreign to the thinking of Deuteronomy. While פָּנִים בְּפָנִים is admittedly found nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible, Vogt says that many interpreters (e.g., BDB; van de Woude) see פָּנִים בְּפָנִים as synonymous with פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים (face to face). For three of the five times that פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים occurs (Gen 32:31[30]; Exod 33:11; Judg 6:22) in reference to Yahweh, it is a clear indication that divine presence is meant (Vogt 2006, 141).

A point of debate is how these two verses relate to each other, considering verse 4 has Yahweh speaking to the people while verse 5 has Moses declaring the word of Yahweh to them. Some commentators (e.g., Driver, Hoffman) think that while the Israelites heard Yahweh’s voice, they were too distant to make out what was being said, and so had to be told what was said. But Tigay (1996, 62) sees no good reason why they would be unable to hear Yahweh themselves. On the enigma of how verses 4 and 5 relate, Tigay (1996, 62) says that if they are read together the problem might be solved. Moses may have wanted to stand between Yahweh and the people at the request of the people, but Yahweh insisted that they hear him themselves. Vogt (2006, 43) also says that עֹמֵד בֵּין (standing between) should not merely be taken as an indication of Moses’s mediatory role. Since it is used in a locative sense elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, it should here also be understood as indicating Moses’s physical location. Craigie (1976, 128) believes that these verses press the reality of the events by identifying the present hearers with those who were present at Horeb. Moses reminds the people that he had to mediate because they were so terrified by their experience of the presence of the living God (Craigie 1976, 128). Block (2012, 155) believes this parenthetical note (5:4–5) is a reminder to Israel that the revelation at Sinai consisted of both mediated and direct divine speech.

5.3. Deuteronomy 6:15 (in the midst of Israel)

כִּ֣י אֵ֥ל קַנָּ֛א יְהוָ֥ה אֱלֹהֶ֖יךָ בְּקִרְבֶּ֑ךָ פֶּן־יֶ֠חֱרֶה אַף־יְהוָ֨ה אֱלֹהֶ֜יךָ בָּ֗ךְ וְהִשְׁמִֽידְךָ֔ מֵעַ֖ל פְּנֵ֥י הָאֲדָמָֽה׃
“For Yahweh is a jealous God in your midst—lest his anger be ignited against you and he destroy you from the land.”

The recognition that Yahweh was in the midst of Israel supervising their affairs was meant to be a deterrent to sin. When this verse is read with verse 16, one sees that they were to remember that Yahweh had been in their midst to provide for them and that they should not question his presence and power to provide (Tigay 1996, 81). In the wilderness, Israel challenged Yahweh to prove his presence among them by supplying their physical desires, and the Israelites were to remember that he is in their midst and not make this mistake again (Block 2012, 194). Yahweh was in their midst to bless them as well as judge them, and his commitment to them would not allow for apostasy to go unpunished (Hall 2000, 144).

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[83] This school of thought sees in Deuteronomy a deliberate move away from seeing Yahweh as anthropomorphic to seeing him in more demythologized and rationalized ways (Vogt 2006, 2).

5.4. Deuteronomy 16:16 (The Chosen Place)

שָׁל֣וֹשׁ פְּעָמִ֣ים ׀ בַּשָּׁנָ֡ה יֵרָאֶ֨ה כָל־זְכוּרְךָ֜ אֶת־פְּנֵ֣י ׀ יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֶ֗יךָ בַּמָּקוֹם֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר יִבְחָ֔ר בְּחַ֧ג הַמַּצּ֛וֹת וּבְחַ֥ג הַשָּׁבֻע֖וֹת וּבְחַ֣ג הַסֻּכּ֑וֹת וְלֹ֧א יֵרָאֶ֛ה אֶת־פְּנֵ֥י יְהוָ֖ה רֵיקָֽם׃
"Three times a year all your men shall see the face of Yahweh your God at the place which he will choose. At the Passover Feast, at Pentecost and at the Feast of Tabernacles. You shall not see the face of Yahweh emptyhanded."

The usual translation "appear before Yahweh" conveys the meaning of the traditional vocalization, which puts רָאָה in the Niphal stem (יֵרָאֶה) rather than the Qal stem (יִרְאֶה), which would be translated "he shall see the face of Yahweh." Without vowels, the verb form יראה could be read as either stem. However, because of grammatical reasons (the direct object marker אֶת־), it makes the most sense to take the phrase אֶת־פְּנֵי יְהוָֹה as the direct object of the verb, which favors reading it as a Qal stem verb (Tigay 1996, 159). The Niphal was most likely an emendation that was made so that the reading is more theologically acceptable and less anthropomorphic (McCarthy 2007; Deut 16:16). Because Exodus 33:20 says that a human cannot look at Yahweh and live, the Masoretic scribes preferred reading יראה as a Niphal rather than Qal (van der Woude 1997, 1010). The expression is an idiom, after all, and the Masoretic scribes did not want the readers to think that the text meant that the early Israelites literally saw Yahweh's face at the sanctuary (Tigay 1996, 159).

While it is indeed a metaphor, it is nevertheless an explicit reference to contact between Yahweh and Israel (Block 2015, 241). In the ANE, temples were not merely monuments that people visited. They were thought to be the dwellings of the deities, and the frequency with which the phrase "the place that Yahweh will choose" appears with לִפְנֵי יְהוָֹה (before Yahweh) reinforces this interpretation (2015, 235). Whether the Niphal or Qal reading is followed, the language is clearly anthropomorphic, and it emphasises that being aware of and responding to the personal presence of Yahweh was the highpoint of worship (Cairns 1992, 159).

5.5. Deuteronomy 23:14[15] (the war camp)

כִּי֩ יְהוָ֨ה אֱלֹהֶ֜יךָ מִתְהַלֵּ֣ךְ ׀ בְּקֶ֣רֶב מַחֲנֶ֗ךָ לְהַצִּֽילְךָ֙ וְלָתֵ֤ת אֹיְבֶ֙יךָ֙ לְפָנֶ֔יךָ וְהָיָ֥ה מַחֲנֶ֖יךָ קָד֑וֹשׁ וְלֹֽא־יִרְאֶ֤ה בְךָ֙ עֶרְוַ֣ת דָּבָ֔ר וְשָׁ֖ב מֵאַחֲרֶֽיךָ׃ ס
"For Yahweh your God walks about in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to hand over your enemies to you, so your camp should be holy, so that he does not see any indecent thing in your midst and turn back from you."

This text is quite an anthropomorphic portrayal of Yahweh, as indicated by words like הָלַךְ (to walk), שׁוּב (to turn back) and רָאָה (to see; Yamoah 2015, 148, 156, 157). Even von Rad (1991, 117), who believed that the author of Deuteronomy consistently situates Yahweh in heaven to avoid the notion that Yahweh is personally present at the sanctuary, finds this text odd. He believes these instructions on the war camp (23:9–14 [10–15]) contain texts that are older than the rest. However, multiple authors (Cook 2015, 171; Yamoah 2015, 148; Hall 2000, 249; Merrill 1994, 310; Cairns 1992, 205; Kalland 1992, 142; Craigie 1976, 265) believe this verse indicates a belief that Yahweh was personally present in the camp. Whether or not the Ark of the Covenant was present in the camp is not clearly indicated in chapter 20. However, whether the presence of the ark is implied or not, the idea that Yahweh was physically present in the camp is clearly indicated (Hall 2000, 349) and seems to portray the religious reality of the Israelites at the time (Craigie 1976, 265). The Hithpael stem of הִתְהַלֵּךְ (walkabout) also shows Yahweh's intimacy with Israel, with whom he spoke face to face (Merrill 1994, 310).

5.6. Deuteronomy 29:10[9] (Israel gathered)

אַתֶּ֨ם נִצָּבִ֤ים הַיּוֹם֙ כֻּלְּכֶ֔ם לִפְנֵ֖י יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֵיכֶ֑ם רָאשֵׁיכֶ֣ם שִׁבְטֵיכֶ֗ם זִקְנֵיכֶם֙ וְשֹׁ֣טְרֵיכֶ֔ם כֹּ֖ל אִ֥ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵֽל׃
"You are all stationed before Yahweh your God today, your heads, your tribes, your elders, your officials, all the men of Israel."

According to Christensen (2001, 717), the use of הַיּוֹם (today) indicates the "cultic present" and Block (2012, 677) adds that it indicates that this is a formal ceremonial event. It is the renewal of the covenant that is in view here, so it was a weighty event (Christensen 2001, 717). Multiple authors (Block 2012, 677; Woods 2008, Deut 29:10–11; Christensen 2001, 717; Tigay 1996, 277; Kalland 1992, 183; Craigie 1976, 452) refer to the fact that the use of נָצַב lends gravity to the event, as it is more formal than the general עָמַד (Craigie 1976, 452; Tigay 1996, 277). The renewal of the covenant was a significant event, and Block (2012, 677) notes that the reference to standing לִפְנֵי יְהוָה (before Yahweh) links the event of the renewal of the covenant to the experience at Horeb when the covenant was established.

5.7. Deuteronomy 34:10 (Individuals)

וְלֹֽא־קָ֨ם נָבִ֥יא ע֛וֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל כְּמֹשֶׁ֑ה אֲשֶׁר֙ יְדָע֣וֹ יְהוָ֔ה פָּנִ֖ים אֶל־פָּנִֽים׃
"And never did another prophet like Moses arise, who Yahweh knew face to face."

Cairns (1992, 306) notes that Deuteronomy has a few references to people knowing Yahweh, but only this verse speaks of Yahweh knowing someone. The verb יָדַע (know) could mean "choose," which is likely the sense here (Tigay 1996, 340). Yahweh sought Moses out and appointed him to a special task, and over the years of Moses serving his commission, their relationship grew to be more intimate than any other (Craigie 1976, 365). While the phrase פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים (face to face) does not mean that Moses saw Yahweh literally, multiple authors (Block 2012, 811; Hall 2000, 501; HALOT 2000, 941; Tigay 1996, 340; Merrill 1994, 455; Cairns 1992, 306) indicate that it does refer to direct personal contact between Yahweh and Moses.

6. Conclusion

In the literature review, it was found that Name Theology is an inherited paradigm that for some time had been allowed to reign unchallenged. However, as has been shown, its basic tenet that Deuteronomy moves Yahweh from earth to heaven, has been ably challenged in recent decades. After a survey of literature that argues that Yahweh is present on earth in Deuteronomy, the article took the conversation further by proceeding to inquire into the proximity of Yahweh to Israel in Deuteronomy. This was done by inspecting phrases by which, and contexts in which, Yahweh is portrayed as proximate to Israel. To prepare the ground for the rest of the discussion, the seven contexts were first inspected. In Deuteronomy, the two most important contexts are Horeb and the Chosen Place. The first is significant because it is the site of the theophanic revelation of the Decalogue. The second is important because it is the place where Yahweh said he would make his Name dwell, and where the Israelite men had to go three times a year to "see the face of Yahweh" (16:16). There were also four other contexts in which Yahweh is portrayed as proximate to Israel as a nation, whether they were on the move or stationed, and some verses also indicate Yahweh as proximate to individuals.

In the section on the phrases that indicate proximity, the ten most pertinent of the fifteen phrases were inspected in descending order of occurrences. We inspected the semantic character of the phrases to show that they can indicate divine proximity and briefly analyzed some verses in which they occur. The literature review already indicated that the phrases פְּנֵי יְהוָה (face of Yahweh) and שָׁכַן (to dwell) cause trouble for Name theologians, and in our inquiry we also found that these indicate the proximity of Yahweh to Israel. The other inspected phrases also have an element of physicality to them that indicates the proximity of Yahweh. There were the phrases that are sensory in nature, whether it was the speaking out of words (דבר*), the physical hearing (שָׁמַע) of a voice (קוֹל), or seeing (רָאָה) theophanic phenomena, like fire (מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ). Then there were also the phrases that were spatial in nature, whether it was the gathering of assembly (קהל*) in the sight of Yahweh, or Yahweh being near to or being approached by humans (קרב*), or someone stationed (עָמַד) in the presence of Yahweh. All these phrases were found to indicate that in Deuteronomy, Yahweh is portrayed as in close proximity to Israel.

In the last section, we exegeted seven pertinent texts that are representative of the seven contexts in which the phrases that indicate the proximity of Yahweh are found. The text for "Israel on the move" indicates that Yahweh, in an attempt to show Israel that he has loved and selected them and that there is no God besides him, personally (בְּפָנָיו) led Israel out of Egypt. In the text for "Horeb" (5:4–5), we found evidence of a personal encounter (פָּנִים בְּפָנִים) between Yahweh and Israel during which time he spoke audibly (דִּבֶּר) with them while Moses stood between (בֵּין) Yahweh and Israel, and that this experience filled them with terror. The text for "in the midst of Israel" (6:15) contains a reminder that Yahweh is in their midst (קֶרֶב) to deter the hearers from sinning or questioning Yahweh's provision. The text for "The Chosen Place" (16:16) contains instructions to go to the Chosen Place to experience and respond (יֵרָאֶה/יִרְאֶה) to Yahweh's personal presence (אֶת־פְּנֵי יְהוָה). The text on "the war camp" (23:14[15]) contains such explicit references to Yahweh's presence that he is said to walk about (מִתְהַלֵּךְ) in the war camp, that he can see (רָאָה) if there is anything unseemly and even turn away (שׁוּב) from them, should he find something there that is not pleasing to him. The text for "Israel gathered" portrays Israel in the cultic present, where they stand (נִצָּב) in Yahweh's presence (לִפְנֵי יְהוָה) to renew the covenant and bind themselves and future generations to him. The text that indicates Yahweh's proximity to "individuals" indicates that in addition to being known by some, Yahweh knew Moses and that he developed an intimate relationship with Moses during Moses's commission.

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The Pericope Boundary in Ephesians 5:18–24: Discourse Markers Favor the Break Being at Verse 22

Kevin G. Smith and Jose de Carvalho

Abstract

Since the proliferation of scholarly works examining Ephesians 5 through the lens of modern gender debates, the preferred segmentation of the text in many articles, commentaries, Bible translations, and Greek editions of the New Testament has shifted. Verse 21, "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ," is now commonly grouped with verses 22–24 instead of with verses 18–20. Scholars argue that verse 21, which focuses on human-to-human relationships, marks a sharp topical break from verses 18–20, which deal with human-to-divine relationships, but verse 21 fits thematically with verses 22–24. By contrast, we argue that linguistic considerations make it more natural to keep verse 21 with verses 18–20 and start a new sub-section in verse 22. Our approach focuses on discourse markers that indicate coherence and discontinuity in the Greek text, most notably Levinsohn's (2000) concept of a point of departure as the primary marker of discontinuity and Baugh's (2015) notion of the distinction between a grammatical and a periodic sentence in Greek discourse. Whereas modern readers tend to dichotomize vertical and horizontal relationships, the author of Ephesians structured the text to position both giving thanks to God and submitting to one another as parallel results of being filled with the Spirit. We do violence to his train of thought when we impose modern categorizations of the world and contemporary gender concerns upon a first-century text.

Keywords
discourse analysis, discourse markers, mutual submission, periodic sentence, point of departure

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Bible-based. Christ-centred. Spirit-led.

1. Introduction

In the Greek text, Ephesians 5:18–24 is one sentence. Verses 19–24 do not contain a finite verb in an independent clause. Grammatically, verses 19–24 depend on πληροῦσθε ("be filled" in v. 18). However, verses 18–24 do not cohere naturally as a thematic unit. Almost all Greek editions and English translations acknowledge this by dividing the passage.[1]

The editors of the UBS and NA editions of the Greek New Testament made a switch in the segmentation in the 1990s. NA26 (1983; similarly, UBS3 in 1975) presented 15–21 and 22–33 as the pericope divisions. They acknowledged the structure of the household code in 5:22–6:9 by presenting each pair of relationships (wives–husbands, children–parents, and slaves–masters) as one paragraph. However, NA27 (1993; similarly, UBS4 in 1998) divided 5:15–33 into three pericopes: 15–20, 21–24, and 25–33, while leaving 6:1–9 as two. This strikes us as unusual because it appears to:

1. obscure the household code,
2. violate the surface structure of verses 18–21, and
3. disregard the markers of disjunction in verse 22.

Since the 1970s, the growing interest in gender-related topics has seen a proliferation of writings about Ephesians 5:21–33 (Johnson 2006). Feminist and egalitarian authors have contributed many of the publications. They tend to argue or assume that the pericope is Ephesians 5:21–33. This demarcation has become so standard that many articles today have "Ephesians 5:21–33" in their titles (Morlan 2014; Mouton 2014; Marshall 2015; Archer and Archer 2019; Mowczko 2020). Perhaps the influence of this default tendency to group verse 21 with verses 22–24 in most recent scholarly articles reflects in the growing number of translations and Greek texts that group with 21 with verses 22–24. However, we argue that linguistic considerations make it more natural to keep verse 21 with verses 18–20 and start a new sub-section in verse 22. Our approach focuses on discourse markers that indicate coherence and discontinuity in the Greek text, most notably Levinsohn's (2000) concept of a point of departure as the primary marker of discontinuity and Baugh's (2015) notion of the distinction between a grammatical and a periodic sentence in Greek discourse. We begin by providing scholarly frameworks for identifying discourse boundaries, and then we show that they support our proposed segmentation more naturally than the main alternative.

2. Boundary Markers

To discuss legitimate boundaries between pericopes and paragraphs, we need criteria to inform where one section ends and the next begins. We will use the views of four scholars to provide a framework for segmenting a passage into its logical sub-sections.

2.1. Beekman and Callow's semantic units

In their seminal work, Beekman and Callow (1974, 279) argue that "[t]he basic criterion is that a section, or a paragraph, deals with one theme. If the theme changes, then a new section has started." They proceed to list a variety of grammatical and semantic clues that might indicate a change of section of paragraph. Although they integrate their clues into their discourse, we extract and list them as follows:

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[1] The notable exceptions are the Lexham English Bible and the Common English Bible, which reflect the influence of Steven Runge (2010, 266) and Cynthia Westfall (2016, 100) respectively.

1. A new theme may be stated.
2. Summary statements may transition to a new section.
3. Formal grammatical clues, such as certain conjunctions, may mark a new section.
4. In narratives, a change of time or location introduces a new setting and scene.
5. Rhetorical questions often introduce a new topic or theme.
6. The vocative form of address often introduces a new section or paragraph.
7. Repeated use of the same or synonymous terms binds a paragraph together.
8. Contrast, especially parallel contrasting statements, may indicate a basic unity.
9. A change in the tense, mood, or aspect of a verb may indicate a new section.
10. A change of participants may indicate the start of a new section.

Regarding vocatives, they say, “The vocative may both distinguish paragraphs and tie a section together” (Beekman and Callow 1974, 279). This phenomenon characterizes household codes. The fact that it is a household code is signaled by vocatives addressing different groups; they tie the section together. However, the sub-sections (paragraphs) of the code are signaled by vocatives indicating a change of the addressees. Beekman and Callow consider Colossians 3:18–4:1 as a simple example of this phenomenon, which is significant since it is a close parallel to Ephesians 5:22–6:9.

Beekman and Callow (1974, 273) make one more invaluable observation.

> It may be, however, the boundaries of grammatical and semantic paragraphs nearly always coincide, although there is some evidence a grammatical paragraph may include several semantic paragraphs in Greek.

In other words, in almost all languages, semantic structure follows surface structure insofar as a new paragraph begins with a new sentence, but there is some evidence to suggest that Greek can start a new semantic paragraph without requiring a new sentence. What they stated tentatively in 1974 is now widely accepted. Ordinarily, Greek (like other languages) begins a new paragraph with a new sentence. However, Greek is capable of long series of subordinate clauses (cola), in which a natural change of theme may begin without an independent clause.

2.2. Kaiser’s exposed seams

Kaiser (1981, 71–72) points out that some authors clearly signpost the structure of their work. However, when they do not, “the interpreter will make use of a variety of clues to locate the slightly exposed seams which mark off specific sections of the book.” He proceeds to give eight examples of “slightly exposed themes”:

1. repeated phrases, terms, or sentences;
2. transitional conjunctions or adverbs;
3. rhetorical questions;
4. changes in time, location, or setting;
5. vocative address showing a change from one group to another;
6. changes in the tense, mood, or aspect of a verb (and possibly even changes of subject or object)
7. repetition of a key word, concept, or proposition; or
8. announcement of theme in a kind of heading.

Regarding vocatives, Kaiser (1981, 72) writes: "A vocative form of address deliberately showing a shift of attention from one group to another constitutes one of the most important devices. It is often used in the epistolary type of literature." The logic for this is persuasive—when an author changes to or about whom they are speaking, a new [sub]-section has begun.

2.3. Levinsohn's points of departure

In his landmark work, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek*, Levinsohn (2000) gives considerable attention to coherence and discontinuity is Greek discourse. He views thematic change as the main indicator of a new segment and avers that a point of departure supported by some surface-level markers are discourse clues for identifying the change. A point of departure is "the placement at the beginning of a clause or sentence of an adverbial or nominal constituent" (2000, 7). He regards it as "a device that signals discontinuities." If a sentence or clause does not begin with a point of departure, "then the pragmatic effect is often to convey continuity with the context" (2000, 14).

In his chapter on "Boundary Features," Levinsohn (2000, 271–284) acknowledges that competing considerations may make it difficult to determine where thematic change occurs. He avers that "the presence or absence of a point of departure has a major part to play in determining the validity of potential evidence" (2000, 271), because a point of departure is "the primary basis for relating the information concerned to its context." He proceeds to present a variety factors that may be used as supporting evidence to confirm a new section, including a noun phrase that marks a change of participant reference, a vocative of address, and changes in the verbal tense, mood, or person as kinds of supporting evidence (2000, 278–279).

2.4. Baugh's periodic sentence

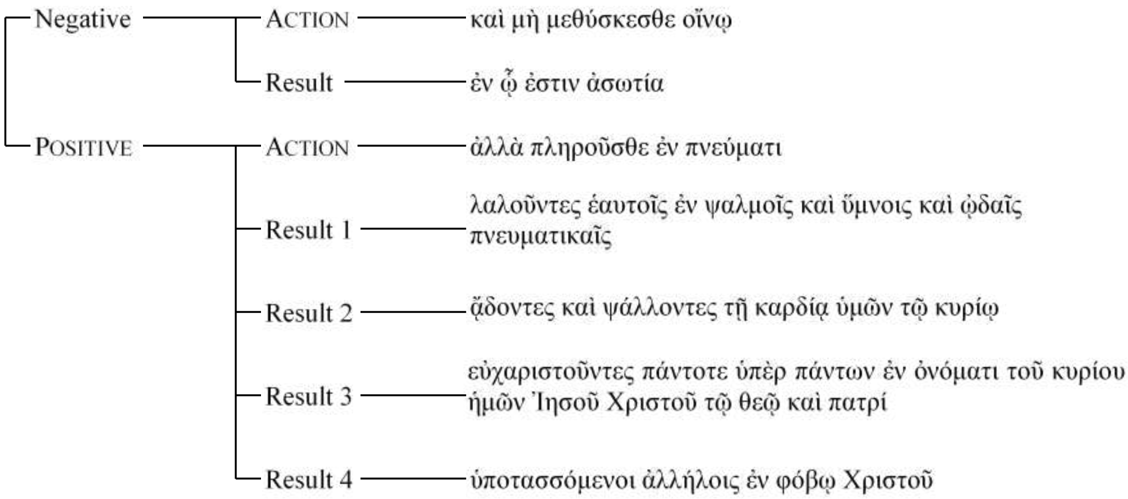
In his superb commentary on Ephesians, Baugh (2015, 15) argues that it is anachronistic to use the modern concept of a grammatical sentence to analyze ancient Greek prose. The Greeks did not use sentences, but cola and periods as "the essential building blocks of discourse." These concepts derived from oratory training. A colon was where a trained speaker or reader would pause, while a period was where he would breathe. A colon corresponds roughly to a modern phrase or clause, while a period is an approximate equivalent for a modern sentence. Baugh uses the term periodic sentence to refer to a collection of periods that form one grammatical sentence (the modern definition), but in Greek are the equivalent of a modern paragraph.

> To summarize, then, modern scholars dealing with the Greek style of Ephesians have focused on the grammatical sentence length and other traits that are more appropriate to a modern work than to an ancient Greek one. Cola and periods are the foundational elements of Greek prose composition, and they many times transcend the boundaries of the grammatical sentence. (Baugh 2015, 25)

Baugh is arguing that Greek can start a new period without making it a new grammatical sentence. We should, however, think of a new period as a sentence when using modern categories. Although he does not state it directly, it seems that new sections (i.e. periodic sentences) typically do begin with a new grammatical sentence.

3. The rationale for keeping verses 18-21 together

There are solid linguistic grounds for keeping verses 18–21 together instead of separating verse 21 from 18–20.


Negative
Action
καὶ μὴ μεθύσκεσθε οἴνῳ
Result
ἐν ᾧ ἐστιν ἀσωτία
Positive
Action
ἀλλὰ πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι
Result 1
λαλοῦντες ἑαυτοῖς ἐν ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς
Result 2
ᾄδοντες καὶ ψάλλοντες τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ κυρίῳ
Result 3
εὐχαριστοῦντες πάντοτε ὑπὲρ πάντων ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί
Result 4
ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ

This is a single grammatical sentence. It begins with two present imperatives that prohibit and enjoin contrasting actions, forming a negative-positive contrast. The negative "do not become drunk with wine" (18a) is contrasted by the positive 18c "but be filled with the Spirit." The prohibition is supported by a reason phrase (18b), serving to motivate not being drunk. The injunction is supported by four (or five) present-tense participial clauses (19–21), indicating the results of being filled with the Spirit.[2] Each participle is present tense, nominative masculine plural; all five are grammatically dependent on πληροῦσθε ("be filled") in 18c, and they are parallel to one another.

Baugh (2015, 444) sees four short periods here. The opening period (v. 18) contains imperative mood verbs. It is developed by three cola that contain subordinate adverbial participles (vv. 19, 20, and 21 are each a period). The adverbial participles, when used in parallel to imperatives, function as supplementary imperatives to provide stylistic relief from the monotony of joining a series of imperatives with καί (2015, 443). The grammatical parallelism mitigates against separating verse 21 from verses 18–20, even though Baugh acknowledges that "[v]erse 21 acts as a transitional concluding exhortation for submission, which is then illustrated in how this works out for various groups within the family in 5:22–6:9."

The supporting criteria espoused by Beekman and Callow (1974), Kaiser (1981), and Levinsohn (2000) provide no support for a paragraph or section break between verses 20 and 21. Although some interpreters see a change of theme in verse 21, the linguistic markers that would confirm segmenting the text there are absent. There is no point of departure (Levinsohn's primary supporting criterion). There is no transitional conjunction or adverb. There is no rhetorical question. There is no change for verbal tense, mood, or aspect. There is no change of subject or object and no contrast.

The surface structure of verses 18–21 strongly favors keeping these verses together. The five participles stand in parallel to one another and share the same grammatical relationship with the main verb πληροῦσθε in verse 18. Although the primary criterion for segmentation is thematic change, where the surface structure so strongly supports conjunction instead of disjunction, one needs persuasive reasons to overrule it.

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[2] Baugh argues that these participles function as supplementary imperatives for stylistic variation.

4. The rationale for a break at the start of verse 21

What then is the rationale for separating verse 21 from verses 18–20 and joining it to verses 22–24? Why do so many scholars either join verses 21–24 or treat verse 21 as a separate paragraph?

Their primary reason is thematic. Texts are segmented based on changes in theme (Beekman and Callow 1974; Kaiser 1981; Levinsohn 2000). Discourse features may signal or confirm a section change, but they remain secondary considerations with thematic changes being primary. Although they recognize that the discourse markers in the surface structure of Ephesians 5:18–24 link verse 21 with verses 18–20, they perceive a jarring topic change in verse 21 in which the theme of verse 21 belongs with 22–24. The first four adverbial participles (λαλοῦντες, "speaking"; ᾄδοντες, "singing"; ψάλλοντες, "singing"; εὐχαριστοῦντες, "giving thanks") portray the worship of the Son and the Father as results of being filled with the Spirit, but the fifth (ὑποτασσόμενοι) switches the focus from vertical to horizontal relationships. This change is perceived as so sharp that the final participial clause, ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ ("submitting to one another in the fear of Christ"), is interpreted disjunctively. In other words, although it is grammatically linked, it is not seen as thematically parallel to the other four. Rather, they see it as a kind of heading for the household code to follow. Paul is saying, "[Now concerning] submitting to one another: Wives, …"

Thielman (2010, 372) is representative of many who favor this segmentation when he argues that the thematic ties between verse 21 and the wives-and-husbands code are more compelling considerations than the grammatical links to verse 18. Although he acknowledges that the grammatical structure of the passage supports attaching verse 21 to verses 18–20, he does not see thematic coherence. Attributing the messiness of the transition to the oral nature of the letter, he writes:

> The theme of submission, however, dominates the household code that follows, reappearing not only where the term ὑποτάσσω (*hypotassō*, submit) itself is implied (5:22) or used (5:24), but also where the concepts of fear (5:33; 6:5), honor (6:2), and obedience (6:1, 5) show up. The grammatical attachment of the participle to the previous section eases the transition to the new section, but the substance of the verse [i.e. v. 21], with its focus on submission, means that it is best taken with what follows and should be understood as an introduction to it (cf. Dawes 1998: 18–21).

This intuition that the break should be between vertical relationships (believers to God in vv. 18–20) and horizontal ones (believers to one another vv. 21ff.) is the primary rationale for a break after verse 21. What are the supporting reasons for this segmentation? We summarize three.

Firstly, verse 21 is transitional. It concludes the catalogue of results of being filled with the Spirit and introduces the first section of the household code. The simplest way to present it as a bilateral proposition[4] linking what comes before and after is to make it a separate paragraph. While there is no doubt that verse 21 is transitional, there is no need to present it as a paragraph on its own. It functions as a tail-head connector, belonging to the previous paragraph while also serving as a natural bridge to the next.

Secondly, if we follow Baugh (2015, 444) in seeing verses 18–21 as four periods (one per verse), then the first three end with trinitarian references:

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[3] Verse 21 lacks the surface-level feature that typically signals a bilateral proposition, namely, conjunctions marking its bidirectional role in the discourse.

- Verse 18: … ἐν πνεύματι (“with the Spirit”)
- Verse 19: … τῷ κυρίῳ (“to the Lord”)
- Verse 20: … τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί (“to God and Father”)

The word order of verse 20 is contrived, seemingly to end the period with the allusion to God. Exegetes might then reason that the worship which flows from the infilling with the Spirit climaxes with thanksgiving to the Father, which concludes that focus. This could make “submitting to one another” (v. 21) thematically distinct from the expression of worship mentioned in verses 19–20, as a result of which it represents a new paragraph or section. If they have reasoned that trinitarian worship climaxes with verse 20 and that submission is an unrelated and distinct theme, they feel justified in treating verse 21 as somewhat distinct from verses 18–20. They can do this by seeing the participle ὑποτασσόμενοι either as imperatival (“submit to one another”) or temporal (“when submitting to one another”).

We do not find these arguments convincing. If this is how the author intended the text to be read, he concealed his intent effectively. It would have been easy to signal that the disjunction belongs in verse 21, but using a fifth adverbial participle that parallels the previous four signals conjunction. Verse 21 also ends with a trinitarian reference, ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ (“in the fear of Christ”), which strengthens its ties to verses 18–20 and undermines the argument from trinitarian allusions at the end of each period.

Thirdly, egalitarian scholars strive to connect verses 22–24 more closely to verse 21 to portray Paul as positioning wives’ submission to their husbands within a framework of mutual or reciprocal submission. This has been the most common and vociferous rationale for associating verse 21 more with what follows than with what precedes in recent publications. Scholars such as Belleville (2000), Westfall (2016), and Keener (2014; 2016) view “wives to your husbands” (the short reading in v. 22) as a phrase that qualifies “submitting to one another” (v. 21). Because “wives to your husbands” is not a new sentence, it cannot stand alone, meaning that there is no new and separate command directed only to wives. By inserting the imperative “submit” in verse 22, patriarchal translators create the illusion that there are two different kinds of commands—one in verse 21 directed to all Christians, and another in verse 22 directed exclusively to wives. This allegedly reinforces a gender-based hierarchy in Christian homes.

In conclusion, scholars have diverse reasons for seeing a break in verse 21. Egalitarians want to connect verse 21 as closely as possible to verses 22–24 to strengthen their view that Paul believes in egalitarian marriage characterized by mutual submission. Many non-egalitarian scholars agree with the segmentation, but for different reasons. They argue that the four participles in verses 19–20 portray congregational life and worship, whereas the fifth participle in verse 21 introduces the topic of submission and takes the ethical instruction in a new direction (Lincoln 1990, 354; Thielman 2010, 365). The theme of submission is then developed in the household code, which outlines who submits to whom.

5. The rationale for a break at the start of verse 22

If verse 21 belongs to the section 15–21, as the discourse markers suggest (see below), then we have only two options with respect to verses 22–24.

1. Keep Ephesians 5:15–24 as one section. This honors the surface structure in which verses 18–24 are one grammatical sentence. It is the approach followed by the Lexham English

Bible and the Common English Bible, which reflect the influence of discourse analysts Steven Runge (2010, 266) and Cynthia Westfall (2016, 100) respectively.[4] In this view, "wives to your husbands" becomes an illustration of "submitting to one another."

2. Segment Ephesians 5:22–24 as a new section. This recognizes that a new period in Greek discourse can begin without a new grammatical sentence, and it honors the semantic structure of the discourse.

The second option is the more natural way to read the Greek text of Ephesians 5. Multiple considerations support this segmentation.

Firstly, and most importantly, verse 22 begins with an unmistakable point of departure. The vocative noun phrase *αἱ γυναῖκες* ("wives") operates as a nominal point of departure for a topic-comment articulation. It serves to switch the participant reference from the entire believing community in Ephesus to a specific subset, namely, wives. In doing so, it establishes a new topic about which the author intends to comment. Throughout the remainder of the household code, similar vocatives operate as new points of departure to switch focus from one group of participants to the next, introducing a new set of comments. Levinsohn (2000) rightly gives this criterion pride of place in identifying a thematic discontinuity; it is supported by some supplementary considerations.

Secondly, the imperative verb *ὑποτάσσεσθε* (the present middle imperative, "submit") is present even if it is absent. There is enough external evidence for its presence to have caused the editors of the UBS editions some uncertainty as to whether to include or exclude the imperative. In UBS3 (1975), they rated its exclusion {C} to indicate considerable uncertainty; in UBS4 (1993) and UBS5 (2011) the rating is {B}, suggesting some uncertainty as to whether the verb should be omitted. Metzger (1994, 541) indicates that "[a] majority of the Committee preferred the shorter reading," which implies that a minority believed that the original reading was *αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὑποτάσσεσθε* (or similar).[5] If the imperative is original, segmenting the text in verse 22 becomes crystal clear.

We agree that the shorter reading (without the imperative verb) is more likely original, as favored by the NA and UBS editions. However, even though the verb is absent, it is implicit. Its omission is through ellipsis—the author omitted it because it is understood from the context. Its implied presence is clear from two observations. First, the standard formulation for a section of a household code is (a) vocative noun plus (b) imperative verb. The parallelism implies the ellipsis:

- *αἱ γυναῖκες*, ... [*ὑποτάσσεσθε*] (5:22; "wives, submit"; cf. Col 3:18)
- *οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπᾶτε* (5:25; "husbands, love"; cf. Col 3:19)
- *τὰ τέκνα, ὑπακούετε* (6:1; "children, obey"; cf. Col 3:20)
- *οἱ πατέρες, μὴ παροργίζετε* (6:4; "fathers, do not exasperate"; cf. Col 3:21)
- *οἱ δοῦλοι, ὑπακούετε* (6:5; "slaves, "obey"; cf. Col 3:22)
- *οἱ κύριοι*, ... *ποιεῖτε* (6:9; "masters, treat"; cf. Col 4:1)[6]

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[4] The LEB separates verses 21 and 22 with an em dash, expressing a less pronounced break than a full stop.

[5] The variant readings vacillate between *ὑποτάσσεσθε* (PAM-2P) and *ὑποτασσέσθωσαν* (PAM-3P); they also vary in the positioning of the imperative in the clause.

[6] The exact same pattern occurs in Colossians 3:18–4:1. In 1 Peter 2:13–3:7, we have a variation. A generic command is given to all believers (2:13, *ὑποτάγητε*). When Peter turns to the individual groupings, he uses the formula (a) vocative noun plus (b) imperatival participle. The vocatives mark the shift from one group to another, while the participles derive an imperatival force from the start of the household code in 2:13.

Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of Greek scribes throughout history supplied a present imperative form of ὑποτάσσομαι, but they vacillated between the second- and third-person forms and they were unsure where to place the imperative. They never supplied any other lexeme. They never supplied anything but a present imperative.[7] To native Greek speakers, a present imperative form of ὑποτάσσομαι, even if physically absent, was implicit in the text. Its absence appeared to be an error, which they corrected by supplying it.

We can now summarize the argument in syllogistic logic:

Premise 1: If a finite verb were present in verse 22, it would be clear to divide the text into verses 15–21 and 22–24.
Premise 2: Both ancient Greek scribes and modern experts concede that a present imperative of ὑποτάσσομαι is implicit in verse 22.[8]
Therefore: Since the verb is implicitly present, it is natural to divide the text into verses 15–21 and 22–24.

Why might the author have omitted the imperative ὑποτάσσεσθε in verse 22? The elision of the imperative positions the entire household code that follows as the fruit of being filled with the Spirit.[9] In other words, the groups in subordinate roles (wives, children, and slaves) are empowered by the infilling of the Spirit to embrace the demands of their roles. Similarly, the groups in authority (husbands, fathers, and masters) are enabled by the filling of the Spirit to embrace the nonconformist demands of treating their subordinates as Christ treats them. In subordinating the entire household code to the command to be filled with the Spirit, Paul profiled the counter-cultural nature of the Spirit-filled life. He used three pairs of domestic relationships to show how believers' newfound identities in Christ are to transcend cultural stereotypes, transforming power into servanthood and rights into obligations (Keown 2016).

Thirdly, the supporting criteria for identifying a new paragraph or section favor treating verse 22 as the start of a new section. Baugh (2015, 15–25) pointed out that a new period (the ancient Greek equivalent of a sentence) may not be a new grammatical sentence; therefore, to insist that verses 18–24 should not be divided because they are one sentence is anachronistic, imposing a modern standard upon Greek discourse. The fact that verse 22 begins a new "sentence" is so clear that no less an authority than Metzger (1994, 541) remarks matter-of-factly that variant readings can be explained on the basis of "the main verb being required especially when the words αἱ γυναῖκες stood at the beginning of a scripture lesson."

Which criteria for supporting a new paragraph or section corroborate the intuition that we need a break between verses 21 and 22? First, the words αἱ γυναῖκες ("wives") fit Levinsohn's (2000, 7, 14, 271ff.) definition of a nominal point of departure, his strongest marker of a boundary, whereas there is no potential point of departure in verse 21. Second, both Beekman and Callow (1974, 279) and Kaiser (1981, 72) consider the vocative of address (αἱ γυναῖκες) to be one of the strongest linguistic tools for shifting attention from one group to another. In verses 15–21, Paul is addressing the entire believing community. In verses 22–24, he is addressing only the wives. Third, in a household code the vocatives both unite the discourse as a code and signal internal shifts to new addressees. Fourth, there is an inferred change of verbal mood from adverbial participles in verses 19–21 to implicit imperative ὑποτάσσεσθε in verse 22. In manuscripts that include the verb, this criterion is weighty, but in those that leave it implicit, it carries less import.

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[7] "The chronology of development seems to have been no verb—third-person imperative—second-person imperative. It is not insignificant that early lectionaries began a new day's reading with Eph. 5:22; this most likely caused copyists to add the verb at this juncture" (The NET Bible 2005, nn. 31–32; Metzger 1994, 541). A lectionary reading could not begin with a verbless sentence.

[8] Not all modern scholars would concede this point, but most do, even amongst egalitarians and evangelical feminists (Mowczko 2020).

[9] The inclusion of the verb does not negate this implication, but the verb's omission strengthens it.

Finally, ancient Greek authorities unanimously concur that there is a break after verse 21. Ancient scribes segmented the text more intuitively than modern editors. However, since they were native Greek speakers more familiar with the rhythms of ancient discourse, their feel for the period breaks is likely to be better than ours. The three major uncials that contain Ephesians 5—Sinaiticus (א), Alexandrinus (A), and Vaticanus (B)—all treat verses 22–24 as a separate paragraph. The major lectionaries also saw a major break starting in verse 22.

> If we were to add the later, more standardized "Euthalian Apparatus," Ephesians is divided into two lectionary divisions of Eph 1–3 and 4–6, which sections are then subdivided into ten "chapters" (κεφάλαια, kephalaia) at: 1:3–14; 1:15–2:10; 2:11–22; 3:1–13; 3:14–21; 4:1–16; 4:17–5:2; 5:3–21; 5:22–6:9; 6:10–20. (Baugh 2015, 29)

The ancient scribes, free of the ideological forces shaping the past forty years, never imagined a segmentation of the text other than at verse 22. The major Greek editions of the NT prior to the 1990s agreed with the ancient authorities, but over the past 30 years, major editions such as UBS4, UBS5, NA27, and NA28 have moved the break to the start of verse 21.

6. Conclusion

What can we conclude about the segmentation of Ephesians 5:18–24? Leaving verses 15–24 as one unit is illogical, and the discourse markers provide more support for a break after verse 21 than before it. Verse 21 is transitional in the sense that it wraps up 15–21 while simultaneously serving as the bridge to the household code that starts in verse 22, supplying the verbal idea for verse 22. Nobody disputes that it is transitionary and thematically shared by verses 18–20 and 22–24. However, it performs this task while remaining grammatically and conceptually subordinate to πληροῦσθε in verse 18. The point of departure that starts verse 22, αἱ γυναῖκες ("wives"), is a key discourse marker supporting a division at the start of verse 22. It marks a change of participant reference from the entire believing community to a focal subset, simultaneously marking the beginning of the household code. The change of subject, addressees, [implied] verbal mood, and genre mark verses 22–24 as a new pericope.

How conclusive are these factors? There are no discourse markers that favor a new section starting in verse 21. The rationale for those who make this segmentation is that the switch from God-directed results of being filled with the Spirit to community-direct results ("submitting to one another") is such a jarring topical shift that it overrules linguistic clues, but we consider this distinction between vertical and horizontal evidences of the Spirit's infilling to be an anachronistic modern scruple. Sometimes the motivation for separating verse 21 from 18–20 and attaching it to 22–24 seems to be ideological preference rather than linguistic evidence. The main linguistic alternative to our proposed division is to follow Runge (2010, 266) and Westfall (2016, 100) in leaving verses 15–24 as one unbroken discourse segment, but this makes a mockery of the obvious parallelism of the subsections of the household code, namely, wives-husbands, children-parents, and slaves-masters. The cumulative force of these arguments seems weighty.

Why does it matter? We do not think it makes much difference to how the ensuing household code, especially the directives to wives and husbands, is interpreted. The competing complementarian and egalitarian understandings do not depend on the segmentation, because the household code, and especially the instructions to wives, are subordinate to verses 18–21 regardless. Ironically, the theological implication that is distorted by wrongly separating verse 21 from verses 18–20 is the bidirectional impact of Paul's pneumatology—proper relationships with God and fellow believers result from being filled with the Spirit. Paul framed his argument in that way, but we obscure the seamless integration of the vertical and horizontal dimensions of biblical worship and relationships by misplacing the pericope division.

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Black Panther's *Tour de Force* as a Marvelous Paradigm for the Decolonization of the Kuyperian Tradition

Robert Falconer

Abstract

The ground-breaking Afrofuturist film *Black Panther* from Marvel Studios celebrates African culture. I propose that if the *Marvel Cinematic Universe*, an American media franchise, can decolonize superhero motion pictures, one might hope the same concerning Western theology, including the Kuyperian tradition, despite the prejudiced views on race by its progenitor. The *Black Panther*, I argue, offers a dramatic portrait for decolonizing the Kuyperian tradition, not just for African saints, but for all believers. To begin, I explore the *Black Panther's* backdrop and the film's cultural significance. Next, the decolonization of the Kuyperian tradition is discussed. Considering the *Black Panther* as a paradigm, the paper explores how the Kuyperian tradition might be decolonized and woven together with rich African wisdom contributing towards a colorful and textured theology for the global church.

Keywords
Black Panther, decolonization, Kuyperian tradition, sovereignty, African culture, public theology

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1. Introduction

Africa is a paradox imbued with hope and despair. For this reason, Africa is arguably the most exciting place to do theology—the theologian standing between the presence of God and the anguish of the people—not to mention how Christianity in Africa is rapidly growing across the continent (Katongole 2018). Africans share many of humanity's concerns and struggles, and for this reason, African theological and philosophical reflection, while distinct, has universal significance offering the world innovative contributions. As Oduor, the Kenyan philosopher has said, "*Ubuntu* transcends beyond Africa!" and that, "the world could do with a little Ubuntu." (Oduor 2015).

This paper will argue for a paradigm shift in public theology by transforming the Kuyperian tradition. I argue that Marvel Studio's recent Afrofuturist film, the *Black Panther*, offers a portrayal, at least in part, of how this might be done. The article begins by telling the story of the *Black Panther* and then explores its cultural and theological highlights. The current significance of the Kuyperian tradition is then discussed, focusing on its theological distinctives, translation projects, and its theological input on human flourishing. Next, the paper explores its decolonization[1] and acknowledges Abraham Kuyper's ill views on the African race. Yet, some African theologians have already begun the project of decolonizing Kuyper. I argue that African decolonization of the Kuyperian tradition may offer a significant, and much-needed, theological contribution to the world. The paper then turns back and looks to another feline as the world's king, the Lion of Judah. Last, a dialectic synthesis of the Kuyperian tradition, together with African theology and philosophy is explored, thus proposing a paradigm shift in Kuyperian public theology.

2. Black Panther

2.1. Hero. Legend. King.

Manyika (2018) makes a startling observation, that one would "be hard pressed to come across a Hollywood Blockbuster, set in Africa, portraying Africa in a nuanced, positive light." That is until Marvel Studio's 2018 ground-breaking Afrofuturist film, *Black Panther*[2] (Coogler 2018; Manyika 2018). The following synopsis is adapted from IMDb (2018).

A vibranium meteorite of alien metal collides with Africa, evoking war between five African tribes. A warrior eats the "heart-shaped herb" infected by the vibranium, and becoming the first "Panther" with superhuman power, he unites four of the five tribes, forming the nation, Wakanda. The vibranium is later used to develop highly advanced technology, while at the same time isolating the nation from the nations of the world and posing as a third world country.

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[1] For Fanon, "Decolonization is always a violent event," which offers a substitution that is absolute and seamless, "the substitution of one 'species' of mankind by another," thus changing the current order of the world (Fanon 2004, 1). Indeed, as Fanon's book demonstrates, this is the general take on decolonization. I, however, use "Decolonization" slightly differently where I genuinely wish to hear the voices and heed the contributions from Africa, because I believe them to be valuable. Using Fanon's language, my (Falconer's) decolonization "infuses a new rhythm, specific to a new generation of men, with a new language and a new humanity," (Fanon 2004, 2; cf. Bhabha 1994, 9–18), at least this is my hopeful objective.

[2] Brown (2018) offers a different view in her online article, "Black people beware: don't let Black Panther joy mask Hollywood's racism." While she is right in stating that movies are a powerful tool for shaping cultural imagination and while I sympathize with her perspective, her analysis seems to imply suspicious ideological motives on the side of the movie's creators and artists.

Many years later, Prince N'Jobu working undercover in California believes the isolationist policies of Wakanda are harmful and its technology ought to be shared with Africans around the globe to help them overcome their oppressors. He employs Ulysses Klaue, a black-market arms dealer to penetrate Wakanda and acquire a supply of vibranium. King T'Chaka confronts his brother, N'Jobu after learning of his actions and reluctantly assassinates the prince but abandons his nephew Erik Stevens to avoid Wakandans learning the truth.

Later, T'Chaka dies during a terrorist attack by Helmut Zemo in Vienna. His son, T'Challa returns to Wakanda and reunites with his mother, Ramonda, his sister Shuri (a technological genius), and Okoye (the leader of the all-female armed force the *Dora Milaje*), and he assumes the throne. M'Baku, the leader of the mountain-dwelling Jabari (the fifth tribe of Wakanda), appears during the crowning ceremony to challenge for the crown in ritual combat. T'Challa is victorious and is crowned as the new king.

Klaue and Erik "Killmonger", now an ex-U.S. black ops soldier, steal a Wakandan vibranium axe from a London museum. Back in Wakanda, the tribal elders hear that Klaue is in South Korea and W'Kabi urges his friend T'Challa to bring Klaue to justice. T'Challa, Okoye, and Nakia respond by intercepting him in a casino in Busan where he intends to sell the axe to an unidentified buyer. T'Challa discovers the buyer is CIA agent Everett Ross, and in no time Klaue senses the deal is a setup, and the deal goes sour. Killmonger rescues Klaue, but Ross suffers an injury and is taken to Wakanda where Shuri saves his life.

Later, Killmonger assassinates Klaue, and after the body is taken to Wakanda reveals himself to the tribal elders to be N'jobu's son, and then challenges T'Challa for the crown. T'Challa is defeated in ritual combat and Killmonger takes the throne. He is now in a position to prepare the shipment of Wakandan weapons to oppressed Wakandans around the world. In the meantime, Nakia, Shuri, Ross, and T'Challa's mother seek help from M'baku and his tribe, and they find that the Jabari are caring for T'Challa. After he recovers, he returns to Wakanda and engages with Killmonger again in combat for his throne. A dramatic fight scene ensues between the two sides, and between T'Challa and Killmonger. The Jubari come and assist T'Challa and his armed forces. In the end, he is victorious over Killmonger and offers to have him healed, but he chooses to die from his injuries rather than live his life imprisoned, saying, "just bury me in the ocean with my ancestors who jumped from the ships because they knew that death was better than bondage."

T'Challa is restored to the throne, and M'Baku is granted a seat in the tribal council in recognition of his loyalty and to represent the Jabari tribe. Back in the United States, T'Challa establishes an embassy to be run by Nakia and Shuri, and he reveals to the world Wakanda's true identity.

2.2. Cultural contribution

The Black Panther blends African traditional motifs, Bantu languages, costumes, culture, and aesthetics, with advanced technology. Many African ethnic groups were represented in traditional costume, employing Adinkra symbols, Maasai warrior outfits, Nigerian agbadas, lip plates from the pastoral ethnic groups Mursi and Surma of southwestern Ethiopia, and Ethiopian crosses reminding us that Christianity found a home in Africa before it did in the West (Horne 2018, online). Pan-Africanism also finds expression in modern costume. As T'Challa, Nakia, and Okoye enter the club in Busan, South Korea to attempt to extract Wakanda's enemy, Ulysses Klaue, they sport the colors of the Pan African flag, Nakia in red, Okoye in green, and T'Challa in his black outfit. Pan-Africanism unites the different countries on the continent in cooperation as a method of resisting imperialism and colonialism. Accordingly, in the club fight scene, the antagonist, Klaue wears a blue tie and waistcoat, symbolic of colonization (Willis 2018, online). The movie is a celebration of Africa!

But the story also calls us to reflect on: (1) *Africa's history*. The colonialist theme emerges when Shuri teases Everett K. Ross, a CIA member, "Don't scare me like that, 'colonizer.'" And then the dark memory of slavery in Killmonger's dying words. Further, the patronizing attitude towards Africa expressed in Klaue's response to T'Challa, "you savages did not deserve it (vibranium)." (2) *Current concerns*. *Black Panther* offers its audience a timely discussion of issues like globalization, technology, and the clash of local, national, and global cultures (Mann 2018).

While it is true that technology and electronics have, for the most part, been developed by Westerners, *Black Panther* highlights the African view of reality that is mystical, and that enchanted reality exists in a binary of the material and spiritual. As Mbiti explains, traditional religions saturate all the aspects of life; "no formal distinction exists between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and non-religious, between the spirit and the material areas of life" (Mbiti 1989, 2; Kunhiyop 2008, 66). Africa has the privilege of reminding the world of its lost sense of the mystical, the enchanted, and the transcendent.[3] Then there is also the sense of *Ubuntu*, "an individual is an individual because of the community," and yet African identities are not homogenous (Manyika 2018).

2.3. Theological highlights

To begin, Manyika (2018) has proposed that vibranium may "be paralleled to Jesus who is the gift from the Father. In *Black Panther*, vibranium hails from the heavens and gives wealth to a people," and Jesus comes to Africa bringing abundant life.[4]

We also have a reminiscent glimpse of the incarnation[5] in the scene where T'Challa has the Black Panther's strength and power stripped away moments before ritual combat; further, the roles of T'Challa's strong mother Ramonda, his former lover and war dog, Nakia, his sister Shuri, and the *Dora Milaje*, Wakanda's all-female special armed forces are significant. Women also enjoy privilege with special, unique roles in the gospel accounts. There are also unintended, implicit references to Christ's Passion in (1) M'baku spearing T'Challa in the chest, (2) W'Kabi's betrayal of T'Challa as he turns to support Erik Killmonger, and (3) the final battle between Killmonger and T'Challa—the *Christus Victor* motif. The *Black Panther* is a story of T'Challa becoming king, yet, this too is the gospel narrative, Christ becoming King![6]

Further, Manyika picks up on both the diversity of Africa as presented in the film and the diversity of the early church (Acts 6:1–7, 10 and Gal 2:11 ff.). He is right, "Diversity is at the heart of the Gospel." We see it where the slain Lamb shed his blood ransoming "people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" and "made them a kingdom of priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth" (Rev 5:9–10; ESV). Both Mann (2018) and Manyika (2018) highlight the issue of identity. While the Wakandans have their own African identity, Christians, whether African or otherwise, enjoy "a more deeply ingrained identity as citizens of God's kingdom." In one of the last scenes, T'Challa proclaimed to the United Nations, "More connects us than separates us." This too is true for Christians to spread throughout the world today. We are a kingdom of priests made up of diverse bloodlines, cultures, and backgrounds (Mann 2018; Manyika 2018).

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[3] Cf. Taylor 2007.

[4] See John 10:10.

[5] See Phil 2:1-11.

[6] Cf. Wright's, Simply Jesus: Who He Was, What He Did, Why it Matters (2011), How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels (2016), and McKnight's, The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited (2016). Further, this is precisely the focus of Abraham Kuyper's (2016; 2017) multi-volume, Pro Rege: Living Under Christ's Kingship.

3. Contemporary Significance of the Kuyperian Tradition

3.1. Kuyperian distinctives

Perhaps the most influential theologian shaping current Reformed social theology is the Dutch statesman, Abraham Kuyper, a Neo-Calvinist[7] who promoted a vision of Christ transforming culture (Jooste 2013, 23). In the second half of the nineteenth century, a revival was experienced among the Dutch Reformed churches in the Netherlands. While this revival included commitments to Christ, it also included an energetic social movement resolved on proclaiming and demonstrating Jesus's kingship over all of life. Many believed this to be an authentic Calvinist renewal, thus describing the movement as Kuyperian or Neo-Calvinism. It found its origins in the Augustinian tradition and was then shaped by Abraham Kuyper's theology and leadership (Strauss 1996, 10).

Strauss explains, while piety, sound theology, and the activities of the church are important to the Kuyperian, they do not limit Christianity to such. Rather, Christianity offers us a worldview—a way of understanding all reality that affects every aspect of our lives (Strauss 1996, 10).[8]

Neo-Calvinism offers a different focus from traditional Calvinism. It puts the gospel focus on Christ's Lordship over all things, as per the storyline of Scripture; creation, fall, redemption, and cosmic renewal. Yet, it does not set aside aspects of the gospel such as sin and salvation, and piety. The emphases are on the following, (1) the created order or cultural mandate, (2) Christian worldview, (3) common grace, (4) antithesis, and (5) sphere sovereignty.[9] God's sovereignty is seen not only in salvation, but is rather over all that is created (Robinson n.d., online). The Kuyperian tradition affirms all work (within reason) as callings from God in all areas of life, explains Carter. Kuyperians, therefore, aim toward cultural renewal (Carter 2012; Kuyper 2015, 334–336).

3.2. Translation of primary sources

Abraham Kuyper and the early Kuyperians wrote in Dutch. G. C. Berkouwer's, *Studies in Dogmatics*, were translated into English only a few years after their Dutch publication. Herman Bavinck's, *Reformed Dogmatics*, was only recently translated.[10] His Reformed Ethics is currently being translated. Abraham Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism* (1931) were originally published in 1898. This was a series of lectures delivered by Kuyper in English at the Princeton Theological Seminary. Other than this, little else has been available in English translation, until recent years. Lexham Press has embarked on the English translation and publication of a major series of Abraham Kuyper's eight key works in public theology in 12 volumes,[11] never before available in English (Faithlife 2019; Bartholomew 2017, x).[12] Richard Mouw proclaimed that "'this is a

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[7] Neo-Calvinist is used interchangeably with Kuyperian.

[8] Kuyper 1931; Bavinck 2008; Bartholomew 2017.

[9] See Kuyper (1931, 79).

[10] The first of the four volumes having been translated in 2003.

[11] Acton Institute houses the Kuyper translation project (Bartholomew 2017, x).

[12] In addition, a growing number of Dutch and English sources are available online (Bartholomew 2017, 324; Neo-Calvinism Research Institute 2019, online; Kuyper n.d., online).

Kuyperian moment' in which we are living." (Bartholomew 2017, x). Bartholomew proposes "that in our fragile time the Kuyperian tradition holds resources for finding constructive ways forward that can defuse some of the major threats we face, renew the life of the church, and promote human flourishing." (Bartholomew 2017, x).

3.3. Human flourishing

The Kuyperian tradition honors Christ as the sovereign king over "every square inch," including the sphere of common grace (Klapwijk 1991, 6; Kuyper 1931, 79; 2015, 440–441). Ballor and Charles (2018) explain, "common grace is a multifaceted concept" reflecting "the diversity and scope of all of God's creation." Such grace is universal because it applies to the entire world and all humankind. Philosophy and science, art and culture, and human progress and ingenuity are possible despite sin for the benefit of all peoples on every continent (Klapwijk 1991, 4).

Abraham Kuyper developed the "spheres of sovereignty" concept where "God's common grace preserves, protects, and promotes social life." Such a theology of God's sustaining activity in the world places value on the created order, how God preserves the social order of the state, church, family, and work (Ballor and Charles 2018). The Kuyperian vision offers a framework from which to engage our current social predicament. Common grace allows us to discern and appreciate truth, goodness, and beauty in our fallen and chaotic world. Both realities are true (Ballor and Charles 2018; Kuyper 1931, 73).

Believing Jesus Christ lived, died, and was resurrected to redeem both the sinner and the cosmos is to recognize Christ's Lordship as supreme over all of life's spheres. Therefore, concerning creation's goodness, the sustaining power of common grace, and Christ's redemption for humankind and the cosmos, Christians are called to engage in every human sphere (Clark 2018, 239).[13]

Strauss (1996, 15) explains how God sets up standards for all created things, offering rich variety. Although humankind has the duty of "culturally opening the possibilities of creation," a struggle exists "between love for God in submission to his law" and revolt "against God in disobedience of his law." Yet, the cosmos will undergo redemption at the end of the age through Christ, and Christians ought to participate now in the project of renewing life towards its created purpose. The gospel is the healing power of creation towards regeneration (1996, 11).

The Kuyperian tradition has sought to demonstrate the eschatological kingdom of Jesus Christ in every part of the social order and its culture. Regarding church and state, they have usually affirmed religious freedom, and yet, on the other hand, encouraged penetrating Christian influence in the state. The issue is not that the governments embrace Christianity and people within a society become Christian, but rather the laws, customs, moral norms, and ideals are influenced by Christian principles (Jooste 2013, 30; Kuyper 2017, 399–400). A Christian public theology, grounded in an appropriate creational theology and an incarnational ontology, argues Smith (2017a, 13), will appreciate the complexities and layers of a flourishing society, affirming "a network of institutions and communities beyond the state that are integral to its flourishing."

The South African missiologist David Bosch has said that the function of the church in mission is to point towards and embody the reign of God and his kingdom, and then also to address the particular challenges of our place and time (cited in Bartholomew 2017, 8). As Bartholomew

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[13] N.T. Wright has said much about culture and Christianity which enjoys significant commonality with the Reformed neo-Calvinist vision of the redemption of culture. For Wright (2008), it is this notion of Christian cultural work which anticipates and provides the building blocks for the new creation (see Jooste 2013, 51).

(2017, 6) puts it, we should ask "How, then, do we seek the welfare of the city at such a time?" Kuyper demonstrated how in all spheres of life the Christian faith offers a better way for humankind in every area of our lives and promoted a genuine pluralism for societies in which the state is responsible for creating and facilitating freedom and the flourishing of all its people (Bartholomew 2017, xi). Not surprisingly then, Jooste (2013, 30) reminds us, "the Kuyperian tradition has historically encouraged Christians to evaluate and transform society and culture from an ultimate (kingdom of Christ) perspective." The above demonstrates that God is not just interested in saving souls from the world, "but desires to see the flourishing of the city" (Smith 2017a, 46).[14]

4. The Decolonization of the Kuyperian Tradition

4.1. The ugly elephant

There is an elephant in the room and it is ugly! Abraham Kuyper's views on racial purity were disgraceful. Kuyper's work shares some sentiment with Ulysses Klaue's reference to Wakandans (Africans) being "savages." Kuyper was a man of his times, concerning his nineteenth century European cultural biases of human and social development (Naude 2009; Kuyper 2019, 563–566), but such allusions are inexcusable. Some Apartheid leaders appropriated Kuyper but misused him. The misuse arose in Kuyper's *Stone Lectures* where he states that the white race is the apex of human progress.[15] Wolterstorff (2018) confesses that Kuyper had nothing good to say about Africans[16] (see Kuyper 2019, 611–613).

Wolterstorff's interviewer, James Bratt, proclaims how in the trickiness of God, Kuyper sometimes had God in a box, but in divine providence, sub-Saharan Africa has become the center of world Christianity. There are gifts there that incarnate the gospel per native culture or primal religion. There is an uptake capacity in Sub-Saharan cultures that give a unique and strong expression of the gospel. Bratt wonders if Africa might forgive and appreciate Kuyper as an unexpected gift to Africa (Wolterstorff 2018, online).

Kuyper had some unsavory views on race, and yet, the Kuyperian tradition has much to offer Africa. Like Marvel's *Black Panther*, Africa also has a wealth to offer the world. Bartholomew (2017, 10) concurs, arguing that Kuyper's thought and the theology that flowed from him offer rich resources which may assist African Christians to fulfill their God-given calling to be the salt of the earth and the light in our world today.[17]

4.2. The genesis of decolonization

African scholars were invited to present papers on Kuyperianism and Africa at the 2018 annual Kuyper Conference at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, USA, with Wolterstorff participating in a dialogue on Neo-Calvinism and South Africa. Perhaps the decolonization of the Kuyperian tradition has already begun! The discussion which follows is informed by two of those African scholars.

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[14] See Bavinck (2013, 120).

[15] This is a nuanced and important topic and more ought to be said here, but for the sake of focus and space I refer the reader to de Gruchy (1986, 1991) and Naude (2009).

[16] For an example of Kuyper's racial views, see Kuyper's Stone Lectures on Calvinism, (1931, 32, 84, 196). In response, see Strauss (1996), and Jooste (2013, esp. p. 245).

[17] See Matt 5:13–16.

Africa is a paradox, a continent with despair and hope, says Katongole.[18] Yet, the task of the theologian is to bring the two together. The theologian stands in the paradox and discovers God in the cries of anguish. Katongole (2018) proclaims that all African theology is a theology of hope, yet it is also public theology. Despite the paradox, the gospel can impact culture when incarnated into African society, thus transforming lives (Bourdanné 2018).

Not dissimilar to Ulysses Klaue stealing Wakanda's vibranium, Bourdanné (2018) tells us that "Africa is full of natural resources but foreign companies are using them to entertain some of the dictators to maintain them in power, we Africans see that something is not right!" Colonialization was an unfortunate complete takeover, crushing African power because of the superior technology of its colonizers. This forced a new reality upon Africa affecting every aspect of life. Many Africans, according to Bourdanné, were manipulated and forced to forsake their cultures, customs, and beliefs. Africa still finds itself in a deep identity transition. Nevertheless, Africa does not only enjoy a long human history, longer than the West, but it also has a significant connection to God's great narrative. Abraham and Joseph were in Africa.[19] Moses lived in Africa, as did the Hebrews for many years,[20] and Jesus was in exile in Africa.[21] God, no doubt, continues to work his redemptive power in salvation, justice, and reconciliation in the continent (Bourdanné 2018).

Katongole (2018) proposes two directions for a prophetic and public theology from Africa: (1) *Critical Direction*. This includes a political and economic critique of modern Africa, an ecological critique, a critique of the church and its religious leaders who do not address evil—including the prosperity gospel—and some Pentecostal and charismatic churches which address suffering inadequately and inappropriately. It also addresses issues such as the degradation of urban and rural Africa. (2) *Constructive Direction*. In contrast to critique, this direction seeks to build and plant, offering healing and visions of a new future, and points towards a new order of human and economic flourishing, and so on. Katongole (2018) suggests that the methodology takes a narrative approach, describing what the promise of new covenant hope looks like in an African context. Theologians work in the "terrible middle," the space between God and the people, being grounded in the Christ of everyday life in Africa, offering theological insight of God amid the people's cries and anxiety. Such a theology must be accessible to the theologian and minister as well as speak to the heart and mind of the layperson. This theology is too urgent to be abstract! For this reason, narrative is very important in developing public theology in Africa (Katongole 2018). And as we have seen in the *Black Panther*, stories are powerful.

I propose that decolonization of the Kuyperian tradition is not only for Africa's own sake, but that in its unique situation and paradoxes Africa may serve the world. It is not simply an African public theology for Africa—not at all—it is a public theology *from* Africa.

4.3. Africa! Feed the world.

Africa has had its paradoxes and challenges,[22] but it has not been cursed by God (Bourdanné 2018). The blessings of God upon Africa are evident in how "the global centers of Christianity have shifted so that the secular West is no longer the center of world Christianity. While we are witnessing a revival of Christianity around the world (including parts of the West), the new centers of Christianity are located in Asia, Latin America, and Africa," says Bartholomew (2017, 2). In the *Black Panther*, Wakanda has the mystical metal, vibranium, and advanced knowledge and wisdom. To honor his cousin at the end of the movie, T'Challa develops an outreach center in the same building where his uncle once lived in America, to be run by Nakia and Shuri. T'Challa then stands before the United Nations and opens up Wakanda, to end its secret isolation from the rest of the world. He rises and proclaims,

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[18] Bourdanné (2018) raises some important questions about this paradox, e.g., Christians in Rwanda and the genocide at a time when Christianity is growing in Africa. In addition, there are still many political, economic, and social concerns.

[19] See Gen 12:10–20; 37:25–28; 46:1–7.

[20] See Exod 1:1–15.

[21] See Ps 68:31; Matt 2:13–23; 27:32.

[22] Katongole (2011, 1) reminds us that while Christianity continues to grow and thrive in Africa, the realities of violence, civil war, and poverty also proliferate.

> My name is King T'Challa, son of King T'Chaka. I am the sovereign ruler of the nation of Wakanda. And for the first time in our history, we will be sharing our knowledge and resources with the outside world. Wakanda will no longer watch from the shadows. We cannot. We must not. We will work to be an example of how we as brothers and sisters on this earth should treat each other. Now, more than ever the illusions of division threaten our very existence. We all know the truth. More connects us than separates us. But in times of crisis the wise build bridges while the foolish build barriers. We must find a way to look after one another as if we were one single tribe. (Marvel 2018)

A member of the UN speaks into the microphone in response and asks, "With all due respect, King T'Challa, what can a nation of farmers have to offer the rest of the world?" Everett K. Ross, a friend to the Wakandans, smiles at this because he knows the value that Wakanda has to offer (Marvel 2018). This is Africa's story.

Bourdanné (2018) is right, "Questions about Africa challenge our theology and our biblical interpretations of Scripture, but these questions are not unique to Africa." Indeed, the global church is invited to engage and participate in public theology from Africa which no doubt will have implications for the entire world. Like the fictional African country Wakanda, Africa has resources, wisdom, and knowledge to offer. Might Africa feed the world and heal those who have wounded it.

5. Transforming the Kuyperian Tradition: A Paradigm Shift in Public Theology

5.1. The lion is our king

Christ Jesus comes into this world under the golden symbol of a different cat, the Lion of Judah. While the Black Panther was the sovereign over the fictional country Wakanda, the cosmic reign of Christ is all-encompassing.[23] The Canadian-American philosopher, James K. A. Smith (2017b) tells us of his recent publication, *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology*, where he articulates that,

> Our public life and our public theology have to be nourished by the thickness of the gospel itself, by the scandalous truth that the Creator-King became human, that he died, that he rose again, that he ascended and that he is coming again, that kind of specificity of the Gospel has something to say to our political life, to our political institutions, to our public life.

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23 Cf. Kuyper 2016, 2017.

24 See, Rev 21:23.

Smith believes, and I do too, that the Kuyperian tradition offers us extraordinary resources for thinking about public life with its vigorous theology of creation and culture undergirding our public life. Further, it comes with a legacy of reflecting upon pluralism, how the created realm "generates different spheres and different responsibilities and different institutions." According to Smith (2017b), Kuyper argues that the church and the formation in the life of believers is where the imagination finds cultivation for faithful public witnesses to redeem culture.

Smith rightly argues that the gospel centers around a Lamb on a throne who has taken for himself a people "from every tribe and tongue and people and nation … to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will reign upon the earth." (Rev 5:9–10; NASB). Evidently, "we are not liberated from politics; we are liberated by a King who makes us citizens of a polis whose lamp is the Lamb."[24] (Newbigin 1995, 16; Smith 2017a, 57). Yet, oddly, he fails to highlight the paradox, the Lamb being "the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David." (Rev 5:5; NASB).

The material universe is inclusive of God's salvific work, and this ought to challenge the way we think about salvation, redemption, and restoration. Jesus was not merely interested in "soul rescue"—his salvation project includes cosmic redemption, demonstrated in Jesus's ministry, announcing a kingdom that promotes justice "for the poor, for the oppressed, for the vulnerable, for all." Jesus does not just redeem souls, but he also puts the world right. If justice and human flourishing are God's concern, they should be our concern too (Smith 2017a, 83–84).

Those already in the kingdom know Jesus already reigns, albeit often hidden from the present world. We participate in setting forth this redeeming work until its consummation, giving witness to the hidden reign of Christ (Newbigin 1989, 111). Newbigin (1989, 222) explains how the church must "be faithful to the message which concerns the kingdom of God, his rule over all things and all peoples; the Church has to claim the high ground of public truth." Indeed, "Jesus is Lord" is the very confession suggesting that the kingship of Christ encompasses our entire public life and the whole created world (Newbigin 1995, 16). The Christian calling is then to "to act out in the whole life of the whole world the confession that Jesus is Lord of all." (1995, 17).

5.2. Dialectic synthesis

The *Black Panther* is an African narrative written for global audiences employing the cinematic arts and technology of the West. Likewise, a paradigm shift in public theology from Africa, considering this Kuyperian enterprise, entails a delicate dialectic synthesis of the Kuyperian tradition with additional Western contributions, together with African theologians and philosophers that inform such a public theology. The Kuyperian tradition offers us the theological framework while African contributions provide the thematic content. Considering African theology, Kunhiyop (2008, xiii) argues that, for some people,

> [t]he word African signals a rejection of anything that has links to the West, colonialism and economic imperialism, and thus an African Christian theology is perceived as reactionary and hostile to any theology developed in the West.
>
> Yet, he seeks "to articulate a theology that originates from an authentic search for the meaning of Scripture to apply it to African life today." (Kunhiyop 2008, xiii)

I agree with him; to do African Christian theology, one ought to take the African situation seriously and yet seek to be faithful to the teachings of Scripture (see Kunhiyop 2008, xiv). All theology is, however, done in community, and African Christian theology is no different, being a part of a greater context in the history of Christianity (2008, xiv–xv). African Christian theology must, therefore, interact with "truths that apply to all peoples, tribes and nations" (2008, xv). Likewise, I argue, the theology of "all peoples, tribes and nations" ought to engage with the theology of African Christianity. This theological project then does not seek to scratch the proverbial African "itch." Instead, it seeks to offer and promote African theological wisdom to the world alongside the West.

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[24] See, Rev 21:23.

Furthermore, a public theology from Africa will also need to dialogue with African Philosophy. Sadly, it was believed that no philosophy or reasoning can be found in Africa, and African culture consisted merely of mystical rites, initiations, and rituals. While the latter is true to some degree, Africa also enjoyed philosophical thought, dialogue, and reasoning. These have been passed down orally and look considerably different from Western reasoning (Oduor 2015).

Among other things, an African philosophy provides a comprehensible set of beliefs about the nature of the world in which we live, and our place in it.[25] There are two trends and orientations in African philosophy: (1) *Religious beliefs in sub-Saharan Africa.* This deals with the concept of God, the concept of time, and human destiny and immortality. The cultural raw material on African tradition and cultural practices form the focus for such philosophical dialogue.[26] (2) *Modern African Philosophy*. This is generally broken down into the following categories: (i) Ethnophilosophy, (ii) Philosophical Sagacity, (iii) Nationalistic–Ideological Philosophy, (iv) Professional Philosophy, (v) Literary and Artistic Philosophy, and (vi) Hermeneutic Philosophy. Modern African Philosophy looks beyond tradition to science, technology, and reasoning (Oduor 2015; New World Encyclopedia 2016).

While African philosophical thought is for the most part distinct, much of it has universal significance, because humanity's concerns and struggles are shared by Africans. I believe their unique context may offer the world unique opportunities. Oduor (2015), a Kenyan philosopher says, "*Ubuntu* (I Am Because We Are) transcends beyond Africa!" He explains that in ubuntu, "a person is a person through other persons," and proclaims, "The world could do with a little Ubuntu." Therefore, African political consciousness may offer constructive input towards humankind's progress. And not dissimilar to Kuyper's Sphere Sovereignty, such development realizes the project of the African renaissance in all areas of cultural, political, and social life (Correct Connect Africa 2018). The dialectic synthesis lies in marrying the (Western) Kuyperian tradition with African theology and philosophy, thus transforming the Kuyperian tradition towards a paradigm shift in public theology.

The article presented the possibility of decolonizing the Kuyperian tradition, offering a shift in public theology.

6. Conclusion

I began demonstrating how the *Black Panther* might offer such prospects by exploring its cultural and theological highlights. The contemporary significance was then examined, looking at the theological distinctives of Kuyperian theology, its translation projects, and its theological impact on human flourishing. The paper explored the decolonization of the Kuyperian theology while acknowledging the “ugly elephant” in the room, and yet demonstrating how some African theologians have begun decolonizing the Kuyperian tradition. I proposed an African decolonization of Kuyperianism which may offer a significant contribution to the world. Last, I offered some thoughts on how a paradigm shift might be made by transforming the Kuyperian tradition.

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[25] The following are notable African philosophers: Paulin J. Hountondji, Achille Mbembe, V. Y. Mudimbe, Kwame Gyekye, Kwasi Wiredu, John Mbiti, Henry Odera Oruka, Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, Wole Soyinka.

[26] See chapter 4 of my doctoral thesis (Falconer 2013).

There is no doubt that Africa is a place with much hope, and yet it suffers much despair and anxiety at the same time. Africa, therefore, relates to much of the world’s struggles. Coupled with the growth of Christianity in Africa and distinct African theology and philosophy, along with other theologies, a decolonization of the Kuyperian tradition may offer the world fresh and innovative theology.

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Walking Alongside: Personal Reflections on Supervising Online Graduate Students

Bill Domeris

Abstract

Supervising graduate (postgraduate) students online brings several unique challenges, along with the normal routine of graduate supervision. In this article, I draw upon my own experiences at residential universities and for the past decade and a half, as an online supervisor. I begin with my time at the University of Durham, where I sat at the feet of Professor Kingsley Barrett, and where I witnessed several valuable practices related to writing and supervising theses. In this article, I avoid, where possible, the standard aspects of thesis writing, available in books for new supervisors. Instead, I deal here with topics like affirmation, encouragement, the faith of the student, the path of scholarship, and guiding students in their quest for that illusive original topic. In addition, I offer some simple guidelines to questions students often ask, such as "how many references per page?" and "how long should a quotation be?" My hope is that the ideas found here may promote good supervision and the highest standards of scholarship.

Keywords
doctoral supervision, postgraduate research, online education

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1. Introduction

While masters and doctoral students (postgraduate students)[1] often walk a lonely path, that of the online student can be even more challenging. In this article, I look at the role of the supervisor (promoter) who is tasked with guiding, directing, and encouraging the student and all of this by means of emails and occasional online conversations. With often minimal interaction, and the difficulties of speaking across cultures and even continents, I ask how does one take a student from the initial glimmerings of an idea into a full-blown doctoral or master's thesis, that makes a genuine contribution to academic knowledge? Reflecting on my own journey as a doctoral student with one of the greatest New Testament scholars, C Kingsley Barrett, through my supervision of a number of graduate students over more than thirty years, I have learnt much from both my successes and failures. My intention here is not to duplicate books and studies for training supervisors, or the guides to research (like Smith 2008), but rather to deal with issues which are peculiar to working in the context of faith, as well as the more general issues specific to online studies. In sharing these ideas, my hope is that new supervisors will be able to discover such ideas as are compatible with their existing methodologies to the success of their students and in the promotion of the highest standards of scholarship.

2. Some Reflections

In the late seventies and early eighties, I sat at the feet of the late Kingsley Barrett, New Testament Professor at the University of Durham, in the north-east of England (see Hooker and Wilson, 1982). Since I did my master's degree at the Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg, Durham was a challenge—especially in the winter; but the joy of a theological library that surpassed my wildest expectations, was due compensation. Barrett followed a simple practice of listening and encouraging. He was the quintessence of patience as I grappled with the all-important task of finding an original topic. It took almost a year to realize that my original aim of studying the Christology of the Fourth Gospel, might be satisfied by a focused study of John 6:69 —The Holy One of God (Domeris 1983).

Barrett encouraged me to write as much as possible. He was not worried if it was only tangential to the topic, so long as I was writing it down for him to read. Little of what I wrote in that first year found its way into my thesis, but I passed an important test— I was able to write down my thoughts for Barrett to consider. Because of his encouragement, and his gentle guidance, I was empowered in the four years of my study to complete my thesis.

Barrett would go through my work, making abundant pencil comments in the margins, in his careful and precise handwriting, correcting grammar and curbing my more ridiculous ideas. Sitting in his office, I would receive his multiple corrections and suggestions, but never failed to leave feeling affirmed and encouraged. Such, I believe, is the basis of good supervision and a practice to be emulated. Even more so, this is true with online students. We all need affirmation, but it needs to be anchored in reality. Too much affirmation may lead to unreal expectations and at some point, in the process, to a shattering of dreams.

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[1] One may be more familiar with the American term "graduate student" to render the British and South African term "postgraduate." Both terms denote students working at the level of master's and doctoral levels.

3. Finding the Path of Scholarship

As supervisors, one seldom discusses the path of scholarship, perhaps assuming that students will naturally discover what it means to be a scholar, by some form of osmosis. In a residential university, one might encounter the quintessential scholar with piles of books in their crowded offices, and that slightly absent-minded look; such scholars have devoted their lives to academic study and so serve as an example to dewy-eyed students fresh from their first degrees. For online supervisors, whose students are scattered across the world, it is vital to impress on students what it means to be an academic of substance and to encourage them in that direction.

In residential universities, in company with senior students, one might discourse at length and far into the night, but on one's own, as the way of online study lies, there may not be fellow students or academics to meet. A colleague sums up the situation as follows,

> During my master's and doctoral degrees, I had had no moral support whatsoever from my family and church, probably because they could not relate to my situation. It was a very lonely five years. All I had was email correspondence with my supervisors once in a while. (pers. comm.)[2]

This comment is a critical reminder of the supportive role of the online supervisor.

The first task of a supervisor is to ensure the student has a solid grasp of what is in front of him or her. One cannot hit the target, unless one can see it. Until a student has paged through a thesis, they may have little understanding of what is involved, especially the length, the number of references, the books in the bibliography, and the stylistic elements needed. Nowadays, most theses completed at international universities are available online, supplying a wealth of information, especially bibliographical sources to be mined.

Prior to arriving in Durham, Barrett's only remark to me was, "I presume that you are familiar with the New Testament in Greek." As I matured as an academic, I blessed the fact that I had labored diligently over my Greek and Hebrew. I made use of essential tools like Greek and Hebrew lexicons, Theological dictionaries, and Greek-text commentaries, and these not just in English. German and French dictionaries soon became my constant companions. Today, there are multiple electronic platforms[3] which offer these tools online, and the supervisor should advise the acquisition of such, early in the shared journey. Without these hard-won keys, the doors into the international world of scholarship for me would have remained firmly closed.[4]

For my first year in Durham, I spent my time filling up the blanks in my undergraduate studies, reading not just about the Gospel of John, but also essential background, like the Mishna, parts of the Talmud, Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Philo, Josephus, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Barrett had, in fact, published a useful book on documents related to New Testament background (Barrett, 1987), which proved to be a useful starting point in my journey of discovery. Over the decades, I have come to appreciate the enduring quality of Barrett's published works, a tribute to his scholarship and a model for his students.

As a residential full-time student, I could afford the luxury of extended reading and reflection. Barrett insisted on going back to the original sources, and this paid dividends when I discovered that the English translation of Bultmann's renowned commentary on John, had mistranslated a sentence from the original German. A reading knowledge of French, German, and Dutch is possible—with a dictionary and lots of perseverance—and is preferable to the use of an online translator. Where possible consult the original version.

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[2] This article was originally entitled "The loneliness of the long-distance student."

[3] Such as Logos, Bible Works, and Greek or Hebrew fonts.

[4] I applaud the fact that tertiary institutions are once more insisting on the study of biblical languages for graduate study for biblical studies and related disciplines.

Today, most students arrive at an understanding of the formative thinkers of their discipline by means of secondary sources rather than the original sources. In the age of online learning, it is possible to present oneself as an expert on a subject and yet having never read anything other than popular summaries in secondary sources. Imagine posing as an expert on the work of N K Gottwald (1979) having only read the critical comments in the work of other scholars?

4. That Illusive Original Topic

The key to a good thesis is to find an original topic. However, one needs to ensure that no one else has been there first. I can vividly remember the look on some fellow student's face when they suddenly discovered an article, or worse still a book, on their chosen topic. For some of my fellow students that marked the end of their years in Durham. Today, a few minutes on the internet might have answered the question, or better still invoking the skills of a trained research librarian to do an extended search. The alternative of having to begin the thesis from page one, more than justifies such effort in the initial stages.

While information technology has far outpaced that of the 1980s, one thing has not changed, namely, the need to find both a topic and a title. In reference to the doctoral degree, this means a topic which is original, or in the case of a master's degree, one that makes a clear contribution to knowledge. This point cannot be over-emphasized. Indeed, the standards of tertiary education departments may be judged by the quality of their doctoral theses against the criterion of making an original contribution to their academic field. Without this essential component, a thesis may not be considered as meriting the doctoral degree, especially a PhD.

As more and more theses, books, and articles are written, it becomes increasingly more difficult to find that original and interesting topic. The supervisor needs to promote original thinking, but it should be the student's own original thinking that determines the final product. However, one might point the student towards an area or a methodology which might promise an original outcome. I sometimes offer the student a list of possible directions for their chosen topic, for them to choose from, using my own knowledge of the subject area.

Once the supervisor has been appointed, and the proposal has been approved, he or she has a critical role to play, namely, helping the student to refine their thinking. Too often students confuse their thesis topic with their life's work (*magnum opus*). The thesis is not one's ultimate life-project. It is a long essay which one needs to write to get a degree. That is the primary goal, and the supervisor should remind the student of that fact. From the first draft to the final submitted proposal, one needs to guide the student to focus, focus, and focus again. Early on, one needs to ask the question, modified according to the level of PhD or MTh, and to keep on asking until there is a satisfactory answer, namely, "What will you add to the existing knowledge of your subject? What will you bring to the table?" This brings us to a vital skill needed by a successful student, namely, the ability to argue convincingly and logically for a single solution to the research problem, from page one of the thesis.

5. Encouraging Critical Engagement

A piece of advice given by Barrett was contained in the simple statement, “At the end of the day, we have the biblical text and we need to interpret it as it stands.” Barrett would have meant this, in terms of its original language and from the best critical editions of the Greek text. Conjectural readings of the text should always take second place to what the text actually says. Failure to take seriously the text, in its literary and historical contexts, is not excusable as far as solid biblical scholarship is concerned. The same would be true of any of the theological disciplines, whether Systematic theology, Pastoral theology, Church history, or related fields. In all these fields, there are primary readings which need to be considered and properly handled, before launching out into the realm of secondary sources.

Two common problems are often found in graduate theses, namely, the failure to be critical of one’s secondary sources and the reluctance to mention those sources with which one may disagree. One needs, firstly, to be firmly in control of one’s sources, which means using them critically, to argue coherently for one’s conclusion and not to be caught up in the maelstrom of their different and disparate views. In some theses, I have found a plethora of citations and references, listed one after the other, but not organized into a coherent argument. Secondly, there is the simplistic argument, in which only sources which agree with one’s conclusions, or one’s theology, are cited. To some extent, we are all guilty of the latter, but what sets good scholarship apart is the courage to engage with such divergent voices. Some theses dismiss contrary voices in a cursory way and simply label them liberal or atheistic. In a gentle and yet academic way, we need to help our students to engage with their sources, seeking out the weaknesses and strengths, and demonstrating why one argument may be either logical or illogical, convincing or not. This is one of the greatest gifts we can offer our students—the sharpening of scholarly acumen.

As a student, in later life, in a department of Archaeology, I came across the work of a philosopher of science by the name of Wylie (2002), who introduced me to the notions of chains of logic and tightness of fit. In essence, what he describes is the process of writing an academic study. Inevitably, there will be different answers to the questions posed by the thesis, with each answer making use of similar evidence. Wylie poses two questions, namely, the question of using evidence (tightness of fit) and secondly, of the actual process of argument (chains of logic). The article helped to crystallize my thinking regarding formulating a solid argument and has served as a valuable tool for helping my own students.[5] Let me elaborate by beginning with the use of evidence. We may ask, “how am I going to make the choice between the different solutions to the problem posed?” The answer Wylie gives is the one which fits best. Like a solver of a jigsaw puzzle, there will be different pieces which might fit, but only one will fit tightly. So, in the construction of an argument, the writer should show both why this specific answer fits the question and why other answers do not. The second aspect of Wylie’s work relates to chains of argument. A good thesis is one where each part of the thesis builds on the previous part and leads logically to the next step, paragraph by paragraph, like bricks in a wall. Moreover, the path needs proper signposting. One important detail, to which external examiners will often refer, is to provide a proper introduction to each chapter, signifying the way forward, and a proper conclusion, summarizing the main points briefly and succinctly and pointing forward to the next step.

Barrett made two points to me as we journeyed together. He began by saying, “You know a great deal about your topic, but along the way, you need to think about your readers. You need to make it easy for them to follow your argument." Then he quoted from the old actor's adage, with an appropriate accent, "Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them."

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[5] See my further discussion in Domeris (2013).

6. Sensitivity to Faith

In the realm of Theology (including Biblical studies, Pastoral and Systematic theology, and other subdisciplines),[6] it is inevitable that the faith of the student plays a role. Barrett, as he once explained to me, was unwilling to push students to be overly critical, especially where he believed it might impact negatively on their personal faith. This meant that he censored or moderated some of his criticisms and comments, even if he realized that the external examiners might not feel the same way. This level of sensitivity about the spirituality of the individual student was a mark of the man and his own faith. At the same time, Barrett urged his students to be in dialogue with those scholars who thought differently from them, which meant not just listing their works in passing or adding their writings to the bibliography. There is a critical balance of open engagement and creating safeguards for one's own faith. As supervisors our hope is that our students, across the subdisciplines, like Paul's young man Timothy, will become proficient in their exposition of Scripture and the teaching of sound doctrine (2 Tim 2:15).

7. Using Quotations and Citations

All theses stand or fall in their use of primary and secondary sources, and external examiners are asked to consider the way in which the thesis has used academic sources and demonstrated knowledge and familiarity with the available sources. As an external examiner, I spend a good deal of time reading through the student's bibliography and noting dates of publications, the balance of books and academic articles, and thinking about what may be missing from the list.

When marshalling evidence for one's conclusion, quotations and citations are critical. This goes without saying. I sometimes remind the students that more than three words taken consecutively from a source must be in inverted commas and properly referenced with page numbers. I explain the value of either quoting or reworking sources into one's own language. Even if there is no clear evidence of plagiarism, I might comment, "This sounds like a quotation—please check."

In terms of the number of citations one might expect in a thesis, I have invented my own rule of ten. I suggest to students that there should be at least ten citations per page, from at least three different sources. Some students attach the citation to the end of a paragraph, but to my mind, it is better to attach the citation to a specific sentence or point made. So, there might be three or four citations in one paragraph, sometimes from the same source. My rule is that each point made, if it is from someone other than yourself, needs its own citation. I frequently insert the comment "Needs support" when a point is made which lacks evidence for substantiation. In my mind, I picture a bridge across a river, and liken the citations to the supporting columns which carry that bridge. Too few citations and the arguments begin to resemble a rickety bridge.

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[6] I follow the British system where Theology is the discipline, and the others (like Church history) are subdisciplines.

The use of block-quotations is a further area where a supervisor might need to interject some guidelines. At times, I come across a thesis which is composed of lengthy block-quotations[7] seemingly randomly sprinkled, creating the effect of an overdressed Christmas tree. I ask myself, can the quotations be removed without any observable impact on the rest of the text? If so, there is a problem. As a rule of thumb, block-quotations should be used circumspectly (a maximum of about three times per chapter) and only when a shorter citation (of less than three lines) will not do justice to the thought needing to be expressed. Block-quotations are useful in introducing a theme, to signal the prevailing consensus or in summing up a chapter. In other words, they mark the beginning and end of a debate. In terms of the length of quotations, I suggest that no quotation should exceed five or six lines and should make a single point. If necessary, the quotation could be divided and treated as two or three quotations, or better still simply cite a few words, integrated into the paragraph.

A quotation should not simply be dropped like a stone in a pond. It needs proper introduction and conclusion and to be clearly linked to the primary argument. The student should make clear to the reader precisely how this quotation furthers their ongoing discussion. After the quotation, the student should resume the discussion by picking up some element of the quotation and using it as a springboard for the next point. The flow from one idea to another needs to be seamless, so that the quotations do not interrupt the flow, but rather serve to enhance the flow. Quotations are not rapids in the river, causing disturbance, but banks to guide the flow.

8. The Mind of the Examiner

When I play the role of an external examiner at the doctoral level for another university, the first place I begin is with the table of contents. That gives me a good understanding of the arrangement of the thesis, its contents, and importantly something of the quality. The next thing I do is to read the abstract, the introductory chapter and the conclusion. By that stage, I already know whether I am looking for reasons to pass it or not. Only then do I read the thesis from the beginning to the end, either confirming my initial impression or not. For this reason, as a supervisor, I stress the importance of headings and the arrangement of chapters and those critical opening and closing paragraphs.

Normally about two thirds of a thesis is built on the work of other scholars laying out the problem. In fact, the initial literature review is really an analysis of the status quo. The remaining one third of the thesis should be one's own original contribution. In a doctoral thesis of about six to seven chapters, that means one or possibly two chapters plus the conclusion should ideally contain the core original elements, as opposed to the critical review of other people's views, and the necessary background discussion. What makes it original is that no one else has argued cogently for this specific conclusion. There needs to be a clear line drawn between where existing scholarship has arrived at the present time and what the student has added as her or his original work extending beyond that point. In addition, examiners are asked to comment on the use of sources, the familiarity of the student with the available sources, his or her style and presentation, and whether there is material worthy of publication.

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[7] A block-quotation is a quotation of at least three lines (depending on the publication), which is indented and separated from the preceding paragraph.

9. Conclusion

From the beginning of one's engagement, the student is often dependent upon the supervisor for encouragement. Whether in residential universities or by online-learning, I have been amazed, time and again, as I watched students grow in confidence and ability, sometimes well beyond anything that I had imagined was possible. One or two empowering words may have an impact for life. In Durham, I was one of about ten PhD students, from across the world. In the early days, I sometimes felt overwhelmed and confessed to Barrett that I was unsure whether I was good enough to do the doctorate. Barrett immediately responded, "Well we think so because we accepted you!"

Supervising at a distance, as in the online situation, will always be a challenge. The responsibility as a supervisor is considerable, since, in many ways, one holds the academic future of the student in one's hands. However, there are also moments of great joy, especially when one sends that email entitled "Congratulations." It was a mark of the man, that Barrett continued to keep in touch for several decades beyond my graduation and I have kept a file of his handwritten Christmas letters. Yes indeed, our role as supervisor and mentor continues well beyond the graduation of our students.[8]

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[8] I was greatly assisted in the preparation of this article by two of my colleagues, Dr. Robert Falconer and Mr. Izaak Connoway. My thanks go to them for their helpful comments and additions.

Conspectus
The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary

Book Review

Benckhuysen, Amanda W. 2019. *The Gospel according to Eve: A History of Women's Interpretation.* Downers Grove: IVP Academic. 260 pp. ISBN: 978-0830852277. Approx. 375 ZAR (25 USD). Paperback.

1. Author Profile

Amanda Benckhuysen is professor of OT at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, where she has taught since 2014. Prior to this, she taught for six years at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, USA. Before entering academia, Benckhuysen was a campus minister and is currently ordained within the Christian Reformed Church. In her research, she is especially interested in biblical hermeneutics and the history of biblical interpretation.

2. Background and Purpose of the Book

The importance of the creation account in Genesis 1–3 cannot be overstated in terms of our understanding of what it means to be human, specifically, what it means to be a man or a woman. Influential interpreters throughout church history have posited answers to questions that Genesis 1–3 beckons us to ask: What is the significance of men and women being made in the image of God (1:27)? Why was Eve created after Adam and what does this created order signify (2:18–25)? What are the implications of Eve being created from Adam's rib (2:21)? Why did the serpent speak to Eve and not to Adam (3:1–5)? What motivated Eve to take the fruit and give it to her husband (3:6)? What do God's declarations about men and women teach us about the relationship between the genders in a fallen world versus his original intention (3:16–19)? What implications does this text have in terms of how men and women should act in society, the home, and the church?

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Bible-based. Christ-centred. Spirit-led.

As they looked at the rest of Scripture, gifted interpreters have sought to answer other questions as well: How do we make sense of Paul's interpretation of the Adam and Eve narrative in 1 Timothy 2:13–15 and in his other discussions about the relationship between men and women (see 1 Cor 11 and 14 especially)? How does Jesus's death, resurrection, and ascension change the way in which men and women should relate?

Benckhuysen notes that most male interpreters throughout church history have answered these questions in ways that have largely led to the "domestication and subordination of women" (p. 1). Benckhuysen, therefore, seeks to recover a host of women's interpretations of Genesis 1–3 that reflect that the Bible does indeed contain good news for women. Throughout her book, she presents the voices of more than sixty women who interacted with Genesis 1–3 from the fourth century to the present. Instead of accepting their culture's understanding of gender, these women discovered that the Scriptures offered a different vision that helped them embrace God's will for them as women in their unique contexts. Thus, Benckhuysen hopes that these unearthed interpretations of our foremothers will help the contemporary church wrestle with and converse about what "the Scriptures say and don't say about gender distinction" (p. 3).

3. Why is a Man Reviewing this Book? A Brief Digression

Some readers may find it strange that a man is interested (or even qualified) to review a book written by a woman about women's biblical interpretation. Before summarizing and engaging with the book, it is appropriate then to present three responses to these potential sentiments.

Firstly, the majority of academic literature in recent years regarding women's roles in the church has been produced by men. For example, in a recent work, New Testament scholar Nijay Gupta surveys the topic and recommends eleven significant books on the subject (from a variety of perspectives) written between 1990 and 2010 (2020, 133–144). Of the sixteen authors and/or editors Gupta lists, fourteen are men.[1] Thus, I do not think my interest in women's biblical interpretation is extraordinary or that my gender disqualifies me from helpfully contributing to the discussion.

Secondly, biblical and theological discussions around gender are often erroneously considered a "women's issue," implying that men are not invested in the dialogue. However, regardless of what a person concludes that Scripture teaches on the issue, their conclusion will deeply impact the lives of men. For example, if women cannot pastor, the church will need more male preachers and leaders; if women are encouraged to have vocations outside of the home, men will have to embrace a more present role caring for children, and so on. Therefore, as a man, I have an investment in discussions of gender and gender-focused biblical interpretation and think it is appropriate for me to engage in this conversation.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly concerning the book being reviewed, women have important insights that men can learn from. Since women have unique viewpoints shaped by experiences that men cannot share, it is important that men reflect upon women's perspectives on Scripture. Just as North American biblical scholars and theologians ought to seek out and value African and other Majority World perspectives, men ought to read works by women in order to understand viewpoints that they cannot possess. Therefore, I think that Benckhuysen's work is a helpful resource for both women and (especially) men.

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[1] These men include such influential evangelical scholars as Wayne Grudem, Thomas Schreiner, Craig Blomberg, and Craig Keener.

4. Summary of the Book

Benckhuysen weaves women's interpretations of Genesis 1–3 into a web of chapters organized by various topics. To begin, Benckhuysen sets the scene by briefly identifying the ambiguities of Genesis 1–3 that have led to a panoply of diverse (and opposing) interpretations offered by both men and women. These include God creating Adam first and then Eve; the meaning of the Hebrew word, *ezer* ("helpmate"); the difficulty of harmonizing the creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2 and the implications of emphasizing one account over the other; discussions about bearing the image of God in a pre-fallen and post-fallen world, as well as God's response to Adam and Eve's sin.

Chapter 1 also briefly summarizes views of women based on Genesis 1–3 held by such influential biblical interpreters as Tertullian, Ambrose of Milan, Augustine, Jerome, and Thomas Aquinas. With few exceptions, Benckhuysen declares that "early interpreters concluded that Eve was an inferior … creation who bore primary responsibility for plunging the world into sin and strife" (p. 7). It is this interpretation of Genesis 1–3 that "provided divine sanction for a system of patriarchy … that made women subordinate … and denied them the right to own property, to pursue formal education, to marry freely, to vote for civic leaders, to participate in public affairs, to choose a profession, and to share in ecclesiastical leadership" (p. 8).

With this background provided, Benckhuysen topically introduces women's perspectives on Genesis 1–3, motivated by the prohibitions placed on them. In presenting the writings of fifteenth- to seventeenth-century women (including Italian Christine de Pizan, and Englishwoman Rachel Speght), she shows how women used Genesis 1–3 to show that, contrary to what their culture told them the garden story meant, women are not inferior, but made in the image of God, and are no more responsible for the fall of humanity than are men.

In chapter 3, Benckhuysen highlights the manner in which women authors from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries (such as Englishwomen Bathsua Makin and Mary Chudleigh) interpreted Genesis 1–3 to advocate for women's education. Accepting (at least ironically) the idea that women are weaker and more prone to being deceived, they argued that on this basis women should be educated. Since women's divine role was to be a virtuous helpmate for their husbands, would not education help women to develop virtue in order to strengthen their marriage and society? If women are made in the image of God and capable of rational thinking, should not this be encouraged through education?

In chapter 4, Benckhuysen brings together the interpretations of Englishwomen Mary Astell (1666–1731), Lucy Hutton (d.1788), and others, who looked to Genesis 1–3 to help them understand God's intention for marriage in the face of the broken marriages that they experienced or witnessed. After interpreting these chapters, these women understood that God intended marriage to be a place of friendship, love, and sexual intimacy, free from the rampant subjugation and oppression of women that they observed around them.

Next, Benckhuysen showcases the interpretations of Genesis 1–3 by women who felt empowered by this text (and the rest of Scripture) to preach, teach, and lead in the Church. Among others, these interpreters include seventeenth-century Quaker Margaret Fell ("the Mother of Quakerism") and nineteenth-century Salvation Army co-founder Catherine Booth. Benckhuysen emphasizes that the women she highlights were not influenced by secular feminist culture around them (since no such culture existed) but by their interpretation of Scripture and their understanding of the leading of God's Spirit in their lives.

Chapter 6 features women (such as eighteenth-century British-American novelist Susanna Rowson and nineteenth-century American Sarah Martyn) who wrote children's devotional writings, describing how their interpretation of Genesis 1–3 subtly and explicitly influenced the next generation's understanding of gender roles.

In chapter 7, Benckhuysen describes how women in the nineteenth century began to advocate for their own rights on the basis of Genesis 1–3. Living out their assumed divinely-given roles as virtuous helpmates, these women took on social causes like temperance, labor reform, and the abolitionist movement, only to find their effectiveness nullified by their own lack of civil rights. The actions of American women such as Hannah Crocker, Sarah Grimke, and Sara Spencer spawned the first wave of modern feminism and the suffragette movement around the globe.

In chapter 8, Benckhuysen highlights interpretations of Genesis 1–3 in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that support various gender ideologies. Women like Katherine Bushnell (d. 1946) and Lee Anna Starr (d. 1937) used biblical scholarship to tackle gender bias in translation of Genesis 1–3. Their work anticipated recent and contemporary feminist Biblical scholarship led by such significant scholars as Phyllis Trible (b.1932) and Carol Meyer (b. 1942).

In chapter 9, Benckhuysen concludes her study by highlighting lessons drawn from the women's interpretations of Genesis 1–3. She says that the highlighted women teach contemporary interpreters (both male and female) that when interpreting Genesis 1–3 we must be aware of the text's ancient context as well as our own biases and the contexts that shape them. Finally, for Benckhuysen the survey of women's interpretations teaches us that we must seek to interpret Genesis 1–3 in the legacy of Augustine, with the primary goal of our interpretations being to lead us to love God and neighbor with greater effectiveness and sincerity.

5. Critical Engagement

5.1. Strengths of the book

Even though Benckhuysen's topic belongs to the history of biblical interpretation, she presents the material in such a way that makes it extremely relevant to the twenty-first century. By mentioning scientific studies and current issues at the beginning of most chapters, she illustrates how the topics that shape her selection of women's interpretations (marriage, women's education, women's place in the church, and so on) are pertinent and still need to be wrestled with by the contemporary church.

Perhaps the greatest strength of Benckhuysen's book is her call for believers to interpret the Scriptures afresh to discover God's will for them, regardless of what their culture tells them. She reminds us that whatever our ethical questions and cultural context, we must wrestle with the biblical texts and their interpretation by others (in the past and present) as we determine God's will in our situation.

On this note, Benckhuysen deeply values not only Scripture, but also the tradition of the church. She makes clear, however, that this tradition has been so dominantly shaped by men that the voices and traditions of women have been pushed to the margins and forgotten. Therefore, so many of our assumed ideas about the story of Adam and Eve originate from a legacy of male-dominated interpretations that throughout history have deeply oppressed women. Thus, Benckhuysen's book bears witness to one of post-modernism's important reminders: no biblical interpreter is completely objective, and every interpreter is influenced by the cultural and historical setting(s) in which they find themselves. This influence does not exclude gender (p. 231).

Consequently, Benckhuysen does the church a deep service by introducing the reader to over sixty female biblical interpreters throughout church history—although admittedly, the majority are from the Global North. Furthermore, these women come from diverse denominations (Anglican, Methodist, Quaker, Roman Catholic, Reformed, Baptist, Shaker, Presbyterian, and others), socio-economic backgrounds, and family situations (wives and mothers, to celibate nuns). Benckhuysen's work challenges us to acknowledge and evaluate women's interpretations of the Bible if we want to conclude that we have truly consulted the history of biblical interpretation.

Despite this vast presentation of female interpretations, Benckhuysen is not without criticism. She acknowledges that while some of the women offer interpretations that are "profoundly insightful," others are "far-fetched or untenable" (p. 230). However, Benckhuysen's purpose is not to be critical, and she therefore allows her readers to weigh the veracity of the various interpretations presented.

At the same time, Benckhuysen curates the women's interpretations as they were in their context, realizing that, although they paved the road that modern types of feminism now travel on, the majority of the early women featured in her book "were not feminists in the modern sense of the word" (pp. 10–11). She further recognizes that most of the women showcased in her work "stopped short of pressing for full social equality"—many even embraced traditional views of gender (p. 11). Thus, Benckhuysen resists the temptation of refashioning the historical women into a twenty-first-century image.

Although Benckhuysen's work is structured thematically, it follows a broadly chronological framework, which enables the reader to understand how women's interpretations have developed and changed since the fourth century. This chronological journey also helps the reader understand the historic foundation that has led to the relationship between contemporary feminism, biblical scholarship, and the Christian faith.

Benckhuysen's book reminds us that scholarly interpretations of the Bible are not the only perspectives that matter. The majority of the women presented in the book were not scholars (for obvious reasons). They did not engage with scholarship and did not attempt to influence academia. Rather, their interpretations of Genesis 1–3 were found in "poems, tracts, devotionals, children's Bibles, dialogues, advice … prayer books," novels, and letters (p. 8). Many of these women's interpretations of Genesis 1–3 were deeply influential and fruitful in their contexts, reminding academically-minded interpreters that the Bible's domain is not limited to the scholarly journal, the classroom, or even the church worship service.

The book also includes hundreds of detailed footnotes, an appendix containing biographical information on the sixty-five female interpreters, and a helpful discussion guide with two to three questions on each chapter. These features are an added bonus that encourage and facilitate further discussion, research, and study.

5.2. Weaknesses of the book

The Gospel According to Eve is a difficult book to critique because it does not consist of a single thesis and supporting arguments. It rather showcases a history of women's interpretation of Genesis 1–3 structured in a thematic way.

This having been said, some chapters were structured better than others. Whereas some chapters were very strong in terms of sorting the various women's interpretations into a unified theme (especially the chapters on education for women, marriage, and justifying women preachers), others were more difficult to grasp as a unified whole (especially "Chapter Six: Forming the Character of Children") and seemed rather scattered (p. 144).

Although Benckhuysen attempts to keep to a broadly chronological ordering of the chapters (beginning with the Church Fathers' understanding of Eve and ending with twentieth and twenty-first-century female Biblical scholars), this is not maintained in every chapter. Thus, those reading the book straight through may be occasionally confused as to the chronology of the women interpreters. This critique may not be fair, as Benckhuysen herself says that "[b]ecause of the nature of the material and the thematic ordering of the book, each chapter can be considered separately" (p. 4).

I occasionally felt that the book was a tad ambitious in terms of fitting sixty-five female interpretations of Genesis 1–3 into just 232 pages! Because of the number of interpreters dealing with the same biblical text, the book felt a bit repetitive at times and by the end it was difficult to recall which woman wrote what about Genesis 1–3 in what period of time.

6. Concluding Thoughts

In an age where conversations around gender are almost always controversial and heated, Amanda Benckhuysen's book *The Gospel According to Eve: A History of Women's Interpretation* is a timely and vital resource for the church. She is among a group of scholars who, in recent years, has set the record straight in showing that women, although silenced, have interpreted Scripture for centuries.[2] If those who study the Bible want to be faithful to the whole of Church history they will never again be able to ignore these women's witness. Benckhuysen's carefully-crafted book reminds us that as we formulate our beliefs about gender and specifically the role of women in the home, society, and the church, we need to perennially return to Scripture, listen to the voices of women as well as men, and not be dominated by the cultural attitudes around us.

Although many readers may disagree with particular women's interpretations of the Bible, they will find this book an incredible resource for men and women alike as we grapple with issues of gender. The book could be especially helpful in a South African context where in 2019 the government declared a national emergency in light of the crisis around gender-based violence towards women. Clearly, the country and the church has a lot of work to do in upholding the Bible's affirmation that women are made in the image of God and intrinsically worthy of respect. Benckhuysen's well-timed book, containing the voices of women who have lived through centuries of abuse and oppression, can help us pursue this Christ-like goal.

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2 See, for example, Taylor and Choi (2012).

3 Mr. Jonathan Tysick is pursuing a Master of Theological Studies at Wycliffe College (University of Toronto). He graduated with distinction from the South African Theological Seminary with a BTh and formerly worked with the School of Biblical Studies (University of the Nations) in Cape Town, South Africa. Jonathan is especially interested in how theological and New Testament studies impact contemporary issues in the church and society and how these fields can equip Christians to live out their faith in a pluralistic world.

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Conspectus Editorial Policy (Abridged)[1]

1. Values, Scope, and Aim of the Journal

Conspectus is the journal of the South African Theological Seminary. Like the Seminary, the values of the journal are encapsulated in the phrase, “Bible-based, Christ-centered and Spirit led.” Operationally, the journal is marked by four distinctives:

1. With **interdisciplinary discours**e being a prized research objective at SATS, the journal publishes articles from across the broad spectrum of theological studies (Biblical Studies, Practical Theology, Systematic Theology, Studies in Church and Society), as well as studies that link with extra-theological disciplines.
2. *Conspectus* is a **Christian journal** whose **ethos** does not divorce academic reflection and engagement from belief in God. Consequently, *Conspectus* welcomes articles that are soundly Scriptural in perspective, approach, and content. The tone should reflect a commitment to the authority and relevance of Scripture, and to a theology that serves the church and honors God.
3. Like the Seminary, *Conspectus* prioritizes **representation** and input from various nations, ethnicities, and denominations. This is reflected in the Editorial Board, Editorial Team, Board of Referees, and the journal’s content.
4. As SATS is based on the **African continent**, its journal is largely representative of the Majority World—reflecting on/from and speaking into this context. Although this emphasis is apparent, this does not preclude contributions and contributors from elsewhere in the world.

Conspectus is an open source journal, meaning that the journal is made available to readers at no cost. The journal is catalogued under ATLA (American Theological Library Association), Logos Bible Software, Galaxy Software, Sabinet, and is available on the SATS website. To be published in *Conspectus*, an article must go beyond a summary of secondary sources and present the results of sound theological research into a biblical or practical problem in a way that would be valuable to the church, including scholars, pastors, students, missionaries, or other Christian workers.

After publication, authors are entitled to:

- share their work on any chosen platform (including conferences and educational purposes),
- expand and edit the article for a thesis or dissertation, and

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[1] The Editorial Policy appears in its abridged form to convey only that which is relevant to *Conspectus’s* readership.

- republish the article elsewhere, provided the new publisher is made aware of the former publication. In addition, the republished article must include a citation original article in *Conspectus*.

2. Editorial Team

2.1. *Description and Responsibilities*

The journal is steered by an Editorial Team that meets once a month. The Editorial Team consists of five members, namely, the editor, associate editor, content editor, copy editor, and proofreader and administrator. The role of book review editor is fulfilled by at least one of the of the Editorial Team members.

The responsibilities of team members are outlined here below:

2.1.1. Editor

The editor is responsible for the Editorial Team, the journal's research trajectory, and upholding the ethos of *Conspectus*. They communicate with the Editorial Board on behalf of the Editorial Team. The editor also reports to SATS's Senior Management Team on behalf of the Editorial Team and vice-versa. The editor and associate editor meet regularly to discuss *Conspectus's* operations. The editor is also a member of *Conspectus's* Editorial Board, a group of academics who share—or are sympathetic to—SATS's theological convictions and values and provides professional input in the running of the journal.

2.1.2. Associate Editor

The associate editor is responsible for the journal's operations. This includes implementing procedures related to the editorial process and contributing to the journal's research trajectory. The associate editor also compiles the agenda for and chairs Editorial Team meetings, communicates with contributors and the Editorial Team, and evaluates the content of the journal. The associate editor is also a member of *Conspectus's* Editorial Board.

2.1.3. Content Editor

The content editor is responsible for the quality of articles that are published in *Conspectus*. As a gatekeeper of standards, they have the authority to query the efficacy and viability of submissions approved by referees. The content editor also contributes to the journal's operational ethos and serves as a member of *Conspectus's* Editorial Board.

2.1.4. Copy Editor

The copy editor is responsible for *Conspectus's* grammar and formatting. However, the role extends to other areas of the editorial process. As a gatekeeper of standards, the copy editor has the authority to query the efficacy and viability of submissions approved by referees. They also evaluate journal content, contributes to the journal's operational ethos, and serve on *Conspectus's* Editorial Board.

2.1.5. Proofreader

The proofreader is responsible for checking grammar immediately before an issue is published on SATS's various platforms. They are responsible for collating minutes and actions from the Editorial Team's monthly meetings. The proofreader also evaluates submissions for publication and contributes to the journal's operational ethos.

2.1.6. Book Review Editor(s)

The role of book review editor is filled by at least one of the Editorial Team members other than the editor and associate editor. They are responsible for negotiating and maintaining agreements for free review copies with publishing houses, identifying relevant books for review, and collating and evaluating book reviews for publication.

2.2. *Editorial Team Members*

Editor:	Dr. Batanayi Manyika
Associate Editor:	Dr. Cornelia van Deventer
Content Editor:	Prof. Dan Lioy
Copy Editor:	Dr. George Coon
Proofreader and Administrator:	Mr. Izaak Connoway
Book Review Editors:	Prof. Dan Lioy and Dr. George Coon

3. Editorial Board

3.1. *Description and Responsibilities*

The Editorial Board is an international group of scholars recommended by *Conspectus's* Editorial Team and appointed by SATS's Senior Management Team to provide accountability and professional input in the running of the journal. At least two thirds of the board consist of scholars with no formal affiliation to SATS. Editorial Board members do not review articles but fulfill an advisory role. An Editorial Board chairperson is nominated by the Editorial Team and Editorial Board, and appointed to the role for a two-year period (four journal issues) by SATS's Senior Management Team. The elected chairperson is responsible for chairing the bi-annual meetings.

3.2. Current Editorial Board Members

Dr. Collium Banda (North-West University, South Africa)
Prof. Anita Cloete (Stellenbosch University, South Africa)
Dr. Albert Coetsee (North-West University, South Africa)
Dr. George Coon (South African Theological Seminary, South Africa)
Dr. Philip du Toit (North-West University, South Africa)
Prof. Godfrey Harold (Cape Town Baptist Seminary, South Africa)
Dr. Desmond Henry (Luis Palau Association; North-West University, South Africa)
Dr. Luc Kabongo (University of Pretoria, South Africa)
Prof. Samuel Kunhiyop (Brigham University, Nigeria)
Prof. Dan Lioy (Institute of Lutheran Theology; Portland Seminary; South African Theological Seminary, USA)
Dr. Johannes Malherbe (South African Theological Seminary, South Africa)

Dr. Dogara Ishaya Manomi (Theological College of Northern Nigeria; University of Mainz, Nigeria)
Dr. Batanayi Manyika (South African Theological Seminary, France)
Prof. Elizabeth Mburu (Pan Africa Christian University; Langham; North-West University, Kenya)
Prof. Elna Mouton (Stellenbosch University, South Africa)
Dr. Linzay Rinquest (Scholar Leaders International, South Africa)
Dr. Vuyani Sindo (George Whitefield College, South Africa)
Dr. Cornelia van Deventer (South African Theological Seminary, South Africa)
Prof. Ernst Wendland (Lusaka Lutheran Seminary; Stellenbosch University, Zambia)
Prof. Cynthia Long Westfall (McMaster Divinity College, Canada)
Dr. Alistair Wilson (Edinburgh Theological Seminary, Scotland)

4. Review Board

Articles submitted to *Conspectus* undergo double-blind peer review, provided they pass the editors' initial inspection. The journal has a board of reviewers who are responsible for reviewing articles across the spectrum of theological disciplines. Reviewers are enlisted to review articles within their areas of specialization. Review forms are supplied by the Editorial Team. The board of reviewers has a two-thirds membership majority external to SATS. To safeguard the integrity of the double-blind peer review process, the list of reviewers is not published in any of the journal's policy documents.

Conspectus Author Guidelines

1. Aims, Scope, and Values of the Journal

Conspectus is the journal of the South African Theological Seminary. Like the Seminary, the values of the journal are encapsulated in the phrase, "Bible-based, Christ-centered, and Spirit-led." Launching from an appreciation of interdisciplinary discourse, the journal publishes from across the broad spectrum of theological studies (Biblical Studies, Practical Theology, Systematic Theology, Studies in Church and Society), while establishing links with extra-theological disciplines where appropriate. Like the Seminary, *Conspectus* invites contributions from the broad spectrum of denominations while showcasing academic research from a broadly evangelical perspective. The journal seeks contributions from authors who subscribe to a high view of Scripture, as is consistent with evangelical tenets. Additionally, as SATS is based on the African continent, the journal foregrounds contributions from the Majority World. To be published in Conspectus an article must go beyond a summary of secondary sources and present the results of sound theological research valuable to the church, including scholars, pastors, students, missionaries, and/or other Christian practitioners. Conspectus is an open source journal catalogued under ATLA (EBSCOhost), Logos Bible Software, Sabinet, and available on the Seminary's website (available here).

2. Terms of Agreement

Once an article is published in the journal, copyright is transferred to SATS. Conspectus is protected by Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0), as stipulated here. Under this license, readers are free to distribute, use, and adapt material from the journal with the condition that

- the author(s) and journal are credited with the use of citations, and
- the user indicates where changes have been made to the original.

The publisher agrees to, as far possible, protect the author's article against plagiarism and copyright infringement.

After publication, the author is entitled to

- share their work on any chosen platform (including conferences and lecturing),
- expand and edit the article for a thesis or dissertation, and
- republish the article elsewhere. However, this must be done with the full consent of the new publisher; and the new publication must include a citation demonstrating the original appearance in *Conspectus*.

By submitting an article for review, the author agrees that

- the article is submitted with the consent of all the authors/contributors and other relevant parties;
- the article includes the necessary citations, is not plagiarized, and does not infringe on any copyright laws;
- consent has been given for the inclusion of all tables, figures, or images used in the article (please include an admission of consent in the submission);
- the article has not been published elsewhere; and
- the article is not undergoing review for possible publication with another journal.

3. Submissions

Prospective authors are to submit their articles to the journal editor, Dr. Batanayi Manyika (bat@sats.edu.za) or associate editor, Dr. Cornelia van Deventer (cornelia@sats.edu.za). For the submission of book reviews and related enquiries, authors should contact the book review editors, Prof. Dan Lioy (dan@sats.edu.za) and Dr. George Coon (george@sats.edu.za). All submissions should adhere to the guidelines listed below. If an article fails to comply with these guidelines, the Editorial Team reserves the right to request a revision before an article is reviewed. Repeated noncompliance can result in the Editorial Team declining the article or review for publication in Conspectus.

4. General Requirements

4.1. Articles

- All articles should be submitted in MS Word format (preferably .docx).
- *Conspectus* only publishes articles in English (US spelling and punctuation).
- Articles should be proofread and contain minimal linguistic, grammatical, and spelling errors. • Articles should be between 5,000 and 8,000 words in length (footnotes included; works cited excluded).
- Articles should include an abstract (100–150 words) and 3–5 keywords. • *Conspectus* employs a double-blind peer review process. Any reference to the author should thus be removed from the article.[2]
- A cover page containing the following information should be included as a separate MS Word document:
    - The title of the article

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[2] This includes self-citations. Authors should indicate where information has been removed.

    - The name of the author
    - The institutional affiliation of the author
    - A short bio of the author (50–70 words)[3]
    - The author's email address

4.2. Book Reviews

The *Conspectus* book review editors are responsible for soliciting books for review. Unsolicited reviews will be considered, but it is preferable that contact be made with the book review editors prior to submission. Reviewers should assess when they first receive their review copy, whether they will indeed be able to write a review within the allotted time (usually three months from the date of receipt). It is vital to finish the review in an expeditious manner. Authors should notify the review editors immediately if a review cannot be completed within the allotted time.

The Editorial Team especially values reviewing books of recent (within the last two years) publication. Rarely is a second edition reviewed, and only if there are substantial changes and it is a significant publication. Works written/produced by more than two or three authors/editors are not ordinarily reviewed, though in some cases the Editorial Team accepts them, depending on the publication's importance. The review should contain roughly an equal amount of description and critical interaction. For this reason, it is expected that the reviewer has at least some expertise in the field of the book being reviewed.[4]

Reviews for *Conspectus* should be scholarly in tone and objective in elocution. The discourse must be free of polemics and *ad hominem* or personal attacks. Moreover, *Conspectus* is not an avenue to publicize a reviewer's personal favorite publications. Instead, books should be assessed for their academic contribution to the field of study under consideration. Conspectus does not accept reviews of popular-level books, nor does it accept reviews of self-published books. Reviews need to be compatible with, or at least sensitive to, Conspectus's broadly evangelical perspective, as described above (see §1). While some latitude is permitted, an overall stance that seems designed to contradict *Conspectus's* theological ethos will result in the review being rejected for publication.

Unless stated otherwise, reviews should adhere to the requirements laid out in this document. Book reviews should be formatted as outlined below:

- The body of the review should ideally be between 1000–1500 words.[5]
- The title of a book review ought to include the following:
    - The book information (formatted according to §5.12 of this document)
    - The number of pages
    - The book's ISBN number
    - The price of the book (an estimation in Rand is preferred)
    - The type of book (paperback; hardback; electronic version; Kindle)

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[3] The biographical note should include the candidate's highest qualification, awarding institution, current position(s), and research interests.

[4] At a minimum, the reviewer should have earned at least an MTh (or equivalent) and be enrolled in a doctoral program. Even better are reviewers having a terminal degree (such as the PhD, ThD, or equivalent).

[5] A review/interaction with a major work in the field may warrant a review article of greater length, which must be approved by the editorial team.

  - For example:
    Powell, Mark A. 2018. *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker. 1–591 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8010-9960-1. Approx. 886 ZAR (52.99 USD). Hardback.
- The body of the review should begin with a short introduction of the book's author, followed by a brief summary of the work being reviewed. This should comprise no more than a third of the review.
- The major part of the review should consist of an objective, balanced evaluation of the work. This includes analyzing the author's thesis, determining the book's purpose, and situating the book in its historical context. When engaging the text, avoid saying simply, "I agree" or "I disagree." Be critical, yet respectful of the author as an accomplished scholar.
- The review should conclude by giving a brief discussion of such matters as the book's place in the field, why the ideas of the book are relevant, the intended audience of the book, and what the book will help readers understand about the subject matter contained in the book being reviewed.
- At the conclusion, the reviewer's name should be given as it is to be published, followed by the reviewer's academic institution, both right justified.
- A short bio of the authors (50–70 words) should accompany all book reviews (see §4.1 above).

5. Formatting

- Book reviews must not contain footnotes and need to indicate the page(s) that is/are being quoted or referenced in parentheses.

Unless otherwise specified, Conspectus adheres to the formatting style of the SBL Handbook of Style, Second Edition (2014). It is the responsibility of the author(s) to ensure that their article

5.1. Font

adheres to the handbook's requirements. The following style guide provides a high-level overview of the most important requirements.

- 12 point, Times New Roman, 1.5 line spacing, justified paragraphs.

5.2. Paragraphs

- Ancient languages (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, Syriac, Coptic) should be in Unicode, set in Times New Roman.
- Paragraphs are to be distinguished by the indentation of the first line of the second and subsequent paragraphs under any given heading (not by white space between paragraphs).

5.3. Punctuation

- Authors should not use tabs to set indents but make use of Word's paragraph formatting function.
- As prescribed by the SBL Handbook of Style (2014, §4.1.1), Conspectus requires the use of the serial comma/Oxford comma.

- For quotations, double quotation marks are to be used with commas and periods placed inside the quotation marks (semi-colons are to feature outside the quotation marks).
- Authors are to use single quotation marks for a quotation within a quotation. In the case where the author wants to emphasize that the punctuation marks are not part of the quotation, they can be placed outside of single quotation marks (see §4.1.2).
- Footnotes are to be inserted after punctuation marks.

5.4. Headings

Headings should be kept at a maximum of three levels. Prospective authors are to use the styles function in Microsoft Word to classify them accordingly (Heading 1, 2, 3). Headings should be left-aligned, numbered, and formatted as below:

1. First-Level Headings (Each word capitalized, bold)

1.2. Second-level headings (First word capitalized, italics)

1.2.1. Third-level headings (First word capitalized)

5.5. Hyphenation

Authors are to distinguish between hyphens, en dashes, and em dashes.

- Hyphens are used to connect words (e.g., first-century audience; well-argued response).
- En dashes are used for any range, including page numbers, dates, Scripture references, and other numerical values (e.g., John 20:30–31; pp. 121–122).[6]
- Em dashes are syntax markers and should be used without spacing before or after (e.g., "The crucifixion represents the climax of the Fourth Gospel, since it functions as the scene with the greatest intensity and conflict—both internal and external.").[7]

5.6. Abbreviations

5.6.1. General

General abbreviations are marked by periods and can be freely used in parentheses and footnotes but not in the main text. For a list of accepted general abbreviations, see the SBL Handbook of Style (2014, §8.1).

- The abbreviation e.g. is used for "for example." If it is in the middle of a sentence, it is preceded and followed by a comma (analyzing, e.g., Eph 2). If it is preceded only by a bracket, it is followed only by a comma (e.g., Eph 2).
- The abbreviation i.e. is used for "in other words." It is always followed by a comma (i.e., the ethos of the believer).
- The abbreviation et al. is used for in-text citations that refer to a work composed by four or more authors. The full stop is only added after "al" and the abbreviation is not italicised (Estes et al. 2010, 150).
- The use of the period abbreviations BC and AD is encouraged. However, authors are f free to use BCE and CE with motivation.[8]

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[6] The en dash can be inserted using the shortcut, Alt + 0150 (Windows users) and Alt + - (Mac users).

[7] The em dash can be inserted using the shortcut, Alt + 0151 (Windows users) and Alt + Shift + - (Mac Users).

[8] AD precedes the date, while BC, BCE and CE follow it.

For accepted abbreviations of divisions, units, texts, and versions of the Bible, see the SBL Handbook of Style (2014, §8.2.1). Unless used to start a sentence, the following abbreviations are to be used for words followed by numerical value:

- p. for page; pp. for pages (p. 2; pp. 2–4),
- v. for verse; vv. for verses (v. 2; vv. 2–4),
- ch. for chapter; chs. for chapters (ch. 2; chs. 2–4).[9]

If any of the above words are not followed by numbers, they are to be written out in full ("in the first chapter"; "on the second page"; "an analysis of the verse"). In a book review, the word "chapter" is always written out in full.

5.6.2. Primary sources

For a list of accepted abbreviations for primary sources and authors, see the *SBL Handbook of Style* (2014, §8.3).

- Abbreviations for books of the Bible, deuterocanonical books, and the Dead Sea Scrolls are not followed by a full stop.
- Unless used to start a sentence, "Old Testament" and "New Testament" are to be abbreviated as OT and NT.
- Please write out terms like "first century," "second century," and "twenty-first century."
- Authors may use the abbreviation LXX for the Septuagint and MT for the Masoretic Text or may choose to write these out in full.[10] These abbreviations should be in subscript if inserted after the text (Deut $8:1_{\mathrm{LXX}}$; Deut $8:1_{\mathrm{MT}}$).
- The following is prescribed for the use of Bible books:
  - o If a Bible book appears without chapters or verses, it is to be written out in full ("Among the themes found in Romans …").
  - o If the reference includes chapter and verse numbers, the Bible book is abbreviated ("Among the themes found in Rom 1–4 …").
  - o If a sentence starts with the name of a Bible book, it is to be written out even if it contains chapters and verses ("Romans 1–4 addresses …"; "Romans 1:4 addresses …"; "Romans addresses …").
  - o If a sentence starts with a Bible book that begins with a number, the number is to be written out ("First Corinthians was written …").
  - o Abbreviations for Bible books are not to be used in abstracts.
  - o Bible books should always be abbreviated in footnotes and parentheses.
- While the works of ancient authors are abbreviated (see 2014, §8.3.6; §8.3.7; §8.3.11; §8.3.14), the names of the authors are to be written out in full.

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[9] Note the space between the abbreviation and the number(s).

[10] The abbreviation MT can also be used for Majority Text. To avoid ambiguity, an author will need to clarify using a footnote.

5.7. *Apostrophes*

According to the *SBL Handbook of Style* (2014, §4.1.6.) all proper nouns ending on the letter s are to be written with an apostrophe and additional s in the possessive (e.g., Jesus’s; Moses’s).

5.8. *Capitalization*

- Authors should be consistent in their capitalization of words.
- Words are capitalized if they are used as titles. For example, “the Gospel of John” would be capitalized, while the literary type of gospel would be written in lowercase. Also, when gospel refers to the good news, it is not capitalized.
- If used adjectivally, lowercase is prescribed. For example, while “Bible” would be capitalized, “biblical” requires lowercase.
- Nouns used for God are to be capitalized (e.g., Son of Man; Lamb; Lord; Shepherd), while pronouns for God should be written in lowercase (he; him; his).
- Official terminology relating to Jewish tradition is to be capitalized (e.g., Law; Hebrew Scriptures; Sabbath; Septuagint; Feast of Booths).
- While some journals prefer Gentiles, Pagans, and Diaspora to be written in lowercase, Conspectus requests that they be capitalized.
- In the case of surnames preceded by particles (e.g., van Deventer; von Rad), authors ought to capitalize according to the standard use employed by the specific author (see 2014, §7.2.2.3 for a list of names). Particles should have the same case throughout the text (including running text, footnotes, indexes, and bibliographies), whether preceded by names/initials or not. However, when at the beginning of a sentence, particles are always capitalized (e.g., “Van Deventer (2019, 20) argues ….”).
- For examples not mentioned here, see 2014, §4.3.6.

5.9. *Quotations*

Quotations, especially block quotations, should be kept to a minimum. Articles containing an overuse of quotations will not be published.[11]

- Authors ought to indicate which Bible translations they are using when quoting Scripture. If an author is working from their own translation, the words “author’s translation” are to be added.
- Incorrect or unexpected forms found in quotations are noted by the addition of [sic]. Note that sic is always in italics and enveloped in square brackets.
- Quotations of five or more lines should be formatted as a block quotation. Block quotations should be indented on the left (not just the first line), not set in italics, and contain no quotation marks. The font size of the block quotation should be the same as that of the rest of the paper. A block quotation is to be ended with the proper punctuation, followed by the citation in parentheses (See §4.1.5). The citation is not followed by a full stop.

5.10. *Ancient Languages*

Words in ancient languages (Greek; Hebrew; Aramaic; Syriac; Coptic) should not be transliterated but formatted using proper characters (in the fonts prescribed in this document, see §5.1). All words or phrases in ancient languages must be accompanied by a translation—either in parentheses or footnotes.

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[11] The overuse of quotations refers to the phenomenon where an article is reduced to a compilation of quotes harvested from secondary sources and Scripture, strung together by connectives.

- E.g., “John uses the phrase ἐν ἀρχῇ (in [the] beginning) ...,” or “Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος.”[1]

  1. In [the] beginning was the Word.
- For Greek, the proper accents and breathing marks should be included. In the instance where a word containing a grave accent is taken out of its sentence and used alone, the grave accent (`) should be replaced with an acute (´).
- The first letter of a Greek word is never capitalized when used in an English sentence, unless it is a proper noun. This even applies when a Greek word is used as the first word within an English sentence (e.g., “νῦν is often used by Peter ...”).
- For Hebrew text, only vowels and consonants should be included (no reading markers, breathings, or accents).
- For Greek and Hebrew, markers from textual apparatus should only be included if discussed.
- Foreign words that have become technical terms can be transliterated and should be italicized (e.g., shalom; koinonia). This includes technical terms from Latin (e.g., a priori), German (e.g., Wirkungsgeschichte), and other foreign languages.

5.11. *Citations*

Conspectus uses the author-date referencing system for secondary literature (see the *SBL Handbook of Style* 2014, §6.5). Footnotes should only be used for additional information—not for referencing. The following should be adhered to:

- Citations should be enveloped by parentheses (round brackets), written in the following format: surname—space—date—comma—space—page number(s).
  - E.g., (Brant 2004, 92)
- Multiple citations are separated by a semicolon and a space.
  - E.g., (Brant 2004, 92; Rhoads 2009, 94)
  - For Scripture references, elements of the same nature (chapter or verse) are separated by a comma (e.g., Exod 9, 12, 18; Exod 9:12, 15), while a semicolon is used to separate multiple references where non-similar components follow one another (Exod 9:12, 15; 12:4, 7).
- A range of page numbers is to be written inclusively (210–220, not 210–20).
- If the author’s name features in the sentence, the citation (inserted directly after the name of the author—not at the end of the sentence) should only contain the date and page number(s).
  - E.g., “Brant (2004, 92) argues that ...”
- For multiple authors, the word “and” is used rather than &.
  - E.g., (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998, 102)
- As discussed under abbreviations, sources written by four or more authors are cited by the name of the first author, followed by et al. (Estes et al. 2010, 150).
- If an author has published multiple works in the same year, a letter is to be added after the date (starting with a). These letters should be in the citation and bibliography.
  - E.g., (Rhoads 2010a, 52; Rhoads 2010b, 108)
- For dictionary entries, the lexical form preceded by the abbreviation “s.v.” may be

used in lieu of page numbers.

  - E.g., (Arndt et al. 2000, s.v. καταγινώσκω)

5.12. *Bibliography*

All in-text citations should be listed in alphabetical order at the end of the article with the heading "Works Cited." Information should be provided in the following sequence (see *SBL Handbook of Style 2014*, §6.1.1):

a) Surname, full first name of author (unless an author is only known by their initials), followed by initials. If no author, cite the editor here.
b) Date
c) Title of chapter or journal article (if applicable)
d) Title of book or journal
e) Editor, compiler, translator
f) Edition (if not the first)
g) Volumes cited (if only a single volume is cited, include the title of the volume)
h) Series title and/or volume number
i) Place of publication
j) Publishing house
k) Page numbers
l) Electronic source information

- If the Works Cited list contains multiple entries by the same author, use a 3-em dash for all but the first entry of the author's name.
  - Voorwinde, Stephen. 2002. *John's Prologue …*
  - ———. 2011. Jesus' *Emotions in the Gospels …*
- Entries by the same author should be in chronological order (oldest to newest). If an author has published 2 or more works in the same year, entries should be listed alphabetically and a letter (a, b, etc.) is added to the date.
- The titles of books or journals should be capitalized (except conjunctions, prepositions, and articles) and should be set in italics (for specifics on capitalization, see the *SBL Handbook of Style* 2014, §6.1.3.3).
- Titles and subtitles are to be separated with a colon, even if this is not reflected on the cover page of the book (2014, §6.1.3.1).
- Ampersands (&) and digits used in book titles should be spelled out in citations and bibliography entries (2014, §6.1.3.2).
- Journals and well-known series can be abbreviated according to the list in 2014, §8.4.
- Works by ancient authors may be referenced by using the name of the premodern author or the name of the modern editor but authors should be consistent (see 2014, §6.1.2.2).
- The name of the publishing house should be preceded with the place of publication or copyright (the city, not the province, state, or country;[12] in English), followed by a colon.

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[12] In cases where the city or town is unclear, please check the information given by the publisher.

- Names of publishing houses should be abbreviated and simplified by omitting terms like "Press" and "Publishers" (university presses notwithstanding). In the case where a publishing house is named after its founder, initials should be omitted (e.g., Eerdmans instead of W.B. Eerdmans). For a list of publishing houses and their correct formats, see the SBL Handbook of Style (2014, §6.1.4.1).

5.13. *Examples*

5.13.1. Book with Single Author:

Larsen, Brian. 2018. *Archetypes and the Fourth Gospel: Literature and Theology in Conversation*. London: T&T Clark.

5.13.2. Book with Multiple Authors:[13]

Barry, John D, David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klipenstein, Douglas Mangum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, Lazarus Wentz, and Wendy Widder. 2016. *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham: Lexham Press.

Malina, Bruce J, and Richard L. Rohrbaugh. 1998. *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John*. Minneapolis: Fortress.

5.13.3. A Later Edition of a Book[14]

Powell, Mark A. 2018. *Introducing the New Testament. A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

5.13.4. An Edited Volume:

McKnight, Scot, and Nijay K. Gupta, eds. 2019. *State of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

5.13.5. A Chapter/Article in an Edited Volume:

Carey, Greg. 2019. "Early Christianity and the Roman Empire." In *State of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, edited by Scot McKnight and Nijay K. Gupta, 9–34. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

5.13.6. A Journal Article:

Mouton, Elna. 2014. "Reimagining Ancient Household Ethos? On the Implied Rhetorical Effect of Ephesians 5:21–33." *Neotestamentica* 48(1):163–185.

5.13.7. A Translated Work:

Bultmann, Rudolph. 1971. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. Translated by George R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches. Philadelphia: Westminster.

5.13.8. A Titled Work in a Multivolume Series

Keener, Craig S. 2014. Acts: *An Exegetical Commentary* (15:1–23:35). Vol. 3 of Acts: *An Exegetical Commentary*. Edited by Craig S. Keener. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

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[13] Note that only the first listed name is inverted (surname, name).

[14] The abbreviation "rev. ed." is used for a revised edition. Since this is usually inserted after the title, the word "Rev." would be capitalized. If the book is a second or third edition, the abbreviations "2nd ed." and "3rd ed." are used (not in superscript).

5.13.9. A Work in a Series

Horsley, Richard A. 2013. *Text and Tradition in Performance and Writing*. Biblical Performance Criticism 9. Eugene: Cascade.

5.13.10. An Article in a Theological Dictionary or Lexicon

Lunceford, Joe E. 2000. “Amen.” Page 52 in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*. Edited by David N. Freedman, Allen C Myers, and Astrid B. Beck. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

5.13.11. An Online Source

Powell, Mark A. 2018. “Jesus.” Baker Academic Textbook e-Sources. http://bakerpublishinggroup.com/books/introducing-the-new-testament-2nd-edition/11940/students/esources/chapters/696

5.13.12. An Unpublished Master’s or Doctoral thesis

Manyika, Batanayi I. 2020. “Philemon: A Transformation of Social Orders.” PhD diss., South African Theological Seminary.

See the *SBL Handbook of Style* (2014, §6.5) for other examples. For citations/references not listed in the former, see *The Chicago Manual of Style* (2017, §15.9).