

STUDIA ANTIQUA

A STUDENT JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY
OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 1
SPRING 2009

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
PROVO, UTAH

STUDIA ANTIQUA

A STUDENT JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

EDITORS IN CHIEF
Daniel O. McClellan
Angela Chapman

FACULTY ADVISOR
Michael D. Rhodes

SANE FACULTY ADVISOR
Dana M. Pike

FACULTY REVIEW BOARD
Dan Belnap
William J. Hamblin
Eric D. Huntsman
Richard Lounsbury
Kerry Muhlestein
Donald W. Parry
Dana M. Pike
Gaye Strathearn

SANE COMMITTEE
Dave Nielsen
Svetlana Tamtik
Joseph Petramalo
Seth Kohrman
Lucas Hill
Daniel Becerra
Jacob Moody

Printed by Brigham Young University Print Services, April 2009

ISSN: 1540-8787

Studia Antiqua is a semiannual student journal dedicated to publishing the research of graduate and undergraduate students from all disciplines of ancient studies. The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Students of the Ancient Near East, Brigham Young University, or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The continued publication of *Studia Antiqua* is made possible through an internship provided by the BYU Religious Studies Center. Additional financial contributions were made to this volume by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Students of the Ancient Near East, and Classics.

Studia Antiqua accepts manuscripts for publication year-round. Manuscripts should be sent to studia_antiqua@byu.edu, and should include a title page with the author's name, major, and year in school. For submission guidelines and other valuable resources, please visit the SANE website at kennedy.byu.edu/academic/ANES/sane.php.

STUDIA ANTIQUA

A STUDENT JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

VOLUME 7, NUMBER I

SPRING 2009

EDITOR'S PREFACE	ii
JOSHUA J. BODINE	
The Shabaka Stone: An Introduction	1
MARY ABRAM	
The Pomegranate: Sacred, Secular, and Sensuous Symbol of Ancient Israel	23
MICHAEL BIGGERSTAFF	
The Lord's Supper: Exegesis of Mark 14:22–26	35
GRANT HARWARD	
A Defensive Offensive: Infantry Tactics of the Early Byzantine Army . .	45
LUCAS HILL	
Heretics and Heresy: Did They Exist Before Iranaeus?	55
ELLIOTT WISE	
An Odor of Sanctity: The Iconography, Magic, and Ritual of Egyptian Incense	67
DANIEL O. MCCLELLAN	
A Reevaluation of the Structure and Function of 2 Maccabees 7 and its Text-Critical Implications	81
JOSHUA MICHAEL SEARS	
False Prophets in Ancient Israelite Religion	97
BOOK REVIEWS	107

Editor's Preface

This issue follows the previous by a full year, thanks in large part to the birth of my daughter, Aryn, in December. As *Studia Antiqua's* sole editor, I was unable to finish the fall 2008 issue before the end of the semester, and the papers from that issue have been combined with papers from the spring 2009 issue. With me for this issue is Angela Chapman, who will replace me as editor in chief after I graduate in April and move on to a master of studies degree in Jewish studies at the University of Oxford. Angela is a junior in ancient Near Eastern studies. She is doing the Hebrew track, and a paper of hers can be found in *Studia Antiqua* 6.1 (Spring 2008): 41–50.

On Friday, November 7th, 2008, the Students of the Ancient Near East, with Ancient Near Eastern Studies and the Religious Studies Center, held the 2008 SANE Symposium on Temples and Ritual in Antiquity. 22 papers were presented by professors and students on a wide variety of topics. The Religious Studies Center has graciously offered to consider a selection of papers for publication, but space is limited, and many quality papers could not be accepted. This issue has included a selection of the papers from the symposium that were not published by the Religious Studies Center. A call for proposals for the 2009 SANE Symposium will appear shortly, so keep an eye out. This year's topic will be related to the idea of canon, and will include a general open session.

Angela and I are introducing a new segment to this journal that we hope will familiarize our nonspecialist readers with important aspects of the history of the ancient world. We will publish one paper an issue that presents an introduction to an important ancient topic. Joshua J. Bodine's introduction to the Shabaka Stone is our first of these papers, and we invite interested students to consider writing and submitting introductions to their favorite topics for future issues.

This issue would not have been possible without the help of a number of individuals. We wish to thank Michael D. Rhodes for his expertise, as well as Dan Belnap, William J. Hamblin, Eric D. Huntsman, Richard Lounsbury, Kerry Muhlestein, Donald W. Parry, Dana M. Pike, and Gaye Strathearn, who all contributed time to reviewing submissions and providing feedback to students. The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship has contributed generously to the publication of this journal, as have the Students of the Ancient Near East, Ancient Near Eastern Studies, and Classics. We wish to especially thank Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and the Religious Studies Center, which provides the internship that makes it possible for us to dedicate the time necessary to publish this journal. Devan Jensen and his editors have provided invaluable aid in helping to edit the final version of this issue. Finally, Joany Pinegar, who has put up with far too much from me to go another issue without being mentioned, has my deepest appreciation.

Daniel O. McClellan
Editor in Chief, *Studia Antiqua*

THE SHABAKA STONE: AN INTRODUCTION

JOSHUA J. BODINE

Introduction¹

Tucked away in the north end of room 4, among the collections in the British Museum's Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, is a little known antiquity of Egypt from the 25th Dynasty: a stela known as the Shabaka Stone.² This obscure stone and its contents were a mystery for nearly one hun-

1. The aim of this paper is to provide an easily-accessible, introductory treatment of the Shabaka Stone in the English language, one which deals with many of the important aspects of the stone together in one article. Excepting a couple articles written by Wim van den Dungen and posted to his internet site, such a publication does not really exist (at least that I could find in the process of my own research). Many of the earlier and important treatments (and even recent ones) are in German or French, or are old and not easy to come by for the average interested reader. Even then, some of these treatments do not deal with all aspects of the stela. As for the few English translations that have been offered over the years, these generally contain very short introductions and editorial remarks along with the translated text or simply portions of it, but are generally lacking in matters pertaining to the physical aspects of the stone and other areas. As well, some treatments are focused on specific topics—thus omitting others—such as dating the stone and its ideas, discrediting it as a “dramatic” text, or focusing on an exposition and interpretation of the myth of creation recorded on the stone. Even the most recent treatment, though important, is only a short article that highlights some new findings. For these reasons, and others, it is my hope that this paper will fill a gap for interested readers, understanding that it is far from comprehensive in its approach (a soon-to-be-published dissertation by Amr El Hawary should fulfill that responsibility). This in mind, at the outset, thanks should be given to Mr. Wim van den Dungen, whose articles offered helpful points of reference (see <http://www.maat.sofiatopia.org/shabaka.htm> and <http://www.maat.sofiatopia.org/memphis.htm>), and who was kind enough to give of his time in locating some otherwise difficult-to-obtain sources, as well as for providing invaluable, high-resolution photographs for individual analysis. Appreciation is also due to Dr. Amr El Hawary who provided a reprint of his own important article (copy in my possession) on the subject.

2. “Little known” is perhaps an understatement as it seems that even a number of British Museum personnel were not familiar with it. While visiting the museum in 2006, upon asking some of the staff members where she could find it, my wife was led on a hunt that took her through two different floors and five museum employees before someone was

dred years after its arrival to the museum, before being deciphered in 1901 by the first American Egyptologist, James Henry Breasted. After examining the stone thoroughly and painstakingly copying the inscription by hand, Breasted subsequently offered the first translation and interpretation of the text.³ It took many years though—and several scholars—to work through details of various aspects of the stone, a process Breasted merely set in motion.⁴ Yet, even though a good understanding of this relic has been established, according to the most recent researcher, work on the stone is far from being completed.⁵ What follows is intended as an introductory treatment of this fascinating stela—both the stone itself and its contents—with remarks about its origin and history, its composition, physical measurements and surface layout, and an interpretation of the inscription it bears along with a brief explication of its importance and significance both then and now.

Origin and History of the Stone

*The Kingdom of Kush and the 25th Dynasty (747–656 BCE).*⁶ Long after the demise of the dynasties of Egypt's New Kingdom period (dynasties 18–20: 1550–1069 BCE), in the turmoil of what Egyptologists refer to as the Third Intermediate period⁷ (dynasties 21–25; 1069–664 BCE), a new political power to the south of Egypt began to look northward from their center at Napata (modern-day Sudan). This was the ancient kingdom of Kush/Nubia⁸ and a stela of the period

able to direct her to it (perhaps due to the title “Black Basalt Mythological Text”).

3. See James H. Breasted, “The Philosophy of a Memphite Priest,” *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 39 (1901): 39–54.

4. The studies of Adolf Erman, Kurt Sethe (his was the definitive work on the subject), and Hermann Junker were influential in establishing a good understanding of the text and opening up the field for later researchers. See Adolf Erman, “Ein Denkmal memphitischer Theologie,” *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 42 (1911): 916–50; Kurt Sethe, “Das ‘Denkmal memphitischer Theologie’, der Schabakostein des Britischen Museums,” *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Altertumskunde Ägyptens* 10 (1928); Hermann Junker, *Die Götterlehre von Memphis (Schabaka-Inschrift)*, *Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse*, 1939 no. 23 (Berlin: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1940); Hermann Junker, *Die politische Lehre von Memphis*, *Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse* 1941 no. 6 (Berlin: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1941).

5. Amr El Hawary, “New Findings about the Memphite Theology,” in *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Egyptologists* (ed. Jean-Claude Goyon and Christine Cardin; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 1:574. Due to be published very soon (personal communication), El Hawary promises a comprehensive examination of the Shabaka Stone in his dissertation—expected to become the new authority—on the subject.

6. All ancient dates follow the chronology set forth in the list provided in Ian Shaw, ed., *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 479–83.

7. The summary of events to follow for this period leans upon the survey by John Taylor, “The Third Intermediate Period (1069–664 bce),” in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, 324–63.

8. For a treatment of the kingdom and civilization of Kush see William Y. Adams, “The Kingdom and Civilization of Kush in Northeast Africa,” in *Civilizations of the*

confirms the Kushite kingdom as a “full-fledged power” by the time they invaded Egypt.⁹ Though they were not Egyptian in origin, the Kushite kingdom and its peoples had long been entrenched in Egyptian culture and customs—and dominated by Egypt—since Early Dynastic times (ca. 3000–2686 BCE). With Egypt weakened and divided, the rulers of Kush, as “strong contenders for power over Egypt,”¹⁰ wanted their turn at ruling one of the great civilizations of the ancient Near East.

Around 750 BCE, the Kushite ruler Kashta seems to have asserted his influence towards Egypt, but it was left to his son Piye (747–716 BCE) to follow through with military expeditions that eventually gained him temporary control over Upper (southern) and Lower (northern) Egypt, and the obeisance of various local rulers who were the remnants of the declining Libyan dynasts. Content to leave his new vassals in control of their local territories, shortly after his conquests Piye returned to his homeland for the remainder of his reign. Under such circumstances, it wasn’t long before one of the provincial rulers claimed the status of king and so began the 24th Dynasty (what was to be the last of the Libyan period). However, Piye’s successor and brother,¹¹ Shabaka (716–702 BCE¹²), wasn’t about to allow such ambitions to continue under his rule. Not long after his ascension to the throne, sometime in 716 BCE, Shabaka launched a new invasion of Egypt, reconquered the Delta area, and took up permanent residence there, thus inaugurating the rule of the 25th Dynasty over a united Egypt.¹³ With such a feat accomplished Egypt now had a dynasty of Ethiopian-born, black African kings.

Scholars have come to recognize the 25th Dynasty as a period of renewal, where the Kushite kings intentionally sought to establish an “ideological link with the great eras of Egypt’s past . . . leading to a revival of artistic, literary,

Ancient Near East (ed. Jack M. Sasson; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2006), 2:775–89, and László Török, *The Kingdom of Kush: Handbook of the Napatan-Meriotic Civilization* (Handbook of Oriental Societies: The Near and Middle East 31; Leiden: Brill, 1998).

9. James H. Breasted, ed., *Ancient Records of Egypt* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 4:406–07.

10. Taylor, “The Third Intermediate Period (1069–664 bce),” 331.

11. Determining the relationships of the Kushite kings is not exactly an easy task; however, many scholars believe Shabaka to have been Piye’s brother. For an easily-accessible overview of the royal family of Kush, see Aidan Dodson and Dyan Hilton, *The Complete Royal Families of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 235–37.

12. This date has recently been questioned since new evidence, deriving from an official Assyrian inscription dated to 706 BCE and accepted by some Egyptologists, states that Shabaka died that year or the year before.

13. Though Piye was in a sense the first ruler of the 25th Dynasty, he never really exercised complete control over lower Egypt as its sole ruler; after his military ventures from his homeland as far as Memphis, he was content to leave things in the hands of local overlords while he went back to his native Kush for the remainder of his reign. Under these circumstances, what scholars now recognize as the 24th Dynasty was allowed to emerge during his absence, thus overlapping dynasties somewhat. It was not until Shabaka deposed the 24th Dynasty, however, and set himself up in Memphis—where he resided at least some of the time—that a 25th Dynasty that ruled over a united Egypt can be talked about.

and religious trends drawing inspiration from earlier ages.”¹⁴ The Kushite kings went to great lengths to restore the glory of Egypt in their own reigns with monumental construction projects reminiscent of earlier times. Moreover, at least some of the Kushite kings seemed to possess a genuine reverence and sincere respect for Egyptian customs and traditions—especially religious ones—and sought to support its ancient practices.¹⁵ They did not see themselves as foreign invaders and conquerors, but as Egyptians in culture and religion, who would restore the greatness that was Egypt. For almost a hundred years, before being conquered by an invading Assyria, the black African kings from Kush, in their attempts to renew the splendor and glory of Egypt’s former days, thus ruled in the likeness of the kings of old, and can be remembered as great kings of their own time.

The Kushite kings’ sincerity, respect, and good intentions, were surely not simply an expression of supreme piety or reverence for Egyptian customs though; there were of course political reasons for their actions. “The Kushite rulers,” explains historian John Taylor, “sought to strengthen their legitimacy by posing as champions of ancient tradition.” In order to legitimize their rule and seek acceptance as authentic Egyptian rulers, they intentionally cast themselves and their reigns in the mold of those of the Old Kingdom (2686–2125 BCE). Such deliberate acts overtly connected the Kushite kings with an archaic period of Egypt and helped them sustain an image of greatness. A sometimes common feature of Egyptian culture, scholars refer to efforts of this kind as “archaism[s],” and these endeavors seemed to escalate in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E., precisely the period of Shabaka and his stone.¹⁶

Memphis, the Temple of Ptah, and Shabaka’s Stone. Lying about 12 miles south of modern-day Cairo, on the west bank of the Nile, is the ancient city of Memphis (now only in ruins).¹⁷ Memphis, located between Lower and Upper Egypt at the tip of the Nile Delta (no doubt a factor in its choice as capital of a unified Egypt, having been known anciently by the epithet “That which binds the Two Lands”) was the site of the first royal administrative headquarters of Egypt and long served as an important religious center. It was the residence of the kings of the Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom periods as well as many succeeding kings. It was a city that rivaled any other (in Egypt only Thebes was comparable), renowned throughout the ancient world, until it was overshadowed in significance with the establishment of Alexandria by Alexander the Great. Its importance can be seen in the tradition—believed by many scholars—that the

14. Taylor, “The Third Intermediate Period (1069–664 bce),” 331–32.

15. Piye was a model of such piety, evident in his stop-over in Thebes to celebrate the Egyptian religious festival of Opet on his way to conquering the Delta, as well as his care in not desecrating the temples and sacred precincts during his military campaigns.

16. Taylor, “The Third Intermediate Period (1069–664 bce),” 349–52.

17. On the importance of Memphis as an ancient Egyptian city, see John Baines and Jaromír Málek, *Atlas of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Facts on File, 1980), 134.

chief Memphite deity, Ptah, and his temple gave rise to the name of Egypt itself by way of a Greek corruption of the Egyptian word “Hut-ka-Ptah,” meaning “the temple of the ka¹⁸ of Ptah.” Important here is that Memphis is the location where the story of Shabaka and his stone begins, and is a city that plays a significant role in understanding the historical context and contents of the stone itself.

No doubt, Shabaka’s move to take up residence in Memphis as Egypt’s sole ruler was a calculated one. Furthermore, once settled in, his activities as the new king were no less calculated in their aims. As might be expected, at some point Shabaka took to attending to the temple of the chief deity of Memphis. In the process of renovating and restoring the Temple of Ptah, Shabaka is said to have discovered a worm-eaten “work of the ancestors” (presumably a papyrus scroll). The text described, among other things, a story of the Memphite god Ptah as the creator of all things and, in his manifestation as the god Horus (patron god of the Egyptian kings), the great unifier and sole ruler of a divided Egypt at the very beginning of history. Shabaka was certainly not ignorant of the historical and religious importance of Memphis and its traditions, and the overtones that such a text held for Shabaka’s reign were undeniable: having earlier succeeded in bringing an end to the 24th Dynasty, successfully uniting Egypt and Kush under one ruler, and setting up his royal residence in Memphis, this was just the kind of propaganda Shabaka needed!

After this unsuspected discovery (so the text goes), Shabaka ordered the ancient document to be copied onto stone, presumably to serve as a concrete image—suggestive both politically and religiously—of his newly-established rule in Egypt’s first royal capital. Shabaka’s residence at Memphis was proof that Egypt had been reunited; the prominent display of his newly-commissioned stone in the House of Ptah, along with an introduction of Shabaka as Ptah’s beloved, was all the more evidence affirming that, once again, Egypt was united under a divinely-approved-of ruler—King Shabaka. Shabaka’s Stone is thus arguably the most important literary monument from his reign.

The Stone’s Provenance, Ancient and Modern. Originally erected as a lasting monument in the Temple of Ptah at Memphis in the late eighth century BCE, the stone was at some point removed, though it is not known how, when, or why. Its history of ownership picks back up in modern times as a donation to the British Museum in 1805 by George John, 2nd Earl of Spencer (1758–1834)—“trustee of the museum” since 1794—where it has sat for nearly two hundred years as one artifact among many. One lingering question is the stone’s provenance before 1805. Recently, an examination of the museum’s archives by Amr El Hawary has revealed that the stone was transported to England, along with five other objects with which it was registered, as ballast aboard a ship leaving the port of

18. The Egyptian word ka is an obscure concept that relates to the interaction of the mind and the body as a person.

Alexandria. There is no mention of the stone being specially transported from Memphis to Alexandria before its journey to England. So, for now, one can only conjecture on its whereabouts between the intervening centuries, when it disappears from the pages of history in Memphis, resurfaces in Alexandria, only then to be moved to England.¹⁹

Details and Descriptions of the Stone

Material Composition. Back in 1901, in his preliminary publication, Breasted identified the Shabaka Stone as a rectangular block of black granite.²⁰ Since then, some scholars have agreed with Breasted, while others have postulated that the monument was a slab of basalt²¹ or a conglomerate stone.²² Recently analyzed by a scientist at the British Museum, the stone was found to have a density of 2.7g/cm³ and determined to be a composition of “‘Green breccia,’ originating from the Wadi Hammamat,” a detail that correlates nicely with the report of an expedition for materials in this area during Shabaka’s reign.²³

General Condition. Even a quick glance at the stone easily reveals its poor condition. Not only have parts of the stone’s inscriptions been intentionally defaced—such as the erasure of Shabaka’s name in three places (lines 1 and 2)²⁴ and the name of the god Seth being chiseled out in many others (at least lines 7, 8 and 9)²⁵—perhaps the most disappointing aspect of its condition is its obvious use as something other than the monument Shabaka intended it to be. Cut right into the center of the stone is a rectangular hole with eleven deeply-scored lines radiating from it. The long-held explanation for this destruction was that the stela was used in later times as a millstone,²⁶ though such a theory has

19. El Hawary, “New Findings about the Memphite Theology,” 1:567–68.

20. See Breasted, “The Philosophy of a Memphite Priest,” 40.

21. Beginning with Kurt Sethe, “Das ‘Denkmal memphitischer Theologie’, der Schabakostein des Britischen Museums,” 55.

22. So Rolf Krauss, “Wie jung ist die memphitische Philosophie auf dem Shabako-Stein?” in *Gold of Praise: Studies on Ancient Egypt in Honor of Edward F. Wente* (ed. John A. Larson, Emily Teeter, and Edward F. Wente; Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 58; Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1999), 239.

23. El Hawary, “New Findings about the Memphite Theology,” 1:568–69.

24. Although the destruction of Shabaka’s name was originally thought to be the work of a Psammetik II, El Hawary has recently argued that the culprit was Psammetik III. See El Hawary, “New Findings about the Memphite Theology,” 1:570–72.

25. This particular detail has been explained in the literature as a demonstration of the hostility to this god in the late periods of Egypt’s history; see, for example, Breasted, “The Philosophy of a Memphite Priest,” 40, note 6, and El Hawary, “New Findings about the Memphite Theology,” 1:570.

26. Beginning with Breasted, “The Philosophy of a Memphite Priest,” 40. A perusal of the British Museum’s website shows that this is still the explanation offered; see “The Shabako Stone,” n.p. [cited 25 May, 2008]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/aes/t/the_shabako_stone.aspx.

recently come under criticism. El Hawary, examining the back of the stone for the first time, has drawn attention to the fact that the damages do not correspond with its suggested use as a millstone, and proposes that it was used as a foundation of “something round,” possibly a column or pillar.²⁷ Whatever the case, such secondary use of the stone is extremely unfortunate as it has destroyed a sizeable portion of the text and thus fragmented its story.

Matters of Measurement. The stela itself is roughly 137 cm wide with the left-side height estimated at 91 cm and the right side about 95 cm. As for the written surface, the width is only slightly smaller than that of the stone itself, measured at 132 cm, while the height of the inscription averages 66 cm (reaching a maximum of 68.8 cm on the left-hand side), thus leaving an unused strip across the bottom quarter of the stone. The aforementioned rectangular hole in the center is 12 x 14 cm, with the eleven radiating lines ranging in length from 25 to 38 cm, amounting to a completely worn-out surface of 78 cm across, except for a few readable hieroglyphs near the center of the hole.

Lines and Layouts. Scholars today owe a debt to Breasted who discovered the hidden clue that led to the stone’s decipherment: although the individual hieroglyphs were written as expected, he found that the columns (lines) of the inscription were to be read not from right to left, as is usually the case, but numbered in the reverse order while still being read from top to bottom.²⁸ The stone’s inscriptions are laid out in three horizontal rows and 61 vertical columns, making a total of 64 “lines” of carved characters with a good amount of lacunae (gaps or empty spaces) interspersed throughout. The first two horizontal rows (lines 1 and 2)²⁹ are at the very top of the stone and comprise its “introduction,” while the other horizontal line (line 48) is a very short row near the top of the stone on the right-hand side amidst the vertical columns. The remaining 61 columns (lines 3–64; excluding 48) all contained some text at one point, except for line 5 which appears to have always been blank. A considerable amount of the surface inscription consists of partially-preserved columns (lines 16–24 and 45–55) and many columns that are totally worn away (lines 25–44 excepting a few readable characters).

27. El Hawary, “New Findings about the Memphite Theology,” 1:569-570.

28. See James H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1912; repr., Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), 46, note 1; see also James H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience: The Sources of Our Moral Heritage in the Ancient World* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1933; repr., 1961), 30-31.

29. Line 1 is the largest line on the stone and reads both left and right extending out from the center, in a “mirrored-manner” so to speak, while line 2 is the second largest line and reads from the left to the right instead of the expected reverse order; noted in Dungen, “On the Shabaka Stone,” n.p. [cited 10 May 2008]. Online: <http://www.maat.sofiatopia.org/shabaka.htm>.

Inscriptions and Transcriptions. Though Breasted was the first to offer a thorough transcription of the stone, no less important is the most recent work of El Hawary who has demonstrated several inconsistencies and errors in Breasted's copy. One of the more glaring ones is Breasted's miscount of the radiating lines (there are not ten as he transcribed but rather eleven). Also noticeable are the missing lacunae at the very beginning of lines 25a, 26a, and 27a. In addition to these, El Hawary's work has illuminated several other minor discrepancies between the stone itself and Breasted's transcription.³⁰

The Contents of the Stone³¹

In order to make some sense of the fragmentary contents of the stone, most translations or treatments divide the text into various logical units or sections, although differences of opinion certainly allow for (and have produced) varying interpretations as to how many sections and what is included in each. For introductory purposes, the inscription will be segregated into four general divisions to be discussed in turn: (1) The introduction and titulary of the king (lines 1–2); (2) a story of the gods that recounts the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt under the god Horus at Memphis (lines 3–47); (3) a creation myth known as the Memphite Theology (lines 48–64); and (4) a summary of the text as a whole (lines 61 [beginning after the lacunae] through 64).³² It must be kept in mind though, that to whatever degree the text may be divided, it nonetheless evinces an internal cohesion—the unifying element being the Memphite god Ptah—that should not be overlooked or forgotten.³³

30. See El Hawary, "New Findings about the Memphite Theology," 1:572–74.

31. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are from Miriam Lichtheim, ed., *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971–1980; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 1:51–56. Interested readers should consult this volume for a full translation of the text.

32. This four-fold division is concededly arbitrary and admittedly imposes a modern point of view on the text that may run counter to the intentions of the original author(s). It is also acknowledged that it overlooks the complex nature of the inscription, and runs the risk of misleading readers into artificial groupings that certainly could be split into more sections than the present segmenting allows for (e.g. on the left-hand side of the stone, lines 3 and 4 could be a section in themselves in that they appear to be somewhat of a preface to the larger story of Egypt's historical creation and the divine dialogue that follows). Be this as it may, this introduction is only to facilitate a general understanding of the contents for those not familiar with the text, and to simply highlight some of its more important features and not all of its intricacies.

33. Such is essentially Junker's argument—echoed and affirmed by Erik Iversen—who saw the Shabaka text as an expository treatise with an implied internal unity. See Junker, *Die Götterlehre von Memphis (Schabaka-Inschrift)*; cf. Erik Iversen, "The Cosmogony of the Shabaka Text," in *Studies in Egyptology: Presented to Miriam Lichtheim* (ed. Sarah Israelit-Groll; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1990), 1:490. Similar sentiments are expressed by James Allen in James P. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt: The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts* (Yale Egyptological Studies 2; New Haven, Conn.: Yale Egyptological Seminar, 1988), 38–43.

Dedications, Doubts, and Dating. A general heading carved on the two horizontal rows across the top of the stone introduces the text. Line 1 commences with the so-called fivefold royal titulary of the king: “The living Horus: Who prospers the Two Lands; the Two Ladies: Who prospers the Two Lands; the King of Upper and Lower Egypt: Neferkare; the Son of Re: [Shabaka],³⁴ beloved of Ptah-South-of-His-Wall, who lives like Re forever.” This sequence of five epithets, a common standard since the Middle Kingdom period, seeks to personify particular aspects of kingship: the first three stress the king’s manifestation of deity, while the last two make reference to Egypt’s division and unification, and include the king’s throne name and birth name.³⁵ The king’s Horus name is of consequence here as it highlights the king as a manifestation of the falcon-headed god Horus, an important deity and patron god to the Egyptian kings.

After the above declaration the inscription continues on line 2 with a dedicatory introduction:

This writing was copied out anew by his majesty in the House of his father Ptah-South-of-his-Wall,³⁶ for his majesty found it to be a work of the ancestors which was worm-eaten, so that it could not be understood from the beginning to end. His majesty copied it anew so that it became better than it had been before, in order that his name might endure and his monument last in the House of his father Ptah-South-of-his-Wall throughout eternity, as a work done by the Son of Re [Shabaka] for his father Ptah-Tatenen, so that he might live forever.

Thus, according to the story, the composition had been copied onto stone from an older deteriorated “work of the ancestors” in order to preserve and memorialize it³⁷—and it is the introduction’s claim that has long entertained inquiries from scholars. What is to be made of it? Is it to be trusted? If so, how ancient was the source? Was it really a direct copy of an earlier original, or only partially reliant on an earlier source? Were there multiple sources involved? When “copied,” were there not literary embellishments added so as to make it, as the text indicates, “better than it had been before”? To this point, which parts, then, were authentic and which were creations of Shabaka—could such even be determined? Or was it all simply an attempt at archaizing a new composition that served Shabaka’s interest in reuniting Egypt and establishing himself as king? In this regard, was it then a complete fabrication by Shabaka and/or his scribes, or just an innovative rewriting of an

34. As previously mentioned, the name Shabaka was erased from the stone in later history and is not found anywhere on it; what does appear in the introduction that positively associates it with Shabaka is his throne name Neferkare.

35. On this see Baines and Málek, *Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, 36.

36. The term “South-of-his-Wall” is an epithet of Ptah and probably refers to the sacred wall that enclosed his precinct in the temple.

37. It is ironic, then, that Shabaka’s rescue of the “worm-eaten” text, and its transfer to stone as a lasting monument, didn’t end up preserving the composition in its entirety as he (and scholars too for that matter!) may have hoped.

earlier source (or sources) in a sort of classicist way? Needless to say, all these questions testify to the complexity of scholarly investigation surrounding the date of the text and its putative source(s).

Breasted, the first observer of the text, exercised caution in his original, “rapid sketch” of some of these answers, first stating that the contents were at least as old as the 18th Dynasty with “strong indications . . . that the inscription is to be dated in or before the beginning of the New Kingdom.” Over time, however, easing up on his judgments, he reasoned that the text dated to the “Pyramid Age” or that it contained “the oldest thoughts of men that have anywhere come down to us in written form.”³⁸ Subsequent to Breasted’s pioneering work, Adolf Erman, Kurt Sethe (these two having influenced Breasted’s later views³⁹), and Hermann Junker, all dated the text to the Old Kingdom. Largely based on the archaic nature of the text—both linguistically (e.g. its language is reminiscent of the Pyramid Texts⁴⁰ of the Old Kingdom) and politically (e.g. its allusions to the importance of Memphis as the first royal city)—the views of many that followed held its ancient origin: Henri Frankfort maintained that its ideas must have been “part of the great movement at the dawn of history,”⁴¹ John Wilson was confident in assigning it an early date based on “linguistic, philological, and geopolitical evidence,”⁴² and Miriam Lichtheim agreed that it was “a work of the Old Kingdom.”⁴³

The tide of opinion changed, however, in 1973 with the important study of Friedrich Junge.⁴⁴ Junge argued that the text was a production of the 25th Dynasty—possibly relying on New Kingdom source material—as an attempt to archaize a new composition in a fresh and creative way. Subsequent research theorized of the possibility—based on the text’s fusing of the gods Ptah and Ta-Tenen and a description of their roles—of an earlier original(s) from the Ramesside period of the New Kingdom (1295–1069 BCE).⁴⁵ More recently,

38. Breasted, “The Philosophy of a Memphite Priest,” 43; Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, 46, note 1; Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, 31–32, emphasis in original.

39. Breasted admitted as much in his own writings (see above note for sources).

40. Pyramid Texts refer to a collection of Egyptian religious texts—some eight hundred separate spells in all—carved upon the walls of royal pyramids of the late Old Kingdom and early First Intermediate periods. Concerned with the afterlife of the king, these texts were primarily funerary in nature, though at times some passages may have been used in temple settings.

41. Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 24.

42. John A. Wilson, “The Memphite Theology of Creation,” in *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (ed. James B. Pritchard; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 1:1.

43. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 1:51.

44. Friedrich Junge, “Zur Fehldatierung des sog. Denkmals memphitischer Theologie oder Der Beitrag der ägyptischen Theologie zur Geistesgeschichte der Spätzeit,” *Mitteilungen des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts*, Abteilung Kairo 29 (1973): 195–204.

45. See Hermann Alexander Schlögl, *Der Gott Tatenen* (Freiburg, Schwiez: Universitätsverlag, 1980), 110–17.

Egyptologist James Allen, in a study of Egyptian creation accounts two decades ago, drew attention to the fact that the text has several internal features that suggest it was not a wholesale fabrication without any basis in an earlier source(s) (e.g. it has similarities in formatting and layout with some Middle Kingdom [2055–1650 BCE] texts, and its descriptions of the god Ptah and his creative role have a likeness with certain passages in the Coffin Texts⁴⁶). Ultimately, however, Allen seems to agree with a New Kingdom date of Ramesside origin for the text, for it is during this period that the creative role of Ptah (akin to that described in the Shabaka text) is “most fully developed.”⁴⁷ A dissenter of this recent trend, however, is Erik Iversen who agrees with Junker’s original Old Kingdom dating, contending that the text still gives the impression that “it is old with a limited number of mostly orthographic innovations, rather than late with an abundance of archaisms.”⁴⁸

Clearly, determining the exact nature of the truth claims of the stone’s introduction will likely forever elude scholars. Admittedly, the inscription’s intertextual relationship with earlier literary pieces, though intriguing, is not enough to argue with certainty for a reliance on any purported original source(s). Yet, surely some of the ideas inscribed on the stone, “at least the core of which [are] ancient,”⁴⁹ were not total fabrications, for if they were the theological/political dynamics of the stone would have been entirely missed by the Egyptian peoples, and likely served no interest as a monument for Shabaka to erect. Could not, then, at least some archaic passages derive from earlier material, or its ideas hark back to much older times—just written anew for Shabaka’s stone? To be sure, ideas are difficult to date if they even can be. About all that can be said with confidence is that the composition as a whole (i.e. its extant form) belongs to the 25th Dynasty;. Anything more is speculation. Nevertheless, as Iversen wisely observes, such a debate may be to a certain extent immaterial from the point of view of hermeneutics, since the text “deals exclusively with genuine Egyptian concepts and notions, most of which can be traced in other sources to the earliest periods of Egyptian history, and the date of this particular version of them is therefore irrelevant to their interpretation.”⁵⁰ At the very least, if the inscription is indeed a completely new creation with no foundation in a “worm-eaten” original, then it is certainly a testament to the author(s) brilliant use of archaic wording, spelling, grammar, and format.⁵¹

46. Primarily inscribed upon non-royal coffins in the First Intermediate and Middle Kingdom periods, the Coffin Texts are a collection of funerary texts which expand upon, and are in part derived from, the Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom.

47. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, 38–43.

48. Iversen, “The Cosmogony of the Shabaka Text,” 1:490.

49. So Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* (trans. Ann E. Keep; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), 116.

50. Iversen, “The Cosmogony of the Shabaka Text,” 1:490, emphasis added.

51. The lacunae—previously thought to be the result of a damaged (i.e. “worm-eaten”) original—is now usually explained as evidence of an archaizing effort at simulating an old and ruined original. See El Hawary, “New Findings about the Memphite Theology,” 1:569.

Ptah, Menes, and the Unification of the “Two Lands” in Myth and History

In most ancient accounts of origins, history and myth were woven together into a single storyline. Ancient peoples—Egypt included—were not particularly concerned with history-writing as carried out under the prescriptions of the modern science of historiography. Rather, “history” was an interpretation told through many elements of narrative art as a means of recalling memories of the past in a way that provided context for meaningful action in the present. Not only was history meant to draw from the past in order to shape the present, the circumstances of the present often affected the way the past was remembered and interpreted. Not surprisingly, then, historical writing was often an amalgamation of historical and mythological elements. And, what is true of most ancient accounts of historical events is also true for Egyptian origins as well.

Growing out of the prehistoric cultures in Upper Egypt known as the Naqada, Egyptian civilization can be traced back historically to the late fourth millennium B.C.E. (ca. 3200–3000 BCE) when it was unified as a distinctively new creation under the rule of a king that later Egyptians referred to as Menes.⁵² The legendary Menes, at least from the 18th Dynasty (1550–1295 BCE) onward, was viewed as the great “founder of the Egyptian realm” who “drained the original marshes; founded Memphis, the first city; and acquainted humankind with culture and civilization which they had not previously known.”⁵³ The unification of Egypt, the founding of Memphis, and the establishment of an Egyptian state—all historical events despite whatever mythical characteristics the story may have included—long served as important elements in the story of Egyptian origins. These elements are also essential components of the myth of Egypt’s origins inscribed on the left-hand side of the Shabaka Stone.

Linked with the historical events above, another important element in Egypt’s genesis is the ideology of kingship.⁵⁴ For the ancient Near East, the ideology of kingship was extremely important, and Egypt is perhaps a prime example of a civilization with a fully developed ideology of it. Kingship in Egypt

52. The identity of Menes remains an issue of speculation amongst scholars, with some designating various kings as the “historical” Menes, such as Scorpion, Narmer, or Aha. Perhaps the most realistic view is that which recognizes Menes as a mythical creation of the Egyptians in an attempt to attribute the unification of Egypt to one ruler, even though his acts and achievements were likely characteristics of several late Predynastic/First Dynasty kings combined into one legendary person in Egypt’s collective memory. It is interesting that in Egyptian the name Menes may mean “So-and-so,” lending credence to the notion that Menes was “another of those constructs through which the Egyptians mythologized their past.” For this view see William J. Murnane, “The History of Ancient Egypt: An Overview,” in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, 2:693–694.

53. Erik Hornung, *History of Ancient Egypt: An Introduction* (trans. David Lorton; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 3.

54. On the origins of kingship in Egypt see John Baines, “Origins of Egyptian Kingship,” in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship* (ed., David O’Connor and David P. Silverman; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 95–156.

was not simply a political institution but something intricately bound to religion and the gods.⁵⁵ In ancient Egypt, the king served as a bridge between the divine and the mortal realm. “Ancient Egyptian civilization,” comments Barry Kemp, “was maintained by an intellectual system that linked society at large to . . . the king, the living human representative of a hereditary monarchy” and also to “hidden forces (divinities)” whose “identities and forms,” though “revealed by the scholarly work of priests, . . . were engaged through the person of the king.”⁵⁶ Inasmuch as the Egyptian cosmos was “composed not of things, but of beings”⁵⁷—meaning these hidden forces were viewed as distinct individuals or personalities—kingship, then, was the interplay and interrelationship between the king and these “beings,” the gods.

Against this background, then, a brief look at the text itself is now in order. Right from the start (excluding, of course, the general heading already discussed), in the two short vertical columns inscribed in the middle of the left-hand side, the text declares the supremacy of the Memphite god Ptah both politically and theologically (see lines 3–6). His preeminence is clear: not only is he the great “uniter who arose as king of Upper Egypt and . . . king of Lower Egypt,”⁵⁸ it was he who created the Ennead (the gods).⁵⁹

After the short preface asserting Ptah’s supremacy, the text jumps right into the fragmented narrative and dialogic speech of the gods that recounts the unification of Egypt.⁶⁰ At the beginning, the narrative tells of a divided Egypt by recalling the story of the quarrel between the gods Horus and Seth.⁶¹ Geb, the

55. See the influential, book-length discussion of this by Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*. It should be noted that some scholars have retreated somewhat from Frankfort’s assertions of the importance of divinity and kingship in Egyptian history. David P. Silverman sees Frankfort’s stressing of divinity as an “important element of kingship” largely due to his reliance on religious texts and rituals in his research, at the neglect of other types of literature and information on the subject. On this see David P. Silverman, “The Nature of Egyptian Kingship,” in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, 50. This aside, the ideology of kingship was nonetheless extremely important for ancient Egyptian society—though it was viewed differently during different periods—and its association with the divine was a part of that importance.

56. Barry J. Kemp, “Unification and Urbanization of Ancient Egypt,” in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, 2:679.

57. As explicated by Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, 8.

58. This statement is perhaps an example of a mythical allusion to the historical event of the ascendancy and domination of his native city of Memphis under Menes.

59. Ennead is a Greek word meaning “the nine,” and signified the nine most important gods and goddesses—Atum and his descendants Shu, Tefnut, Geb, Nut, Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys—although this term is sometimes synonymous with the generic term “gods,” without reference to a number. On this see Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, 8.

60. Starting in line 7, the divine drama continues to at least line 35b, and then, due to highly damaged sections, the text doesn’t pick up again until line 48. Since line 48 represents the natural break in content for a discussion of the right-hand segment of the stone, the current segment must have ended somewhere in between lines 36–47 though where exactly is anybody’s guess. This is noted in Dungen, “On the Shabaka Stone.”

61. As noted by Lichtheim, this is perhaps a recollection of different traditions ascribing the rule of Upper and Lower Egypt to originally separate rulers; see Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 1:56, note 3.

god of the earth, calls the other gods before him and judges between Horus and Seth and forbids them to quarrel (lines 7–8). Each is then given his portion—Horus is assigned Lower Egypt and Seth Upper Egypt—which brings “peace over the Two Lands” (line 9). Then, for reason of a familial relationship, Geb decides to give the whole of Egypt to Horus, the “son of his [Geb’s] firstborn son [Osiris]” (lines 10c–12c). Following this, Geb announces to the Ennead that he has chosen Horus—and Horus alone—as his heir (lines 13a–18b). Given this inheritance, Horus becomes the sole ruler of the land, king of Upper and Lower Egypt (lines 13c–14c).

Continuing the story, however, after reporting how Horus received the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, the text recites a statement that basically equates Horus with Ptah (see line 13c which makes reference to Ptah’s epithet “South-of-His-Wall”; cf. line 54 for Horus as Ptah as well). Since the text had already identified Ptah and not Horus as the king of Upper and Lower Egypt in the preface (see lines 3–4), such a designation here was key for the text (and altogether typical of a religion with syncretistic tendencies).⁶² Read through the eyes of an Egyptian, then, and interpreted within their paradigm of myth and reality, the text was saying that the earthly king who historically united Upper and Lower Egypt, personified in his divine counterpart and patron deity, Horus, who is but a manifestation of Ptah, had a divine right to rule in Memphis, the capital of a unified Egypt and home to Ptah the supreme god. The earthly king, in his various manifestations of and interactions with the gods, was the great unifier of Egypt, having “united the Two Lands in the Nome of the Wall [i.e. the White Wall or Memphis].” The great city of Memphis was the “place in which the Two Lands were united” and, “being united in the House of Ptah, the ‘Balance of the Two Lands’” was achieved (lines 14c–16c).

To the extent that cultural traditions and memories of the past—whether historical or mythological—gave Egyptians a sense of identity, imparted meaning to the present, and also shaped its reality, in a sense, history became ritual. For Egypt, the coronation of each Egyptian king was to a certain degree a ceremonial commemoration of the unification of Egypt and the founding of Memphis at the beginning of Egyptian history—in other words “a re-enactment of the original event, participating in its virtue and reaffirming its purpose.”⁶³ To take the analogy even further though, history was not just earthly ritual but, inasmuch as historical reality was not separated from the divine world in Egyptian tradition (nor was it on the Shabaka Stone) history was “ritual in the cosmos.”⁶⁴ The historical unification of Egypt under its new leader at Memphis and the establishment of a royal administration was, therefore, a story with cos-

62. This kind of syncretism was not a creation of the Shabaka Stone; this was just another instance of proclivities that were quite common of an Egyptian religion that conflated and restructured the gods and their roles into a “mindless variety.” On this see Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 26–35.

63. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 23.

64. Baines and Málek, *Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, 209–11.

mological importance—order in the state meant order in the universe and order in the divine realm. Civilization, as conceived by the Egyptians, with an earthly king who interacted with both the mortal and divine realms, was the realization of a divine plan, “a god-given” right that was “established when the world was created” and which formed “part of the universal order.”⁶⁵

The above in mind, it was pointed out long ago by Sethe that the text on the left-hand side of the Shabaka Stone read like a “dramatic” text. By this it was meant that the text is formed as a drama or a play to be performed as part of a ritual. The text on much of the left-hand side of the stone is divided into short sections where, accompanied by brief explanatory narration, various gods have responsive dialogue with each other. The text would thus have a priestly narrator who delivered its prose sections and, at appropriate times, each “god” would participate in the presentation in dialogue form. The text thus served as a liturgical composition for a drama of succession involving the new king. A kind of “mystery play of succession,” such a reenactment was not just a mere representation of the past, but rather an act that had power, an act which changed the present actuality in an important way; it was a ceremony which established the bond between the Egyptian state and the divine realm in the person of the king, affirming his right to rule and maintain the established order of things as a bridge between the two.⁶⁶

The view of the text as a “dramatic” text, however, has not gone unchallenged. Iversen, in some brief remarks a few decades ago, opposed such an interpretation. In his opinion, the explanation that certain passages were stage directions and components of a ritual was based on a faulty “conception of the sequence of columns” and, when rearranged according to Iversen’s layout, the text’s dramatic character could no longer be supported. For Iversen, the text was not so much a dramatic play as it was what he called “mythical historiography.”⁶⁷ Iversen’s own words are instructive:

[T]he mythical events chronicled in the text were obviously considered factual historical events, and against this background the relations between the narrative passages and those in direct speech acquire a very special significance. Throughout the text the speeches were intimately connected with the narratives in so far as they always referred to a specific episode recorded in them, with the obvious purpose to confirm and verify them by the higher authority of the personal utterances...of the mythical figures involved.⁶⁸

Iversen’s explanation, then, accounts for the dialogic or dramatic nature of the text by highlighting the fact that the god’s interactive speech is merely confirmatory of the narrative passages.

65. Henri Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion: An Interpretation* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2000), 50.

66. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 123–25.

67. Erik Iversen, “Remarks on Some Passages from the Shabaka Stone,” in *Festschrift Elmar Edel* (ed. Manfred Görg and Edgar B. Pusch; Ägypten und Altes Testament 1; Bamberg, 1979), 253–62.

68. Iversen, “Remarks on Some Passages from the Shabaka Stone,” 260–61.

Whatever one's inclination, all told, the Shabaka inscription contains a story that reflects the interplay of gods and king in Egyptian historical events, and is a story that does not distinguish between myth and reality. Inasmuch as "historical deeds were supposed to repeat mythical events,"⁶⁹ the text is, among other things, a mythical reflection of an historical reality. On the left-hand segment in question, Egyptian historical events are intertwined with the doings of the gods at the "beginning" of history, and such affairs carried meaning for Egyptians in their present in the bridge between the divine and mortal realm—the office of the king, who, though mortal, engaged divinity in his very person.

Reflecting on the above, then, the question of a context for Shabaka's reign is perhaps appropriate. What meaning, if any, did this text have for Shabaka that he went through the trouble of having this story inscribed upon stone? Was this a mystery play, as Sethe and others saw it, narrated by a priestly-lector and acted out by various "gods" in the Temple of Ptah, culminating in Shabaka's coronation as the great unifier of the land and the divinely-approved-of representative on earth—in other words, a liturgy of royal affirmation? Or, was it simply pious propaganda in an attempt to demonstrate Shabaka's right to rule? Regardless, commemorating on stone a mythical story of the unification of Egypt that was familiar to his subject peoples—whether created wholesale from earlier ideas and themes and made anew in an archaizing fashion, or copied and edited directly from earlier text(s) in a classicist way—Shabaka's erection of such a monument was a brilliant move full of significance. Shabaka had conquered Memphis and declared himself a "beloved son of Ptah"; looked at in context, what could be a more potent symbol of power and divine authority than erecting such a stone?

The Theology of the Memphite Priests and the Preeminence of Ptah

In addition to the historical themes in the inscription on the Shabaka Stone, the theological subject matter is perhaps the stela's leitmotif. The element that combines the two is the god Ptah⁷⁰ who is both historically and theologically the centerpiece and focus of the Shabaka Stone.

Ptah appears to be one of Egypt's oldest gods, known from the First Dynasty (ca. 3000–2890 BCE) onward and represented in most major Egyptian archaeological sites. Indeed, as already mentioned, Ptah's importance may be attested in the name of Egypt itself. He was the patron god of the craftsmen, metalworkers, artisans, architects, and such, and was closely associated with Memphis where he had a large temple complex. The unification of Upper and Lower Egypt by one ruler, and the establishment of a new royal center at Memphis at the beginning of Egyptian history, as Wilkinson notes, "doubtless had

69. Hornung, *History of Ancient Egypt*, 3.

70. For a brief overview of Ptah see Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, 123–26.

a profound effect on the development of Ptah's importance."⁷¹ While he may have started out only as a local deity of little significance, he quickly rose to a prominent position. As Breasted noted long ago, when Memphis took front and center as the administrative capital of a newly created Egyptian state, in the minds of ancient Egyptians "it was but a step to see in Ptah the master craftsman who had created the world."⁷² So Ptah came to be viewed as a creator-god, the great craftsman of the universe who was the primary source of existence.

Traditionally, the most widespread creation myth of ancient Egypt—among the many versions and representations—was that of the sun-cult at Heliopolis which viewed Atum as Egypt's creator-god. Rising from Nun (the waters of chaos) upon Ta-tenen (the primordial mound) he created the rest of the gods: "Hail Atum," the Egyptian Book of the Dead reads, "who made the sky, who created all that exists . . . Lord of all that is, who gave birth to the gods!"⁷³ The Memphite Theology on the right-hand segment of the Shabaka Stone, however, has a different story to tell.

Beginning with the short horizontal line (line 48) inscribed on the right-hand side of the stone among the vertical columns, what has become known to scholars as the Memphite Theology⁷⁴ begins with the declaration of "the gods who came into being in Ptah." The text then continues for another thirteen lines explicating the theology of Ptah as the supreme creator of the gods and all that exists (lines 48–61). Yet, interestingly, Atum still has a prominent—though subservient—role in creation.

Various theological/political explanations have been offered over the years by scholars to explain the dynamics at work in the Memphite Theology with regard to Ptah and Atum. The most common has been the interpretation of the text as a polemic against a competing theology—a political maneuver by the priests of Memphis who wished to discredit the traditional solar theology. A slight modification of this view (though still somewhat political in nature) is that the Memphite priests did not simply wish to completely "conquer and annihilate" the beliefs of the sun-cult; its aim was to "subsume them into a higher philosophy, to take advantage of them by pointing out that they belong to a higher system."⁷⁵

In contrast to views that incorporate political elements to explain the relation between Ptah and Atum, are the more recent explanations from scholars who argue for theological elements in their interpretations. The descriptions of

71. Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, 124.

72. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*, 34.

73. Book of the Dead, Spell 79, as quoted in Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, 10.

74. The terms "Memphite" and "Theology" were first put together and used in reference to the contents of the Shabaka Stone by Adolf Erman who studied it shortly after Breasted; incidentally, the term has become somewhat synonymous with the Shabaka Stone itself.

75. Henri Frankfort et al., eds., *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 56, 59.

the “relations between Ptah and Atum,” opines Iversen, “were not attempts to elevate one at the expense of the other, but purely theological attempts to define the difference between creator and demiurge.” If the text had been polemical, he says, its rival deity would have been Heliopolitan’s true counterpart to Ptah as creator: the sun god Re. For Iversen its discussion was “purely theological”—Ptah was creator while Atum was demiurge (second god) who was a Memphite deity and “not his Heliopolitan counterpart and namesake.” Looked at in context with other Egyptian conceptions of creation—where there was an “immaterial creator responsible for creation as such,” who is “projected . . . into a second, sensible god” who carries out material creation—the Shabaka text was simply a treatise explicating the local Memphite version of creation.⁷⁶ Another view representative of a theological explanation is that of Allen who sees these matters not as “relics of competing theological systems”—and so not polemical in nature—but rather a “persistent syncretism of Egyptian thought” in which religious conceptions continually evolve and progresses into more advanced forms.⁷⁷ Whatever the case, what is important is that, for the Memphite Theology, Ptah was the great and central figure who preceded and superseded and all other gods.

There is much more to the Memphite Theology, however, beyond a discussion of the relation of Ptah and Atum. A brief look at the text illuminates some of its important features. After some initial introductions about Ptah (lines 48–52b), the Memphite Theology starts by declaring that “through the heart and through the tongue something developed into Atum’s image.” This something that took shape in the form of Atum was the result of none other than the “great and important . . . Ptah, who gave life to all the gods . . . through this heart and this tongue.” True, the text admits, it was through the seed and hands of Atum that the Ennead came forth. But, “the Ennead is teeth and lips in [Ptah’s] mouth that pronounced the identity of everything . . . and gave birth to the Ennead.” It is through Ptah that all the gods were born, “Atum and his Ennead as well,” and that all things came into existence (lines 53–56, 58).⁷⁸

Thus it is said of Ptah: “He who made all and created the gods.” And he is Ta-tenen, who gave birth to the gods, and from whom every thing came forth, foods, provisions, divine offerings, and all good things. Thus it is recognized and understood that he is the mightiest of the gods. Thus Ptah was satisfied after he had made all things and all divine word. . . . Indeed, Ptah is the fountain of life for the gods and all material realities.

The Memphite Theology was clearly setting forth the idea of creation as a combination of both immaterial and material principles, with Ptah serving as the connection between the two. Creation, according to the Shabaka Stone, was both a spiritual or intellectual creation as well as a physical one. It was

76. Iversen, “The Cosmogony of the Shabaka Text,” 1:489–90; emphasis added.

77. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, 62.

78. As translated by Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, 43–44.

through the divine heart (thought)⁷⁹ and tongue (speech/word) of Ptah as the great causer of something to take shape in the form of the physical agent of creation Atum, through which everything came forth. Importantly, creation was first and foremost an intellectual activity and only then a physical one. The intellectual principles of creative thought and commanding speech were realized in Ptah and could be said to be embodied in him. He is that which “causes every conclusion to emerge” (line 56).⁸⁰ Just as important though, at several points earlier in the text, as well as within the Memphite Theology, Ptah is identified as Ta-tenen, the primeval mound that Atum sat upon arising from the waters of Nun as he created the gods (see lines 2, 3, 13c, 58, 61, and 64). So, while Ptah is the intellectual and creative principle that “in-forms” and precedes all matter, he is also “a physical principle that is the font of all matter, conceptualized in his identification with Ta-tenen,” and in his imparting of life to Atum who, standing on Ta-tenen, carried out physical creation. Thus, in keeping with the notion that the things of the universe are for the Egyptians beings with distinct wills and personalities, it is through both spiritual and physical principles and actions—personified in and derived from Ptah—that the world becomes a reality.⁸¹

It did not take scholars long to recognize that in the ideas of the Memphite Theology there was an approach similar to the Greek notion of logos.⁸² The so-called “Logos” doctrine is that in which the world is formed through a god’s creative thought and speech—Logos meaning, literally, “Word.” The parallels with the creation account in the book of Genesis in the Hebrew Bible, or with the opening chapter of the Gospel of John in the Christian New Testament, are obvious, as with other ancient texts and philosophies.

Naturally, many scholars have tied the bulk of the stone’s significance to the portion of the text containing the Memphite Theology—in fact, the major purpose of Breasted producing his “rapid sketch” was to draw attention to the important philosophical ideas set forth in it.⁸³ Indicative of this position is a statement of Louis Žabkar more than fifty years ago:

One of the most important documents of the entire Egyptian literature . . . is the document of the Memphite Theology. . . . The impact of the Memphite Theology was so fundamental that its effect and influence on Egyptian religious thought remained constant until the end of the Egyptian religion. Unparalleled in the history of the ancient Orient as far as its cosmogonic signification is concerned it traveled from century to century,

79. The Egyptians had no word for mind and here expressed the idea of thought as occurring in the heart.

80. As translated by Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, 43–44.

81. For a discussion of the Memphite Theology along these lines, and an interpretation of it, see Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, 43–47.

82. Noticed first by Breasted, “The Philosophy of a Memphite Priest,” 39.

83. See Breasted, “The Philosophy of a Memphite Priest,” 40.

from one theological system to another . . . becoming a universal theological theme.⁸⁴

Whether it was the most important document of Egyptian literature, as Žabkar maintains, is no doubt overstating the case. Still, Žabkar's assessment highlights the obvious philosophical and theological implications of the Memphite Theology.

In his first analysis of the stone it was Breasted's opinion that it contained the "oldest known formulation of a philosophical Weltanschauung."⁸⁵ Though its philosophical ideas are certainly old, as Allen demonstrates, the Shabaka Stone's theme of an intellectual creation was not the first (it has earlier antecedents in the Coffin Texts of the Middle Kingdom).⁸⁶ A lingering question, then, is the Memphite Theology's influence, if any, on later philosophical and theological systems. Unfortunately, similar to inquires into the ideas/source(s) that may have shaped the Shabaka text itself, the question of the Shabaka Stone's influence on later texts is extremely difficult to answer. What is perhaps more important is what can be known: the Shabaka inscription is a reliable witness that serious philosophy did not begin with the Greeks. The stela is excellent evidence that ancient Egyptian cosmologies and cosmogonies were not simply primitive notions or crude attempts to understand the world and the place of humans within it. Rather, such things were a "continual fascination" for Egyptians and their philosophical conceptions were not as undeveloped as was once thought.⁸⁷ In spite of the ambiguities of dating the text of the Shabaka Stone, or of its influence on other documents, the extant inscription demonstrates that a philosophical/theological formulation similar to later Greek conceptions is, at the very least, as old as the eighth-century B.C.E. It is very likely, then, as Breasted recognized over a century ago, and as subsequent scholarship has demonstrated, that the Greek's tradition that it received its first philosophical "impulse" from Egypt may be a somewhat truthful statement after all.⁸⁸

Summaries and Celebrations

Marking the end of the Memphite Theology and its philosophy of creation and cosmos, is a celebration of the supremacy of Ptah and his creative role in poetic fashion that concludes with the following: "Thus were gathered to him all the gods and their kas / Content, united with the Lord of the Two Lands" (line 61). In a befitting manner, the text declares Ptah's preeminence among the gods and also connects his role in creation with his prominent place in the preceding story of unification: Ptah is creator of all and "Lord of the Two

84. Louis V. Žabkar, "The Theocracy of Amarna and the Doctrine of the Ba," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 13.2 (1954): 87.

85. See Breasted, "The Philosophy of a Memphite Priest," 39.

86. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, 46.

87. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, 9.

88. Breasted, "The Philosophy of a Memphite Priest," 54.

Lands.” Having signaled a theme that links creation in the cosmos with order in the Two Lands, the last few columns of the inscription offer a suitable summary to the whole of the text: Memphis is the royal city, the “Great Throne” in the House of Ptah creator of all, which gives joy to the gods and sustains the Two Lands. Memphis is also the site where the Horus-king “entered the hidden portals in the glory of the lords of eternity, in the steps of him who rises in the horizon, on the ways of Re at the Great Throne . . . and joined the gods of Ta-tenen Ptah, lord of years” (lines 61–64).

Conclusion

A brief introduction to the Shabaka Stone—one which reviews its origin and the context of its creation, its scantily-known history, and the complicated story inscribed upon it, with its accompanying importance and significance—perhaps ironically illustrates that an outline of this sort may, in a certain sense, leave more questions unanswered than it has sought to answer. Unfortunately, there are several reasons for this, not the least of which are deficiencies in historical knowledge in certain areas, the formidable task of dating the text and more importantly dating its ideas, as well as the difficulty in reading and translating a text that is not only archaic in its nature but one which has been severely damaged. Nonetheless, if a better understanding of what its latest inquisitor has called “one of the most exciting monuments and up to now one of the unanswered mysteries of the Ancient Egypt” is obtained, in the hopes that in the process the stone and its contents have become a little less mysterious for more than just its close observers, then the purpose of this paper will have been realized.⁸⁹ At the very least, the Shabaka Stone is indeed a remarkable monument with a fascinating story to tell—and it is a story that deserves to be known as much as any other associated with ancient Egypt.

89. El Hawary, “New Findings about the Memphite Theology,” 1:567.

THE POMEGRANATE: SACRED, SECULAR, AND SENSUOUS SYMBOL OF ANCIENT ISRAEL

MARY ABRAM

The pomegranate, a globular-shaped fruit filled with juicy red seeds inside a hard shell, appears in the mythologies and artifacts of several ancient Near Eastern cultures. Cheryl Ward's description of this fruit as a luxury item in *World Archaeology* charts the discovery of pomegranate representations in high-status contexts: a vase decoration in an elite residence of fourth millennium Uruk, a pomegranate-shaped wooden box with dried remnants of the fruit in a 17th century bce Hyksos tomb at Jericho, a gold bowl with fruits in another elite residence at 14th/13th century bce Ugarit, and a variety of depictions in 18th Dynasty Egyptian tombs and temples.¹ A vessel shaped like a pomegranate, fashioned from rare silver, accompanied other treasures in the tomb of the young Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamun.²

Pomegranate representations continued into later centuries: on a bronze cultic tripod from 13th century bce Ugarit, on ninth to eighth century bce Assyrian palace reliefs, and as ivory carvings in eighth century bce Phoenicia.³ Pomegranate seeds featured in ancient Greek explanations of seasonal cycles.⁴ Early Christian art picked up the pomegranate motif as "the symbol of hope of eternal life" due to this fruit's legendary association with the Garden of Eden's Tree of Life.⁵

Well-attested in archaeological discoveries, the pomegranate "was widely used as a symbolic and decorative motif in the sacred and secular art of

1. Cheryl Ward, "Pomegranates in Eastern Mediterranean Contexts during the Late Bronze Age," *World Archaeology* 34.3 (February 2003): 529, 533, 536.

2. Ana Ruiz, *The Spirit of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2001), 71.

3. Nahman Avigad, "The Inscribed Pomegranate from the 'House of the Lord,'" in *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed* (ed. Hillel Geva; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 134–35; 137.

4. Richard Stoneman, *Greek Mythology: An Encyclopedia of Myth and Legend* (London: The Aquarian Press, 1991), 142.

5. Harold Moldenke, *Plants of the Bible* (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1952), 191.

various cultures in the ancient Near East.”⁶ This multi faceted fruit, appreciated in diverse geographical regions and throughout different eras of time, reveals an even more fascinating role as a symbol of ancient Israel. Three distinct contexts emerge from the biblical text: the sacred pomegranate of Exodus, the secular pomegranate of Deuteronomy, and the sensuous pomegranate of Solomon’s Song. These three perspectives of the pomegranate, in turn, define ancient Israel’s collective character.

The Sacred Pomegranate of Exodus

Ancient Israel likely encountered the pomegranate motif in other older cultures before incorporating it into its own iconography. Ritual objects discovered in a 13th century bce Canaanite temple at Lachish included two ivory scepters topped by stylized pomegranates.⁷ According to Ward, pomegranate representation and remnants appeared most often in tombs, indicating this fruit’s connection with the underworld.⁸ In ancient Israel, however, the pomegranate is most often attested in the sacred, cultic practices of the living.

The Pomegranate and Sacred Vestments. The first biblical reference to the pomegranate occurred after the ancient Israelite exodus from Egypt and before their entry into the land of Canaan. Through Moses, the Lord instructed that a portable sanctuary, the Tabernacle, be constructed. Further revelation included details regarding the vestments of the officiating priest.

And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all of blue. . . . And beneath the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about; A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about. (Exod 28:31; 33–34)

Harold Mokdenke, author of the book *Plants of the Bible*, proposed the view that both the pomegranate embroidery and the golden bells on the hem of temple robes were patterned after the pomegranate flower while the ripe fruit became the model for other objects.⁹

Theories also exist to explain the presence of pomegranates on sacred vestments. Besides adding sound to rituals performed by the priests, the golden bells shaped like pomegranates dispelled demons.¹⁰ Some symbolists see fertility connotations: “The pomegranates with the bells on the priestly vestments

6. Avigad, “The Inscribed Pomegranate,” 133.

7. Avigad, “The Inscribed Pomegranate,” 134.

8. Ward, “Pomegranates in Eastern Mediterranean Contexts,” 530.

9. Moldenke, *Plants of the Bible*, 190.

10. Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols* (New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1992), 128.

represent fecundating thunder and lightning.”¹¹ Others suggest that the bells were for the people; when they heard the sound, they would think of the high priest and pray for him.¹² Still others say that the sound sent a message to the high priest. Since “the pomegranates symbolized the Word of God,” the tinkling bells reminded the high priest of his duty to teach Torah to the congregation just as the people, when hearing the bells, remembered the tribe of Levi’s part in these procedures.¹³ In his article about the pomegranates of the high priest’s mantle, C. Houtman concludes that “pomegranates, representatives of pleasant fruits, were intended to create together with the bells a pleasant atmosphere in order to propitiate YHWH. Being favourable to the high priest, YHWH would be favorable to Israel, too.”¹⁴

The sanctity of the ceremonial robe first assigned to Aaron was reiterated in Exod 29:29: “And the holy garments of Aaron shall be his sons’ after him, to be anointed therein, and to be consecrated in them.” These sacred garments and their symbols, then, were to be passed from one generation to the next, thereby maintaining a tradition of holiness.

The Pomegranate in Temple Architecture. The earlier priests of Israel carried out their duties in the portable Tabernacle. When Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem, the pomegranate as an art form became part of that sacred structure. Three separate biblical references describe the chapters (column capitals) of the temple’s twin entry pillars decorated by a network motif of pomegranates. 1 Kgs 7 details the temple’s construction. Hiram, an artisan from Tyre, fashioned the two pillars named Jachin and Boaz. He also ornamented these with pomegranates:

And he made the pillars, and two rows round about upon the one network, to cover the chapters that were upon the top, with pomegranates: and so did he for the other chapters . . . And four hundred pomegranates for the two networks, even two rows of pomegranates for one network, to cover the two bowls of the chapters that were upon the pillars. . . . So Hiram made an end of doing all the work that he made king Solomon for the house of the Lord. (1 Kgs 7:18, 40, 42)

2 Chronicles confirms the presence of pomegranates on the capitals and adds the information that at least some pomegranates were attached to chains. “And he made chains, as in the oracle, and put them on the heads of the pillars; and made an hundred pomegranates, and put them on the chains” (2 Chr 3:16).

The prophet Jeremiah mentions the chapters and pomegranates in the context of the brass booty taken from Jerusalem by Babylonians in the sixth century bce.

11. J. C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978), 134.

12. C. Houtman, “On the Pomegranate and the Golden Bells of the High Priest’s Mantle,” *Vetus Testamentum* 40.2 (April 1990): 225.

13. Houtman, “On the Pomegranate and Golden Bells,” 225.

14. Houtman, “On the Pomegranate and Golden Bells,” 227.

And concerning the pillars . . . a chapter of brass was upon it; and the height of one chapter was five cubits, with network and pomegranates upon the chapters round about, all of brass. The second pillar also and the pomegranates were like unto these. And there were ninety and six pomegranates on a side; and all the pomegranates upon the network were an hundred round about. . . . The pillars of brass that were in the house of the Lord . . . the Chaldeans brake, and carried all the brass of them to Babylon. (Jer 52:17, 21–23)

The Pomegranate and Cultic Objects. Recent attention has focused on an ivory ornament shaped in pomegranate form and purported to be the only surviving artifact from Solomon's Temple. Some scholars claim that this two-inch tall carving with a hole bored at its base was placed atop a ceremonial scepter and used in Solomon's Temple during the time of Hezekiah.

This exquisite carving . . . served as the decorative head of a ceremonial scepter carried by Temple priests. The fragmentary inscription around the neck reads "holy to the priests, belonging to the House of Yahweh." The paleo-Hebrew script dates to the late eighth century bce, around the time of King Hezekiah who attempted to centralize all Israelite worship in the Jerusalem Temple.¹⁵

The authenticity of the ivory pomegranate has been disputed. French scholar Andre Lemaire examined and photographed it at a Jerusalem antiquities shop in 1979. He concluded that even though caked dirt had been scraped from the incised letters, the original remaining patina "confirmed . . . that both the inscription and the artifact were genuine."¹⁶ The pomegranate then vanished for six years. It reappeared at a Paris art exhibition in 1985 and was subsequently purchased and presented to the Israel Museum in 1988.¹⁷ At that point, "curators asked Nahman Avigad, a senior archaeologist from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, to authenticate the object. Avigad and his colleagues examined the piece with a microscope and declared it to be genuine."¹⁸ These assertions were based on three main factors: (1) Chemical analysis undertaken in the Israel Museum laboratory showed that the ancient patina covering the ivory pomegranate was present also inside the incisions of the letters, (2) the edges of several letters were worn, "merging with the surface of the object . . . the result of long wear," and (3) the broken surface "bears distinct signs of forcible destruction and of having been buried in the soil for many years."¹⁹

The pomegranate itself is generally accepted as genuine. Questions still exist, however, about the inscription. In 2003, Yuval Goren, chairman of Tel

15. Herschel Shanks, ed., *Ancient Israel* (Washington, D. C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1999), 126.

16. Andre Lemaire, "Probable Head of Priestly Scepter from Solomon's Temple Surfaces in Jerusalem," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 10.1 (January/February 1984): 26.

17. Avigad, "The Inscribed Pomegranate," 128.

18. Haim Watzman, "Antiquities Fraud: Reality Check," *Nature* 434 (March 2005): 13.

19. Avigad, "The Inscribed Pomegranate," 131.

Aviv University's Department of Archaeology, examined the pomegranate with high-tech equipment and concluded: "although the pomegranate does date to the bronze age—the period 3300–1200 bce and before Solomon's Temple is believed to have been built—the inscription is a modern addition."²⁰

The pomegranate's authenticity had always been an issue because its provenance could not be traced. Concern escalated recently due to the pomegranate's association with Obed Golan, a private antiquities dealer indicted for forgery in Israel. Other inscribed objects associated with Golan and pronounced as fakes include the Jehoash tablet and the James ossuary.²¹ The ivory pomegranate came to be regarded as guilty through association, if nothing else. Some scholars say the criticism is unjustified and maintain that the pomegranate, complete with inscription, is authentic. Hershel Shanks, editor of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, stated in 2005 that there is a "very substantial question as to whether it [the pomegranate inscription] is authentic or a forgery" and points out evidence suggesting the former because "an ancient break cuts the inscription."²²

While a validated inscription might confirm its use in a temple setting, the fact that alleged forgers used the already-ancient ivory pomegranate to simulate a temple artifact supports its recognition (even by criminals) as a sacred symbol. The cultic use of pomegranate-topped scepters was not confined to the Israelites. In addition to the Lachish ivory scepters from a Canaanite temple mentioned previously, an excavation at Nami, south of Haifa, exposed two bronze pomegranate scepters on a 13th century bce skeleton. Bronze incense vessels were also found, which indicate the deceased was probably a priest. "The excavator, M. Artzy of Haifa University, suggested that the person interred . . . was a priest and that the tomb deposits represent cultic implements used by him when performing his office."²³

The cultic use of the pomegranate motif was not confined to scepters. Their natural form easily facilitated their function as vessels.

The very use of pomegranate-shaped objects for cultic purposes is attested to by a number of clay vessels in the form of globular pomegranates which were found in various excavations of sites in Israel dating to the 10th–8th centuries bce. They are either individual vessels or attached to a bowl or to a kernos (a hollow ring base on which are mounted pomegranates and other objects believed to have been used for libation).²⁴

The Pomegranate and the Torah. The Torah, always important, became even more central to the Jewish faith after the destructions of the Jerusalem temple. Attention focused on scriptural injunctions, and rabbis used the pomegranate, which apparently maintained its status as a sacred symbol, to illustrate concepts.

20. Watzman, "Antiquities Fraud," 14.

21. Watzman, "Antiquities Fraud," 14.

22. Hershel Shanks, "The Editor of BAR Responds," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 68 (2005): 76.

23. Avigad, "The Inscribed Pomegranate," 135.

24. Avigad, "The Inscribed Pomegranate," 134.

According to the midrash, there are exactly 613 seeds within a pomegranate, corresponding to the number of mitzvot [commandments] prescribed in the Torah. Israel is compared to a pomegranate, as full of good deeds as this fruit is of seeds.²⁵

Torah study became an essential part of Jewish life. At one point in their history, “the Jews concluded that education must be universal and that people must do with the absolutely barest minimum of existence, if need be, even self-deprivation, in order to find the happiness of [Torah] study.”²⁶ The nature of the pomegranate, continuing in its new role as a teaching tool, facilitated the internalization of a valuable concept: to choose the good in learning.

Unlike the seeds, the peel is very bitter, hence the pomegranate was used metaphorically for a pupil who selected only the good. . . . Schoolchildren sitting in their rows and learning Torah were compared to the compact kernels of the pomegranate.²⁷

The pomegranate, originally associated with the Torah, is today an integral part of the Torah scroll throughout Jewish congregations. Beginning in the Middle Ages, the two wooden rollers holding the Torah scroll became ornamental with the top pieces fashioned in the shape of fruits, especially pomegranates. These decorative caps placed on the Torah staves are even called *rimmonim*, the Hebrew word for “pomegranates.”

Rimmonim, generally made of silver, have assumed many shapes throughout the centuries, reflecting the inventiveness, artistic traditions, and pocketbooks of their various communities. . . . Even though these ornaments were fashioned in a variety of architectural and botanical shapes, . . . they continued to be called *rimmonim*, in memory of their earliest form.²⁸

The Secular Pomegranate of Deuteronomy

The term “secular” is, by definition, the opposite of “sacred.” In contrast with heaven, an earthly realm might include matters relating to the land, its production, and its governance. Delineation between sacred and secular in ancient Israel, however, isn’t easily distinguished. The attachment of ancient Israel to the land was also a religious attachment, and religious devotion may also have been linked with the land. “These major forces of God, Torah, Land, and Mitzvot interact, each of them evolving from the other, each of them leading to the other. We cannot separate them.”²⁹ Likewise, the pomegranate motifs, while

25. Frankel and Teutsh, *Jewish Symbols*, 128.

26. Leo Trepp, *Judaism: Development and Life* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1982), 31.

27. Jehuda Feliks, “Pomegranate,” *Encyclopedia Judaica* 16:364.

28. Frankel and Teutsh, *Jewish Symbols*, 129.

29. Trepp, *Judaism*, 7.

presented in a secular context, also retain their sacred character corresponding with the dual-natured elements they represent.

The Pomegranate and the Land of Ancient Israel. Shortly after the exodus from Egypt, Moses sent out spies to investigate the new land. Numbers 13:23 records that these twelve representatives brought back from their scouting expedition, along with grapes and figs, the pomegranate as evidence of Canaan's fertility. Later, Deuteronomy lists the pomegranate as "one of the seven species emblematic of Israel's agricultural fertility."³⁰ These seven species are named in connection with the land given to Israel by the Lord. "For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey" (Deut 8:7–8).

Along with other first fruits of autumn, the pomegranate traditionally was part of the Israelite festival Shavuot, a harvest celebration.

When a Jewish farmer saw the first cluster of grapes or the first pomegranate or the first ripe figs, he would not pluck the fruit and eat it. Instead, the farmer would tie a ribbon around the branch of the fruit. This ribbon served as a sign to all that these fruits were *bikkurim*, first fruits, to be brought to Jerusalem and eaten in the Holy City.³¹

Since the pomegranate was included as one of the seven specific species associated with the land's productivity, it also assumed the nature of an appropriate sacrifice, thereby solidifying another link between sacred and secular.

Once the Israelites settled in Canaan, they were commanded to bring their first fruits to the Levites as offerings. Although no specific fruits or grains are mentioned in the Bible, the rabbis dictated that this law applied only to the seven species mentioned in Deuteronomy 8:8.³²

These seven species contributing to physical health related also to spiritual well-being. The Lord's favor could be gauged by the condition of these plants. Joel foretold that the symbols of the land's productiveness would become barren due to Israel's disobedience. "The field is wasted, the land mourneth . . . the vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, . . . even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men" (Joel 1:10, 12).

Hope accompanies this judgment. Even as Israel would be restored, so would the land's fertility, and the pomegranate back in blossom would be an emblem that the Lord was no longer displeased with Israel. "Haggai (2:19) includes it [the pomegranate] with grapes, figs, and olives as an indication of restoration to God's favor."³³

30. Trepp, *Judaism*, 7.

31. Naomi Black, ed., *Celebration: The Book of Jewish Festivals* (New York: Jonathan David, 1989), 132.

32. Frankel and Teutsh, *Jewish Symbols*, 150.

33. J. C. Trever, "Pomegranate," IDB 3:840.

The Pomegranate and Kingship. According to tradition, Solomon's crown was fashioned in the shape of a pomegranate.³⁴ The archaeological discoveries of pomegranate-topped scepters suggest that these may have been used in royal along with cultic contexts. Again, a clear separation of sacred and secular is difficult. In ancient Israel, the first requirement for legitimate kingship was selection of the king by the Lord (Deut 17:15). The divine calling and subsequent prophetic anointing of the king would give the regalia of his office a certain cache: mingled sacred and secular symbolism. The pomegranate effectively accommodates a combination of both sacred and secular iconography.

The Pomegranate throughout Israel's History. The pomegranate as an art form reflecting the values of ancient Israelite and later Jewish society is documented in a variety of artifacts. The pomegranate's likeness appeared on ancient eighth to seventh century bce seals and on Jewish coins of the first century ce.

On bronze coins of John Hyrcanus I (135 bce), one sees on the reverse double cornucopias with a pomegranate between horns. The pomegranate was used again on silver coins of the First Revolt (66–74 c.e.). On the reverse one sees within the inscription "Jerusalem the Holy" or "Jerusalem is Holy" three pomegranates on one branch.³⁵

The modern State of Israel uses the pomegranate motif in coins and stamps.³⁶ The pomegranate as a favored art form in both ancient and modern Israel may be due to the fruit's connection with the land. "The pomegranate played a role in the biblical period, and it continued to be used on coins, glass, sarcophagi, ossuaries, in synagogue art, and in tomb art. . . . In Jewish art that features the agricultural richness of the land, pomegranates are likely to be found."³⁷ Although the pomegranate motif exists in secular contexts, these instances cannot be fully separated from the sacred traditions connected with this particular fruit.

The Sensuous Pomegranate of Solomon's Song

Webster distinguishes the term "sensuous" from "sensual." The latter term with more negative connotations focuses on an indulging of the physical senses while cutting intellectual and spiritual links. The word "sensuous," however, "suggests the strong appeal of that which is pleasing to the eye, ear, touch . . . [and] implies susceptibility to the pleasure of sensation."³⁸ Given this definition and combined

34. Frankel and Teutsh, *Jewish Symbols*, 128.

35. Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999), 492.

36. Frankel and Teutsh, *Jewish Symbols*, 128.

37. Neusner and Green, *Dictionary of Judaism*, 492.

38. Michael Agnes and David B. Guralnik, eds., *Webster's New World College Dictionary* (Ohio: Wiley, 2002), 1306.

with its appeal to and gratification of certain senses, namely sight and taste, the pomegranate may be categorized as a “sensuous” fruit.

The Pomegranate as Pleasurable Food. Pomegranate seeds are compacted within a hard, outer shell. Once this shell has been opened, the sudden display of juicy scarlet seeds appeals to the eye as well as the appetites of those who have acquired a taste for this particular fruit. This is especially the case in the Middle East with its long tradition of pomegranate cultivation.

The pomegranate . . . has been cultivated since prehistoric times and is now common in the Holy Land, Egypt, and along both shores of the Mediterranean. . . . The pulp of the fruit has been used extensively since the days of Solomon for making cooling drinks and sherbets, and is also eaten raw. . . . Pomegranate fruits in their native haunts attain a fine sweetness which makes them highly valued in those hot climates.³⁹

The first evidence of the pomegranate as a desirable fruit for eating comes in the form of a complaint to Moses by the children of Israel. “And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink” (Num 20:5). Obviously, the absence of the pomegranate contributed to ancient Israel’s lament.

The Pomegranate Connection to Fertility. The adjective “sensuous” cannot fully escape from its cousin term “sensual,” which is itself attached to “sexual.” Nor can the pomegranate, despite all its other characteristics, disconnect from its association in many cultures with sexuality and fertility. The pomegranate’s many seeds, its red color paralleling the blood of life, and its link with the land’s productiveness—all suggest this fruit is a symbol of human fertility. The fertility traditions embedded in biblical culture, particularly in connection with the pomegranate and combined with its recognition as a pleasant fruit, make it a likely candidate for inclusion in love poetry.

The Song of Solomon lovers link the pomegranate and its juice with romantic encounters. “Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves” (Song 7:12). This scene intensifies as it moves from the gardenlike setting to an actual partaking of the fruit in a more private, walled situation. “I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother’s house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate” (Song 8:2).

The pleasant and desirable nature of the pomegranate is apparent when a man uses this fruit to poetically describe his beloved: “Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks” (Song 4:3). Perhaps only those who recognized the pomegranate’s symbolic associations could appreciate such imagery.

39. Moldenke, *Plants of the Bible*, 90–91.

A Higher Level of Sensory Pleasure. Certain elements of society, often mystics, use the understandable emotions of lovers' relationships to describe the inexpressible joy of union with deity. Some biblical scholars regard the Song of Solomon in this way, as a literary device in addition to a literal romantic description. These verses could be a love song between God and his people.

In proportion to its size, no book of the Bible has received so much attention and certainly none has had so many divergent interpretations imposed upon its every word . . . Interpretations of the Song of Songs fall first of all into either allegorical or literal mode. The allegorical approach is the older and prevailed both in the Synagogue and the Church. The Jewish interpretation saw the Song as depicting the relation of Yahweh and the Chosen People, Israel, as his bride.⁴⁰

Talmudic scholars, taking the allegorical viewpoint, broke down the phrases of the Song 6:11 and offered an alternate interpretation of this text:

"I went down into the garden of nuts"—this is the world;

"To look at the green plants of the valley"—these are Israel;

"To see whether the vine had blossomed"—this is synagogues and houses of study;

"And the pomegranates were in flower"—these are young children who sit occupied with Torah and are arrayed in row upon row, like the seeds of a pomegranate.⁴¹

Even a sensuous view of the pomegranate, particularly in its context of a human fertility symbol, is colored by sacred overtones.

Conclusion

The pomegranate has been an integral part of many world cultures. Ancient Israel savored its colorful, juicy fruit and depicted it in art forms. The pomegranate shared the stage with leading stars, grapes and olives, as the classics of religious symbolism. Others of the seven species, such as the cereals, may be more essential to the sustenance of life. But no fruit but the pomegranate best combines the diversities of sensory pleasure, earth's seasonal cycles, worldly kingship, and holiness. These three primary qualities—sacred, secular, and sensuous—parallel the pomegranate with ancient Israel.

The pomegranate's round shape suggests a circular pattern connecting this

40. Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs* (AB 7; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977), 89.

41. Hayim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky, eds., *The Book of Legends: Legends from the Talmud and Midrash* (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), 420.

fruit's symbolic attributes. The secular aspects of both the pomegranate and ancient Israel link with the sacred and both of these merge with the sensuous. The pomegranate's crown-shaped calyx could represent ancient Israel's monarchy or, on a higher level, God as Israel's true king still attached to the nation he made covenants with. His original covenant with Abraham, reiterated in subsequent generations, involves promises of land and seed, thus laying the foundations for the ideology of sacred/secular/sensuous bonds. These three interwoven qualities permeate the history and culture of Israel. The pomegranate, replete with these same connected characteristics, therefore qualifies as a worthy symbol of ancient Israel.

THE LORD'S SUPPER: EXEGESIS OF MARK 14:22–26

MICHAEL BIGGERSTAFF

While they were eating, he, after taking bread [and] blessing [it], he broke [it] and gave [it] to them and said, "Take, this is my body." And after taking a cup [and] giving thanks [over it] he gave [it] to them, and they all drank from it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out in behalf of many. Amen, I say to you that I will no more drink from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink [it] new in the kingdom of God." And, after singing a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives. Mark 14:22–26, author's translation

While this pericope is a part of Mark's biographical narrative on Jesus; the words Mark records as being uttered by Jesus carry the weight of a sermon. Today Christians would call this pericope the institution of "the Lord's Supper," "the Eucharist," or "the Sacrament." At face value, Mark depicts this passage as part of a Passover meal with Jesus identifying the bread and wine with himself (see Mark 14:12). Those two identifications divide the pericope into two segments. The bread segment consists of four actions: taking, blessing, breaking, and giving to the twelve; followed by two sayings: a command to take, and an identification of what the bread is. The wine segment consists of four actions: taking, giving thanks, giving to the twelve, and the twelve drinking; followed by two sayings: an identification of what the wine is and a promise. The pericope is then closed by the singing of a hymn and a trip to the Mount of Olives. Throughout, Mark is heavily influenced by Old Testament motifs, lacing this pericope with covenant and Messianic prophecy language.¹ It is also of significance that, in this pericope, Jesus seems to know that his death is imminent and that it will have an expiatory value.²

1. John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (Sacra Pagina 2; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2002), 398.

2. See Donahue, *The Gospel of Mark*, 396, and Craig A. Evans, *Mark, 8:27–16:20* (Word Biblical Commentary 34B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 386.

Setting the Scene

Mark mentions this meal as having taken place after Jesus and the twelve entered into the room in which two of Jesus' disciples "prepared the Passover" (Mark 14:16). As such, despite some scholarly debate, Mark obviously considers this to be a Passover meal.³ As C. S. Mann phrases it, "attempts to find in the Last Supper an occasion other than Passover must accommodate some very awkward realities."⁴ Even though Mark claims this is a Passover meal, he does not mention the presence of the requisite lamb, nor does he identify at what point during the meal this pericope occurs.⁵ Since the earliest recording of the Passover ritual dates to 200 c.e., approximately 170 years after Jesus' death, it is not known exactly what would have taken place with a Passover meal in Jesus' day.⁶ Assuming that the earliest account is accurate, it would have been tradition for the head of house to have explained the significance of and what each part of the meal represented.⁷ What prompted Jesus to take this role may have been his acting as head of the little family of the twelve, and thus he would have been fulfilling the responsibility of the head of house.⁸

Peter may very well have been Mark's primary source for these sayings, as he was for much of Mark's Gospel.⁹ However, Donahue points out that "clear evidence for a tradition of the Lord's Supper some twenty years prior to Mark is found in 1 Cor 11:23–26."¹⁰ Since this Pauline material is considerably different in textual form, many scholars debate as to how much Mark may have redacted his source in light of early Christian traditions.¹¹ As part of this debate, it has been argued whether Mark's account could even be translated back into Aramaic.¹² Thus, Mark likely edited the early Christian tradition in light of

3. The scholarly debate concerns when the meal was actually held and what kind of meal it was. "The Synoptic tradition and Paul place the meal on the eve of Passover (that is, the evening before the death of Jesus) and so present it as an actual Passover meal. But John places it on the day of preparation when the Paschal lambs were slain." See Donahue, *The Gospel of Mark*, 398–99. See also Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 371–72.

4. C. S. Mann, *Mark* (Anchor Bible 27; New York: Doubleday, 1986), 570. See Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 372 for a brief summary of some of these awkward realities.

5. See Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 372 and Donahue, *The Gospel of Mark*, 395.

6. See PHEME PERKINS, "The Gospel of Mark: Introduction, Commentary, Reflections" in *New Testament Articles: Matthew, Mark* (New Interpreter's Bible 8; Ed. Leander E. Keck; Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 702.

7. See Mann, *Mark*, 574, and William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), 505.

8. See Mann, *Mark*, 572. It may also be possible that Jesus was responding to questions from the twelve as to why there was no lamb. Also if this was not the official Jewish day to celebrate the Passover meal, Jesus may have been answering questions as to why they were celebrating it this night.

9. See Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 20–24.

10. Donahue, *The Gospel of Mark*, 398. See also discussion on *kainēs* under "detailed analysis" for evidence of an antecedent Christian tradition.

11. See Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 374–75.

12. See C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Cambridge: Cam-

who he understood Jesus to be as well as what he gathered from Peter, his personal source.

In viewing Mark as a three-act play, this pericope falls within the third act, that of the Passion.¹³ As such, it should be read and identified in such a way that it points to the suffering, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. This is accomplished in that this pericope occurs during a Passover meal in which no lamb is mentioned, but the body and blood of Jesus are identified. The placement of this pericope, as being “sandwiched” between a prediction of betrayal and one of denial highlights the impending death of Jesus.¹⁴ Donahue adds that it “rounds off the pattern begun in 8:31 and repeated in 9:31 and 10:33–34, that Jesus will be handed over while the disciples will fail to comprehend his suffering.”¹⁵ However, this pericope should also be seen in light of the fact that appears at the center of a type of short chiasm, the betrayal and denial being in parallel to one another.

The Gospel of Mark focuses on Jesus. Though, at times, there seems to be a polemic against Jesus’ disciples, this may be more a literary method of Mark to instill hope and courage within his audience.¹⁶ Since the original disciples so struggled and yet became the great men of Christian history they were known as, it is possible for all to accomplish the same. This pericope adds to the climax of that theme. One of the twelve is about to betray Jesus into the hands that will play a key role in condemning him to death, while another is about to thrice deny knowing him. In the midst of both, Jesus is sharing a Passover meal with the twelve; which commemorates God’s deliverance with Israel.

The Institution

In v. 22, Mark begins with a genitive absolute acting as a temporal identifier. Thus it is “while they were eating” that vv. 22–26a take place. It is interesting that the betrayal prediction in Mark 14:18 also begins with a genitive absolute and includes the same form of the verb *esthiontōn* (eating). Despite saying that it was “while they were eating,” Mark does not make it known at what point during the meal either of these pericopes take place.

In the context of “during the meal,” Mark records Jesus’ bread action and saying. “After taking the bread and blessing it, Jesus broke it and gave it to them [the twelve].” The participles and verbs used here by Mark echo back to his account of Jesus’ miraculous feedings of the five thousand and four thou-

bridge University Press, 1966), 427; Perkins, “The Gospel of Mark,” 704; and Mann, *Mark*, 579.

13. See R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 11–15.

14. See Perkins, “The Gospel of Mark,” 703.

15. Donahue, *The Gospel of Mark*, 397.

16. See Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 54–56, and France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 27–29.

sand (Mark 6:41 [31–44] and Mark 8:6 [1–9], respectively).¹⁷ In each instance, *labōn* is used for “taking” and a form of *klaō* is used for “breaking.” A form of *eulogeō* (to bless) is used here in the bread action as well as in the feeding of the five thousand, while a form of *eucharisteō* (to give thanks) is used in the feeding of the four thousand.¹⁸ A form of *didōmi* (to give) is also used for Jesus’ giving to the disciples in all three occasions—though in this pericope it is in the aorist while it is in the imperfect in the feedings. Even if these occurrences were simply because Mark needed the definition which the word conveyed, it is nevertheless an interesting connection. Should this connection have been intentional, it quite possibly may have been designed to cause Mark’s audience to connect this breaking of bread with the feedings of the multitude. Since the pattern of “take, bless, break, give” is the same in all three, it could be that Mark’s Jesus was implying that in the future the twelve would likewise be commanded to give a similar sacramental meal to other believers. This becomes all the more plausible when the earlier account of the Lord’s Supper, found in 1 Cor 11:20–26, is taken into consideration. There it is already mentioned as having been established as an early Christian ritual in which the believers would partake. Mark would have likely already been aware of this.¹⁹

The saying of Jesus in v. 22, in reference to the bread being his body, is a much debated and often confused point. Jesus’ statement “this [bread] is my body” comes after he had taken the bread, blessed it, broke it, distributed it, and commanded the twelve to take it. At face value, this saying of Jesus would seem to promote cannibalism. However, Evans points out that *estin* here can have a translational value of “signifies” or “represents,” which then leads to the bread as a symbol of the body of Jesus rather than the literal thing.²⁰ Even without Evans’s help, this saying should be held in the context of the highly symbolic and figurative teachings of Jesus. Also, despite *touto* (this) being neuter and *arton* (bread) being masculine, both Mann and Hiebert see *touto* as being connected with the bread.²¹

Mann mentions that some lesser manuscripts of Mark have added the command “eat” to the command “take.” Thus where Mark’s Jesus originally commanded to take, Matthean assimilation commands the twelve to “take, eat.”²²

17. See Donahue, *The Gospel of Mark*, 395. Mann believes the “primitive Eucharistic pattern” to have “left its mark on the accounts of the feedings” (see Mann, *Mark*, 573). Either way, the feedings of the multitudes seem to echo back to Moses and the feeding of the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings.

18. Despite this difference, it should be noted that (a) *eucharisteō* is used in Mark 14:23 in reference to the cup, and (b) *eulogeō* is used with the fish in the feeding of the four thousand.

19. This possibly would then link Mark’s account with how the early Christian tradition was formed, the twelve (eleven because of Judas Iscariot) went out and shared this experience with other disciples.

20. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 390. See also D. Edmond Hiebert, *Mark: A Portrait of the Servant* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 352; and Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 375.

21. Mann, *Mark*, 577 and Hiebert, *Mark*, 352.

22. Mann, *Mark*, 577.

Though this Matthean command seems to be implied in the Markan command, Evans mentions an interesting proposition by Daube that the bread Jesus gives could be the *afikoman*, which symbolizes the Messiah. If this were the case, then the twelve would not have eaten the bread until after it was identified, at which point their partaking would have been to “demonstrate their faith in Jesus as the Messiah.”²³

An interesting point is that Mark makes much more of the wine than he does of the bread. His entire account of Jesus’ teaching on the bread encompasses a solitary verse, whereas the teaching on, and about, the wine encompasses three verses. This brings up an interesting question as to why. The wine is not only identified as the blood of Jesus, its purpose is also identified as being “poured out in behalf of many” (Mark 14:24). However, the bread receives no other signification than identification with Jesus’ body. Scholars have a wide array of opinions on this. Hiebert, Cranfield, and Lane all claim that the bread was broken for the purpose of distribution; Cranfield and Lane go on to suggest that it was part of a promise by Jesus to be with his followers.²⁴ Perkins says that “the association between wine and the blood of a covenant sacrifice shed for the people makes the symbolism of the cup more significant than that of the bread.”²⁵ Carrington would agree in that “the cup, rather than the bread, is the outward and visible sign of the new covenant, and the symbol of fellowship in the Kingdom of God.”²⁶

Mark 14:23 begins the cup saying of Jesus. “And after taking the cup [and] giving thanks [over it], he gave [it] to them, and they all drank from it” (Mark 14:23). The “all drank from it” presumably indicates a single cup.²⁷ This mention of the cup should recall to the reader’s mind the conversation between James [Jacob] and John with Jesus in Mark 10:38–39 in which Jesus promises that they will indeed drink of the cup which he drinks.

The cup of this pericope has often been associated with the third cup of Passover, the “cup of blessing.” Mann emphasizes that this connection is not certain, pointing out that Mark only mentions one cup.²⁸ Despite that, Cranfield, Hiebert, and Lane all connect this cup with the third cup of Passover.²⁹ Donahue does not specify which of the four cups this would have been, but does mention that this cup would have been taken after eating the lamb.³⁰ If this was the third cup, Lane’s identification of its interpretation as “I will

23. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 390–91.

24. Hiebert, *Mark*, 351; Cranfield, *Saint Mark*, 426; Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 506–07.

25. Perkins, “The Gospel of Mark,” 8:704.

26. Philip Carrington, *According to Mark: A Running Commentary on the Oldest Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 315.

27. See Mann, *Mark*, 578.

28. Mann, *Mark*, 577.

29. Cranfield, *Saint Mark*, 426; Hiebert, *Mark*, 352; Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 506.

30. Donahue, *The Gospel of Mark*, 395.

redeem you" is very significant, especially in light of Jesus' own identification of the cup.³¹ However, it should be remembered that since the earliest extant record of the Passover ritual dates to 200 c.e., the notion of multiple cups may not have any pertinence to this meal of Jesus.³²

It can be presumed that the cup is referring to a cup of wine for a couple reasons. One is that wine was integral to Passover meals. Another is that in v. 25 Jesus says that he will not drink from the "fruit of the vine" for a period of time. "Fruit of the vine" is a Semiticism for wine.³³ Another is that in the Old Testament, wine was a symbol of blood (see Gen 49:11; Deut 32:14; Isa 49:26). Donahue says that "though 'wine' is not explicitly mentioned, by metonymy the cup represents what it contains (here, wine)."³⁴

Metzger says "it is much more likely that *kainēs* is a scribal addition, derived from the parallel accounts in Luke 22.20 and 1 Cor 11.25, than that, being present originally, it was omitted" from numerous authoritative manuscripts.³⁵ France acknowledges the "theologically suggestive echo of Jer 31:31 in the Adjective *kainēs*" and goes on to say that it "would be a natural insertion" and that there "would be no good reason for its exclusion once in the text."³⁶

The phrase *to haima mou tēs [kainēs] diathēkēs* (my blood of the [new] covenant) is very intriguing. With *touto estin* (this is) the cup of wine is obviously identified with the blood of Jesus. However, it does so in a covenant fashion.³⁷ This is evidenced in that the phrase is identical, with the exception of *mou* (my), with that found in Exod 24:8. Thus Mark portrays Jesus as summoning the memory of this passage to the minds of the twelve. The reason for this becomes obvious as one reads Exod 19–24. To paraphrase, as the children of Israel were encamped round about Sinai, the law of God was given to Moses. Moses in turn told the words of the LORD to the people of Israel. Upon hearing these words, all the people of Israel announced: "all which the LORD said we will do and we will obey" (LXX Exod 24:3). Moses prepared a sacrifice, then read the law of the LORD to the people, to which they replied the same as before (see Exod 24:7). At this point Moses took the blood of the prepared sacrifice and sprinkled/threw it upon the people, saying: "behold the blood of the covenant which the LORD made with you concerning all these words" (LXX Exod 24:8). In light of this Old Testament passage, Mark is apparently identifying the blood of Jesus with the blood of Israel's covenant to obedience.³⁸ Since the

31. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 508.

32. See Perkins, "The Gospel of Mark," 702.

33. See Donahue, *The Gospel of Mark*, 397 and Mann, *Mark*, 580.

34. Donahue, *The Gospel of Mark*, 395.

35. Metzger, Bruce M., *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Society's Greek New Testament*, 3rd ed. (London, New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), 95. See also Donahue, *The Gospel of Mark*, 396; Cranfield, *Saint Mark*, 427.

36. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 559.

37. See Evans, Mark 8:27–16:20, 393, and Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 507.

38. See Donahue, *The Gospel of Mark*, 396, and Perkins, "The Gospel of Mark."

law was predicated on obedience and Israel was not always obedient, the law of sacrifice was given in which the blood would make the atonement (Lev 17:11). Thus Mark's Jesus goes on to further identify his blood as that "which is poured out in behalf of many" (Mark 14:24).

While Mark does not explicitly state what "poured out in behalf of many" means, it can be deduced from the imagery of the Passover as well as the numerous other sacrifices known to the Jews. Since it is Jesus' "blood of the [new] covenant which is poured out in behalf of many," one can see the imagery as one remembers that it was traditionally a lamb, or other sacrificial animal, which would have its blood poured out for another.³⁹ A stronger imagery becomes apparent as one realizes that often at least part of the sacrificial animal would be eaten and Jesus has already identified his body as the bread. In the apparent absence of a lamb at this Passover meal, Jesus is identifying himself as the bread and commanding it to be eaten. He is also identifying himself as the blood, and thus Mark has Jesus identifying himself as the paschal lamb.

Besides the significant allusion to Exod 24:6–8, Mark 14:24 has several other strong references to the Old Testament. Continuing in the covenant motif, both Jer 31:31–34 and Zech 9:11 are echoed here.⁴⁰ In Jer 31:31–34, God has promised Israel that he would establish a new covenant. Since the blood of the covenant referred to here in Jeremiah is alluding back to the Sinai covenant, this v. would easily have come into the minds of the twelve. Thus, it appears that Mark may like us to see here that in Jesus this promise will be fulfilled.⁴¹ Perkins states that "In Zech 9:11, Yahweh speaks to the daughter of Zion/Jerusalem, promising to liberate her captives 'by the blood of your covenant.'"⁴² This liberation fits right in with this pericope being a part of a Passover meal. Therefore, Mark may here desire Jesus' cup pronouncement to indicate the fulfillment of another Messianic promise. Also, some have seen the phrase "poured out in behalf of many" as being an allusion to the suffering servant of Isa 53.⁴³ If that is the case, then it would be possible that Mark would like us to see Jesus as the servant throughout the entire servant song.

The participle *to ekchunnomenon* (which is poured out) is neuter nominative and, since it is in apposition to *to haima mou* (my blood), specifies that it is Jesus' blood that is being poured out.⁴⁴ Hiebert also points out that the

39. See Mann, *Mark*, 575.

40. See Donahue, *The Gospel of Mark*, 399; Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 393; Hiebert, *Mark*, 352; and Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 507.

41. The fact that the oldest manuscripts of Mark do not include *kainēs* may be problematic. However, the earlier account of Paul in 1 Cor 11 does include *kainēs*; therefore it is still possible that Mark here is alluding to this passage, especially when we look at everything else he appears to be desiring to accomplish.

42. Perkins, "The Gospel of Mark," 704.

43. See Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 392–94; Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 507; Cranfield, *Saint Mark*, 427; and Hiebert, *Mark*, 353.

44. See Donahue, *The Gospel of Mark*, 396 and Hiebert, *Mark*, 352.

present tense of this participle “views the pouring out as a certainty.”⁴⁵ In the passive voice, which *ekchunnomenon* is, it can have a meaning of “to give oneself totally in commitment, give oneself up to, dedicate oneself” (original emphasis).⁴⁶ This alternate definition grants further enlightenment as to how Jesus views his blood. His blood is not just poured out in a sacrificial sense, but has been willfully committed and dedicated by him for many.⁴⁷

Verse 25 begins with Jesus saying, *amēn*.⁴⁸ Mark then moves into Jesus uttering an emphatic triple negation,⁴⁹ emphasizing that he will not drink the “fruit of the vine (wine) until that day when I will drink [it] new in the kingdom of God.” Here, Lane suggests that Jesus actually abstained from drinking what would have been the fourth cup of Passover; which would have concluded the Passover fellowship.⁵⁰ Lane suggests that the significance can be found in the interpretations of what the cup meant: “I will take you for my people and I will be your God.”⁵¹ Thus this cup will be the one which Jesus will drink at the messianic banquet. Lane concludes his remarks stating that v. 25 “constitutes the solemn pledge that the fourth cup will be extended and the unfinished meal completed in the consummation, when Messiah eats with redeemed sinners in the Kingdom of God.”⁵² If Lane’s understanding is correct, then the Markan Jesus is identifying himself as the redeeming Messiah.

Only the first part of v. 26 is pertinent to the passage concerning the institution of the Lord’s Supper. The reference to singing a hymn, in the context of this being a Passover meal, would signify that this hymn would be part of the Hallel.⁵³ The Hallel, Ps 113–18, were divided and sung both before and after the Passover meal. The singing of the second half, 115–18, signified the conclusion of the table-fellowship.⁵⁴ The importance of this verse is described by Witherington: “This reference supports the view that Jesus partook of no ordinary meal on the last night of his earthly life, but rather of a celebratory and sacred one.”⁵⁵ In reading Ps 118, the imagery of what Jesus is about to do becomes strikingly apparent. It is with this verse on his lips that he heads for the Mount of Olives.⁵⁶

45. Hiebert, *Mark*, 352.

46. W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 312.

47. See Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 386, 88, 94.

48. See Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 394; Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 158.

49. See Hiebert, *Mark*, 353.

50. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 508.

51. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 508.

52. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 508–09.

53. See Mann, *Mark*, 581.

54. See Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 509.

55. Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 376.

56. See Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 509.

Jesus Is the Sacrifice

As recorded by Mark, Jesus equates himself with the paschal lamb. Mark's use of Old Testament events and history portrays Jesus' actions as deliberate and premeditated. Jesus was going to introduce a new covenant of which the twelve were to be major advocates. Though Mark portrays, through the pericopes sandwiching this one, that the twelve seemingly failed to acknowledge exactly what was going on at the time, Mark likely did know the twelve had soon after felt the impact and weight of each word Jesus spoke.⁵⁷ With all of the Old Testament allusions together with the biographical nature of this gospel, Mark uses the institution of the Last Supper to further explain who Jesus is and what he came to do.

57. This is evidenced in that Mark likely knew of the early Christian Last Supper tradition that appears in 1 Corinthians as well as in that he seems to have been writing in such a way that his audience would see the early disciples and subsequently will go and do better.

A DEFENSIVE OFFENSE: INFANTRY TACTICS OF THE EARLY BYZANTINE ARMY

GRANT HARWARD

After the disaster inflicted upon the Romans at Adrianople in August 378 ce by the Goths, the Roman leaders in the Eastern Empire had to reorganize their army and expand their cavalry arm to meet this new threat. The increasing importance and even dominance of Byzantine cavalry in their military system could easily eclipse the role of Byzantine infantry. However, heavily armored, well-trained, and organized infantry remained the mainstay of the Byzantine army, without which the improvements in Byzantine cavalry would have been useless. These infantry formations were capable of effectively defeating mounted nomadic charges but normally unable to annihilate them. However, if properly supported by cavalry, they could shatter enemy cavalry formations, which would then be enveloped and crushed between the combined weight of Byzantine cavalry and infantry.

The early Byzantine army is rooted in the Roman military disaster at Adrianople on 9 August 378 ce. This battle highlights the two major flaws of the Roman army. Upon seeing the larger Visigothic wagon, “the emperor, with wanton impetuosity, resolved on attacking them instantly.”¹ Herein lies the root cause of most of the Roman army’s greatest defeats: reckless commanders who impudently committed their forces too early, hoping to overwhelm the enemy with the sheer weight of infantry. The disaster at Cannae against Hannibal in 216 b.ce, the debacle in the Teutoburg forest in 9 ce, the ignoble defeat at Carrhae in 53 b.ce, and the fresh defeat at Adrianople were all led by glory-seeking commanders, rushing headlong into battle, in unfamiliar terrain, with little reliable information on the tactics, dispositions, or capabilities of the enemy. After the infantry had been fully committed and order had disintegrated into chaos “the cavalry of the Goths had returned with Alatheus and Saphrax, and with them a battalion of Alans; these descending from the mountains like a thunderbolt, spread confusion and slaughter among all whom in their

1. Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Roman History of Ammianus Marcellinus* (trans. C. D. Yonge; London: G. Bell & Sons, 1911), 609–11.

rapid charge they came across.”² The surprised and disorganized Romans were encircled and completely destroyed because the brash Valens failed to hold back a reserve to meet any unexpected Visigothic attack.

The previous passage illustrates the other traditional weakness of the Roman army which was had plagued it from its very beginnings: its weak cavalry arm. Its defeats by Hannibal and the Parthians were dependent largely on skillful usage of mounted lancers against the slower Roman formations. Only when effective *auxilia* of Numidian cavalry were employed by the Romans did they finally defeat Hannibal. When cavalry enveloped infantry they would usually panic, huddle together seeking protection, and then be slaughtered where they stood. As Ammianus Marcellinus described in his account of the battle of Adrianople:

Our left wing had advanced actually up to the wagons, with the intent to push on still further *if they were properly supported*; but they were deserted by the rest of the cavalry, and so pressed upon by the superior numbers of the enemy, that they were overwhelmed and beaten down, like the ruin of a vast rampart.³

The heavy, disciplined, and organized infantry of the Roman army was effective against the forest nomads of Gaul, Germania, and Briton, in part, because they faced armies which were made up primarily of infantry with limited cavalry contingents. The Roman army's history is filled with victories against these infantry based armies where their strategic ineptness, impudent boldness, and weak cavalry could be overcome by the tactical organization and discipline of the Roman infantry soldier. However, the old style Roman army could not effectively match the mobility and strength of mounted armies. Roman infantry left unsupported could retain their cohesion for a time, but after being surrounded, under constant attack from all sides, and without any hope that of own cavalry rescuing them, they would be cut down by the enemy. The Byzantines had to reorganize their military to be able to keep the enemy at a distance and prevent any catastrophic flanking.

The Justinian age, from 527–565 ce, marked a resurgence of Byzantine military power and its success can be attributed to the reforms enacted within the Byzantine army.⁴ The *Strategikon*, attributed to the emperor Maurice who began his rule only 17 years after the death of Justinian in 582, describes a completely revitalized army which had risen to the challenge of defeating Vandals, Goths, Avars, and even Persians. The military organization advocated by Maurice and other Byzantine military authors is one that stresses the importance of cavalry and defensive tactics to guard against enemy attacks but is clearly dependent on traditional heavy infantry and combined arms.

2. Marcellinus, *The Roman History of Ammianus Marcellinus*, 611.

3. Marcellinus, *The Roman History of Ammianus Marcellinus*, 612–13; emphasis added.

4. John Haldon, *State, Army and Society in Byzantium: Approaches to Military, Social and Administrative History, 6th–12th Centuries* (Great Britain: Variorum, 1995), 5–6.

“The Romans conquered all nations chiefly through military training.”⁵ So begins Vegetius’ treatise on Roman military matters in late antiquity. Thorough training allowed the Byzantines to effectively control their armies and execute complicated maneuvers on the battlefield. Without this training the Byzantine army could not have hoped to defeat its enemies. “For in the contest of battle a few trained men are more ready for victory, whereas an untried and unskilled multitude is always subject to slaughter.”⁶ The most important result of this training in the Byzantine army was the tactical options given to the Byzantine phalanx.

“A phalanx is a formation of armed men designed to hold off the enemy. It may assume a variety of shapes: the circle, the lozenge, the rhomboid, the wedge, the hollow wedge, and many others which we shall not bother to discuss in this work.”⁷ The phalanx was subdivided and organized almost ad nauseam. This diversity is an indicator that the Byzantine phalanx was not at all the bulky, unwieldy phalanx used by in the Greek world by Alexander’s successors. Rather the Byzantine phalanxes were a continuation of the maniples tradition of the Old Roman army, able to subdivide their units quickly, change positions, reform lines, create new tactical formations, exploit holes in the enemy’s line, maintain proper intervals, and react quickly to enemy threats. This flexibility is what made the Byzantine infantry so dangerous on the battlefield.⁸

The phalanx was the first and last line defense for the Byzantine army. This was because the heavy infantry,⁹ the *protostate*,¹⁰ played two important roles in battle. The most obvious was to repel enemy charges by presenting an impregnable wall of spears and shields to the advancing foe. In this aspect the Byzantine phalanx was similar to the Old Greek phalanx, but the spears used by the Byzantines were only two meters long,¹¹ a third of the length of the Old Greek *sarissa*, and the depth of the phalanx was no more than 16 men deep because the Byzantine commanders had decided that if the phalanx was any deeper it was a less effective use of manpower.¹² The heavy infantry were armored with helmet, mail jacket, greaves, and a *spatha* as their secondary weapon. The second role of the heavy infantry was as missile troops. Each man had a bow and quiver with 30 to 40 arrows and as the enemy began his attack he was to lodge his spear in the ground and begin raining missiles into

5. Flavius Vegetius Renatus, *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, trans. Leo F. Stelten (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1990), 11.

6. Renatus, *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 11.

7. Anonymous, “Strategy: *Anonymi Peri strategias*, The Anonymous Byzantine Treatise on Strategy,” in *Three Byzantine Military Treatises* (ed. and trans. G. T. Dennis; Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1985), 46.

8. John F. Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World* (London: Routledge, 1999), 192.

9. Maurice, *Strategikon*, trans. George T. Dennis (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 139.

10. Anonymous, “Strategy: *Anonymi Peri strategias*,” 49.

11. I. P. Stephenson, *Romano-Byzantine Infantry Equipment* (Stroud, Engl.: Tempus, 2006), 83.

12. Maurice, *Strategikon*, 142.

the enemy.¹³ Only after “the enemy’s horses have been shot at for a while and they begin to slow down their forward progress, then the infantry should pick up their spears from the ground, hold them tightly, and with increased energy and courage they should advance against the enemy.”¹⁴ This was an improvement on the old *gladius* and *pilum* combination used by the Old Roman legion. The longer thrusting spears allowed the infantry to engage the enemy at a distance and hold them off with a wall of bristling spear points. Procopius records the incredible ability of even a few heavy spearmen, on good ground, to withstand repeated cavalry charges and wreak havoc among the charging horsemen.

The horsemen accordingly charged upon them with great hubbub and shouting, intending to capture them at the first cry, but the Romans drew up together into a small space and, making a barrier with their shields and thrusting forward their spears, held their ground. Then the Goths came on, charging in haste and thus getting themselves into disorder, while the fifty, pushing with their shields and thrusting very rapidly with their spears, which were nowhere allowed to interfere one with the other, defended themselves most vigorously against their assailants; they purposely made a din with their shields, terrifying the horse, on the one hand, by this means, and the men, on the other, with the points of their spears.¹⁵

This passage also illustrates another important result of training: the maintenance of proper intervals. There were three basic intervals: normal intervals for marching, tight intervals to repel cavalry charges, and loose intervals to allow light infantry to filter through the phalanx if necessary. It is clear that that these intervals could have only been maintained by well-disciplined troops. Precise interval keeping also allowed the infantry to fully employ their multitude of missile weapons.¹⁶ This evolution in dual role heavy infantry was an important development which allowed the Byzantine army to meet the mounted armies threatening the empire in the sixth century ce

However, heavy infantry only formed the outer shell of the Byzantine line. Only first four ranks, the last rank, and the flank files were made up of these spear wielding infantry. The center of the phalanx was made up of regular infantry, for “what use will a set of long spears in the middle of the phalanx be to the *protostate* who are engaged in hand-to-hand fighting with the enemy?”¹⁷ These men did not wear greaves, nor the heavy mail coat, but wore lighter leather armor, which allowed for greater movement. These soldiers filled the gap between the long-range arrows and close-range spears. They carried an assortment of missile weapons: javelins, throwing axes, slings, and, most interestingly,

13. Procopius, *History of the Wars*, trans. H.B. Dewing (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1919), 5.358.

14. Anonymous, “Strategy: *Anonymi Peri strategias*,” 111.

15. Procopius, *History of the Wars*, 5.357–58 (emphasis added).

16. Stephenson, *Romano-Byzantine Infantry Equipment*, 149.

17. Anonymous, “Strategy: *Anonymi Peri strategias*,” 55.

lead weighted darts. The *spiculum* and the *gaesum* were lighter versions of the classic *pilum* but with greater range.¹⁸ Some men were armed with *francisci*, which were throwing axes that could shatter shields at 4 meters and were still lethal at 8 and 12 meters.¹⁹ Slingers were also often used. These fist-sized rocks could be hurled the impressive distance of 150 to 400 meters and were often valued more than archers because of their ability to deliver an incredible amount of blunt trauma to the enemy at long distances. The *plumbatae* were short arrows, or darts, weighted with lead and thrown underhand to create an ancient mortarlike weapon that would plunge down vertically behind the enemies shields and hit them in their unprotected heads and shoulders.²⁰ This weapon had a range up to 60 meters.²¹ These darts were held, like the javelins, in the left hand which held the round, medium shield of the regular infantry. Lastly, light infantry armed with small shields, daggers, and bows would support the main phalanx body.²² With so many different types of weapons it is clear why the soldiers in the phalanx had to be properly trained to keep intervals. Men standing shoulder to shoulder could not employ these types of weapons. The slingers, ax-throwers, *plumbatae* troops, and archers needed space around them to employ their weapons. The ranks and files would have kept proper distance from each other in order to allow the missile armed infantry to work their deadly arts. Maurice states that the proper proportion of archers to infantry should be one light infantryman for every four heavy infantryman, “so that if the heavy infantry ranks are reduced to four deep in a file, there will be one archer behind it.”²³ It is obvious that the importance of missile weapons had been recognized by the Byzantines. These missile armed soldiers could inflict immense physical and psychological damage even against the most determined enemy cavalry charge.²⁴

It is interesting to note that the *protostate* were a throwback to the *triarii* of the old “Polybian” legions that existed at the time of the Punic Wars. The *triarii* were the older veterans who had occupied the last line in the three line Roman army of the Republic. Unlike the forward lines the *triarii* were armed with long, thrusting spears and larger shields, just like the heavily armed *protostate*. However, the roles which they filled were completely different. The *triarii* had been the last line of defense. If the first assaults had been halted and routed by the enemy the shattered line was to filter through and take refuge behind the great wall of shields and spears created by the *triarii*. The Byzantines had taken this old defensive support unit and had put it in the front ranks of their phalanx and given it the responsibility to halt the enemy. It is plain to see why these units were favored over the old legionaries: they could use their spears to halt a charge, while

18. Stephenson, *Romano-Byzantine Infantry Equipment*, 111.

19. Stephenson, *Romano-Byzantine Infantry Equipment*, 120.

20. Renatus, *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 37.

21. Stephenson, *Romano-Byzantine Infantry Equipment*, 117–19.

22. Maurice, *Strategikon*, 139.

23. Maurice, *Strategikon*, 143.

24. Procopius, *History of the Wars*, 5.378.

legionaries armed with the pilium and the short gladius had to engage the enemy at a much closer range and without the same defensible power of that imposing wall of bristling spears. Soldiers assaulted on all sides by cavalry could become “so huddled together that a soldier could hardly draw his sword, or withdraw his hand after he had once stretched it out,”²⁵ because they could not distance themselves from the enemy. With tactical mobility and training negated, they became an easy target for the enemy. The regular infantry, which had been the main offensive arm of the Roman army during both the Republic and Imperial ages, was now relegated to supporting the *protostate*. The old, lighter-armed soldiers just could not stand up as effectively to the charges of Visigothic charges. This is a clear move to a more defensive formation to meet the needs of the changing battlefield.

Now, it easy to visualize the effect a well-trained phalanx could have on a cavalry charge. The charging cavalry would come under fire by long-range arrows, bouncing off their armor, hitting unprotected limbs, striking their horses, inflicting wounds, and causing panic. Soon, large stones hurled by slingers would ricochet off shields, dent helmets, knock men off balance, and crush bones. The cavalry would begin to become confused and the cohesion of their lines would falter. As the enemy grew closer, unseen darts would suddenly bombard them, penetrating mail and weak points in the armor, injuring horses and men alike. As this hail of missiles distracted the riders and panicked the horses; the air would be rent with the high-pitched screams of wounded horses, groans of dying men, and war cries of the attacking Goths. However, other than the sound of barked orders and the exertions of the missile troops, the Byzantine line would remain completely silent. At close range a spattering of spinning axes would knock men off their horses, crack shields, and stun the riders. Suddenly the enemy line would let loose a cry, “O God!” and contort, contract, and transform into a solid wall of bristling spears.²⁶ The horses would shy away, riders would be speared off their horses, unable to break the Byzantine line, and would be forced to retreat or reform. To pass through this maelstrom intact and carry the day would have been nearly impossible.

Clearly no intelligent Avar leader or Persian general would send their cavalry against a formed line of Byzantine infantry, properly trained, armed, and in good spirits. Instead the classic tactics of a mounted army was to envelope the enemy, avoiding a frontal charge, attacking the flanks and rear, causing panic and routing the enemy. The Byzantines recognized the need for effective cavalry to help augment the infantry and allow a decisive blow to be dealt to the enemy. Infantry were just too slow to envelop mobile cavalry armies. They could defeat them but not destroy them. The Byzantines introduced extensive reforms that greatly strengthened their cavalry, which began playing a very important role in the Byzantine military system. However, it is clear

25. Renatus, *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, 617.

26. Maurice, *Strategikon*, 146.

from the sources that cavalry had not supplanted infantry, but remained the backbone of the Byzantine army well into the seventh century ce.²⁷ The early Byzantine army sought to find an effective combination of cavalry and infantry.

“To form the whole army simply in one line facing the enemy for a general cavalry battle and to hold nothing in reserve for various eventualities in case of a reverse is the mark of an inexperienced and absolutely reckless man.”²⁸ The multiple-line system of the Old Roman army was modified by the Byzantines to create an effective defensive formation with the option of a powerful offensive punch. “To draw up the whole army in one battle line, especially if it is composed of lancers, is, in our opinion, to invite a host of evils.”²⁹ These evils were the reasons for the multiple-line system. It kept the line shorter so it was easier to command and control. It also allowed the army to retain tactical cohesion. Equally as important, this created a surplus of soldiers which could be used to create a second or even a third line to support the front line. The width of the front line was to match that of the enemy unless it thinned the ranks to the point when they were dangerously thin. The second line would be placed a bow shot behind the first line in order to be close enough to support the first line but remain out of range of enemy missiles. If the first line broke it could retreat through the second line and use it to take shelter and reform within the confines of an unbroken and unbloodied line.³⁰ This support line could also be turned around and guard against any cavalry assaults on the rear of the Byzantine army. The general’s position would have been at the center of the second line where he could best see and control the battle, yet remain protected.³¹ The last line was not really a line in the strictest sense. It was a small cadre of cavalry and “a few soldiers, both heavy and light infantry with their own officers, not really needed in the battle line,”³² placed far to the rear of the first two lines, which acted as a kind of tactical reserve or a quick reaction force to any crisis on the battlefield. It could plug gaps in the line, check any envelopments around the flanks, or frustrate any hidden ambushes against the Byzantine rear. This system is a clear evolution of the original three line system of the Old Roman army, but is much more defensively oriented and tactically effective against sweeping envelopments and ambushes, which were the bread and butter of the mounted armies.

Most importantly this system was effective in keeping the Byzantine commander from committing his troops too early. Over and over in the *Strategikon*, the emphasis is placed on an orderly attack only after the enemy had been harassed and misinformed. Even if the enemy broke before the

27. Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World*, 193, 196.

28. Maurice, *Strategikon*, 23.

29. Maurice, *Strategikon*, 23–24.

30. Maurice, *Strategikon*, 24, 51.

31. Maurice, *Strategikon*, 33.

32. Maurice, *Strategikon*, 141.

onslaught of the the Byzantine infantry, the commander was to keep his soldiers from pursuing recklessly, breaking ranks, and becoming a disorganized mob. Rather the cavalry was to run down the enemy while the two lines of infantry were to remain a cohesive unit in case the enemy flight was only a ruse and would turn back and try to break the line again. The second line was only to be committed if the first line had completely disintegrated and had to be relieved. The need to remain uncommitted in Byzantine tactics is illustrated that even after a defeat the second line was still supposed to be relatively unscathed and able to replace the shattered first line and conduct offensive operations if viable.³³

This defensive orientation dominated Byzantine tactical thinking, protecting it from surprise envelopments, ambushes, and feigned retreats, but an offensive spirit was cultivated by Byzantine leaders and the army itself remained offensively potent. "If our army seems to be in better condition, we should move toward battle, *but without underestimating the enemy*."³⁴ This statement works well as a maxim for the model Byzantine commander. The army should always move to battle and make the enemy react to it rather than be caught in the enemies own surprises. However, not every Byzantine commander was a Belisarius or Narses, who masterfully balanced their offensive power with the necessary protective defensive tactics. With so much emphasis on defense and the movements of the enemy, many commanders could easily lose sight of the offensive capabilities of the army and not exploit the weaknesses of the enemy to the fullest. Maurice openly berates passive commanders who, after routing the enemy, do not pursue their utter destruction. For,

By not seizing the opportunity, these people only cause themselves more trouble and place the ultimate results in doubt. One should not slacken after driving them back just a short distance, nor, after so much hard work and the dangers of war, should one jeopardize the success of the whole campaign because of lack of persistence. *In war, as in hunting, a near miss is still a complete miss.*³⁵

Many commanders probably feared the risks involved with pursuing the enemy. This was compounded if the commander did not have a grasp on how to properly employ his cavalry and only used it in short envelopments of the enemy line and not in the destructive pursuit of broken enemy infantry and cavalry. The *Strategikon* attempts to educate commanders on how to properly employ their cavalry units in concert with the infantry.³⁶ Even if the Byzantines could muster only a force large enough to harrass the enemy columns and their lines of logistics in hit and run ambushes; the emperor Nikephoros says that "the general, therefore, must never let them return home unscathed."³⁷ Therefore,

33. Maurice, *Strategikon*, 73.

34. Anonymous, "Strategy: *Anonymi Peri strategias*," 103; emphasis added.

35. Maurice, *Strategikon*, 74; emphasis added.

36. Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World*, 196.

37. Emperor Lord Nikephoros, "Skirmishing," in *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*,

while much of the Byzantine tactical formations, training, and doctrine were more defensively oriented, they still considered their field armies “the means by which one retaliates against his opponents.”³⁸

The Battle of Taginae is an example of the destructive capabilities of the Byzantine army when under the command of a gifted commander who could effectively use his combined arms to halt the enemy and then completely destroy it. Narses faced the Gothic king Totila. Narses was able to obtain a good defensive position and formed his line with his Lombard allies dismounted in the center and formed into a dense phalanx.³⁹ This was designed to keep them from riding away from any enemy charge. Regular Byzantine infantry were placed on either side in their phalanxes with archers on the both wings of the line. A thousand were placed on the left wing with 500 acting as the tactical reserve.⁴⁰ The opening movements of the battle were over a hill which dominated the Byzantine left. Narses hurriedly rushed 50 heavy infantry to take the hill and deny it to the enemy. Totila ordered repeated cavalry charges on the hill, but the infantry showered the enemy with missiles and then held them off with their long spears. Wave after wave of Gothic cavalry broke against the infantry, unable to turn the Byzantine flank.⁴¹ Totila delayed battle until he received further reinforcements. Narses had no reason to break from his position and waited out his enemy, making his men eat in formation to keep them from being surprised by an unexpected enemy charge, and knowing full well that he could not be defeated where he was. Totila was finally forced to attack en masse. He concentrated his attack on a mass cavalry charge against the Byzantine center. He probably hoped to close as quickly as possible against the Lombards in the center who were not normally foot soldiers, untrained in Byzantine phalanx tactics, and were the most likely to break against a determined charge. The Lombards may have been placed there as a trap laid by Narses to lure the Goths to attack the center, and he used the same formation again later at the Battle of Casilinum. The Gothic cavalry charge came under immediate attack by the Byzantine archers and the other missile troops in the phalanx, which produced a terrible crossfire as the Byzantine line bent into a crescent and enveloped the Gothic cavalry. The Gothic charge was halted immediately and decimated.⁴² A general advance by the whole Byzantine line shattered the dispirited Gothic army and resulted in a general slaughter in which Totila was killed.

The Early Byzantine army was less a shadow of the Old Roman army and more an army in its prime, the equivalent and possibly the superior of the Old Roman army. It had reinvented itself in some ways and developed a much stronger cavalry arm but still relied on the traditional training, subdivision, dual

(ed. and trans. G. T. Dennis; Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1985) pg. 159

38. Anonymous, “Strategy: *Anonymi Peri Strategias*,” 21.

39. Procopius, *History of the Wars*, 5.370.

40. Procopius, *History of the Wars*, 5.370.

41. Procopius, *History of the Wars*, 5.357–58.

42. Procopius, *History of the Wars*, 5.378.

armed soldiers, basic tactical formations, and offensive drive that had made Rome a world superpower. This new army now protected the perpetuity of the Byzantine Empire long into the Middle Ages.

HERETICS AND HERESY: DID THEY EXIST BEFORE IRENAEUS?

LUCAS HILL

Irenaeus inherited a region torn apart from barbarian invasions, persecutions, and religious sectional strife when he took his position as Bishop of Lyons in the late second century.¹ These local difficulties created a need for him to strengthen his own position of authority and led him to formulate his own conception of orthodoxy, which for him, eliminated all differing opinions. He continued Justin Martyr's method of pointing out apostates based upon a self-perceived orthodoxy and worked to spread his viewpoints to the rest of the Christian world.² Irenaeus wrote *Against Heresies* as a way to label and define various sects of Christians (especially that of Valentinian Gnosticism) as heretics or members of an apostate group that did not believe or practice the rule of faith defined by him.³

The negative usage of the term *hairesis* has persisted into modern times, and it is still viewed in an anti-orthodox light, providing a sense of right or wrong in its application. It is therefore difficult to discuss this topic because of our definitional bias, problems associated with ecclesiastical foundation and orthodoxy (determining who was able to apply the heretical label), and what it actually meant in early Christianity when the word was used. Understanding early Christians' conceptions of sectarian deviants will thus allow for a better comprehension of

1. Walter H. Wagner, *After the Apostles: Christianity in the Second Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 206–7.

2. For example, Irenaeus wrote to Bishop Victor in Rome to remove Valentinian Christians from the church. Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 389.

3. Elaine Pagels discussed the commonly held opinion that “heresy” was invented by Justin Martyr, using *Dialogue with Trypho* 35.1–3 as the usual proof for this claim. She however, argued that Irenaeus faced a different situation entirely and was indeed the architect behind defining different heretical groups, not just lumping them all together as Justin did. She also pointed out that Irenaeus was not as concerned with differing opinions of doctrine, rather, with different forms of practice and ritual. “Irenaeus, the ‘Canon of Truth,’ and ‘The Gospel of John’: ‘Making a Difference’ Through Hermeneutics and Ritual,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 56 (November 2002): 339–47.

the evolution of the church. This paper aims at determining if the negative usage of *hairesis* existed before Irenaeus, by examining its definitional usage and textual frequencies in texts before his expansive project to remove these falsehoods from the church. Heresies existed as early as the apostolic age (with some aspects of Irenaeus' definition), but they must be viewed in the proper relation to church structure and definitional context, without Irenaeus' meaning presupposed.

Defining αἵρεσις

Irenaeus would have agreed with Bart Ehrman's sarcastic statement, "Orthodoxy was the original form of Christian belief, held by the majority of believers from the beginning, and heresy was a false perversion of it, created by willful individuals with small and pestiferous followings."⁴ Irenaeus' main target was Gnosticism and wrote his work on heresies mostly as a way to counter their doctrines, thus protecting the unsuspecting Christians lured in by their lies. He called out twenty-one heretical groups by name and based his doctrine on apostolic grounding, claiming that the heretics lacked any link to apostolic foundations.⁵ He took liberty in defining *hairesis*, but it did not always denote the same meaning as he viewed it.

The term *hairesis* comes from the verb *haireō*, which literally means "to take with the hand," "seize," or "to take for oneself."⁶ The middle-passive usage of the verb is translated as "making a choice," whether in politics or other circumstances. Both the active and middle-passive aspects of this verb carried over into the term *hairesis*. The lexical entry for this word can mean "a taking," "a choice" (political or otherwise), and "a sect," whether philosophical or religious by nature.⁷ In book 2 of Polybius' *Histories*, he used the term as a single policy chosen by the Achaean League by which it would conduct its affairs in the Mediterranean.⁸ Later, he used the term in context of choosing the proper methodology of conducting historical inquiries and in another location, how the Aetolians had two choices in which to secure peace.⁹ Philo also used this term in context of how God chose priests to carry out sacrifices on behalf of the people.¹⁰

Ancient authors also commonly used *hairesis* to discuss a sect clinging to a particular set of ideas. Philo did not limit his definition of *hairesis* to making choices, but also used this word in terms of defining a particular way of think-

4. Bart Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battle for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 164.

5. Wagner, *After the Apostles*, 215, 18–19.

6. Liddell and Scott, "αἵρεω," *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th ed: Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 41.

7. Liddell and Scott, "αἵρεσις," *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 41.

8. Polybius, *Histories* 2.42.3.1.

9. Polybius, *Histories* 6.2.9.1. and 21.4.12.3.

10. Philo, *On the Life of Moses* 2.160.1.

ing (i.e., a philosophy or sect).¹¹ Strabo used this same definition in describing the Apollodoreian sect, a following of the rhetorician Apollodorus.¹² Josephus continued this aspect of *hairesis* by using this word to describe the sect of the Pharisees in a discussion about Hyrcanus.¹³ These authors were close in terms of time to the early Christian writers and help establish how this word was used anciently, especially Josephus and Philo, who were contemporaries of the earliest Christian writers. The “sect” definition had exacting effects on early Christianity, as various sects surfaced and clung to their views of a correct doctrine. The formation of sects ultimately led Irenaeus and others to define and label other groups as incorrect. The desire of a universal church thus paved the way to destroy other challenges to the realization of the proto-orthodox goal.

The general sense of seizing or grasping something must not be forgotten in discussing the usage of this word. A sect, defined as a *hairesis*, is in its simplest usage a group that seizes upon a certain doctrine, way of life, or other distinguishing feature. This definition does not denote a false or a correct meaning, but rather qualifies a certain group in terms of what they hold close. Irenaeus turned the term *hairesis* into something evil and thus changed the more general usage to fit his theological purposes, helping to establish proto-orthodox supremacy. These sects challenged his authority and theology, so he articulated the negative connotation of the word and used it to define these apostate groups. Ancient authors had already established this term as something that separated a group or individuals and it only needed the seedbed of self-proclaimed true doctrine to give it a bad image.

Church Structure: Orthodoxy?

The importance of determining if there was an ecclesiastical position in which to base claims of heresy upon (at least in terms of Irenaeus’ definition) is just as essential at looking at the proper definitional context in which the word *hairesis* developed. Various groups of Christians existed in the early centuries of the church, but this does not mean that they looked upon each other as non-Christian just because they shared different opinions. When these groups started to view each other as non-Christian or apostate (as in Irenaeus’ case), the definition of *hairesis* began to change, as righteous and evil attributes became attached. The refinement of doctrinal opinions coincided with an establishing church authority (i.e., the advancement of proto-orthodoxy). The question must be discussed whether there was an emerging central authority in Christianity before Irenaeus which could examine doctrines and label some false. This does not mean that there was a catholic church during Irenaeus’ lifetime, but to be able to label a group as apostate there had to be something or someone to apply this label, if we are going to retain his definition. Orthodoxy had not yet

11. Philo, *On the Contemplative Life* 29.2.

12. Strabo, *Geographica* 13.4.3.16.

13. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 13.288.2.

conquered the other sects of Christianity and correct doctrine was a matter of personal opinion (or of a group). Irenaeus mostly helped define what was not true rather than trying to state proper theology. If there was no central authority (or at least one perceived on an individual level) in which to base a heresy claim, the usage of *hairesis* cannot line up with Irenaeus' definition. This does not negate the existence of heresies. It only shows that the definition changed with varying levels of church structure (real or perceived).

Two general time periods must be addressed—apostolic and apostolic fathers. These two periods line up with the textual examples that are available to examine the heresy issue. The apostolic age deserves special attention because there are various scholarly opinions that explain what the ecclesiastical structure was in the early church.¹⁴ Unfortunately, there is a limited amount of data to be able to draw any certain conclusions about church structure in the first two centuries. This paper will provide no definitive answer to the authority question, since it would require a lengthy discussion and would lack firm argument. It will however demonstrate that there was some type of church structure during the lifetime of the apostles and by the time of the apostolic fathers, that structure became murky.¹⁵

The Gospel of Matthew has readily been used to discuss early church structure since Christ delivered authority to Peter (Matt 16:18–19 KJV). Peter (or at least the rock) was the foundation to build *mou tēn ekklēsiān* (my [Christ's] church) and he was given *tan kleidan tēn basileian* (the keys of the kingdom) with the purpose of furthering Christ's work when Christ left mortality.¹⁶ This alone is not enough evidence to draw any certain conclusions, but it does show that Peter had influence in early Christianity,¹⁷ since he drew his authority from Jesus Christ. In Peter's epistles, he also spoke as though he had authority, using his title as an apostle to address his audience.¹⁸ Paul likewise appealed to his office to show that he had authority to instruct various churches to adhere to sound doctrine.¹⁹ This is quite different from what we find in the writings of the apostolic fathers. Some may claim ties to apostolic foundations, but they are not able to use the same title or authority in their exhortations.

There are also two accounts in Acts that enable an early structure to surface. As the church grew, temporal matters of the church were handed

14. Bart Ehrman argues that orthodoxy was not created in the apostolic age but was a later development centuries later. For him there was no firm structure in which to hold an orthodox doctrine. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 170.

15. For example, there were 15 to 20 house churches in Rome, which led to further fractionation as argued by Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 364.

16. All Greek New Testament quotations will be from UBS4.

17. This is also shown in how some of the major centers of Christianity, such as Rome and Antioch, claimed their authority through Peter or other apostles. It seems that the early church fathers looked back to a time when authority existed and rode on the apostles' coat-tails to affirm their own position.

18. 1 Pet 1:1, *Petron apostolon Iēsou Xristou* (Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ), and 2 Pet 1:1.

19. Eph 1:1 and Gal 1:1 are examples of this.

over to seven men, allowing the apostles to preach and travel as Christ had commissioned them (Acts 6:1–8). Likewise, there arose a need to discuss the matter of Gentile conversion in the church and a council was convened to come to an agreement on how to handle this new aspect of growth (Acts 15:1–29). Again, these examples by themselves are not enough to prove that a universal church structure existed, but it does show that there were individuals, namely apostles, that had authority to issue instruction in terms of doctrine and other ecclesiastical necessities.

The writings of the apostolic fathers are quite different from their predecessors in terms of authority. Clement, writing to the Romans, advised the people to *dexasthe tēn symboulēn hēmōn*²⁰ but did not give any indication that he had the authority to force his opinions on the members in Corinth. He only gave what he thought would benefit them, but he failed to possess any authoritative stamp like the epistles of Peter or Paul. Ignatius also stayed away from claiming authority over the various cities in which he addressed. In his letter to the Ephesians he made it clear that he could not command them the same way the apostles did.²¹ Later, in his letter to the Trallians he again stated his lack of authoritative base to give commands to these Christians.²² He was not an apostle and did not attempt to exist on the same authoritative level with them. Lastly, in his letter to the Romans, he continued to support his other statements on authority explaining that *ouch ōs Petros kai Paulos diatassomai humin, ekeinoi apostoloi*.²³ Polycarp likewise mentioned that the Philippians only invited him to speak and did not attempt to justify his claims of correct doctrine through authority.²⁴

New Testament Evidences

The New Testament provides the earliest documents to discuss the first decades of Christianity and the issue of heresy under scrutiny. Although the frequency of the term *hairesis* in the New Testament is low, the few instances that exist still provide an excellent window into this discussion. *Hairesis* had two general connotations in the text. The first had a strong foundation in the other ways that this term surfaced in ancient writings. Soon after Christ went back into heaven, the apostles preached and caused a stir amongst the leadership of the Jews. In one instance where the leaders imprisoned the apostles, the high priest and those of his entourage were described as sect of the Sadducees (Acts 5:17).²⁵ Paul, while recounting his life to Agrippa, also used this term as he described that he lived after the strict sect of the Pharisees

20. Clement, 1 Clem 58.2 (Ehrman, LCL). He translated this as “take our advice.”

21. Ignatius, *To the Ephesians* 3.1.

22. Ignatius, *To the Trallians* 3.3.

23. Ignatius, *To the Romans* 4.3: “Not as Peter or Paul do I command you. They were apostles.”

24. Polycarp, *To the Philippians* 3.1.

25. *Hē housa hairesis tōn Saddoukaion* (Being a sect of the Sadducees).

(Acts 26:5).²⁶ These instances show how certain sects existed, but were still very much Jewish. There was no labeling of apostasy, but rather a coexisting of differing opinions. It is also convenient that the New Testament writer most competent in the Greek language also contained the majority of *hairesis* found in the New Testament.²⁷

It is even more interesting to see how the New Testament named Christians. In the Jerusalem Council, two major camps developed in terms of opinions about circumcision. The account mentioned that those that supported the mandatory circumcision of Gentile converts were of the believing sect of the Pharisees (Acts 15:5).²⁸ They were still in the conference and were Christians, but they clung to a different ideal or philosophy concerning circumcision. This distinction concerning Gentile converts would eventually cause more problems, but at least for now, the two groups were not separate and each had standing in the council.

Two other instances of this word showed up in Acts and gave some inclination to a negative usage when Jews or Pagans described the Christian sect. In the very last chapter of Acts, the people came to Paul to ask him about his religious convictions. "But we desire to hear of thee . . . as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against" (Acts 28:22). Earlier, in the process of Paul's arrest, he is accused by Tertullus of being a leader of the sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:5). The sect "spoken against" was the Nazarene group, which was still apart of Judaism but had started to challenge basic tenets. The last reference demonstrates the negative title that was associated with the Christian sect and how Paul disrupted Judaism through his preaching. Still, he attracted the gaze of the Jewish leaders, showing that they still saw him as a Jew. If the "Nazarene sect" was completely separated from Judaism, they would not have been concerned with him nor attempt to try him under their law.

The references mentioned so far deal explicitly with *hairesis* defined as a sect with some negativity permeating from the Jews, who felt that the Christian sect was becoming dangerous. The remainder of the occurrences of *hairesis* that are found in the New Testament deal with Christian leaders addressing groups that begin to form in the very earliest days of the church. These groups attracted a negative light, since they held doctrines that were not implicit in Christ's original message (at least from the apostolic standpoint). The first of these is found in 2 Peter 2:1 where he warned the people that some "shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that brought them, and bring

26. *Hoti kata tēn akribestatēn haresin tēs hēmeteras thrēskeias ezēsa Pharisaioi* (According to the strictest sect of our worship I lived as a Pharisee).

27. F. C. Baur and others have argued that Acts was an attempt to combine two very different modes of Christianity and therefore concluded that it is unreliable. Still, it is the only history for this time-period that has survived. Its contributions to the heresy question are therefore important for this discussion. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 171–2.

28. *Echavestēsān de tines tōn apo tēs hareseōs tōn Pharisaion pepisteukotes* . . . (And some of those from the sect of the Pharisees, which had believed, rose up . . .)

upon themselves swift destruction.”²⁹ This is an important passage because Peter uses the adjective *apōleia* to describe *hairesis*. This term literally means “destruction” and this adjective connotes the type of heresy.³⁰ Does this mean that there were non-damnable heresies? We cannot answer that question fully from only one verse, but it is safe to say that Peter felt that these heretical teachings would cause spiritual destruction.

The final place where the term *hairesis* is used in the New Testament is within the Pauline corpus. The uneasiness that Paul felt toward the doctrines and opinions of James and Peter have been debated by scholars, but he still presented himself at the Jerusalem Council and had no grievance with the decision there. This paper will entertain the thesis that he did have authority in the church (however disconnected it may seem to some) and his negative views of heresies can be seen as reliable. Paul listed the “works of the flesh (as) adultery, fornication . . . idolatry, witchcraft, hatred . . . seditions, (and) heresies” (Gal 5:19–20). Thus, Paul listed heresies as something equal to the category of sexual immorality. The negative connotation of *hairesis* cannot be denied.

Some of the justification for the negative opinion is found in 1 Corinthians. Apparently there were divisions in the church at Corinth and Paul wrote to them to admonish them to be united (also a prevalent theme for Clement and Ignatius). In chapter fifteen, we see that the Corinthians began to teach that the resurrection of Christ did not happen, a tenant of faith most explicitly stated by Paul. “And if Christ be not risen . . . and your faith is also vain” (1 Cor 15:14). He heard of this *schismata* in the church and therefore concluded that *dei gar kai haireseis en humin einai* (1 Cor 11:18–19).³¹ The word *schisma* comes from the verb *schizō*, which means “to split.” This same connotation is used by Paul to show how there were sects or factions that either led to the schisms or were resultant from them. In either case, the formation of multiple sects in the church in Corinth was problematic for Paul. In chapter 12, he used a similar term *diairesis*, *hairesis* with the prefix *dia-*. This word comes from the verb *diaireō*, and means “to distribute” or “divide.”³² Instead of using this word to describe the negative divisions of the Corinthians, Paul used it to describe the “diversities of gifts (spiritual) . . . of administrations . . . (and) diversities of operations” (1 Cor 12:4–6) that God possessed but how he was still unified. He obviously disliked divisions within the church but used the root *hairesis* in two different ways, showing that the word itself did not denote correct or incorrect implications.

There are other evidences in the New Testament that do not use the word *hairesis*, but adhere to the general definition of clinging to various doctrines or practices. Already mentioned above, Paul corrected the Corinthians for preach-

29. 2 Pet 2:1.

30. Liddell and Scott, “ἀπόλεια,” *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 113.

31. In 1 Cor 1:10: “For there must be heresies among you.” *Schismata* is also used to discuss the division that is occurring in the church in Corinth.

32. Frederick William Danker, “διαίρεω,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 229.

ing the non-existence of the resurrection of Christ. This does not provide enough information to determine the full Christological aspects that existed in Corinth, but it does show that different Christologies existed and caused divisions in the church there. One major problem that the apostles faced was a Christology that claimed that Jesus only seemed to have flesh and bones, completely denying the crucifixion. John condemned this false Christology and stated “every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God” (1 Jn 4:2–3). He labeled those that taught only a spiritual Christ *antichristos* because they went against what the apostles and Christ himself taught, even apostles that scholars claim held different viewpoints.

The next set of evidence also comes from the writings of John. In his epistle to Gaius, he discussed how Diotrephes, “who loveth to have preeminence among them, receiveth us not . . . prating against us with malicious words” (3 Jn 9–10). We do not have much to illustrate this event, but it does show how even leadership issues began to manifest in the apostolic age, potentially from individuals clinging to opposing doctrines from what the apostles taught. John continued to call out difficulties in various churches in Revelation. He wrote (as commanded by Christ) to the church in Ephesus and stated *alla echō kata sou hoti tēn agapēn sou tēn protēn aphēkes* (But I have something against you because you left your first love; Rev 2:4). Although he praised them for not accepting the works of the Nicolaitans, he still called them to repentance for deviating from what they had previously been taught. In his address to the church of Smyrna, he was not as kind and pointed out two sects that needed a call to repentance. They apparently allowed “the doctrine of Balaam” and held “the doctrine of the Nicolaitans” (Rev 2:14–15). The Old Testament reference to Balaam implied the selling of priesthood pronouncements, which shows problems within church liturgical leadership.³³ The Nicolaitans were a sect of Christianity that (at least according to heresiologists such as Irenaeus) practiced promiscuity and probably derived from a Jewish background.³⁴ John also chastised Thyatira for allowing the priestess Jezebel to convince Christians there to pollute themselves (Rev 2:20). John pointed out various deviations from apostolic doctrine but these churches were still Christian and thus deserved his exhortation (i.e. they were worth bringing back to the fold). This study is not long enough to entertain a scholarly discussion on these factions, but they show that there were individuals adhering to varying doctrines.

Apostolic Fathers

The early leaders of Christianity, after the apostles were all gone, faced the same compulsory need to correct different congregations of false teachings and of-

33. See Numbers 22.

34. Birger A. Peterson, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 36–37.

fer other practical advice. These, as shown above, did not speak with apostolic authority, nor claimed any such power to make an orthodox doctrine. Clement addressed the church in Corinth because they had rebelled against their bishop and placed another in his stead.³⁵ He called the division an *anosiou staseōs*³⁶ and chastised the people for allowing such a mess. It is interesting that Clement used *staseōs* when other words were available to describe the separation in the Corinthian Church. This word typically refers to a faction within a governmental system that seeks to overthrow the current leadership but it can also refer to a party, company, or sect.³⁷ In both senses of the word, Clement described a group that sought to put into effect their own viewpoints in terms of leadership and probably doctrine as well. He stated that *ē ouchi hena theon echomen kai hena Christon kai hena pheuma*³⁸ and advocated the cure would only come from having the church unified and religious *stasis* removed.

Ignatius also made it his mission to correct doctrines or ideas that he viewed negatively. Of the three fathers discussed, he is the only one to use the term *hairesis* in his writings. He advised the Christians in Ephesus that *hoti pantes kata alētheian zēte kai hoti en humin ou demia hairesis katoikei*.³⁹ In context, this line refers to spurious teachers and doctrines that were circulating among the members of the church at Ephesus and *hairesis* in this instance, definitely had a negative slant. He continued this aspect of *hairesis* when he used eating as a symbol to describe the difference between Christian and heretical food.⁴⁰ He made it clear that they were to avoid bad food (i.e., heresy), since *hoi heoutois paremplekousin Iēsoun Xriston kataxiopisteuomenoi*.⁴¹ These false opinions, circulating with partial truths of Christ, were of great danger to Ignatius' conception of doctrine. Those he addressed mostly avoided these factional teachings, but it still showed that there were different doctrines in circulation that Ignatius combated.⁴²

Ignatius mostly concerned himself with two groups: the Docetists and the Judaizers. The first of these especially presented a challenge to Ignatius' Christological conception.⁴³ He said those who taught the doctrine that Christ only appeared to suffer and die were atheists, and confirmed that Christ was

35. Clement, 1 Clem 3.3.

36. Clement, 1 Clem 1.1.

37. Liddel and Scott, "σάσις," *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 742.

38. Clement, 1 Clem 46.6: "Do we not have one God and one Christ and one spirit?"

39. Ignatius, *To the Ephesians* 6.2: "That you all live according to truth and that no heresy is found at home among you."

40. Ignatius, *To the Trallians* 6.1.

41. Ignatius, *To the Trallians* 6.2: "Those professing to be faithful mix Jesus Christ [with poison]."

42. Ignatius, *To the Ephesians* 9.1.

43. On an interesting note, Michael D. Goulder argues "'docetism' is a modern misunderstanding for a form of Ebionism." "Ignatius' 'Docetists,'" *Vigiliae Christianae* 53.1 (Feb 1999): 16. This is plausible since the Ebionites held an adoptionist Christology, denying Christ's physical suffering.

born, ate, drank, and was crucified.⁴⁴ In retort to the claim that Christ only appeared to suffer, he said that the Docetist were *autoi to dokeiē ontes*!⁴⁵ He told the church in Smyrna that he was protecting them *apo tōn thērion tōn anthrōpomorfōn* (from wild beasts in the form of men) but also showed some hope of repentance for these false teachers.⁴⁶ The imagery of wild beasts in human form is highly reminiscent of Acts 20:29, which used “grievous wolves” to describe false teachers that would drive away some of the flock from the true doctrine of Christ. Ignatius continued this symbol to drive the point that the Docetists were ferocious in their attempts to ravage the church (whose church is still debatable). Ignatius told the church in Smyrna to pray for them and accept the possibility of repentance if it occurred. This is a crucial aspect in understanding who these Docetist individuals were in Smyrna. Ignatius’ response shows that these heretics were once apart of the church there (or maybe even still apart of it) and were worthy of being received back into the church if they gave up their false views. At the time though, they were a factional group and problematic to Ignatius.

The next group that Ignatius targeted was the Judaizers, who retained Jewish aspects that went against Ignatius’ religious mold. The initial converts to Christianity were Jewish and some resisted the change to leave the Mosaic Law, which centered on legalistic interpretation, for a grace centered Gentilic focus. To the Magnesians he wrote, *atopoē estin Iēsoun Xriston laleiē kai ioudaizein. ho gar Xristianismos ouk eis Ioudaismōn episteusin, all Ioudaismos eis Xristianismōn*.⁴⁷ Earlier in the epistle, he reasoned with the Magnesians that if they were to keep Jewish elements, they were actually denying the grace of Jesus Christ.⁴⁸ He admonished the Philadelphians to avoid listening to anyone attempting to share Jewish doctrine, since it was better to learn from a Gentile about Christ than a Jewish Christian.⁴⁹ These troublemakers were apart of Christianity, although they professed their own views of the doctrine of Jesus. Ignatius saw them as a threat to his opinion of dogma and warned the Christians in his epistles to avoid those that coexisted with his version of Christianity.

The last writing of this age to discuss is Polycarp’s letter to the Phillipians. Polycarp continued Ignatius’ zeal to warn against Docetistic teachings by professing that if someone denied the appearance of Christ in the flesh they were an *antichristos*.⁵⁰ He also warned against individuals that took the teachings of Christ and distorted them to teach against a resurrection or judgment to appease their theological goals.⁵¹ Such a warning again demonstrates that there were varying

44. Ignatius, *To the Trallians* 9.1–10.1.

45. Ignatius, *To the Smyrnaeans* 2.1: “Those that seemed to be!”

46. Ignatius, *To the Smyrnaeans* 4.1.

47. Ignatius, *To the Magnesians* 10.3 (Ehrman, LCL). He translated this as “it is outlandish to proclaim Jesus Christ and practice Judaism. For Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity.”

48. Ignatius, *To the Magnesians* 8.1.

49. Ignatius, *To the Philadelphians* 6.1.

50. Polycarp, *To the Philipians* 7.1. One cannot miss the similarity with 1 Jn 4:3.

51. Polycarp, *To the Philipians* 7.1.

opinions in the church concerning fundamental aspects of the faith. Even Valens, a presbyter, was not strong enough to endure righteous living but gave into sin.⁵² Rather than completely separating Valens and other sinners from the flock, he taught that these members needed to be treated as though they were sick and needed a good physician to bring them back to full health.⁵³ These individuals were still Christians and not some apostate group that no longer retained Christian heritage or the value of being taught true doctrine. These Christians still held to different opinions within the church but were not yet out of the church.

Conclusion

Irenaeus defined the word *heresy* in terms of right and wrong, righteous and wicked. This does not necessarily articulate the meaning of the word *hairesis* in a literary background. Its literal interpretation is a group or individual that clings to (or seizes upon) a particular doctrine, philosophy, or way of life. This definition is thus much broader than the version that Irenaeus used to describe and define apostate groups that went against his definition of true doctrine. The question analyzed in this paper was if heresies existed before Irenaeus made his leap into definitional history. The New Testament demonstrated elements that pointed to a church structure in which to both label heretics and apply a negative meaning, but without more data, this conclusion is circumstantial. Of course, whenever someone labels a heretic in a religious setting, their opinions are the “truth,” while the other group is obviously deviant. Regardless of how authoritative semantics played out, the New Testament evidence showed that there were various opinions of doctrine within the apostolic age and thus heresies did exist. These heresies were not always viewed negatively (as in defining a sect of the Pharisees or Nazarenes) but a derogatory sentiment arose which labeled certain groups as disconnected from true doctrine and therefore harmful. These heretics were still Christian, though, demonstrated by the drive to correct their false opinions through exhortation.

The writings of the apostolic fathers also showed that heresies existed from the standpoint of the older definition but they also fought against doctrines from sects that they viewed to be false. These leaders professed a lack of authority in their writings and made no effort to define and label the problematic groups as Irenaeus, who argued a much clearer rule of faith, but was still by no means the orthodox victor. Still, these writers expressed the possibility of repentance for these groups and continued the exhortation method of their predecessors, thus demonstrating the closeness of the problematic groups discussed within the Christian community. These groups could still be called Christians, but some leaders saw their doctrines as spurious. In summary, heresies existed before Irenaeus because there were various doctrines that early Christians clung to while Christianity was evolving and growing. Irenaeus’ negative application was not

52. Polycarp, *To the Philipians* 11.1.

53. Polycarp, *To the Philipians* 11.1.

completely applicable until greater strides existed to remove competing doctrines from the church as orthodoxy emerged. Irenaeus labeled apostates and gave the ammunition to remove other Christians from the “true church,” but previously, *hairesis* was not a means to segregate apostates from the real faith but rather to point out necessities for repentance.

AN “ODOR OF SANCTITY”: THE ICONOGRAPHY, MAGIC, AND RITUAL OF EGYPTIAN INCENSE

ELLIOTT WISE

Fragrance has permeated the land and culture of Egypt for millennia. Early graves dug into the hot sand still contain traces of resin, sweet-smelling lotus flowers blossom along the Nile, Coptic priests swing censers to purify their altars, and modern perfumeries export all over the world.¹ The numerous reliefs and papyri depicting fumigation ceremonies attest to the central role incense played in ancient Egypt. Art and ceremonies revered it as the embodiment of life and an aromatic manifestation of the gods. The pharaohs cultivated incense trees and imported expensive resins from the land of Punt to satisfy the needs of Egypt's prolific temples and tombs. The rise of Christianity in the first century ce temporarily censored incense, but before long Orthodox clerics began celebrating the liturgy in clouds of fragrant smoke. Some of incense's ancient properties of life and fertility were even persevered under the new theology. By examining the iconography and magic of incense, this paper will trace the themes of intercession, rejuvenation, and deification from their cultic and funerary origins to their reverberations in the monasteries and churches of Coptic Orthodoxy.

The “Fragrance of the Gods”

The most common depictions of incense in ancient Egypt come from tombs and temples where standard scenes present a pharaoh or priest fumigating a mummy or the statue of a god. The smoking censer often takes the shape of a human arm ending in a hand holding a charcoal-filled bowl. The officiator would select precious pellets of resin from a small compartment located halfway along the arm and throw them into the bowl. These censers proliferated during the middle and later dynasties of Egypt, and they imitate the *derep*

1. A. Lucas writes that traces of incense have been discovered in graves from the earliest to the latest eras of Egyptian history. A. Lucas, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1962), 96.

hieroglyph for “offering.”² In addition to pictorially recalling the gift-giving nature of fumigation, the long, arm-shaped censer prevented burns from the hot charcoal and also protected the incense from being polluted by human hands.³ Although temple and tomb censuring rites accomplished similar purposes, cultic and funeral incense should be considered separately in order to categorize the nuances of Egyptian religious symbolism.

A 19th Dynasty relief from the temple of Seti I at Abydos provides a classic example of cultic fumigation (fig. 1). Seti leans forward towards a statue of Amun-Re, his right hand pouring water over a bouquet of lotus flowers while his left hand wafts smoke from an arm-shaped censer towards the god.



Fig. 1: Relief from temple of Seti I (Abydos, 19th Dynasty)

2. Richard H. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art: A Hieroglyphic Guide to Ancient Egyptian Painting and Sculpture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992), 53. In an article documenting the evolution of censers in ancient Egypt, Henry B. Fischer draws attention to Fourth Dynasty images of the dead seated before offering tables with hieroglyphs of arms holding offering bowls floating above. These are the ancestors of the arm-shaped censer, which also begins to float over offering tables in the images of the Fourth and Sixth dynasties. Henry G. Fischer, “Varia Aegyptiaca: No. 4, The Evolution of the Armlike Censer,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 2 (1963): 30–31.

3. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, 53.

The incense signifies reverence and prayer, but on a deeper level it also evokes the actual presence of the deity by creating the “fragrance of the gods.”⁴ The temple text from the *Ritual of Amun* describes incense coming from the pores of Amun:

The god comes with body adorned which he has fumigated with the eye of his body, the incense of the god which has issued from his flesh, the sweat of the god which has fallen to the ground, which he has given to all the gods . . . It is the Horus eye. If it lives, the people live, thy flesh lives, they members are vigorous.⁵

Some texts identify deities with specific scents or types of incense. Secret recipes for incense carved onto the walls of the temple of Horus at Edfu explain that the finest myrrh “springs from the eye of Re,” while other grades of myrrh come from the eyes of Thoth and Osiris, the back of Horus, “the divine limbs,” “the spittle,” and the bone of the gods.⁶ The Egyptians worshipped several patrons of fragrance, including Merehet, goddess of unguents; Chesmou, deity of perfume production; and Nefertum, the lion-headed god of incense described as “the lotus in the nostril of Re.”⁷

The Egyptians carefully bought, transported, and stored their frankincense and myrrh, treating the pieces of resin like emblems of their gods’ bodies. Hatshepsut immortalized her expensive expeditions to Punt on the walls of her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri. Rows of men carry incense trees back to Egypt so that the sacred precinct could have the “odor of the divine land.”⁸ A New Kingdom priest named Hepusonb considered his temple duties of storing and offering incense so important that he included images of the resin trade in his tomb along with inscriptions detailing the amount of incense required by Amun each day.⁹ The monetary worth of incense doubtlessly signified the depth of Egypt’s devotion, and fittingly, the priests burned these expensive gifts before equally expensive cult statues made of gold and precious stones. Religious secrecy veiled the process for making incense and unguents, which required

4. Richard H. Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 92; G. Elliot Smith, *The Evolution of the Dragon* (Manchester, U.K.: The University Press, 1919), 38.

5. “Ritual of Amun 12.11,” in Smith, *The Evolution of the Dragon*, 36.

6. Lise Manniche, *Sacred Luxuries: Fragrance, Aromatherapy, and Cosmetics in Ancient Egypt* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 27, 34.

7. Michel Malaise, “Les Parfums en Égypte,” *L’Art du Parfum* (1993): 42. Like many of the other deities, Nefertum seems to have physically embodied incense and perfumes. Perfume jars frequently take the shape of the cat goddess, Bastet, and scholars explain that this might be because Bastet is Nefertum’s mother. As a jar, she symbolically carries her son inside her in the form of perfume. Joann Fletcher, *Oils and Perfumes of Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 1998), 51–52.

8. Malaise, “Les Parfums en Égypte,” 40.

9. Nina M. Davies, “A Fragment of a Punt Scene,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 47 (December, 1961), 20.

a set number of days, symbolic ingredients, and magical spells.¹⁰ Perhaps the priests believed that as they compounded fragrant resins with honey, wine, and raisins, they were mysteriously creating the body of the gods.

Thus in burning resins before the temple statues, the pharaoh and his priests sacramentally offer the god to the god, a concept which surfaces again in Christianity. Incense becomes the sensory equivalent of the cult statue—a manifestation in scent that complements the visual manifestation in gold or wood. Incense embodies Amun, the “Hidden One,” particularly well since both smoke and god can permeate the sanctuary invisibly.¹¹ Myth and legends recount how other gods reveal their divinity through scent. In Plutarch’s *Isis and Osiris*, the queen of Byblos sees through Isis’s disguise only when she smells the “ambrosia”-like fragrance of the goddess, and the *Coffin Texts* mention the “fumes” and “scent” of the god Shu, described as the “storm of half-light,” or “byproduct of incense.”¹²

Osiris has a particularly ancient connection to incense. Scholars believe his name used to mean “place of the eye” in reference to the legend of Horus offering his “sweet smelling” Eye to his father as a token of victory over Seth.¹³ Egyptians equated the Eye of Horus with incense, and they sometimes linked it specifically to the sticky juices of labdanum incense, which fell as tears from the god’s Eye onto gum-cistus bushes.¹⁴ Osiris became equated with these bushes—the literal “place of the [labdanum] eye”—and the Egyptians revered the goats wandering through the gum-cistus patches as manifestations of the Osirian ram of Mendes.¹⁵ As they ate the bushes, the goats’ beards became caked with hardened labdanum, and the incense could be harvested by cutting off their beards. Alternatively, ribbons of goatskin attached to flails were pulled over the gum-cistus plants to catch drops of labdanum. Osiris’s attributes of a goat beard and a flail connect him to the incense harvest and underscore the ancient centrality of scent in Egyptian religion.¹⁶ Pharaoh’s ceremonial beard and flail may have also carried incense connotations. Scholars hypothesize that the king’s crook represented his role as shepherd over his people while the flail

10. See Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris* (trans. Frank Cole Babbitt; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 5.187; Manniche, *Sacred Luxuries: Fragrance, Aromatherapy, and Cosmetics in Ancient Egypt*, 38.

11. Fletcher, *Oils and Perfumes of Ancient Egypt*, 52.

12. Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, 5.41; “The Coffin Texts,” in William W. Hallo, ed., *The Context of Scripture* (New York: Brill, 1997), 1.12 (Spell 80).

13. T. J. Colin Baly, “A Note on the Origin of Osiris,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 17 (November 1931): 222.

14. Baly, “A Note on the Origin of Osiris,” 222.

15. Baly, “A Note on the Origin of Osiris,” 222.

16. Baly, “A Note on the Origin of Osiris,” 222; Percy E. Newberry, “The Shepherd’s Crook and the So-Called ‘Flail’ or ‘Scourge’ of Osiris,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 15 (May 1929): 91–92. Newberry explains another connection between Osiris and incense. Osiris absorbed the attributes of Andety, god of the nome Audet, a geographical area named for labdanum. Newberry, “The Shepherd’s Crook and the So-Called ‘Flail’ or ‘Scourge’ of Osiris,” 94.

reminded him of his duty to the gods.¹⁷ As tools for collecting labdanum, the flail and beard may have likened the king's intercession for his people to gathering incense for the temple altars and then using the clouds of smoke to mediate between heaven and earth.

The decoration of many arm-shaped censers again references pharaoh's role as chief intercessor with the gods. A miniature image of the king sometimes crouches behind the container for resin, located halfway along the length of the censer. Since the priest-king could not officiate at all of Egypt's temples, these small sculptures may have endowed the priests with authority to fumigate the gods in place of pharaoh. In this way, the king's presence could be magically invoked, regardless of who actually burned the resin.

The Egyptians depended on myrrh and frankincense trees for much of their incense, gathering the resinous "tears" and "sweat" of the gods as they exuded from the bark. These fruitful trees were venerated as mother goddesses, their resin described as divine menstrual blood.¹⁸ Other gods also offered life-sustaining fluids through tree bark. Illustrations from the *Book of the Dead* frequently show goddesses like Hathor encased in trees, refreshing the dead with a stream of water. In addition to appearing as a gum-cistus bush, Osiris's *djed* sign implies that he evolved from a tree god, and spell 15 from the *Book of the Dead* calls him "lord of the naret-tree."¹⁹ Plutarch adds that a bush of heather enclosed the god's coffin until the king of Byblos cut the wood down to use as a column in his palace. Isis retrieved her husband's corpse from inside the trunk and wrapped the remaining heather in scented linen for the people to worship.²⁰ Osiris's coffin parallels the sacred trees that secrete aromatic resins. Fragrance wafts from his corpse, from the heather blossoms surrounding it, and finally from the layers of perfumed linen. The Egyptians associated all the life-giving fluids that seeped out from Osiris's decaying body with the resinous tears and sweat of the other gods.

The connection between incense and divine trees gains additional support from scholarship hypothesizing that the incense lamps used for offering light and aroma to the dead intentionally took a cone shape to imitate sycamores, incense trees sacred to Osiris.²¹ Their light-producing function imitates the sun,

17. Newberry, "The Shepherd's Crook and the So-Called 'Flail' or 'Scourge' of Osiris," 87.

18. Smith, *The Evolution of the Dragon*, 37, 38. Lucas notes that the solidified drops of both myrrh and frankincense are shaped like tears. A. Lucas, "Notes on Myrrh and Stacte," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 23 (June 1937): 27–28. Pliny emphasizes the reddish color of frankincense in his *Natural History*, in Lucas, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries*, 29. The color probably led the Egyptians to associate the resin with blood.

19. Baly, "A Note on the Origin of Osiris," 221; Spell 15 in "The Book of the Dead," in *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (trans. Raymond O. Faulkner; ed. Carol Andrews; Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 40. Baly connects Osiris's tree god prototype to a Memphite god. Baly, "A Note on the Origin of Osiris," 221.

20. Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, 41–43.

21. N. de Garis Davies, "A Peculiar form of New Kingdom Lamp," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 10 (April 1924): 11–12.

and their triangular form recalls the symbolic sunrays streaming down the sides of pyramids and obelisks. In the *Pyramid Texts*, the “the scent of Horus’s eye” clearly symbolizes the sun since the falcon god uses the sun and moon as his eyes.²² Significantly, Re first appeared in a lotus blossom, the symbol for the incense god Nefertum, and the fragrance of that flower rises each morning like a fumigation to the sun god.²³

These solar associations endowed the censuring rites with the magic to vivify the statues of the gods. The Egyptian priests symbolically offered animating sunlight to their gods in the form of the fragrant Eye of Horus. Like the aromatic sweat of Amun that wafts life into all the deities of the cosmos, the censer could breathe vitality into lifeless statues.²⁴ The incense transferred the warmth and “odor of the living body” to inanimate objects, infusing wood or metal with the moisture of sweat.²⁵ Libations of water assisted the incense in creating bodily fluids for the statues, and the Egyptians sometimes interpreted pellets of resin as the tears of Isis that resurrected Osiris and commanded the life-giving Nile to rise each year.²⁶ As a result, incense resins became emblematic for the power that breathed life back into the mummified god of the underworld.²⁷

In a sense, Egyptian priests regarded their gods as corpses constantly needing to be resurrected.²⁸ In an image of Seti I fumigating statues of Horus and Osiris, the angled direction of the flames rising from the censer indicates that the pharaoh directs the incense towards the gods by blowing through the censer (Fig. 2).²⁹ In this way, he bestows life on the images through his own breath. Besides animating the cult statues, incense had other important functions in the cult. Fumigation cleansed the temple and bestowed life and divinity on offerings, making them fit for the consumption of the living gods.³⁰ The concentrated scent

22. E. A. Wallis Budge, *Books on Egypt and Chaldaea* (The Liturgy of Funerary Offerings: The Egyptian Texts with English Translations 25; London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Company, 1909), 49; Pyramid text from the burial chamber and passage, north side of the Pyramid of Unis, printed in James P. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 19.

23. Veronica Ions, *Egyptian Mythology* (New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1988), 104.

24. “Ritual of Amon 12.11,” in Smith, *The Evolution of the Dragon*, 36. Osiris also can also ritually nourish the gods with his sweat, giving them life through fumigation rites. Aylward M. Blackman, “The Significance of Incense and Libations in Funerary and Temple Ritual,” *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 50 (1912): 74.

25. Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic*, 36.

26. Smith, *The Evolution of the Dragon*, 55. Smith mentions that the Arabic term for a type of Egyptian incense—*a-a-nete*—may preserve the tear symbolism because it translates to “tree-eyes.”

27. Smith, *The Evolution of the Dragon*, 38. Some Egyptian legends claim that Isis conducted a memorial service for each piece of Osiris’ mutilated body and buried them in separate locations all along the Nile. As a result, many temples claimed to have a relic of the god and a tomb dedicated to him.

28. Blackman, “The Significance of Incense,” 73, n. 2.

29. Sh. Yeivin, “Canaanite Ritual Vessels in Egyptian Cultic Practice,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 62 (1976): 111.

30. Blackman, “The Significance of Incense,” 74; Malaise, “Les Parfums en Égypte,” 39.

of incense can create a hypnotic stupor, a property which may have aided priests as they mediated with the gods. Plutarch writes that “the odor of resin contains something forceful and stimulating” that “gently relax[es] the brain, which is by nature cold and frigid.”³¹ In other words, the incense alters a person’s natural mental state, imposing an artificial sense of comfort and ease. Plutarch expounds on this numbing, relaxing power when he writes that kyphi causes “a beneficent exhalation, by which the air is changed, and the body, being moved gently and softly by the current acquires a temperament conducive to sleep.”³² He associates this druglike sensation with wine and drunkenness.³³ It may be that Egyptians fumigated their gods in thick clouds of pungent smoke in order to lull them into a druglike trance. This would make it easier to manipulate the deities into assisting questionable or undeserving causes. Pharonic religion certainly has precedents for this type of “divine deception.” Spell 30b in the *Book of the Dead* prevents the heart of the deceased from confessing its evil deeds to the gods, and Spell 14 dissipates the anger of a deity with magic and offerings.³⁴



Fig. 2: Relief from temple of Seti I (Abydos, 19th Dynasty)

31. Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, 185, 187.

32. Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, 189. In his *De Materia Medica*, Dioscorides describes how the unnatural, calming effect of incense causes people to become “drowsy by the odor of the aromatics.” Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica*, 1.128; Strabo, 16.4.19, in Newberry, “The Shepherd’s Crook and the So-Called ‘Flail’ or ‘Scourge’ of Osiris,” 92 n. 3.

33. Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, 189.

34. “The Book of the Dead,” Spells 30b and 14.

“If It Lives, the People Live”

The life-giving properties of incense take on new implications in the cult of the dead and especially in the “Opening of the Mouth” ceremony, illustrated by papyri like Hunefer’s nineteenth-dynasty *Book of the Dead* (fig. 3). In this image, the jackal-headed god Anubis presents a mummy to a group of mourners while a priest offers incense and libations from behind a pile of gifts. The “Opening of the Mouth” ceremony functioned similarly to the rites that animated statues of the gods, with the smoke infusing the corpse with the “odour of the living.”³⁵ It may at first seem eccentric for the Egyptians to single out scent as the most potent tool for restoring life. Scholar G. Elliot Smith writes that Egyptians naturally would have considered odor as a fundamental characteristic of living, breathing, heavily perfumed men and women as they sweated in the sweltering sun along the Nile. The absence of scent would have automatically indicated death.³⁶ Dating back to primitive burials in the desert sand pits, incense accompanied the corpse as the vehicle for restoring fragrance, warmth, and moisture to the scentless, desiccated, and cold bodies of the dead.³⁷

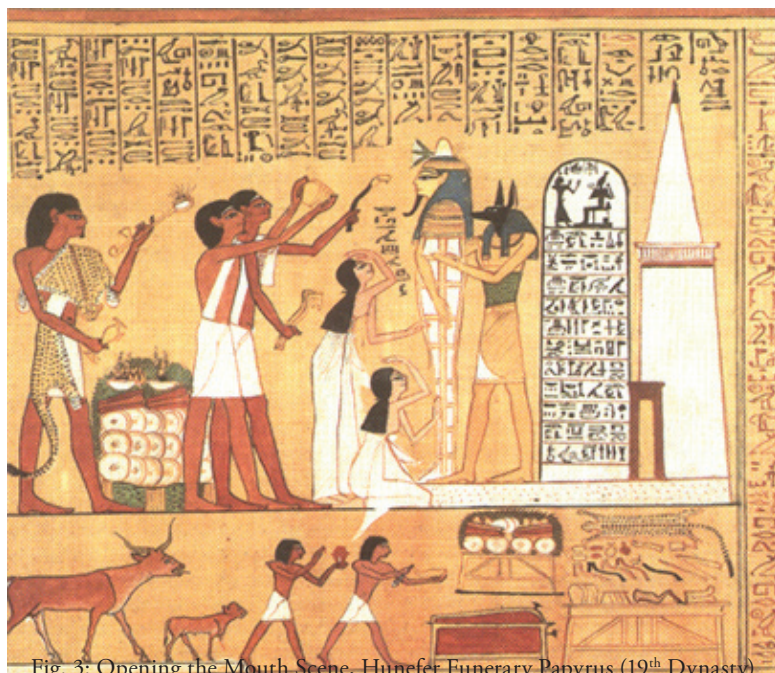


Fig. 3: Opening the Mouth Scene, Hunefer Funerary Papyrus (19th Dynasty)

35. Smith, *The Evolution of the Dragon*, 37.

36. Smith, *The Evolution of the Dragon*, 37.

37. Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic*, 92.

As with temple fumigation that assured “living” offerings for the “living” gods, the vivifying qualities of funeral incense could also be used to animate non-humanoid objects. Priests performed the “Opening of the Mouth” ceremony on heart scarabs to make them give a positive testimony when the deceased appeared before the underworld tribunal of Osiris.³⁸ Even cartouches could have their “mouths opened,” as in a relief inscribed in the temple of Seti I where Seti and his son offer incense to long columns of pharaohs’ names. For the Egyptians, who believed that every object possessed a spirit, incense could restore warmth and moisture to anything.

Although resin burned in the temples could represent the bodies of multiple different gods, the incense and libations used to “open the mouths” of mummies primarily referenced Osiris. The funeral rites dramatically reenacted the myth of his resurrection. The son of the deceased usually officiated before the mummy in imitation of Horus and his legendary visit to Osiris’s corpse. The falcon god vivified his dead father by offering him his Eye, the sign of his victory over Seth.³⁹ In the same way, the dutiful son would burn “the scent of Horus’s eye” before the mummy to ensure his parent’s triumph over death. Appropriately, a falcon head often appears on censer handles, like a tangible corollary for the abstract “version of Horus” rising as incense from the other end of the censer.

With cultic incense, priests offered the resinous body of the god to the god himself or to other gods. The funeral fumigation resurrected the dead by administering Osiris’s resinous flesh, bones, and sweat to the mummy, transforming the corpse into Osiris.⁴⁰ An incense text from the Middle Kingdom describes this process of receiving the various parts of Osiris’s body: “The incense comes (twice). The grains [of incense] come (twice). The toe comes. The back-bone of Osiris comes forth. The natron goes (twice). The members which issued from Osiris.”⁴¹ As the dead “absorb” the god’s flesh, they not only receive life but also the god’s divinity. During fumigation, the mummy appears to “inhale” the gods’ breath in the form of incense.⁴² Sharing the divine breath bestows godhood on the dead, a concept described in the *Book of the Dead* during the nocturnal voyage of the sun god’s barque through the watery underworld: “I breathe the air which comes out of your nose, the north wind which

38. Aylward M. Blackman, “The Rite of Opening the Mouth in Ancient Egypt and Babylonia,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 10 (April 1924): 57.

39. Ions, *Egyptian Mythology*, 32. Sometimes the son performing the “Opening of the Mouth” ceremony used a rod with a ram’s head carved on it. This identified him ritually with Horus. There may be a connection between this animal-headed instrument and the arm-shaped censers with their hawk-headed handles.

40. Blackman, “The Significance of Incense,” 74.

41. Middle Kingdom incense formula, quoted in Blackman, “The Significance of Incense,” 74. Most depictions of the “Opening of the Mouth” ceremony also include a priest offering a calf’s leg to the mummy. This motif may be connected to the arm-shaped censer used to fumigate the corpse. Since the incense can also be interpreted as parts of Osiris’s body, the ceremony offers arms and legs on several literal and symbolic levels.

42. Malaise, “Les Parfums en Égypte,” 42.

comes forth from your mother. You glorify my spirit, you make the Osiris my soul divine.⁴³ Even Egyptian lexicon reflects this symbolism with the word *senetcher*, meaning “incense,” deriving from the word, *senetcheri*, meaning “to make divine.”⁴⁴

Although the Middle Kingdom democratization of the funeral rites extended aspects of godhood to ordinary people, the deifying quality of incense applied most readily to pharaoh. In the spells from the west-south walls of the antechamber of Unis’s pyramid, the king becomes a god as he exchanges his “scent” with the heavenly scent of the deities: “Your scent has come to Unis, incense: Unis’s scent has come to you, incense. Your scent has come to Unis, gods; Unis’s scent has come to you, gods, Unis shall be with you, gods; you shall be with Unis, gods.”⁴⁵ Incense could also be used to acknowledge the living king’s divinity. In the texts for the fumigation rites of pharaoh’s coronation the distinction between king and deity blurs as the officiator asks pharaoh, to “take . . . the fragrance of the gods (censing) . . . which has come out of thyself.”⁴⁶ Wearing the royal crown that signified the Eye of Horus, the king shared the life-giving fragrance emanating from the Egyptian pantheon.⁴⁷

Birth symbolism in censers and incense intensifies the power of fertility and renewed life. According to the *Coffin Texts*, the first deity created gods and humans from the same fluids that mystically produce precious incense resin: “I made the gods evolve from my sweat, while people are from the tears of my Eye.”⁴⁸ Papyrus plant motifs often complement the decoration on arm-shaped censers, doubtlessly a reference to the primeval swamp of creation. Perhaps Egyptians even interpreted the bowl resting on the hand of the arm-shaped censer as a womb, which “conceives” new life as it burns frankincense and myrrh—the menstrual blood of the tree goddesses.⁴⁹ “Giving birth,” to the smoky, evanescent bodies of the deities, the censer bowl could also symbolize Nut, the primeval mother of the gods. Interestingly, the hieroglyph for her name suggests both a womb and a vessel for carrying water. In the *Book of the Dead* the goddess bears a divine child who rises from her womb like an aroma—“the flower which came out of the Abyss, [whose] mother is Nut.”⁵⁰ Nut gives birth to the sun each morning, and in a similar way, the censer “gives birth” to the rejuvenating, solar Eye of Horus.

43. Spell 15 in “Book of the Dead.”

44. Wilkinson, *Symbols and Magic*, 93.

45. Pyramid text 176 from the antechamber, west-south walls of the Pyramid of Unis, in Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 49.

46. Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 131.

47. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 131.

48. Spell 1130 in Hallo, *The Context of Scripture*, 1.27.

49. Interestingly, the wooden coffin holding a mummy until it resurrects also was thought to represent the womb of the tree mother. See M. L. Buhl, “The Goddesses of the Egyptian Tree Cult,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 6 (1947): 80–97.

50. Spell 42 in “Book of the Dead.”

The “Sweet Savour” of Coptic Incense

Although the use of incense in Coptic Christian art and liturgy most likely derives from ancient Egypt, the Church at first felt reluctant to embrace fumigation because of its pagan associations.⁵¹ Long before its appearance at services, however, some Christians used incense in their funeral rites.⁵² Paganism survived well into the Christian era, and even funerary incense probably continued to conjure up idolatrous mystery rites. For this reason, indications of incense in the official liturgy float unreliably in and out of historical documents for several centuries.⁵³

The mystical writings of the Coptic Gnostics parallel the symbolism of pharonic incense. The concept of the “fragrance of the gods” and the sensory presence of deity finds a corollary in the Christian God who reveals himself through the “odor of sanctity.”⁵⁴ Censing in the Coptic liturgy reflects the themes of resurrection and fertility associated with ancient fumigations. In the services of evening and morning incense as well as in the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, priests burn frankincense while petitioning the Lord to accept deceased Church members into the “waters of restfulness,” and the “Paradise of Delight,” to “raise . . . their bodies” and “grant them the incorruptible in place of the corruptible.”⁵⁵ Incense and water libations also accompany prayers for the fertility of the land. The swinging censer animates the local crops as the priest prays for “the vegetation and the herbs of the field,” “the face of the earth . . . for sowing and harvesting,” and for the “rising of the waters” of the Nile.⁵⁶

51. Jill Kamil, *Christianity in the Land of the Pharaohs: The Coptic Orthodox Church* (London: Routledge, 2002), 148; Stephen Gero, “The So-Called Ointment Prayer in the Coptic Version of the Didache: A Re-evaluation,” *Harvard Theological Review* 70 (January–April 1977): 74.

52. Early believers envisioned incense as a symbol for prayer rising to heaven. Gero, “The So-Called Ointment Prayer in the Coptic Version of the Didache: A Re-evaluation,” 75. Gero gives an interesting example of burning incense used as a literary device to indicate prayer. He cites a group of sailors who sought the attention of the Virgin Mary as they were about to sink. The text says they “placed incense on the fire,” which is completely illogical on a wet, sinking ship. Rather, the phrase must mean that they prayed to her. Ernest Alfred Wallis Thompson Budge, ed. *The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the History of the Likeness of Christ* (London: Luzac, 1899), 138, n. 1.

53. Gero, “The So-Called Ointment Prayer in the Coptic Version of the Didache: A Re-evaluation,” 74–78.

54. Gero, “The So-Called Ointment Prayer in the Coptic Version of the Didache: A Re-evaluation,” 79.

55. “Intercession for the Oblation from the Raising of Incense Service,” in *The Coptic Liturgy* (Cairo: Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, 1963), 30. See also the “Intercession for the Dormants from the Raising of Incense Service,” on page 24, and the “Prayer from the Dptych of the Liturgy of St. Basil,” on page 101.

56. “Intercessions for the Water, the Plants, the Winds and Fruits, and the Final Intercessions from the Raising of the Incense,” in *The Coptic Liturgy*, 46–47.

The ancient Egyptians use of incense to “open the mouths” of the statues of their gods has some resonance in the Orthodox rite of censuring icons—painted images of Christ and the saints. An icon becomes a mystical “window” of communication with the divine only after being blessed, incensed, and anointed with holy water or oil. Incense ritually helps restore life to the dead Christ on Easter morning after the clergy “inters” an icon of the Lord beneath the church altar. The priest incenses the altar and then “resurrects” the icon from its liturgical tomb to the sound of a triumphant anthem.⁵⁷

Just as the pellets of resin embodied the actual blood, sweat, and tears of the pagan deities, Coptic incense symbolizes Christ, particularly as he hung bleeding from the cross. In a poignant text from the Raising of Incense rite, the priest censes towards the east and north and announces, “This is He Who offered Himself an acceptable sacrifice on the cross . . . and His good Father smelt It in the evening on Golgotha.”⁵⁸ In another section of the liturgy, the celebrant compares the incense offering to the sacrifice that Abraham burned on the altar in place of Isaac, the Old Testament shadow for the paschal Lamb of God.⁵⁹ Incense so strongly evoked the presence of Christ that 12th century Copts developed a custom of confessing their sins into a censer.⁶⁰ The faithful probably imagined that the smoke would carry their confession up to God, but they may have also viewed the ceremony as an opportunity to whisper their faults directly into the ear of Christ, mystically present in the white smoke billowing from the golden censer.

Although censers appear regularly in Coptic images dealing with the priestly duties of Aaron or the funeral of the Mother of God, a recently discovered Annunciation scene from the Monastery of the Virgin (al-ʿAdra) in Dayr al-Suryan deepens the iconographical complexity of Coptic incense. The encaustic mural dates to the 12th century and had been obscured for hundreds of years by a painting on top of it. The Virgin sits on a throne surrounded by Old Testament prophets, while the Archangel Gabriel approaches to announce the message of the Incarnation.⁶¹ In analyzing the painting, scholar Lucy-Anne Hunt highlights the prominently placed censer balanced on a column. The smoke symbolizes the virginity of Mary, cited poetically in a Coptic hymn: “The fine incense of your virginity, Virgin Mary, rose more still than that of the Cherubim and Seraphim

57. Alfred J. Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2004), 2.351–53.

58. “Liturgy following the Creed at the Raising of Incense Service,” in *The Coptic Liturgy*, 39.

59. See the “Inaudible Prayer Accompanying the Censing During the Catholic Epistles in the Liturgy of St. Basil,” in *The Coptic Liturgy*, 70.

60. Lucy-Anne Hunt, “The Fine Incense of Virginity: A Late Twelfth-Century Wall-painting of the Annunciation at the Monastery of the Syrians, Egypt,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 19 (1995): 195; Gero, “The So-Called Ointment Prayer in the Coptic Version of the Didache: A Re-evaluation,” 80, n. 69.

61. Hunt, “The Fine Incense of Virginity,” 200.

up to the throne of the Father.”⁶²

The lush plants and trees surrounding Mary symbolizes her virgin fertility, which will culminate in the birth of Christ. The censer makes an apt allegory for the new life springing from the Incarnation as the incense creates vegetation and life wherever its scent reaches.⁶³ The Syrian Jacobite Mass of the Catechumens also describes the Mother of God and her divine Child in terms of scent: “The blessed root that budded forth and sprang up out of a dry ground, even of Mary, and all the earth was filled with the savour of its glorious sweetness.”⁶⁴ The Coptic doxologies reinforce this theme, beseeching the Virgin to “come out of thy garden, thou choice aroma.”⁶⁵ Hunt notes that the direction of the rising incense lines up with a cross surmounting one of the buildings framing the Virgin’s throne.⁶⁶ This foreshadows Christ as the crowning blossom on the root of Jesse, growing up from his mother just as the vinelike coil of incense smoke “grows” up from the censer. The Liturgy of St. Basil even refers to Mary’s womb as “the censer of gold,” and “her sweet aroma” as Christ.⁶⁷

The burning bush next to mural’s depiction of the prophet Moses, combined with the inscription on his scroll alludes to the Orthodox tradition of comparing the flaming bush of Sinai to the virgin-fertility of the Mother of God.⁶⁸ In icons of the burning bush, the Virgin frequently bears the Christ Child at her bosom surrounded by the bush and a circle of fire. The smoke produced by the flaming leaves and branches relates to the tree resin burning inside a golden, spherical censer. Icons from the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai sometimes depict Mary standing in front of a blossoming shrub as a substitute for the burning bush. This deepens the fertility symbolism of fire and smoke and again anticipates Christ as a “budding rod,” the blossoming fruit of Mary’s spherical womb.⁶⁹ The fire within the Coptic censer conceives Christ and allows him to rise aromatically through the air. This womblike censer may be a final development in the ancient associations linking Nut and the maternal tree goddesses to the harvesting and burning of pharaonic incense.

Religion along the Nile has relied heavily on incense to convey an “odor of sanctity” to ritual and art. Pharonic reliefs abound with depictions of arm-shaped censers perfuming the offering tables of gods, kings, and mummies. In

62. P. van Moorsel, “Deir es Souriani Revisited,” *Nubian Letters* 17 (Leiden, 1992): 9, n. 17.

63. Hunt, “The Fine Incense of Virginity,” 210.

64. F.E. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western* (Oxford, 1896), 74.

65. “Doxology to the Blessed Virgin from the Raising of Incense Service,” in *The Coptic Liturgy*, 34.

66. Hunt, “The Fine Incense of Virginity,” 203.

67. “Absolution of Ministers in the Liturgy of St. Basil,” in *The Coptic Liturgy*, 67.

68. Hunt, “The Fine Incense of Virginity,” 209; 198–99.

69. Hunt, “The Fine Incense of Virginity,” 198–99. Hunt describes the burning bush as a “container,” paralleling the censer and also hearkening back to Christianity’s long tradition of representing Mary by enclosed spaces. See pp. 199, 182.

the lonely monasteries of the desert and the great churches of Alexandria Coptic priests intone the liturgy behind a white mist of pungent smoke. For ancient Egypt, the burning frankincense and myrrh distilled through the air, recalling the womb of creation, the fluids of deity, and the life that depends on the rising sun. Although the early Coptic bishops strove to eliminate the superstitious idolatry of new converts to Christianity, some pagan ideas survived, notably in the theology and iconography of incense. The sweet smoke began to connote the hope for life after death, the fertility of the land, and especially the fruit of the Blessed Virgin's womb—God himself, who like a fragrance, “fill[s] all places, and [e]xist[s] with all beings.”⁷⁰

70. “Pauline Prayer of Incense,” in *The Coptic Liturgy*, 68.

A REEVALUATION OF THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF 2 MACCABEES 7 AND ITS TEXT-CRITICAL IMPLICATIONS

DANIEL O. MCCLELLAN

Over the years 2 Maccabees has been subjected to all manner of critical analysis. The primary concerns have been related to the date and provenance of the book, its historicity and chronology compared to 1 Maccabees, and its overall form and function.¹ Recently source critics have been at the

1. The first major work is C. Grimm, "Das zweite, dritte, und vierte Buch der Maccabäer, vierte Lieferung," in *Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zu den Apokryphen des Alten Testaments* (ed. O.F. Fritzsche; Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1857). During the mid-19th century, scholarship began to grant preeminence to 1 Maccabees as the more historical (and thus valuable) of the first two Maccabean texts (see I. Abrahams, review of Benedictus Niese, *Kritik der beiden Makkabäerbücher, nebst Beiträgen zur Geschichte der makkabäischen Erhebung*, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 13.3 [April 1903], 509). In the 20th century James Moffat ("The Second Book of Maccabees" [APOT, 1913], 1:125–54), F. M. Abel (*Les Livres des Maccabées* [Paris: J. Gabalda, 1949]), Solomon Zeitlin and Sidney Tedesche (*The Second Book of Maccabees* [New York: Harper & Bros., 1954]), John R. Bartlett (*The First and Second Books of the Maccabees* [Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973]), Arnaldo Momigliano ("The Second Book of Maccabees," *Classical Philology* 70.2 [April 1975]: 81–88), Christian Habicht (*2. Makkabäerbuch* [JSHRZ 1.3; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1976]), Jonathan Goldstein (*II Maccabees* [Anchor Bible 41A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983]), Robert Doran (*Temple Propaganda: The Purpose and Character of 2 Maccabees* [The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 12; Washington: Catholic Bible Association of America, 1981]), and Martha Himmelfarb ("Judaism and Hellenism in 2 Maccabees," *Poetics Today* 19.1 [Spring 1998]: 19–40) have contributed to the contemporary perspective on 2 Maccabees. Because the letters found in the book of 2 Maccabees provide the best clues for dating, much attention has been given to them. See Christian Habicht, "Royal Documents in Maccabees II," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 80 (1976): 1–18; David S. Williams, "Recent Research in 2 Maccabees," *Currents in Biblical Research* 2.1 (2003): 69–83; and Victor Parker, "The Letters in II Maccabees: Reflexions on the Book's Composition," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 119 (2007): 386–402. Publications focused primarily on 2 Maccabees 7 includes U. Kellermann's *Aufersanden in den Himmel: 2 Makkabäer 7 und die Auferstehung der Märtyrer* (SBS 95; Stuttgart: 1979), Doran's "The Martyr: A Synoptic View of the Mother and Her Seven Sons," in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism* (ed. George W. E. Nickelsburg and John J. Collins; Septuagint and Cognate Studies 12; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980) and Jan Willem van Henten's *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees* (SupJSJ 57; Leiden: Brill, 1997).

forefront of the academic discussion. In 1975 A. Momigliano argued that the book represents a conglomeration of scattered motifs that betray a rather fragmented composition. Christian Habicht advocated the same position in 1976 and included in his discussion a possible Hebrew provenance for chapter 7. In the same year Jonathan Goldstein posited multiple sources for 2 Maccabees. These arguments have since been met with heavy criticism. Robert Doran and Jan Willem van Henten are most prominent among those who stress the unity of the epitome and the futility of seeking specific sources.² While some scholars still question the harmony of the book,³ to this date, no scholar has undertaken to explain the implications of chapter 7 as an interpolation, or provide a date for it. The current investigation will show that a critical examination of the structure and rhetorical function of the chapter, combined with a number of text-critical considerations, provides considerable evidence for an independent provenance for the chapter. This investigation will also show a much later date for its composition than is currently accepted is to be preferred. Several ideological and textual considerations will contribute to these conclusions.

The Structure of 2 Maccabees 7

While Habicht's study remains the most comprehensive evaluation of the composition of 2 Macc 7, it is primarily atomistic, focusing on individual words and phrases rather than on context and overall style. A brief look at the structure of 2 Macc 7 reveals a surprisingly complex and illuminating chiasm unlike any found elsewhere in the composition. The chiasm runs the length of the entire chapter. The central element is twofold, highlighting resurrection as a recompense for martyrdom, and the value of giving one's life for the laws of the fathers. The two themes are repeated four and five times, respectively, throughout the chapter, and they come together at the climax to provide an antithesis for the third major theme of the chapter: Antiochus' inevitable destruction (which is repeated six times). This chiasmic reading supports the

2. Van Henten states, "Both stories are coherent parts of the larger narrative." He relegates the possibility of an independent origin to a footnote, but claims it precedes the epitome, protecting the unity of the book. See van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs*, 17–18, n. 1. Doran flatly rejects the possibility, stating, "the epitome is a unified piece . . . and not a patchwork quilt of sources. This is not to deny that the epitome shows that information was gained from many quarters. The application of the methods of source-criticism, however, has failed to turn up 'sources' in the technical sense. The epitome, therefore, must be considered as a whole and analysed accordingly" (Doran, *Temple Propaganda*, 22–23).

3. Several scholars have recently argued for an independent provenance for 2 Macc 7. See, for example, G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 10–11; Himmelfarb, "Judaism and Hellenism in 2 Maccabees," 31–32; and Shmuel Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 36–59.

conclusions of Habicht,⁴ Kellerman,⁵ and Himmelfarb⁶ regarding resurrection as the central theme of the chapter, but it conflicts with Doran.⁷ Viewed chiastically, the thesis of the chapter is clear. A willingness to die for the laws of God will catalyze a glorious resurrection.

- A – Family threatened with torture for not eating sacrifices (1).
- B – “We are ready to die rather than to transgress the laws of our fathers” (2).
- C – ἔκθυμος δὲ γενόμενος ὁ βασιλεὺς (3).
- D – God will show compassion on his servants (6).
- B – “We are dying for the sake of his laws” (9).
- E – “The King of the world will raise us up . . . to everlasting life” (9).
- E – The brother hopes to be raised again by God (14).
- F – Antiochus will not be raised to life (14).
- F – God will torment Antiochus and his seed (17).
- G – “We suffer this for our own sake, having sinned against our God” (18).
- F – “Do not think . . . that you will escape unpunished” (19).
- H – The mother bore her sons’ deaths because of hope in the Lord (20).
- I – “I do not know how you came into being in my womb” (22).
- B/E – God will, “in his mercy give life and breath back to you again, as you regard not yourselves for the sake of his laws” (23).
- I’ – “I carried you nine months in my womb” (27).
- H’ – The mother exhorts her son to accept death and return to her (29).
- F’ – Antiochus will not “escape the hands of God” (31).
- G’ – The brothers suffer for their own sins (32).
- F’ – Thou hast not escaped the judgment of Almighty God (35).
- F’ – Antiochus will be punished for his pride (36).
- E’ – The brothers are under God’s covenant of everlasting life (36).
- B’ – “I offer up my body and my life for our ancestral laws” (37).
- D’ – The brothers appeal to God to show mercy to their nation (37).
- C’ – ἔκθυμος δὲ γενόμενος ὁ βασιλεὺς (39).
- B’ – “So he died undefiled” (40).
- A’ – “Enough has been said about the sacrificial meals and the excessive cruelties” (42).

The narrative is split into two sections, pivoting around the interplay between the mother, Antiochus, and the seventh son in the center of the chapter. The torture and martyrdoms of the first six sons are the focus of the first section, but when the seventh son displays the same resilience as his brothers, Antiochus changes his tactics, pleading first with the mother to talk sense into her child, and then with the boy himself, promising

4. Habicht, *2. Makkabäerbuch*, 171–77.

5. Kellermann, *Auferstanden in den Himmel*, 39.

6. Himmelfarb, “Judaism and Hellenism in 2 Maccabees,” 31–32.

7. “While the speech does include a reference to resurrection (7:36), the thrust of the speech deals with the coming judgment of the king” (Doran, “The Martyr: A Synoptic View of the Mother and Her Seven Sons,” 199). The climax of the speech falls on the speech of the last son, who Doran believes stresses the judgment against Antiochus over all else.

him riches and happiness. No specific punishments are mentioned for the seventh son, outside of the somber recognition that he was handled worse than the others.

Several verses from 2 Macc 7 are omitted from our chiasm. Of the 23 verses in the first half of the section, eleven do not appear in the chiasm; and of the 19 verses after the apex of the chiasm, nine do not appear. Some scholars argue that omissions indicate a significant degree of subjectivity in the identification of the chiasm.⁸ Several considerations, however, support the “chiasticity” of the chapter. The content is divided in two parts of roughly equal length. In the first half the king uses torture to influence the first six children. Immediately following the mother’s speech at the center of the chapter, Antiochus changes methods and attempts to convince the youngest son through bribery and by appealing to his mother. The two halves of the chiasm are almost perfectly balanced (there is a deviation of one element), and the individual elements are approximately the same length. Conceptually, the chiastic elements are generally theological statements while the omissions are narrative.⁹ In addition, macrochiasms, which cover sections of text more than a dozen or so verses, are more likely to include nonchiastic elements.¹⁰

The rhetorical function of the chapter also presents a strong case for chiasticity.¹¹ The opening and closing verses establish the context of the unit and provide a conclusion. The willingness of the boys to die for the laws of God is repeated five times and frames their hope of resurrection. That hope is repeated four times and itself frames the fate of Antiochus, which serves as the antithesis to the faith of the boys and is repeated six times. The willingness of the boys to die and their faith in everlasting life appear together in the apex of the structure.¹² A chiastic reading establishes the focal point of the chapter.

8. See M. J. Boda, “Chiasmus in Ubiquity: Symmetrical Mirages in Nehemiah 9,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 71 (September 1996): 57.

9. While the central theological elements of the chapter are arranged chiastically throughout this narrative, the second half of the narrative may include two important doctrines not presented as part of the rhetorical structure. Verse 28 bears an implicit appeal to *creatio ex nihilo*. Also, in vv. 37–38, the seventh son shares the understanding that the death of the seven brothers represents a vicarious sacrifice on the part of the entire nation of Israel: “It stands to me and my brothers to bring an end to the wrath of the Almighty.”

10. For a list of “laws” that govern macro-chiasms, see Nils Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in Formgeschichte* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrikson, 1992), 40–41. Lund lists the propensity for macro-chiasms to mix chiastic and alternating elements.

11. Concerning the evaluation of chiasms, Ian Thomson states, “No matter how careful the inquiry, it is unlikely that absolute certainty will be reached, and most cases will result in a balance of probability” (Ian H. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters* [JSNTSup 111; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995], 34).

12. As Craig Blomberg points out in his criteria for identifying chiasms, “The center of the chiasmus, which forms its climax, should be a passage worthy of that position in light of its theological or ethical significance. If its theme were in some way repeated in the first and last passages of the text, as is typical in chiasmus, the proposal would become that much more plausible” (Craig Blomberg, “The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1–7,” *Criswell Theological Review* 4.1 [1989]: 7). The balanced repetition in 2 Macc 7 of the central theme strengthens

Authorship Revisited

A chiastic reading of this chapter provides an interpretive tool, but also gives us an insight into the authorship of the chapter. What becomes immediately evident is that chapter 7 is unique within the book of 2 Maccabees. Chiasms can be found elsewhere in 2 Maccabees, but they rarely extend past a single verse and do not even approach this level of development and intricacy. 2 Macc 4:25 provides an example of the elementary state of the other chiasms in the book:

A – θυμὸς
 B – ὠμοῦ τυράννου
 B' – θηρὸς βαρβάρου
 A' – ὀργάς

A – the temper
 B – of a cruel tyrant,
 B' – of a wild animal
 A' – the rage

ὀργάς is moved to the end of the verse to make the chiasm possible. This is typical of the rhetorical devices of 2 Maccabees. Chapter 7, however, is distinct. It has been noted that the prose of chapter 7 seems more rudimentary than that of chapter six.¹³ The martyrdoms of the seven sons and of Eleazar (in chapter 6) appear to function in unison within the context of the book, but Eleazar's pericope is far more elaborate and expressive, grammatically. Chapter 7 utilizes basic Greek constructions and is void of the multiplicity of adjectives that lace the Eleazar account. The syntax of the chapter has been called "ungriechisch,"¹⁴ although Doran has pointed out that many of the exceptional words and phrases are not absent from Classical Greek.¹⁵ Doran's error, however, is in dismissing the Semiticisms that are present in the chapter because he believes his argument for the unity of the text already precludes a distinct provenance for the final version of the chapter, rendering the Semiticisms immaterial.¹⁶ He does not feel threatened by Hebrew traditions behind the text, but feels safe in concluding that the book that has come down to us was composed initially and entirely in Greek. We are left to conclude he means to insist that a Hebrew source can be allowed for the sections containing Semiticisms, but cannot be posited for the entire chapter. According to Doran, "the epitome is a unified piece, sepa-

the case for a chiastic reading. See also Antoninus King Wai Siew, *The War Between the Two Beasts and the Two Witnesses: A Chiastic Reading of Revelation 11.1–14.5* (JSNTSup 283; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 37–53.

13. See, for example, Himmelfarb, "Judaism and Hellenism in 2 Maccabees," 31–32.

14. Habicht, *2. Makkabäerbuch*, 233, note for 7:1.

15. Doran, *Temple Propaganda*, 34–39.

16. Doran, *Temple Propaganda*, 35–36. I agree with Habicht that the Greek of the text is distinct from the rest of the book, even if the peculiarities are not exclusively Hebraic. For his discussion of the Semiticisms in 2 Macc 7, see Habicht, *2. Makkabäerbuch*, 171–77, 233.

rate from the prefixed letters and not a patchwork quilt of sources. This is not to deny that information was gained from many quarters. The application of the methods of source-criticism, however, has failed to turn up 'sources' in the technical sense."¹⁷ The strongest support Doran offers for this conclusion is the unity of the text itself, but as will be shown, that unity is not as well supported as has been asserted.

The martyrdoms of Eleazar and the seven sons are often referred to as a turning point within the narrative. Their deaths catalyzed the subsequent victories of Judas and his men.¹⁸ Interestingly enough, when Judas gives his intercessory prayer with his men, he fails to mention the martyrdoms. He cites the blasphemies committed prior to the martyrdoms,¹⁹ but he is silent regarding any subsequent improprieties on the part of the king. If these events were really the impetus for Judas's descent from the mountains and return to battle, he seems rather indifferent to them. Additionally, the text seems to treat the intercessory prayer as the catalyst for the return of God's favor. Immediately following the prayer we are told simply that the Lord's wrath turned to mercy. A brief look at contemporary literature shows intercessory prayers are consistently represented as the event that leads to divine intervention. In 1 Maccabees it is Judas's intercessory prayer alone that restores the Lord's mercy.²⁰ The situation is same in Daniel 9, 1 Enoch 47, and Baruch 2–5. Throughout the Maccabean period the prayers of the righteous serve to appease the wrath of God. Martyrdom is conspicuously absent as such a catalyst. Thus 2 Maccabees provides its own turning point independent of chapter 7, and the chapter can be excised without handicapping the narrative, contrary to Doran's assertion. The excision of the chapter is further supported by 2 Macc 6:12–17, where the author comforts the reader after having described the brutal improprieties of Antiochus.²¹ No explanation or warning accompanies the more grisly deaths of 6:18–7:42, and Judas's prayer in chapter 8 specifically names only those crimes that precede the author's interjection.

It is also instructive to consider the designation of the deaths of the seven sons as expiation for the nation of Israel. In 2 Macc 7:37–38 the youngest brother

17. Doran, *Temple Propaganda*, 22–23.

18. According to Doran, "the persecutions suffered bring about a reversal in the history of the Jews" (Doran, *Temple Propaganda*, 54). From van Henten: "The intercessory prayer and the death of the martyrs seem to have resulted in the return of God's mercy" (van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs*, 299).

19. "They besought the Lord to look upon the people who were oppressed by all, and to have pity on the temple which had been profaned by ungodly men, and to have mercy on the city which was being destroyed and about to be leveled to the ground, and to hearken to the blood that cried out to him, and to remember also the lawless destruction of the innocent babies and the blasphemies committed against his name, and to show his hatred of evil" (2 Macc 8:2–4).

20. 1 Macc 3:42–54.

21. "Now I beg those who read this book not to be disheartened by these misfortunes, but to consider that these chastisements were meant not for the ruin but for the correction of our nation. . . . Let these words suffice for recalling this truth. Without further ado we must go on with our story" (2 Macc 6:12–17, NAB).

states, “I, like my brothers, give up my body and life for the laws of our fathers, calling upon God to quickly show mercy to our people, and with afflictions and plagues to cause you to confess that he alone is God, while to me and my brothers it remains to bring an end to the wrath of the Almighty, which has justly fallen on our whole nation.” Such a motif is anachronistic in this period and scholarship has been unable to reach a consensus regarding its presence here.²² We find our earliest Jewish manifestations of martyrdom as expiation in Philo, Taxo, and more clearly in rabbinical Judaism.²³

22. According to van Henten, “The epitomist may have combined Greek and possibly Roman views about atoning death . . . with biblical traditions about Moses and Phinehas, mediators who stopped the Lord’s wrath against his unfaithful people. Inspired by non-Jewish traditions, he may have added to the biblical view that it was necessary in an extreme situation for the mediator to sacrifice his or her life in order to bring about atonement” (Van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs*, 299). Seeley argues that the deaths in 2 Macc 7 are not representative of a vicarious expiation on behalf of the nation of Israel (Seeley, *Noble Death: Graeco-Roman Martyrology and Paul’s Concept of Salvation* [JSOTSup 28; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990], 87–89), despite the youngest brother’s hope that their collective sacrifice would bring the mercy of his God upon the entire nation. Seeley points to a similar petition for mercy from Judas in the following chapter (in a context devoid of immediate danger) as an indication that there was nothing singular about the boy’s plea. Seeley’s error is in his presupposition that the two chapters are univocal. The epitomizer was unconcerned with expiation and instead had Judas pleading for compassion on the part of the Lord. The two prayers come from entirely distinct backgrounds. Frend interprets the martyrdoms as the inspiration for the subsequent Christian developments of resurrection, atonement, and the ideal of martyrdom (W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* [New York: New York University Press, 1967], 34–36). Williams rejects the notion of atonement as it appears in 4 Maccabees. “I find it more appropriate by far to speak of ‘effective death’ in IV Maccabees” (Sam K. Williams, *Jesus’ Death as Saving Event: The Background and Origin of a Concept* [Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975], 179). Williams decides that the land of Israel was purified, but that personal sins are not mentioned. Collectively, however, Williams seems to grant the expiatory nature of the martyrdoms, although he rejects it in 2 Maccabees, partially because chapter 8 seems to present main catalyst for the return of God’s protection in Judas’s intercessory prayer (Williams, *Jesus’ Death*, 85–87), but it is likely that 2 Macc 7 is an interpolation that neglected to account for the turning point already present in the text. Nonetheless, for Williams, martyrdom as collective expiation is found exclusively in 4 Maccabees: “IV Maccabees telescopes this extended event and identifies it as the effect of the martyrs’ faithful suffering unto death; it was through their death that God delivered Israel; because of them the land was purified” (Williams, *Jesus’ Death*, 196, emphasis in original). Heard isolates seven criteria that define the Maccabean martyr motif: (1) Israel’s sin precipitates the wrath of God, (2) cosmic dualism, (3) divine eschatological vengeance, (4) vicarious atonement, (5) suffering as a result of faithfulness, (6) humiliation-exaltation, and (7) eschatological determinism. Armed with this motif he sets out to track the development of the Maccabean martyr ideal through Daniel, Enoch, the *Martyrdom of Isaiah*, and the *Assumption of Moses* (Warren J. Heard Jr., *Maccabean Martyr Theology: Its Genesis Antecedents and Significance for the Earliest Soteriological Interpretation of the Death of Jesus* [PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1989], 34). Heard tentatively identifies these elements in all of the above texts, except for the notion of martyrdom as expiatory. He cautiously posits expiatory qualities in the *Martyrdom of Isaiah*, Enoch, and Daniel, but he recognizes the frailty of this argument (Heard, *Maccabean Martyr Theology*, 69, 100–103, 127).

23. Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 233–36; *Assumption of Moses* 9:1–7. As van Henten points

Prior to the first century ce, willingness to die under the pressure of persecution was generally viewed as a catalyst for divine intervention. Death was actually not the intended outcome, and expiation is naturally precluded. In Dan 3:17, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, facing death, declare, "Behold, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us from your hand, O king." Although they recognize death as a possibility, the author avoids that conclusion, and they are ultimately delivered. Josephus records a similar expectation: "and if we fall into misfortunes, we will bear them, in order to preserve our laws, as knowing that those who expose themselves to dangers have good hope of escaping them, because God will stand on our side."²⁴ Although Josephus and others record the deaths of numerous people as a result of their fealty to their beliefs, these events are never cast in an efficacious light.²⁵ 2 Maccabees is devoid of effective death ideology—despite accounts of numerous deaths—and is therefore inconsistent with the ideological context of chapter 7.

Finding a New Date

Several elements combine within our chapter to suggest a much later composition than is generally accepted. Many of these elements relate to the ideology of martyrdom, which is thought by many to have first been developed in 2 Macc 7, and only later adopted by other writers. Scholars have had difficulty,

out, "from the rabbinic period onwards, martyrdom became defined as the sanctification of the Name of the Lord" (van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs*, 304). From Shepkaru: "These images illustrate the need for legitimizing the Jewish adoption of the Roman idea of human sacrifice. What facilitated the presentation of the seven sons as sacrifices in 4 Maccabees was the mutability of voluntary death in post-Temple Judaism and the crystallization of Diaspora theology" (Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs*, 57). Shepkaru, however, fails to find the same expiatory qualities in 2 Maccabees. Williams goes so far as to state that, "a theologoumenon of vicarious expiatory death was not current in pre-70 a.d. Judaism" (Williams, *Jesus' Death*, 230). Aharon Agud asserts that it is "decidedly an early rabbinic theme" (Aharon Agus, *The Binding of Isaac and Messiah: Law, Martyrdom, and Deliverance in Early Rabbinic Religiosity* [New York: State University of New York Press, 1988], 40). Expiation in Isaiah's suffering servant is a possibility, but the ancient Jewish perspective views the suffering servant as the exiled Israel, a corporate personality. The insertion of "messiah" in the Isaiah Targum has led some to believe the chapter supports the Christian interpretation of the servant as Jesus, but the Targum actually describes the messiah's deliverance of the suffering Israel through prayer. The Jewish interpretation has classically viewed the servant as Israel, although that interpretation may have been developed as an anti-Christian polemic. Irrespective, expiation is not readily evident.

24. Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.267. As Shepkaru notes, "paradoxically, the option of death was exercised to avoid it" (Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs*, 49). The possibility of death could not be precluded, but that possibility in no way conflicted with the central thesis that God would deliver those who were willing to die for his laws. In his Jewish War, Josephus does present several examples of Jewish willingness to die as sacrificial, but death is not the final outcome of that pericope. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.196–97.

25. For example, "What effect does the death of the righteous ones have in 1 Maccabees? It appears to have no direct effect at all" (Williams, *Jesus' Death*, 74).

however, fitting the martyrological perspective of the chapter into a second century bce context. Freeing the text from its dependence on the book of 2 Maccabees, however, allows the ideologies to dictate the historical context rather than the other way around.

In 2 Macc 7:12, it is said of one of the dying brothers that, “he regarded his suffering as nothing,” which astonished the king and his men. Ascetic responses to martyrdom are not found in the worldview of second century bce Judaism, but, rather, they developed in the first centuries of the Common Era.²⁶ The type of “noble death” represented in the chapter also presents a problem to a second century bce composition, as the mutilation of the victims conflicts with the Greek ideal, to which the motif is usually attributed. A Roman noble death fits much better with the story.²⁷ 2 Macc 7, in addition, presents resurrection as a recompense for martyrdom, which is completely absent from Judaism until well into the Christian era. Philo and Josephus fail to recognize resurrection as a specific reward for martyrdom. Josephus makes several allusions to resurrection, but never in the context of martyrdom.²⁸ As far as can be perceived, resurrection developed in Judaism as a universal condition without ever being viewed as a reward for martyrdom. The first text outside of 2 Macc 7 that intimates such an ideology is Heb 11:35b.²⁹

Another anachronistic element is an implicit appeal to *creatio ex nihilo* in defense of the resurrection. We have no indication that resurrection was in need of defense in the second century bce, and the juxtaposition of human birth, the creation of the world, and the resurrection is a uniquely Christian

26. According to Maureen A. Tilley, “asceticism logically and practically preceded martyrdom. In fact, it made martyrdom possible” (Maureen A. Tilley, “The Ascetic Body and the (Un)Making of the World of the Martyr,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59.3 [Autumn 1991]: 475). See also Abraham Gross, *Spirituality and Law: Courting Martyrdom in Christianity and Judaism* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2005), 2–5; and Brent D. Shaw, “Body/Power/Identity: Passions of the Martyrs,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4.3 (1996): 269–312.

27. Marie-Françoise Baslez explains the mutilation as the introduction of a type of Jewish antithesis to the Greek noble death (Marie-Françoise Baslez, “The Origin of the Martyrdom Images: From the Book of Maccabees to the First Christians,” in *The Book of Maccabees: History, Theology, Ideology* [ed. Géza G. Xeravits and József Zsengellér; JSJSup; Leiden: Brill, 2007], 115–18), but she misses the connection with the Roman noble death, which ascribes more glory to the mutilated martyr, provided they endure it stoically (see Carlin A. Barton, “Savage Miracles: The Redemption of Lost Honor in Roman Society and the Sacrament of the Gladiator and the Martyr,” *Representations* 45 [Winter 1994]: 56–57).

28. In reference to the suicides at Masada he speaks of resurrection as the reward of those who die via natural means, in contrast to those who take their lives, which action he criticizes (Josephus, *Jewish War* 3.374). See Shmuel Shepkaru, “From after Death to After-life: Martyrdom and Its Recompense,” *AJS Review* 24.1 (1999): 6–11. See also Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs*, 59, where it is argued that, in this respect, the martyrdoms of 2 Macc 7 appear prematurely in Hellenistic Judaism. Levenson provides a strong argument for an awareness of the doctrine of resurrection prior to the Hellenistic age, but nothing related to martyrdom (Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006]).

29. See below for a discussion of the relationship of Heb 11:35b to 2 Macc 7.

argument. Celsus and Tatian are the first to make the connection.³⁰ Prior to that Justin Martyr and Athenagoras defended the resurrection on the grounds that man was created from a single drop of semen,³¹ but creation *ex nihilo* had yet to be intimated, as it may be in 2 Macc 7:28.³²

In 2 Macc 7 there is also a complete absence of any mention of the temple, which is peculiar considering Antiochus' forced consumption of pork (as far as it is attested) occurred within the Jerusalem temple.³³ Within a text designed specifically as temple propaganda, it is odd that the temple setting is omitted. The only other chapter in all of 2 Maccabees that does not mention the

30. James N. Hubler, "Creatio ex Nihilo: Matter, Creation, and the Body in Classical and Christian Philosophy through Aquinas" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1995), 114–15. The mother in 2 Macc 7 is using the creation and the resurrection parenetically to comfort her son. See also Pastor of Hermas 2:1: "First of all, believe that there is one God who created and finished all things, and made all things out of nothing."

31. Justin Martyr, *On the Resurrection* 5.7; Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection* 17.1–2.

32. This has been a rather controversial section of 2 Maccabees. Since Origen of Alexandria this verse has been championed by various scholars as the earliest explicit manifestation of creatio ex nihilo. See J. C. O'Neill, "How Early is the Doctrine of Creatio Ex Nihilo?" *Journal of Theological Studies* 53.2 (October 2002): 449–65 (although O'Neill has recently advocated a different position); Hans Schwarz, *Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 172; Paul Copan and William Craig, *Creation Out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical and Scientific Exploration* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004), 95–96; Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis* (JPS Torah Commentary; New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 5; Robin Darling Young, "The 'Woman with the Soul of Abraham': Traditions about the Mother of the Maccabean Martyrs," in "Women Like This": *New Perspective on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine (Early Judaism and Its Literature 1; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1991), 71. The difficulty lay in the use of the phrase ἐκ μὴ ὄντων (and its equivalents) in early Jewish texts, as the Platonists are known to have described preexistent matter as "not being" (See Jonathan A. Goldstein, "The Origins of the Doctrine of Creation Ex Nihilo," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 35.2 [Autumn 1984]: 127). If the author of 2 Maccabees refers to the Platonic idea then creation ex nihilo is precluded. An early Rabbinic text (*Genesis Rabbah* 1:9) has long been thought to vindicate an early date for the doctrine, but Maren Niehoff has recently shown the text to be a late interpolation. See Maren R. Niehoff, "Creatio ex Nihilo Theology in *Genesis Rabbah* in Light of Christian Exegesis," *Harvard Theological Review* 99.1 (2006): 44. Prior to Niehoff's paper, scholarship had dismissed *creatio ex nihilo* in the *Genesis Rabbah* text, much as it does with 2 Macc 7:28. The doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* has been postulated in a number of Hebrew Bible verses, the most significant of those being the discussions of Wisdom's preexistence. Prov 8:24 is the best example, describing Wisdom as predating the depths (*tehomōt*). If we interpret the Bible univocally, this would place Wisdom's birth prior to the existence of Genesis's waters of chaos from which the universe was created, but, while the fundamental messages are generally consistent, the Bible was composed by a number of different individuals with a number of different rhetorical objectives in mind. Prov 8:22–31, as a creation hymn, is commonly interpreted as a polemic against the standard creation myths of the ancient Near East. Wisdom's authority supersedes the prevalent Canaanite worldview, and the author points to her antiquity as evidence of this. The need to assail the prevailing myths (in this instance, the role of Tiamat, cognate with *tebōm*) takes priority over the need to accurately represent well-established creation ideologies.

33. See Théodore Reinach, *Textes d'auteurs grecs et romains relatifs au judaïsme* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1895), 58.

temple is chapter 12, although that chapter describes a military campaign away from Jerusalem and does mention “sin offerings” and “atonement rites” being performed in Jerusalem. Since the text was most likely composed post-70 ce, the martyrdoms may have been composed as a temple sacrifice. Seven brothers represent a perfect sacrifice, and the author of chapter 7 views their deaths as atonement for all of Israel. The author may be providing a proxy in the absence of proper temple ordinances.

Also noteworthy is the use of the phrase “King of the Universe” in 2 Macc 7:9. The phrase does not appear in any Jewish literature until the Christian Era, when the Hebrew word *’olām* came to connote “universe.” In the rabbinic period, *melech ha’olām* (King of the Universe) became an important element of Jewish prayer. Goldstein presumes the phrase originated among Greek speaking Jews, as the verse in 2 Maccabees predates the change in meaning of *’olām*, but no Jewish literature in Greek contains the phrase prior to that change.³⁴ The phrase τὸν βασιλέα τῶν αἰώνων, from Tob 13:7, 11 (BA), however, preserves a Greek translation of the Hebrew phrase from before the change in meaning. 2 Macc 7:9 preserves the later meaning and indicates a Common Era date of composition.

External evidences also provide a better context for dating the pericope. The story of a parent and seven sons facing death for their fidelity to God’s laws is not unique to 2 Maccabees. Five texts share the plotline of 2 Macc 7: *The Assumption of Moses* 1:9, *Jewish Antiquities* 14.429, *b. Gittin* 57b, *Midrash Lamentations* 1:16, and *Pesiqta Rabbati* 43. The story begins in the mid-first century ce with the *Assumption of Moses*, which tells the story of Taxo, a Jewish father who takes his seven sons into a cave to protest Roman oppression, presumably killing his sons and finally himself. Josephus’s text expands upon the Taxo narrative by describing the father killing the sons one by one. The rabbinical texts are the first to present the parent as a mother, and the antagonist is Caesar, who attempts to force the family to bow before his statue. It is likely that an oral tradition was in circulation from which these five narratives drew their information.³⁵ *Pesiq. Rab.*

34. Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, 305. Using the TLG, I was able to find the phrase in Critolaus (Fragment 37a, line 7), from the second century bce, and in Plutarch (*Political Precepts* 15), from the second century ce. Origen is the first of the Judeo-Christians to employ the phrase in Greek (*Exhortation to Martyrdom* 24.10), as far as I am able to tell.

35. Robert Doran, “The Martyr,” 197–99. 2 Maccabees and *b. Git.* do not record the name of the mother, while *Pesiq. Rab.* calls her Miriam. Generally the anonymous accounts precede those that assign names. Nickelsburg points to the *Assumption of Moses* 9 as a parallel account that may have been influenced by 2 Macc 7 (Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, 127–29), but Doran rejects this correlation on the grounds that suicide seems the more likely outcome of the Taxo pericope. While the mother and seven sons are willingly captured, Taxo flees to a cave with his sons and their deaths are not recorded in the text (Doran, “The Martyr,” 190, see also note 5). Josephus preserves a similar account (*Jewish War* 1.312–13, *Antiquities* 14.429–30), but the father kills the sons and the mother, throwing them off the precipice at the mouth of the cave, and finally jumping himself. This probably post-dates the *Assumption of Moses*, which itself dates to the Common Era (Johannes Tromp, *The Assumption of Moses: A Critical Edition with Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 93–96, 116–17). This adds further support to the conclusion that this tradition develops much later than the date traditionally assigned to

43 is typologically earlier than 2 Maccabees and *b. Git.* 57b. *Midr. Lam.* 1:16 is a recension of *b. Git.* 57b, and the most developed of the five. 2 Macc 7 fits well into the evolution of this pericope.

The preponderance of evidence favors a date after the destruction of the temple in 70 ce, and before the latter half of the second century ce, when allusions to our story begin to surface. The developed appeal to fidelity in the face of martyrdom points to a composition during a time of widespread persecution. The text draws upon martyrological ideals that developed relatively synchronically within Christianity and Judaism after the destruction of the temple, and the Roman persecutions of the opening decades of the second century ce thus become a likely context. The chapter promises a glorious resurrection for those who suffer death for the laws of God. Such a promise is anachronistic to the second century bce, but fits well into Judaism as it struggled for identity following the destruction of the Jerusalem temple.

Potential Obstacles

Two texts that provide a *terminus ante quem* for 2 Macc 7 are 4 Maccabees and Heb 11:35b, which both show clear indications of borrowing from the chapter in question. We will consider the arguments for the dating of each.

4 Maccabees presents another perspective on Eleazar and the seven sons, and it is a much more developed and rhetorical narrative focused on the philosophical value of martyrdom. Our thesis must be able to comfortably place 4 Maccabees after the composition of 2 Macc 7. While the scholarly consensus regarding the dating of 4 Maccabees has long been thought to be secure in the early first century ce,³⁶ a new generation of concerns has arisen that has demanded consideration, and support for the traditional view is meeting with considerable resistance.³⁷

2 Macc 7.

36. Bickerman's argument has long been the standard. He notes the addition of the toponym "Cilicia" in 4 Macc 4:2. He concludes that Cilicia was added during a period in the early first century ce when Syria and Cilicia were thought of as the same province. See Bickerman, "The Date of 4 Maccabees," in *Studies in Jewish and Christian History: Part One* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 275–81. See also M. Hadas, *The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees* (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), 95–96; H. Anderson, "Fourth Maccabees," *ABD* 4.453; B. H. Anderson, "4 Maccabees: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, ed. James Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 533–34; and David deSilva, *4 Maccabees* (Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 12–18.

37. Van Henten prefers a date in the early second century ce (van Henten, "Daierung und Herkunft des Vierten Makkabäerbuches," *Tradition and Re-interpretation in Jewish and Christian Literature: Essays in honor of Jürgen C. H. Lebram* (ed. J. W. van Henten, et al.; StPB 36; Leiden: Brill, 1986), 139–49; Barclay places the author in the late first century ce. See Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan [323 BCE – 117 CE]* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 379. Campbell disagrees with Bickerman's assessment, arguing that the juxtaposition of Cilicia and Syria in 4 Maccabees does not necessarily convey such a meaning. See Douglas A. Campbell, *The Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans 3.21–26* (JSNTSup 65; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 221–24. See also Stephen D. Moore, Janice Capel Anderson, "Taking it Like a Man:

A particularly engaging argument is made by Douglas Campbell, who points to close similarities in syntax and diction between 4 Maccabees and Galen (from the late second century ce).³⁸ Of considerable interest is the Greek word τροχαντήρας (4 Macc 8:13), which derives from the eminence on the superior body of the femur (English “trochanter”). As Campbell points out, Galen and Sextus Empiricus seem to be the first to utilize the term outside of 4 Maccabees, which they do in its proper medical sense. 4 Maccabees uses the word in reference to a torture device, connoting some kind of joint separating tool. In light of other similarities with Galen, it is not unreasonable to conclude the author of 4 Maccabees borrowed the term from Galen’s texts. The word is absent from the texts of earlier physicians, such as Herophilos or Hippocrates.³⁹ Significant correlation is also found between the Maccabean martyrdoms and those of Christians such as Polycarp, Ignatius, Carpus, Papyrius, and Agathonice.⁴⁰ A provenance in the late second or early third century ce is not unlikely. The author of 4 Maccabees displays an intimate familiarity with Greek philosophy that points to a well educated Jew, probably living in one of the major Jewish-philosophical centers of the ancient Near East. Antioch becomes a likely place of origin for 4 Maccabees given the sudden appearance of a Maccabean martyr cult there in the fourth century, the mention of their tomb in 4 Macc 17:8, as well as the Antiochan claim to the Maccabean relics.⁴¹ In light of this, 4 Maccabees poses no threat to our thesis.

Masculinity in 4 Maccabees,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117.2 (Summer 1998): 251, note 4.

38. Campbell, *The Rhetoric of Righteousness*, 226.

39. See “τροχαντήρ” in the TLG. Campbell misses the occurrence of the word in Julius Pollux, also of the late second century ce: “ἡ δὲ περὶ τῇ τοῦ μηροῦ τῶν ὀστέων ἐκφύσις τροχαντήρ ὀνομάζεται” (Julius Pollux, *Onomasticon* 2.187.4). The phrase γενναῖος ἀθλητῆς is also first attested in the second century, in the *Martyrium Sanctorum Carpi* 35.2. A striking correlation is Eusebius’ account of the martyrdom of Blandina, found in *History of the Church* 5.1.18–19. She is called a “noble athlete,” but her torturers are also said to have been “conquered” (cf. 4 Macc 6:10). David deSilva disagrees, stating that, “a closer examination of the words attested elsewhere only in second- and third-century texts reveals, however, that they are mostly compound forms or new grammatical forms of earlier existing words” (David A. deSilva, *4 Maccabees* [Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998], 17). DeSilva does not seem to be aware of Campbell’s work.

40. Campbell, *The Rhetoric of Righteousness*, 227–28. Williams notes similarities between 4 Maccabees, Polycarp, and Ignatius, but he prefers to interpret this as a sign of borrowing on the part of Christianity, rather than the other way around. “The noteworthy similarities and the precise parallels between the Martyrdom of Polycarp and IV Maccabees argue for the probability that the author of the Martyrdom was acquainted with the book of IV Maccabees” (Williams, *Jesus’ Death*, 236). Later he refers to the “probability that Ignatius was familiar with IV Maccabees” (Williams, *Jesus’ Death*, 236).

41. This tradition originates with a Syriac martyrology from the mid-fourth century ce (although St. Chrysostom is the first to mention their relics), and is taken up by several other writers over the following centuries (Margaret Shatkin, “The Maccabean Martyrs,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 28.2 [June 1974]: 99–101). Van Henten calls the possibility of a cult of the martyrs in Antioch “dubious,” but the question is ultimately left open to further research (Van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs*, 79).

In Heb 11:35b the author, speaking of examples of faith, refers to those who “were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might receive a better resurrection.” The reference seems a clear allusion to 2 Macc 7. While the date of Hebrews is generally accepted in the late first or early second century ce, the earliest textual witness we have to this verse, P⁴⁶, dates to the late second century ce, well after our proposed date for 2 Maccabees.⁴²

The first text to explicitly reference the Maccabean epitome also comes from the end of the second century ce Clement of Alexandria, in his *Stromata*, cites, in passing, ἡ τῶν Μακκαβαίων ἐπιτομή.⁴³ No mention, however, is made of the chapter 7 characters. After Clement, the Maccabean martyrs surface among Alexandrian writers, appearing later in Antioch and beyond.

Conclusion

The structure and function of 2 Macc 7 adds support to the argument for independent authorship. The peculiarities in the Greek of the chapter have long cast suspicion upon its composition, but its unique structure and its undermining of the rhetorical function of the rest of the book leave no room to insist the chapter be viewed as playing any part in the original composition. Decoupling the chapter from 2 Maccabees exposes several ideologies previously suppressed by the historical framework that long restricted readings of the text. These ideologies allow scholars to reapply critical methodologies to the text to provide a fresh perspective on its composition. Such methodologies lead to the conclusion that our author, rather than providing the catalyst for some of the most important early Christian ideologies, is merely adopting those extant ideals that fit into his worldview. It has long been thought that 2 Macc 7 provided the foundation for the development of Christian beliefs about martyrdom, resurrection, and the doctrine of vicarious expiation; and it accomplished all this without registering so much as a blip on the literary radar. Far more parsimonious is later borrowing on the part of the author of 2 Macc 7 from the milieu of the Judeo-Christian battles for identity and orthodoxy.

We can see in the text a clear treatise on the role of resurrection as an incentive for martyrdom. In the same breath, voluntary death is presented

42. Evidence exists, as well, that the reference to the Maccabean martyrs is not part of the original version of the text. The asyndeton of vv. 32–38 refers exclusively to the prophets. Many of the references are unambiguous, but early Christian writings show many of the more vague references were understood as explicit allusions to specific prophets. 1 Clement 17:1, for example, refers to Heb 11:37b and attributes the allusion to Elijah, Elisha, and Ezekiel. Origen attributes Heb 11:37 to the prophets on three different occasions (*To Africanus* 9; *Against Celsus* 7.7 and 7.18), although he references a version of Hebrews that contains the interpolation ἐπιδράσθησαν. Clearly a reference to seven children and a woman from the Maccabean era is anomalous. Heb 11:35b is also superfluous to the literary unit, as a turning point exists in 11:36 that provides its own conjunction.

43. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 5.14.97. See also Shephkaru, *Jewish Martyrs*, 36; G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome*, 10–11.

as a vicarious sacrifice for the entire nation of Israel. Both ideas have clear connections to first and second century ce Christian ideologies, and cannot fit comfortably into second century bce Judaism. The implicit appeal to the creation of the world and the creation of humanity as a defense of the resurrection is also a uniquely second century ce Christian argument, whether or not we grant to the mother the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. The textual and ideological incompatibility of 2 Macc 7 with Jewish literature of the Second Temple Period, the ease with which those elements of the text fit into a second century ce context, and the evolution of the tradition of the parent and seven sons within Jewish texts of the Common Era combine to provide abundant evidence for a late first or early second century ce provenance for the pericope.

FALSE PROPHETS IN ANCIENT ISRAELITE RELIGION

JOSHUA MICHAEL SEARS

How long halt ye between two opinions?” Elijah asked the children of Israel. “If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.” Despite the seeming simplicity of Elijah’s invitation, the people stood indecisive and “answered him not a word” (1 Kgs 18:21). The scene was indeed a spectacle: there stood Elijah, the last prophet who spoke for the LORD, Yahweh (1 Kgs 19:10), and opposing him not only Israel’s own king but at least 450 prophets representing Baal (1 Kgs 18:19). Who to support, the lone, wild desert-man, or the hundreds of prophets that in addition to strength in numbers held the full authority of the state? Despite these differences in appearance, the record in Kings tells that in the contest that followed Elijah clearly triumphed. “All the people . . . fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God” (1 Kgs 18:39). Elijah then commanded the people to slay all the prophets of Baal.

This dramatic encounter between prophets of two opposing ideologies exemplifies an important feature of ancient Israelite religion: the constant struggle of the people to decide which of all the prophets really spoke the divine word that they should follow. The history of the Hebrew Bible is full of such theological warfare and indicates that these choices were both difficult and divisive. While the Hebrew Bible records some tests and guides that were used to help discern between “true” and “false” prophets, they appear to have been inadequate to help the Israelites make proper discernment for every case.

Part I: Prophets and Prophecy

Before examining the role of false prophets among the ancient Israelites some definitions must be made concerning prophets and prophecy. These terms are defined in different ways by different biblical scholars. Before discussing prophecy in his book *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, Martti Nissinen recognizes the different approaches and offers this definition:

Prophecy, as understood in this volume, is human transmission of allegedly divine messages. As a method of revealing the divine will to humans, prophecy is to be seen as another, yet distinctive branch of the consultation of the divine that is generally called “divination.” . . . Prophets—like dreamers and unlike astrologers or haruspices—do not employ methods based on systematic observations and their scholarly interpretations, but act as direct mouthpieces of gods whose messages they communicate.¹

Nissinen’s approach emphasizes the differences many scholars traditionally place between prophecy and other, more physical forms of supernatural communication. Some observed the stars, some cast lots, and some examined livers—prophecy, on the other hand, came from without and was communicated from within.² Other scholars define prophecy not only according to its process but also its purpose as a divine mandate rather than simply an answer to human questions (such as with astrology or extispicy).³ Herbert B. Huffmon offered this definition:

For our purposes prophecy may be defined as having the following general, but not exclusive, characteristics: (1) a communication from the divine world . . . (2) inspiration through ecstasy, dreams . . . or what may be called inner illumination; (3) an immediate message . . . (4) the likelihood that the message is unsolicited . . . (5) the likelihood that the message is exhortatory or admonitory.⁴

Most definitions will have similar features to these two, usually focusing on prophecy as direct communication with the divine or its role as an exhortatory message. In simple terms, then, prophecy is the communication of a divine message and a prophet is the human agent that both receives and transmits this message. Although modern English sometimes uses prophecy in the specific sense of “a prediction of something to come” and a prophet as “one who foretells future events,”⁵ the biblical usage makes no requirement that prophecy be restricted to revelation about the future. Indeed, many prophets are noted for their roles in promoting social justice within their own contemporary societies,

1. Martti Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (Writings from the Ancient World 12; ed. Theodore J. Lewis; Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 1.

2. One instance in which the process itself is described in the Hebrew Bible is Num 12:6: “If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.” Elijah also received communication not through external signs like wind, earthquakes, or fire, but through “a still small voice” (see 1 Kgs 19:11–12).

3. With most prophets we are not told specifically if at the time of their calling they were seeking revelation, only that the word of the Lord came, saying such and such. However, on most occasions in which we are given more detail it appears that the initial prophecies were unsolicited and at times even unwanted; see Exod 3:1–11; 1 Sam 3:1–4; Jonah 1:1–3; Jer 1:4–6.

4. Herbert Huffmon, “Prophecy in the Mari Letters,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 31 (1968): 103.

5. “Prophecy” and “Prophet” in *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1996), 935.

with little concern for future events.

With these definitions in mind, a question naturally follows: was prophecy an extensive phenomenon in the ancient Near East or was it unique to ancient Israel? Although Israelite prophecy is generally considered unique in many ways, some scholars have argued for cases of prophecy in other contexts. Much of the time, the extent to which other cases can be labeled as “prophecy” depends upon the definitions of prophecy that are employed. Nissinen argues that prophecy belongs to a “common cultural legacy which cannot be traced back to any particular society or place of origin.” However, examples of extrabiblical prophecy are so scant and so debated that he also recognizes that “the huge process of collecting, editing, and interpreting prophecy that took place as a part of the formation of the Hebrew Bible is virtually without precedent in the rest of the ancient Near East.”⁶ To date, the prophetic texts found at Mari have most often been compared to Israelite prophecy, and though they greatly differ in terms of both geography and chronology, some scholars have drawn extensive parallels between them (though not without some criticism).⁷ The usual consensus, however, is that employing prophecy as a means of obtaining divine messages was generally unique to Israelite culture.⁸

Understanding that prophecy for the most part is limited to (or at least best documented within) ancient Israel, are there any extrabiblical sources that shed light on prophecy? Unfortunately, like with so much of our information about ancient Israel, we are almost entirely limited to what has survived in the Hebrew Bible text. One notable exception is the inscription found on Lachish Ostrakon 3, which contains a letter written by one military leader to another. One line reads: “I am also sending to my lord the letter (which was in the custody) of Tobyahu, servant of the king, which was sent to Shallum son of Yada from the prophet and which begins ‘Beware.’”⁹ Although this fragmentary conversation is not a lengthy text, it is interesting that it confirms the idea that prophets gave exhortatory declarations and that these were considered important enough that they were noticed by military leaders.

6. Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 4–5. See pages 4–8 for his discussion of prophetic roles in other ancient Near Eastern cultures and how they relate to the biblical usage.

7. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* makes such a connection, even noting that “Before the discovery of Mari the Hebrew phenomenon of apostolic prophecy had tended to be viewed in isolation, and often treated as a unique phenomenon” (Abraham Malamat, “Mari,” *Encyclopedia Judaica* 13:540). Abraham Malamat, who had written extensively on the Mari texts, observed: “Indeed, [Mari] is the earliest such manifestation known to us anywhere in the ancient Near East. . . . [Prophecy] at Mari places biblical prophecy in a new perspective” (*Mari and the Bible* [Leiden: Brill, 1998], 60–61).

8. See J. Andrew Dearman, *Religion & Culture in Ancient Israel* (USA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1992), 153.

9. Dennis Pardee, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters* (SBLSPS 15; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982), 84–85.

If prophets, then, receive direct communication from a divine source¹⁰ and if the study of prophecy is to be largely confined to the Hebrew Bible, what then are false prophets? This, of course, is a matter of theological interpretation. “False prophet” itself is not a term found in the Hebrew Bible. *Nabi*, or “prophet,” is used by biblical authors and redactors to refer both to prophets considered legitimate spokesmen for Yahweh as well as those that falsely claimed such authority. The veracity or falsehood of any given prophet depended on the ideology of the one giving the label, and biblical writers make it quite clear that they considered some prophets to be authentic and others usurpers.

With this background about prophecy in ancient Israel, we can proceed to examine what the Hebrew Bible says about those prophets it condemns as “false.”

Part II: What the Hebrew Bible Says about False Prophets

Both archeological finds and the biblical text attest to the fact that ancient Israel’s religious life was far more diverse than that with which the Deuteronomistic laws tolerated. Perhaps simply because of the nature of prophecy, one of the features of popular religion was the reality of multiple prophetic voices. Scholar R. R. Wilson noted:

The possibility of false prophecy is inherent in any society that tolerates the existence of prophets. This is so because prophecy is essentially a process by which an intermediary (the prophet) facilitates communication between the human and divine realms. In various ways the prophet receives divine messages and then delivers them to human recipients. However, the prophetic experience is basically a private one, even though the prophet may describe it publicly. In the end the prophet’s audience can never be sure that the experience took place as described or that the prophet is accurately reporting the divine message. Therefore, the reliability of any prophecy can be questioned, and the threat of false prophecy is always present.¹¹

Whatever the real motives or inspirations of the Hebrew Bible’s “false prophets,” it is clear that the biblical redactors opposed them vehemently. On several occasions the “true” prophets singled out their competitors as a source for Israel’s apostasy from true worship of Yahweh. Jeremiah 23, for example, is largely a condemnation of the false prophets and teachers who led the people astray. Some highlights of the chapter include:

10. For more examples, see Gen 12:1; 28:11–15; Exod 3:4; Josh 1:1; 1 Sam 3:4; Isa 1:1; 6:1; Jer 1:4; Ezek 1:1; Dan 2:19; Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1; Mic 1:1; Zeph 1:1; Hag 1:1; and Zech 1:1. Many prophecies are prefaced with such introductions as “The word of the LORD which came . . .” or “Thus saith the LORD . . .”

11. R. R. Wilson, “Interpreting Israel’s Religion: An Anthropological Perspective on the Problem of False Prophecy,” in *The Place Is Too Small For Us: The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship* (ed. Robert P. Gordon; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 333–34.

- “Folly in the prophets of Samaria . . . caused my people Israel to err” (13).
- “The prophets of Jerusalem . . . commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers” (14).
- “From the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land” (15).
- “The prophets . . . make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart” (16).
- “They are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; which think to cause my people to forget my name” (26–27).
- “Behold, I am against the prophets, said the LORD . . . behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams . . . and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies” (31–32).

Jeremiah, of course, was particularly sensitive about this subject as his ministry included several confrontations with opposing prophetic voices. Several other prophets also blamed false teachers and prophets for much of Israel’s wickedness.¹²

What was the motivation and origin of the men that made up this hated group? On a few occasions the Hebrew Bible accuses them of seeking wealth.¹³ Other times they are called liars.¹⁴ Sometimes blame for false prophecy is placed upon the people themselves, who seek out leaders who will condone their iniquity (a simple case of providing a product that meets the demands of the market).¹⁵ Other times still the false prophets are described as evildoers who teach wickedness to help support their own riotous living.¹⁶ In other cases the goal of the false prophet is described simply as trying to turn the people away from Yahweh, although we might assume that some of these other motives drove such teachings.¹⁷

On many occasions where false prophets appear they are tied to a royal court.¹⁸ Such an observation is what we would expect. Since the biblical record

12. For more examples of false prophets contributing to the wickedness of the populace, see Isa 9:14–16; Ezek 22:25, 28; and Mic 3:5, 10.

13. For examples, see Num 22:7, 17, 37 and Mic 3:11.

14. For examples, see 2 Chr 22:22; Jer 14:14; 23:14, 16, 26; Ezek 22:25, 28 and Mic 2:11.

15. For examples, see 1 Kgs 22:7–8; Isa 30:9–11; Jer 23:17–18 and Mic 2:6, 11.

16. For examples, see Isa 28:7 and Jer 23:14.

17. For examples, see Deut 13:5 and Jer 23:27.

18. For examples, see the 450 false prophets of Baal and 400 false prophets of Asherah “which [ate] at Jezebel’s table” (1 Kgs 18:19); Zedekiah and the false prophets of King Ahab (1 Kgs 22); and the false prophet Shemaiah who had open communication with the high priest (Jer 29:24–32). Even Moses in Pharaoh’s courts had to contend with the state magi-

condemns most of the kings of Israel and Judah as apostates it would make sense that these kings would financially support a prophetic class that supported them ideologically. Simple economics also dictates that if one decided to get into the false prophet profession, it would be most lucrative to do so in the service of the monarchy. Not every false prophet is given a direct royal connection in the text, of course, but it appears in several cases that wicked kings and wicked prophets went hand in hand.

Given that these deceiving prophets were so terrible, what fate does Yahweh give them? Deut 13:5 is very clear: “that prophet shall be put to death” (see also Deut 18:20). It is with this authority that Elijah slew the 450 priests of Baal. Often in Israel’s history the false prophets had popular support and thus were not executed; however, the “true” prophets prophesied that Yahweh himself would execute judgment.¹⁹

Similar fates are pronounced upon those that hearken to false prophets. Jeremiah’s warning that people who listen to false prophets walked a path “as slippery ways in the darkness” (Jer 23:12) was probably the lightest example; most of the time, destruction was the promise.²⁰

Part III: Distinguishing between True and False Prophets

Obviously, the issue of false prophecy was of great concern to the authors of the Hebrew Bible. Not only was it a capital crime, but a host of other apostate practices came in its wake. These observations lead to one overarching question: how does one distinguish between true and false prophets?

The text suggests a few different characteristics of a true prophet. Foremost among these is the requirement that he must prophesy in the name of Yahweh; if he is promoting any other god he is false by default (Deut 18:20). Another characteristic is suggested when Miriam and Aaron tried to justify their resistance to Moses’ decisions by pointing to their own prophetic gifts; Yahweh told them that though He makes Himself known to many people in visions and dreams, Moses was different in that he received revelation “mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD [doth] he behold” (Num 12:8). Jeremiah also taught that false prophets do not teach the people to repent of their evil ways and return to Yahweh’s commandments, clearly implying that a true prophet would do so (see Jer 27:21–22).

Frequently, true prophets are characterized by the miracles or signs they perform. Upon receiving his prophetic call Moses asked: “But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee” (Exod 4:1). God instructed Moses to perform a series of miraculous signs, and upon doing so “the people believed” (Exod 4:31).

cians (Exod 7–8).

19. For examples, see Isa 9:14–16; Jer 14:15; 23:12, 15, 19; 27:15; 28:15–17; 29:31–32; and Mic 3:5–7.

20. For examples, see Isa 9:16; Jer 14:16; 23:19; and 27:15.

The classic test in the Law to discern a true prophet is found in Deut 18:21–22:

And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

Thus, if a prophecy turns out to be untrue, it can be certain that the prophet who gave it is false.

It should be noted that none of these standards and tests by themselves are completely definitive. Speaking in the name of Yahweh, for example, is necessary for a true prophet but is seen several times coming from false prophets.²¹ The Pharaoh's magicians performed some of the same miracles performed by Moses (Exod 7:11, 22; 8:7). And even the test of predicting the future from Deut 18 is only certain if the test fails; Deut 13:1–4 makes it clear that a true prediction may come from a false prophet and does not necessarily mean his teachings are correct.²²

So of all these indicators of a true prophet, which ones did the Israelites utilize in the heat of theological warfare? It appears that by far the most common methods of discernment that people put into practice were the use of signs and the experiment outlined in Deut 18:22, that is, see if what the prophet predicts actually happens. These two concepts are often tied together, as prophets would prophesy that some sign would take place, after which the people could watch and see if the sign occurred. By prophesying of the future (and often imminent) occurrence of some supernatural event, the prophet's audience could apply Deut 18:22 and see if the prophet was really communicating heaven's will.

Oftentimes such prophecies occurred in the context of a type of prophetic confrontation, in which a true prophet and a false prophet would make opposing predictions to see whose authority was legitimate. Such was the case with the aforementioned story of Elijah and his famous showdown with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. "Call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God." Perhaps the people recognized the application of Deut 18:22 when they "answered and said, It is well spoken" (1 Kgs 18:24). As Elijah offered his prayer, he requested that Yahweh send down fire for the specific purpose that the people know "that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word"

21. For examples, see Deut 18:20, 22; 1 Kgs 22:11–12; Jer 14:14; 23:17, 31; 27:15; 28:1–2, 4, 11; 29:24–26; Ezek 22:28; and Mic 3:11. Indeed, false prophets appear to have spoken in the name of Yahweh more than they did in the names of foreign deities.

22. This makes sense logically, as even complete guesses could be accurate some of the time. Interestingly, Yahweh explains in Deut 13:3 that sometimes he will allow a false prophet's prediction to come true as a test for the people to see if they will hearken to that prophet's false doctrine.

(1 Kgs 18:36). His prophecy was that Heaven would hear him, while the prophets of Baal predicted that it was they who would be heard. The resulting sign was in Elijah's favor, indicating clearly that the prophets of Baal had "spoken it presumptuously" (Deut. 18:22).

Even Moses set up such a test. When Korah and other rebels accused him of presumptuously taking on a leadership position when "all the congregation [was] holy, every one of them, and the LORD [was] among them" (Num 16:3), Moses had the people separate into groups and proposed a prophetic test. If the rebels lived to a ripe old age and died of natural causes, Moses himself was a liar; but if the earth opened up and swallowed the rebels alive, Moses was right. Almost humorously, the rebels did not have a chance to say if they liked the terms of such a test, for as soon "as he had made an end of speaking all these words . . . the ground clave asunder that was under them" (Num 16:31). Moses' accurate prediction of the rebel's death clearly demonstrated his legitimacy.

Another example of a prophetic confrontation occurs with King Ahab, apparently none the wiser after his encounter with Elijah. This time his options were between Zedekiah and the court prophets declaring victory for battle, and lonely Micaiah predicting defeat. As Ahab threw Micaiah into prison for pronouncing the less-favorable prophecy, Micaiah declared: "If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me" (1 Kgs 22:28), a clear application of the principle found in Deut 18:22. It was Micaiah's prophecy against Zedekiah's, and Ahab's death showed the latter was wrong.

The true-prediction test is also key to a dramatic confrontation between Jeremiah and the false prophet Hananiah. Jeremiah declared that Jerusalem would be destroyed by Babylon, whereas Hananiah stood up before all the people and declared, in the name of Yahweh, that within two years Babylon would fall. In response Jeremiah sarcastically declared, "The prophet which prophesieth of peace [that is, Hananiah], when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly sent him" (Jer 28:9).

Jeremiah then went on his way, but apparently Yahweh felt the need to speed things up a bit (why wait two years?), and so He sent Jeremiah back. Jeremiah prophesied to Hananiah: "this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month" (Jer 28:16–17). The people observing these happenings should have been able to discern between the prophecies of Jeremiah and Hananiah by the outcome of their predictions.

There are several other occasions in which, even if a test was not formally proposed, Hebrew prophets used signs as a means of validating their authority. These were often preceded by prophecies that predicted the occurrence of the sign. For example, in 1 Kgs 13 a "man of God" prophesied to Jeroboam of the birth of Josiah through the House of David. He then explained,

This is the sign which the LORD hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out. And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God . . . that . . . the altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. (1 Kgs 13:3–5)

Jeroboam, now recognizing the man as a true prophet, offered him a reward.

Another example is Pharaoh's demand to "shew a miracle for you." In response, Aaron "cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent" (Exod 7:9–10). Although the Egyptian magicians were able to imitate a few plagues, they finally confessed to Pharaoh that "this is the finger of God" (Exod 8:19).

A particularly interesting case is that of Gideon, who proposed a test in order to confirm to he himself that he was called of God! Doubtful because he considered himself the "least" of all, Gideon asked: "shew me a sign that thou talkest with me" (Judg 6:17). After the first sign was given, Gideon later proposed: "If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know" (Judg 6:36–37). After the test was successful, Gideon proposed a second, in which the conditions were reversed. After the second test succeeded, Gideon went forward and did indeed lead the Israelites to victory.

The prophet Isaiah also used signs to demonstrate the veracity of his prophecies. After declaring to King Ahaz his prophecy that the northern kingdom of Israel and Syria would shortly be destroyed, he asked the doubting king to pick a test whereby he would know that Isaiah's prophecy was true: "Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above" (Isa 7:11). When for whatever reason the king refused to suggest his own test, Isaiah responded:

Will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. . . . For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest [the northern kingdom and Syria] shall be forsaken of both her kings. (Isa 7:13–14)

Part IV: Applying the Test

As all these examples demonstrate, the principle of Deut 18:22 was applied throughout Israelite history to test prophetic claims. But despite the frequency with which it was applied, how good of a test was it really? The idea is simple enough: if predictions come to pass, the prophet is likely to be true, and if predictions don't come to pass, the prophet is definitely false. However, one can quickly begin to think of situations where such a test has limited practicality. As one scholar noted:

Ancient Israel was fully aware of the difficulties involved in assessing the truth of prophetic claims, and the Old Testament records several suggestions for dealing with the problem, none of them completely satisfactory. In Deut 18:22 Moses tells the Israelites that a false prophecy can be recognized when it does not come true. . . . [B]ut unfortunately this test can only be applied retrospectively, long after the time for public decision about the truth claim has passed. . . . This test is useful as far as it goes, but it is not applicable to many prophetic oracles.²³

If one considers, for example, the case of Jeremiah and Hananiah, it was true that one could wait and see who's predictions came true. However, that doesn't help the average Jerusalemite when he discovers too late that Jeremiah was right because a Babylonian soldier is breaking the front door down! In cases where prophecies dealt with future (and sometimes, distant future) events, the test of Deut 18:22 would have been insufficient to help make a decision in a timely manner. It was perhaps for this reason that on some occasions the prophets proposed a more immediate, here-and-now test, such as Elijah did with the prophets of Baal. In those instances where the tests and signs were not immediate, however, the people would have had to find other ways to discern between truth and falsehood.

So what to do? How could the average Israelite distinguish? As has been mentioned, there are a few characteristics of true prophets that are described in the law of Moses, such as speaking in the name of Yahweh, exhorting people to follow Yahweh's commandments, speaking true predictions, etc. But if the biblical redactors are to be believed in even half the claims of apostasy with which they accuse the people at any given point their history, the variety of religious practices within Israelite society would be great indeed. With so many overlapping forms of worship, with so many diverging and converging extra-Israelite religious practices, with so many theological voices screaming to be heard, did the Israelites have a sure way to determine who was right and who was wrong? The answer, according to the evidence that exist in the text, is: maybe not.

The history of ancient Israel, as preserved in the Hebrew Bible, actual suggests this difficulty. There were occasions, to be sure, in which Yahweh demonstrated in some earth-shaking or fiery way who had authority and who should be followed. But if such Moses or Elijah experiences occurred every day there certainly wouldn't have been the apostasy that is recorded. That this apostasy to one degree or another was such a common feature of biblical history suggests that for most of the time either people were so wicked they openly rejected the clear evidences in front of them or they simply were not quite sure who to follow, and chose poorly. We do not know if they had other tests available to them, but according to the present texts it appears that many people may have been just as confused and indecisive as the crowd that stood before Elijah, and "answered him not a word."

23. R. R. Wilson, "Interpreting Israel's Religion," 334.

BOOK REVIEWS

EVANS, CRAIG A., and EMANUEL TOV, eds., *Exploring the Origins of the Bible: Canon Formation in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective*. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Baker Academic, 2008. Pp. 272. Price: \$22.99. ISBN: 0801032423.

Presided over by two of the most authoritative figures of Hebrew Bible and New Testament scholarship, respectively, this collection of essays comprises a series of eight presentations delivered at a special spring session of the Hayward Lectures at Acadia Divinity College in Nova Scotia in April of 2006. The papers are grouped into thematic couplets: two discuss the Septuagint within the history of the canon; two discuss the extracanonical corpus; two address the question of scriptural authority; and two discuss the emergence of canon ideologies as manifested in the tripartite canon of the Hebrew Bible and the Pauline canon. Craig Evans begins the volume with a wonderful introduction to the transmission of the Hebrew Bible, the Pseudepigrapha, Apocrypha, and New Testament. Students unacquainted with the details of this literature will find it especially enlightening. The volume as a whole provides a sweeping panorama of the predominant perspectives on the development of the biblical canon and is a must read for any student involved in related research.

Emanuel Tov, editor in chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls Publication Project, begins the discussion with an investigation into the Septuagint as a key for the literary analysis of the Hebrew Bible. James H. Charlesworth follows with a presentation of the writings which sit “ostensibly” outside the canon, and what they can teach us about formative Judaism. Stephen G. Dempster evaluates evidence intrinsic and extrinsic to the Hebrew Bible for the development of a tripartite perspective on its canon. R. Glenn Wooden next evaluates the role of the Septuagint in the formulation of the Jewish and Christian canons. Craig A. Evans reappears with an investigation into the “possibilities and problems” of searching the New Testament Apocrypha for a glimpse at early Christian perspectives on Jesus. Stanley E. Porter discusses the process of the compilation

of the Pauline corpus and their canonicity. Lee Martin McDonald, one of the world's authorities on the question of canon, looks at the major issues in canonical criticism: book lists, variation in ancient manuscripts, and the translation of the scriptures into other languages. The concluding paper, "Canon and Theology: What Is at Stake?" by Jonathan R. Wilson, discusses the nature of theology, its location within the community, and how these two principles reflect on the rather nebulous concept of a canon.

Room does not permit a comprehensive review of all the articles, but some highlights should prove informative. Tov has long been an authority on the relationship of the Septuagint to the Hebrew Bible. In this volume's paper, he seeks to isolate two types of variants between the MT and the LXX, namely those indicative of a divergent Hebrew Vorlage and those which manifest the independent exegesis of the translator. The latter generally comprise the passages more freely translated from the Hebrew, while the former betray Semitic grammatical and syntactical idiosyncrasies, like the use of the uniquely Semitic phrase *wayehi' ahare hadebarim ha'eleh*. It is with this principle that Tov is primarily concerned, and he uses it as a key to the uncovering of the Hebrew parent texts to the Septuagint corpus and the relationship of those texts to the Masoretic texts. This type of research is critical to understanding the evolution of the text of the Hebrew Bible and its relationship to the concept of canonicity, specifically its elasticity. Tov shows that in some cases the LXX represents a more archaic Hebrew Vorlage than that preserved in the MT, and in others represents a tradition subsequent to that of the MT. This shows a divergent text tradition which stands in contrast in many ways to the Masoretic tradition, and, as Tov concludes, represents a community of believers separate from that of the Masoretic texts. This reveals new questions about the antiquity of the concept of canon within formative Judaism.

Charlesworth continues this theme with a discussion of the extracanonical groups of texts from the same time period (Second Temple). He explains that a large corpus of theological and historical literature was produced and consumed during the Second Temple Period that contributed in no small way to the development of the Jewish and early Christian identity, but that was ultimately excluded from the canon. This raises more questions about early Judaism and Christianity's definition of canon and even scripture, two words which too often assumed to be synonyms. Charlesworth presents a number of insights into Judaism that can be garnered from thorough investigation of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. The overarching theme: although fragmented and heterodox, the Jewish communities shared a number of common concerns, namely, the search to understand God, the preeminence of Torah, the need for faith within a volatile world.

Dempster's paper, "Torah, Torah, Torah: The Emergence of the Tripartite Canon," seeks to evaluate the internal and external evidence for the development of a tripartite perspective on the canon of the Hebrew Bible. The internal evidence shows a concern for two primary sources for the revelation of God: the

Torah, and the prophets. Dempster proposes wisdom as a third. From the external evidence Dempster draws a relatively consistent vernacular used to reference the holy writings. They are generally referred to as the Law and the Prophets, although a collection of texts beginning in the Maccabean period seems to reference a third category: the writings. While Dempster is comfortable positing a rather early date (the first century) for the standardization of the tripartite canon, he overlooks the slight discrepancies in the references to this third category. While a general tripartite perspective on scripture can hardly be argued, the third category does not necessarily represent a consistent closed set of books. The numbers of books within this category, and in some cases the books contained in it, differ from text to text, which is at odds with the contemporary denotation of a canon as a closed and concrete standardization of scripture. I am inclined to disagree with Dempster's early date for the closing of the Jewish canon. I side with McDonald and a second century date.

Lee Martin McDonald provides the penultimate discussion in this volume. He has published numerous texts on the discussion of canon (most recently *The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority*), and here discusses three of the most critical concerns for the canon history and canonical criticism: book lists, variation in ancient manuscripts, and the translation of the scriptures into other languages. For centuries the book lists of early Judaism and Christianity have been perceived as rather clear indications of an early consciousness of scriptural canonicity. Discrepancies in the number and contents of those lists have been overlooked, as have the variations in number and content of ancient codices and translations. McDonald reviews their import as they relate to discovering the earliest intimations of scriptural canonicity. Aimed primarily at an audience not already familiar with his publications on the topic, this investigation will perhaps serve as the definitive introduction to the problems of canon and canonicity in antiquity.

DANIEL O. MCCLELLAN
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

BROWN, SCOTT G. *Mark's Other Gospel: Rethinking Morton Smith's Controversial Discovery*. Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University, 2005. Pp. 356. Price: \$85.00. ISBN: 0889204616.

Mark's Other Gospel: Rethinking Morton Smith's Controversial Discovery is the first dissertation written on the Secret Gospel of Mark. Brown's exegesis seeks to demonstrate that Mark wrote both the shorter gospel, and the "Longer Gospel of Mark" (which he abbreviates as LGM). The book comprises nine chapters convincingly covering issues such as forgery and authenticity, modern academic paradigms, the interrelationship of the gospels, the Longer Gospel's purpose, Markan literary forms, and how the "mystery of the kingdom of God" relates to the Markan Gospels.

In chapter 1, Brown gives the history, methodology, scholarly assessments, and a literary thesis on the LGM. Brown polemicizes the common academic mindset of LGM as “non-canonical gospel = imitation gospel = mid second century gospel = heretical gospel” (p. 9). He also posits his idea that the young man with a linen sheet in Gethsemane (Mark 14:51) is the same as in LGM. Brown argues that the combined stories involving the young man with the linen cloth are evidence of established Markan literary techniques of “juxtaposing episodes and framing sections of a narrative” (p. 19).

Chapters 2–3 address issues dealing with ancient and modern forgeries, LGM’s relationship to John, LGM’s relationship to the synoptic gospels, and oral tradition. Chapters 4–5 address issues such as the nature of the LGM, its original purpose, its later purpose, and initiatory interpretations of LGM. In chapter 5, Brown reasons that the initiation scene in the LGM cannot represent a baptism for Catechumens, but rather an esoteric teaching given only to the most advanced Christians.

In Chapters 6–9 Brown’s general focus is on Markan literary techniques. He specifically speaks of intercalation, inclusio, and verbal echoes. Brown comments that the insertion of (LGM 1:6–7, 9) would form a perfect inclusio with (Mark 16:3, 5, 8). Brown sees the passion narrative being bracketed as evidence of the validity of LGM. Brown demonstrates that the multifarious literary techniques used in Mark correspond exactly with the LGM selections. He concludes by affirming his belief that LGM should be given the same level of credence as canonical gospel writing. Brown postulates that if we had the entire copy of LGM we would possess a much greater understanding of early Christianity.

I disagree with Brown’s conclusions that the young man with a linen sheet in Gethsemane represents imitation and following of Christ’s passion. The young man could simply have been part of an initiation ritual at Gethsemane. However, Brown’s logic that the young man in Gethsemane is used as a literary device seems correct. Brown’s idea that LGM serves as the transitioning bracket to begin the passion narrative in Mark seems to be exactly the type of thing Mark would do in order to emphasize a change in the narrative. His belief that further comparisons of LGM with John could shed new light on gospel authorship seems plausible. I agree that perhaps there could be some connection between the authorship of LGM and John, because the two “Lazarus” stories are positioned chronologically in the same location. Brown seems to have made an accurate conclusion that both Lazarus stories represent the first part of a bracket that begins the passion narrative. Thus, Lazarus becomes the literary example of what will happen to Jesus by the end of the passion narrative.

Mark’s Other Gospel: Rethinking Morton Smith’s Controversial Discovery is an interesting and insightful read. Brown’s lack of bias and detailed research adds compelling support for the authenticity of the LGM.

ERIK YINGLING
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY