

THE JOURNAL OF
Inductive
Biblical
Studies



Summer • Vol. 7/2

PUBLISHED BY FIRST FRUITS PRESS OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

asbury.to/jibs

THE JOURNAL OF

Inductive Biblical Studies

TIMOTHY C. TENNENT

President and Publisher

DOUGLAS K. MATTHEWS

Provost

ISSN 2372-0727

Published in Winter and Summer

Content and articles may be copied for personal or classroom use. Permission to otherwise reprint must be granted by the editor and the author.

204 N. Lexington Avenue
Wilmore, Kentucky 40390

asburyseminary.edu
800.2ASBURY



The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies intends to promote the hermeneutical approach to the study of the Scriptures generally known as Inductive Biblical Studies. By Inductive Biblical Study (IBS) we mean the hermeneutical movement initiated by William Rainey Harper and Wilbert Webster White that was embodied in the curriculum of The Biblical Seminary in New York founded in 1900. This approach had precursors in the history of interpretation and has since the beginning of the twentieth-century enjoyed widespread dissemination, being taught at such institutions as Princeton Theological Seminary, Columbia Theological Seminary, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, Fuller Theological Seminary, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Azusa Pacific University, and Asbury Theological Seminary, as well as hundreds of other institutions and organizations around the world.

CHIEF EDITORS

David R. Bauer

*Dean of the School of Biblical Interpretation, Ralph Waldo Beeson
Professor of Inductive Biblical Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary*

Fredrick J. Long

*Professor of New Testament, Director of Greek Instruction,
Asbury Theological Seminary*

Joseph Y. Hwang

Editorial Assistant

EDITORIAL BOARD

William J. Abraham

Albert Cook Outler Professor of Wesley Studies, Perkins School of Theology

G. Richard Boyd

Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, Wesley Biblical Seminary

Joseph R. Dongell

Professor of Biblical Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary

Michael D. Matlock

*Associate Professor of Inductive Biblical Studies and Old Testament,
Asbury Theological Seminary*

Alan J. Meenan

Founder/ President/ Chief Executive of The Word Is Out Ministry

James C. Miller

*Professor of Inductive Biblical Studies and New Testament,
Asbury Theological Seminary*

Suzanne B. Nicholson

Professor of Biblical Studies, Malone University

Brian D. Russell

*Dean of the School of Urban Ministries, Professor of Biblical Studies,
Asbury Theological Seminary*

David L. Thompson

Emeritus Professor of Biblical Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary

Dorothy Jean Weaver

Professor of New Testament, Eastern Mennonite Seminary

For more information, contact
David R. Bauer or Fredrick J. Long
Asbury Theological Seminary
204 N. Lexington Ave.
Wilmore, KY 40390

<http://place.asburyseminary.edu/jibs/>

© Copyright 2020 by Asbury Theological Seminary

NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies

VOLUME 7/2

Summer 2020

Table of Contents

- 4 From the Editors
Fredrick J. Long
- 7 An Alternative Approach to the Dilemma of 2 Kgs 3:27
Drew Holland
- 32 Ancient Literary Criticism and Major Structural Relationships: A Comparative Analysis
Matthew R. Peterson and Dain Alexander Smith
- 61 *The Resurrection Body* “According to the Scriptures,” Chapter Three
Wilbert Webster White
- 68 “Arise ‘n’ Shine, Daughter Zion of the Messiah Jesus!”:
A Sermon at Asbury Theological Seminary, Aug 19, 2020
Fredrick J. Long
- 85 My Journey with Inductive Bible Study
Joseph R. Dongell



From the Editors

Fredrick J. Long

During this time of COVID-19, I am pleased that we are offering the second issue of Volume 7 of *The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies* (*JIBS*), and not too terribly late. The delay is all my responsibility.

This current Summer Issue (*JIBS* 7/2) contains two articles (one by a former student, Drew Holland; and the other by a pair of current students, Matthew R. Peterson and Dain Alexander Smith), another chapter from Wilbert Webster White's book *The Resurrection Body*, a sermon of mine that utilized IBS in its creation, which inaugurates a new type of offering that readers of *JIBS* will see in subsequent issues, and an autobiographical journey by my colleague, Joseph R. Dongell.

First, Drew Holland offers "An Alternative Approach to the Dilemma of 2 Kgs 3:27." Interpreters have puzzled over the sequence of events depicted in this verse. Holland, however, adduces contextual and lexical evidence that tips the scale and shows how Israel was culpable in the child sacrifice and thus God's judgement.

Second, Matthew R. Peterson and Dain Alexander Smith team up to investigate the relationship of "Ancient Literary Criticism and Major Structural Relationships" and provide "A Comparative Analysis." Their research adeptly correlates the claim of IBS that Major Structural Relationships (MSRs) are ubiquitous to human communication with one type of ancient data: the ancient literary critics. Thus, Peterson and Smith provide ample evidence of the similarities, but also the differences, that MSRs have with the literary devices and practices found in the ancient Greco-Roman literary critics.

Third, chapter 3 of Wilbert Webster White's *The Resurrection Body* "According to the Scriptures" asks "Why Is the Resurrection Judged Incredible?"

White considers various proposed reasons, including Adolf von Harnack's found in *What is Christianity?* White shows that Harnack does not follow the sound principle of exegesis of Johann Albrecht Bengel in separating the modern Easter message (Jesus is alive) from the ancient Easter faith (Jesus is raised from the dead). During COVID-19, we need once again heed the Easter Faith. "The programme of Christianity calls for belief on evidence rather than on [dismissive] explanation. This is the method of science," says White.

Fourth, this issue of *JIBS* offers my sermon, "Arise 'n' Shine, Daughter Zion of the Messiah Jesus!" delivered at Asbury Theological Seminary, August 19, 2020. My approach was very inductive, tracing themes through Isaiah and correlating these with the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) and Ephesians 5:14. God expects His people to embody justice and show righteousness; and by God's own provision and as reflecting God's own glory, we are able to arise and shine!

Finally, Joseph R. Dongell concludes this issue by offering autobiographically "My Journey with Inductive Bible Study." Dongell, a beloved and highly lauded teacher, reveals how his godly heritage, his curiosity, his being mentored, and his exposure to IBS—all as parts of Divine Providence—have enriched and motivated his love of Scripture and its study via IBS. Readers will enjoy reading this as much as I did.

To conclude, I want to thank my co-editor, David R. Bauer, for his steady and constant hand at the helm to help steer *JIBS*. Also, I am very grateful for Joseph Hwang, our editorial assistant, for providing exactly this. His work is most professional and adept. Moreover, I want to give thanks to our editorial board for the direction they offer as well as for the blind reviews they constantly provide. Then too, thanks are due to Robert (Robbie) Danielson for oversight of the final file uploads into the Digital Commons Network that makes *JIBS* available to tens of thousands of users. In fact, as of today, as I finish writing this, *JIBS* articles have enjoyed 41,558 downloads. Additionally, I want to thank Asbury Theological Seminary's President, Timothy C. Tennent, and Provost, Douglas K. Matthews for supporting *JIBS*. Finally, I thank my God and Savior, Jesus Christ, for providing light for the path, joy for the journey, and comfort for the hardships.

Soli Deo honor et gloria!



An Alternative Approach to the Dilemma of 2 Kgs 3:27

Drew Holland

Martin Methodist College

dholland@martinmethodist.edu

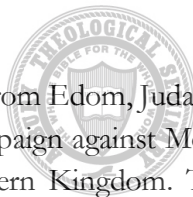
Abstract

King Mesha's sacrifice of his son and the subsequent retreat of the Israelite army from Moab in 2 Kgs 3:27 has proven to be a puzzling text for interpreters from rabbinic Judaism to the present. Modern historical analysis has fallen short in providing a coherent explanation for the events of this verse. This article attempts to seek a new and cogent interpretation for this passage based upon support from other texts and lexemes within the Old Testament. In keeping with the theme of Omride disobedience found throughout the Old Testament, this article deduces from intertextual evidence that Israel participated in Mesha's burnt offering after securing victory over Moab. This cultic impropriety led YHWH to drive the Israelite army from its newly regained territory.

Keywords: 2 Kgs 3:27, Mesha, Elisha, Intertextuality, Child Sacrifice

Introduction

After mustering help from Edom, Judah, and the prophet Elisha, Israel inflicts a crushing campaign against Moab, which had previously been a vassal of the Northern Kingdom. The battle appears to conclude



when Mesha, king of Moab, attempts to break through enemy lines with seven hundred horsemen and fails (2 Kgs 3:26). However, the narrative takes an unexpected turn with the following verse, which reads:

וַיִּקַּח אֶת־בְּנוֹ הַבְּכוֹר אֲשֶׁר־יָמְלֵךְ תַּחְתָּיו וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ עָלָהּ עַל־הַחֹמָה וַיְהִי קֶצֶף־גָּדוֹל
עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּסְעוּ מֵעָלָיו וַיָּשָׁבוּ לָאָרֶץ:

And he (Mesha) took his son, his first-born who was to reign after him, and he offered him as a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great wrath upon Israel. So they withdrew from it, and they returned to the land.

This abrupt change of fortune for Israel ends the account of chapter 3. Its suddenness, brevity, and verbal ambiguity leave the reader with myriad questions. Does this mean Elisha's prophecy of victory for Israel (3:15–19) has gone unfulfilled? Why does a sacrifice by a non-Israelite lead to "great wrath" upon Israel? Who sends this wrath? To whom does Mesha offer his sacrifice?

The enigmatic nature of this verse has puzzled interpreters from Josephus to the modern-day. Josephus and later rabbis understood the Israelites to be so repulsed at such a horrific act that they returned.¹ In the critical period, G. R. Driver suggested that the wrath (קֶצֶף) demonstrated in this passage bears the sense arising later in Aramaic and Mishnaic Hebrew, that of "sorrow."² Others, however, have not been willing to massage the text in this way. Instead, they view Elisha's prophecy as a failure since Israel could not conquer Moab.³ Two recent interpreters, Jesse C. Long and Raymond Westbrook, have offered

¹ Josephus, *A.J.* 9.42–43; Qimḥi and Gersonides, Commentary in *Mikra'ot Gedolot*.

² G. R. Driver, "Studies in the Vocabulary of the Old Testament. VIII," *JTS* 36 (1935): 293.

³ Cf. Robert B. Jr. Chisholm, "Israel's Retreat and the Failure of Prophecy in 2 Kings 3," *Biblica* 92 (2011): 70; Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *2 Kings: A New Translation with Commentary*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1988), 51.

more nuanced readings in which they see Elisha's prophecy as technically fulfilled in terms of the prophet's verbiage, yet this prophecy did not necessitate that the battle would go Israel's way.⁴ The cacophony of voices attempting to make sense of the confusion in this passage has led Cogan and Tadmor to proclaim that the writer's inclusion of the wrath upon Israel "has been an embarrassment to all his readers."⁵

This paper attempts to add a new understanding of the text to this inventory of interpretations. I propose that this passage need not embarrass readers but rather provide constructive background toward our understanding of the history of Yhwh's relationship with the Northern Kingdom. Instead of presenting a failed prophecy or show of divine power by a foreign deity, 2 Kgs 3:27 reckons with Israel's disobedience and thus failed responsibility to the gift of victory given them by Yhwh. Elisha's prophecy did come true, but at the very moment Moab fell back into Israel's hands, the Northern Kingdom failed the God who had led them to reclaim their rebellious vassal when they participated with Mesha in his illicit sacrifice. The result was divine anger from Yhwh against Israel, which forced them to withdraw from the land.

Such an interpretation requires filling in many gaps not present in the text of 3:27. As daunting as this seems, my proposal is that these gaps may be filled inductively from elsewhere in the Old Testament.⁶

---

⁴ Jesse C. Long, *1 & 2 Kings* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2002), 304–305; Long, "Unfulfilled Prophecy or Divine Deception? A Literary Reading of 2 Kings 3," *SCJ* 7 (2004): 101–17; Long, "Elisha's Deceptive Prophecy in 2 Kings 3: A Response to Raymond Westbrook," *JBL* 126 (2007): 168–72; Raymond Westbrook, "Elisha's True Prophecy in 2 Kings 3," *JBL* 124 (2005): 530–33; Westbrook, "Law in Kings," in *The Book of Kings: Sources, Composition, Historiography and Reception*, ed. Baruch Halpern and Andre Lemaire (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 445–66.

⁵ Cogan and Tadmor, *2 Kings*, 52.

⁶ I adopt this approach from the work of Shemaryahu Talmon, who contends that, before looking to ancient Near Eastern parallels, we must first look within the linguistic and thought world of the Bible. See Shemaryahu Talmon, "The 'Comparative Method' in Biblical Interpretation—Principles and Problems," in *Congress Volume: Göttingen, 1977*, ed. Walther Zimmerli, VTSup 29 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 320–56. For my use of the term "inductive," I draw upon the definition from Bauer and Traina that inductive Bible study is "a commitment to the evidence in and around the text so as to allow that evidence to determine our understanding of the

The reader is required to bring to this text a number of other passages from Israel's history that create a fuller meaning than one finds by merely accepting the text as presented in its equivocal form. We will also address, where necessary, issues arising from the ancient Near Eastern background of the text. The net of this method will be to suggest an alternative reading of a long-puzzling text.

Elisha's Prophecy Succeeds

One's interpretation of 3:27 depends on one's reading of previous material in the chapter. Did Elisha's prophecy of Israelite victory over Moab come to fruition or not? If Elisha's prophecy has failed, then one must interpret the events of 3:27 as an impediment to prophetic fulfillment. However, if Elisha's prophecy is successful, this sets the stage for understanding Israel's waywardness in handling the victory given to them by Yhwh.

Given the withdrawal of the Israelite army in 3:27 and no explicit reference to victory over Moab, it appears that Israel has been defeated after Mesha's sacrifice.⁷ Indeed, Robert B. Chisholm is correct in critiquing the interpretations of Iain Provan and Raymond Westbrook, who argue for a technically-complete prophecy and thus initially-successful military campaign, in that they fail to account for any notice of Moab falling "into the hands" of Israel at the conclusion of the chapter, as Elisha predicts in 3:18. Chisholm argues instead that the prophecy did fail, but that this is no fault of Elisha's. Rather, Israel has failed in its contingent responsibility to serve Yhwh. His warrant for this is Jer 18:10, which is a direct rebuke of Israel's wantonness and a claim

---

text, wherever that evidence may lead." See David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina, *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 17.

⁷ Cf. also a brief reading from ancient Near Eastern background of prophecy in Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, "Prophecy as a Way of Cancelling Prophecy—The Strategic Uses of Foreknowledge," *ZAW* 117 (2005): 345–46.

that divine favor will be withheld from the Northern Kingdom as a result.⁸ While I agree that Israel is irresponsible in this passage, Chisholm does not expand upon exactly how Israel fails Yhwh here. Moreover, Chisholm argues that Jer 18:1–10 evinces the conditional nature of prophesies, but he does not engage fully with the text of this latter prophet. In Jer 18:6, Yhwh says that he will change his mind about a prophecy concerning a nation's destruction if that nation turns from evil. Yet 2 Kgs 3 does not indicate that the Moabites, once destined for destruction, ever turned from evil. His argument for a conditional prophecy in 2 Kgs 3 is thin and comes from outside of the Deuteronomistic corpus. Instead, I argue that we need to first look within the Deuteronomistic corpus for the appropriate context of the language used in this passage.

One approach is that of Jesse C. Long, who argues that this passage exhibits another instance of the “lying spirit,” as found earlier in 1 Kgs 22. There, the Judean king Jehoshaphat joins forces with Ahab and has aided him in battling neighboring Aram. The prophet in question, Micaiah, explicitly fools the Israelite king to enter a losing battle as part of the prophecy (22:15–23). In the same way, Long argues that Elisha has tricked Jehoram into a losing battle. He notes several parallel movements between these passages, such as 1) the Northern king asking the Southern king if he will join him in battle, 2) inquiring the word of Yhwh, 3) the question “Is there a prophet of Yhwh?” and 4) a battle report of defeat. The prophecy in 3:19 promises that the Israelites will “strike/נכה” all the fortified and choice cities, while the actual events in 3:25 show that they only “tore down/הרס” the cities and that only Kir-hareseth was “struck/נכה.” The notice of “tore down/הרס” thus interrupts the expected flow as the prophecy is fulfilled.

However, Long's reading comes up short in a few ways. For one, although the formal and compositional connection between this

---

⁸ Chisholm, “Israel's Retreat.” As we will see, I also disagree that the prophecy is unfulfilled due to the lack of recurrence of the phrase “in your hand.” Rather, this phrase serves as the introduction to the following chiasm.

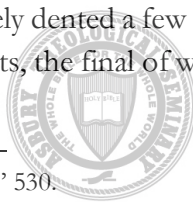
passage and 1 Kgs 22 is clear, there is no explicit trickery of the king by the prophet in 2 Kgs 3:27, as we see in 1 Kgs 22:15–23. Further, Long has manipulated the technique of chiasm to suit his interests. He argues that 3:25, as the fulfillment of the prediction in 3:19, reverses the events to form a chiastic structure of prophecy and fulfillment, but that the verb “tore down/הרס” interrupts this order so that the fulfillment portion of the chiasm is incomplete. But he overlooks the phrase in 3:18, which functions as the summary and heading of Elisha’s prophecy, stating plainly that “Yhwh ... will hand Moab over to you.” Elisha’s prophecy cannot be fulfilled if Israel does not defeat Moab. The remainder of the prophecy enumerates how this will be done (i.e., felling good trees, stopping the springs, ruin good fields with stones). Also, the first clause of 3:25, that they “tore down/הרס” the cities, falls outside of the chiastic structure since it appears before the fulfillment portion of the chiasm, but Long wishes to include it in the chiasm anyway to fit his proposed schema. The notice of the cities having been “torn down/הרס,” merely provides background to the fulfillment portion of the prophecy.

Another recent interpretation of the prophecy has come from Raymond Westbrook who claims, “The plain fact is that Israel lost the war.”⁹ However, he argues that Elisha’s prophecy did not fail but instead was “fulfilled to the letter.”¹⁰ The reason he offers for this is the use of the verb נכה. When Elisha gives the initial prophecy in 3:19, the reader and Jehoram are led to believe this verb is being used in its usual sense, that of “destroy” or “conquer.” However, the text tells us that Kir-hareseth is “struck” by the slingers, and this does not carry the connotation of victory for Israel, but rather simply that these infantrymen innocuously slung rocks at larger stones. Therefore, Israel did not conquer Kir-hareseth but merely dented a few keystones. This then led to Mesha’s two last-ditch efforts, the final of which, the sacrifice of his

---

⁹ Westbrook, “True Prophecy,” 530.

¹⁰ Ibid., 531.



son, was successful.¹¹ Thus, Westbrook holds that Elisha's prophecy was indeed fulfilled since the prophecies of 3:19 occurred, but not in the manner the reader and Jehoram expected.

Nevertheless, Westbrook's arguments do not hold up under scrutiny. First, the slingers, which Westbrook considers ineffectual, were actually quite potent in ancient warfare tactics and were known for wreaking an army's final salvo while conquering a city.¹² Second, the verb נכה in both 3:19 and 3:25 must entail the destruction of the city. Of the 269 occurrences of the verb נכה in the Deuteronomistic literature, the text only refers to striking without death or destruction eight times (2 Sam 24:10; 1 Kgs 20:35, 37; 22:24; 2 Kgs 2:8, 14; 11:12; 13:18). Of these, only twice in a single passage does it refer to striking with an instrument of war and not involve annihilation (2 Kgs 2:8, 14).¹³ Among these examples, the objects of striking are either inanimate objects or a specific body part, not a city or human life. Third, Westbrook's scheme does not reckon with the explicit prophecy from 3:18 that Yhwh will give Moab into the hands of Israel. Finally, Westbrook does not consider 3:26. Here, we are told that Mesha attempts to take "with him seven hundred swordsmen to break through, toward (אֶל) ¹⁴ the king of Edom, but they could not." Why does Mesha attempt to head toward the King of Edom, and why was he unable? Precisely because he was running *away* from Israel and its band of slingers, who were so effective that Mesha's final opportunity to claim victory was thwarted.

---

¹¹ Ibid., 531–32.

¹² Yigael Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands: In the Light of Archaeological Study* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), 297. Morschauser, on the other hand, argues that the work of the slingers was an "opening salvo" while engineers and sappers undermined the bulwarks. Although he is correct that we do not need to read the assault of the slingers as impotent, neither do I think Morschauser's reconstruction is necessary given the information of the text. See Scott Morschauser, "A 'Diagnostic' Note on the 'Great Wrath upon Israel,'" *JBL* 129 (2010): 300–301.

¹³ See also Josh 10:28, 30, 32, 37, 39; 11:10, 11, 12, 14; 19:47; Judg 1:8, 15; 20:37, 48; 21:10; 2 Sam 15:14; 2 Kgs 22:34.

¹⁴ The NRSV reads "opposite," but this is an odd translation of אֶל here, likely to try to make sense of the passage.

Taking these arguments into account, nothing in the text suggests that Israel is unsuccessful in suppressing the Moabite army. Instead, Elisha's prophecy is fulfilled as predicted in 3:19, indicated by the exact unfolding of the events of 3:25 in reverse order. Moreover, the content of 3:19 is summed up by its heading in 3:18, namely that Moab will be given into the hand of Israel with Yhwh's help. So, if we have correctly observed a closely corresponding chiasm between 3:19 and 3:25, we must hold that Israel has defeated Moab. This observation is affirmed by the beginning of 3:26, captured best by the NIV's translation, "When the king of Moab saw that the battle had gone against him . . ." In short, Mesha knew he had lost the war. Consequently, we must consider Mesha's following failed attempt to break through enemy lines with seven hundred swordsmen as the last-ditch action of a defeated king. Mesha's action in 3:26, then, precludes us from viewing his sacrifice of 3:27 as his final attempt at victory, a topic to which we now turn.

The Meaning of Mesha's Sacrifice

The dominant interpretation regarding Mesha's offering in 3:27 is that the Moabite king immolated his first-born son to appease Chemosh, the chief Moabite god, and has undertaken the last possible route to salvation from his enemy, Israel.¹⁵

---

¹⁵ This can be seen in the following: Cogan and Tadmor, *2 Kings*, 47; Richard D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, IBC (Atlanta: John Knox, 1987), 169; Lissa M. Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 315; Marvin A. Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 284; J. B. Burns, "Why Did the Besieging Army Withdraw? (II Reg 3,27)," *ZAW* 102 (1990): 190; Chisholm, "Israel's Retreat," 79; Baruch A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord: A Study of Cult and Some Cultic Terms in Ancient Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 25; Patricia Berlyn, "The Wrath of Moab," *JBQ* 30 (2002): 224; Christian Eberhart, *Studien zur Bedeutung der Opfer im Alten Testament: Die Signifikanz von Blut und Verbrennungsriten im Kultischen Rahmen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2002), 372; Jacob Milgrom, "Were the Firstborn Sacrificed to YHWH? To Molek? Popular Practice or Divine Demand?," in *Sacrifice in Religious Experience*, ed. A. I. Baumgarten (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 53, 55; Julie Faith Parker, *Valuable and Vulnerable: Children in the Hebrew Bible, Especially the Elisha Cycle*, BJS (Providence, RI: Brown University, 2013), 103; Kristine Henriksen Garroway, *Children in the Ancient Near Eastern Household*,

Baruch Margalit distinguishes his interpretation by attempting to explain Mesha's wrath by both historical and psychological means. He notes sacrificial infanticides by city leaders in Ugarit and Carthage when battles were going against them.¹⁶ Based on these parallels, he argues that Mesha sacrificed his son in view of the Israelite army to evoke disgust from them and influence their retreat.¹⁷ This reading has recently come under increased scrutiny and does not hold up. J. B. Burns contends that both ancient parallels omit the city walls as the sacrificial location, whereas both parallels assume the performance of the sacrifices upon an altar. Moreover, to attribute the motivation of the sacrifice to the provocation of the enemy's horror is anachronistic.¹⁸ And, though the Ugaritic text does mention a "first-born" as the object to be sacrificed (which we expect with a burnt offering) and Rufus's account of the Carthaginian practice mentions a free-born male child (*ut ingenuus puer*), neither of these cite a prince as the specific object to be sacrificed.¹⁹ In addition, neither of these texts designates these sacrificial actions with a cognate to the technical term used in 3:27, whole burnt offering (עֹלָה). Instead, they cite more general terms for the sacrifice.²⁰ Finally, as I will argue below, to draw these particular

---

EANEC (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 180. Although he believes, as I do, that Israel cooperated in this sacrifice, Westbrook also holds the view that Mesha's sacrifice was made to Chemosh in particular. See Westbrook, "Law in Kings," 465. Garroway contends that this passage belongs in view with 2 Kgs 6:24–30; Deut 28:52–57; and Jer 19:9. However, these examples refer to the consumption of children and not in connection with cultic sacrifice, and particularly the burnt offering.

¹⁶ Baruch Margalit, "Why King Mesha of Moab Sacrificed His Oldest Son," *BAR* 12 (1986): 62.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Burns, "Besieging Army," 188–190.

¹⁹ See A. Abou-I-Faradj Al-Ouche et al., eds., *Ugaritica VII* (Paris: Mission Archéologique de Ras Shamra, 1978), 31–39; Quintus Curtius Rufus, *Historiae Alexandri Magni*, ed. Edmund Hedicke, Perseus, n.d., sec. 4.3.23.

²⁰ RS24.266 line 9 indicates that the firstborn shall die by *dbb*. See Patrick D. Miller, Jr., "Prayer and Sacrifice in Ugarit and Israel," in *Text and Context: Old Testament and Semitic Studies for F.C. Fensham*, ed. W. Classen, JSOTSupp 4 (Sheffield, 1988), 145; Abou-I-Faradj Al-Ouche et al., *Ugaritica VII*, 32–33, *Historia Alexandri Magni* 4.23.3

parallels to 2 Kgs 3:27 is to ignore the shared historical context between Israel and Moab evident within the biblical text, which consistently reveals proximity between the two nations in their cultic practices. Indeed, the southern Levant seems to have a particular understanding of this act apart from its neighbors to the north. Margalit’s incorporation of these parallels is evidence too far afield for the writer of Kings.

Westbrook correctly searches for an understanding of Mesha’s action within the biblical text itself. He enumerates a parallel between this passage and 2 Kgs 18–19, in which Hezekiah renders tribute to the Neo-Assyrian king, Sennacherib, after a prolonged rebellion. This passage finds resonance with 2 Kgs 3 in that both detail the rebellion of a vassal state against its suzerain.²¹ After the suzerain regains control over the vassal in both instances, the vassal undertakes an act of propitiation to reconcile with the suzerain. This alternative is better than the “ultimate punishment” of destruction.²² In the case of 2 Kgs 3, this act of propitiation is the sacrifice of Mesha’s son.²³ For Westbrook, Mesha sacrifices his son to Chemosh to atone for breaching his oath against the vassal state.²⁴ This sacrifice parallels Hezekiah’s earlier action, who explicitly relays his apologies to Sennacherib and renders tribute from the Temple treasury accordingly (18:14). In sum, we may draw the following parallels with Westbrook’s argument:

Parallel Passages	Event
2 Kgs 3:5 2 Kgs 18:7	Vassal rebels against suzerain

uses *immolaretur*, which is a more general term for sacrifice and from which English derives the term “immolation.”

²¹ This is another point Burns notes against Margalit, as the latter dubs Israel’s act incorrectly as הָרָם. See Burns, “Besieging Army,” 188.

²² Westbrook, “Law in Kings,” 465.

²³ Ibid., 465–66.

²⁴ Ibid., 465.

2 Kgs 3: 21–26 2 Kgs 18:13	Battle account—vassal loses to suzerain
2 Kgs 3:27 2 Kgs 18:14–15	Vassal attempts to offer propitiation

Westbrook writes, “From these two tendentious accounts, we may conclude that the rebellion was in fact settled by a compromise: restoration of the rebel king’s vassal status in return for payment of a heavy tribute.”²⁵

Given the reasons we have seen to detract from Margalit’s view of parallel accounts in the ancient world, Westbrook is right to look for an explanation of Mesha’s sacrifice within the Bible itself. And a few more points illustrate that Westbrook’s interpretation is more viable than Margalit’s. For one, it is important to note that Mesha’s sacrifice was not a general sacrifice; rather, it was a particular kind, the burnt offering (חֵלֶב)—a type of sacrifice Israel shared with its Canaanite neighbors and was specifically concerned with the contrition of the offerer.²⁶ Milgrom, in particular, notes that the burnt offering often serves a “propitiatory and expiatory” function in the ancient Near East and the Bible.²⁷ Moreover, the whole burnt offering must be of a “first-born” (Exod 22:9 and Num 18:17). Mesha’s sacrifice in 3:27 fits the pattern of a burnt offering. He has been defeated in battle and must atone for his rebellion or else face death and the annihilation of his people. He properly exhibits his attempt to atone for his sin by offering his first-born son.

²⁵ Westbrook, “Law in Kings,” 466.

²⁶ See Gary A. Anderson, “Sacrifices and Sacrificial Offerings (Old Testament),” *ABD* 5:872–87 and Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ABC (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 172–76.

²⁷ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 174. Note also, that other purposes for this sacrifice can be detected. See *ibid.*, 172–77. Here I argue that the propitiatory and expiatory function is one dimension of Mesha’s sacrifice.

Also, similar occurrences appear elsewhere in the Bible. In Judg 20:26, the text indicates the Israelites offered a burnt offering to Yhwh at Bethel after losing eighteen thousand soldiers in a defeat at the hands of the Benjaminites. In 1 Sam 7:9, Samuel offers a burnt offering to Yhwh as they learn their impending doom at the Philistines' hands. These examples tie military failures to an act of repentance via the burnt offering. Nevertheless, the most telling instance is found in 2 Kgs 16. There, Ahaz attempts to strike a tribute deal with Tiglath-Pile-sar III so that the neo-Assyrian king will help him destroy King Rezin of Aram. After establishing the alliance through gifts from the house of Yhwh to Tiglath-Pile-sar, Ahaz sends the priest Uriah to construct an altar based on the model of the altar in Damascus. Ahaz then commands Uriah to offer a burnt offering upon this altar, and the text tells us that this, along with the giving of other gifts to Tiglath-Pile-sar, was done "before the king of Assyria" (16:8). These examples provide further context for Mesha's motivation to offer the burnt offering. The burnt offering was commonly sacrificed in a wartime situation by battle losers to express apology, and it was also done by vassal kings to solidify a relationship with a suzerain king. Both types fit Mesha in 2 Kgs 3, the rebellious vassal wishing to re-establish his relationship with his suzerain after defeat.

What then is the reason for implicating Israel as a partner with Mesha in this act? For one, the above-noted instance of Tiglath-Pile-sar's presence during the tribute payment and subsequent offering of an *עֹלָה* points to a common pattern in Kings and the ancient world. Namely, the suzerain is present at the ceremony, which cements the vassal status. In the case of 2 Kgs 3, the burnt offering re-solidifies this agreement.

Second, this sacrifice has practical functions. It both expresses contrition in cultic terms and serves the political purpose of ensuring that Mesha's successor would not seek vengeance against the Israelites. If Mesha's first-born son is the offering to be destroyed in a sacrifice, he will not live to seek the rebellious path of his father. In the words

of Julie Faith Parker, “By sacrificing his son, King Mesha saves his kingdom from defeat while robbing it of its next ruler.”²⁸

Third, the idea of the “first-born” (הַבְּכוֹר), is intrinsically connected with the burnt offering and is instructive to revealing the nature of the burnt offering in this case. The gift for a burnt offering is typically a first-born male.²⁹ With regard to the offering of human children, Gen 22 provides an instructive example. God commands Abraham to offer Isaac, the first-born male of Abraham and Sarah, as a burnt offering. However, the angel soon prevents Abraham from following through, allowing Abraham to offer a ram instead.³⁰ A similar idea is at play in 2 Kgs 3:27, where Mesha’s beloved first-born is offered as a burnt offering. Yet, in contrast to Abraham, Mesha follows through with the offering.

One function of the sacrifice of the first-born male is as a substitute for the sacrificer.³¹ This concept is seen not only in cultic contexts (as in Gen 22) but also in the milieu of military conflicts. It is a prominent theme of the exodus, as Yhwh institutes both the final plague against the first-born as an ultimate warning against the Egyptians as well as a consecration of Israelite first-born to Yhwh after victory (Exod 4:23; 11:5; 12:12, 29; 13:1–15).³² The substitutionary function is

²⁸ Parker, *Valuable and Vulnerable*, 109.

²⁹ Exod 22:29; Num 18:15, 17. There is some debate concerning whether the “firstborn” refers to animals or humans. See Karin Finsterbusch, “The First-Born between Sacrifice and Redemption in the Hebrew Bible,” in *Human Sacrifice in the Jewish and Christian Tradition*, ed. Diethard Römheld, Armin Lange, and Karin Finsterbusch (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 49–55. See also Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 172–177.

³⁰ Gen 22:14. Another example is Judg 11. In this case, the daughter is sacrificed since Jephthah had no other children. Therefore, the text goes out of its way to note that she was his “only child.” (Judg 11:34)

³¹ Eberhart, *Studien zur Bedeutung der Opfer*, 188ff. Summarized in Finsterbusch, “The First-Born between Sacrifice and Redemption in the Hebrew Bible,” 107.

³² That is, the firstborn Egyptian children die rather than Yhwh inflicting total death and destruction upon all the Egyptians. This sense is evident in Num 3:11–13, where the text connects the Levites as the firstborn dedicated to God’s service with the firstborn of Egypt dedicated to God in death. Thus, the firstborn of Egypt are seen as a substitute in a similar pattern to that of the Levites. For this idea, I credit Jim Wilson, who has crafted this argument elsewhere. Jim Wilson, “Help Wanted:

also behind Joshua's claim that anyone who rebuilds Jericho will do so at the cost of his son's life.³³ Although not in the context of a military conflict or overt cultic practice, the death of David's son with Bathsheba, who dies as a result of his father's sin, similarly functions as a substitute for the king himself following his contrition (2 Sam 12:14–19). The incident of David's son echoes the claim in Deut 5:9 that Yhwh will attend to the sins of the father upon his children.

Further examples from the OT suggest that, in general, the first-born is to be considered a substitute.³⁴ Similarly, the Moabite crown prince functions as a substitute for his father's sin. Regarding this passage, Jon D. Levenson writes, "This variety of child sacrifice is to be associated with the ancient notion that, in certain circumstances the king himself must be offered: the son is here but a substitute for the father, just as the lamb will become a substitute for the son...."³⁵ Since Mesha has rebelled against the Israelites, Jehoram and his army have exacted punishment against Mesha by agreeing to allow his son's death to function in place of Mesha's death and the entire destruction of Moab.

Fourth, intertextual evidence indicates one dimension of the burnt offering in military contexts is that it functioned as a means of

---

The Role of 'The Levites in Your Gates' in Deuteronomy," (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Central States Region of the SBL, St. Louis, 14 March, 2016), 35–36.

³³ Josh 6:26 and paralleled by 1 Kgs 16:34, as Hiel rebuilds Jericho and loses his firstborn as a result. Joseph Coleson also connects this to the concept of firstfruits, as does Wilson in the note above. See Joseph Coleson, "Joshua," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, CBC (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2012), 77.

³⁴ Regarding the Levites as substitutes, see Num 3:12, 41; 8:16–19. For other, even more general examples, see Job 15:7; 16:13; and Mic 6:7.

³⁵ Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 27. Levenson builds his argument from the work of Christiano Grottanelli, whom he quotes on the same page, stating that a sacrifice like this is "to be interpreted as a substitution for the sacrifice or suicide of the king": "Through [his first-born son], the king supplicates the angry gods and pays a great price to ransom his people; but through him the king also ransoms himself, as he covers the child with the insignia of his own rank and person." Of course, I disagree that this instance is necessarily a supplication of the angry deity, the point of the son as sacrificial substitute holds true.

celebrating success for the victor and as an instrument of contrition for the loser. The primary example of this is seen after the exodus event. Moses's father-in-law, Jethro, confesses the power of Yhwh over all the deities following the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea in Exod 18:11. In the following verse, he helps the Israelites celebrate this victory by offering a burnt offering to Yhwh. Then, after destroying Ai in Josh 8, Joshua explicitly follows the command of Moses by building an altar on Mount Ebal and offering a burnt offering to Yhwh (Josh 8:30–31). In an infamous episode of Judges 11, Jephthah vows to offer a burnt offering to Yhwh should he be able to defeat the Ammonites and does so by sacrificing his daughter (Judg 11:21–40). Also, after the ark is returned from the Philistines, the people of Beth-Shemesh offer a celebratory burnt offering.³⁶ These examples point to a common trope within biblical, and especially in Deuteronomistic literature, that victorious kings would offer a burnt offering following a successful military campaign. So, the intertextual evidence reveals to us that burnt offerings are common following military battles. They were performed by the loser as an attempt to reconcile either with the deity or enemy, and the victor often sacrificed burnt offerings to the deity as a means of celebration.

Another example illustrative of the Bible's, especially the Deuteronomistic History's presentation of the burnt offering in association with military campaigns, appears in 1 Sam 13. Here, Saul hides in Gilgal for seven days while waiting to fight against the Philistines. Meanwhile, the people of Israel have "slipped away" from Saul, and he begins to

---

³⁶ 1 Sam 6:14. An extra-biblical assertion of this idea also appears in Moab's own literature. Although the debates surrounding this passage are many, including arguments over the historicity of this very passage, it is worth noting the cultic parallels in a Moabite text. Harold Schweizer notes that lines 12/13 of the Mesha stele include this very practice, as there the Moabites drag the "Davidic hearth" before Chemosh. See Schweizer, *Elischa in den Kriegen: Literaturwissenschaftliche Untersuchung von 2 Kn 3, 6, 8–23, 6, 24–7, 20* (München: Ksel, 1974), 100–101. I am aware of the debated translation of *'l dwdh* of line 12. Regardless of whether this is a "Davidic" hearth or the hearth of a beloved, the object remains cultic and the action is presumed as sacrificial.

feel his grip of power loosening. In an act of insecurity, he offers burnt offerings to Yhwh before the battle with the Philistines has begun despite Samuel's command to wait for his own arrival (1 Sam 13:12). When Samuel finally arrives, he chides Saul for this act and claims that Saul will soon be usurped (1 Sam 13:13–14). Not only was this not Saul's sacrifice to make, but he undertook this act inappropriately.³⁷ The incident in 1 Sam 13 underscores the idea that the burnt offering was meant to follow a military campaign as either a sign of remorse or celebration rather than to precede a campaign as a means of influencing the deity. Such manipulation, however, is what many interpreters have exactly accused Mesha of doing.

In fact, nowhere in the biblical text do we find the burnt offering functioning as the means by which one would appropriately provoke a deity for military victory assistance.³⁸ Rather, the burnt offering is only intended to be undertaken after a battle is complete. If one loses the battle, the burnt offering has repentant force. If one wins the battle, the burnt offering has celebratory intentions. The significance attached to burnt offerings affirms not only the rationale for Mesha's sacrifice but also the point of the prior section that the battle at Kir-hareseth was complete and that Israel had won, fulfilling Elisha's prophecy.

Although I have attempted in the preceding analysis to further Westbrook's argument that Mesha sacrificed his crown prince in appeasement of his military failure, as opposed to summoning his god, I diverge from Westbrook in his argument that the recipient of Mesha's sacrifice was the Moabite god Chemosh.³⁹ The text is puzzling in its opacity here, simply noting that Mesha offered this burnt offering

---

³⁷ Indeed, it seems at some points that Samuel had granted Saul some priestly authority (1 Sam 9:23–24; 10:4), so Saul may have assumed his license to offer this sacrifice. However, the means by which he undertakes this sacrifice is ultimately inappropriate, particularly given the literary and historical context we have surveyed.

³⁸ Milgrom notes that 3:27 is the only example when a sacrifice of a firstborn was performed in a crisis. However, I hope that the preceding has shown that Mesha's sacrifice was not unique in this respect. See Milgrom, "Firstborn," 55.

³⁹ Westbrook, "Law in Kings," 465.

without giving notice as to whom he offered it. The text's ambiguity is further complicated by confusion over the subject of the "great wrath" in the following clause. However, I hold that the textual ambiguity here is purposeful. It functions to indicate that the Israelites were behaving in a cultically ambiguous, thus inappropriate manner. We have little idea to whom Mesha, supported by the Israelites, sacrificed. But we do know it was cultically inappropriate for Yhwh's people to participate in it. In Judg 11:24, Chemosh's effectiveness for his people is noted, highlighting the Moabite god's power to save his people. But the author chose not to name Chemosh or any deity here. In short, the ambiguous description of the sacrifice is appropriate for exactly the kind of sacrifice it was.

The rationale for this ambiguity lies in the long history of convergence between Israel and Moab. From its earliest engagements with the people of Moab, the Israelites struggled to differentiate their identity and worship from those of the Moabites. In Genesis, the author proffers the close relationship between Israel and Moab in an etiological note which cites the Moabites as descendants of Lot (Gen 19:37).⁴⁰ The two nations were engaged in conflict throughout several periods of Israel's history.⁴¹ But, most importantly for understanding our passage at hand, Israel was also frequently tempted to intermingle with Moab in ways deemed cultically inappropriate. The first noted instance appears in Num 25, in which the text indicates that the Israelites began to have sexual relations with the women of Moab and sacrificed to their gods, directly violating the prohibitions against these acts given at

---

⁴⁰ This is reaffirmed in Deut 2:9.

⁴¹ Num 21–24 discusses their relationships during the wilderness wanderings. In the period of settlement and the judges, we see interaction between the two nations in Josh 24; Judg 3; and Judg 11. During David's reign, there was also some fighting against Moab, as noted in 2 Sam 23:20. Ps 60:8; 83:6; 108:9; Isa 15–16; Jer 48 all speak to tension with the Moabites. However, sporadic periods of peace between them are indicated by 1 Sam 22 and 1 Kgs 11. To this we may add that Ruth was a Moabite (Ruth 1:1–4).

Sinai.⁴² Before the Israelites were oppressed by the Ammonites, the text notes that the Moabites are one of several people groups whose worship has tempted the people (Judg 10:6). In the postexilic period, Nehemiah is disgusted with the Jews who intermarried with the women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab (Neh 13:23). But closest to our text are two passages from the Deuteronomistic history. First, the perceived cultic sin of the eastern tribes of Josh 22 has been viewed in light of Israel's relationship with Moab.⁴³ Second, the Deuteronomistic Historian gives notice that Solomon's downfall came about due to his syncretistic practices involving, among others, the Moabites (1 Kgs 11:33).⁴⁴ These must be read in light of the warnings of Deut 29, which by no mere coincidence appear on the plains of Moab. It is there that Moses warns the Israelites of cultic abominations leading to a break of the covenant with Yhwh, and it is there that many such sins occur in the unfolding narrative of the OT.

Another instance in the OT pointing to cultic ambivalence that proves instructive for interpreting 2 Kgs 3:27 is the story of Balaam in Num 22–24. Here, the Moabite king Balak calls the prophet to curse Israel and subsequently encounters Yhwh through a series of divine messages. After these encounters and the subsequent oracles, Balaam twice orders Balak to offer burnt offerings (Num 23:13, 29–30).⁴⁵ These follow a prior confession of apology (Num 23:13, 29–30). Thus, we witness the established pattern of a worshipper who is first contrite, then offers a burnt offering. However, as with Mesha's sacrifice, the text never mentions a divine recipient of the sacrifice. In both cases, Moabites and Israelites have come into conflict, and the character of

---

⁴² For the prohibition against worship of foreign gods which precedes this episode, see Exod 20:3. The prohibition against marriage first appears in a later text, Deut 7:3, but is hinted to in Gen 34:14.

⁴³ See J. Maxwell Miller, "Moab (Place)," *ABD* 4:882–93.

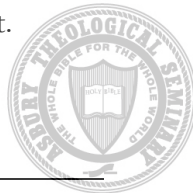
⁴⁴ See also 1 Kgs 11:7.

⁴⁵ Balak also offers a sacrifice in 22:40, but this is prior to any oracle and utilizes the more general verb זָבַח.

the resulting burnt offering is mysterious, pointing to the ambiguous nature of Israelite/Moabite relations, as revealed in the cultic activity.

The close and often ambivalent relationship between the Israelites and Moabites is clear across several generations. For this reason, Maxwell Miller writes concerning the composition of the stories concerning Moab, “While many will have married non-Israelite wives and worshipped local gods at Moabite shrines, there will have been counter efforts to maintain ethnic and religious distinctiveness....”⁴⁶ If I am correct in agreeing with Westbrook’s argument that Jehoram’s forces participated in Mesha’s burnt offering, then this action continues the long-running theme throughout the Old Testament of Israel participating in syncretistic activities with the Moabites. This means that the recipient of Mesha’s sacrifice was not strictly Chemosh. Rather, even if the Moabites and Israelites had their respective gods in mind while sacrificing, the net result of their deed was a worshipful action directed to an unknown god. The text reflects this syncretistic situation in its ambiguity.

The advantage of using evidence from the surrounding biblical text to investigate Mesha’s burnt offering has been to place this mystifying act in its closest literary and geographical contexts. Margalit’s attempt to use comparative ancient evidence falls short in comparison with this approach because it locates Mesha’s action farther north than the southern Levant and with only minimal points of literary connection. Other approaches have attempted either by analogy or by general (and vague) understanding of the ancient Near East to project towards the motivation for Mesha’s sacrifice of his first-born son. The attempt here has been to investigate Mesha’s sacrifice in the light of the larger literary context surrounding it, and by extension, the historical context of the southern Levant.



⁴⁶ Miller, “Moab (Place)” 888.

The “Great Wrath” and Its Intertextual Counterparts

The greatest point of contention among scholars regarding 2 Kgs 3:27 has been the subject of the “great wrath” (קֶצֶף-גָּדוֹל). The text is silent on this issue, simply noting that great wrath was present “against” (עַל) the Israelites. On the one hand, some scholars contend that the wrath emanated from Chemosh.⁴⁷ Since this was the god to whom Mesha had sacrificed, this was the same deity who was exacting revenge on behalf of his worshiper. On the other hand, some have seen it impossible for the Bible to refer to the wrath of a foreign deity as being efficacious against Israel. Therefore, they have posited that the subject of the wrath is Yhwh.⁴⁸ However, some have taken Driver’s route by viewing the wrath in its sense from later Hebrew. Thus, קֶצֶף here refers to the “vexation” or “sorrow” that was upon Israel after viewing Mesha’s horrible act.⁴⁹ Others still wish to leave the ambiguity in the text and not supply a subject for the wrath.⁵⁰

---

⁴⁷ Burns, “Besieging Army,” 192; Chisholm, “Israel’s Retreat,” 79; Levine, *Presence of the Lord*, 25; Westbrook, “Law in Kings,” 465; Gwilym H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, NCBC (London: Eerdmans, 1984), 400.

⁴⁸ Philip D. Stern, “Of Kings and Moabites: History and Theology in 2 Kings 3 and the Mesha Inscription,” *HUCA* 64 (1993): 11–13; Long, *1 & 2 Kings*, 306; Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, 316.

⁴⁹ For Driver’s original article, again see Driver, “Studies,” 193. For others who follow this interpretation, see Margalit, “King Mesha,” 63; Montgomery, *Book of Kings*, 364; Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 284; Terrence Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, WC (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 143. Indeed, Burns concedes that the LXX μετάμειλος used here in this passage appears to carry this effect. But he, as do I, regards this as a softening of the original Hebrew. See Burns, “Besieging Army,” 192. A similar argument appears in Morschauser, “Diagnostic” Note. Here, he argues that the “wrath” is a tangible plague, as opposed to divine wrath.

⁵⁰ Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 169; John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1963), 490; Berlyn, “The Wrath of Moab.” I cite Berlyn because she does not appear to land on any particular answer regarding this question. See especially 225.

The first suggestion must be dismissed. As the scholars holding the second position have noted, it would be out of character for the biblical text to attribute such power to a foreign deity. Although I have mentioned above that Jephthah does acknowledge Chemosh's abilities for his own people, this does not indicate that Chemosh holds sway over the Israelites. To the contrary, the prophetic narratives of Kings refuse to view any foreign deity as effectual. This view is most evident in a preceding narrative, 1 Kgs 18:20–40, in which Elijah defeats the prophets of Baal. The climax of this passage comes in the confession of the people that “Yhwh is God,” as opposed to Baal (1 Kgs 18:39). Not only would the author of 2 Kgs 3, who falls in this same prophetic tradition (if not the same author of both passages), omit Chemosh as the subject of this passage, but he would never consider Chemosh powerful enough to influence the Israelite soldiers. Only Yhwh has this ability for the author of Kings.

Similarly, we must discount Driver's suggestion of remorse. Driver's thesis that the author utilizes the sense of the word seen in later Aramaic and Mishnaic Hebrew certainly fits our modern psychological tastes in response to child sacrifice, but the examples he gives do not fit the literary context of 2 Kgs 3. Rather, this passage must be seen in its broader literary light, as I will show. Only in this way will the meaning of the wrath make sense.

Also, the intimation that we ought not to supply a subject for the wrath falls short. While this proposition is true to the literary form presented in the text, it ignores the reader's ability to supply meaning for this verse based on surrounding passages and within the corpus of literature.

As is evident by this point, I argue that Yhwh is the subject of the wrath in this passage. My approach, however, differs from those who have posited a similar reading. They have focused on the OT's insistence of Yhwh's power over Israel at the exclusion of other deities. They are certainly correct in this approach, but I wish to add another factor to it. Scholars have often focused on “wrath” as a concept in

itself. Yet 2 Kgs 3:27 does not simply list “wrath” as what drove the Israelites from Moab. Instead, it is “*great wrath*” (קֶצֶף-גָּדוֹל) that caused Jehoram’s army to flee. This phrase deserves our attention as the exact construct the author of this passage utilizes. We must then investigate the usage of this phrase in other OT texts.

My primary contention here is that this phrase as constructed in 2 Kgs 3:27 has its roots in Deut 29:27 (MT). In this passage from the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy, Moses hypothesizes a situation in which the Israelites will be disobedient to Yhwh, disobeying his commandments, worshiping other gods, and blessing themselves. Under these circumstances, Yhwh will pour out his “*great wrath*” upon them, and he will send them to another land. A parallel movement appears in 2 Kgs 3. Here, the evil ways of Jehoram have been established in 3:13–14. Certainly, the reader is aware of the sins of all of the Omrides to this point as well. The ambivalent cultic action of the Israelites in 3:27 as expressed above, combined with the intimation of Israel’s participation in the abhorrent practice of child sacrifice (Lev 18; Deut 12:31; Jer 7:31; Ezek 16:20; 20:31; Ps 106:37–39), provides a tipping point for Yhwh. Israel’s God drives away the soldiers of the Northern Kingdom in accordance with this Deuteronomistic commandment. Granted, at this point, Israel has not been exiled from their own land, as they have only been driven from the land that was promised them in 3:18. But the movement of this passage remains the same.⁵¹ In fact, it functions as an anticipation of the descriptions in 2 Kgs 17 and 18:9–12 of the ultimate exile of the Northern Kingdom in 722.

This trope is reflected in several other passages, all of which deal with cultic sins that provoke the “*great wrath*” of Yhwh, ultimately leading to the flight of the people. Both Jer 21:5 and Zech 7:12 utilize this exact phrasing (קֶצֶף-גָּדוֹל) to describe Yhwh’s reaction to the

---

⁵¹ Therefore, I contend that this reference functions more at the level of an “echo” than strictly an “allusion.” For the definitions of “echo” and “allusion,” see Timothy K. Beal, “Glossary,” in *Reading between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Diana Nolan Fewell (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 21–24.

misappropriations of worship on the part of his people, culminating in exile. Several other passages present identical understandings of “great wrath,” albeit with different lexemes for “wrath.” Four times, “great wrath” is designated with the term **אַף** (Deut 29:27; 2 Kgs 23:26; Jer 21:5; 32:37). Six times the term **חֵמָה** is used (Deut 29:27; 2 Kgs 22:13; 2 Chr 34:21; Ps 90:11; Jer 21:5; Zech 8:2). With the exception of Ps 90:11, “wrath” described as “great” (**גָּדוֹל**), unanimously refers to Yhwh’s anger resulting from the cultic malpractice of Israel and is always tied with a flight from the land.⁵² While the occurrence of two other terms for “wrath” might appear to argue against my claim for this trope, this need not be the case. Instead, the three lexemes used for “wrath” in association with its modifier **גָּדוֹל** are interchangeable. G. Sauer writes regarding the terms for “wrath,” “The etymology does not permit a differentiation of the nuance of various terms.” Rather, as Sauer defines these terms, all three indicate “the human expression of the emotion of anger toward another person.”⁵³ The use of **קֶצֶף-גָּדוֹל** in 2 Kgs 3:27 thus characterizes God’s wrath towards the army of the Northern Kingdom.

Thus, the “great wrath” 2 Kgs 3:27 must be seen in light of the previous discussion. It must come from Yhwh and it must refer to some cultic sin on the part of Israel. It anticipates the final sending from the promised land at the hands of the Neo-Assyrians by using the same movement of the passage and similar lexemes. Such a reading conforms to the trope of cultic sin on the part of Israel, leading to great wrath from Yhwh, which in turn necessitates that Yhwh drives his people from the land. Other interpretations have neglected this biblical trope in favor of historical comparisons from outside of the southern Levant or by offering alternatives with less substantial evidence. The

---

⁵² I would argue that the presence of “great wrath” in Ps 90:11 is tendentious in comparison to the other examples as it appears predicative and refers to two referents, wrath and fear. Moreover, it is poetry abstracted from historical context and falls outside of the genre pertinent for our study here.

⁵³ G. Sauer, “קֶצֶף,” *TLOT* 3:1157.

present approach seeks to give voice to the thought world of the historian by placing the lexeme of קֶצֶף-גָּדוֹל in the biblical context.

Conclusion

In sum, intertextual correspondences of the burnt offering (עֹלָה), the first-born (בְּכוֹר), the ambivalent cultic situation existing between the Israelites and Moabites, and the great wrath (קֶצֶף-גָּדוֹל) offer a more coherent interpretation of this passage conforming to the boundaries of the biblical text as a whole. Mesha's burnt offering of his first-born son echoes Israel's own participation in similar sacrificial acts and its cultically ambivalent past with Moabites. The echoes betray Israel's participation in this sacrifice. Since this particular burnt offering is considered unclean by Torah standards, Yhwh drives his people away from the land he had promised them in 3:18. The manner in which the author of this passage expresses this, namely by omitting the divine recipient of the burnt offering and the subject of the great wrath, underscores the severity of this situation. Israel's vague and improper cultic action provokes Israel's god to distance himself from identification with them, yet also to act swiftly and decisively in punishment.

Doubtless, the author of Kings wishes to contend for the failings of the Omrides and that such disobedience cannot go unpunished.⁵⁴ He accomplishes this in this passage while still revealing the effectiveness of Yhwh's prophet, Elisha. As demonstrated, Elisha's prophecy of victory over the Moabites is fulfilled. The Israelites overcome their foe, as 3:26 displays. However, it does not take long for Israel to fail in their responsibilities of this gift, as they soon cooperate in a cultic misdeed with their vassal king, Mesha. Thus, the author of Kings holds in

---

⁵⁴ Indeed, I hope this paper provides additional support to a recent argument on this topic by Rachele Gilmour, who suggests via a modern literary reading of the sacrifice in 3:27 that the resulting withdrawal of Israel was due to their disobedience of a conditional prophecy. See Gilmour, "A Tale of the Unexpected: The Ending of 2 Kings 3 Re-Examined," *ABR* 65 (2017): 17–29. See especially pp. 24–25.

tension the idea that, on the one hand, Yhwh is powerful to deliver, but, on the other hand, his people may reject what Yhwh grants them through his power. No other dynasty exemplifies such disobedience as the Omrides.

Cogan and Tadmor resolve that “A proper biblical explanation [of 2 Kgs 3:27] would have been to point to some wrongdoing on the part of Israel which then brought on the divine wrath, but such an act was not a part of the prophetic tradition in vv. 6–25.”⁵⁵ This paper has sought to offer such a “biblical explanation” by the incorporation of various facets of meaning from other OT texts into 3:27. My interpretation fits more suitably with the prophetic tradition of the prior verses in the immediate context of the pericope and the larger tradition of the OT itself.



---

⁵⁵ Cogan and Tadmor, *2 Kings*, 51–52.

Ancient Literary Criticism and Major Structural Relationships: A Comparative Analysis

Matthew R. Peterson and Dain Alexander Smith

Asbury Theological Seminary

matthew.peterson@asburyseminary.edu

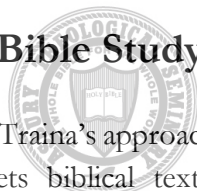
dain.smith@asburyseminary.edu

Abstract: The texts of the New Testament (NT) emerged during an era that produced robust literary and rhetorical criticism. This article draws from works produced during that period to investigate similarities and differences between the figures discussed by ancient literary theorists and the Major Structural Relationships (MSRs) identified by David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina. Ultimately, this article reveals that the MSRs proposed in their Inductive Bible Study (IBS) handbook are not merely an invention of modern literary critical reading strategies but reflect devices incorporated into ancient literature and identified and discussed by ancient literary theorists.

Keywords: Inductive Bible Study (IBS), Major Structural Relationships (MSR), Ancient Literary Criticism

Structural Inductive Bible Study

David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina's approach to the Inductive Bible Study (IBS) method interprets biblical texts by emphasizing the



relationship between structure and meaning.¹ One important aspect of this method is the observation that various “major structural relationships” (MSRs) may be identified in biblical texts.² Bauer and Traina argue that these relationships are “found in all cultures, all genres, all time periods, and all forms of art, not simply in literature. They are pervasive and foundational for communication.”³ Additionally, Fredrick J. Long has mused that these MSRs have some correlation to topos theory within the ancient rhetorical tradition as well as to “vital relations” in contemporary conceptual integration theory.⁴ Thus, these studies provide this article’s point of entry. If this claim of their ubiquity to human discourse is accurate, then these MSRs would not only be beneficial for modern readers approaching ancient texts, but they also ought to be acknowledged, if not discussed in some measure, by ancient literary theorists. Indeed, the NT texts emerged during an era that had a precedent and concurrent tradition of robust literary criticism, and such a tradition has influenced modern literary criticism. Consequently, this article investigates the similarities and differences between Bauer and Traina’s MSRs and ancient literary and rhetorical

---

¹ Due to its widespread use, there exist a multitude of approaches to IBS, each with varying terminology to describe structural relationships. This article references the descriptions in David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina, *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011) because this book is utilized by students of Asbury Theological Seminary. A helpful survey of different IBS models can be found in Fredrick J. Long, “Major Structural Relationships: A Survey of Origins, Development, Classifications, and Assessment,” *JIBS* 1.1 (2014): 22–58.

² These relationships being: *repetition, contrast, comparison, causation/substantiation, climax, pivot, particularization/generalization, instrumentation, preparation/realization, summarization, interrogation, inclusion, interchange, chiasm, and intercalation*; see Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 127–30.

³ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 94.

⁴ Long posits that MSRs, Greco-Roman rhetorical topoi, and Jewish exegetical methods “provide a “heuristics” for interpreting human discourse, employing categories that are either 1) universal in nature, or, 2) historically conditioned, yet based upon universals of communication” (“Major Structural Relationships,” 26). Also see idem, “Vital Relations and Major Structural Relationships: Heuristic Approaches to Observe and Explore Biblical and Other Discourse,” *JIBS* 4.2 (2017): 92–128.

figures in order to demonstrate that these MSRs correspond to observed and theorized phenomena within ancient literary criticism.⁵

In order to accomplish this goal, we first briefly explain how modern literary criticism depends and expands upon ancient literary criticism.⁶ Second, we present some similarities and differences between Bauer and Traina's MSRs and corresponding literary and rhetorical figures found in ancient literary criticism. Ultimately, this article reveals that the MSRs proposed by Bauer and Traina are not merely an invention of modern literary critical reading strategies but reflect devices incorporated into ancient literature and identified by ancient theorists.

References to Classical Literature by Literary Critics

Reference to ancient discussions about the structure and organization of literature is not unprecedented within the field of literary analysis. Erich Auerbach opens his influential work *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* with discussions on the literary technique of Homer and Petronius alongside biblical narratives.⁷ In his *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, Gérard Genette often alludes to literary critical discussions amongst the philosophical schools regarding

---

⁵ The genesis of this research project emerged during an Independent Study course taken by the authors under the guidance of Dr. David R. Bauer. Conversations with Dr. Bauer prompted an analysis of IBS methods in light of the works surveyed in the course. The authors wish to thank Dr. Bauer and Dr. Fredrick J. Long for additional insights into IBS methodology.

⁶ Although ancient literary critics are diverse and are not monolithic, this study adopts the term “ancient literary criticism” to broadly explain the literary analysis done by ancient critics. We have chosen this specific terminology because it is used by classical scholars. J. W. H. Atkins, *Literary Criticism in Antiquity: A Sketch of its Development*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934); G. M. A. Grube, *The Greek and Roman Critics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965); G. A. Kennedy, ed., *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 1, *Classical Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁷ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 3–49.

mimesis (imitation) and *diēgesis* (narrative).⁸ Paul Ricoeur's works *The Rule of Metaphor* and *Time and Narrative* both appeal to Aristotle's work on rhetoric and poetics.⁹ Literary critical works influenced by these authors frequently incorporate similar discussions of Homer, Plato, Aristotle, and other ancient literature.¹⁰ Such references generally occur in order to illustrate the origins of specific literary structures or to engage the philosophical question of a relation between the text and its referent. Within biblical studies, many have been influenced by modern literary criticism, but it is rare for a sustained analysis of biblical texts to be directly influenced by ancient literary criticism. Although rhetorical criticism has grown in prominence, the ancient discussions on literary style and figures are often unutilized.¹¹

Ancient Discussions on Plot Construction and Mimesis

It is not surprising that ancient literary criticism has influenced modern literary criticism since critiquing literature's plot, rhetoric, and style is well documented in antiquity. One of the earliest extant discussions of

---

⁸ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 30, 46, 163–69.

⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977) 8–39; *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 31–52.

¹⁰ Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 85–89, 108–111; Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 92–94, 98–99; Alan R. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 80–82; Paul Cobley, *Narrative*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 52–58; Kent Puckett, *Narrative Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 24–46.

¹¹ George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996); Ben Witherington III, *New Testament Rhetoric: An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament* (Eugene: Cascade, 2009); Mikeal C. Parsons and Michael Wade Martin, *Ancient Rhetoric and the New Testament: The Influence of Elementary Greek Composition* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2018).

literary criticism can be found in Aristotle's *Poetics*, a work that primarily analyzed poetic epic and tragedy. According to Aristotle, "plot is the mimesis of the action—for I use 'plot' to denote the construction of events, 'character' to mean that in virtue of which we ascribe certain qualities to the agents, and 'thought' to cover the parts in which, through speech, they demonstrate something or declare their views" (*Poet.* 1449b.36–1450a.9 [Halliwell, LCL]). The construction of plot takes such a central role in Aristotle's approach that it drives both characterization and description of events within a narrative (*Poet.* 1450a.14–28; 1451a.16–1451b.35; 1454a.16–19). Aristotle also argues that a poet is one only "by virtue of mimesis" through plot-making rather than composition of verse (*Poet.* 1451b.25). While a full discussion of mimesis exceeds the scope of this article, it should be noted that for Aristotle and indeed many ancient theorists, it served as the core aim towards which literary, stylistic, and rhetorical devices were to be employed.

Vividness and beauty repeatedly appear in ancient discussions of literary figures due to the relationship between mimesis and art. A number of ancient critics discuss literature, painting, sculpture, and other creative works as similar examples of life imitation, albeit with distinct techniques.¹² Mimesis through plot was prioritized because writers desired that their literature imitate or represent life (Aristotle, *Poet.* 1449b.36–1450a.9). Longinus explains that literary figures allow "imitation [mimesis] to approach the effects of nature. For art is only perfect when it looks like nature and Nature succeeds only when she conceals latent art" ([*Subl.*] 22.1 [Fyfe, LCL]). These ancient discussions about mimesis are similar to Bauer and Traina's discussion of MSRs compounding in books and units. "Indeed, books and other units of various sizes will usually contain more than one major structural relationship, for biblical literature tends to be thick and somewhat

---

¹² Aristotle, *Poet.* 4.1–9; *Rhet.* 1.1371^a21–1371^b25; Longinus, [*Subl.*] 13.2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Comp.* 20; Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.2.1–11; Plutarch, *Mor.* 346f–384d.

complex.”¹³ Bauer and Traina observe similar phenomena as noted by ancient theorists, but they describe them with different terms. The authors of biblical and other ancient literature utilized numerous figures or MSRs because these produce thick, complex, and vivid imitations or representations of reality.

The Importance of Ancient Literary Criticism

Ancient literary criticism and rhetorical criticism’s usefulness is often critiqued in biblical studies because scholars postulate that this literature was reserved for the literate elite.¹⁴ This misconception is then used to posit a substantial divide between orality and literature. However, classical scholars note ample evidence that suggests otherwise. For example, Bernard Knox summarized some relevant data,

Though the archaic period yields no explicit evidence of books and readers, there is evidence of the essential precondition for their existence, widespread literacy. Public inscriptions ... are found all over the Greek world.... In addition to inscriptions added by the artist we have specimens of private messages scratched on broken potsherds. Three sixth-century (BCE) graffiti from the Adienian agora clearly suggest that writing was a commonplace accomplishment.¹⁵

This evidence assumes a functional widespread literacy. Additionally, it is anachronistic to assume that literature was only accessible to

---

¹³ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 98.

¹⁴ William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 106–110; cited in, Fredrick J. Long, *In Step with God’s Word: Interpreting the New Testament with God’s People* (Wilmore, KY: GlossaHouse, 2017), 326.

¹⁵ Bernard Knox, “Books and Readers in the Greek World,” in *Greek Literature*, ed. P. E. Easterling, *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature 1* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 5–6.

readers and written only for the literate. In the ancient world, literature was not composed solely for private readers but public listeners. Long explains: “Orality influenced the production of texts.... In the Greek world, the oral and textual dimensions of communication co-existed and mutually informed each other both in poetry (esp. Homer) and in the rhetorical tradition....”¹⁶

Moreover, public reading and performance of texts constituted the majority of public exposure to literature.¹⁷ An interplay existed between oral-aural culture and written literature in what Vernon Robbins has termed *rhetorical culture*.¹⁸ This interplay can be observed in comments by Dionysius of Halicarnassus who writes of the orator Lysias that he “varies his style according to the different parts of the speech: his introductions have a firm moral tone, his narratives are persuasive and economical, his proofs terse and concentrated, his amplifications and appeals to the emotions are dignified and sincere, and his concluding summaries are relaxed and concise” and that “his charm [a literary figure] ... blossoms forth in every word he writes” (*Lys.* 9 and 10 [Usher, LCL]). Speeches were littered with stylistic “literary” figures because they were written with the art of performance in mind.

Remnants of ancient orality can be observed in works related to the process of rhetorical education. This form of education aimed to produce in the student an ability to develop oratorical skill through a gradual process of learning how to read and practice writing, as well as to recite and comment upon classic literary works. The traditional

---

¹⁶ Long, *In Step with God's Word*, 327.

¹⁷ Paul J. Achtemeier, “Omne Verbum Sonat: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity,” *JBL* 109 (1990): 16. Repeated exposure to higher forms of oratory would then instill certain patterns of thought within the minds of those hearers who could utilize literary and rhetorical devices even if they could not describe them in the same way as found in the progymnasmata.

¹⁸ Vernon K. Robbins, “Oral, Rhetorical, and Literary Cultures: A Response,” *Semeia* 65 (1994): 80–81; Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 28–32; David F. Smith, “Can We Hear What They Heard?: The Effect of Orality Upon a Markan Reading-Event” (PhD diss., University of Durham, 2002), 54.

model, which some eager orators may have attempted to skirt, involved significant effort to imitate the prose, diction, and style of famed orators and poets of the past.¹⁹ The innate connection between preferences in speech and the process of writing can be found in introductory comments in rhetorical treatises and the *progymnasmata*.²⁰ Students who reached a sufficient stage in their education to engage in composition of texts and speeches would have had prior exposure to poetry and other literary works as well as the stylistic devices used to achieve effective mimesis of life. Therefore, rhetorical argumentation rested not only upon persuasion but also an assumed familiarity with stylistic literary preferences for vivid representation.

Scope of Study

This survey provides only a brief glimpse into how ancient discussions of literary and rhetorical figures cohere with the MSRs provided by Bauer and Traina. Our primary source sample set includes the following works: Aristotle's *Poetics* (4th century BCE), Longinus's *On the Sublime* (1st century CE), Demetrius's *On Style* (2nd century CE), the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (1st century BCE), various critical essays by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (1st century BCE), Quintilian's *Institutes of Oration*

---

¹⁹ In a satire directed at contemporaries who skirted past the elementary phases of composition, Lucian alludes to the centrality of imitation to training in rhetoric, "he [the teacher] will tell you to imitate those ancient worthies, and will set you fusty models for your speeches, far from easy to copy, resembling sculptures in the early manner such as those of Hegesias and of Critius and Nesiotes —wasp-waisted, sinewy, hard, meticulously definite in their contours. And he will say that hard work, scant sleep, abstention from wine, and untidiness are necessary and indispensable; it is impossible, says he, to get over the road without them" (*Rhet. praec.* 9 [Harmon, LCL]).

²⁰ According to Aelius Theon's *Progymnasmata*, it is through reading the works of another author that the student assembles a style repertoire; but this can only be actualized through frequent written composition which engages literary works (Theon, *Prog.*1). This is affirmed in similar compositional handbooks: Nicolaus the Sophist, *Preliminary Exercises* 1; John of Sardis, *Commentary on Prog. Aphthonius*, Preface.

(1st century CE), and several *progymnasmata* from Kennedy's volumes (1st–4th centuries CE).²¹

These sources come from a variety of geographic and temporal settings within the ancient Hellenistic and Roman worlds so that we are able to note recurring trends and approximations of wider cultural views. It should not be assumed that ancient literary criticism was monolithic or uniform. In the following study, we do *not* argue that Bauer and Traina's precise nuancing of MSRs is found in ancient literary criticism. Rather, this study demonstrates that ancient critics were aware of concepts and techniques that are similar to the MSRs used in IBS to interpret biblical discourse.

Comparative Analysis of Major Structural Relationships and Ancient Literary Criticism

Repetition and Recurrence

Working from William Freedman's understanding of a literary motif, Bauer and Traina explain their first MSR, Repetition or Recurrence as "the repetition of the same or similar terms, phrases, or other elements, which may involve motifs, concepts, persons, literary forms, or other structural relationships."²² They then identify three functions of repetition: emphasis, thematic development, and "depth and richness of presentation" that "invites readers to interpret individual occurrences in light of the other occurrences and in light of the recurring pattern

---

²¹ Citations from the *progymnasmata* of Aelius Theon, Aphthonius, John of Sardis, Hermogenes, Libanius, Nicolaus the Sophist, and Pseudo-Hermogenes reflect the numbering in Kennedy's translations in the following volumes: *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*. WGRW 10 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); *Invention and Method: Two Rhetorical Treatises from the Hermogenic Corpus* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005).

²² Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 95.

as a whole.”²³ Essentially, Bauer and Traina argue that authors use repetition/recurrence to emphasize and develop rich concepts in texts.

In ancient literary criticism, repetition is discussed in a variety of forms. Demetrius explained the figure *epanalepsis* as “resumptive repetition of the same particle in the course of a long sentence.... Clarity often demands repetition” (*Eloc.* 196–97 [Innes, LCL]). The author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* explained, “This figure has not only much charm, but also impressiveness and vigour in highest degree; I therefore believe that it ought to be used for both the embellishment and the amplification of style” (*Rhet. Her.* 4.19 [Caplan, LCL]). Elsewhere, the author mentioned four varieties of repetition: *repetitio* (the same word for the start of successive clauses), *conversio* (the same word for the end of successive clauses), *complexio* (a combination of *epanaphora* and *antistrophe*), and *traductio* (multiple repetitions of a key term in close context). “In the four kinds of figures ..., the frequent recourse to the same word is not dictated by verbal poverty; rather there inheres in the repetition an elegance which the ear can distinguish more easily than words can explain” (*Rhet. Her.* 4.21).

Ancient authors thought that repetition had multiple functions.²⁴ Demetrius explained that repetition makes a passage “clear”; the author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* stated that repetition makes it easier for the listener. Therefore, repetition is an aid to listeners and readers that brings clarity to a passage. It is a figure that embellishes and amplifies the Plain or Elegant style of a writer. Plain or Elegant “style” is not colloquial dialect, but a style of writing (*Eloc.* 127–235.). Repetition also makes a passage “vivid.” Demetrius explained a repeated insult, “The repetition ... gives the insult a more vivid impact” (*Eloc.* 211). This appeal to “vivid impact” was a goal of ancient writers and speakers because vivid discourse was considered a virtue in composition (Dion.

---

²³ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 96.

²⁴ Other notable mentions of repetition: Demetrius, *Eloc.* 59, 66, and 140; Longinus, [*Subl.*] 20.1–3; *Rhet. Her.* 4.38; Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.3.29–31.

Hal., *Lys.* 13). The more vivid a text was, the better it represented real life (Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.2.64–65).

Multiple similarities and differences exist between Bauer and Traina's use and understanding of repetition and examples found in ancient literary criticism. Both view repetition as a literary device used to communicate meaning in a text; both argue that repetition adds emphasis, embellishment, or something similar; and both explain that repetition draws the reader into vivid or rich presentation. However, Bauer and Traina expand repetition to encompass larger patterns working throughout whole books, and thus repetition in the IBS model is a more broadly applied concept than is found in ancient discussions. Additionally, Bauer and Traina argue that repetitions contribute to themes and motifs. In contrast, repetition in ancient literary criticism was focused on repeating words, letters, and ideas primarily in closer context for stylistic effect. Repetition brought clarity and vividness, but the larger application of repetition across a whole text would likely have been considered a form of plot construction, not a distinct literary device.

Contrast and Comparison

After their discussion of repetition, Bauer and Traina delineate “semantic structures” that indicate “movement from something to something.”²⁵ The first structure they explain is contrast—“the association of opposites or of things whose differences the writer wishes to stress.”²⁶ After contrast, they discuss comparison—“the association of like things, or of things whose similarities are emphasized by the writer.”²⁷ Essentially, Bauer and Traina argue that contrast emphasizes difference, while comparison emphasizes similarity. Although contrast

---

²⁵ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 97.

²⁶ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 97.

²⁷ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 98.

and comparison are presented as separate MSRs in Bauer and Traina's work, ancient theorists often presented these together. For example,

Comparison is a manner of speech that carries over an element of likeness from one thing to a different thing. This is used to embellish or prove or clarify or vivify. Furthermore, corresponding to these four aims, it has four forms of presentation: Contrast, Negation, Detailed Parallel, Abridged Comparison. To each single aim in the use of Comparison we shall adapt the corresponding form of presentation. (*Rhet. Her.* 4.59)

The common Greek term for comparison was *syncrisis*, a device used in legal/deliberative oratory and literature (Theon, *Prog.* 1). The device frequently received extended discussion within ancient handbooks.²⁸ Regarding comparison within literature, Aelius Theon commented:

Syncrisis (*synkrisis*) is language setting the better or the worse side by side. There are syncrises both of persons and of things. An example involving persons is a comparison of Ajax and Odysseus, of things a comparison of wisdom and bravery. Since, however, we give preference to one of the persons by looking at their actions, and at anything else about them that is good, the method would be the same in both cases. (*Prog.* 10)

Several components of ancient approaches to comparison are of note. First, there was an emphasis that proper *syncrisis* engaged similar figures for the purpose of either distinguishing one over the other or demonstrating their equality (Theon, *Prog.* 10; Hermogenes, *Prog.* 8). Second, when a comparison was made with a highly regarded individual (such as a hero or deity) or an extreme event, this had an amplifying effect which highlighted the quality of the initial individual (Hermogenes,

---

²⁸ Theon, *Prog.* 10; Hermogenes, *Prog.* 8; Athonius, *Prog.* 10; Nicolaus, *Prog.* 9.

Prog. 8; Nicolaus, *Prog.* 9).²⁹ Third, it lent vividness, clarification, and stylistic variety to a text or speech (*Rhet. Her.* 4.45–49).³⁰ It is worth noting as well that within ancient literary criticism, points of comparison were reflective of social values of the time and thus tended to revolve around parentage, physical traits, and great deeds (Theon, *Prog.* 10). These points of comparison were contextually bound and often found in laudatory speeches.

Working from this understanding, Quintilian explained, “Comparisons ... are a pair of specially effective features” (*Inst.* 9.1.31–32 [Russell, LCL]). Therefore, contrast and comparison are different expressions of the same figure that placed people and objects in parallel with one another. Although these figures emphasized sameness or difference, similarly to Bauer and Traina’s explanation, there is one important specification in ancient literary criticism. Comparison added vividness, detail, and beauty to a description. Demetrius explained, “comparison owes its vividness to the fact that all accompanying details are included and nothing is omitted” (*Eloc.* 209). He also stated that detailed comparison adds “an element of beauty and precise detail” (*Eloc.* 274). Ultimately, comparison and contrast are figures that transform description from banal to vivacious, or “thick and somewhat complex,” to use Bauer and Traina’s wording.³¹

---

²⁹ To illustrate with a NT example: When Jesus indicates that his disciples will perform “greater” works than those which he was engaged in (John 14:12), this establishes a mental comparison which draws upon the reader’s knowledge of Jesus. By comparing the work(s) of the disciples to those of Jesus, the author amplifies the quality of their work without elaborating on the precise content thereof.

³⁰ Quintilian lists comparison as one of several ornamental devices of addition which can render one’s speeches more pleasing to the ear through diversity in sound and structure (*Inst.* 9.3.28–54). Demetrius recommends comparison as a way of developing *charm* for one’s work (*Eloc.* 146–147).

³¹ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 98.

Causation and Substantiation

Bauer and Traina organize their discussion of causation (a shift from cause to effect) and substantiation (a shift from effect to cause) around three varieties: historical, logical, and hortatory.³² Within ancient literary criticism, concern for causal relationships between events and thoughts was valued in both writing and public speaking. Causation was listed by Aelius Theon as one of the six principal elements of narrative description with its constituent parts corresponding specifically to motives for action (*Prog.* 5).³³ Description of causal relationships between events and character motivations was also an important component of establishing narrative credibility (John of Sardis, *Commentary of Prog. Aphthonius*, 2).

While cause and substantiation were important elements in judicial rhetoric,³⁴ one also finds discussion of these in reference to historiographical literature. Aelius Theon framed his section on narrative credibility around an analysis of historical narratives by Thucydides and Herodotus (*Prog.* 5). There he commented that the standard order was to progress from cause to effect, but acknowledged that authors could occasionally dislocate their comments on historical causes/motivations from this sequence in pursuit of a more stylistic narrative. One of Dionysius of Halicarnassus's critiques of Thucydides was an improper narrative ordering of causes for the Peloponnesian War (*Thuc.* 10–11). Dionysius argued that historical/chronological order should dictate narrative order and that by providing a retroactive claim by one of the parties at the start of his work, Thucydides's arrangement suffered. These concerns over the shaping of larger historical narrative

---

³² Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 105–8.

³³ The same narrative elements are provided in other handbooks (Nicolaus, *Prog.* 3; Aphthonius, *Prog.* 2).

³⁴ For instances of judicial and deliberative rhetoric that correspond with BT's *logical causation/substantiation*, see Quintilian, *Inst.* 5.10.80–81 and Pseudo-Hermodorus, *On Invention* 2.2, 2.7. The author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* warns against appeals to evidence for which a causal connection cannot be firmly established (2.25).

units adhere closer to judicial uses than the historical, logical, and hortatory categories that Bauer and Traina also propose. As elaborated in our discussion of other devices, ancient theorists tended to place greater weight on stylistic flourishes and rhetorical impact than on the ability to communicate meaning, although these concerns are not absent from IBS.

Climax

The next MSR delineated by Bauer and Traina is climax. “Climax is the movement from the lesser to the greater, toward a high point of culmination. The term climax derives from the Greek word for ladder or staircase and suggests the element of climbing.”³⁵ This description is similar to explanations of a literary figure sharing the same name found in ancient literary criticism.

The figure called climax should also be used, as in this sentence from Demosthenes, “I did not express this opinion, and then fail to move the resolution; I did not move the resolution and then fail to serve as envoy; I did not serve as envoy and then fail to convince the Thebans.” This sentence seems almost to be climbing higher and higher at each step. (Demetrius, *Eloc.* 270)

Both Bauer and Traina and various ancient literary theorists recognize that a climax progresses upward in a step by step fashion (Longinus, [*Subl.*] 23.1–4; *Rhet. Her.* 4.34; Dion. Hal., *Pomp.* 3; Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.4.7–9.). However, similar to the discussion on repetition, ancient literary criticism focused more on the clause or sentence level. The author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* described climax (*gradatio*) as repetition of preceding words within subsequent cola in a hierarchical arrangement (*Rhet. Her.* 4.25). A similar description was offered by Quintilian,

---

³⁵ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 99.

who stressed the emphatic impact of climactic arrangement (*Inst.* 9.3.54–57). Conversely, while Bauer and Traina acknowledge climaxes at the sentence or clause level, they also expand their discussion of climax into the larger macrostructure. Bauer and Traina offer examples of climax that cover the whole book of Acts and Exodus.³⁶ In contrast to this, Demetrius explained a climax as something that happens within a sentence (*Eloc.* 270).

Cruciality/Pivot

Bauer and Traina define cruciality as a process through which a core narrative pivot brings about “a radical reversal” in narrative trajectory, which leads to “an accurate understanding of the message of the book-as-a-whole and for the interpretation of individual passages within the book.”³⁷ Aristotle’s discussion of “complex” tragedies (*Poet.* 1452a.10–1452b.13) is similar to that argued by Bauer and Traina. “[M]ost integral to the plot and action is the one described: such a joint recognition and reversal will yield either pity or fear, just the type of actions of which tragedy is taken to be a mimesis; besides, both adversity and prosperity will hinge upon such circumstances” (*Poet.*, 1452a.35–1452b.5). Aristotle referred to shifts from prosperity to adversity, which were marked by scenes of *reversal* and *recognition*. Such were generally unanticipated by the reader yet were integrally related to the wider plot narrative.

Furthermore, this figure was not unique to tragedies, “epic should encompass the same types as tragedy, namely simple, complex, character-based, rich in suffering; it has the same components, except for lyric poetry and spectacle, for it *requires reversals, recognitions*, and scenes of suffering, as well as effective thought and diction” (*Poet.* 1459b.10–15; emphasis added). Recognition and reversal were distinguished primarily through their orientation—reversal referred to the shift in

³⁶ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 99–100.

³⁷ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 108.

fortunes of the key character, and recognition alluded to a plot upheaval marked through a revelation to the character. Ultimately, Bauer and Traina’s “cruciality” or “pivot” and Aristotle’s “reversal and recognition” are incredibly similar, if not describing the same literary phenomena. Both stress a reorientation to the components of the wider work through the impact of occurrences interior to the narrative.

Particularization and Generalization

The MSRs particularization and generalization are respectively described by Bauer and Traina as movements in material from general to particular and particular to general. These are broken down into identificational, ideological, historical, and geographical varieties depending on their content.³⁸ Such specific designations do not find analogous expression within ancient literary criticism, although the practice of text organization along general or particular lines can be observed as latent in ancient texts. One reason for this distinction is that in IBS, the MSRs are understood according to their content as well as their form.³⁹ Ancient literary criticism tended towards descriptions of form and style. There existed a widely held belief that these elements must correspond closely with the nature of the content to provide a satisfying imitation.⁴⁰ Such differences in orientation explain why perfectly analogous devices cannot always be located.

Long has proposed a connection between these MSRs and the argumentative *topos* “from parts to whole,” first described by Aristotle (*Rhet.* 2.23.13).⁴¹ Aristotle described this as ἐκ τῶν μερῶν, “enumerating the parts” [Freese, LCL] and provided an example of the general

---

³⁸ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 100–105.

³⁹ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 4.

⁴⁰ For select comments on this, see Demetrius, *Eloc.* 6–7; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Comp.* 16.

⁴¹ Fredrick J. Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul’s Apology: The Compositional Unity of 2 Corinthians*, SNTSMS 131 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 66.

question “what kind of movement is the soul” to which a full response required an examination of the varying ways in which the soul moves. Long also observes this *topos* in the writings of Cicero and Quintilian. Cicero listed “enumeration of the parts” under “internal arguments” (*Part. Or.* 2.7 [Rackham, LCL]; *Top.* 8). As an example, Cicero provided an argument in which a woman was bequeathed all the silver in her home. This general bequeathment would cover particulars such as an individual coin that falls under the category of silver (*Top.* 13). In addition to these authors, Long references Quintilian, who placed this *topos* under the category of arguments by definition (*Inst.* 5.10.54-55). This usage would provide a more specified definition of a term, object, or individual by listing its constituent parts.

Long’s analysis suggests that particularizing and generalizing forms of organizing discourse existed within ancient rhetoric and that these were common enough to be included in rhetorical handbooks. However, this specifically rhetorical usage tends towards shorter, more immediate contextual uses in the middle of an argument. Particularization and generalization in Bauer and Traina’s model can expand across significant portions of text and even entire books. For this reason, comparisons between these MSRs and Greco-Roman argumentative *topoi* should be reserved for instances in which biblical texts appear to enumerate “parts” in an immediate literary context. For example, Bauer and Traina observe that Psalm 78:2–4 offers a general overview of Israel’s history as “things that we have heard and known, that our ancestors have told us,” with events in this history enumerated over the remainder of the psalm.⁴² Although this text was not composed within a Greco-Roman rhetorical framework, its enumeration of particularized expressions in close connection with a general claim operates out of a similar organizational framework as espoused by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian.

---

⁴² Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 102.

Preparation and Realization

Bauer and Traina refer to preparation as “the inclusion of background or setting for events or ideas,” which are then realized in the subsequent narrative.⁴³ Bauer and Traina use Job’s heavenly court scene as an example. “[T]he book begins in chapters 1–2 by providing background or setting according to which the reader is to understand the dialogues that follow.”⁴⁴ This literary phenomenon was also discussed by Aristotle. For Aristotle and others who followed after him, literature was imitative of life, and plot events must be plausible within the confines of the universe established in the text. Background involving supernatural agents were placed in narrative frames *external* to the main narrative setting, such as heavenly councils.

The *deus ex machina* should be employed for events outside the drama—preceding events beyond human knowledge, or subsequent events requiring prediction and announcement; for we ascribe to the gods the capacity to see all things. There should be nothing irrational in the events; if there is, it should lie outside the play, as with Sophocles’ Oedipus. Since tragedy is mimesis of those superior to us, poets should emulate good portrait painters, who render personal appearance and produce likenesses, yet enhance people’s beauty. (Aristotle, *Poet.* 1454b.1–10)

Aristotle recognized that sometimes a narrative’s plot required information from outside of the central events, and he recognized this as a literary device similar to Bauer and Traina. The heavenly court scene is not the only way preparation and realization can be used. Bauer and Traina also explain that characters prefigure and help readers interpret other characters. “John’s ministry provides background for ... the

---

⁴³ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 114.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

ministry of Jesus. The reader of this Gospel, then, is to interpret Mark's narrative of Jesus's ministry according to the background or setting of Mark's account of John's ministry."⁴⁵ Classical scholars have observed the same phenomena in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. Alexi V. Zadorojnyi writes, "The erudite writings of Plutarch, in particular the *Parallel Lives*, explore the past specifically with an eye to examples to learn from and (discriminately) imitate.... Mimesis is thus both an ingredient of the exemplary past and the purpose of studying it under Plutarch's tutelage."⁴⁶ For example, Plutarch depicted Diogenes frankly saying, "I imitate (μιμοῦμαι) Heracles, and emulate (ζῆλῶ) Perseus, and follow in the footsteps of Dionysus, the divine author and progenitor of my family" (*Alex. fort.* 332B [Babbitt, LCL]). Similarly to Jesus and John, Plutarch placed the narrative about Diogenes in relation to people and gods who came before him. Although ancient literary theorists may not have used a specific term to describe this practice, concepts analogous to Bauer and Traina's preparation and realization were observed by them and utilized by ancient authors in literature.

Summarization

Summarization, according to Bauer and Traina, is "an abridgment or compendium (summing up) either preceding or following a unit of material," which identifies the "main elements" of the narrative or discourse.⁴⁷ This semantic structure is constrained to interactions with material within the text rather than a summary of events in the world external to the narrative. Bauer and Traina identify three areas of significance in summarization. "First, the selectivity of the summary statement indicates to the reader what is of prime importance in the

---

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Alexi V. Zadorojnyi, "Mimesis and the (plu)past in Plutarch's *Lives*," in *Time and Narrative in Ancient Historiography*, ed. Jonas Grethlein and Christopher B. Krebs (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 176

⁴⁷ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 110.

material being summarized.” Second, the summary identifies “the main elements in the material.” Third, the context of the summary may indicate the passage’s “interpretive function” in its surrounding context.⁴⁸ Essentially, summarization statements help readers reinforce the central ideas and concepts presented in a text.

Summarization is also addressed in ancient literary criticism. Towards the beginning of a speech, one could include a discrete section called a “partition” (*partitio*) that outlined the argument heads of the speech (Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.5.1–3).⁴⁹ Additionally, Quintilian suggested that one could include *partitio* anywhere needed in the discourse (*Inst.* 3.9.2–3).⁵⁰ Then, too, discrete argument units ended in a conclusion that could provide a summary (*complexio*) of the propositions (*Rhet. Her.* 2.28). Also, summarization as recapitulation occurred as one important function of the speech’s conclusion in the epilogue or *peroratio* (*Rhet. Her.* 2.47; Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.1.1–2; cf. Cicero, *Part. Orat.* 17.59). The author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* explains, “The conclusion is the end of the discourse, formed in accordance with the principles of the art” (*Rhet. Her.* 1.4). The “art” being discussed here is the Résumé or *complexio* that is said to be defective “if it does not include every point in the exact order in which it has been presented; if it does not come to a conclusion briefly; and if the summary does not leave something precise and stable” (*Rhet. Her.* 2.46; cf. 2.28 and 3.15).

Although some may think that speeches are not “literature,” it is important to note that ancient rhetoric was the last step in Greco-Roman education; the development of the oration involved the application of written composition practices. Therefore, if summary and conclusion were used in oral speech, they were also used in writing. This connection explains why Demetrius wrote about the written style of letters, “*In summary*, in terms of style the letter should combine two of the styles, the elegant and the plain, and *this concludes* my account of the

---

⁴⁸ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 111.

⁴⁹ Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul’s Apology*, 85–89.

⁵⁰ Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul’s Apology*, 79.

letter, and also of the plain style” (*Eloc.* 235; emphasis added).⁵¹ Dionysius of Halicarnassus also utilized summary in his writings on rhetoric, style, and history. He wrote in this manner about Thucydides, “I may *summarise* the instruments, so to speak, of Thucydides’s style as follows: there are four—artificiality of vocabulary, variety of figures, harshness of word-order, rapidity of signification. The special features of his style include compactness and solidity, pungency and severity, vehemence, the ability to disturb and terrify and above all emotional power.”⁵²

Thus, summarization was an important tool in ancient rhetoric as well as in ancient literary theory. Similar to Bauer and Traina, ancient literary theorists utilized summary by selectively highlighting important points that were previously covered in a text. Although summarization as a distinct literary figure was not expounded upon like some of the other figures, the application of summary in rhetorical theory (as *partitio* and *complexio*) and its application by literary theorists (Demetrius and Dionysius of Halicarnassus) demonstrates its importance and usefulness. Furthermore, the three areas of significance identified by Bauer and Traina are also identifiable in the examples above. Dionysius’s summary identified key material, differentiated that material from other ideas previously discussed, and it even offered an important comment about “special features” of Thucydides style that highlighted the significance of the material and could be analogous to Bauer and Traina’s “interpretive function.” Ultimately, summarization was a useful tool in rhetoric, written discourse, and ancient literary theory.

Interrogation

Bauer and Traina suggest that interrogation may be found in immediate contexts (such as rhetorical questions followed by a response) and

---

⁵¹ See also *Eloc.* 270–71.

⁵² Dion. Hal., *Thuc.* 24 [Stephen Usher, LCL]. Also see, *Lys.* 9 and 13; *Dem.* 46.

across wider structural units (narrative presentation of a problem and its intended solution).⁵³ “The implied author ... has employed this problem-solution structure to give readers guidance in understanding the movement of the book, to indicate to readers a major emphasis within the book, and to encourage readers to understand individual passages in light of their role in this problem-solution framework.”⁵⁴ This MSR, then, aids readers in their interpretation of passages and books.

In ancient literary criticism, interrogation was described as a rhetorical strategy in public oration rather than in written literature, but, as stated earlier, written and spoken discourse in the ancient world were not harshly divided. Longinus wrote about interrogation:

Now what are we to say of our next subject, *the figures of inquiry and interrogation*? ... the inspiration and quick play of the *question and answer*, and his way of confronting his own words as if they were someone else’s, make the passage, through his use of the figure, not only loftier but also more convincing. ... [T]he figure of question and answer actually *misleads the audience*, by encouraging it to suppose that each carefully premeditated argument has been aroused in the mind and put into words on the spur of the moment. (Longinus, [*Subl.*] 18.1–2; emphasis added)

Similar to Bauer and Traina, Longinus understood this figure in a question and answer format. Interestingly, the figure was also supposed to influence the audience/reader. In Bauer and Traina, interrogation guides the reader through an argument; but in Longinus, the figure “misleads” the listener. This misleading was not a negative idea but acknowledged that the questions were “carefully premeditated” to guide the listener. In other words, like Bauer and Traina’s assertions about interrogation, Longinus recognized that interrogation guided readers through a

---

⁵³ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 113.

⁵⁴ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 113–114.

hypothetical argument. Additionally, this figure was said to hold the attention of listeners. “This figure is exceedingly well adapted to a conversational style, and both by its stylistic grace and the anticipation of the reasons, holds the hearer’s attention” (*Rhet. Her.* 4.23).⁵⁵ Ultimately, interrogation is a figure with ancient roots that guides readers through an argument by representing a hypothetical dialogue.

Rhetorical Structures

Bauer and Traina describe rhetorical structures as relationships which do not possess intrinsic meaning but instead are employed alongside semantic relationships to highlight the author’s intended point.⁵⁶ Such devices are often discussed within rhetorical critical approaches to the Bible. In order to avoid duplication of points that have been addressed elsewhere, our analysis of these devices is brief. However, a few comments are warranted due to the links between orality/rhetoric and literature within the ancient world.

Inclusio

Bauer and Traina explain *inclusio* as “the repetition of words or phrases at the beginning and end of a unit, thus creating a bracket effect.”⁵⁷ In their perspective, *inclusio* is used to frame a central thought, whether in a short context or across a work as a whole. Within a shorter context of discourse, *inclusio* is paralleled by an ancient literary device known as *kyklos* in which “a sentence, clause or phrase” begins and ends with the same word in the same form (*On Invention* 4.8). In a wider context of discourse, it can be used to enclose a sustained narrative:

---

⁵⁵ It should also be noted that “conversational style” is a style represented in written discourse; see Demetrius, *Eloc.* 223–24. For more on interrogation, see *Rhet. Her.* 4.22–23; Hermogenes, *Prog.* 2; *On Forceful Speaking* 10.

⁵⁶ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 116.

⁵⁷ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 117.

As Demosthenes does in *Against Leptines* (20.73): “It is said (legetai), then, that after telling them to build the wall, he went off as an ambassador to Lacedaimon.” After going through an account of Themistocles’ doings, he ended in the same way: “And you all know in what way he deceived them it is said (legetai).” It is not the rhythm that is evidence of the *kyklos* but the beginning and the ending. (On Invention 4.8)

Kennedy has also pointed out that in the realm of rhetoric, repetition of words at the beginning and end of a sentence or clause constituted one variety of addition known as *epiphora* (Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.31) or *conplexio* (*Rhet. Her.* 4.20). In these references, the focus was on a much smaller scale than that which Bauer and Traina allow for since the intent behind such usage was to lend *charm* to one’s speech patterns and impress an audience (Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.28).

Chiasm

Bauer and Traina rightly note that chiasm is identified in ancient texts more frequently than is preferred and is best confined to discrete literary sub-units rather than books-as-wholes.⁵⁸ Robert M. Fowler suggested that the “spatial, visual pattern” through which scholars identify chiastic structuring is reliant upon modern approaches to texts rather than the oral-aural approach of ancient societies.⁵⁹ However, other scholars working with oral and visual modes of exegesis have proposed that hearers could have identified chiastic structure due to their exposure to public rhetoric.⁶⁰ In Pseudo-Hermogenes, a chiasm occurs

---

⁵⁸ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 118–20.

⁵⁹ Robert M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 152.

⁶⁰ For information on oral and visual exegesis, see Fredrick J. Long, “The Oral, the Textual, and the Visual (or, The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly) in Jesus’s and Paul’s Chiastic Performance of Scripture in 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Mark” in

“[w]hen both apodotes harmonize with both protases, but crosswise” (*On Invention* 4.3). This sense of chiasm referred to the narrow set of instances in which two statements existed whose antecedent clauses could be applied to each other’s consequents. Kennedy relates this to the device *commutatio* (translated “reciprocal change” in Caplan’s translation), as may be found in *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.39.⁶¹ According to Kennedy, this type of arrangement was not inclusive of all that modern scholars refer to as chiasm, although he is quick to note that a pattern analogous to that found in modern surveys was present within works by Homer and other authors. Notably, *commutatio* and the related figure ἀντιμεταβολή serve a contrastive purpose, with juxtaposed terms and word order heightening the contrast’s effect (*Rhet. Her.* 4.39; Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.3.85). What we find, then, is a rhetorical device that likely was latent in the compositional tendencies of authors, stemming from the sphere of public oration. In light of this, the aforementioned cautions ought to be kept in mind when proposing that a text was written with a chiasmic structure as a key to its meaning.

Structural Relationships with Limited Parallels

Several structural relationships provided by Bauer and Traina lack clear extant parallels in the literature surveyed. The discrepancy in parallels does not mean that such relationships did not exist within ancient texts, but rather that they were not directly commented upon in the portions of ancient literary criticism surveyed.

Intercalation is described as “the insertion of one literary unit in the midst of another,” which prompts the reader to draw conclusions about how these materials connect.⁶² In the analysis by Bauer and Traina, this structure includes the book-as-whole or macro level. Such

---

Orality and Theological Training in the 21st Century, ed. Jay W. Moon and Joshua Moon (Wilmore, KY: Digit-oral, 2017), 48–63.

⁶¹ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 28–29.

⁶² Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 121.

a level was less frequently the scope of analysis in ancient literary criticism. One handbook, *On Forceful Speaking*, referred to the use of *hyperbaton* in a similar fashion, albeit within a strictly narrow context when performing an analysis on a section of the tenth book of the *Odyssey* in which Odysseus explained to his crew the reason why they were heading towards the underworld (229).⁶³ This use of *hyperbaton* was done in a much briefer fashion than the sort of analysis found in Bauer and Traina. Nevertheless, this analysis involved the insertion of remarks in order to clarify the wider narrative.

Interchange is “the exchanging or alternation of certain elements in an a-b-a-b arrangement.”⁶⁴ It is likewise not mentioned in ancient literary criticism. Similar to chiasm, this structuring can be more easily detected through analysis of written texts as opposed to hearing them performed.

Instrumentation concerns purpose statements and means-to-ends constructions;⁶⁵ such do not receive clear discussion in ancient literary criticism. However, Bauer and Traina indicate that these structures are often marked by the use of certain conjunctions or prepositions (“in order that,” “through”). As a result, they are supported at the syntactical level of texts and do not require justification via ancient literary criticism.

---

⁶³ It should be noted, as Kennedy does, that this use of hyperbaton is peculiar. Generally the device refers to insertion of words or thoughts in order to create the impression of spontaneity in one’s speech or to preserve meter (Longinus, [*Subl.*] 22.1–4; *Rhet. Her.* 4.32; Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.6.62–67). Aelius Theon comments that such usage might be appropriate in literature for variety’s sake, but should be avoided for its potential to confuse the audience (*Prog.* 5). It is possible that the author cited above is not using hyperbaton in a technical sense to suggest that intercalation is the full spectrum of uses of the device, but rather that these follow the usual use in a similar fashion.

⁶⁴ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 116.

⁶⁵ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 115–16.

Conclusions

In this article, we have explored how Bauer and Traina's MSRs are often analogous to literary and rhetorical figures found in ancient literary criticism. Bauer and Traina's all-encompassing claim that MSRs are "found in all cultures, all genres, all time periods, and all forms of art, not simply in literature. They are pervasive and foundational for communication" is impossible to fully validate.⁶⁶ However, this study has demonstrated that ancient Greco-Roman literary theorists, since the time of Aristotle, had been observing phenomena similar to the MSRs that Bauer and Traina propose. Moreover, because ancient critics saw these figures and techniques connected to a vivid representation of life, they too thought these figures were foundational for communication. Ancient literary and rhetorical analysis was concerned with mimesis through vividness and aural impact. In the Aristotelian system, written texts, alongside the other arts, participated in the imitation (mimesis) of life. Therefore, the success of a work depended on its ability to vividly represent human action. Ancient literary criticism differs from but is not in complete contradiction with, the IBS model. For IBS focuses on "the form of the text, giving serious attention to the ways students can identify for themselves literary structure and can show how such structure informs the meaning of the text."⁶⁷ Although there may be subtle differences between these approaches, the result is similar: patterns, structures, literary figures, and literary style guide readers in the communicative process.

The content of this article is but a starting point for additional work. Further analysis of how literature achieves *vividness* and collation of comments from an even wider array of sources is needed. While NT scholarship has made ample use of ancient rhetoric, discussions of literary figures and literary style have largely been overlooked with some

---

⁶⁶ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 94.

⁶⁷ Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 4.

notable exceptions.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, when Bauer and Traina's MSRs are understood alongside ancient literary criticism, it is clear that literary and rhetorical figures are not just tools for constructing meaning. They are tools for representing life. The life that was presented in ancient texts was a unique description of the world, and MSRs and ancient literary and rhetorical figures aid readers in the hermeneutical reconstruction of a text's world. "Hermeneutics does not place accent on the dialogic relation between the author and the reader, nor even on the decision taken by the listener to the word, but rather—and essentially—on the world of the text."⁶⁹ By paying attention to MSRs and literary and rhetorical figures, modern readers encounter tools that authors used in the ancient world to imitate life. The tools once meant for vivid and imitative representation are now the readers' tools for creative hermeneutical reconstruction.

---

⁶⁸ Aída Besançon Spencer, *Paul's Literary Style: A Stylistic and Historical Comparison of II Corinthians 11:16–12:13, Romans 8:9–39, and Philippians 3:2–4:13* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2007). However, Spencer's analysis is based on a modern linguistic analysis known as "stylistics," not ancient literary criticism's understanding of style.

⁶⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, ed. Mark I. Wallace (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 235.

If we suppose Intelligence, with an organism answering in its characteristics merely to the properties of the ether, we have a being conforming very nearly, if not quite, to the notion the mystics had of the indwellers of the supersensual world. With bodies more dense than steel, though unamenable to earthly sight or touch, these creatures would see the fleshly forms as a shadowy garment, and a matter at large but as a film thinner than air which offered no bar to their passage. And, exempt from the laws of gravitation which hold prison bound the frame of clay, they might levitate at will, and with the swiftness of light transport themselves from planet to planet. From the sun's flame they could take no harm and even the chill of absolute zero would leave their bodies unscathed.

CHARLES KASSEL in *Immortality and the New Physics*,
 "North American Review," October, 1922.

Chapter III: Why Is the Resurrection Judged Incredible?

This question of St. Paul addressed to King Agrippa (Acts 26:8) may well be employed to include a brief, partial statement both of explanations of rejection of the Easter message and of reasons for acceptance of it as true.

Why do some disbelieve the Easter message of the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus as Lord of death and the grave?

One reason is because, as in the days of our Lord, there are those who have adopted a world view which does not permit the belief. The sect of Sadducees denied the resurrection. They went further. "The

Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both” (Acts 23:8). “On that day there came to him Sadducees, they that say there is no resurrection” (Matthew 22:23).

Paul addressed the representative of another type of present-day unbeliever in the resurrection when to King Agrippa he said (Acts 26), “Why is it judged incredible with you, if God should raise the dead?” This class is living luxuriously and is careless of the future. Attention to affairs of the spirit is not popular in its circle. Its members smile superciliously at efforts of serious-minded believers to bring them face to face with reality. Paul in his great chapter on the resurrection (I Corinthians, fifteenth) intimates that with some at Corinth evil companionships were the explanation of doubt about the resurrection. He reviews the evidence for the resurrection of our Lord, and then proceeds to indicate inconsistency on the part of certain members of the Corinthian Church (“some among you”) in believing that our Lord rose, while at the same time doubting the possibility of resurrection of their own beloved dead. It would seem that these people were faced by indisputable evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, and at the same time were living such untrue lives as to be unsettled about the resurrection of their own dead! He earnestly warns them not to be deceived. “Evil communications,” says he, “corrupt good manners.”

The influence of great names coupled with faulty exegesis of Scripture is a powerful influence with the average person in the direction of practical denial of the resurrection, and consequent abandon to the free and easy life referred to by Paul when he says: “If we are found false witnesses . . . let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” Professor Harnack in *What is Christianity?* declares that the New Testament itself distinguishes between the Easter message of the empty grave and the appearance of Jesus on the one side, and the Easter faith on the other. By the Easter faith he means that Jesus is alive, but the tomb was not opened, nor did Jesus appear “according to the Scriptures.” He asserts that, although the greatest value is attached in the Scripture

to that message, we are to hold the Easter faith even in its absence. In support, he tells us that the story of Thomas is given for the exclusive purpose of impressing us that we must hold the Easter faith even without the Easter message. "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." He further says that the disciples on the road to Emmaus were blamed for not believing, even though the Easter message had not yet reached them.

Is Professor Harnack a safe exegete of Scripture in these instances? Let us see. Is it not true (see John, twentieth chapter) that Thomas had already been given the Easter message by his fellow-disciples? They had told him that they had seen the Lord. He had already rejected the Easter message at the mouth of trustworthy friends and consequently was without the Easter faith. The Lord's address to Thomas was substantially as follows, when we take into account the context: Thomas, you declined to accept the Easter message (the message of the empty tomb and of My appearances hitherto) as true on the word of your fellow-disciples. Blessed are those who do not reject this message of theirs, as you have done. While in this special instance I have met your demand for sight and touch, the method for the time to come will be that of belief of the message on testimony. I shall not make it a rule to appear in bodily form as I have done to you. The message of My rising from the dead will be carried by you and your fellow disciples who have seen Me. By that message the Easter faith will be created. On that message the Easter faith will rest. Your own testimony on this particular occasion will be recorded and read by multitudes in all parts of the world. It will be a great aid to their faith. It will even be the means of creating the Easter faith in many. It is for this reason that I have appeared to you. These things will be written that people everywhere in days to come may believe that I am the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing they may have life in My name.

Turning to Luke, the twenty-fourth chapter, the thoughtful reader will there also take issue with Professor Harnack's exegesis. He says

that “the two were blamed for not believing in the resurrection even though the Easter message had not reached them.” The fact is that Jesus did not blame them for this at all. He expressed surprise at their failure to grasp the Easter message in view of its presence in the Prophets. His words are: “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe [the Easter message] after all that the prophets have spoken! And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” Moreover they had already received the message. They spoke to Him of certain persons who had reported that the tomb was empty and Jesus was alive.

Surely Professor Harnack’s exegesis of the parts of the Gospels by Luke and John given above, does not conform to the canon of interpretation laid down by Bengel when he says: “An expositor should be like the maker of a well, who puts no water into the source himself, but makes it his object to let the water flow without diversion, stoppage or defilement.” We fain would ask Professor Harnack, in all earnestness, what he means by the Easter faith. He describes it in the words, “Jesus is alive.” In what sense is Jesus alive? Is it in the same sense in which Abraham is alive, or Paul, or Luther? If Jesus is not alive according to the Easter message, of what special value to me is the faith that He is alive.

Note in passing, the manner in which this twenty-fourth chapter of St. Luke puts Jesus into the Old Testament, including specifically His death, His resurrection on the third day, and the preaching of repentance and remission of sins in His name unto all the nations. The Old Testament is not brought into evidence in present-day apologetics as it deserves to be used. If we are not greatly mistaken, it will be coming back to its own soon.

How comes it to pass that honored leaders have gone to such lengths in their thinking as seriously to consider, and publicly to advocate, such a severance as that of the Easter faith from the Easter message? The explanation is believed to be found in the words of Henry

Robert Reynolds in the Introduction to his book on John the Baptist, where he says: "If in deference to the Zeitgeist, our religious leaders should recklessly surrender every position which is speciously assailed, in forgetfulness that the assault has been successfully repelled by those who have not lost heart, the cause of Christ will be for a period dishonoured, and a time of deep discouragement will prevail."

The *spirit of the times* has already stampeded not a few into compromise with what they believe to be the demands of science. This has resulted in a surrender of positions supported by valid evidence and sound reasoning. However there are many who have not lost faith nor have they lost heart. These trust that in the days to come (may we not hope soon) the critical spirit will be replaced by the judicial temper, and that the scientific method will be employed wholly and not partially as is so often the case at present. Indeed already there are even among those who have caught and slain the nightingale, certain discerning spirits who have begun to lament the silence of the forest. We cannot have the Easter faith once the Easter message is gone. There is even now widespread evidence of the absence of the faith where the message has been rejected. The average man is usually consistent in his thinking.

Why do so many doubt or wholly reject the Easter message? This question is partly answered, I repeat, because the scientific method is not faithfully, persistently, and patiently employed in the matter. We need here not only to carry on. We need to *carry through*. Defining the scientific method in somewhat different terms from those already suggested (See Inductive Method in dictionary), we may say that it consists of exact observation, correct interpretation, rational explanation, and reasonable construction. We ought to add also, obedient application. Neptune is the outermost known planet of the solar system. It requires 164 years to make its journey around the sun! Its distance is 2,760,000,000 miles from the sun. It was discovered September 23, 1846, by Galle of Berlin. The discovery was made as the result of

calculations by Leverrier. Adams, an English astronomer, had previously made calculations which indicated the same result. *Neptune was located before discovered*. Neptune was located by the Inductive Method, which is another way of saying, by the Scientific Method. An effect was observed and an adequate cause for it was sought. The opinion is confidently ventured that if in the study of resurrection men would observe, interpret, explain, construct, and obey as faithfully as was done in locating and discovering the planet Neptune, they would find that the Easter faith, according to the Scriptures, is inseparable from the Easter message.

A question is in place here. Why, since the resurrection is such a transcendentally important fact, if a fact, is it not so indisputably evidenced as to preclude all possibility of doubt on the part of anybody? We are sobered in our thinking by the consideration that were such the case, the moral as well as the intellectual significance of Christianity would be impaired. The programme of Christianity calls for belief on evidence rather than on explanation. This is the method of science. To chosen witnesses, and not to all the people, the Saviour appeared after His passion. He appointed a campaign of testimony for the days ahead. This is clear from His words to Thomas: “Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.” The next verses (John 20:30, 31) indicate the method by which belief is to be secured: “These things are written that ye may believe.”

Christianity certainly involves the development of the whole man. Its method is essentially scientific. Schiller of Oxford is right when he declares the identity of method in science and religion to be far more fundamental than the differences. Both call for action on probability, even on possibility. Both require experimentation. Both lead to certain knowledge through obedience to law. It is quite generally believed that a large element in true education consists of *ability to weigh evidence*. The scientific method calls for exact observation, correct description, and just valuation. This method would be uncalled for if the resurrection

of Christ were so attested that nobody could possibly doubt the fact. There is profound wisdom in what is involved in the words of the prophet (Isaiah 45:15): "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." There is supreme challenge to the intellectual and moral possibilities of mankind in Christianity's method of approach to the race. Latham in *Pastor Pastorum* says: "If our Lord's resurrection had been so attested that no sane person could doubt of the fact; if he had appeared in public and appalled Pilate on his judgment seat or Herod his throne, then, strange as it may appear, by the very fact of historic certainty being well established, the moral significance of the resurrection would be impaired. For, the acceptance of it would be independent of that which I have so often said is essential to religious belief, the concurrence of the free human will."

“Arise ‘n’ Shine, Daughter Zion of the Messiah Jesus!”

A Sermon at Asbury Theological Seminary, Aug 19, 2020

Fredrick J. Long

Asbury Theological Seminary

fredrick.long@asburyseminary.edu

Sermon Introduction

Isaiah’s Vision of God’s deliverance of His People, Daughter Zion, entails restoring justice and righteousness such that His people shine forth God’s glory. Isaiah describes a process of restoration that entails 1) stopping doing wrong; 2) learning to do what is right; and 3) seeking justice (1:16–17). At the end of Isaiah, God’s people are called to “Rise up and shine” God’s glory. Altogether, we might summarize Isaiah as Stop, Learn, Grow, and Glow. The Hebrew word “justice” (*mišpāt*) means to make right judgment in terms of having the right view of things, offering the appropriate judgment (punishment) to those injuring others, and rectifying a situation such that injured parties are vindicated and restored. We may understand the Greek word “righteousness” (*dikaïosunē*) as signifying “rightly relating (to one another).” God’s display of justice is found ultimately in the Messiah Jesus. The Messiah’s politics is God’s Kingdom that transcends human-scale political systems. Today, we need to press not into hatred, anarchy,

apathy, but into God’s presence to be present, to heal, and to confront injustice. In the end, Jesus likens believers to “a city on a hill that cannot be hidden” and calls them “to let their light shine” in good (Matthew 5:16) so that they reflect a surpassing righteousness (5:20).

In preparing the sermon, I specifically used inductive bible study in the following ways. I observed that Isaiah reaches a final climax in calling Zion to “Rise up and shine” (60:1). Moreover, the book begins with a statement of problem and solution (1:16–20) featuring prominently “justice” (*mišpāt*). Divine confrontation calls for human response while offering divine provision of cleansing for sin (1:18), and yet a choice still exists to be willing and obeying or to refuse and rebel. A cognate-based word study on “justice” (*mišpāt*) across Isaiah reveals the special importance of its pairing with “righteousness” (*ṣedāqah*). Clearly, the problem needing solution is how God establishes justice and righteousness among His people such that they embody these. Correlating this central concern into the New Testament, I observed that the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) reveals the importance of the word “righteousness” (*dikaïosunē*) in the Beatitudes and its general statements (5:20; 6:1; 6:33; cf. 7:12). Also, the list of the Beatitudes progresses to a climax in peacemaking and persecution (5:9–12). Next, the Sermon alludes to Isaiah’s vision of Zion, the city displayed on a hill (5:15). Here, Jesus calls for his disciples to be light entailing a purpose statement to shine with good works in order to help people glorify God (5:16). Then, in the following metacomment, Jesus states his own purpose in coming “to fulfill the Law and the Prophets” (5:17), thus abutting human calling and purpose with divine coming and purpose. Finally, making another correlation, I considered Paul’s calling of believers to be light before he quotes from some source—likely a generalization of Isaiah’s message—“Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you” (Ephesians 5:14). Then, I noted other places where passages of Scripture contain general statements, climaxes, or chiasm, which alert readers to central and important ideas.

Scripture Texts (NRSV)

The Third Song of Isaiah, Canticle 11 (called in Latin, *Surge, illuminare* “Rise up, Shine”) includes Isaiah 60:1–3, 11, 14b, 18–20. I have added 60:4 for the reading because of the gender-inclusive language.

60 Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

² For darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.

³ Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

⁴ Lift up your eyes and look around;
they all gather together, they come to you;
your sons shall come from far away,
and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses’ arms.

¹¹ Your gates shall always be open;
day and night they shall not be shut,
so that nations shall bring you their wealth,
with their kings led in procession.

^{14b} they shall call you the City of the LORD,
the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁸ Violence shall no more be heard in your land,
devastation or destruction within your borders;
you shall call your walls Salvation,
and your gates Praise.

¹⁹ The sun shall no longer be

your light by day,
nor for brightness shall the moon
give light to you by night;
but the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your God will be your glory.
²⁰ Your sun shall no more go down,
or your moon withdraw itself;
for the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your days of mourning shall be ended.

Matthew 5:9–20

⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵ No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore, whoever

breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Ephesians 5:5–14

⁵ Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient. ⁷ Therefore do not be associated with them. ⁸ For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light— ⁹ for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. ¹⁰ Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; ¹³ but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴ for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Sleeper, awake!

Rise from the dead,

and Christ will shine on you.”

Sermon Proper

Good morning. It’s great to be here and seeing you! This bandana mask I’m wearing has become my signature. When medical masks were unavailable, I bought a 24 pack of these. It was a bit weird walking into the police station for a vehicle inspection wearing it. And when I showed up to an ongoing appointment with a regular medical mask

on, the receptionists didn't recognize me. So, this is my signature mask. I mean, we got to have some fun with this COVID situation, right? Let's just admit it—it's been terrible! It's bad on so many different levels. We need some levity.

Wearing this bandana reminds me of my childhood days playing cops and robbers, good guys and bad guys. Those were the days when we had a clear sense of right and wrong, well, at least we thought we did. It was fun being the bad guy, but you could also be the bad good guy, like the Lone Ranger, or like Clint Eastwood roles in Westerns. Come to think of it, maybe it isn't so clear what is good and bad.

The notion of right and wrong really strikes at the core of what it means to be a human being. Even the worst of us—presuming we could determine who is the worst; let's draw straws—we all have a strong sense of justice; we are acutely aware when we are wronged or misunderstood. And when we see other persons wronged, it shocks and angers us. We have a conscience by which we live our lives and a code of conduct with which we judge others and how they live their lives. Humans are hard-wired for justice and when we see any perceived injustice, we rightly are outraged—police murders, violent protests, destruction of property, racial injustices—and two wrongs don't make it right, so we're stuck at an impasse.

But who owns the definition of justice? Who will decide between different versions of justice? We are prejudiced in our justice; we extend mercy to our own and judgment to others. But we must remember, as I've heard it said, "Justice is never about just us." We thus need to consider each other—friends and enemies, neighbors, and especially strangers. But because we have differing and competing views of justice, we need what C. S. Lewis argued for so well, an arbiter, a *tertium quid*, a third perspective to help adjudicate our rights and our wrongs.

Who has the authority to claim that definition? I would point us to Jesus, whose Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), if nothing else, is a Sermon on the Mountain of Righteousness. We'll turn to that

momentarily, but first, I've been struck by Isaiah's third vision in Chapter 60. In fact, it was my Facebook post on this passage that prompted Jessica LaGrone to ask me to preach this morning. I've not preached here for many years, so hold on to your seats, because I want to connect some dots across the testaments from Isaiah to Jesus to Paul about what it means to be God's people, especially in today's climate of COVID, just and unjust outrage, and political turmoil. It's a mess and we all know it. Brothers and sisters, we need to Shine now more than ever before.

Structurally, the Book of Isaiah builds to this Climax in this vision of Zion arising and shining with salvation, praise, the end of mourning, and God's presence fully experienced. But, Isaiah begins with an initial statement of the problem and solution way back in chapter 1. (PowerPoint slide content is provided in what follows.) There, Isaiah offers an initial blistering critique that God's people are rebellious and sinful (1:2–4) and are bearing the personal and social consequences of this (1:5–7); they have corrupt leaders (1:10), and they don't realize that their religious practices like sacrifices, prayers, etc., only hide the real extent of their spiritual poverty; despite their religiosity, the Lord is not listening to them (1:11–15). But right here, the text slows down with a battery of commands that outline the solution: 1) "stop doing wrong" (repentance); 2) "learn to do good" and then 3) "seek justice" specified as "defending the oppressed, taking up the cause of the fatherless, pleading the case of the widow" (1:16–17). STOP–LEARN–GROW, and later GLOW. Then, the Lord says, "Come, let's argue it out!" in which God promises that, despite their sins being crimson red, "they will be turned white as snow" (1:18); and this all concludes with a set of alternative possible responses in 1:19–20: ¹⁹ "If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; ²⁰ but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Here, Isaiah models sober, prophetic truth-telling and confrontation, a call for human response of repenting, learning what is right, doing justice, and God's promise of a solution to somehow undo the red stain of our sin. But then, there's a continued opportunity to either obey or to continue to rebel. He never forces us one way or the other. And God surprisingly invites us to argue it out with Him! No wonder Isaiah is the longest Book of the Bible (66 chapters!) apart from Psalms (150 chapters). Both Isaiah and the Psalms join with Deuteronomy as being the most quoted OT books in the NT—Isaiah and Psalms both plumb the depths of our struggle with Justice and God's making things right—what we call by the fancy word “theodicy.” Really, all of Scripture is about Theodicy—How is God righting the wrongs of the world, our world, and my world? Scripture reveals to us God's Theodicy, His way of making this right, and this centers in Jesus and the Gospel who teaches us to STOP–LEARN–GROW.

Now, Isaiah 1:8–9 introduces “Daughter Zion” and says that she is like a shelter, a hut, and is “a city under siege.” What is Zion? Well, Zion is a complex idea, sometimes referring to a physical location like Jerusalem, but then also Zion is the cosmic place from which God rules. The daughter of Zion is thought to be the city itself or its people. But I think particularly here, Daughter Zion represents the faithful remnant who are hunkered down, a city under siege. But, I'm guessing that Zion may evoke a certain movie series—maybe you've heard of it—called the Matrix where Zion is this underground place of refuge against the computer-generated virtual world above, a world literally powered by the life of blissfully ignorant human souls reduced to warm bodies in cocoon units. Too late for the spoiler alert.

Now, there is a powerful analogy here, because our world systems in which we live, move, and breathe are in fact, in many ways virtual, not really real. This COVID situation has in some real sense unmasked it. A pervasive deception is occurring. And we as people are influenced and plagued by underlying ideologies and hidden agendas and

worldviews that call for our complete attention, participation, and allegiance—and these ideologies and worldviews and personal beliefs may be quite at odds with God’s Kingdom in Jesus. It’s in fact for this reason that Paul in Romans 12:2 commands us not to be conformed to the pattern of this world but to be transformed by the renewal of our minds. (Slide content is provided below.)

Non-Conformity & Transformity (Rom 12:2 NRSV)

- Do not be [being] conformed to this world,
- but be [being] transformed by the renewing of your minds,
- so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

And the Greek command forms used here are in the present tense (okay, you should have known that I would comment on some Greek grammar!). What this implies is that there is an ongoing and pervasive need to stop being conformed, which is the default. In other words, if we do nothing intentionally contrary to this pervasive influence to conform, we will be conformed to this age, so powerful is it. **We need to STOP–Learn–Grow.**

In fact, a pervasive evil influence is continually the context of our mission and witness and Christian living. And, I think we’ve become deaf and dumb to it; our world has become so humanistic to think that “evil” is simply a construct to be merely educated out of us. But for believers, we should be constantly aware that evil is present in the Lord’s Prayer that comes to its climax as “Deliver us from the Evil One”—which sadly, we simply have been taught to say, “Deliver us from evil”—as in like moral evil. No, it’s much worse than that! Indeed, in the Lord’s High Priestly Prayer of John 17, at the very center of Jesus’s praying for his disciples is this statement: “Protect them from the Evil One,” and this prayer is structured as a chiasm. Notice the

immediate context of being in the world in mission, the Word (of God), truth, and a need for protection. (PowerPoint slide content is provided below.)

The Center of Jesus's High Priestly Prayer (John 17)

14 I have given them your **word** and the *world* has hated them,
for *they are not of the world any* more than I am *of the world*.

**15 My prayer is *not* that you take them *out of the world*
but that you protect them from the evil one.**

16 *They are not of the world*, even as I am *not of it*.

17 Sanctify them by the truth; your **word** is truth.

But, returning to the Matrix movies, I'm a Sci-fi guy. There's a John Carpenter Science Fiction movie, a B movie, that powerfully portrayed the pervasive, subtle messaging of sinister aliens that had taken over the world. In order to see this evil, however, one needed to wear special glasses to recognize them and their messaging. In fact, for the protagonist in the movie, it took an alley brawl with a guy who was trying to get him to wear the glasses. I mean, the fight lasted many minutes—reflective of the intensity of the struggle—but he finally puts on the glasses only to see the alien invasion and false subliminal messaging behind the glamorous, attractive billboards. Brother and Sisters, it's time to put on God's glasses; it's time to adopt God's view of things as revealed in Jesus, our political ruler.

As Isaiah continues, it is clear that the Lord expects justice and righteousness from His people, and it breaks his heart when they do not. For example, in 1:21, Isaiah says: "See how the faithful city has become a prostitute! She once was full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her— but now murderers!" The problem is WHOM we look to as our leaders. In Isaiah, it is a fundamental religious and political problem. Indeed, all of Scripture is so fundamentally political, and

thus it is not surprising that God has ultimately revealed himself as a Political Figure—a Messiah, a King—that we must not ignore since God’s message to us is that His Kingdom, His politics is what Jesus proclaimed to us. And, once again, let me ask it, who gets to define justice? And, who will lead God’s people?

Well, the Hebrew word “justice” (*mišpāt*) means to make right judgment in terms of having the right view of things, offering the appropriate judgment (punishment) to those injuring others, and rectifying a situation such that injured parties are vindicated and restored. That’s justice. Righteousness is closely related, but I’ll define that shortly. By tracing the words justice and righteousness across Isaiah, one realizes the nature and extent of the problem and God’s solution. It is a leadership problem! God offers restoration in 1:26–27: “²⁶ I will restore your leaders as in days of old, your rulers as at the beginning. Afterward you will be called the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City. ²⁷ Zion will be delivered with justice, her penitent ones with righteousness.” God expects justice; we need justice—it’s a match made in heaven. But, our human condition is such that, as we see throughout Isaiah, there is a cycle of sinning, consequences of sinning, prophetic confrontation, and God’s solutions offered.

Now this cycle culminates in Isaiah 59 right before the clear vision of Zion arising and shining in Isaiah 60. So, in 59:1–15 we find a litany of sins that God sees and He concludes there is no “justice” (59:15b). Also, there is no appropriate leader or an “intercessor,” a mediator (59:16a). So, in response to this dilemma in 59:16b, Isaiah indicates that it is God’s arm, i.e., the Messiah, that brings salvation and offers loving kindness. Moreover, this arm wears “the breastplate of righteousness” and “the helmet of salvation”—pieces of metaphorical armor that the Apostle Paul urges believers to wear in several different places (Romans 13:12; Ephesians 6:10–17; 1 Thessalonians 5:8). These are pieces of God’s Messianic armor, tried and true. Then, concluding Isaiah 59, the Lord describes his covenant solution: “The Redeemer

will come to Zion, to those of Jacob who repent of their sins. My Spirit who is on you will not depart from you and words that I have put in your mouth will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children, and on the lips of their descendants—from this time on and forever, says the Lord.” Folks, Paul quotes these verses in Romans 11:26–27. This is God’s solution to our problems; this Redeemer is none other than Jesus; He is God’s light and glory that allows Zion to Rise ‘n’ Shine. By gazing at Him, we are being transformed into greater and greater glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). **It’s time for us, brothers and sisters, to Grow and Glow.**

Today, now, in the USA but also across the globe, we are in a climate where we expect our GOVERNMENT(s) to be the solution to our problems; but, governmental systems—be they capitalism, socialism, Marxism, anarchy, or any other; or any instantiations of political parties be they democrat, republican, libertarian, or progressive—are part of the problem, and inasmuch as we look to them as solutions, we are deceived and distracted from God’s Solution. God’s Solution then and now comes to us in the form of a humble servant, “the shoot from the stump of Jesse” upon whom the Spirit will rest (Isaiah 11:1–2). He will delight in the fear of the Lord; He will not judge “on appearance,” nor knee jerk react simply by what he “hears” (11:3) but rather “with righteousness he will judge/give judgment for the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth” (11:4). Again, we see the centrality of Justice and Righteousness. Indeed as 9:6–7 say, “the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.” This Anointed Leader comes to us as a Suffering Servant in the person of Jesus. He is the King of God’s people; He brings with Him God’s Kingdom; He sets the standard of justice and righteousness, and He casts the vision of what it means to be God’s people in the world, even our world, especially in our world right now! Jesus

reveals that God’s kingdom work stands above from, apart from any human political solution! So, why would we fight with brother and sister over earthly politics when we ought to be aligned MOST fundamentally to a different politics?

You see, right now, Jesus and His outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our human space is mobilizing a people to embody the vision of Zion now, the letting of God’s Kingdom come now as we pray as the Lord taught us, “Let Your kingdom come, Let Your will become on earth as it is in heaven.” We are members of a “Jerusalem above that is Free,” as Paul says in Galatians 4:26, and “we have come” (which is a Perfect Tense verb in Greek indicating something attained with ongoing effects now)—and I continue quoting here, “to Mount Zion, to the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,” as the author of Hebrews says in 12:22. This is our governing reality; this is our vision. It counters the common adage, perhaps you’ve heard it, “you’re so heavenly minded that you’re no earthly good”; actually, it’s just the opposite: “we’re so heavenly minded that we are able to do earthly good!”

Now, Jesus prepares his followers to be Zion in the Sermon on the Mount as he laid out his vision of righteousness. The Sermon features righteousness in general statements. (PowerPoint slide content is provided below.)

The Sermon of Mt. Righteousness in Matthew

- 5:20 For I tell you, unless your **righteousness** exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
- 6:1 Beware of practicing your **righteousness** before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.
- 6:33 But strive first for the kingdom of God and his **righteousness** ...

- 7:12 **In everything** do to others as you would have them do to you; for **this is the law and the prophets**. [this is the final statement on righteousness]
- **Righteousness** is “rightly relating to one another,” which may involve rebuke, mercy, love, compassion, etc.

It's quite unfortunate that we have debated whether “righteousness” is simply imputed as a verdict or imparted as a virtue. All along, we've failed to recognize that “righteousness” is fundamentally a social-ethical concept that speaks to morally upright behavior. The term that we often see translated as “righteousness” is the same word that the Greek thinkers used in political discourse for “justice,” one of their four cardinal virtues and a critical formative goal of society to produce virtuous, flourishing citizens. So, inherently, the concepts “righteousness” and “justice” are ethical and relational, not just vertically, as in our relationship with God, but horizontally in relating to one another as a public virtue. In fact, I prefer to understand righteousness as signifying “rightly relating” (to one another). God's righteousness is revealed in the Gospel, by which is meant that not only does God uphold and maintain just standards and condemn sin as sin, but God also provides Jesus as a way forward to forgive us AND to show us a better way to live in the world. So, in the Gospel both God's justice (maintaining right standards) and righteousness (rightly relating to his Creation) are revealed.

So, it is especially fitting that Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes. (PowerPoint content is provided below.)

The Beatitudes (Matt 5)

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit ...

⁴ “Blessed are those who mourn ...

⁵ “Blessed are the meek ...

⁶ “Blessed are those who hunger/thirst for righteousness ...

⁷ “Blessed are the merciful ...

⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart ...

⁹ “Blessed are the **peacemakers** ...

¹⁰ “Blessed are those who are **persecuted for righteousness’**
sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

...

¹² Rejoice and be glad ... for in the same way they persecuted **the prophets** who were before you.

Now, I used to approach these Beatitudes as a pick and choose smorgasbord of virtues; but, in fact, they build progressively and climactically to peacemaking and persecution. In fact, you need poverty of spirit (humility), mourning over sin, meekness, thirsting for righteousness, mercy and purity for the climactic calling and virtue of peacemaking. Why? Well, peacemaking is trying to reconcile opposing parties, people at odds with themselves and with God. But, this is why the Beatitudes move to being persecuted, because peacemaking will necessarily involve truth-telling, and calling out the wrongs in each party—and, people often do not like that, and so, Jesus indicates that his disciples should expect to be persecuted for righteousness’ sake like the prophets before them. And so, we are sober; we need to be wise as serpents, yet innocent as doves. We are light to the world. (PowerPoint slide content is provided below.)

Being the Light for the World (Matt 5:14–17)

- ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵ No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.

- Our Purpose: ¹⁶ In the same way, **let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.**
- Jesus's Purpose: ¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill [them].

And right here, Jesus likens his followers to a city sitting on a hill for all to see, the daughter Zion present in the world. And it is precisely here in the Sermon of Mount Righteousness that our human calling and purpose to be Light in the World in order to lead people to see and to praise God (5:16) is placed right next to Jesus's purpose of coming to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (5:17) and to urge us to embody a surpassing righteousness (5:20), a way of rightly relating with one another that is true, honest, humble, courageous, and full of love and captivated by God's vision of justice and righteousness. And folks, we need to shine right now—whether it's the ER nurse working extra shifts and then helping clean up after riots in downtown Atlanta; or the single mother raising her daughters and helping them find godly husbands; or the sex-addiction counselor helping people overcome their addictions; or the police chaplain loving on these public servants; or the one joining in protests seeking a more just society. We all need to SHINE where we find ourselves.

In closing, allow me one more connection from Isaiah through Jesus to Paul. Paul understood the need for us to wake up, like in the Matrix movies, to come out of our sleep and so he says, and let us listen to the Word: ⁶⁸ For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light— ⁹ for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. ¹⁰ Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; ¹³ but everything exposed by the light

becomes visible,¹⁴ for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” I love this last verse that is inspired by Isaiah. Christ shines on us so that we can shine as light in the World.

And so, brothers and sisters, in this time of chaos and confusion, you see, we have a higher citizenship, a greater allegiance, a better political Leader in Jesus who gazes down with justice and love upon us. He has become one of us—teaching us how to rightly relate to one another—to **Stop, Learn, Grow, and Glow**. And he wants and hopes and even prays in John 17 that we would live differently in this world in alignment with Truth and Justice, to live beautifully, graciously, humbly, courageously, and faithfully. As much as we may enjoy to fight and to be right, we must always look to Jesus who is God’s *tertium quid*, God’s adjudicating perspective for us. And he’s prepared the way and continues to be our *tertium quid*, showing us the way to do this so that our human wills and his divine will come together as a light for the world to see.

That’s the invitation of this table prepared for us this morning, a chance for us to see the light and be the light. Christ is shining on us at this very moment; it’s time to Arise ‘n’ Shine, Daughter Zion, Your Messiah has come! Amen

My Journey with Inductive Bible Study

Joseph R. Dongell

Asbury Theological Seminary

joe.dongell@asburyseminary.edu

As with everything else, the backstory of my journey with IBS should not be overlooked. A natural place to begin is with my parents, Herbert and Virginia (Swauger) Dongell, who modeled before me a deep reverence and love for Scripture. Their Bibles were well-worn, filled with their own handwritten comments and with dates marking how specific passages had ministered to their souls on a particular day. And their daily searching of Scripture led into their daily prayer, usually alone behind the closed bedroom door, but loud enough to be heard, though not understood, by us children. And so the message came through to me from the very beginning, without much preaching at me, that the prayerful study of Scripture was the primary foundation of vibrant Christian life and ministry.

There was never any idea of competition between genuine piety and academic study. Both of my parents were the products of Houghton College, and both counted among their dearest mentors teachers who lived out a union between the two. How could it be otherwise if God was the God of all truth? My father in particular, who would add several academic degrees behind his name and serve as biblical studies professor at two Christian colleges, was a precious example of one with

a heart that was humble and a mind that was eager to learn. I remember that he often preached in camp meetings and revival services right out of his Greek New Testament, though he never drew attention to it. On the coffee table beside his easy chair where he had his daily devotions were books on prayer and Christian holiness, mixed in with others on NT textual criticism or archaeology. Largely because of my parents, I never had to figure out how to unite the spiritual quest with the intellectual quest as a growing disciple.

Another part of my inheritance, perhaps drawn more from my grandparents, was a love of analysis, of pressing through to understand how things worked underneath it all. From an early age, I was fascinated with machinery and took apart more contraptions, motors, and devices than I ever succeeded in putting back together! But I wanted to see what made them “tick.” Gaining traction alongside this curiosity were two other loves that began maturing during my high school years: a love for chemistry and a love for grammar. Both of these fields drew me deeper into trying to understand how systems worked and how they had power to explain the phenomena of the real world.

I began college as a chemistry major, happily contemplating a career in that field. But as I worked one evening in the lab, a strange but clear awareness settled on me. Though I heard no words, these words were impressed so clearly on my mind that I have remembered them distinctly for over forty-five years: “Chemistry is wonderful, but there is something far more wonderful than chemistry!” I knew this had to be “the Lord’s work.” This constituted my call to ministry, a call that was clear though in no way defined. I knew I was called, but it would take years to discern what form my ministry should take.

What was clear was my growing hunger for Scripture. I changed my major, signing up for Greek and Bible courses. Here I must mention the professor (at Central Wesleyan College, now Southern Wesleyan University, in Central, SC) who opened my eyes to the wonder and joy of studying Scripture, Marling Elliott. The hallmarks of his

teaching were these: first, a profound humility that allowed him frequently to say, “I don’t know.” I had thought that a Bible professor should already know everything! Wasn’t that how they earned their status? Didn’t their jobs consist essentially of informing their listeners of what they themselves knew? But with Prof. Elliott, his oft-repeated “I don’t know” meant that he had let go of this notion, had discovered how much we really didn’t know about Scripture, and was now interested in inviting us students into a real adventure of serious research and discovery. I came to see that few discoveries can be made without first admitting one’s ignorance. Prof. Elliott encouraged me toward that admission, helping me then to open the door to experiencing the amazing freedom rising from it.

The second and third hallmarks of Elliott’s teaching really belong together, and created in me a perfect receptivity for IBS as I would later encounter it. On one hand, Elliott was a master of asking questions of the biblical text because, on the other hand, he was also a master of observing the biblical text. As a young college student I was amazed at how regularly his patient, thoughtful, and careful work with texts would yield up rich insights that had eluded us. Most of these insights were harvested right from the texts themselves, right from under our noses, though we hadn’t seen them in our haste and carelessness. It was from Elliott that I learned to “read the text,” then to “read it again,” then to “read it again.”

When I arrived at Asbury Seminary in the Fall of 1978, my passion for pressing ahead in biblical studies suggested to my advisor that I petition to enter (what was then called) the “Specialized Curriculum.” This would allow me to set aside certain courses in the “practical disciplines” in order to spend those hours more directly in biblical studies. But I discovered, to my mild consternation, that I would still be required to take several “EB” courses. “What? English Bible?” I surely didn’t succeed at hiding my disappointment over this affront. I had taken at least six Greek courses in college, had purchased and used all

of the (then-available) advanced Greek grammars, and had read several key texts on exegetical method. To now be required to take “English Bible” felt like a giant step backward in my educational journey, a regrettable waste of time and money.

And so in early September of 1978, I went “quite unwillingly” (here I intend a tongue-in-cheek allusion to Wesley’s Aldersgate experience!) to a morning “English Bible” course taught by Robert Traina. I had heard of him a short time earlier and was aware only that he had written a book on Bible study method. As I recall, the first several weeks of “Mark EB” started a bit slowly for me, as I was still captive to my faulty expectations about what “EB” was all about. But by the third or fourth week, I began to realize that a new and unexpected world was opening before me.

Traina was a gifted and enthusiastic teacher, highly skilled at laying out both content and method with remarkable speed and depth. But what began to capture me more than those traits was the nature of the method he was proposing, for three specific reasons. First, the thoroughness and fulness of the method helped me envision as never before the whole movement from beginning to end that included (at least in principle) all of the other exegetical practices, theological explorations, and applicational strategies that I had already been learning to value. I began to see how and where to plug in (and integrate) all sorts of matters I knew to be important but had not yet incorporated into my own Bible study approach. I’m not sure that any of my assignments for Traina in any of my three seminary classes with him ever achieved this full synthesis, but the seeds were sown, and the ideal was projected that would draw me forward toward it.

Second, it was through Traina that the idea of “books-as-wholes” really took hold. Now I’m sure that I had already known that each of the books of the Bible likely had its own message, its own outline, and its own way of beginning and ending. Every study Bible offers such analysis. But Traina pushed far beyond these generalities, pressing us

to determine *much more exactly and precisely*, just how the various portions of a book interacted with each other to create the finished whole. According to the thoroughness of his method, we were required to demarcate and name the textual units in their ascending (and descending) hierarchies and to specify the structural relationships that bound them together.

And in mentioning structural relationships, I arrive at the third distinct contribution that Traina made to my thinking. My world had been focused on grammatical structure, on the relationships binding words and phrases to each other to form clauses and sentences. And while I was faintly aware of larger textual structures, it was through Traina that I saw more clearly this higher level of textual organization (Nida called them “Secondary Semantic Configurations”) that brought order and meaning to the inter-relationships between various units of text (including, but also *larger than* the clause and the sentence). Through Traina’s “Structural Laws,” I was introduced to a set of relationships operating between sentences, paragraphs, segments, sections, and so on. What a boon that was to my understanding of how biblical texts “worked”!

By the time my seminary education was coming to an end, I had become keenly aware that Robert Traina had changed my outlook on Bible study forever and had equipped me in ways I could never have acquired otherwise. The three courses I took from him (Mark, Romans, Pentateuch) so deeply impacted me that I determined to seek him out on the day of my graduation (after all grades had been turned in and my diploma had been granted!) to tell him personally that he was among the three most influential mentors of my seminary career. I’m sure that Traina was accustomed to receiving that sort of accolade from students, but for students like me, it felt almost like a moral imperative to express directly to him my gratitude for his ministry to me.

Now every good student must retain a degree of independence in thinking, in curiosity, and in unwillingness to accept things simply on

the authority of even our worthiest teachers (to paraphrase the words of another mentor of mine, Bob Lyon). And so I did find myself a bit suspicious about those “Structural Laws” that Traina had taught us. Yes, I did find them intuitively convincing and pragmatically effective in textual analysis. But doubt arose in my mind in the form of three questions that plagued me. First, “Laws? Says who?” The very terminology (of a “law”) was off-putting to me as if a conference of authoritative scholars had been convened somewhere and had passed binding legislation on the rest of us that named these relationships as “laws.” Such a conference, of course, had never happened!

Second, my analytical mind kept asking, “How many ‘laws’ are there? Perhaps there existed more than those listed by Traina.” With this question, I was essentially asking whether the set of laws was bounded. If the set was bounded, why was it bounded? And if it was not bounded, how many other ‘laws’ might there be beyond the canon we had been taught?

Third, I was dissatisfied with Traina’s appeal to the famous literary/art critic, John Ruskin, as a sufficient authority for identifying and interpreting these “Structural Laws.” Ruskin had seen in the paintings of skilled artists certain principles of organization at work in, say, a landscape scene. The thoughtful observer could perhaps detect repetition, or radiation, or contrast, or curvatures that organized various visual elements into a pleasing whole. Taking his cue from such visual strategies of organization, Ruskin proposed that similar organizational strategies were at work in literary texts.

This transference from visual art to literary texts was not convincing to me. Perhaps my scientific background in chemistry and my perennial love of machines were restricting my appreciation of Ruskin, an artistic type. But here’s where Traina’s wife, Jane, indirectly supplied the missing warrant! Jane reigned as the queen of the seminary bookstore for years. Many will remember her fondly for managing the sprawling collection of required texts and books relevant to the various

disciplines comprising seminary education. That larger inventory gave us students the opportunity to browse, discover titles that would not likely be found in a course bibliography or even in our library.

One day when browsing there, I happened upon a book whose title immediately seized my attention: *The Thread of Discourse*, by Robert Longacre. As I leafed through it, I came to its 5th chapter, entitled Rhetorical Predicates. Though this terminology was completely foreign to me, the substance of the chapter turned out to follow rather closely the list of structural laws Traina had taught us. I was both shocked and pleased to learn that linguists like Longacre had been working for some time at discerning the strategies that speakers and writers use to organize the successively higher levels of discourse beyond the grammar of the clause/sentence. I felt like the proverbial child in a candy shop! Through Longacre's bibliography and a few phone calls placed to some of these explorers, I was able to assemble a shelf of works written by scholars (loosely called Discourse Analysts) that fed my curiosity and understanding of how "texts" are in fact something like "textiles," whole cloths that are united by specific kinds of threads. It was not so much that I had overthrown Ruskin's insights, but that I had discovered a more convincing different basis for, and an analysis of, the structural laws I had been taught.

Through these Discourse Analysts, three key convictions took shape: First, these structural relationships were cross-cultural, cross-temporal, and cross-generic. The inductive work of many linguists examining all sorts of texts convincingly persuaded me that discourse (i.e., whether oral or written products) of all types, from all cultures, and across the ages is constructed of materials bound together by means of these relationships, these logical connections. Second, these structural relationships are surprisingly limited in number (though allowance needs to be made for their exact number, given that some can be joined together or perhaps subdivided). And the limitation in number is due, not to an arbitrary decision by an authoritarian cadre of

legislators, but by the nature of the human mind and the limited number of logical maneuvers constituting human thought. (Here I was also fed by the work of Stephen Pinker, evolutionary cognitive psychologist.) And if these things are true, then (third) our use of these relationships to analyze biblical texts is not a modern imposition upon Sacred Scripture, but a valid tool, just as useful and appropriate for interpreting the Bible well as is (sentence/clause) grammar itself. These convictions created the degree of confidence I needed to forge ahead along these lines without any lingering doubts about them.

When in the providence of God I was admitted in 1986 into the doctoral program at Union Theological Seminary (in Virginia), my hopes were already primed for writing a dissertation that would allow me to perform a serious textual analysis upon a biblical book in light of Discourse Analysis and the structural relationships that were common to it and my underlying instruction from Traina. Again in the providence of God (I am convinced), I was blessed in specific ways by two scholars who had a direct hand in making this dream possible. The first is David Bauer, who had completed his own dissertation at the same institution just a few years earlier. Especially significant to me was that Bauer had written his dissertation (on the book of Matthew) employing the structural laws as presented by Traina to analyze the literary structure of that Gospel, the very “laws” that I had now come to fully embrace.

But what made it possible for me to follow Bauer’s lead was the role that Jack Dean Kingsbury played for both of us. Kingsbury, a world-class Matthean scholar who had cut his teeth on Redaction Criticism, had shifted to Narrative Criticism as the primary lens through which he would analyze all three Synoptic Gospels. Bauer had become one of Kingsbury’s most important proteges, just as Bauer had earlier become Traina’s most important protégé. Kingsbury’s commitment to narrational analysis was nicely compatible with Bauer’s approach to textual analysis as inherited largely from Traina. And so when I stepped

on Union's campus in the fall of 1986, Kingsbury rather smoothly adopted me as his advisee, and (eventually) as his mentoree when I would undertake to write my own dissertation analyzing the literary structure of Luke's Gospel. Though Bauer identified himself more explicitly within Narrative Criticism and I more within Discourse Analysis, the degree of methodological overlap between us was huge, given that we both were appealing fundamentally to the structural relationships/laws that Traina had taught us.

I was completely surprised by another delightful providence in being invited to join the Biblical Studies faculty at Asbury Theological Seminary in December of 1988. My title (Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies) was broad enough to allow me to teach in any department of the Division of Biblical Studies (now School of Biblical Interpretation), but my assigned courses through the years have largely been in the Department of Inductive Bible Study. For over 30 years now, I have been privileged to teach (in IBS format) the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel of John, the Epistle to the Romans, a collection of smaller Pauline Epistles (Gal., Eph., Phil., Col.), and the Pentateuch. As every teacher will quickly report, there's no more potent way of learning a subject well than by teaching it. And so my own insight into these biblical books, along with my own skill in presenting and practicing IBS methodology, have grown exponentially over these three decades. Perhaps here I should voice my deep appreciation to my students over the years whose presence in my classrooms supplied me not only with strong motivation to teach well but with substantial input to my own thinking. Their work (submitted in the form of assignments) and their questions (both during and after class sessions) were something like upper and lower millstones that ground the grain of my thoughts into a more refined and valuable product over the years.

I'm glad I was not recruited to serve as a lone wolf in this teaching role. Rather, I was placed within a department (IBS) alongside David Bauer and David Thompson, amazingly talented and insightful

practitioners of the IBS method. I can only wish others the rare privilege of being teamed with colleagues (mentors, to a large degree) sharing the same outlook, supporting each other in spirit, and working together toward improving their common craft. [In recent years following the retirement of (the late) David Thompson, Michael Matlock has been added to our ranks and enriches our joint mission in his own important ways.] Few things are more invigorating than hashing out matters of theology, methodology, and pedagogy with fellow scholars aimed in the same general direction. Though we made every effort to “dance together” in our teaching approaches so as to enable students to see our common commitments, there was at the same time appropriate freedom to adjust and adapt the “received” approach to reflect certain of our individual interests and convictions.

I will resist the temptation of descending into greater detail about any phase of the story I’ve just sketched out. These broad strokes should be sufficient, I hope, for communicating my leading thought, that at every step along the way I have been the recipient of rich, diverse, gracious divine providence. The disposition with which I was born, the heritage and modeling of my parents and grandparents, vitally important intersections with key books and resources, educational institutions that provided settings conducive to learning, mentors who gave gifts of inestimable value, and colleagues who were the “iron sharpening iron” in my life—all of these have beautifully conspired to shape to my ministry and calling as a teacher of the Bible, largely through the avenue of Inductive Bible Study. It should be evident that I fervently hope that many more students and teachers will be raised up who both value and advance this approach—which has so deeply blessed me—for studying the Scripture and serving the church.



First Fruits
THE ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

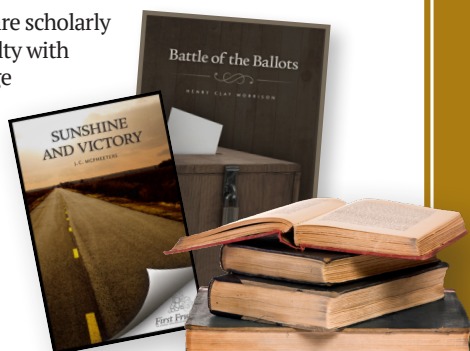
About First Fruits Press

Under the auspices of B.L. Fisher Library, First Fruits Press is an online publishing arm of Asbury Theological Seminary. The goal is to make academic material freely available to scholars worldwide, and to share rare and valuable resources that would not otherwise be available for research. First Fruits publishes in five distinct areas: heritage materials, academic books, papers, books, and journals.

In the Journals section, back issues of *The Asbury Journal* will be digitized and so made available to a global audience. At the same time, we are excited to be working with several faculty members on developing professional, peer-reviewed, online journals that would be made freely available.

Much of this endeavor is made possible by the recent gift of the Kabis III scanner, one of the best available. The scanner can produce more than 2,900 pages an hour and features a special book cradle that is specifically designed to protect rare and fragile materials. The materials it produces will be available in ebook format, easy to download and search.

First Fruits Press will enable the library to share scholarly resources throughout the world, provide faculty with a platform to share their own work and engage scholars without the difficulties often encountered by print publishing. All the material will be freely available for online users, while those who wish to purchase a print copy for their libraries will be able to do so. First Fruits Press is just one way the B. L. Fisher Library is fulfilling the global vision of Asbury Theological Seminary to spread scriptural holiness throughout the world.



asbury.to/firstfruits



ASBURY
theological
SEMINARY

asburyseminary.edu
800.2ASBURY