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A Canonical-Critical Study of Selected Traditions in the Book of Joel

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ABSTRACT

The book of Joel presents a myriad of problems to the honest interpreter. For example, the inability to date firmly the book makes it exceedingly difficult to find an original meaning for the work. In addition, the failure of scholars to come to a consensus on the connection between the locust plague and the Day of Yahweh theme in the book exacerbates the interpretive problems further. This dissertation is an attempt to elucidate the meaning of the book of Joel by focusing on the Day of Yahweh and its sub-themes in the book via the methodology of canonical criticism.

Canonical criticism claims to offer a way out of the single original meaning impasse in interpreting a text. Brevard Childs solves the single meaning dilemma by transferring the authoritative meaning to the canonical meaning of the final form of the text as shaped and passed on by the believing community. James Sanders rejects any single meaning in the tradition process as normative and wants to catalog all the meanings and the hermeneutical process each believing community used to arrive at each meaning. When Sanders's method is applied to several stages

of the book of Joel, it reveals a developing understanding of the Day of Yahweh in Joel by the believing communities from preexilic through intertestamental times. The Day changed from one of covenant curses (exemplified by the locust plague) to an eschatological Day when a teacher of righteousness would precede the apocalyptic salvation of Judah.

Although the canonical-critical method offers some fresh understanding of Joel by focusing on canonical readings, it does not solve the hermeneutical dilemma because it is dependent on historical-critical method as well for its readings of the book. Further, Sanders's method merely replaces the difficulty of finding the original meaning of a text with the problem of choosing between several hypothetical meanings of a text.

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INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Increasingly during the last two decades, questions
about the formation, form and function of the canon have
been raised in Old Testament scholarship.[1] This renewed
interest in canon arose primarily for hermeneutical reasons,
as one attempt to resolve issues of theological significance
and authority left unresolved by historical-critical
approaches to the Bible.[2] The implicit hermeneutics of the
historical-critical method had locked the Bible in antiquity
by emphasizing the recovery of original historical meanings.
Historical criticism ignored later meanings resident in the
final canonical form of a text as received and shaped by a
later believing community. This approach did little to
provide meaning for the modern believing community.[3]
Historical-critical methodology was seen as unable to bridge
the gap between the horizons of meaning. In addition,

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[1]The publication of Childs's _Biblical Theology in
Crisis_ (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970) seems to have
been a primary catalyst.

[2]James A. Sanders, _Canon and Community: A Guide to
Canonical Criticism_, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, Old
Testament Series, ed. Gene M. Tucker (Philadelphia: Fortress
Press, 1984), ix.

[3]Ibid., 3.

critical scholarship had defined canon as a list of sacred books arrived at via ecclesiastical decision without addressing the significance of the term for the development of the religious literature so defined.[4]

Attempts to reopen the question of canon arose on several fronts. First, certain scholars expressed dissatisfaction with the nineteenth century view which saw the Jewish canon as simply the product of an external ecclesiastical decision.[5] They saw the canon as a worthwhile subject for historical investigation.[6] Second, attempts were made to broaden the definition of canon beyond a list of sacred books validated by ecclesiastical authority. The attempt focused on the process through which sacred traditions became authoritative scriptures. Canon was envisioned as the result of a long historical process and not simply the result of a time-conditioned decision by religious authorities.

Brevard Childs and James Sanders, in particular, have focused their work on the historical and theological forces

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[4]George W. Coats and Burke O. Long eds., Canon and Authority (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), x-xi.

[5]The older view was exemplified by Julius Wellhausen's Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel (Edinburgh: Black, 1885).

[6]An example is Joseph Blenkinsopp, Prophecy and Canon: A Contribution to the Study of Jewish Origins (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1977).

behind the canonical process.[7] The canonical process is seen as the collection, selection, interpretive sifting, and application of traditions which produced the final body of writings designated as the Jewish canon or Old Testament. For them the concept of canon was necessary to adequately deal with the religious nature of the Jewish literature found in the Hebrew Bible.

The work of James Sanders represents one developed canonical critical approach which he designates "canonical criticism."[8] Sanders sees the history of the canon as a constant hermeneutical activity extending throughout the history of ancient Israel. His definition of canon entails the believing community's attempt to retain its identity in the light of earlier authoritative traditions which are constantly reinterpreted as the community's historical conditions change.[9]

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[7]Brevard Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979); Sanders, Canon and Community.

[8]Sanders, Torah and Canon (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), xv; idem, Canon and Community, 21.

[9]Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume, s.v. "Hermeneutics," by James A. Sanders: "The canon includes the process whereby early authoritative traditions encountered ancient cultural challenges, were rendered adaptable to those challenges, and thus themselves were formed and re-formed according to the needs of the believing communities. (It was in this process, e.g., that ancient Near Eastern wisdom was adapted into biblical literature). That process itself is as canonical as the traditions which emerged out of it."

Sanders's canonical criticism focuses on two areas.
The first area is canonical process and the second canonical
hermeneutics. The canonical process stresses the function
of canon and the process by which canon was formed in
ancient Israel. This process was not limited to the final
form, but involved how the canon was shaped from earliest
times when repetition of a tradition began because the
believing community thought it was valuable.[10]

Canonical hermeneutics involves analyzing the
tradition/text taken up by a biblical author or editor to
discover how it was resignified (reused and given new
meaning) to apply to the community's current sociological
context or setting.[11] The canonical-critical enterprise

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[10]Sanders, From Sacred Story to Sacred Text
(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 83. For Sanders the
continual shaping of the canon and the hermeneutics involved
in the process are the focal point of the canonical process,
rather than normative trajectories compressed in a final
canonical text. Sanders sees the hermeneutics of the
biblical tradents as providing canonical parameters for
modern interpretation of the Bible (Sanders, Canon and
Community, 78). This view is contra Brevard Childs's
portrayal of the canonical process as involving continual
critical evaluation of the received tradition by the
believing community toward theological goals. For Childs,
it is the content in the final canonical form of the
traditions lying between the rich processes of precanonical
and postcanonical developments, which functions normatively
for the church. Childs, Old Testament Theology in a
Canonical Context (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 11;
See also Coats, Canon and Authority, xii.

[11]Sanders, Canon and Community, 22, concerning
resignification states, "Repetition of a community value in
a context other than of its 'original' provenance (the main
stress of biblical criticism until recently) introduces the
possibility, some would say the necessity, of
resignification of that value to some limited extent. One

is thus both diachronic and synchronic. Canonical

hermeneutics also makes use of comparative midrash in the

interpretive process. The study of midrash in the Old

Testament includes how a psalmist or prophet uses an earlier

Torah or prophetic tradition.[12] In other words, how did

they interpret (read) the earlier tradition? Extending the

results of traditio-historical study, canonical criticism

asks what the function or authority was of the ancient ·

tradition in the context where it was cited.[13] What

authority did the tradition possess for the community? The

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may have been able to repeat the value (probably literary in oral form) 'accurately' meaning in this instance verbatim, but the very fact that the later context involved different ears, questions and concerns means the high likelihood that a somewhat different meaning was derived from rereading the text."

[12]Sanders, Torah and Canon, xiv, on the definition of midrash Sanders states, "it at least means the function of an ancient or canonical tradition in the ongoing life of the community which preserves those traditions and in some sense finds its identity in them. When one studies how an ancient tradition functions in relation to the needs of the community, one is studying midrash. Any definition of midrash which limits its scope to the citation and use of an actual biblical passage is deficient. The more common and well known a biblical concept was, the less likely the community was to cite it in its final written form and the more likely they were to assume the congregation or community would know it and its canonical authority." Elsewhere Sanders writes, "Comparative midrash attempts to ferret out all passages in the Bible and, of course, the later literature, in which an earlier tradition is called upon." Canon and Community, 26.

[13]Sanders, Torah and Canon, xvii. For example, Amos cited the Exodus and conquest of Canaan near the end of his address in Amos 2:10. The canonical critic asks how he uses it and applies it. What were his hermeneutical rules? What was the tradition's authority?

assumption of canonical criticism is that the method of midrash began in early Judaism within the exilic and postexilic biblical materials and arose out of a period of intense canonical process following the destruction of the state of Judah and the resultant Babylonian captivity.[14]

This study will focus on the application of canonical criticism to selected traditions/themes found within the book of Joel to test the usefulness of the canonical critical method for fresh interpretation of the book of Joel and for uncovering the unrecorded intrabiblical hermeneutics in the biblical literature.[15] The study will endeavor to ascertain how the later believing community used the earlier canonical (authoritative) traditions to adapt to the needs of a later life setting.

Goals of the Study

The ensuing chapters involve a canonical-critical examination of selected traditions/themes in the book of Joel. The Hebrew text of Joel is the point of departure for study. The study encompasses selected traditions used in

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[14]On the origins of midrash in the Old Testament see Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplemental Volume, s.v. "Midrash," by Merrill P. Miller; also "Interpretation, History of," by J. Weingreen in the same volume; G. W. Vermes, "Bible and Midrash: Early OT Exegesis," Cambridge History of the Bible, vol. 1, gen. eds., P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1970), 199-231.

[15]Sanders, Canon and Community, 46: "The true shape of the Bible as canon consists of its unrecorded hermeneutics which lie between the lines of most of its literature."

the book of Joel and is in no way intended to be exhaustive. The dissertation will explore the function of the Day of Yahweh (Joel 1:15; 2:1-2, 10-11; 4:14).[16] In addition, the covenant curses (locusts, drought and invasion) as harbingers or evidences of the Day of Yahweh will be explored. The curses and their effects are detailed in chapters 1:1 through 2:17. The function of the restoration of covenant blessings (2:18-27) will also be a focal point of the study. Another focal point will be the pouring out of Yahweh's Spirit (3:1-5). Finally, the oracles against the nations in chapter 4 will be examined.

The above traditions reflect major emphases of the book of Joel.[17] The Day of Yahweh was selected because it is the central theme of the book and binds the book together.[18] Subsumed under this theme, the three curses are the main concern of the first major section of the book.[19] Still under the rubric of the Day of Yahweh are

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[16]All further references to Joel in the body and footnotes of this paper will reflect the Hebrew versification unless otherwise noted.

[17]The traditions proposed for study reflect the major emphases of the book form-critically divided. H. W. Wolff, Joel and Amos, trans. Waldemar Janzen, et al., Hermeneia, ed. Frank Moore Cross, et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 9, connects the first half of the book with a lament (1:2-2:17), and the second half with divine oracles in answer to the lament (2:18-4:21).

[18]Leslie C. Allen, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 36.

[19]Wolff, Joel and Amos, 41-43.

the major concerns in the second half of the book including

the restoration of material covenant blessings, the pouring

out of Yahweh's Spirit, and the judgement of the nations via

the Holy War oracle.[20]

A number of questions will be put to the traditions

selected for study. First, what are the antecedents to the

traditions used in the book of Joel? In particular,

possible canonical (authoritative) antecedents will be

explored. Second, how do these earlier canonical traditions

function within the book of Joel? What authority is assumed

for earlier tradition in the canonical shape of the book?

In addition, what are the canonical hermeneutics at work in

the book? Are the traditions totally transformed in their

reinterpretation by the believing community or is there a

normative process at work in the growth of the book which

limits the range of resignification and application of the

earlier traditions by the believing community?[21] Third,

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[20]Ibid., 11, mentions three main tradition complexes which have influenced the language of Joel. They are the Day of Yahweh prophecies (Zeph. 1-2; Isa. 13; Ezek. 30; Obad., and Mal. 3), the prophetic oracles against the nations (Jer. 46, 49-51; Ezek. 29-32, 35), and the prophecies concerning the enemy from the North (Jer. 4-6; Ezek. 38-39). He also notes the influence of the Deuteronomic-Deuteronomistic curse oracles (Dtn. 28:27, 33, 38, 49-51).

[21]Cf. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, 76, where he points out that the canonical approach insists that the final shape of the text reflects a critical judgement by the believing community on how the earlier tradition should be understood. He appears to see a normative trajectory within the growth of the tradition. This view is contra Sanders, Canon and Community, 67, who

does the resignification of authoritative tradition in the

book of Joel provide any clues as to why it was included in

the Book of the Twelve in its particular order? Is there a

thematic interest involved in Joel's placement in the Book

of the Twelve?[22]

It is in response to James A. Sanders's call for more

work on the function of canonical figures, traditions,

texts, and ideas that the present work is attempted.[23]

The methodology used reflects Sanders's

diachronic/synchronic approach.[24] The next chapter will

discuss the history of critical research on the book of Joel

and attempt to set the present canonical-critical study

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appears to talk about diverse theological trajectories
rather than any normative content involved in the canonical
process.

[22]Little work has been done on the thematic unity of
the Book of the Twelve. Why are Jonah, which appears to
favor Nineveh, and Nahum, which certainly denounces Nineveh,
in the same canonical entity? Is there any possible reason?
See Andrew Yeuking Lee, The Canonical Unity of the Scroll of
the Minor Prophets (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 1985),
iv, who locates the canonical unity in a progressive theme
of hope. Cf. recently also Ronald W. Pierce, "Literary
Connectors and a Haggai/Zechariah/Malachi Corpus," Journal
of the Evangelical Theological Society 27/4 (December,
1984): 401-12, who derives several canonical literary
connectors between the books which develop the theme of
failure by the post-exilic remnant to keep the covenant.

[23]Sanders, Canon and Community, 61.

[24]Ibid., 47. After isolating the traditions, Sanders
states one must define the pericope form critically, do the
text-critical work, and analyze the structure of the
passage. Then the canonical antecedents are determined
using tradition history. Finally, the question of how the
traditions were adapted and represented in the passage by
the believing community is examined.

within a historical context. Chapter three will delineate
the methodology of canonical criticism by comparing and
contrasting Sanders's methodology with Brevard Childs's
canonical approach. The fourth chapter will begin
canonical-critical analysis of the selected traditions in
the book of Joel by searching for possible canonical
(authoritative) antecedents to the traditions. As mentioned
earlier, traditions for study will include the Day of
Yahweh, covenant curses and blessings, the pouring out of
Yahweh's Spirit, and the Holy War oracle against the
nations.

Chapter five will then examine how these traditions
function in the original and later canonical forms of the
book of Joel by comparing them with earlier usages and
noting whether they were resignified within the later forms
of the book. The possible hermeneutics involved in the
canonical shaping will be examined and implications for
interpreting the canonical forms of the book will be noted.

CHAPTER II

JOEL IN THE FOCUS OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Critical investigation of the book of Joel has primarily centered on questions of date and unity or literary integrity. Decisions regarding these matters have in turn affected the interpretation of the book in varying degrees. Each of the above issues will be explored in order to set the proposed canonical-critical examination in proper context.

Date

The lack of a time-related superscription for Joel has resulted in a plethora of dates for the book. The book of Joel has been dated by scholars from early preexilic times to the fourth century B.C.[1] In general, four periods for the time of the book are proposed: the early preexilic, the mid preexilic, the late preexilic, and the postexilic. The

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[1]Leslie C. Allen, <u>Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah</u>, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 19-25; see also the discussion of the wide range of dates in Willem Prinsloo, <u>The Theology of the Book of Joel</u>, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 163 (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1985), 5-9 and Hans Walter Wolff, <u>Joel and Amos</u>, trans. Waldemar Janzen, et al., Hermeneia, ed. Frank Moore Cross, et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 4-6.

early preexilic dating of Joel was placed on a scholarly

footing by Karl August Credner in 1831. He dated the book

in the reign of Joash of Judah in the ninth century B.C.

Credner's dating held sway for the remainder of the

nineteenth century.[2] A minority of scholars continue to

adhere to Credner's basic time frame.[3]

There are a number of arguments based on internal

evidence which are marshalled in support of an early pre-

exilic dating for the book. (1) The lack of a mention of a

king is seen to fit best during the early reign of Joash

when Jehoida, his uncle, was the high priest and acted as

his regent (2 Kings 11-12). Thus is explained the role of

the priests and elders who seem to bear the responsibility

of national leadership in the text. (2) The array of

nations which threatens Judah and that are mentioned in the

book is regarded as evidence of an early date. Indeed, the

foes are stated to be the Phoenicians, the Philistines, the

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[2]K. A. Credner, Der Prophet Joel: übersetzt und
erklärt (Halle, 1831), 40ff. Examples are C. F. Keil, The
Twelve Minor Prophets, Commentary on the Old Testament by C.
F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, Vol. 10, trans. by James Martin
(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 169-70; Conrad Von Orelli,
The Twelve Minor Prophets, trans. by J. S. Banks (Edinburgh:
T & T Clark, 1893); A. F. Kirkpatrick, The Doctrine of the
Prophets, (1890), 63-65.

[3]Milos Bič, Das Buch Joel (Berlin: Evangelische-
Verlagsanstalt, 1960), 106-8; E. J. Young, An Introduction
to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 270-72;
Gleason Archer, A Survey of Old Testament Introduction
(Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 292-94; J. T. Carson, "Joel,"
in The New Bible Commentary, second edition, gen. eds. F.
Davidson, et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 690.

Egyptians, and the Edomites (Joel 4:4, 19). These

references point to a time before the hegemony of Assyria

and following it Babylon which so exercised the cries of the

later prophets. References to Egypt and Edom are explained

by Pharaoh Shishak's attack on Jerusalem in Rehoboam's reign

(1 Kings 14:25ff.), and the rebellion of Edom during the

rule of Jehoram (2 Kings 8:20-22). The raid of the

Philistines and Arabs on Judah accounts for the historical

allusions in Joel 4:3, 5 (cf. 2 Chr. 21:16-17).[4]

Four arguments support a mid preexilic date (during

the eighth century B.C.): (1) the canonical placement of the

book of Joel between the generally acknowledged early books

of Hosea and Amos in the Hebrew canon is evidence cited in

favor a mid preexilic date for the book. The force of this

argument based on Jewish tradition is strong only if it can

be demonstrated that the Jewish canonical ordering of the

Book of the Twelve was based mainly on chronology, which is

a difficult task.[5] Nevertheless, the traditional Masoretic

order does seem to lend evidence to an early date. At least

the belief was current at the time of forming the canon that

Joel began to prophecy after Hosea had begun his prophetic

labors and before Amos had entered upon his or during the

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[4]See C. Von Orelli, The Twelve Minor Prophets, 73-76;
Archer, A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, 292-94 for
additional arguments for a ninth century B.C. date.

[5]See Douglas Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, Word Biblical
Commentary, Vol. 31, ed. David A. Hubbard et. al. (Waco:
Word Books, 1987), xii-xiv, 224.

reign of Uzziah, king of Judah, and while Jereboam was on the throne of Israel (Hos. 1:1; Amos 1:1, 7:10).[6]

(2) The lack of reference to Syria is seen as significant since Syria was denounced by Southern prophets after threatening Judah during the reign of Ahaz (2 Kings 12:17). On this point see Isaiah 7:8 and Jeremiah 49:23-27 among others.[7] (3) The failure to mention Assyria or Babylon is explicable because Assyria was in decline from Adad-nirari III's death (782 B.C.) until the accession of Tiglath-pileser III (745 B.C.) and Babylon was in the picture much later.[8] (4) Again, the condemnation of Egypt as an enemy fits well with the eighth-century prophets who repeatedly denounced idolatrous and treacherous Egypt (Isa. 19, 30:1-5, 31:1-3; Hos. 7:11, 12:1).[9] Egypt later became

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[6] F. W. Farrar, The Minor Prophets, Men of the Bible, ed. J. S. Exell (New York: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.), 104 mentions Hengstenberg and Hävernick as favoring this date; also Josef Schmalohr, Das Buch des Propheten Joel, übersetzt und erklärt, Alttestamentliche Abhandlungen 7/4 (Münster: i. W., 1922); B. Kutal, Liber Prophetae Joelis, Commentarii in Prophetas Minores, 2 (Olmutz, 1932); R. D. Patterson, "Joel," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, gen. ed. F. E. Gabelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985) 7:231-33; Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 224-26. Stuart allows for the possibility of dating Joel in 701 B.C. though favoring a date just before the fall of Jerusalem.

[7] J. D. Davis, Davis Dictionary of the Bible, fourth revised edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1924), 421.

[8] R. D. Patterson, "Joel," 231. In contrast to Patterson, Stuart asserts that the locusts themselves represent either Assyria or Babylon preparing to invade Jerusalem itself (ca. 701 B.C., 598 B.C., or 588 B.C.), Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 226.

[9] Patterson, "Joel," 232.

an ally of Judah before being defeated by Babylon at Carchemish according to Jeremiah 46.

Those opting for a late preexilic date include Arvid S. Kapelrud, Carl A. Keller, Wilhelm Rudolph, and Klaus Koch.[10] Some of their collective argument is as follows: (1) The lack of mention of a king is due to the fact that Joel did not intend to specify classes of people but their ages (Joel 2:16).[11] (2) The use of 'Israel' for Judah implies that Judah is the sole remaining representative of old Israel and presupposes the fall of the Northern kingdom in 721 B.C.[12] (3) Connected with (2) above, the historical allusions in Joel 4:2ff. refers to the fall of the Northern kingdom and not Judah.[13] (4) The reference to Egyptian aggression in Joel 4:19 is dated to the Egyptian intervention in Palestine under Necho shortly before the

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[10]Arvid S. Kapelrud, Joel Studies (Uppsala: A. B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1948), 191-92 dates Joel's prophecies to 600 B.C. but the redacted book to 300 B.C.; Carl A. Keller, Oseé, Joël, Amos, Abadias, Jonas, The Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament, XIa (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1965), 103 to between 630 and 600 B.C.; Wilhelm Rudolph, Joel, Amos, Obadja, Jona, Kommentar zum Alten Testament, 13/2. ed. E. Sellin (Gutersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohr, 1971), 24-29 dates Joel to 597-587 B.C.; Klaus Koch, Die Propheten I, Assyriche Zeit (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978), 171 to just before the fall of Assyria in 612 B.C.

[11]Kapelrud, Joel Studies, 187-89.

[12]Rudolph, Joel, Amos, Obadja, Jona, 26.

[13]Keller, Oseé, Joel, Amos, Abadias, Jonas, 147.

fall of Assyria in 612 B.C.[14] (5) The reference to the
Greeks in Joel 4:6 is possible since the Ionians appear in
Assyrian literary sources as early as the eighth century
B.C.[15] (6) There are similarities between the book of
Joel and the book of Zephaniah that point to the time just
before the Judean state was invaded and Jerusalem fell to
the Babylonians.[16]

The majority of scholars have adopted an exilic or
postexilic date for the book of Joel. However, there is no
consensus even here. Myers dates the book around 500
B.C.[17] Gosta W. Ahlström dates it between 515 and 445
B.C.[18] According to Wolff, the evidence points to the
cultic community of the days of Ezra and Nehemiah between
445 and 343 B.C.[19] Treves maintains a date of 323 B.C.[20]
and F. R. Stephenson asserts a date of 350 B.C. based on

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[14]Koch, Die Propheten I, Assyriche Zeit, 171.

[15]R. K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament
(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 877.

[16]Kapelrud, Joel Studies, 181; see also William S.
LaSor, David A. Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush, Old
Testament Survey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 439.

[17]Jacob M. Myers, "Some Considerations Bearing on the
Date of Joel," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche
Wissenschaft 74 (1962): 193.

[18]Gosta W. Ahlström, Joel and the Temple Cult of
Jerusalem, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum (Leiden: E. J.
Brill, 1971), 129.

[19]Wolff, Joel and Amos, 5.

[20]Marco Treves, "The Date of Joel," Vetus Testamentum
7 (1957): 155.

tenuous astronomical data.[21] Duhm even found a date in
the second century B.C. for the final form of the book.[22]
The post-exilic dating was first defended by Vatke in
1835[23], and was taken up by Davidson and Driver.[24]

Significant arguments which point to an exilic or
post-exilic date are listed as follows: (1) The historical
allusions in Joel 4:1-2 are to the fall of Jerusalem in 587
B.C. and the resultant exile.[25] (2) The lack of the
mention of Assyria or Babylon coupled with the lack of Greek
control in Palestine suggests a time when Persia ruled in
benignity over Judah.[26] (3) The positive emphasis on the
cult in Joel is contrasted with the condemnation of the cult

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[21]F. R. Stephenson, "The Date of the Book of Joel,"
Vetus Testamentum 19 (1969): 229.

[22]Bernhard Duhm, "Anmerkungen zu den Zwölf Propheten,"
Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 31
(1911): 184-87.

[23]Wilhelm Vatke, Die biblische Theologie
wissenschaftlich dargestellt, Vol. 1: Die Religion des Alten
Testaments nach den kanonischen Buchern entwickelt (Berlin:
n.p. 1835), 462.

[24]Cited in George Adam Smith, The Book of the Twelve
Prophets, Vol. 2, The Expositor's Bible, ed. W. Robertson
Nicoll (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1898), 380.

[25]Wolff, Joel and Amos, 4; Smith, The Book of the
Twelve Prophets, 380-81; Prinsloo, The Theology of the Book
of Joel, 6.

[26]Allen, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah, 20; Smith The
Book of the Twelve Prophets, 381; Wolff, Joel and Amos, 4.

in a pre-exilic prophet like Amos.[27] (4) Both the absence

of the king and the dominance of the priesthood coincide

with a theocratic postexilic community as well.[28] (5) The

fact that the entire community was summoned to the temple

implies a small population returned from the Exile.[29] (6)

Joel 1:9, 13 and 2:14 refer to the cereal offering and

libation which are equated with the postexilic (תָּמִיד) or

daily temple offering.[30] (7) Literary parallels or

allusions are numerous and suggest Joel copied or was aware

of a number of earlier prophets.[31] (8) The reference to

"the wall" in Joel 2:7f. may imply a time after Nehemiah's

work on it, although large sections may have stood already

upon his arrival.[32] (9) The supposed early position of

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[27]Julius A. Bewer, J. M. P. Smith, William H. Ward, _Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel_, The International Critical Commentary, eds. S.R. Driver et al. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 57.

[28]Wolff, _Joel and Amos_, 5.

[29]Ibid., 33.

[30]Allen, _Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah_, 20.

[31]Cf. S. R. Driver's summation of G. B. Gray's excellent study from "The Parallel Passages in Joel in their Bearing on the Question of Date," _The Expositor_, 4/8 (1893): 208-25, in _The Books of Joel and Amos_, Cambridge Bible, rev. edition (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1915), 19-23. A selection of proposed borrowings includes: Joel 1:15 from Isa. 13:6; Joel 3:1 from Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2:1f. from Zeph. 1:14f.; Joel 2:11, 3:4 from Mal. 3:2 and 4:5; Joel 4:17 from Obad. 17.

[32]J. A. Thompson, "Joel," in _The Interpreter's Bible_, eds. George A. Buttrick et al., 12/6 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), 732; Douglas R. Jones, _Isaiah 56-66 and Joel:_

Joel in the Masoretic canon is countered by appeal to the different order in the Septuagint wherein Joel is grouped after Micah. This may indicate that as early as the time of the formation of the Prophets there was uncertainty as the place of Joel as well as Obadiah and Jonah since none of these books give any indication of their dates.[33] Those advocating a late date also point out that the canonical arrangement in the Hebrew canon was based on obscure thematic reasons which have left traces in literary connectors between the books. Thus Joel 4:16a is repeated in Amos 1:2a and Joel 4:18a corresponds with Amos 9:13b.[34] In addition, the nations of Tyre, Philistia and Edom in Joel 4:4, 19 resurface in Amos 1:6-8, 9-10, and 11-12. (10) Finally, it is often pointed out that Joel has an apocalyptic tone which while not fully developed, places it midway between early prophetic eschatology and late Old Testament and intertestamental apocalyptic literature.[35]

Introduction and Commentary, The Torch Bible Commentary (London: SCM Press, 1964), 136.

[33]James Orr, gen. ed. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. III, s. v. "Joel," by James Robertson, 1690.

[34]Wolff, Joel and Amos, 3-4.

[35]Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 225 notes the oft mentioned affinities with Zechariah 1-8, Daniel, and parts of Isaiah commonly dated late (e.g. Isa. 13); on the significance of Joel as a harbinger of the apocalyptic school see Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, s. v. "Joel," by W. Neill.

Despite the majority agreement and the confident
assertions by some of a postexilic date for the book of
Joel,[36] this writer on balance tends to favor the mid pre-
exilic date as set forth earlier in the chapter.
Admittedly, such a date is tentative and one is tempted to
take an agnostic position regarding the date, admitting that
the book betrays a "Judean flavor but is intrinsically
concerned with bigger issues than contemporary
politics."[37]

Since the methodology of Sanders's canonical criticism
requires attention to the historical setting(s) for the
passage or book being examined, the following discussion
will involve a brief rationale for a mid preexilic dating.

(1) First, it seems that the chronological implications
of the canonical position of the book are too lightly
dismissed by those holding a postexilic date. There does
appear to be a rough chronological ordering of the Book of
the Twelve in the Hebrew canon.[38] Even the Septuagint's
ordering (Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah)
places Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah which have no direct
indication of their date between the prophets of the

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[36]Wolff, Joel and Amos, 6 says confidently, "Hence we
have confirmed and clarified for ourselves the postexilic
dating of the book of Joel, first defended by Wilhelm Vatke
in 1835."

[37]J. D. Douglas, gen. ed. The New Bible Dictionary, s.
v. "Joel," by R. A. Stewart.

[38]Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, xii-xlv.

Assyrian and Babylonian periods. These facts indicate if
not prove, that those who assembled the canonical Book of
the Twelve presumed Joel to be early rather than late.
Further, if the book was as late as 400 B.C., it is curious
that the canonical editors working so close to that time
were unaware of Joel's recency as they were of Haggai,
Zechariah, and Malachi. Though appeal is often made to
thematic connections as the real force behind the canonical
order of the Book of the Twelve, the question can be asked
whether such thematic connections are necessarily non-
historical. Perhaps historical contingencies played a role
as well. It need not be an either/or situation. Could not
thematic similarities between Joel and Amos, a prophet dated
in the Assyrian period, be a reflection of similar
historical prophetic response to a possible Assyrian threat
rather than strictly a literary reworking by a later
canonical editor? If so, then an appeal to the catchword
and thematic similarity between Joel and Amos may or may not
reflect actual similarity in prophetic response to a
developing historical crisis.[39] Interestingly enough,

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[39]For example, Wolff makes the following comments in
an attempt to show that only later historical reasons
entered into the final form of the Twelve. "In all
likelihood those who arranged the collection of the Twelve
wished us to read Amos and the following prophets in the
light of Joel's proclamation. For manifest in Joel is a
comprehensive view of prophecy closely akin to that
governing the prophetic corpus in its final, canonizing
redaction." (Wolff, Joel and Amos, 4). One might turn
Wolff's assertion on its head and postulate that such a
later comprehensive understanding of prophecy reflects a

Amos seems to build on Joel. Amos dwells upon the idea that the threatenings formerly uttered against the nations by Joel are about to be fulfilled. Therefore, the position of Joel among the eighth century prophets Hosea and Amos could point to a similar date for Joel.

(2) The failure to mention Assyria, Babylon, or Persia for that matter is an argument from silence which can be justified by any dating on some grounds. However, on an eighth century dating Assyria may not have been mentioned because of its declining power from Adad-nirari III's death (782 B.C.) till the accession of Tiglath-pileser III (745 B.C.)[40] or it may have been assumed by the author that the feared invaders were already well known and identification other than the Northerner (Joel 2:20) was unnecessary.

(3) The argument that the historical allusions in Joel 4:1-2 are to the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. and the resultant exile necessitating a postexilic date is formidable. However, it is possible to reconcile these allusions with a mid preexilic date as well. In Joel 4:1 there is a phrase (הָ בוֹשׁ־תֶא בוֹשָׁא) "bring back the captivity," in which the word 'captivity' may refer to a capture by

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trajectory based in early tradition (as found in Joel) which influenced later prophetic understanding. Perhaps developing historical crises called forth common prophetic responses grounded in the torah traditions, which in the canonical process was as much responsible for shaping the book of Joel as later literary editing by a Deuteronomistic theologian.

[40]Patterson, "Joel,", 231-32.

military forces (King James Version) or to a restoration of
fortunes as in other English versions (Revised Standard
Version, Modern Language Bible).[41] In fact, the second
sense appears to fit the context of restoration of material
and spiritual blessing in the latter half of the book of
Joel. Even the first translation can fit within a mid
preexilic context since awareness of exile or deportation
was not limited to the period after 586 B.C., but was one of
the expected punishments of war in the ancient Near
East.[42] The second phrase found in verse two "who they
scattered among the nations and parted my land" אֲשֶׁר פִּזְּרוּ
בַגּוֹיִם וְאֶת־אַרְצִי חִלֵּקוּ) appears stronger than reference to
anything less than a major conquest such as occurred in the
Assyrian or Babylonian invasions. With a mid preexilic
dating, the phrase is both historical and prophetic. It
refers backward to past incursions by enemies such as Edom

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[41]F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, A Hebrew
and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon
Press, 1907), 986 where the identical term used here in Joel
(שְׁבוּת) is used in preexilic Amos 9:14 and Hosea 7:1; William
Holladay, The Root SUBH in the Old Testament (Leiden: E. J.
Brill, 1958) provides a good place to start in examining the
phrase.

[42]Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 226, refers to the Code of
Hammurabi, ca. 1700 B.C., as evidence of this fact. He
states that there was ample precedent during Amos's time as
well though Amos never mentions Assyria. Indeed Assyria was
in a state of decline at the time. However, there was
literary precedent represented in the covenant curses for
disobedience. There was historical precedent from strife
with border nations. Finally, there was the memory of
Israel's former status as slaves in Egypt. The concept of
captivity and dispersion was quite comprehensible in early
to mid eighth century B.C. Israel and Judah.

Kings 14:25f; 2 Kings 8:20-22) and forward to the fall of the Northern kingdom in 722 B.C. and the later judgement on Judah and Jerusalem called for by the covenant strictures.[43] If the phrase means to be brought back from captivity, it is curious that such a usage would occur in postexilic days when the captivity had long since ceased.

(4) The fact that Joel mentions Judah and Jerusalem matter of factly but never Israel or Samaria can be adduced as evidence that he spoke his oracles after the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C., though again it is another argument from silence. However, the prophet's interest in Judah per se could also account for it,[44] or perhaps he sees the southern kingdom as the true spiritual Israel.

(5) The absence of a king and the assumed prominence of priests and elders could accord with a postexilic view or simply reflect a thematic intention on the part of the

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[43]Keil, The Twelve Minor Prophets, 221, sees the verbs as prophetic perfects in verses 2 and 3; cf. however Allen, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah, 20, who questions Keil's prophetic view as doubtful since the events appear to be in the author's past. The solution defended here is to grant Allen's objection as partially valid and grant a backward reference to earlier incursions but assert that the event referred to in v. 3 was prophetic of still future judgement to come on Judah based on Joel's knowledge of covenant traditions (e.g., Lev. 26:33ff.; Deut. 28:36ff.).

[44]International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, III, 1691, notes that Isaiah 1-5 mentions only Judah and Jerusalem and is arguably from the mid preexilic period; Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 226 makes the suggestion of a 701 B.C. date for this oracle which correlates with the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians in which case the 'scattering' in v. 3 refers to the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C.

author wherein he is attempting to identify the ages of the people. The importance of the priests is certainly not a purely postexilic phenomena but permeates much of the Old Testament.[45]

(6) The reference to "the wall" in 2:7-8 is often used to imply a time after Nehemiah's work on it and thus date Joel after 445 B.C. However, the clear intent of the passage is that the wall is ineffective in stopping the invaders. If so, the very impregnability of the wall is a pointer to the preexilic period when Jerusalem was perceived as inviolable because Yahweh dwelt there and thus before the wall had been destroyed by the Babylonians. It does not seem the wall of Nehemiah's day would suffice to make the point. The casual mention of the wall can just as easily support a preexilic date.

(7) The so-called positive emphasis on the cult in Joel versus the condemnation of the same in Amos has been overworked and the fact that both emphasize the repentance of the heart (Joel 2:13; Amos 5:21-24) supports the contention that mere formalism in sacrifice or the abuse of the cult is what they opposed (cf. also Hos. 14:2). Joel is in this regard in step with the eighth-century prophets.

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[45]Nahum is without reference to a king yet preexilic. The thematic intent of reference to the elders can be seen in the prophet's question to them in Joel 1:2, whether they had experienced what was happening in the land in earlier days. Thus it is precarious to set a date based on reference to elders when the passage's focus demands the mention of the aged ones.

The failure to mention national sins is another argument
from silence. Indeed, genuine repentance for sins committed
rather than mere outward rending of the garment is stressed
in 2:12 in the phrase "return unto me with all your heart"
(שֻׁבוּ עָדַי בְּכָל־לְבַבְכֶם) paralleled in Deuteronomy 4:29, 30.
Thus, the judgement for heinous social and personal sins is
implied and is consistent with the eighth century
prophets.[46] (8) The implication that the summoning of all
the people of the land to the temple supports a small
population since they all had to fit into the temple is an
argument which makes too much of the language which simply
calls for a national fast.[47] The mention of a cereal
offering and libation in 1:13 need not refer to a specific
postexilic offering (cf. Exodus 29:38-42).[48]

(9) Joel's apocalyptic style is not as developed as
Zechariah 1-8, dated in the Persian period, with its use of
fantastic symbolic figures, angelology and interest in the

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[46]On this see Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 231.

[47]Rudolph, Joel, Amos, Obadja, Jona, 28, mentions
Jeremiah 26 and 36 as examples of language similar to Joel's
as follows: "Dass die Erwartung, das ganze zum Fasten
zusammengerufene Volk des Landes habe im Vorhof des Tempels
Platz (1, 14; 2, 16f.), die Kleinheit des nachexilischen
Juda voraussetze, wird durch Jer 26 und 36 widerlegt (s. bei
1, 14)."

[48]Wolff, Joel and Amos, 31, and fn. 95, states that
the word pairing occurs only in postexilic texts. However,
that the offerings would occur in combination is understood
in the P texts he cites and Joel may reflect an earlier
state of the priestly traditions. Ahlström, Joel and the
Temple Cult of Jerusalem, 15-17, notes that the daily
offering was not solely postexilic (cf. 2 Kings 16:15).

role of the Satan as Adversary (Zech. 3:1). For example, it
fits better with preexilic Isaiah 13 or early exilic Ezekiel
32 in the use of heavenly portents (Joel 2:31; 3:15).
Indeed, both preexilic Zephaniah and Amos 5:18 see the Day
of Yahweh as one of darkness, like Joel.[49] At best,
arguments for a postexilic date for Joel based on its
apocalyptic imagery are ambiguous.

(10) The assertion that Joel borrows from a number of
earlier writers and is therefore at least exilic is not so
impressive as at first glance. A number of the parallels
appear to be commonplace prophetic responses, some based in
covenant traditions. The statement in Joel 2:27, "And ye
shall know that I am Jehovah your God, and there is none
else . . .," is very often used in Ezekiel as Driver
maintains (e.g., Ezek. 36:11), but it is also common in
preexilic traditions (cf. Exodus 6:7; 14:2 which note
Yahweh's name becoming known among the Egyptians or
Deuteronomy 4:35, 39 or the Levitical legislation Leviticus
18:2, 4).[50] Another example is Joel 2:28, "I will pour

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[49]D. S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish
Apocalyptic (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), 91,
mentions another idea common to Joel and Zephaniah, namely
the final great conflict of God's people with the forces of
evil and the ultimate destruction or submission of the
Gentiles (cf. Zeph. 1:15f. and Joel 3:9ff.). Thus such
ideas are not necessarily evidence of lateness although
Russell does date Joel in the postexilic period.

[50]George Fohrer, Introduction to the Old Testament
lists Exodus 6:7 with P (p. 180); Exodus 14:2 under J (p.
148); Leviticus 18:2 as P (p. 180); and of course
Deuteronomy 4:35, 39 reflecting the D source (p. 176).

out my spirit upon all flesh." Driver notes the connection
with Ezekiel 39:29, "When I have poured out my spirit upon
the house of Israel," but Numbers 11:29 could be a common
source for them both as well.[51] The ambiguity of such
examples could be multiplied.[52]

Perhaps the most often cited proof of prophetic
borrowing in Joel is his alleged use of Obadiah 17 which is

Though some of these texts are commonly seen as late (Exodus
14:2 could be no later than 800 B.C.), it can be argued even
on grounds accepting such a critical consensus that they at
least reflect earlier traditions which the prophets called
on and this indicates the widespread usage of the formulae
and negates the necessity of all Joel's material being
borrowed from other prophets. Representative of those who
tend to date classical source documents or at least the
traditions behind them early is Yehezkel Kaufman and his
followers who date P in the mid preexilic period. The
Religion of Israel (London: Allen and Unwin, 1961), 178.

[51]Driver, The Books of Joel and Amos, 20. Again,
Numbers 11:29 is considered early and part of the J strata
by many scholars (cf. Fohrer, Introduction to the Old
Testament, 148).

[52]Driver, The Books of Joel and Amos, 20, connects
Joel 2:17, "Wherefore should they say among the peoples,
Where is their God?" with the postexilic Psalm 79:10,
"Wherefore should the nations say, Where is their God?"
without noting that the idea is found in Exodus 32:12
(connected with pre-exilic E in Fohrer, Introduction to the
Old Testament, 154) as well as in Moses's intercession for
the people and thus may have been a commonplace phrase based
on this earlier historical understanding. Again, Driver
sees Joel 2:27, "And ye shall know that I am in the midst of
Israel, and that I am Jehovah your God, and there is none
else." as derived from Ezekiel 36:11, "And ye shall know
that I am Jehovah." together with many other instances in
Ezekiel. However, he admits it is a "stereotyped phrase"
used in Exodus 7:17; 8:18b; Deuteronomy 29:5; Isaiah 45:3.
Some scholars have recognized this phraseology as deriving
from a preamble formula within the covenant treaty form
which is quite early (see D. J. McCarthy, Treaty and
Covenant (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1963), 109ff.

dated after 586 B.C. by many scholars.[53] Joel 2:32 [Heb.

3:5] reads, "For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be

they that escape, as Jehovah hath said, . . ." Several

responses to this are possible. First, the date of Obadiah

may be too late.[54] Additionally, the thoughts and several

words from Joel 2:32 are found in Isaiah 4:2, 3 which says,

"In that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and

glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and

glory of the survivors of Israel. And he who is left in

Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy." This

opens up the prophetic possibility of a common prophetic

understanding of the deliverance in Mount Zion for the

remnant. In this writers view, the parallels are not

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[53]Wolff, _Joel and Amos_, 5, states, "But 3:5 is
particularly instructive for establishing a _terminus
postquem_: here Joel quotes as Yahweh's word a saying as late
as Obadiah 17a, itself scarcely earlier than the middle of
the fifth century."

[54]G. W. Anderson, _A Critical Introduction to the Old
Testament_ (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd., 1959), 151
refers to the acknowledged similarity between Jer. 49:7-16
and Obadiah 1-8, which in his opinion are more original in
Obadiah. If Jer. 49:7-16 dates back to Jeremiah, it would
be evidence of an earlier date for Obadiah. It is often
argued that both used a common earlier oracle against Edom
which would weaken Obadiah's priority. However, Amos seems
to be familiar with Obadiah (cf. Amos 1:6 and Obadiah 14;
Amos 9:2 and Obadiah 4; Amos 9:12 and Obadiah 19). Wolff
among others rejects this necessity by claiming that the
oracle against Edom in Amos 1:6 is a postexilic addition
(_Joel and Amos_, 160). If one does not accept such editorial
evidence however, Amos is reflecting actual early (ca. 760
B.C.) conflict between Edom and Israel apparently based on
the aforementioned Obadiah passages. [see Bruce Cresson,
Obadiah, Broadman Bible Commentary 7/12, ed. Clifton J.
Allen (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972), 143-45 for a cogent
summary of arguments for a postexilic date].

sufficiently patent to date the book of Joel in the postexilic period. In spite of the erudition and scholarship of the majority view, the evidence for a postexilic dating is ambiguous.[55] It is often asserted that it would be incredible for all the later prophets to have borrowed from the little book of Joel or expanded on thoughts contained within it. In response, the number of actual quotes is not as large as those who point them out maintain. From the remainder of quotes the evidence is unclear as to which is the earliest. Additionally, if it is possible for a later writer (Joel) to quote from so many antecedent writings, it is just as possible for later writers to go back to an earlier prophet (Joel) and reflect upon his earlier thoughts. However, it is this author's judgement that most of the borrowings are not borrowings at all but reflect evidence of a common core of authoritative traditions out of which the prophets drew their material.

(11) The litany of nations mentioned by Joel fits well with a mid preexilic date, for Amos mentions the same nations castigated by Joel namely Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Edom (Amos 1:6-12). The lack of later hostility toward Tyre and Sidon is evident in Ezra 3:7 where they are supplying materials for the second Temple. If Joel is a postexilic Temple prophet why would he condemn such a

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[55]Prinsloo, The Theology of the Book of Joel, 9, admits the subjectivity of any dating of Joel.

generous offering? The failure of Joel to mention the other
postexilic enemies such as the Samaritans, Moabites and
Ammonites is curious as well (cf. Neh. 2:19; 4:7; 6:1).

(12) The picture of the Temple seems to reflect a
vibrant institution rather than the struggling postexilic
Temple of Haggai's day. The Temple and its worship are
central (Joel 1:14; 2:15-17) and so important that the
cutting off of the meal offering and drink offering is
evidence of national ruin. This fits well with the pre-
exilic emphasis on the connection between the Temple, the
operation of the cult and national safety (cf. Jeremiah 7:4-
15 for a late preexilic reference to this Judean phenomena
which Jeremiah attacks).

In summary, there is adequate reason for tentatively
holding to a mid preexilic date for the book of Joel. The
prophecies in the book may then refer to a prophesied
invasion of Jerusalem and its environs by later Mesopotamian
armies. This date accords with the canonical placement of
the book but is not solely dependent on such a placement.

Unity

Exploring the redaction history, composition and
structure of the book of Joel in the history of scholarship
presents one with a confused picture. The complicating
problem involves the apparent juxtaposition of historical
and apocalyptic material in the book and how this affects
the relationship between the two halves of the book

generally seen as Joel 1:1-2:27 and Joel chapters 3 and 4. During most of the nineteenth century, the unity of the book's composition remained the majority opinion.[56] The relationship between the materials was often solved and the book's unity maintained by asserting that the whole book was prophetic in nature.[57]

The classical literary-critical model for work on the book of Joel was propounded by Bernhard Duhm.[58] Following the earlier work of J. Rothstein, Duhm drove a wedge between the contemporary and eschatological portions of the book.[59] His basic standpoint was that Joel was the author of chapters 1 and 2 only or those sections dealing specifically with a plague of locusts and written in verse. The following chapters 3 and 4 were apocalyptic additions added by a synagogal preacher from the time of the Maccabees and written in prose. The apocalyptic redactor also added certain interpolations into Joel chapters 1 and 2 (including

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[56]Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 234; Keil, The Twelve Minor Prophets, 178; Von Orelli, The Twelve Minor Prophets, 77f.; E. B. Pusey, The Minor Prophets: A Commentary, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 147.

[57]Fohrer, Introduction to the Old Testament, 427; cf. Pusey, The Minor Prophets, 150f. for example. Also A. Merx, Die Prophetie des Joel und ihre Ausleger (1879), 63 who held that the locusts were figurative of the apocalyptic enemies of Jerusalem.

[58]Duhm, "Anmerkungen zu den Zwölf Propheten", 184-87.

[59]Cf. S. R. Driver, An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, rev. ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 333f.

1:15; 2:1b-2a; and 11b), namely the references to the
eschatological Day of the Lord theme so prominent in the
last two chapters and applied to the natural catastrophe of
the locust plague in Joel 1 and 2. These redactional
changes in chapters 1 and 2 with the addition of chapters 3
and 4 transformed the earlier prophecies into futuristic
predictions.

Duhm's influence was great on subsequent scholarship.
J. A. Bewer in the International Critical Commentary took up
Duhm's assumption of a two stage composition of the book and
saw Joel 4:4-8 as a still later addition.[60] A number of
other scholars also followed Duhm's lead including T. H.
Robinson who accepted Duhm's basic thesis but regarded Joel
3 and 4 as a series of fragments from unknown authors built
around Joel 4:9-14 and brought together in the third
century.[61] Back of each of these analyses was the
presupposition that the same author did not or could not
have described both a historical locust plague and a future
Day of the Lord.

Such a presupposition was challenged by Dennefeld
among others who discerned a unifying underlying idea
indicative of a single author, namely the Day of Yahweh in

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[60]J. A. Bewer, Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk,
Obadiah, and Joel, 49-56.

[61]T. H. Robinson, Die Zwölf kleinen Propheten,
Handbuch zum Alten Testament, 3rd edition (Tübingen: J.C.B.
Mohr, 1964), 55-56.

the second half of the book with the locusts as its
precursors in the first half.[62] In addition, R. H.
Pfeiffer pointed out, many other prophets in the Old
Testament combined a concern for the historical present with
an apocalyptic vision of the future.[63]

The recent trend in scholarship has been to regard the
book of Joel as a substantial unity.[64] The arbitrary
nature of removing references to the Day of the Lord in
chapters 1 and 2 (Joel 1:15; 2:1f., 10f.) as later
interpolations when they fit smoothly into their context
with respect to style and subject matter was pointed out by
Weiser.[65] The presence of apocalyptic elements in the
first half of the book is sufficient warrant for its
elaboration in the second half of the book. Thus Joel sees
in the havoc wrought by the locusts a symbol or seed of the
awesome crisis to come in which God would preside in
judgement over people and nations.

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[62]L. Dennefeld, "Les problemes du livre de Joel,"
Revue des Sciences Religieuses, 4 (1924): 555-75, cited by
Allen, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, 26.

[63]R. H. Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament
(New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), 575.

[64]Prinsloo mentions A. S. Kapelrud, Th. Chary, J. A.
Thompson, L. C. Allen, and H. W. Wolff among others, The
Theology of the Book of Joel, 4.

[65]Artur Weiser, The Old Testament: Its Formation and
Development, trans. from the 4th German ed. by Dorothea
Barton (New York: Association Press, 1961), 239.

The argument for unity is centered around unity in content, structure, and linguistic/stylistic considerations. These are explored in turn as follows.

A number of scholars have noticed similar themes which occur in both halves of the book and give indications of unified thought. The Day of Yahweh is a common thread which runs through both halves of the book. Although the Day of Yahweh is local and temporary in the first two chapters and appears cosmic and eschatological in the last two chapters, the details of the Day within each half of the book are so similar as to appear interdependent. Bourke has noticed four traits of the Day of Yahweh which are common to both halves of the book. They are the nearness of the great Day (Joel 1:15; 2:1b, 2a; 4:14), the voice of Yahweh (Joel 2:11a; 4:16), the shaking of heaven and earth (Joel 2:10; 4:16), and the blocking of the sun, moon and stars (Joel 2:31; 4:15).[66] These characteristics of the Day of Yahweh are not all dependent on the verses which are commonly seen as interpolation in the first half of the book (Joel 1:15; 2:1b, 2a 11b). Wolff has pointed out the existence of a thematic and structural symmetry in the book of Joel with Joel 2:17 and 18 as the midpoint. At these verses there is an abrupt transition from the preceding cries of lament to oracles of divine response. The earlier lament over the

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[66]J. Bourke, "Le Jour de Yahvé dans Joël," Revue Biblique 66 (1959): 8.

scarcity of provisions (Joel 1:4-20) is balanced by the

promise of the calamity's reversal (Joel 2:21-27). The

earlier declaration of imminent eschatological catastrophe

for Jerusalem (Joel 2:1-11) is reversed in (Joel 4:1-3; 9-

17) with a promise of the restoration of the city's

fortunes. Finally, the call to return to Yahweh as the

necessity of the moment (Joel 2:12-17) is balanced by the

pouring out of the Spirit and the deliverance on Zion as the

eschatological necessity (Joel 3).[67]

In suggesting the authenticity of Joel 4:4-8, Allen

argues that Joel 4:1-12 corresponds to the earlier section

Joel 2:18-27, and Joel 4:4-8 is the counterpart to Joel

2:21-23. The prophet's song in Joel 2:21-23 interrupts the

oracle concerning crops and locusts in 2:18-20, and

continuing in Joel 2:24-27 by using the catchword 'acting

mightily'.[68] The same phenomenon occurs in Joel 4:4-8

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[67]Wolff, Joel and Amos, 7. While granting that the
book of Joel exhibits two major parts, Wolff points out that
the possibility of understanding the book at the outset is
destroyed by attributing the parts to different authors
since its structural configurations conjoin emphases on the
present and future.

[68]Allen, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, 28. The
catchword "done great things" (הִגְדִּיל לַעֲשׂוֹת) in Joel 2:21
is found in v. 20. The idea is picked up again in the
notion of Yahweh's acting wondrously in v. 26 which appears
to be synonymous with his acting greatly. The greatness of
Yahweh's army is a similar theme found in Joel 2:11 which
also connects it with the Day of Yahweh. The idea provides
common ground for Joel 2:21-23 within the context of 2:18-27
and even the wider context of chapter 2 and most notably
connects greatness with the Day of Yahweh, the primary theme
of the book. For a contrary opinion see Wolff, Joel and
Amos, 74-75, who sees Joel 4:4-8 as secondary because it

where the passage interrupts the flow of the eschatological discourse of 4:1-12 with its reference to specific nations whose mild penalty is to be slavery. Just as in Joel 2:21-23 another catchword is used to tie the section into the surrounding context, namely 'sold'.

Common literary elements also attest to the unity of the book. These literary elements include a number of key words and phrases which occur in both halves of the book. Key words and phrases include: "day of the Lord" (yôm Yāhweh,[69] 1:15; 2:1, 11: [Hebrew 3:4; 4:14]), "sacred mountain" (hār qōdeš, 2:1; [Hebrew 4:17]), "darkness" (hōšek, 2:2; [Hebrew 3:4]), "escape" (p^elêtāh, 2:3; [Hebrew 3:5]), "war" (milḥāmāh, 2:5, 7; [Hebrew 4:9]), the earth "shakes" (rā'aš, rāgaz, 2:10; [Hebrew 4:16]), "sanctify . . . gather" (qādaš . . . qābaṭ, 1:14; 2:16; [Hebrew 4:2, 11]), "send away" (rāḥaq, 2:20; [Hebrew 4:8]), "know Yahweh" (2:27; [Hebrew 4:17]), "pour out" (šāpak, 2:28; [Hebrew 4:19]), "generation(s)" (dôr, 1:3; [Hebrew 4:20]).[70] A number of these literary connecting words occur in Joel

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interrupts the flow of 4:1-3 and 4:9-17.

[69]The Hebrew transliteration system in the body of this dissertation is the one used by the *Journal of Biblical Literature*.

[70]Graham S. Ogden and Richard R. Deutsch, *Joel & Malachi: A Promise of Hope - A Call to Obedience*, The International Theological Commentary, eds. George A. F. Knight and Frederick Carlson Holmgren (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), 54-55; also Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 8, who lists eleven words-phrases common to both halves of the book.

4:18-21 which is often seen as an editorial edition to the
book.[71] Thus, "know Yahweh," "pour out," and
"generation(s)" are found in the first half of the book of
Joel and point towards its unity.[72]

Evidence for the unity of Joel goes beyond common
words, phrases and themes. A number of scholars note a
structural unity in the overall form of the book. Such
chiastic patterns in the overall structure are further signs
of the book's inherent unity. Danièlle Ellul is one scholar
who has noticed a chiastic pattern in Joel as follows:

SQ I 1:1-14	3:18-21 SQ V
Agricultural catastrophe Absence of Yahweh.	Paradisial fertility in Zion.
SQ II 1:15-21	3:1-17

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[71]Wolff, Joel and Amos, 8 is an example though he
strangely admits it may have been added later by Joel
himself because of its similarities with the rest of the
work.

[72]The use of contrast is another literary feature
which occurs in both halves of the book. The devastation by
locusts and drought and the resulting sorrow of people and
animals in Joel 1:4-20 is set against the restoration of
fertility and the resulting gladness in 2:19-25 in the
second half of the book. The same thing occurs in the
second half of Joel where the judgments on the heathen
nations are contrasted with the blessings of God's people.
Thompson, The Interpreter's Bible, 731. Ogden draws out a
similar literary device namely "reversal" in 2:18-27 and
chapters 3 and 4. The sending of the rain reverses the
earlier drought (2:23); abundant food reverses the shortage
(2:24); prior destruction is overcome by new provision
(2:25); the nations are punished as a kind of reversal of
what they did to Judah, which has rebounded on their own
heads (3:1 to 4:21). Judah's anguish is restored to joy
(2:21, 23). Ogden, Joel and Malachi, 54.

The Day of Yahweh against Israel.	The Day of Yahweh against against the nations.
SQ III 2:12-17	2:28-32
Repentance. Return. We are "his people."	Theme of Rest. Giving of Spirit. People of Prophets.

SQ IV 2:18-27

Response of Yahweh.[73]

Another recent attempt at positing a chiastic structure for the book is found in the work of Duane Garrett. In his view, the chiastic structure overlaps the two often disputed centers of Joel (viz., 2:17-18 and 2:27-3:1). The pattern is set forth in two parts:

A (chap. 1): Punishment: The locust plague

  B (2:1-11): Punishment: The apocalyptic army

    C (2:12-19): Transition: Repentance and (vv. 18-19) introduction to Yahweh's oracular response

  B^1 (2:20): Forgiveness: The apocalyptic army destroyed

A^1 (2:21-27): Forgiveness: The locust ravaged land restored

     Introduction to Yahweh's response (2:18-19)

A (2:20): Judgement: The apocalyptic army destroyed

  B (2:21-27) Grace: The land restored

  B^1 (3:1-5): Grace: The Spirit poured out

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[73]Danièlle Ellul, "Joél," Ètudes Theologiques et Religieuses (1979): 435.

A[1] (4:1-21): Judgement: The nations destroyed[74]

Obviously, these two attempts at unlocking the overall unifying structure of the book of Joel are different. However, they do focus attention on the many unifying factors between the two halves of the book which make plausible the unity of the book of Joel.[75]

Interpretation

Bound up with the issue of Joel's unity is the interpretation of the locusts found in the text of the book. In particular, do Joel 2:1-11 and 2:20 continue the description of a historical locust plague begun in chapter 1 or do they refer to an apocalyptic or human army which invades Judah on the Day of Yahweh? Like the previously discussed issues of date and unity, the scholarly community is without a consensus.

The history of interpretation is replete with examples of an allegorical/symbolic understanding of the locusts in Joel. This view is as old as the Targumic interpretation of 2:25 which paraphrases the four locust terms as peoples,

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[74]Duane A. Garrett, "The Structure of Joel," _Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society_ 28/3 (September, 1985): 295-96. Garret states, "Just as the first chiasm ends at the second 'center' of the book (2:27/3:1), so the second chiasm begins after the first 'center' (2:17/18-19). As such the two chiasms interlock."

[75]Childs, _Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture_, 389-92 in commenting on Wolff's impressive arguments for unity still opts for a redactional unity between chapters 1, 2 and 3, 4 which is still capable of interpretation using his canonical approach.

languages, rulers, and kingdoms.[76] The allegorists were further supported by many of the Fathers[77] and by the Reformers Luther and Calvin.[78] Among modern critics, the allegorical/symbolic view is taken by Hävernick, Hengstenberg, Pusey, and Merx.[79] The obvious eschatological flavor of Joel 3 and 4, together with the highly poetic description of the locusts has buttressed the allegorical/symbolic interpretation. The purely allegorical understanding suffers from a lack of exegetical control and is in the main rejected today. However, the symbolic (Joel's locusts symbolize real or apocalyptic armies) understanding of the locusts continues to have adherents.

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[76]Wolff, Joel and Amos, note m, 55-56. This understanding of the locusts was later concretized as "Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Greeks and Romans" in the margin of a sixth-century A.D. ms. of the LXX-Q; Allen, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, 29.

[77]In Jerome's time, the four names of the locusts in Joel 1:4 denoted (1) the Assyrians and Babylonians (2) the Medes and Persians (3) the Macedonians and Antiochus Epiphanes and (4) the Romans. James Orr, ed. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. III, s.v. "Joel," by James Robertson.

[78]Calvin understood the locusts of Joel chapter 1 as literal and those of chapter 2 as referring to the Assyrians. John Calvin, A Commentary on the Twelve Minor Prophets, Vol. 2, trans. by John Owen (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1986), 20, 21, 46f.; see Martin Luther, Lectures on the Minor Prophets, I, Vol. 18, ed. Hilton Oswald (Saint Louis: Condordia Publishing, 1975), 79f.

[79]Farrar, The Minor Prophets, 116; E. W. Hengstenberg, Christology of the Old Testament, i, 2nd ed., trans. Theodore Meyer (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1854), 302; Heinrich A. Hävernick, Introduction, ii (1836), 294f.; E. B. Pusey, The Minor Prophets, 150f.

Among those holding a symbolic viewpoint, the problematic nature of descriptive language in chapters 1 and 2 that seems to go beyond a literal plague is stressed. The following considerations are generally noted.[80] (1) The description of the locusts as "my northerner" (הַצְּפוֹנִי) belies the fact that locusts come in from the deserts of the South. However, invasion from the North by armies was not uncommon and makes sense of the term (cf. Zeph. 2:13 where God's judgement will be directed northward against Assyria).[81] (2) The imagery appears to go beyond a literal locust plague. The people are frightened and the text infers the city is taken by these creatures (Joel 2:6, 9, 10) - strong language for literal locusts who devastate crops and are better called a nuisance in the city. (3) The reason for the destruction of the locusts in Joel 2:20 is because "he has done great things." In this context it includes the dimension of haughtiness. Such evil sentiment is unsuited to irrational creatures. (4) The priests are directed by the prophet to plead with Yahweh that the

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[80]Cf. Pusey, The Minor Prophets, 150-157; G. A. Smith, The Book of the Twelve Prophets, 390-97; Farrar, The Minor Prophets, 117-23.

[81]The 'North' is often a technical term in the Old Testament for the enemies of ancient Israel. It is often used to indicate the direction from which calamity and misfortune come upon Israel. Assyria and Babylon came out of the North against the Hebrew kingdom as contemporary enemies and are later typified as the eschatological 'Northerner' (cf. Zech. 6:8; Jer. 1:14, 6:1, 22; Ezek. 38:6; Isa. 14:31; Zeph. 2:13).

heathen would not rule over them in Joel 2:17 which implies
fear of conquest.[82] (5) The effects caused by the locust
army are broader than the usual damage caused by literal
insects. More than one year's crop is affected and the meal
offering is destroyed when only a very small quantity of
meal was required. Also, the plague is delineated as the
worst in memory but locusts were a fairly common though
dreaded occurrence and certainly not unique (cf. Joel 2:2).
(6) The connection of the Day of Yahweh, which is linked
with invasion and is so eschatologically pregnant in other
prophets, with the locust plague is evidence that more is
meant than a mere plague of insects.

In spite of the impressive reasons for a symbolic
view, significant evidence is also marshalled by those who
hold a purely literal view of the locust plague in Joel and
many scholars, perhaps most today, interpret the locusts as
literal insects in both chapters.[83] To the casual reader,
the locusts appear to be a historical agricultural

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[82]This reading is supported by Brown, Driver, and
Briggs, A Hebrew-English Lexicon, 605 and the context;
contra G. A. Smith, The Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets,
393 who opts for "to mock them" following the marginal
reading in the ASV.

[83]Farrar, The Minor Prophets, 117, mentions Rashi, Ibn
Ezra, Kimchi, Calvin and Bochart as historical supporters of
a literal view. Smith, The Book of the Twelve Minor
Prophets, 389, note 1, adds moderns such as Hitzig, Vatke,
Ewald, Robertson Smith, Kuenen, Kirkpatrick, Driver,
Davidson, Nowack, etc. More recent interpreters in this
vein include Allen, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, 29;
Prinsloo, The Theology of the Book of Joel, 27; Rudolph,
Joel, Amos, Obadja, Jona, 68.

affliction which has devastated the Judean countryside.
This is augmented by the following general considerations.
(1) The creatures mentioned are too lifelike, too actual, to
be predictive or mystical. The agricultural damage they
cause (devouring vines and stripping tree bark) is
consistent with real locusts.[84] (2) Joel 1:16 denotes a
plague of locusts which is having an immediate effect on
Joel as an eyewitness together with his people ("Before our
eyes the food is cut off . . ."). (3) The fact that the
locusts are compared to horses and horseman (Joel 2:4ff.)
and act like an army is problematic for any interpretation
which sees the locusts as symbolic of an invading army for
why would Joel compare a real army to itself?[85] (4) Joel
2:25 seems to identify the locusts of chapter 2 with those
of chapter 1 by referring to the insects under the same
names found in 1:4 yet in a different order. (5) The
restoration promised by Yahweh in 2:18-27 deals with
material damage associated with locust attacks. (6) The
past verbs in 2:18-19 indicate a response by Yahweh to the
locust crisis and the people's penitential pleas which has

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[84]Allen, _Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah_, 29, notes
they ravage fields, trees, and fruit, but do not kill or
plunder or take prisoners of war.

[85]Ibid., "They are indeed described metaphorically as
an attacking army and are compared with soldiers, but to
conceive of figurative locusts who are like the soldiers
they are supposed to represent is a tortuous and improbable
interpretation."

already occurred.[86] (7) Literal locusts were one of the

instruments of divine judgement predicted in Deuteronomy for

the sins of the disobedient people (Deut. 28:38, 39, 42;

also 1 Kings 8:37.

One is immediately struck by the impressive nature of

the evidence compiled by adherents to both literal and

symbolic interpretations of Joel's locusts. In this

writer's view, the solution is to recognize the obvious

strength in both views and posit a combination of a literal

and symbolic understanding. Chapter 1 describes an actual

locust plague as seen by an eyewitness. Chapter 2 describes

a future invasion by enemies of Judah foreshadowed by the

locust plague.[87] The prophet uses simile based on the

actual locust calamity in chapter 1 to describe the coming

devastation of Judah by armies. In ancient Near Eastern

literature, armies are often compared to locusts or vice

versa in both destruction and manner.[88]

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[86]This assertion is weakened by the imperfect verbs
beginning in Joel 2:20 which describe the response in vv.
18-19 as still future. Thus vv. 18-19 may delineate only an
oracular response which had already occurred but still
concerned the future (cf. Pusey, The Minor Prophets, 186,
note 11); also Wolff, Joel and Amos, 61.

[87]Wolff, Joel and Amos, 41-42 opts for a similar
distinction but based on a Persian date for Joel regards the
enemies symbolized in chapter 2 as typical eschatological
armies rather than Assyria or Babylon.

[88]J. A. Thompson, "Joel's Locusts in the Light of Near
Eastern Parallels," Journal of Near Eastern Studies, XIV,
No. 1 (Jan., 1955): 52-55. Thompson, however, supports a
purely literal view since he does not find any references
wherein an army under the rubric locusts is compared to

Summary

An important aspect of canonical criticism as this writer views it, is prior determination of the historical setting in which a tradition or text is called upon and re-used. A tentative date during the time of Hosea and Amos is assumed for the bulk of Joel which is in the main considered a unity. Additional discussion is necessary regarding earlier traditions used in Joel and will be addressed in chapter four of this work. Before beginning canonical critical work on the traditions in Joel selected for study, an examination of canonical critical method is necessary in order to clarify its use on the material. The next chapter entails such a discussion.

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itself. Thompson's objection need not be valid if the description in Joel 2:1-11 of the locust-like invaders emanates from the prophet's contemplation of the literal locusts of chapter 1 which he interprets as the precursors of the prophetically certain coming invasion by an enemy army and further fulfillment of the Day of Yahweh.

CHAPTER III

TWO APPROACHES TO CRITICISM OF THE CANON:

CHILDS VERSUS SANDERS

Introduction

Since canonical criticism is a rather new and
controversial approach to scriptural interpretation, this
chapter will set forth the theory behind canonical criticism
by examining both the 'canonical approach' of Brevard Childs
and the method of 'canonical criticism' fostered by James
Sanders. The similarities and differences of the two
approaches will be explored in order to clearly distinguish
the canonical critical program of James A. Sanders for
application to the traditions selected for study in the book
of Joel.

One immediate similarity and difference concerns the
similar adjectives but different nouns found in the name
given to the discipline by the two men. Childs prefers
'canonical approach' while Sanders opts for the nomenclature
'canonical criticism'. The similar, yet different naming is
indicative of the deep differences reflected in their
respective methodologies.[1]

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[1]James A. Sanders, "The Bible as Canon," Christian
Century 98 (December, 1981): 1250-52. Childs does not like
the term 'canonical criticism' coined by Sanders and prefers
the words 'canonical approach'. The word 'approach'

B. S. Childs: A Canonical Approach

Introduction

The major impetus for the developing field of canonical critical study was provided by the work of Brevard Childs. One can see the evolution of his dissatisfaction with the historical-critical method as it pertained to interpretation of sacred Scripture and grappling with the theological dimensions of a text. Early on he criticized the failure of many Old Testament commentaries to penetrate the theological depths of the biblical texts.[2] Childs particularly attacked the prevailing assumption that the Old Testament could be interpreted as any other document from the ancient Near East from a so-called neutral, objective starting point. In his view, such a stance was valuable for historical inquiry but failed to deal with the materials as the Scriptures of the Church and Synagogue.

Childs promoted the necessity of a framework of faith in order to reflect theologically on the Scriptures. From a stance of faith, the text had to be interpreted from within

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emphasizes that he is proposing a new method of interpretation and not just an additional higher-critical method. Some writers prefer the terminology 'canon criticism' in order to escape the implication that the method is somehow authoritative [e.g., Gerald T. Sheppard, "Canon Criticism: The Proposal of Brevard Childs and an Assessment for Evangelical Hermeneutics," Studia Biblica et Theologica 4 (October, 1974): 3-17].

[2]Brevard Childs, "Interpretation in Faith: The Theological Responsibility of an Old Testament Commentary," Interpretation 18 (1964): 432-49.

a hermeneutical circle which interpreted single passages in the light of the Old Testament and vice versa. The hermeneutical circle included the relationship between the Testaments and each was to be understood in light of the other. The ultimate goal was not to hear the words of an individual biblical author but God's word in the text.

The publication of Biblical Theology in Crisis by Childs clearly revealed that he was calling for a change of direction and not merely minimal hermeneutical adjustments. In Childs's view, the biblical theology movement was a failure because it failed to recognize the importance of the religious theological environment as a vital context for correctly interpreting the Scriptures of the Church or Synagogue. The historical-critical method used in the biblical theology movement was simply unable to deal adequately with the theological nature of the biblical materials.[3] For Childs, the only interpretive context that could adequately account for the theological nature of the Scriptures as the book of the believing community was the context of the canon.[4]

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[3]Cf. Childs's discussion in Biblical Theology in Crisis (Philadelphia: Westminister Press, 1972), 97-122.

[4]Frank W. Spina, "Canonical Criticism: Childs Versus Sanders," Interpreting God's Word for Today: An Inquiry into Hermeneutics from a Biblical Theological Perspective, ed. Wayne McCown and James E. Massey (Anderson, Indiana: Warner Press, 1982), 168, where Spina derives from Childs's method the following: (1) that a canonical context for the Christian interpreter involves one in the historical confession that the Old and New Testaments together

Childs's argument essentially proposed a canonical context instead of a historical context. He took issue with critical scholarship's dictum that the most valid indicator of the meaning of a biblical tradition rested in its earliest, most pristine form. In his opinion, recovery of the original historical meaning was a necessary but partial step in the exegetical task.[5]

It was not a question of whether historical-critical tools were to be used, but how they were to be used. In order to get at the canonical context, he suggested beginning with the quotes in the New Testament of the Old Testament. He saw four advantages to such an approach: (1) the warrant for doing theology in this way is biblical; (2) such a method allows one to treat a genuine biblical category; (3) the different ways a text can function are thus underlined; (4) reflecting on the different biblical

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constitute sacred Scripture and this implies a close relationship between the Scripture and the community of faith that treasured it. (2) Taking the canon as normative connotes that the modern believer does not function parallel to the biblical tradition but derivative of it. (3) The primacy of the canonical context suggests that interpreters should attempt to discover meaning in the text not somewhere behind it. (4) The canonical context suggests another way of construing the doctrine of inspiration by not limiting it to the production of the biblical materials but also understanding it as the claim for the uniqueness of the canonical context of the Church through which the Holy Spirit works.

[5]Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis, 111.

witnesses in the canonical context is enhanced by having the same text in common.[6]

How serious Childs was in carrying out his pioneer proposal is seen in the emphasis and structure of his Exodus commentary, the purpose of which is to understand Exodus as the Scripture of the Church. Exegesis is done in the context of the Christian canon and directed toward the community of faith which confesses Jesus Christ.[7] Though the commentary discusses critical questions, such questions are only significant when they explicate the final canonical form of the text. The subordinate character of the historical-critical section is noted by its smaller type and Childs's comments that pastors and Sunday School teachers may disregard the first two sections without missing the message of the commentary.[8] The core of the commentary revolves around placing each passage in its received form first in its Old Testament, then its New Testament context; finally the passage is treated within the history of exegesis leading up to theological reflections by Childs on the text for today's Church.[9]

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[6]Ibid., 151-63.

[7]Brevard Childs, The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary, The Old Testament Library, ed. G. Ernest Wright, et al. (Philadelphia: Westminister Press, 1974), ix.

[8]Ibid., xiv-xvi.

[9]Spina, "Canonical Criticism: Childs Versus Sanders," 174-75.

The publication of Childs's magnum opus <u>Introduction</u> <u>to the Old Testament as Scripture</u> in 1979, set out his 'canonical approach' as it related to Old Testament introduction. The last two words of the title imply that Childs had a different emphasis in mind than the standard Introduction which sought to describe the growth of ancient Israel's literature along a historical path.[10] The book is organized around the Hebrew canonical units. Each unit, and the individual books within it are discussed in relation to three areas: (1) historical-critical problems, (2) the canonical shape, (3) and the theological and hermeneutical implications of this shape.[11]

Childs's Critique of the Historical-Critical Introduction

In the first section of the book Childs sets out his "canonical approach" and attempts to relate it to historical criticism. For Childs, it is possible to make full use of critical tools and understand the books of the Old Testament as canonical Scripture. However, one soon learns that Childs's approach necessitates a somewhat different idea of history and Scripture than the old positivistic conception

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[10]Ibid., 177.

[11]Ibid.

of history which underlies historical-critical

interpretation of ancient Israel's religious literature.[12]

The solution is not to divorce history and theology as

requiring mutually exclusive methods, but to posit the

'canonical approach' as one which does justice to the nature

of the Bible's historicality.[13] The canon bears witness

to Israel's historical experience with God but the witness

cannot be recovered merely by reconstructing history. The

tools of critical scholarship are appropriate insofar as

they are employed to discover the exact nature and function

of Israel's unique historical witness, the canon.[14] The

same tools weaken the concept of canon as authoritative

Scripture when they are used to get behind the texts, or to

discern and make authoritative the circumstances or

processes that led to the text.[15]

At the heart of Childs's proposal is his assertion

that the historical-critical approach to the Bible has

failed to address the religious nature of the literature and

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[12]Brevard Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 45; Spina, "Canonical Criticism: Childs Versus Sanders," 178.

[13]Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, 71.

[14]Spina, "Canonical Criticism: Childs Versus Sanders," 179.

[15]Ibid.

its existence as canon.[16] Though Childs accepts the

achievements of historical-critical scholarship with respect

to understanding the Old Testament, he notes that the method

is inadequate for fully understanding the Old Testament in

several ways.[17]

First, the historical-critical introduction has as its

goal the description of the history of the development of

the Hebrew literature and not the analysis of the canonical

literature of the synagogue and church.[18] Thus, there

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[16]Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as
Scripture, 16.

[17]Ibid., 40-41.

[18]Brevard Childs, New Testament as Canon: An
Introduction (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 12-13.
In promoting his 'canonical approach' for study of the New
Testament, Childs appears to argue for a shift away from the
concept of formation of the New Testament canon as simply a
post-apostolic development without real significance for
understanding the shape of the New Testament itself, not
because of a failure of historical criticism as much as in
continuity with the results of historical criticism. He
mentions the historical fact that the canonical process was
not simply a post-apostolic Catholic development which was
separate from the formation of the New Testament literature
and notes Von Campenhausen's location of canon consciousness
within the New Testament itself. From a history of
religions perspective, he notes the need to deal with the
enormous controversies and tensions lying behind the
individual books and posits that the struggle to define the
gospel influenced the emergence of canon. He appeals to
form-critical and tradition-historical results which show
there is no simple relationship between an author and
composition and which recognize that the literature is
affected by the circle of tradents to whom addressed and by
whom transmitted. He posits that this canonical influence
by the community left a deep stamp on the materials through
a process of ordering and collecting. Such canonical
shaping stands in continuity with the kerygmatic intent of
the New Testament writers. Finally, Childs maintains that
the theological nature of the New Testament resists purely

remains a hiatus between the description of the critically
reconstructed literature and the actual canonical text
received as authoritative by the believing community.
Second, the historical interest of the critical introduction
fails to note that ancient Israel's religious literature was
soundly influenced by the process of establishing the scope
of the literature, forming its shape and structuring its
inner relationships. Third, historical criticism has failed
to relate the literature correctly to the community which
used it as Scripture. The literature formed the identity of
the religious community which in turn shaped the literature.
Such a dialectic, which lies at the heart of the canonical
process, is lost says Childs when criticism assumes a
historically referential reading of the Old Testament as the
key to its interpretation. Political, social, or economic
factors are given precedence over religious dynamics in
forming the canon. For Childs, the problem of the canon is
the crucial issue which must be adequately addressed in
order to describe the Hebrew Bible as religious literature
for the believing community. Childs defines the problem of
the canon as "how one understands the nature of the Old

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historical or sociological solutions. This writer sees the
same questions arising in the development of the Hebrew
canon.

Testament in relation to its authority for the community of
faith and practice which shaped and preserved it."[19]

Critique of the Canonical Approach

Childs's call for a new beginning in biblical theology
on the basis of the canon was prepared for by the
observations of redaction criticism. Instead of focusing on
the earliest literary strata of the text and the way these
were used in theology, redaction criticism focused on the
'Nachgeschichte' or 'relecture' of the earlier material in
later forms. Thus emphasis was placed on later forms of the
text finally including its canonical form. In order to
determine the later usage of a text, the use of the Bible in
the worship of the synagogue and early church was
investigated (a descriptive aspect which was earlier
eliminated by historical criticism in its struggle against
ecclesiastical authority). Scholarship began to recognize
the importance of the fact that the prophet's words and the
recitation of a psalm were all expressed and mediated as
part of the life and experience of a religious community.
As a result of such observations, even Childs's critics
recognized that his canonical approach could have some

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[19]Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as
Scripture, 41.

beneficial results in the field of Old Testament

interpretation and biblical theology.[20]

In spite of such positive factors, the canonical

approach was severely criticized as well for a number of

perceived defects. Childs was accused of returning to a

pre-Enlightenment or Fundamentalist understanding of the

Bible.[21] However, even James Barr, by no means a friendly

critic of Childs's method, recognized that Childs's

canonical approach begins with historical-critical

results.[22] Childs himself criticized conservative

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[20]Cf. Andrew Yeuking Lee, "The Canonical Unity of the Scroll of the Minor Prophets," (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 1985), 34-35. Lee has gleaned eight benefits of the 'canonical approach' from critiques of Childs's method. (1) Attention on the final form diverts emphasis from the origins of the historical processes to the neglected area of its effects. (2) A holistic attitude toward canon recognizes the importance of the biblical books in their internal arrangement for hermeneutical purposes. (3) Scripture is judged to be an ensemble wherein pericopes which say one thing as independent units say another when conjoined with other passages in a canonical context. (4) Some writings are even deemed canonisable as redactors modify their message (e.g., Qoheleth). (5) The approach serves as a corrective against atomization of the text. Each Old Testament book in its entirety receives the right to be heard and interpreted. (6) The final form acts as a control against reducing the meaning to a single point in the tradition process. (7) Attention is drawn to the role of the religious community in the formation of the canon. (8) Seeing the Old Testament as Scripture places one in accord with the manner in which the New Testament perceives the Old Testament.

[21]R. N. Whybray, "Reflections on Canonical Criticism," Theology 84 (January, 1981): 29.

[22]James Barr, review of Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, by Brevard Childs, In Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 16 (May, 1980): 15, where Barr writes, "The operation is bipolar: if one pole is the

Introductions which practice "a kind of 'soft' historical
criticism" for failing to deal seriously with modern
critical results.[23] In fact, conservative evangelical
thought has expressed reservations about Childs's failure to
safeguard the historicity of the biblical accounts as the
foundation of the faith.[24] Spina correctly notes that the
question for Childs is not whether to use critical tools but
how, and this does not reflect a precritical approach to the
question of the canon and its interpretation.[25]

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new canonical reading, the other is the situation reached by
traditional criticism . . . the canonical reading here
presented makes no sense unless one already has a latish
Deuteronomy, a Deutero-Isaiah, and so on."

[23]Childs, New Testament as Canon: An Introduction, 35.

[24]Elmer B. Smick, "Old Testament Theology: the
Historico-genetic Method," Journal of the Evangelical
Theological Society 26 (1983): 146f.; Bruce Waltke, "A
Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms," Tradition and
Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg, ed. John
S. and Paul Lee Feinberg (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 3-18,
where Waltke faults Childs's approach for failing to
distinguish the stages in literary activity in development
of the text from changes that take place from scribal
activity on the text. The first partakes of inspiration
while the second does not in Waltke's view. Childs is also
criticized for allowing a divorce between ancient Israel's
history and the canonical witness to that history by not
tying God's supernatural intervention in Israel's history
with supernatural activity on the record of that history
reflected in the canonical text. Finally, Waltke rejects
Childs's emphasis on the authority of the Jewish text
achieved about A.D. 100, opting to emphasize the meaning of
the Hebrew Scriptures within the context of the New
Testament.

[25]Spina, "Canonical Criticism: Childs Versus Sanders,"
169.

The prominence of the final form in the canonical
approach has evoked more negative reaction on the part of
scholarship than any other single feature in Childs's
proposal. Childs's emphasis on the final form of the
canonical text as the normative vehicle to understanding has
been judged as simply another form of structuralism or new
criticism.[26] Like Kuhn's paradigm shift in science,
Barton sees the shift in biblical studies from historical
criticism to a canonical approach or structuralist or new
critical approach as formally the same as the shift in the
wider literary world from 'expressive' to 'objective'

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[26]John Barton, analyzing shifts in biblical studies as
analogous to shifts in the wider literary-critical world,
suggests that historically biblical studies can be
classified into four possible literary-critical approaches
to the biblical text. (1) In precritical exegesis the text
was thought to mirror reality and thus biblical events
recorded occurred within the real world and theological
truths mentioned were real truths about God, humanity, and
nature. (2) With the rise of historical criticism, the
focus of biblical study shifted to discovering the author's
intention in the text instead of assuming the biblical
record corresponded to external reality. All traditional
forms of biblical criticism operate on this basis (source,
form, and redaction). (3) Recently, there has been an
increasing emphasis on text-centered biblical study wherein
the text itself is studied as an objective entity divorced
from authorial intent or direct correspondence to historical
objective reality. Forms of biblical criticism with such a
focus include structuralism and those emphasizing a
synchronic or holistic reading of the Bible. Barton places
Childs's 'canonical approach' in the text-centered
classification. (4) Finally, a shift to a reader-centered
focus can be seen in recent biblical scholarship which
locates a text's meaning in its performance or actualization
by its readers. "Classifying Biblical Criticism," Journal
for the Study of the Old Testament 29 (1984): 19-35; also
Reading the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Westminister Press,
1984).

criticism.[27] Such a shift represents a move from an author-centered paradigm to a text-centered one for purposes of interpretation.[28]

Childs is also taken to task by Barton for claiming that his approach approximates a return to the superior exegesis of the Reformers. He notes the Reformers believed that the author's intent and historical circumstances were wholly transparent vehicles of the text's truths which corresponded with external reality. This approach is many times removed from a critical decision to treat composite texts as though they were a unified whole.[29] Barton's primary criticism of Childs's canonical approach as a text-centered method is to stress that the literary world has already shifted to more novel reader-centered approaches in

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[27]Barton, "Classifying Biblical Criticism," 28; cf. R. B. Crotty, "Changing Fashions in Biblical Interpretation," Australian Biblical Review, 33 (1985): 15-30, for the Kuhnian analogy.

[28]"Childs, by contrast is interested only peripherally in the intentions of those who produced our canonical Scriptures, only where those intentions can provide a clue to the canon's inherent and objective meaning; and he regards historical criticism undertaken as an end in itself as a complete waste of time and a misapplication of critical energies. The text itself is what matters for him; and in this we have a far more radical shift of interest than in any previous refinement of method. When he rejects the expression canon criticism on the grounds that it might seem to suggest merely one more 'criticism' to be added to the existing list (source, form, redaction, traditio-historical, etc.), he is correctly perceiving that his work represents a really radical innovation in biblical studies . . . 'Objective' biblical criticism never existed before Childs." Barton, "Classifying Biblical Criticism," 27.

[29]Ibid., 28.

which the text itself as a matter of fact does not exist, but only reading.[30]

Childs has elsewhere denied that the canonical approach can be understood as a form of structuralism or new criticism. He does however admit that the canonical approach does have a common focus on the synchronic reconstruction of the text as opposed to diachronic reconstructions. However, he also mentions significant differences.[31] He also has taken issue with the newer forms of 'narrative theology' which seek to apply reader centered approaches to biblical interpretation.[32]

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[30]Ibid., 29, " . . . in the world of post-structuralism, semiotics and 'deconstruction' there is now something like unanimity that 'the text itself' does not, as a matter of fact, exist. What does 'exist' is reading: a highly formalized activity, whose conventions differ from one culture to another, and which has a high degree of artificiality . . . Readings of a work are not judged as good or bad approximations of some 'real' meaning inherent in the text but rather as alternative 'performances,' equally valid but making no sort of truth-claims."

[31]"Yet the canonical approach differs from a strictly literary approach by interpreting the biblical text in relation to a community of faith and practice for whom it served a particular theological role as possessing divine authority. For theological reasons the biblical texts were often shaped in such a way that the original poetic forms were lost, or a unified narrative badly shattered. The canonical approach is concerned to understand the nature of the theological shape of the text rather than to recover an original literary or aesthetic unity. Moreover, it does not agree with a form of structuralism which seeks to reach a depth structure of meaning lying below the surface of the canonical text." Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, 74.

[32]Childs, New Testament as Canon: An Introduction, 541-46.

In criticizing G. A. Linbeck's <u>The Nature of Doctrine,</u> <u>Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age</u>, Childs attacked the notion that recognizing the Bible offers a faith-construal means denying that it bears witness to realities outside the text. He also criticized Linbeck (and thus narrative theology in general) for assigning the Bible a subordinate role within the creative imagination of the church where it functions merely as a source of imagery without a determinate meaning.[33]

It seems to this writer that Barton's attempt to critique Childs is mere classification and really offers no substantive critique of his position. This issue, it seems to me, is the problem with a Kuhnian approach in general. It does not adjudicate on the relative merits of various paradigms but only describes the sociological process which resulted in them. From the above rebuttal on Childs's part it can also be seen that Childs doesn't fall solely in a text-centered, structuralist paradigm (or a reader-centered one) which divorces the text from history altogether but rather approaches the text as possessing a normative expression of the earlier tradition.[34]

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[33]Ibid., 545-46.

[34]Childs sets his <u>Introduction</u> philosophically within the framework of Wittgenstein's discussion of the nature of language or a particular 'language game'. He is trying to describe the use of the Old Testament as Scripture by a community of faith and practice. Theologically, he is exploring how one reads the Old Testament from a rule-of-faith called canon. Brevard Childs, "Response to Reviewers

As Childs recognizes, the canonical approach is often
seen as static in nature as opposed to a dynamic traditio-
historical process.[35] The canonical approach evokes the
strongest opposition from the side of traditio-historical
criticism for which the goal of the exegetical task is the
recovery of the depth dimension. Childs asks himself the
substantive question form critics raise. Why should one
stage in the traditioning process be accorded a special
status? Were not the earlier strata of the text once
regarded as canonical as well; then why should they not
continue to be so regarded within the exegetical process?
Is not the history which one recovers in the growth of a
text an important index for studying ancient Israel's
development of a self-understanding, and thus the very
object of Old Testament theology?[36]

Indeed, it is often noted that tradition history
demonstrates the fundamental point that the development of
canon was a legitimate search for authority by the
community, but the final canonization was an illegitimate
closure of that process by the community at one moment in

of Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture," Journal
for the Study of the Old Testament 16 (1980): 52-60.

[35]Paul D. Hanson, The Diversity of Scripture
(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

[36]Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as
Scripture, 75.

its history.[37] For Childs, such an understanding fails to

take seriously the critical function which canon performs

regarding the earlier stages of the literature.[38] As to

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[37]Robert B. Laurin, "Tradition and Canon," Tradition
and Theology in the Old Testament, ed. Douglas A. Knight
(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 261.

[38]Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as
Scripture, 75-76, "The reason for insisting on the final
form of scripture lies in the peculiar relationship between
text and people of God which is constitutive of the canon.
The shape of the biblical text reflects a history of
encounter between God and Israel. The canon serves to
describe this peculiar relationship and to define the scope
of this history by establishing a beginning and end to the
process. It assigns a special quality to this particular
segment of human history which became normative for all
successive generations of this community of faith. The
significance of the final form of the biblical text is that
it alone bears witness to the full history of revelation.
Within the Old Testament, neither the process of the
formation of the literature nor the history of its
canonization is assigned an independent integrity. This
dimension has often been lost or purposely blurred and is
therefore dependent on scholarly reconstruction. The fixing
of a canon of scripture implies that the witness to Israel's
experience with God lies not in recovering such historical
processes, but is testified to in the effect on the biblical
text itself. Scripture bears witness to God's activity in
history on Israel's behalf, but history per se is not a
medium of revelation which is commensurate with a canon. It
is only in the final form of the biblical text in which
normative history has reached an end that the full effect of
this revelatory history can be perceived.
     It is certainly true that earlier stages in the
development of the biblical literature were often regarded
as canonical prior to the establishment of the final form.
In fact, the final form frequently consists of simply
transmitting an earlier, received form of the tradition
often unchanged from its original setting. Yet to take the
canon seriously is also to take seriously the critical
function which it exercises in respect to the earlier stages
of the literature's formation. A critical judgement is
evidenced in the way in which these earlier stages are
handled. At times the material is passed on unchanged; at
other times tradents select, rearrange, or expand the
received tradition. The purpose of insisting on the
authority of the final canonical form is to defend its role

why one should take the canon seriously with respect to

Israel's tradition, Childs asserts that he does it

confessionally as a testimony of belief.[39] In fact it is

in defending such an understanding of canon within a

framework of faith that Childs is actually taking issue with

the methodology of tradition history as it relates to

understanding the canon and the canonical process.[40]

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of providing this critical norm. To work with the final
stage of the text is not to lose the historical dimension,
but it is rather to make a critical, theological judgement
regarding the process."

[39]Childs, "Response to Reviewers of Introduction to
the Old Testament as Scripture," 5.

[40]Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as
Scripture, 76, where he addresses again the failure of
tradition historians to recognize the normative function of
the canon. "The depth dimension aids in understanding the
interpreted text, and does not function independently of it.
To distinguish the Yahwist source from the Priestly in the
Pentateuch often allows the interpreter to hear the combined
texts with new precision. But it is the full, combined text
which has rendered a judgement on the shape of the tradition
and which continues to exercise an authority on the
community of faith!"; also New Testament as Canon, 42-43,
where Childs states, "The issue at stake is not the contrast
between static text and dynamic process, but the nature of
the process which is considered normative and its relation
to the canonical text. Usually for the critical method,
using the tools of tradition history, a process is
reconstructed which seeks to traverse the period from the
material's inception to its final stabilized textual form.
In some contexts of interpretation such a projection is
useful in highlighting the growth and diversity of various
traditions. However, the procedure is largely hypothetical.
It usually falls in periods in which evidence is lacking and
it functions as an abstraction of the tradition from actual
historical communities. No one historical community ever
heard the material according to the schemata being
hypothesized. In contrast, the canonical approach to the
New Testament begins with those historical communities who
received and heard the gospel congruent with portions of the
New Testament canon. They found their identity in these

For Childs, the final canonical literature reflects a long history of development in which the received tradition was selected, transmitted, and shaped by hundreds of decisions. This process of construing its religious traditions involved a continual critical evaluation of historical options which were available to Israel and a transformation of its received tradition toward certain theological goals.[41]

His assertion that the final canonical form reflects the consensus of the believing community and is the locus for all biblical theology and exegesis has not gone unchallenged. The approach seems to skew the relationship

particular apostolic construals which served finally to overcome earlier historical diversities within early Christianity. In spite of the constant emphasis on the diversity within the New Testament by modern scholars, historically by the end of the second century, if not before, the gospels were being read holistically as a unity within the circumference proscribed by a rule-of-faith (cf. Papyrus Egerton 2, NT Apoc., I, 94-97) . . . Interest in the process by which this particular rendering of the New Testament message developed remains an integral part of canonical exegesis. The approach identifies with this particular perspective within the text's history, in the development of which whole areas containing other theological options were either subordinated or ruled out (e.g., the Gnostic). However, the process itself has no independent theological significance apart from the canonical text in which it left its interpretations. Conversely, the text cannot be isolated from the actual tradents of the tradition who participated in the canonical process. Ironically enough, the canonical approach being suggested offers the potential of actually being more historical in a genuine sense of the term, than a critical method which is prone to abstraction and speculation regarding groups, traditions, and motivations."

[41]Brevard Childs, Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 11.

between theology and history by construing history as
ancient Israel's witness through the lens of the canon to
God's activity. To some, ancient Israel's confession of
their history and what really took place must be decided on
external critical grounds and Childs's canonical principle
of normativity smacks of authoritarianism.[42] Barr states
that Childs has merely traded the authority of the original
meaning for the authority conferred by the "generations of
the redactors and canonizers."[43] The decision to give
prime authority to the final form is a theological one which
is arbitrary.[44]

In spite of the lack of sources and controls and the
possibility of negative results, many believe Childs is too
skeptical about the ability of criticism to discover the
early traditions which lie behind the final form.[45] In
fact, interest in so-called original meanings and settings

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[42]John Drury, review of New Testament as Canon by
Brevard Childs, In Theology 89 (Jan., 1986): 60-62, who
considers Childs's canonical principle an authoritarian
attempt to smuggle in a dogmatic principle.

[43]Barr, review of Introduction to the Old Testament as
Scripture by Brevard Childs," 21.

[44]Rudolph Smend, "Questions About the Importance of
the Canon in an Old Testament Introduction," Journal for the
Study of the Old Testament 16 (1980): 49.

[45]James Barr, Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority,
Criticism (Philadelphia: Westminister Press, 1983), 83-84,
affirms the necessity of doing just that in order to
discover the 'pre-canon' and properly do canonical
criticism.

is found in the final canonical form itself in the psalm titles.[46]

The importance of the final form in the canonical approach raises the issue of what form of the text embodies the final form. Childs advocates the Massoretic Text for this role of a final text.[47] This view is problematic for some, who see a neglect of the Septuagint used so much by the New Testament writers.[48] Childs further advocates that the goal of textual criticism should be to establish a canonical text rather than an original text and that earlier lexical understandings of words should be used to explicate the later word in the canonical text.[49] This textual policy would retain meaningless gibberish such as the haplography found in 1 Samuel 1:24 "and the lad became a lad," under the guise of canonical authority. This text, most agree, should be emended following the more original reading found in the LXX and at Qumran.[50] On the positive

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[46]James A. Sanders, From Sacred Story to Sacred Text (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 170.

[47]Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, 96f.

[48]Barr, review of Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture by Brevard Childs," 60.

[49]Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, 96-106.

[50]R. E. Murphy, "The Old Testament as Scripture," Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 16 (1980): 41; Barr, Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism, 85-90 mentions 1 Sam. 14:41 as another text wherein the LXX preservation of the earlier reading is necessary to make

side though, Childs's approach to textual criticism does maintain continuity with the history of exegesis and allows for careful scrutiny of any possible midrashic tendencies which such curious readings might contain.[51] However, it is hard not to agree that Childs's emphasis on the Massoretic Text results in a hermetically sealed canon which gives too much authority to one irreplaceable witness.[52]

It is evident that the canonical approach of Brevard Childs has produced much discussion, both pro and con, within biblical scholarship. His emphasis on the normative theological function of the final form, his neglect of the original meaning, reliance on the Massoretic Text, and neglect of historical criticism for exegesis are unconvincing and inadequate to many who remain supportive of traditional critical methods. James Sanders is one who supports a different kind of canonical approach more appreciative of and dependent on historical-critical methodology. A discussion of his thought follows.

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sense of the Hebrew MT, and Deut. 33:2 where comparative philology external to the reading will be necessary to make sense of the semantic lacuna found in the MT.

[51]Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, 95-97.

[52]Ibid., 664-65; however, notes the LXX was dependent on an earlier Hebrew text and points out that the early church never claimed the superiority of the LXX but focused on pressing the claims of Christ upon the foundation of the Old Testament. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the MT was not relied upon until the Reformers picked it up and Childs fails to address this problem.

James Sanders: Canonical Criticism

Introduction

Traditionally the discussion of the canon was done largely in polemical contexts. For example, it was discussed in the Reformation in the context of the rival roles of Scripture (sola scriptura) and the tradition of the Church. The polemical context can also be seen in the Enlightenment in favor of the authority of autonomous critical judgement over any dogmatic authority whether Scripture or the Church's tradition.[53] The question of the authority and meaning of the canon for the church today can still be addressed within the above two contexts. How can the problem of the canon be answered in such a way that it addresses the roles of Scripture and of tradition as authorities for the Church while recognizing the Enlightenment legacy of critical study of Scripture? Within the above contexts, James Sanders argues that attention to the canonical process can resolve many of the issues of authority and meaning for the Church left open by other historical-critical approaches to the Bible and yet be in continuity with historical-critical achievements.[54]

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[53]A. C. Outler, "The Logic of Canon-Making and the Task of Canon Criticism," In Texts and Testaments: Critical Essays on the Bible and Early Church Fathers, ed. W. Eugene March (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1980), 264.

[54]James A. Sanders, Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, Old Testament Series, ed. Gene M. Tucker (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 2.

Aspects of Thought

Torah and Canon

In his initial call to canonical criticism, Sanders focused his attention on the question of the origins and function of canon as prior to the question of the structure (form) of the canon (i.e., what is in or out). Sanders asks why the canon received its present shape.[55] What function did the ancient traditions have that caused them to be preserved amid the destructive crisis leading to the exile and restoration?[56]

For Sanders, the answer lies in understanding the heart of canon which is Torah. Torah enabled Israel to survive the ash heap of physical and spiritual destruction. Though the general meaning of Torah is 'instruction', it also has an older more inclusive meaning of 'revelation'. It is the older meaning of Torah as 'revelation' that is the key to understanding the canonical shape and function. "Priestly and prophetic oracles of the oldest vintage are called torahs."[57] The univocal sense of the Torah as Law thus fails to encompass the overall canonical heart of the word. Clearly, the Pentateuch is basically a narrative rather than a code of laws, though laws are embedded in the

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[55]James A. Sanders, Torah and Canon (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), xx.

[56]Ibid., 1-53.

[57]Ibid., 2.

story. As a narrative, Torah was adaptable enough to withstand the destruction of the Israelite state and Temple cultus in 586 B.C.

Even though the Torah and Former Prophets describe events that are preexilic, it was the crisis of the exile that had the greatest effect on the shape of those materials. Sanders sees the final shape of the Torah as an answer to the exiles' questions of how they should live without the land or the Temple or their nationhood. The final editors and theologians placed Deuteronomy after Numbers and appended the rest of two earlier versions of the Torah story that ended with the conquest and monarchy.[58] Thus, he accepts the existence of a JE complex of traditions by 722 B.C. The E tradition as Torah story encompassed at least Abraham to the monarchy. The J complex entailed at least Abraham through the conquest. Neither story ended with Deuteronomy. The traditions were edited to emphasize that ancient Israel was first a kingdom of priests and that its identity as the kingdom of God and its ability to worship were not dependent on land or state. The new religious community of Israel found its identity in the possession of Sinai which became in the Torah what Israel

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[58]Ibid., 23-24.

could never lose.[59]   In Sanders's view, the canon within

the canon is the Torah story.

In summary, Sanders's exploration into the origins and

function of canon ends up with the Torah story as the real

nucleus of crystallization around which other parts of the

Old Testament canon came to be organized. Historically, it

is the contents and shape, antecedents and _gestalt_ of Torah

which provides the valid starting point for understanding

the meaning and authority of canon for the whole Bible.[60]

This Torah story was finally adapted by the religious

community of Israel during the trying time of the Exile in

which Israel lost both land and Temple. During this search

for identity without land or Temple to derive it from,

Israel shaped the canon to emphasize Torah.[61] Childs

appreciates Sanders's broadened definition of canon as a

process extending throughout ancient Israel's history which

effected the shaping of the literature itself. However, he

criticizes Sanders's existential categories which see the

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[59]Gese sees the nucleus of the canon in a 'Sinai
Torah' shaped by the self-revelation of YHWH in content and
form. This nucleus of revelation later shifts to Zion and
becomes a 'Zion Torah' ["The Law," in _Essays on Biblical
Theology_, trans. Keith Crim (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press,
1984), 80f.]. Gese's assessment would fit well with
Sanders's contention that this later 'Zion Torah' was
superceded by the earlier 'Sinai Torah' as a matter of
national survival in the crisis of 586 B.C.; cf. also Spina,
"Canonical Criticism: Childs versus Sanders," 173.

[60]Sanders, _Torah and Canon_, 118.

[61]Ibid.

growth of canon as resulting from an identity crisis between poles of adaptability and stability. Nor does Childs think Sanders's category of monotheistic pluralism sufficient to describe the effect of canon on the literature. Finally, Childs is critical of Sanders's attempt to reconstruct the hermeneutical process within ancient Israel as a highly speculative enterprise.[62]

Canon and Community

As mentioned earlier, Sanders posits that attention to the canonical process is the way to resolve many issues of meaning and authority left unresolved by other historical-critical approaches to the Bible.[63] Though Sanders recognizes the traditional questions regarding canon (i.e., which books are in the Bible? Why these particular books and in this order?), his primary focus is to address questions concerning the relationship between critical scholarship on the one hand and biblical theology and hermeneutics on the other.[64]

The relationship between the ancient meanings of texts and their authority today is addressed partially by examining how questions of authority and truth were decided at each stage of the canonical process. It is Sanders's

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[62]Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, 56-57.

[63]Sanders, Canon and Community, ix.

[64]Ibid.

contention that how the biblical texts and books functioned
in ancient communities of faith can serve as a model for
modern understanding in today's believing communities.[65]
Perhaps Sanders's most controversial attempt in the book is
to delineate what is central to the Bible and what is not.
He asserts that the canon within the canon is the Torah
story, adapted by certain canonical hermeneutics within the
context of monotheistic pluralism.

Sanders sees the canonical-critical program as the
next logical step in biblical criticism beyond form and
redaction criticism. Moving beyond the last individual
redactors, it focuses on the ancient community which made
decisions about what the geniuses had said and done.[66]

He argues for a revision in the traditional model of
inspiration (inspiration by the Holy Spirit of an individual
in antiquity whose words were more or less preserved by
disciples, schools, or scribes). More original wording was
preserved for conservatives with less preserved for
liberals.[67] The model proposed by canonical criticism is
the Holy Spirit inspiring all along the canonical process,
from the original speaker, to what disciples believed was
said, to editorial reshaping, on down to modern

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[65]Ibid., ix-x.

[66]Ibid., xvi.

[67]Ibid.

understandings in the believing communities.[68] There is

justifiable criticism of his model in the eyes of some. He

has failed to separate inspiration and illumination by not

sufficiently addressing the fact that the canon(s) were

closed a millennium and a half ago by the believing

communities.

While admitting the possibility of inspiration being

given to the believing community, John Oswalt faults Sanders

for ignoring the canonical portrait of inspiration which

speaks of inspired individuals speaking to the community

(e.g., Hebrews 1:1). Though there is a progressive

unfolding of revelation and a deepening response by certain

segments of the community, that is a far cry from a largely

unconscious reflection upon and sifting of traditions with

those that are stable and adaptable rising to the top.[69]

Canonical Process

"The history of canon, or the canonical process, as an

element in canonical criticism includes both a particular

perspective and a set of tools and techniques."[70] It uses

the same critical tools other subdisciplines in criticism

use but uses them differently because of the perspective.

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[68]Ibid., xvii.

[69]John Oswalt, "Canonical Criticism: A Review from a
Conservative Viewpoint," Journal of the Evangelical
Theological Society 30:3 (Sept., 1987): 322.

[70]Sanders, Canon and Community, 21.

"Above all the process requires questions the other
subdisciplines tend not to ask."[71] Canonical criticism
focuses on the nature and function of canon and the process
by which canon was shaped in antiquity, not merely at the
end of its literary formation but as shaped from earliest
moments when repetition of a 'value' rendered it a tradition
down to a final, ordered collection of those traditions.

> "The value needed by the repeating-reciting
> community may have been the same as in the original
> instance or it may have been different; but in both
> instances the tradition had to be able to speak to the
> new occasion or it would not have been repeated. Hence,
> the character of the value was both to some extent
> stable and to some extent adaptable."[72]

This implies the multivalency of traditions according to
Sanders [e.g., the list of David's mighty men in 2 Samuel
23:8-39 may have originally been a roster but in the context
of 2 Samuel 23, the list is transformed into a group of men
over whom David the sweet psalmist rules (vv. 1-3) and the
opposite of godless men (v. 6)].[73] Such multivalency
exists synchronically in the final canonical context but
also diachronically as a tradition is repeated in different
historical contexts.

For example, the prophets who were once thought of as
original thinkers are now commonly seen as alluding to or
citing authoritative traditions of the communities to which

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[71]Ibid., 21-22.

[72]Ibid., 22.

[73]Ibid.

they belonged and spoke. From the earliest times there has been a "continuum of function of canonical literature."[74] Thus one can see diachronic change in the use of earlier canonical traditions, figures, and ideas. Sanders believes that the Bible was both text and interpretation from its earliest beginnings.[75] It was handed down through the liturgical and instructional life of the believing community which treasured it. At first, the canonical traditions were primarily fluid 'sacred story' easily adaptable to the new struggles of the believing community. However, due to a shift in the ontology of canon under the impetus of the crisis of the Exile, the story became more and more stable as 'sacred text' and new hermeneutics arose to make it adaptable once again to the ever changing needs of the community.[76]

Attention to the canonical process is important to give credence to the fact that something can be canonically true without being historically true. Sanders mentions the different chemistry which occurs in placing Ruth in the Writings with the Megilloth or in its perceived historical order as in the LXX after Judges.[77] This different chemistry occurs because of the differing questions and

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[74]Ibid., 28.

[75]Ibid., 32.

[76]Ibid., 32-33.

[77]Ibid., 42.

hermeneutics implicit in their ordering. The importance of canonical hermeneutics will be addressed in the next section.

Canonical Hermeneutics

Sanders finds the true shape of the Bible as canon in the "unrecorded hermeneutics which lie between the lines of most of its literature."[78] To him the ingenious ways in which the biblical writers repeated and resignified the Torah story all along the path of the canonical process toward the final biblical form provides us with important clues on how to use the Bible today in the life of the Church.

Since the Bible is the community's book, Sanders relates its proper function as being in dialogue with the heirs of the early believing communities that shaped it and were shaped by it as they sought answers to their questions of identity and lifestyle or faith and obedience. For Sanders, hermeneutics is essential to such a dialogue and the most valid hermeneutics is that which can be discerned in the Bible's own history (canonical hermeneutics) via the tools of biblical research.[79]

Canonical hermeneutics is the means whereby Israel, Judaism, and the Church spanned the gap between inherited

[78]Ibid., 46.

[79]Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume, s.v. "Hermeneutics," by James A. Sanders, 403.

faith and new cultural settings. "Canonical hermeneutics has two basic tasks: determining valid modes of seeking the meaning of a biblical text in its own setting, and then determining a valid mode of expression of that meaning in contemporary settings."[80] The importance of canonical hermeneutics for Sanders is based on his definition of canon as the process in which earlier authoritative traditions were adapted to cultural challenges according to the needs of the believing community. It is this adaptation process which is as canonical as the content of the canon, that can be used as a paradigm to show modern believers how to pursue the integrity of reality today.[81]

In discussing how later prophets used the earlier authoritative traditions, Sanders emphasized the importance of context. Depending on the context, the biblical thinkers employed one of two hermeneutical modes: the constitutive (supportive) or the prophetic (critique). During moments of history when Israel was weak the ancient texts were called upon in a supportive or constitutive manner. However, when Israel was self-dependent and powerful, the canonical witness indicates the texts were used by the prophets in a prophetic mode to challenge the status quo.[82]

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[80]Ibid.

[81]Ibid., 404.

[82]Ibid., 405.

According to Sanders, the canonical shaping
(hermeneutics) betrays a number of interpretive principles
or rules. First, there was the importance of ascertaining
context in order to determine whether a prophetic of
constitutive word was needed. Again, there was recognition
of covenant solidarity or being a member of the same group.
Third, the concept of memory was important as the means
whereby a prophet by reciting God's mighty acts in the past
produced identification among the later covenant group with
those in the past. In addition, by way of dynamic analogy,
the prophetic or constitutive reading of an earlier text
challenged the dynamically equivalent people in the later
believing community. Fifth, the principle of dynamic
analogy entailed the ambiguity of reality which means that
absolutizing Amos as right and his addressees as wrong in
some absolute sense misses the realism of the canon.[83]
Thus the biblical texts were read as mirrors for identity
not models for morality. Finally, as Sanders sees it there
were few moral models in the Bible as it is canonically
shaped. Consequently, one should read the Bible
theologically before reading it morally and should identify

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[83]Spina questions the results of this rule: "If in the
appropriation of the text today we can only determine how
and where God has acted or spoken, what can we say in the
present? . . . does the canon provide any certitude for the
contemporary moment?" "Canonical Criticism: Childs versus
Sanders," 188.

with those challenged by Jeremiah and Jesus, not with

Jeremiah and Jesus.[84]

According to Sanders's own analysis of the Bible's

unrecorded hermeneutics, its shape reveals five

observations. First, the Bible is a monotheizing

literature. Second, it possesses a theocentric hermeneutic.

Third, it celebrates the fact that God works through human

sinfulness. Fourth, the Bible reveals that God is biased

toward the weak and dispossessed. Fifth, non-national

traditions were adapted by a fourfold hermeneutical

process.[85] According to Sanders, however, this fourfold

process was not always completed.[86]

Method: The Triangle

Methodologically, "the principal tools of canonical

criticism are tradition history and comparative midrash,

with constant attention to the hermeneutics which caused the

authoritative tradition being traced to function in the

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[84]Sanders, s.v. "Hermeneutics," 407.

[85]Sanders's analysis has not gone unchallenged as Gene
Tucker predicted in the Forward to Canon and Community (cf.
Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture,
589).

[86]Sanders, Canon and Community, 56-57. One need not
accept Sanders's view of which texts reflect such borrowing
(e.g., Abraham's testing by God as a transformed version of
a story about child sacrifice) to find his basic viewpoint
useful.

sociological context where repeated or recited."[87] He

labels these tools the triangle.

In getting at the unrecorded hermeneutics of the

Bible, the importance of the triangle for Sanders's

canonical critical approach cannot be overstated. In his

study of true and false prophecy, he uses it as an

indispensable exegetical tool.[88] In Canon and Community

he delineates it as a necessity for canonical-critical

work.[89]

For example, prophecy in biblical antiquity can be

better understood if studied in light of three important

factors if they are discernible:

<div align="center">

hermeneutics

texts/traditions ⸺ ⸺ ⸺ ⸺ ⸺ ⸺ ⸺ ⸺contexts/situations

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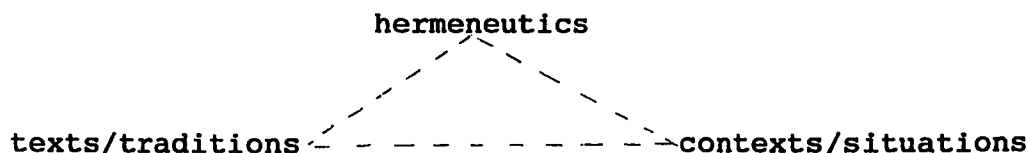
Each of these is interrelated and interdependent and is

defined as follows. Texts are the common authoritative

traditions employed and brought forward (re-presented) by

the prophet to bear upon the situation to which he or she

spoke in antiquity. Such traditions included both the

authoritative forms of speech expected of prophets and the

authoritative epic-historic traditions to which they

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[87]Sanders, "Hermeneutics in True and False Prophecy,"
Canon and Authority, eds. George W. Coats and Burke O. Long,
21.

[88]Ibid.

[89]Sanders, Canon and Community, 77.

appealed to legitimate their messages. By context is meant the historical, cultural, social, political, economic, national and international situations to which prophets applied the 'texts'. Context is not solely or principally a literary reference (though oftentimes the literary context is determinative for meaning), but refers primarily to the full, three dimensional situation in antiquity necessary to understand the significance of the literary record or unit under study. Hermeneutics means that ancient theological mode, as well as literary technique, by which that application was made by the prophet, true or false, that is, how he read his texts and 'contexts' and how he related them.[90]

The triangle can be superimposed upon the traditioning process at any point along the path of a tradition but there may not be enough data at some points in the tradition process to fill in all three points. For Sanders, these three factors are always involved in the canonical process from ancient times when the Bible was in formation to modern times when it is called upon to function in modern contexts. Thus the canonical process is never ending as long as there is a believing community with a canon to tradition.[91]

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[90]Sanders, "Hermeneutics in True and False Prophecy,"
22; also <u>Canon and Community</u>, 77.

[91]Ibid.

Sanders views the relation between the text and context as the nexus of the Word of God. The human words of ancient members of the faith become the Word of God many times as situations change in the believing community and as the Holy Spirit wills.[92] The correct Word of God is apparently attained by discerning the canonical hermeneutics which lie unrecorded in and between all the lines of the biblical text. Failure to discern the appropriate hermeneutic results in mishearing the text. Thus, it is important to use canonical criticism and all the Enlightenment tools of exegesis to determine the permissible range of resignification of biblical texts found in the canonical shaping. These limits can only be ascertained by examining each layer of the tradition.[93]

Comparative Midrash

One of Sanders's operative terms is 'comparative midrash'. For him it is essential to understand both the canonical process and the canonical hermeneutics of the communities, whether early or late. Midrash is a Hebrew word found in the Hebrew Bible which basically means 'quest'. It is derived from the verb (דרשׁ) which means 'seek'. Sanders connects the word with the seeking of a divine answer from God via an oracle from a prophet or from

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[92]Ibid., 78.

[93]Ibid.

the <u>urim</u> and <u>thummim</u> of the priest. The use of such earlier

divine answers in later context(s) is the focus of

comparative midrash. For Sanders, understanding midrash

primarily as 'interpretation' misses the point. "Midrash

was the mode whereby in biblical and later antiquity one

explained the world by received tradition properly brought

to bear on the situation for which wisdom was sought."[94]

It was one's condition in the world which needed

illumination and was the focus of the midrash. Comparative

midrash looks at how earlier tradents used "droshed"

(darashed) a tradition in order to compare and inform how

the tradition is used in the later passage under

investigation.[95]

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[94]Ibid., 26.

[95]Robert W. Wall, "Ecumenicity and Ecclesiology: The
Promise of the Multiple Letter Canon of the New Testament,"
<u>Christian Scholar's Review</u> 16:4 (1987): 343, fn. 19,
clarifies Sanders's somewhat enigmatic use of 'comparative
midrash' through a private note to him from Sanders on
'comparative midrash' and Luke's use of his Bible which runs
as follows: "'Comparative midrash' is the method we use in
canonical criticism to see how early believing communities
resignified in their new contexts the various Scriptural
passages, figures, etc., in order to be able to assess how
the NT writers did their re-presenting and re-signifying.
Luke 'droshed' or 'midrashed' Scripture, that is, searched
it and sought in it light on what he was convinced God had
done in Christ and was doing in the early church, so he
could understand it in the light of what God had earlier
done since creation, and the better present the gospel in
his day. 'Comparative midrash' shows how others up to Luke
had 'droshed' the same passage or figure and shows where his
(or others) fits comparatively into that diachronic
history."

Comparative midrash differs from 'history of interpretation' in two ways.[96] Midrash focuses on the role or function of an ancient tradition, whether or not quoted as Scripture, in the life and history of Judaism or Christianity. History of interpretation emphasizes how an Old Testament passage was used in postbiblical literature. Second, in comparative midrash close attention is paid to the hermeneutics by which the tradition is contemporized to meet the needs of the community.

Midrash begins in Scripture, for the Hebrew Scriptures began the process of their own interpretation. As Jacob Neusner puts it, "Specifically, the Scriptures unfold in such a way that one document--a passage or a whole book-- responds to an earlier one."[97] Midrashic tendencies can take the form of paraphrase (LXX and Targum renderings), prophecy (postexilic understanding of Isaianic tradition or Matthew's use of Old Testament passages), and parable (as in the Talmud).[98] Comparative midrash begins with the original interpretation of an earlier tradition as uncovered

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[96] James A. Sanders, "From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4," Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults, Part One, New Testament, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity, ed. Jacob Neusner, 12 Vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 75-76.

[97] Jacob Neusner, What is Midrash? Guides to Biblical Scholarship, Old Testament Series, ed. Gene M. Tucker (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 17. As one example, Neusner mentions the Chronicler's interpretation of the history in Kings.

[98] Ibid., 7-12.

by form criticism and examines it in the history of tradition to its final redaction but moves beyond it to see how it was made relevant by way of paraphrase, prophecy, or parable in later believing communities whether Judaic or New Testament.[99]

Critique of Sanders's Canonical Criticism

As with Childs, Sanders's methodology has received high marks from some in the scholarly community and poor marks from others. From those who accept the necessity of historical criticism in the interpretive task, Sanders has received high marks for refusing to join the ranks of those advocating a move into a postcritical era in biblical interpretation.[100] The fact that Sanders's method allows for historical reconstruction using the tools of the Enlightenment is applauded.[101]

Sanders's focus on the diachronic history of the text with an emphasis on recovery of the process by which a tradition was passed along by the community of faith until it became canonical fits well with the tradition historian's understanding that stresses becoming rather than being as

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[99]See Sanders, "From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4," 77-79; also Neusner, What is Midrash?, 7-12.

[100]Bernhard W. Anderson, review of From Sacred Story to Sacred Text by James A. Sanders, In Religious Studies Review 15:2 (April, 1989): 97; also Barr, Holy Scripture: Canon and Authority, 156.

[101]Spina, "Canonical Criticism: Childs versus Sanders," 187-88.

the focal point of exegesis. It is within the confines of the Enlightenment legacy that Sanders's method resides.[102] Sanders's work is a refocusing of critical methodology to emphasize the final stages of the growth of the Old Testament. In doing so he uses source, form, and redaction criticism as well as the traditio-historical approach. These tools are used to uncover the understanding of Israel's earlier story/history which becomes a paradigm for the modern believing community's attempt at self-understanding.[103]

The sociological emphasis in Sanders's method is seen as a strength and a weakness. One the one hand, it recognizes the fact that the traditions met the life needs of the community. The traditions had to answer questions of lifestyle and identity or such traditions never would have survived. The flexible reappropriation of tradition enabled the believing community to maintain their identity in times of cultural assimilation or historical catastrophe.[104] On the other hand, the danger of sociological reductionism is nevertheless present.

For example, how can one know that the only questions being asked which were relevant to the formation of the

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[102]Barton, "Classifying Biblical Criticism," 27.

[103]Ibid.

[104]Anderson, review of From Sacred Story to Sacred Text, 98.

canon were ones of identity and lifestyle or that these were the main questions.[105] Perceived social need is not adequate to account for the preservation of tradition or its deposit in writing as the preservation of Jeremiah's scroll by Baruch in Jeremiah 36 attests.[106] Sanders's approach appears to render archaic the biblical notion of revelation. Can one uncover anything besides ancient Israel's religious consciousness via Sanders's sociological approach?[107] If one reads the lines of Scripture, the prevalent view seems to be "Thus saith the Lord" sometimes going against the perceived social need of the majority of the day. Nor does social need seem to explain the pervasive poetry found in the Old Testament which witnesses to a dimension of transcendence.[108]

Sanders's resort to monotheistic pluralism as the only possible hermeneutical center derivable from canonical

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[105]Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, 57; Spina, "Canonical Criticism: Childs versus Sanders," 188.

[106]Anderson, review of From Sacred Story to Sacred Text, 98.

[107]Spina, "Canonical Criticism: Childs versus Sanders," 188; Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, 59, interprets Sanders's method as turning the canonical process on its head by emphasizing the anthropocentricity of the process. For Childs, theology begins from an encounter with God which produces a response on the part of the community which is evidenced in the writing of Scripture.

[108]Anderson, review of From Sacred Story to Sacred Text, 98.

hermeneutics has also received mixed responses. His attempt

to do justice to the oneness of God as expressed in the

Shema and Trinitarian Christianity is seen as a strength

which corrects his anthropocentric approach.[109] However,

the recognition of pluralism within the believing community

and Sanders's attempt to contain it within the stable

concept of God's oneness through constitutive or prophetic

hermeneutical modes is seen as attractive but too

simplistic.[110] It does however, point in the direction of

appreciating the fluid and dynamic way in which the early

believing communities interpreted their earlier traditions.

One could posit that canonical hermeneutics reflect a

mutually self-correcting interplay of theological and

ethical concepts rather than mutually exclusive ones.[111]

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[109]Spina, "Canonical Criticism: Childs versus
Sanders;" Anderson, review of From Sacred Story to Sacred
Text, 100.

[110]W. Sibley Towner, review of From Sacred Story to
Sacred Text, by James A. Sanders, In Religious Studies
Review 15:2 (April, 1989): 101-2, asks whether a mannerist
hermeneutic of ambiguity [Ecclesiastes], or of world
rejection as in apocalyptic are also necessary; Childs for
his part does not think Sanders's rubric of monotheistic
pluralism adequately describes the effect of canon on the
literature. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as
Scripture, 57.

[111]Cf. R. W. Wall's appropriation of what he terms
Sanders's "canonical process criticism" for understanding
the limits of hermeneutical diversity within the multiple
letter canon of the New Testament. R. W. Wall, "Ecumenicity
and Ecclesiology: The Promise of the Multiple Letter Canon
of the New Testament," 336.

Sanders's positive vision of hermeneutics with its existential terminology is considered vague and even somewhat incoherent by some.[112] This writer concurs with this judgement often finding his terminology obtuse. When Sanders enjoins the hermeneutical rule of the "ambiguity of reality," one wonders whether the Bible can speak with any certitude in the present moment. However, to search for the ancient hermeneutics of the faithful who resignified ancient traditions/texts seems to this writer to be an important undertaking within the guild of scholarship.[113] As Sanders puts it, "Must we not look for the Word or point made by these words (in text and tradition) so as not the confuse the two?[114] One can agree with Childs regarding the speculative nature of historical reconstruction without thereby jettisoning the attempt.[115]

Childs gives Sanders high marks for creativity in adapting the term canon to fit the experiential-expressive

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[112]Barr, Holy Scriptures: Canon, Authority, Criticism, 157 notes the vague wording and non sequiturs in Sanders's article on hermeneutics in Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Suppl. Vol., s.v. "Hermeneutics."

[113]Childs's concern in Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, 589, that such a quest is "a romantic understanding of history" reflects his judgement that historical reconstruction is precarious for interpretive purposes and is too skeptical in this writer's opinion.

[114]Sanders, From Sacred Story to Sacred Text, 174, fn. 42.

[115]Ibid.

mode of liberal theology. In Childs's view, liberal

theology is distinguished by a concern to find a generic or

universal experiential essence to religion. This concern is

expressed in critical studies by those form and redaction

critics who appeal to the traditio-historical and literary·

process as the non-discursive bearer of religious values.

As the modern interpreter seeks to establish truth from an

inherited tradition within a changing religious milieu, he

or she participates in this universal religious process.

This writer agrees with Childs in viewing such an

understanding of canon as reductionistic and too

representative of Western modernity.[116]

A Summary Comparison of Childs and Sanders

In his penetrating analysis of the methodologies of

Childs and Sanders, F. A. Spina notes several similarities

and differences in their respective approaches.[117] Both

agree the concept of canon must be central to any discussion

about hermeneutics. They are united in insisting the Bible

be returned to its rightful place in the community of the

faithful. It is not primarily grist for the scholarly mill.

Taking note of the full canonical context as authoritative

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[116]Childs, New Testament as Canon, 542-43. Childs's
comments occur in dialogue with George Linbeck's The Nature
of Doctrine (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) and his
definition of experiential-expressive theology.

[117]This section is indebted to Spina's excellent
summary, "Canonical Criticism: Childs versus Sanders," 183-
84.

is accepted by both men. Both consider themselves as
practitioners of historical criticism and accept the
appropriateness of the critical task. However, they
acknowledge the inadequacies of historical criticism in
interpreting the biblical text. For example, source
criticism has atomized the text in spite of the attempts of
redaction critics to piece it back together. Also, the
community that produced and shaped the canon has been of
little concern, with emphasis on individual authors on the
one hand, and concilear elements on the other. Finally, the
tendency to emphasize the original historical setting of
Scripture to the exclusion of later ones has locked the
Bible in the past.[118]

In spite of obvious similarities, the differences
between Childs's and Sanders's methodologies are acute.[119]
Childs focuses on the canonical product (his emphasis on the
final form of the text) as the locus of exegesis while
Sanders focuses on the canonical process as most meaningful
for exegesis. The product reflects a literary phenomena,
while the process involves a historical/social focus since
it seeks to explain the interaction between the developing
literature and the believing community. Authority resides

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[118]Ibid.

[119]Ibid., 185-86.

in the community's literature for Childs, but in the
community's use of that literature for Sanders.[120]

Since they have different focal points in exegesis,
their use of historical criticism differs as well. Childs
uses it to understand the final literature but Sanders the
historical context in which the literature functioned.
Childs insists that the canonical process is behind the text
and recoverable only by critical tools and not accessible to
or authoritative for the community of faith. In contrast,
Sanders insists on the importance of the discovery of the
process behind the text for theology positing that the way
in which Israel adapted her traditions to new situation is a
paradigm of interpretation for the modern believing
community.[121]

Childs rejects the idea of a canon within the canon
and asserts that God's word is contained in the full
canonical witness. Individual passages are related to this
full canonical context making any segment of the canon
applicable at any time. Though Sanders accepts the
significance of the total context, he asserts that some
parts of the canon were given a higher status by the
believing community based on their understanding of the

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[120]Ibid., 185.

[121]Ibid.

shape of the text. These central traditions are the Torah in the Old Testament and the Gospel in the New.[122]

Childs sees the canon as a vehicle for the Divine Word such that passages, books and canonical units, yield a unified Word translatable into theological truths. In contrast, Sanders emphasizes the texts' pluralism; the Word is only understood by seeing how traditions are played off against one another. This system of checks and balances prevents any individual part from being made absolute. For Sanders, the interpreter must determine which text the community at any time needs to hear. The canon is as much an indication of divine activity as it is of a divine Word. Out of the canon, one may construct a paradigm for conjugating the verbs of divine activity and declining the nouns of divine presence. The validity of the paradigm is only determined after enough time has elapsed for the community to look back and decide how and where God has acted.[123] Sanders sees the canon as a vehicle for salvation (life). For Childs, the canon is a vehicle for revelation and discloses the nature of Israel's God and Israel's response to him. Thus, Israel's salvation is derived from and based on God's revelation. Revelation (torah) is seen in functional terms for Sanders who denotes

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[122]Ibid.

[123]Ibid., 186.

it in terms of giving life rather than revealing truths about God.[124]

When turning from examining broad theoretical differences between the 'canonical approach' of Childs and the 'canonical criticism' of Sanders, to their possible exegetical applications to the book of Joel, caution is in order. Childs, for example, warns that he is not elaborating a set exegetical method or model and allows for a variety of exegetical models under the rubric of canonical analysis.[125] However, any model is bound to the primary assumption that the text under scrutiny is Scripture. "Scripture is what a text is, and where it is,"[126] and any canonical exegesis of Joel begins within a framework of the text as Scripture revered by a community of faith and practice. A canonical understanding of traditions in Joel as presupposed above would thus involve several interpretive horizons.

At the first level, a tradition (e.g., the Day of Yahweh) is interpreted within the framework of the entire book of Joel, which in both content and arrangement is read as Scripture. Thus, the tradition is read as finalized in

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[124]Ibid.

[125]Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, 85.

[126]James Luther Mays, "Psalm 118 in the Light of Canonical Analysis," Canon, Theology and Old Testament Interpretation, eds. David L. Petersen, Gene M. Tucker and Robert R. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 302.

Scripture and not primarily according to its particular

genre in ancient Israel or from some original historical

usage. This interpretive horizon is the one Childs

endeavors to explicate briefly in his Introduction by noting

the differences in grounding the interpretation of Joel in a

Persian period Sitz im Leben versus the book as it is

canonically shaped.[127]

The next level, one presumes, would build on the first

and seek to interpret the Day of Yahweh as illuminated by

its function in the canonical book of Joel within the

broader context of the canonical shape called the Book of

the Twelve. Obviously, a wider canonical context opens up

the understanding of the Day of Yahweh gained from the

canonical book of Joel to a fuller-orbed meaning than the

original holy war or covenant curse origin may have

entailed. The canonical context of the Book of the Twelve

would necessitate interpreting Joel's Day of Yahweh

tradition within the boundaries of a developed prophetic

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[127]Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as
Scripture, 389-93. In critiquing Wolff's exegesis of the
book, Childs faults him for reading into the text a variety
of themes like the "almost forgotten Day of Yahweh," or
opposition to the status quo set up by the Jewish leaders
Ezra and Nehemiah and thereby focusing on factors which are,
at most, in the background of the book in its canonical form
(390). Childs, in contrast, opts for an understanding based
on the work of a canonical editor who fashioned Joel's
historical message of deliverance by Yahweh of Judah from a
locust plague, into a message for future generations (Joel
1:3) about the latter days (Joel 3:1), wherein Yahweh would
offer salvation not just to Judah, but to all nations if
they repented and judgement if they did not repent.

eschatology. The developed prophetic eschatology entailed
would view Joel's Day of Yahweh from a perspective which
reflected on the lessons of the two exiles and their
relationship to a completed Torah.

As noted earlier, Childs promoted the Masoretic text
of Joel (or any other passage) as the canonical text for
interpretation. In understanding the linguistic meaning of
a word or words in Joel (say, Day of Yahweh יהוה יום),
text-critical reconstructions based on original meanings of
words as illumined by Ugarit, for example, are controlled by
the Masoretic reading and meaning. Any Septuagintal or
Targumic interpretation is, of course, also subservient to
the Masoretic text.

Finally, any or all of the interpretive horizons for
Joel, take place in the setting of a historical community of
faith and practice. Therefore, a canonical exegesis of the
Day of Yahweh in Joel will try to understand the book from
the standpoint of a believing reader within the group for
whom the book of Joel had become sacred Scripture.[128]

Like Childs, Sanders has not promoted any particular
exegetical method, but has approached exegesis within a
certain perspective. His own canonical studies include a
canonical-critical study of Isaiah 61:1-3 from its origin to

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[128]Mays, "Psalm 118 in the Light of Canonical
Analysis," 303.

its function in Luke 4,[129] and a study of the function of Habakkuk from its Old Testament context through its use at Qumran, to its use by the apostle Paul in Romans.[130]

In both of Sanders's studies, using comparative midrash, he traces the text's usage by believing communities from their original settings through their final usage in the later passages. First, the tools of criticism are used to discover the historical/social situation in which the earlier text/theme is called upon. In other words, what need of the community's was the tradition called on to meet? Second, how was the tradition contemporized by the community to meet that need? How was the tradition "woven by the exegete with other materials at his disposal to draw benefit from the citation, reference or allusion."[131] One could study the coming of the Spirit from its beginning point in Joel 3 to its function in Peter's sermon in Acts 2:28. Relevant to such a study would be the usage of Joel 3 by the Qumran community and midrashic tendencies the versions like the LXX might reveal, since its use in Acts 2:28f may reflect a challenge to or approval of an understanding found already in rival communities.

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[129]Sanders, "From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4," 75-106.

[130]Sanders, "Habakkuk in Qumran, Paul and the Old Testament," Journal of Religion 39 (1959): 232-44.

[131]Sanders, "From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4," 75-76.

Another task of canonical criticism, in Sanders's view, is analyzing the structure of whole biblical books or large literary units, presumably using the tool of midrash in order to understand the statement the believing community was making in the larger literary unit.[132] It is this second task which limits the focus of the following study of the traditions as they function in the book of Joel. The focus is on the synchronic function of the traditions at one or two points in the diachronic 'long cut' and not through its entire journey into the New Testament. With these theoretical similarities and differences in mind, in the following chapter, the canonical critical methodology of James Sanders will be applied to significant traditions in the book of Joel.

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[132]Sanders, <u>Canon and Community</u>, 62.

CHAPTER IV

THE CANONICAL PRECURSORS OF THE DAY OF YAHWEH

AND ITS SUB-THEMES IN THE

BOOK OF JOEL

Introduction

The importance of the Day of Yahweh for interpretation
of the book of Joel is reflected in the use of the term some
five times in the short book (1:1; 2:1, 2, 11; 3:4; 4:14).
"Nowhere else in the Old Testament is the Day of Yahweh
treated in as sustained a way as in the book of Joel."[1]
One writer compares it to an engine driving the prophecy.[2]
The expression is commonly noted as the theme that binds
together and controls the book of Joel.[3]

Since the Day of Yahweh as the main theme is critical
to understanding the book, this chapter will begin a
canonical-critical exegesis of the term and its sub-themes

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[1]Hans Walter Wolff, Joel and Amos, ed. S. Dean
McBride, Jr., trans. Waldemar Janzen, S. Dean McBride, Jr.,
and Charles A. Muenchow, Hermeneia, ed. Frank Moore Cross,
Jr., et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 33.

[2]Douglas Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, Word Biblical
Commentary, Vol. 31, ed. David A. Hubbard, et al. (Waco:
Word Books, 1987), 230.

[3]Leslie C. Allen, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah, New
International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. R. K.
Harrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 36.

as found in the book of Joel. As von Rad noted, a term of such importance does not appear alone but is associated with a complex of ideas with definite recurring themes; that fact necessitates a broader exegetical base than simply the term itself.[4] "The exegesis must include the whole of the textual unit in which the term appears along with its constituent concepts."[5] In the case of Joel, the term occurs in every pericope, regardless of how the text is divided by commentators.[6] Careful examination of the complex of ideas in each surrounding formal unit should yield important insight into the meaning and function of the Day of Yahweh in Joel and thus the book since it is the central theme.

In keeping with Sanders's diachronic/synchronic method, each occurrence of the term Day of Yahweh must first be placed within the text's diachronic history, not ignoring any redactional growth. In an earlier chapter, I set forth evidence for the unity of the book as it stands and that the unity is primarily authorial (4:4-8 is seen as an

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[4]Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, Vol. II, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 119-20.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Wolff, Joel and Amos, 17, 37, 54, 71; Georg Fohrer, Introduction to the Old Testament, trans. David E. Green, 10th ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 428-29.

interpolation by many).[7] This tentative assumption that the book is primarily the product of one author enables the treatment of the Day of Yahweh to be examined synchronically as a literary package.

Likewise, acceptance of a mid preexilic date entails (using Sanders's method) looking for antecedent traditions which fit in or predate the mid-eighth century B.C. milieu. The goal is to uncover the earlier 'canonical' precursors Joel used to inform his use of the Day of Yahweh and discern what authority they possessed and how they were resignified and given new meaning in Joel's own historical context and beyond in the canonical process.

One could object that a minority position was taken by accepting a mid preexilic date for the book and that will weaken the canonical interpretation built upon it. However, the strength of Sanders's canonical-critical method lies in taking seriously the text at each stage in the canonical process.[8] Unless one chooses Childs's canonical approach, a tentative position on unity and date is an a priori for further work. For Sanders, uncovering the canonical process

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[7]Contra Brevard Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 389; with Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 227, and Wolff, Joel and Amos, 7-8.

[8]In my opinion, the greatest difference of interpretation would lie between the preexilic and postexilic setting for the developing understanding of the Day of the Lord.

and canonical hermeneutics is a historical issue to be
pursued by historical-critical methods.

Origins of the Day of Yahweh

Any discussion of precursor material for Joel's Day of
Yahweh must begin with the possible earlier origins of the
tradition. Four major positions have been taken in
explaining the origin of Yahweh's Day as a technical term
used by the prophets of Israel to describe certain
cataclysmic events in the life of Israel.

Cult Drama

In line with the cult drama approach, Sigmund
Mowinckel suggested that the Day of Yahweh arose within the
history of Israel's cult. Its proper setting lies primarily
in the rituals of the annual New Year's celebration, wherein
Yahweh was enthroned. Thus, its original meaning was the
day of Yahweh's manifestation or epiphany, his royal day,
the day when Yahweh came as king and brought salvation for
his people.[9] Year by year as Yahweh's Day was celebrated
in the ritual, it reaffirmed the reality of God's kingdom
and his victory over chaos for later generations. As
Sigmund Mowinckel states it:

> In the future hope, and later in eschatology, 'the day
> of Yahweh' (or simply 'that day') becomes the term

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[9]Sigmund Mowinckel, He That Cometh, trans. by G. W.
Anderson (New York, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954), 145;
also The Psalms in Israel's Worship, trans. by D. R. Ap-
Thomas (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 189-90.

which sums up the great transformation, when he comes and restores His people, and assumes kingly rule over the world.[10]

This cultic ritual understanding supposes that eschatology emerged by projecting into the future cultic experiences and affirmations regarding the kingly rule of God and Israel's earthly king which had lost their present reality because of changes in society, culture, and finally the nation's decline and fall.

The recognition of the importance of the cult and its forms in the life of the nation of Israel together with the recognition that the prophets did use and adapt cultic forms to express their message is the primary strength of the cult drama approach to the Day's origin.[11] In spite of the above, serious objections were raised concerning a cultic origin for the Day of Yahweh. First, the theory breaks down in the textual evidence in the Prophets, for none of the prophetic references explicitly refers to Yahweh becoming king or being enthroned.[12] Indeed the existence of an

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[10]Mowinckel, He That Cometh, 145.

[11]John Bright, Covenant and Promise: The Prophetic Understanding of the Covenant in Pre-Exilic Israel (Philadelphia: Westminister Press, 1976), 23; cf. Ronald Clements, Prophecy and Covenant, Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. C. F. D. Moule, et al. (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., and SCM Press, Ltd., 1965), 107-8. Clements points out the forward-looking aspect of the festival which connected it with Yahweh's past saving acts on behalf of Israel.

[12]von Rad, Old Testament Theology, Volume II, 123, fn. 38.

annual enthronement festival is still debatable, though it
has many adherents.[13] Second, if the Day of Yahweh
partook of the common ancient Near Eastern cultic background
would not other nations have developed a similar eschatology
since they had official cults? We have no evidence that
they did. Third; the view that the ideas of the Day which
lost their relevance in the present were projected into the
future ignores the possibility that irrelevant ideas may be
discarded as psychologically disappointing.[14] However, it
is true that core beliefs are not easily given up.

Because of the above considerations, Mowinckel's
proposal for a cultic origin of the Day of Yahweh has not
received widespread support. The same can not be said for
the next theory concerning the Day's origin.

Holy War

The predominant view places the origin of the Day of
Yahweh within the Israelite traditions of holy war. By
broadening study of the Day of Yahweh from its locus
classicus in Amos 5:18-20 to include broader portrayals such
as Isaiah 13; Ezekiel 7; and Joel 2, Gerhard von Rad
isolated patterns, in his view, characteristic of sacral war

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[13]Bright, Covenant and Promise, 23.

[14]Ladislav Černy, The Day of Yahweh and Some Relevant
Problems (Prague: Cena Kcs, 1948), 76.

in the Day of Yahweh passages.[15] This stereotypical

pattern may have included: (1) a call to battle; (2) sacral

conduct of the war; (3) exclamation before the battle; (4)

fright, discouragement, panic, and ban; and (5) changes in

the natural spheres such as darkening of the stars, clouds,

thunder and earthquake.[16] Thus, the Day of Yahweh

originated as a pure event of war in which Yahweh rose

against his enemies in victorious battle. Von Rad sought

the original setting of this day of battle in the old

Israelite tribal league or amphictyony.

Though the Day of Yahweh was originally an act of

salvation for Israel when God delivered them from their

enemies, the prophets transformed the idea into a day of

battle wherein Yahweh could turn against Israel itself. The

use of the Day as one of judgment via war against Israel

returns to one of salvation for the chosen nation by the

time of the postexilic prophets (see Zechariah 14). In von

Rad's opinion, the day of battle against Israel becomes a

mere interlude in the development of the Day of Yahweh.[17]

Von Rad's placement of the Day's origin in the holy war

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[15]Gerhard von Rad, "The Origin of the Concept of the
Day of Yahweh," Journal of Semitic Studies 4 (1959): 97-108.

[16]Ibid.; also von Rad, Old Testament Theology, Volume
II, 119-25.

[17]Von Rad, "The Origin of the Concept of the Day of
Yahweh," 105.

tradition has met with widespread acceptance.[18] It is

hard to reject such close examination of the textual

evidence. The concept of holy war does appear to explain

many features of the Day of Yahweh. Also, it has the

strength of rooting Israel's concept of the Day of Yahweh in

her history in a manner that Mowinckel's proposal does not

or need not. The main criticism of von Rad's theory

revolves around the failure of holy war to encompass all the

features of the day which are found in the texts. The final

two theories concerning the day's origin are based on this

weakness and offer alternatives.

Theophany

Meir Weiss after a thorough critique of von Rad's

viewpoint suggested that the Day of Yahweh motif-complex did

not harken back to an ancient holy war tradition but had its

roots in the ancient motif-complex of the theophany

descriptions.[19] Weiss pointed out that the elements

thought to be essential to the Day of the Lord prophecies

and reflecting a holy war origin also appeared in theophany

descriptions. Further, the same elements occurred in

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[18]E.g., Wolff, Joel and Amos, 34; Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 23; cf. Clements's more cautious assessment, Prophecy and Covenant, 109.

[19]Meir Weiss, "The Origin of the 'Day of Yahweh' Reconsidered," Hebrew Union College Annual 37 (1966): 60.

prophecies which did not involve the Day of the Lord, and were absent in the conquest materials.[20]

To explain these anomalies, Weiss posited a wider meaning and context for the Day of the Lord prophecies than a pure event of war. The broader meaning and context was necessary to encircle texts such as Amos 5:18-20 and Isaiah 2 which had no marks of the holy war traditions. By comparing what the Amos and Isaiah texts had in common on the one hand and extending these commonalities to Zephaniah, Zechariah 14 and Joel on the other hand, Weiss concluded that the proper origin of the Day of the Lord lay in theophany descriptions.[21]

Weiss buttressed his theory by noting that the usage of the Day of the Lord as a term existed in variant forms in a number of prophets and the usage was not consistent. For example, Amos used "...in the day of the whirlwind" (Amos 1:14), "the Day of the Lord" (Amos 5:18-20), and "the evil day" (Amos 6:3). Similarly, Isaiah called it "the day of the Lord of Hosts" (Isaiah 2:12) and a "day of visitation" (Isaiah 10:3).[22] From such variant usage, Weiss deduced that the Day of the Lord was not a fixed term denoting a

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[20]Ibid., 31.

[21]Ibid., 41.

[22]Ibid., 43.

specific unit of time in general prophetic circles or among those who used it.[23]

The variant use of the term and the fact that the term, Day of the Lord, seemed to encompass a broader conception than holy war led Weiss to the astonishing conclusion that "Amos on one occasion stumbled on the designation (יהוה יום) 'the day of the Lord' as indicative of Yahweh's coming theophany to Israel."[24] Thus, the Day of the Lord denoted a day on which the Lord revealed himself in some way and on which he acted in some manner and which is characterized by him in some aspect.[25]

Apart from his assertion that Amos coined the term de novo, the vagueness of Weiss's position is troubling. The Day of the Lord becomes any revelation, action or characteristic of Yahweh. Perhaps the prophetic variants point in the direction of a better defined Day of the Lord rather than a diffuse, vague conception.

However, Weiss's proposal succeeds in showing the difficulty of placing all prophetic Day of the Lord descriptions under the rubric of the holy war.[26] Also,

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[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid., 6.

[25]Ibid., 42.

[26]E.g., Wolff, Joel and Amos, 34 who acknowledges the occurrence of theophany description as well.

from his study it is plausible that theophany is a major
part of the Day of the Lord in its prophetic conception.

Covenant Blessings and Curses

The final proposal for the origin of the Day of the
Lord was originally set forth by F. C. Fensham. Like von
Rad, Fensham recognized the importance of the holy war
tradition for understanding the Day of the Lord. He agreed
that von Rad had uncovered an important antecedent aspect of
the Day. However, Fensham noted several weaknesses in von
Rad's derivation which resulted in the holy war view being
only partially correct.

Noting first that the idea existed in the traditions
that a holy war was usually waged against the enemies of
Israel, Fensham asked why the destructive effect of the Day
was prophesied against Israel in the majority of cases. If
the holy and purified soldiers of Israel were soldiers of
the Lord against Israel's enemies, who then were the
soldiers who would fight a holy war against Israel?[27] Is
there an antecedent tradition governing the holy war aspect
of the Day of the Lord? Von Rad's derivation did not
adequately address the problem of the change in focus of the
holy war. Like others, Fensham also noted another problem
in von Rad's derivation. It entailed the lack of a clear

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[27]F. C. Fensham, "A Possible Origin of the Concept of
the Day of the Lord," Biblical Essays, Proceedings of the
Ninth Meeting of Die OuTestamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid-
Afrika (Bepeck, S. Africa: Potchefstroom Herald, 1966), 90.

idea of holy war in every description of the Day of
Yahweh.[28] In Fensham's opinion, there is a cluster of
concepts surrounding the Day of the Lord, not all of which
can be traced to holy war.

Fensham agreed that in Ezekiel 13:5; Jeremiah 46:10;
and Zephaniah 1:16 the Day of the Lord is directly connected
to the concept of war. Indeed, there is a strong tradition
as evidenced by the connection of the term (צְבָאוֹת) 'hosts'
with Yahweh which points to a background of holy war in
which the Lord as head of a sanctified army does battle
against Israel's enemies.[29] Thus, holy war occupies an
important place in the cluster of ideas which define the
Day.

However, other terminology connected with the Day of
the Lord shows the effect of the Day on nature and living
things. It affects nature and the cosmos via changes in the
sun, moon and stars (e.g., Isaiah 13:10; Joel 3:4), the
appearance of dark clouds and darkness (e.g., Ezekiel 30:34;
Joel 2:1; Amos 5:18-20; Zephaniah 1:15), and earthquakes
(e.g., Isaiah 13:13). The Day fills living beings with
dread (e.g., Isaiah 2:19; 13:8; Zephaniah 1:17) and confuses
them (e.g., Isaiah 2:5). While the effects of dread and
confusion are prominent in holy war language, the
association of dark clouds with the Day is more at home in

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[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid., 91.

theophany language as Weiss pointed out. In the Sinai
tradition, the presence of the Lord is connected to clouds
(e.g., Exodus 19; 24; 33). Thus, the Day may have
antecedents in the theophany of the Sinai tradition.

The most important aspect of the theophany connected
with the Day of the Lord is his coming in wrath to place the
transgressor in an ordeal. His coming is characterized as a
"day of wrath" in Isaiah 13:9; Ezekiel 7:19; and Zephaniah
1:15, 18.[30] A day of wrath is equated with a "day of my
visiting" in Exodus 32:34 when Yahweh's angel would visit on
them their sins.[31] In some cases, the visitation is in
wrath against Israel and this brings up the double sided
nature of the Day. Yahweh's presence may entail blessing
and salvation or judgement and punishment for Israel but in
all cases it is a day of the Lord's coming to punish the
guilty.

From the double-sided nature of the Day, as a day of
wrath, and from concepts that appear broader than holy war,
Fensham suggested there is a fusion of terminology out of
two or more different strands of tradition from which the
holy war tradition can be distinguished.[32] Also, Fensham
proposed a prior antecedent to the Day of the Lord revolving

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[30]Ibid.

[31]Walter C. Kaiser, Toward an Old Testament Theology
(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 190.

[32]Fensham, "A Possible Origin of the Concept of the
Day of the Lord," 92.

around the earlier Israelite covenant with Yahweh and particularly connected to the blessings and curses associated with the Israelite covenant patterned after an ancient Near Eastern vassal treaty.[33] For him, the concepts and terminology of the Day of the Lord appeared to fit under the rubric of covenant blessings and curses (in particular).

The idea that Israel began as a covenant society was, for sometime, widely accepted in the scholarly world.[34] It is evident that Israel existed as an entity several centuries before the tenth century monarchy.[35] However, what unified the various tribes of Israel without a king was unclear until the proposal put forth by Martin Noth. Noth postulated that early Israel existed as an 'amphictyony' or tribal confederation.[36] The Israelite tribal confederation was bound together by a covenant with Yahweh. This ancient covenant is reflected in Joshua 24:1-28 in the account of the Shechemite covenant ceremony. The proclamation of the covenant with Yahweh took place in the

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[33]Ibid., 94.

[34]Martin Noth, The History of Israel, trans. Stanley Godman, 2d. ed. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1958), 88, 103-4.

[35]Apparently Israel had some sort of unity as early as 1240 B.C. as seen in the reference to 'Israel' in the Mernephtah Stele. James B. Pritchard, The Ancient Near East, Vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 231.

[36]Noth, History of Israel, 88ff.

cult and it was passed on through the generations via the cult as well.

When one turned to an examination of the nature of the tribal covenant, it was the comparison of ancient Hittite political treaties with the Sinai covenant described in the Old Testament (e.g., Ex. 19; Josh. 24; and later Deuteronomy) that seemed to offer independent confirmation of and an adequate religio-sociological basis for the early tribal amphictyony postulated by Noth. After all, the purpose of the vassal treaty was to bring the various vassals under the one overlord (in the case of tribal Israel, Yahweh) and to regulate their dealings with each other in order to preserve political unity under the suzerain.

These discussions involving the concept of covenant in the Old Testament centered on the recognition that international suzerainty treaties were analogous in form to certain biblical covenant forms. Form-critical study of ancient Near Eastern treaties from the Hittite empire in the second millennium B.C. revealed a pattern with six parts. These parts were not always present or in strict order: (1) preamble introducing the speaker (cf. Deuteronomy 1:1); (2) historical prologue rehearsing former relations (cf. Deuteronomy 1:3-4); (3) stipulations dealing with the vassal's obligations (cf. Deuteronomy 24:7); (4) document clause which details the safe storage and required public

reading of the agreement (cf. Deuteronomy 27:8); (5) the

gods who bear witness to the treaty (cf. Deuteronomy 32:1,

Isaiah 1:2, and Ezekiel 17:12-21); (6) curse and blessing

formula (cf. Deuteronomy 28).[37]

Though Mendenhall tried to show that the treaty form

was reflected in covenant traditions from the earliest

period such as Joshua 24 and Exodus 24:1-11,[38] D. J.

McCarthy rejected Mendenhall's view and proposed

Urdeuteronomium as the real expression of the treaty

form.[39] In his view, this earlier form of Deuteronomy

comprised Deuteronomy 4:44-26:19 and chapter 28 of the

present book.[40] McCarthy also saw the treaty form

represented in miniature in Deuteronomy 4:1-40 and in

Moses's discourse in Deuteronomy 28:69-30:20. He dated the

composition of Urdeuteronomium to the time between the fall

of Samaria and the rise of Josiah.

M. Weinfeld is another scholar who has supported the

treaty background of the book of Deuteronomy. Weinfeld

asserted that the book reflects the classic structure of the

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[37]John Bright, Covenant and Promise, 24-48.

[38]G. E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," Biblical Archaeologist 17 (1954): 50-76.

[39]D. J. McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963); also Meredith G. Kline, Treaty of the Great King (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963) who found a Hittite treaty form in the structure of the entire book.

[40]D. J. McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant, 109-30.

Assyrian political treaty as found in the ninth to seventh centuries B. C.[41] In particular, the curses in Deuteronomy 28 were thought to reflect the fuller curse formulae of the Assyrian treaties as opposed to the shorter curse formulae of the second millennium Hittite texts.[42] As a result of the similarity between Deuteronomy 28 and the Assyrian curse lists, Weinfeld proposed that Deuteronomy 28 is not a product of separate redactions but is a unity.[43] The other parallels mentioned by Weinfeld are primarily linguistic. He points to terms such as 'to serve others', 'to love', 'to fear', 'to swear', 'to hearken to the voice of', and 'to be perfect with him', as examples of terms which were taken over from the diplomatic vocabulary of the ancient Near East.[44]

However, there were a number of scholars who did not accept the antiquity of the covenant form in Israel and believed that the treaty form was taken over at a relatively late date in the period of the divided monarchy. In fact, E. W. Nicholson recently proposed that the idea of covenant was not important in Israel until the time of the

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[41]M. Weinfeld, <u>Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School</u> (Oxford: at the University Press, 1972), 66.

[42]Ibid., 116-17.

[43]Ibid., 128-29.

[44]Ibid., 83 and following; see also P. Kaluveetil, <u>Declaration and Covenant</u>, Analecta Biblica 88 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1982).

Deuteronomic writers in the seventh century B.C. and had

little to do with political treaties except in a

metaphorical sense.[45]

Major points these writers have made include: (1) The

existence of treaty forms in Assyria makes it possible that

the Israelites adapted the form of an Assyrian treaty in the

seventh century B.C. for her own purposes. (2) The book of

Deuteronomy provides the closest parallel to the treaty form

and it is customarily dated in the seventh century B.C., at

least in its final form.[46] (3) The Hebrew word (בְּרִית)

'covenant' occurs rarely in biblical literature dated before

the seventh century B. C.[47] (4) The idea of an early

Israelite confederation patterned on a model like the

'amphictyony' as propounded by Noth is now considered

untenable by most. Each of these problems is significant

and deserves a response in turn.

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[45]E. W. Nicholson, God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986). Nicholson dates all so-called covenant texts as late preexilic texts and accepts a position similar to Wellhausen's in which the covenant is a theological creation of the prophets (117). Nicholson builds on the earlier work of E. Kutsch, Verheissung und Gesetz: Untersuchungen zum sogenannten 'Bund' im Alten Testament (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alltestamentliche Wissenschaft, 131, 1973).

[46]E.g., Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School, 59-157; McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant, 2d. ed., 290.

[47]Nicholson, God and His People, 188, appears to apply the origin of covenant in Israel as a metaphor coined by the prophet Hosea without any connection to a formal Bund or treaty.

(1) The idea that the treaty form is late and based on
an Assyrian pattern is not without problems. Some point out
that the biblical texts fit the form of the Hittite
suzerainty treaties of the second millennium B. C. much
better than the later Assyrian patterns. The Vorgeschichte
(antecedent history) or historical prologue which outlines
past relationships between the suzerain and vassal is a
standard feature of the earlier Hittite treaties and the
classical covenant texts in the Bible but is lacking in the
later Assyrian treaties.[48] Also, there is a lack of
blessings corresponding to the curses in the later Assyrian
treaties. They are both present in the biblical materials
and in the earlier Hittite form.[49] From another
perspective, one wonders whether an Assyrian treaty form
would be appealing to Deuteronomic theologians when Assyrian
suzerains "had subjugated and despoiled the land and
people."[50] In fact, there is a different understanding of
the suzerain-vassal relationship in the Assyrian treaties
based on threats and force rather than on fatherly
persuasion and goodwill as in the biblical examples.[51]

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[48]Bright, Covenant and Promise, 40.

[49]K. A. Kitchen, Ancient Orient and Old Testament
(London: Tyndale Press, 1966), 95-96; Bright, Covenant and
Promise, 40.

[50]Nicholson, God and His People, 78.

[51]Bright, Covenant and Promise, 40-41.

(2) The book of Deuteronomy provides the closest parallel to some sort of treaty form, and it is commonly dated late; however that need not mean the book reflects the Assyrian form. Bright, for example, suggests that the treaty form was adapted in Deuteronomy from earlier second millennium forms reflected in earlier biblical texts such as Joshua 24.[52] Other scholars have proposed that Deuteronomy itself reflects the Hittite treaty form of the second millennium B.C. and not the later Assyrian form.[53] In this writer's judgment, it is a difficult task to hold a seventh century date for Deuteronomy as Bright seems to do and argue for the book adapting a second millennium B.C. treaty form. If one accepts a late date for D and rejects the similarity between Deuteronomy and the Assyrian vassal treaties, then a position like Nicholson's which sees the covenant as a theological creation seems more plausible, in fact almost necessary. In my judgment, one must accept the

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[52]Ibid.; also Harper's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. P. J. Achtemeier (1985), s.v. "Covenant," by J. Unterman.

[53]Meredith G. Kline, The Structure of Biblical Authority (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 9; Peter C. Craigie, The Book of Deuteronomy, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 24-25. Curiously, much scholarly work has ignored point by point comparison between Deuteronomy and the second millennium treaty form. This state of affairs is explicable in view of the quasi-consensus since Wellhausen that Deuteronomy is late. Thus, Nicholson explores the weaknesses of the classical covenant texts from a classical position in which Deuteronomy is late and therefore all pentateuchal traditions which show Deuteronomic influence are late as well. Nicholson, God and His People, 188.

antiquity of Deuteronomy in some form, to postulate a
connection with the second millennium B. C. Hittite
suzerainty forms and argue for the antiquity of a biblical
covenant based on a treaty analogy.

Klaus Baltzer hints at the antiquity of the covenant
terms in the so-called Deuteronomistic tradition by noting
that if the Deuteronomistic tradition is associated with the
period of the Josianic reform movement in the seventh
century B.C., then it must be primarily a revival of a much
earlier form rather than a new innovation.[54] While
Baltzer recognizes the value of later Assyrian texts, he
states, "It remains, however, a striking and historically
unexplained fact that the Old Testament texts resemble most
closely the highly developed formulary of the Hittite
treaties".[55]

This evidence does seem to point in the direction that
the structure of Deuteronomy is related in some way to the
political treaties of the ancient Near East.[56] Beyond
this acknowledgement, it is difficult to assess how much of
it is old and how much involves editorial reworking. The

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[54]Klaus Baltzer, The Covenant Formulary, trans. David
E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), xiii.

[55]Ibid., xii.

[56]Nicholson admits that the final structure of
Deuteronomy 28 resembles the curses in the Assyrian treaties
but oddly suggests that a relationship wasn't consciously
intended. Instead, the structure of the chapter grew via a
gradual process of the accretion of curse traditions.
Nicholson, God and His People, 77.

treaty covenant analogy need not perfectly reflect Hittite or later Assyrian parallels to be valid historical inference. The structure of Israel's treaty with Yahweh may be distinctive in some ways through a blending of law codes and treaty characteristics.[57] Peter Craigie, for example, cautiously proposed a no-longer extant Egyptian form of a vassal treaty behind the original form of Deuteronomy.[58] For the purposes of this study of Joel, the plausibility of a Deuteronomic influence on the book as early as the mid-eighth century B. C. is all that is proposed and either the earlier Hittite or later Assyrian forms provide a suitable model for such an early influence.

(3) Whether or not the word 'covenant' (בְּרִית) in the biblical literature predates the seventh century B.C.[59] is tied together with one's critical presuppositions regarding the pericopes in which the term resides. If all occurrences of the term reflect Deuteronomic editing and such editing is by definition late, then the term is late (e.g., Genesis 15:18; Exodus 19:5; 24:7-8; 34:27-28; Joshua 24:1-28; II Samuel 23:5; Psalm 89). Whether all these and others are late must be argued on a text by text basis but signs of

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[57]Cf. G. J. Wenham, "The Structure and Date of Deuteronomy," (PhD. Diss., University of London, 1970).

[58]Craigie, The Book of Deuteronomy, 79-83.

[59]The literature on b^erît is enormous but detailed study is found in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Volume II, S. v. 'berith', by M. Weinfeld, 253-79.

antiquity occur in many.[60] One can point to an underlying
core of ancient tradition behind covenant which could
reflect treaty associations. Secondly, it is possible that
even later usage retains an earlier understanding of a
covenant treaty with Yahweh.

There is no doubt the semantic range of covenant in
the Old Testament is broader than a treaty analogy, but
certainly the treaty analogy is an important one that 'fits'
some biblical texts (e.g., most notably Deuteronomy and
Joshua 24). The paucity of references in the earlier
prophets (Hosea 6:7; 8:1 are covenant's earliest occurrences
among them) neglects the possibility that a concept can be
present without the word itself being mentioned. For
instance, in modern America one might mention freedom of

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[60]E.g., Baltzer, The Covenant Formulary, 20, 25.
Joshua 24 provides a good example of the problem of relating
critical decisions regarding dates and provenance to new
data. The problem becomes acute when Deuteronomic editing
posited in Joshua 24 is formally a characteristic of a
covenant treaty structure. One must decide whether the
references to blessings and cursings in Joshua 24:19-24 are
signs of a Deuteronomic hand or evidence of a treaty
formulary common to both Joshua 24 and Deuteronomy. Such a
dilemma may be insoluble but shows a certain circularity in
reasoning. A paradigmatic literary understanding of
Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic editing may become a
controlling presupposition in critical analysis of any
passage. Implications of new data may not be recognized.
This approach is found in Nicholson's critique of the work
of Weinfeld who posited the unity of Deuteronomy 28 based on
the passage's formal similarity to the curse sections of
Assyrian treaties. Nicholson asserts that Weinfeld makes
the treaty Gattung the controlling presupposition without
recognizing that he (Nicholson) makes his own understanding
of the literary growth of Deuteronomy the controlling
presupposition by which he rejects the postulations of
Weinfeld. Nicholson, God and His People, 75.

speech without referring to the formal document in which the concept appears, the American Constitution. The concept of covenant defined in the above manner is one presupposition of the prophetic preaching.[61]

(4) It is true that the notion of an 'amphictyony' in early Israel has been critiqued and in the main rejected.[62] However, the view that the nation was a loose tribal confederacy persists.[63] Clearly the tribes possessed a sense of cohesion. The narrator of the book of Judges perceived the tribes as one people just as in the Mernephtah Stele. For example, pan-Israelite expressions such as "all Israel" and "all the sons of Israel" occur in Judges 8:27 and 2:4; 20:1, respectively.[64]

Terms above like b^enê yiśrāēl and others imply that pan-tribal cohesion was partially based on an ethnic unity

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[61]Bright, Covenant and Promise, 41-42.

[62]One example is A. D. H. Mayes, Israel in the Period of the Judges (London: SCM Press, 1974).

[63]Bright, A History of Israel, 3d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), 161-82.

[64]Other pan-Israelite expressions include "the hand of Israel" (3:30; 11:21), "the camp of Israel" (7:15), "the misery of Israel" (10:16), "the daughters of Israel" (11:40), "the border of Israel" (19:29), "the inheritance of Israel" (20:6), and sixty-one times, "the sons of Israel." See Daniel I. Block, "The Period of the Judges," Israel's Apostasy and Restoration, ed. Avraham Gileadi (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 41-42.

of descent from a common ancestor.[65]   In addition, tribal

cooperation may have occurred when facing a common enemy.

Finally, there was tribal cohesion based on a common

religious faith. Yahweh was their national deity who

covenanted with them at Sinai (Judges 5:5 and Deut. 33:2-5).

The early Israelite covenant with Yahweh demanded an

exclusive allegiance (Judges 2:1-2; 6:10; 10:3-4). The

nation is called the "people of God" (עַם־הָאֱלֹהִים) Judges

20:2), or "his people, Israel" (עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל) Judges

11:23).[66] Thus, a modified loose tribal confederation

based on a covenant faith, common ancestry, and protection

from common enemies is probably the most tenable position

possible.

It is not without significance to remember the

plethora of covenants backed and enforced by deities that

existed among peoples in the ancient Near East when asking

about the possibility of such a treaty in early Israel.[67]

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[65]Fohrer's explanation of a tribal unity based on the formulation of genealogies in the postsettlement period is one attempt in an ethnic direction. Georg Fohrer, "Altes Testament-'Amphiktyonie' und 'Bund'?" Theologische Literaturzeitung 91 (1966): 801-16 and 894-904, (899-900).

[66]Block, "The Period of the Judges," 43.

[67]K. A. Kitchen, "The Fall and Rise of Covenant Law and Treaty," Tyndale Bulletin 40 (1989): 119-35. In my view, Kitchen makes several cogent criticisms of Nicholson's position on the lateness of covenant. (1) Nicholson fails to take note of the extra-biblical evidence that b[e]rît was widely used in West-Semitic texts in all spheres of life at least as early as 1400 B.C. (2) Also, Nicholson fails to recognize that in the comparative material law, treaty and covenant form a conceptual tryptych in the late second

It seems incredible that a covenant with Yahweh would only

come about in a later mid-monarchical setting by way of

theological reflection in a milieu of covenant making dating

from at least the second millennium B.C. among Israel's

neighbors.[68] Evidence for such a treaty background for

the Israelite covenant exists not only in the canonical

Torah traditions but also in the prophetic corpus as set

forth in the following discussion.

The basic covenantal background of prophetic thought

was commonly recognized as stated by Clements:

> The institution of a tradition of law, with both ethical
> and cultic regulations was indigenous to Israel's cult,
> and forms a permanent feature of the covenant
> relationship between Yahweh and Israel. It is to this
> tradition of a covenantal code of conduct that the great
> prophets of the eighth and seventh centuries appealed
> when they accused their nation of disloyalty to Yahweh,
> and of disregard of his revealed demands.[69]

In general, prophetic thought thus entailed reflection upon

earlier traditions regarding Israel's election and the

divine stipulations flowing from her choice.[70]

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millennium B. C. material and not in the first millennium
materials.

[68]Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary
Volume, s. v. 'Covenant, Mosaic' by P. A. Riemann
(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), 193.

[69]Clements, Prophecy and Covenant, 23.

[70]Ibid.; Clements has since rejected covenant as the
one major explanation for the prophetic preaching and does
not see tradition in ancient Israel as a uniform entity
which imposes a unifying pattern on the prophets. Clements,
Prophecy and Tradition, Growing Points in Theology (Atlanta:
John Knox Press, 1975), 23, 87.

The covenant and the covenant form were often appealed to in explaining the rationale for the prophetic critiques of national Israel. It was not claimed that the prophets used the form itself, but rather were influenced by institutions and forms of expression which reflected or resembled the covenant form.[71]

One line of evidence pursued was the possible relationship of the prophet to the cult as a so-called 'cult prophet'. The evidence is strong that the ancient presentations of Israel's Sinai covenant with Yahweh entailed a sacrificial rite and thus a cultic connection (cf. Exodus 24:11; also later Deuteronomy 27). Similarly, the treaties also involved a relationship to a cult since the oath was taken in a religious context and provision was made to deposit the treaty in a temple. In such a scenario the cult prophet's duty was to proclaim the covenant law with cursing for disobedience and pronouncing blessing for obedience.[72] While it is difficult to establish a direct connection between worship in the cult, covenant, and the prophetic office, evidence in the Psalms shows the obligation to know the covenant and pass on the knowledge of it to future generations.[73] Further, certain prophetic

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[71]McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant, 35-36.

[72]Cf. Walther Zimmerli, The Law and the Prophets (Oxford: at the University Press, 1965), 52.

[73]Examples are Psalms 105:1-5, 111:4, 135:13.

passages appear to merge these three ideas of covenant, cult, and the prophetic office.[74]

A second line of evidence adduced to show dependence on the covenant treaty form is the parallels between the prophetic threats and the curses found in the ancient Near Eastern treaties. These parallels are striking and documented in the work of F. C. Fensham and Delbert Hillers.[75] The curses found in the treaties are connected with the curses existing in the final form of the Pentateuchal corpus (e.g., Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28). These maledictions or curses also permeate the writings of the Latter Prophets.

The purpose of the curses in the treaties was to provide the most effective guarantee that the treaty will be kept by invoking the curses of the gods upon any treaty violator. In a similar manner, the prophets pointed out that Yahweh's curses, which were embedded in the

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[74]Cf. Walter Brueggemann, "Amos IV 4-13 and Israel's Covenant Worship," Vetus Testamentum 15 (1965): 1-15; and Hosea 4:1-5 where Yahweh's lawsuit accusation for covenant violations is directed against both the priesthood and the prophets for failing to pass on to the people the knowledge (v. 5) of covenant stipulations (vv. 1-2). Hosea seems to imply a proper connection between covenant, cult, and prophecy which has gone awry.

[75]F. C. Fensham, "Common Trends in the Curses of the Near Eastern Treaties and Kudurru-inscriptions Compared with the Maledictions of Amos and Isaiah," Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 75 (1963): 155-75; also Delbert Hillers, Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets, Biblica et Orientalia 16 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964).

stipulations of their covenant with him were about to take
effect because Israel had violated his covenant. Thus, in
the book of Amos one finds the words, "You only have I known
of all the families on earth, Therefore I will punish you
for all your iniquities." (Amos 3:1-2, Revised Standard
Version) Amos's threat is based on Yahweh's knowledge of
Israel and such knowledge reflects Yahweh's special
relationship with Israel as her suzerain protector in the
context of the language of the treaties.[76]

Returning to the curses in the prophets and those in
the treaties, one finds numerous similarities. For
instance, the curse of wild animals which is directed
against treaty violators in the treaties and in the biblical
covenant curse pericopes (e.g., Leviticus 26:22; Deuteronomy
32:24) is also delineated in a number of prophetic passages.
In Hosea 13:7-8, God is likened to an angry lion, she-bear,
and panther who will devour Israel. The above comparison
becomes illumined when one notes the same curse in a Sefire
treaty of the eighth century B.C. which reads in part, "May
the gods send every sort of devourer against Arpad and
against this people! [May the mouth of a snake [eat], the

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[76]Herbert B. Huffmon, "The Treaty Background of Hebrew
'Yada'," Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental
Research, 181 (February, 1966): 31-37, points out that (ידע)
'to know' encompasses two legal senses in the treaties,
namely recognizing treaty stipulations as binding and
recognizing the legitimacy of the suzerain or vassal
relationship (see Hosea 4:1-2; 13:4-5).

mouth of a scorpion, the mouth of a bear, the mouth of a panther . . . ."[77]

Another common curse found in the treaties and the Pentateuchal curse language is drought, locusts, and general agricultural disaster (see Deuteronomy 28:24, 38, 39; Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon 528-531). The prophets too make use of such imagery. Amos 4:7-9 mentions lack of rain, locusts, and the resultant agricultural disaster as evidence of Yahweh's activity against Israel for unfaithfulness which will ultimately result in a holy war by Yahweh, the God of Hosts against Israel (Amos 4:13). In Yahweh's war against his people, he would execute the curse of invasion and dispersion mentioned in Leviticus 26:25, 33 and Deuteronomy 28:49, 63.

The gruesome results of such invasions are described under the rubric of cannibalism in the besieged vassal's city. Hillers mentions the Ashurnirari treaty which states, "May they eat the flesh of their sons (and) their daughters and may it taste as good to them as the flesh of a ram or sheep."[78] The same morbid curses are found in Leviticus 26:29 and Deuteronomy 28:56 and reflected in the doom

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[77]Cited and modified in Delbert Hillers, Covenant: the History of a Biblical Idea (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 132 from J. A. Fitzmeyer, The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire, Biblica et Orientalia, 19 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967), 181, 185.

[78]Hillers, Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea, 136.

oracles of the prophets (e.g., Jeremiah 19:9; Ezekiel 5:10), both of which speak of family members devouring one another.

Another parallel between the treaty curses and prophetic imagery is the cessation of joy and mirth among the disobedient vassal's people because of the curses coming upon them.[79] The prophet Jeremiah expresses this mournful sentiment well in his repetitive refrain, "I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp." (Jeremiah 7:34; 25:10; and 31:13 for restoration of Israel's joy equated with restoration from exile, New International Version).

The parallels between the treaty curses, Pentateuchal curses, and prophetic imagery could be multiplied many fold. However, it is also true that there was a general tradition of similar curses in the ancient Near East for crimes such as violating tombs and boundaries, and the question arises whether the prophetic curse imagery can be tied to the violation of a covenant with Yahweh in treaty form. Does such a connection provide the best context for a given prophet's use of the imagery? The answer is affirmative in this writer's view because the imagery functions in a similar manner both in the Prophets and in the treaties. Just as in the treaties the curse is invoked because of rebellion, in the prophets the curse is pronounced because

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[79]Ibid., 134.

of rebellion. As Hillers states it, "What framework is there that makes the coming of predators the just and normal outcome of the people's sin?"[80] The presupposition of a binding treaty covenant with Yahweh patterned after others in the ancient Near East provides a plausible conceptual framework that makes sense of and underlies some of the prophetic message.

The third line of evidence which points to a covenant background with treaty characteristics is the prophetic rîb motif, the Gerichtsreden or covenant lawsuit. Examples often cited of the covenant lawsuit in the prophetic books include: Isaiah 1:2ff.; Micah 6:1ff.; Jeremiah 2:4-13, and Hosea 4:1-3, as well as Deuteronomy 32; and Psalm 50 outside the prophetic corpus. One major connection between this lawsuit genre and the covenant treaty form is the appeal to the witnesses, namely heaven and earth, and mountains and hills. Old Hittite vassal treaties invoke deified mountains and other natural elements as witnesses. In Micah 6:1-2, the prophet asks the mountains and hills to hear the case of Yahweh against Israel regarding their failure to live up to the legal obligations they assumed. Some scholars see the lawsuit genre arising out of the Israelite civil court procedure[81] or out of the cult and not out of the treaty form. However, procedural law, or the cult for that matter,

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[80]Ibid., 139.

[81]Clements, Prophecy and Covenant, 78.

and a political treaty background need not be mutually
exclusive and thus a lawsuit pattern based on violation of a
covenant form similar to the ancient Near Eastern vassal
treaty appears reasonable to many.[82]

The use of lawcourt procedure would be suitable to
many kinds of legal violations and may say little about the
cause of the suit. However, when one looks at other
thematic roots in the lawsuit speeches such as (ידע) 'to
know' (חטא) 'to sin', and (פשע) 'to rebel', and finds them
occurring in treaty contexts as well, a treaty context for
the lawsuit is strengthened.[83] Again, it is only the
reasonable nature of a linguistic connection with the treaty
form that is being proposed.

Outside the prophetic corpus, the invocation of heaven
and earth as witnesses is also found in biblical texts which
are specifically covenantal speeches such as Deuteronomy 4
and 30. Deuteronomy 4:25-27 invokes heaven and earth as
witnesses against Israel that if they worship idols after
Yahweh permits them to dwell long in the land, they will be

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[82]G. E. Wright, "The Lawsuit of God: A Form-Critical
Study of Deuteronomy 32," Israel's Prophetic Heritage, James
Muilenburg Festschrift (1962), 26-67; J. Limburg, "The Root
Rib and the Prophetic Lawsuit Speeches," Journal of Biblical
Literature 88 (1969): 291-304.

[83]So Limburg, "The Root Rîb and the Prophetic Lawsuit
Speeches," 303-4, who makes the important point that these
roots in combination have possible treaty backgrounds and
thus a covenant lawsuit brought by Yahweh and based on
violation of his treaty with Israel is the sphere of life in
which these speeches originated.

destroyed off the land and be scattered among the nations.
The validity of the treaty parallel appears to be
strengthened when it exists in both covenantal texts in the
Pentateuch and the prophetic oracles against Israel and
Judah. When one examines the cumulative evidence for a
treaty type covenant background for many of the prophetic
oracles, it remains a tentative hypothesis subject to future
revision but nevertheless a plausible one. The same could
be said of a treaty covenant background for some of the
Pentateuchal traditions.

Treaty Covenant Form and Joel

Interestingly, Joel as a prophetic book supplies
evidence for a covenant treaty background for at least some
prophetic thought. The book as it stands connects covenant
and cult, reflects covenant curse language, and indirectly
hints at familiarity with the rîb motif.

Joel is often seen as a cultic prophet. He is
familiar with the priestly routine, calls the people to a
penitential assembly and grieves over the stoppage of the
Temple offerings caused by the crisis.[84] The material in
Joel has affinities with cultic compositions as well and it
seems plausible that Joel used these forms to address the
people regarding their violation of the covenant. Joel 1:5-

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[84]Allen, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah, 31, finds the
idea that the prophet Joel was a cult functionary quite
plausible.

14 possesses the formal character of a call to communal
lamentation. Of interest is the reason for the call as
stemming from a locust plague which is interpreted by the
prophet as a harbinger of the Day of Yahweh. How could this
connection between a plague of insects and the Day of Yahweh
involve a violation of a covenant and in particular a
covenant in treaty form? Von Rad noted that the traditional
Day of Yahweh, as he viewed it originating in holy war,
seemed to have little to do with the advance of a locust
plague.[85] Perhaps the answer entails the possibility that
Joel conceived of the Day of Yahweh in broader terms than
holy war. If the Day's coming was caused by a violation of
a covenant in treaty form with Yahweh and possessing
specific stipulations and penalties, then the locusts as an
aspect of such a Day become sensible as does Joel's call for
lamentation based on their ravages.

Further, a second reason for Joel's call to communal
lament is also a harbinger of the Day of Yahweh, namely
drought. In Joel 1:10, 12 and 17-20, the land is wilted,
the new-wine dried up, the trees of the field withered, the
beasts groan, the wild beasts pant after water, and fire
caused by drought ravages the pasturelands. Indeed, the Day
of Yahweh is near because of a combination of factors
including locusts, drought, and fire. None of these
calamities fits well with an understanding of the Day of

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[85]von Rad, Old Testament Theology, Vol. II, 122.

Yahweh limited to holy war or for that matter theophany, except perhaps fire. Yet in the book of Joel they are regarded as evidences of the nearness of Yahweh's Day, a day of judgment on the people. Why would the prophet interpret these occurrences as evidence of Yahweh's judgement, and why were they visited upon the people of Judah? One answer lies in an interpretation of the locusts, drought and fire as the prophetically recognized fulfillment of curses unleashed by violation of the covenant treaty with Yahweh.[86]

Joel also appears to reflect the curse language of the covenant traditions and such language is entangled in the understanding of the Day of Yahweh found in the book. The basis of the call to communal lament is a series of terrible calamities which are befalling and will befall Judah. These calamities are so terrible that the Judahites are called to mourn concerning these things (Joel 1:15-18). The reason for the calamities is the arrival of the Day of Yahweh which is a Day that brings devastation and destruction for Judah in its wake (1:15). The calamities that occur are evidence of the Day of Yahweh and bring up the question of whether there is any coherence or unity to the calamities that would help in their interpretation and thus in interpreting the Day of Yahweh as it functions in Joel? The answer may lie in the similarity of the calamities in Joel to the curses in

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[86]Hillers, Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets, 88.

the Pentateuchal traditions (especially in Deuteronomy) which in turn are illuminated by the vassal treaty pattern in the comparative materials in the ancient Near East.

Covenant curse language is reflected in the several crises facing the terrified citizens of Judah. The locusts which are ravaging the land are evidence of Yahweh's curse for violating the covenant (Deuteronomy 28:42). The same is true of the curse of drought in Joel 1:20 found also as a covenant curse in Deuteronomy 28:22. Even the fire which has eaten the pasturage (Joel 1:20b) building and intensifying the case for the Day of Yahweh is found in Deuteronomy 28:24 where Yahweh is described as a consuming fire. The crisis of war and invasion occurring in Joel 2:1-17 is widely distributed in the curse language of Deuteronomy 28 as well as the curse language of Leviticus 26 in the Holiness Code. A third calamity which is also found in the covenant curse language is the desolation of the land (Joel 1:9, 16; 2:3-5) as a result of the agricultural disaster and invasion of the land of Judah (Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 28:51).

The comparison of the calamities in Joel with the occurrence of curses for violation of the covenant with Yahweh as enumerated in Deuteronomy and parts of Leviticus is intriguing for it provides a coherent background for Joel's understanding of the calamities as well as his understanding of the Day of Yahweh which the disasters

define. In terms of the debate between von Rad and Fensham regarding the origin of the Day of Yahweh, Joel provides evidence for Fensham's view that the Day of the Lord was originally a day in which certain curses took effect for violation of a treaty covenant. For the Day entails more than holy war as noted by the curse language discussed above. However, it is possible that Joel has a developed conception of the Day which it did not originally have. The idea of a coming grand era of final blessing for Zion and cursing for Yahweh's enemies wasn't made explicit in the covenant traditions but the idea of a chastised then restored and blessed Israel provided a seedbed for such eschatological thinking.

The peculiar similarity between Deuteronomy 32, commonly associated with the covenant lawsuit motif, and Joel 1 and 2 provides further evidence that at least Joel's Day of Yahweh involved the coming of Yahweh in judgment for violation of the Deuteronomic treaty covenant. Since the lawsuit motif is often appealed to for evidence that the prophets knew of a treaty type covenant between Yahweh and Israel, it is not insignificant that Joel is similar both structurally and thematically to the lawsuit form in Deuteronomy 32, as Stuart first noted:

> In many particulars Joel 1 and 2 reflect both structurally and thematically what is found especially in Deuteronomy 32. The nonimperative verbs in Joel 1 are predominantly preterite, while the nonimperative verbs in chapter 2 are predominantly present-future. Interestingly, Deut. 32 displays a similar shift in

preferred tenses, as the song shifts largely from what
has happened (vv. 1-21a) to what is coming (vv. 21b
-43). When the thematic correspondences are added, the
result is a high degree of comparability as evidenced
in the following listing of key features.

	Deut. 32	Joel 1:1 -2:17
Call to attention	vv 1-2	1:2-3
Justness of Yahweh	vv 3-4	2:13-14
Appeal to remember the past	v 7	1:2
Israel, Yahweh's special people	vv 8-12	1:17
Past agricultural bounty	vv 13-14	1:5-20; 2:3
Yahweh's rejection	vv 19-21	1:15; 2:11, 17
Destructive fire	v 22	2:3, 5
Harm	v 23	2:13
Arrows	v 23	2:8
Famine	v 24	1:4-20
Harmful animals	v 24	1:4-6
Invasion	v 25	1:6; 2:1-11
Taunt of the enemy	v 27	2:17
Yahweh's rejection	vv 26-30	1:15; 2:11, 17
Judgement day	vv 34-35	1:15; 2:1, 2,11
Rescue and forgiveness	vv 36-38	2:12-14, 17
Deliverance from Israel's enemies	vv 39-43	2:20-27
Recompense of the land	v 43	2:18-27[87]

In effect Joel's theme of the Day of Yahweh is permeated by

'canonical' language and ideas derived from a Judahite

Weltanschauung or world view based in authoritative covenant

traditions strikingly similar to those in Deuteronomy and in

part of the Holiness Code (Leviticus 26).

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[87]Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 228, Stuart does not suggest
that Joel is a mere reworking of Deuteronomy 32. In his
opinion, the similarities reveal Joel's knowledge of and
dependence on the covenantal sanctions and blessings found
in the Pentateuchal corpus.

These Hebrew covenant traditions in turn reflect or parallel the formal characteristics of the vassal treaty in the ancient Near East. Indeed, at least in the case of Joel the Day of Yahweh involves a much broader concept than origins in Israelite holy war would seem to allow and this writer is prone to accept Fensham's suggestion that the Day of Yahweh arose out of a vassal-type treaty covenant with Yahweh and involved the execution of certain curses either against Israel's enemies whom Yahweh bound himself to protect when the people were obedient or against Israel for breaking the conditional covenant ratified by Israel in the treaty.

This possibility has important implications for the interpretation of the Day of Yahweh in the book of Joel and because the Day is the major theme for a diachronic/synchronic canonical interpretation of the book itself.

Covenant Curses

If indeed the Day of Yahweh is the primary focus of Joel and every section of the book is structured as an explication of the theme, then the inability of certain scholars to tie together certain aspects of the book (e.g. the locusts with the Day of Yahweh) is inexplicable unless the Day is incorrectly defined. In my view, the failure to understand the connection between the Day of Yahweh in Joel and its relationship to the covenant curses and blessings

has resulted in an inability to integrate the curse concepts in Joel with the Day. Thus, Driver could state that the Day of Jehovah would not suggest itself to the prophet Joel as a natural consequence of a locust visitation.[88] The prementioned lack of a conceptual framework for integrating an agricultural disaster with an eschatological Day of Yahweh would also provide impetus for a two stage formation of the book of Joel in order to explain the conjunction of locusts and Yahweh's Day. However, the conceptual integration between the Day of Yahweh and locusts is made plausible once the locusts are seen as a package of covenant curses culminating in invasion and dispersion for the covenant violating nation.

If the Day of Yahweh in Joel is defined by the subject matter surrounding it in the pericopes, then can it be inferred that the curses are an aspect of the Day of Yahweh? Further, are such curses consonant with a covenant curse tradition and do they have canonical precursors or precursors in the comparative material in the ancient Near East? In my judgment the answer to both questions is yes and I will attempt to set forth evidence for these assertions.

First, although the book of Joel never mentions the usual words for cursing (roots אָרַר and קָלַל), the makeup of

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[88]S. R. Driver, <u>The Books of Joel and Amos</u>, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Rev. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), 19.

the disasters associated with the Day of Yahweh are all found in the Pentateuchal curse traditions, in particular the Deuteronomic-Deuteronomistic curses.[89]

Remarkably, the blessing and curse section of Deuteronomy (assuming Deuteronomy reflects a treaty form), provides close parallels to the various Day of Yahweh disasters in the book of Joel. The initial cause of the agricultural disaster in Joel 1 is the ravaging locusts. The same beasts are part and parcel of Yahweh's curses in Deuteronomy 28:38, 42 where swarms of locusts would take over the trees and crops and devour the harvest (cf. Joel 1:7, 11). Of the four terms Joel uses for locusts, two are used elsewhere in specific covenant curse contexts. Outside Joel (גָּזָם) is only found in Amos 4:9 where it occurs in conjunction with hunger, drought, crop failure, pestilence and sword. These are listed as covenant curses in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26. Likewise (חָסִיל) is found in Deuteronomy 28:38 (as the cognate verb) in conjunction with (אַרְבֶּה). It also occurs in 1 Kings 8:37 as a disaster caused by the people's sin which through penitence might be assuaged and in Psalm 78:46 as a plague of judgment on sinful Egypt. The general usage of Joel's particular words for locusts elsewhere reflects a number of times judgment contexts.

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[89]Wolff, _Joel and Amos_, 11, notes their influence but does not recognize their profound impact on the interpretive framework of the Day of Yahweh.

A second covenant curse, drought (Deut. 28:22, 23), is also found in Joel 1:10-12, 17, 19-20, producing a dry ground which has withered and ruined the crops leading to thirst and starvation among the animals. In fact Joel 1:10 mentions the loss of the same agricultural triumvirate of "grain," (דָּגָן) "new wine," (תִּירוֹשׁ), and "oil," (יִצְהָר) as found in the covenant curses of Deuteronomy 28:38-40, 51 and in the same order (see Hos. 2:22; Jer. 31:12 for usage in a context of covenant blessing). The three terms occur in combination in five other texts in Deuteronomy in contexts of covenant blessing or stipulation. Drought as a punishment for covenant violations is also mentioned in Leviticus 26:19 of the Holiness code.

The agricultural drought is extended first to the fruit trees in Joel 1:12 another of the covenant curses in Leviticus 26:20 and Deuteronomy 28:40. It has also affected the flocks and herds (Joel 1:19-20) because they have no pasture or water to drink. A curse on cattle is described in Deuteronomy 28:18. Following and caused by the drought, Joel 1:19,20 describes a fire which is burning up the pastures and trees. In Deuteronomy 32:22, seen as a covenant curse poem, Yahweh equates his wrath with fire (see Amos 5:6 where Yahweh describes his coming to judge the house of Joseph as like a fire).

Other possible curses in Joel 1 include the resulting famine (Joel 1:16). Famine, of course is the end result of

the crop failure caused by the locusts, fire and drought
which will even extend to the priests since they were to
subsist on the tithes and offerings from the land which the
people brought (Numbers 18:12). Famine as a covenant curse
is set forth in Deuteronomy 28:48, 53-57; Leviticus 26:26,
29 and in a prophetic text in Amos 4:6. Joel also notes the
loss of joy and gladness (Joel 1:12, 16) which results from
the disaster. Such a loss of mirth is often alluded to in
the context of Yahweh's judgment on Israel by the prophets
(e.g., Jer. 7:34; 16:9). Isaiah 16:10, an oracle against
the nation of Edom, mentions joy and gladness taken away in
the orchards and vineyards from an enemy invasion.

All of the previously-mentioned curses entail a
disaster which produces the call to communal lamentation in
Joel 1:2-20. However, the curses do not reflect just a
general agricultural disaster but are seen as harbingers of
the Day of Yahweh against Judah (Joel 1:15). Thus, the
locusts, drought, the resulting famine, loss of joy, and
lack of offerings are significant because they entail that
Yahweh's Day is "near," (קָרוֹב). Indeed, Joel reiterates the
Day's expected destructive effects by noting again the
results of Yahweh's covenant curses, the locusts and
drought. The food is gone as well as joy and gladness from
the Temple (Joel 1:16). There is no food in the granaries
(Joel 1:17), so starvation is coming. Already the cattle
are suffering from a lack of pasture (Joel 1:18) and water

(Joel 1:20). The resulting fires have finished off the crops and pasture which the locusts and drought missed.

The covenant curses associated with Yahweh's Day in Joel 1 fall under the rubric of agricultural disaster. The prophet knows, as a good student of Deuteronomic tradition, however, that the end result of the unleashing of the covenant curses is military invasion, defeat and exile (Deut. 28:25, 49-52).

The shift from agricultural disaster to invasion (literal or eschatological) in Joel 2:1-11 follows Joel's call to communal lamentation ending in Joel 1:20. It begins with the formal sounding of an eschatological alarm at the approach of an invader likened to an army (2:1, 2). The invasion alarm included the blowing of the rams horn and is also found in Hosea 5:8-10 and Jeremiah 4:5-6. Following the sounding of a military alarm, a description of the enemy follows in 2:2b-11. They are numerous (v. 2), they too destroy the land with fire (v. 3), they cause great anxiety (v. 6), they are disciplined (v. 7b), they are unstoppable (vv. 7, 8),[90] and they scale the wall and take the city. Unlike the locust plague which has already occurred, the invader in 2:1-11 is yet to come, as suggested by the

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[90]E.g., Duane Garrett points out the absurdity of Judahites trying to stop a locust swarm with weapons of war (הֶשֶׁל) in 2:8. "The Structure of Joel," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 28 (September, 1985): 292.

imperfect verb tenses in 2:4-9.[91] In my opinion, the language in Joel 2 moves beyond the locusts as discussed earlier in chapter one of this dissertation.

Military language abounds in the description of the enemy. They are like running war-horses (v. 4). They sound like rumbling war chariots (v. 5) and appear as a mighty people arrayed for battle (v. 5). The invaders are like warriors or men of war who scale the wall (v. 7). They assault the city as soldiers would, finally entering the homes (v. 9). In verse 11 the invaders are called Yahweh's army and his great encampment. The invaders are equated with the Northerner in Yahweh's assurance oracle (2:20), a traditional name for invading armies in the prophets (Isa. 14:31; Jer. 1:14-15). The army is further accused of pride in Joel 2:20 which is a strange accusation to make against literal locusts but not a human army. The fact that the prayer plea of the people is for deliverance from the rule of foreign nations (Joel 2:17) fits well with an invasion curse motif.[92]

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[91]Wolff, _Joel and Amos_, 41-42.

[92] לִמְשָׁל־בָּם as a construction means "to rule over" in Ps. 106:41; Deut. 15:6 and Lam. 5:8; see however C. F. Keil, _The Twelve Minor Prophets_, trans. James Martin, Commentary on the Old Testament by C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, Vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 199, who dissents preferring to translate (מָשָׁל) as "byword" with Deut. 28:37 and 1 Kings 9:7, 8. Either translation fits an invasion curse motif since Israel becomes a proverb because Yahweh permits their invasion and exile in both Deut. 28:37 and 1 Kings 9:7, 8.

A common objection to interpreting Joel 2:1-11 as a literal army is the apparent strange use of the particle kî (כִּי) wherein the army is compared to itself. However, the older grammarians noted a kaph veritatis which recognizes a thing's correspondence with the idea it ought to realize.[93] For example, in Ezekiel 26:10 the Babylonians are prophesied to enter the gates of Jerusalem (כִּי) "as men enter a breached city." Thus it is plausible Joel is previewing the coming of a literal army.[94] The army may be literal but one that is to come as the final end of Yahweh's execution of curses on his disobedient vassal people. Thus, the locusts in the earlier plague in chapter 1 with their cavalry horse appearance (Heupferde - hay horse in German), prefigure the reality of the ultimate execution of the covenant invasion and dispersion curses. Indeed, the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32, similar to Joel 1 and 2 in many ways is placed in the literary context of Yahweh's and Moses' prediction that the people of Israel would rebel against the covenant treaty and would bring down the covenant curses upon themselves (Deut. 31:16-19, 27). It is the end of the covenant people caused by an invading army and not merely agricultural disaster that leads to the

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[93]Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 454.

[94]Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 251.

plaintive appeal to Yahweh to not let it happen lest the nations ask "Where is their God?"[95]

A final reason for understanding the enemy of chapter two as an enemy army is to supply a reason for Yahweh's judgment against the foreign nations in Joel 4. Why should the nations be judged for a locust plague on Judah?[96] In point of fact, in Joel 4:1-3 the nations are judged for invading and exiling the Judahites as slaves. In the Deuteronomic covenant curses, the invading nations would be used as instruments to chastise Israel. However, the prophets were of one voice in also pronouncing Yahweh's judgment on those nations that invaded Israel (e.g., Nahum; Isa. 13; Jer. 49).

Thus, I interpret the description in Joel 2:1-11 as an invading army which is an aspect of the Day of Yahweh. The form-critical connection of the Day of Yahweh with the battle alarm cry in Joel 2:1 and the summary of the description and destructive activity of the enemy as an aspect of the same Day of Yahweh at the end of the pericope in Joel 2:11, constitutes an _inclusio_ which metaphorically defines the Day as one of invasion.

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[95]Wolff, _Joel and Amos_, 52, notes several Deuteronomistic passages as well as others which he believes are linguistically related (e.g., Ex. 32:12; Deut. 9:26-28; Pss. 44:12-15; 79:4, 10; 115:2).

[96]See Garrett, "The Structure of Joel," 294.

In summary, Yahweh's Day in Joel 1 and 2 represents a progressive judgment by Yahweh himself against his people for covenant unfaithfulness. The judgments are rooted in the covenant curses of the treaty covenant Israel made with Yahweh. There is the same progression in Joel 1 and 2 from agricultural disaster to invasion as found in Amos 4:1-13 where invasion is the end result of failing to heed the warnings of the agricultural covenant curses.

Structurally then, the first two chapters through 2:11 may be outlined as follows:

A (Joel 1:2-20): Covenant Curses Executed: Locusts,
    Drought and Famine

B (Joel 2:1-11): Final Covenant Curse Envisioned:
    Military Invasion by a Foreign Power.

Lament Prayer for Breach of Covenant

Joel 2:12-17 is transitional and provides a bridge between the execution of the covenant curses and Yahweh's oracular response of promised restoration blessings (Joel 2:21-27). These promised restoration blessings are indicative of Yahweh's favor and a restored covenant relationship based on the people's genuine internal repentance. Harvey saw the actual Sitz im Leben of this pericope as a prayer, in the rîb form, offered in the situation of a breach of covenant. The danger to which such prayers speak is the damnation which results from breach of

faith.[97] The damnation which provokes the prayer is the
Day of Yahweh disasters mentioned in Joel 1 and 2. We have
already posited that this Day of Judgment unleashes the
covenant curses upon the people. The prayer was offered on
a day of fasting wherein Israel (Judah in this case) awaited
the answer oracle from Yahweh. For Harvey, the situation .
suggested the reaction of a Hittite vassal who was accused
of a breach of covenant.[98] The function of the prayer is
to interpret the disasters Israel was experiencing or about
to experience in such a way that Yahweh's actions could be
seen as judicially and morally correct.[99] The second
purpose of Yahweh's execution of the curses is to get his
covenant people to return to him (שׁוּבוּ עָדַי) and be faithful
to the covenant. Thus, the lamentation prayer as an aspect
of the broader rîb motif functions as a paranetic
instrument. It is used to prevent judgment on the people by
awakening them to their violation of the covenant, spurring
them to repentance which would result in salvation from

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[97]J. Harvey, "Le *riv* pattern: Requistoire prophetique
sur la rupture de l'alliance," Biblica 43 (1962): 172-96.
see Kirsten Nielsen, Yahweh as Prosecutor and Judge, Journal
for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement, 9 (University
of Sheffield, 1978), 18.

[98]Harvey, "Le *riv* Pattern," 44, mentions Jdg. 20:26-
27.; 1 Sam. 7:5-6; 31:13; Jer. 14:11-12; 36:6-9 as other
examples of prayers belonging to the rîb pattern. One need
not postulate a direct borrowing from the Hittite pattern
for the rîb, as much as a parallel development in Israel.

[99]Harvey, "Le *riv* Pattern," 45; also Nielsen, Yahweh
as Prosecutor and Judge, 18.

Yahweh as their suzerain Lord.[100]   The verb 'return' presupposes the covenant relationship.   In asking the people to return "with all their heart" (בְּכָל־לְבַבְכֶם) Joel is taking up both Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic themes.[101]   This redemptive purpose of the covenant curses is clearly reflected in Amos 4:6-11 where the function of the covenant curses was thwarted in Yahweh's sad refrain, "yet you have not returned to me."

The basis of Joel's call to return wholeheartedly is Yahweh's compassionate character (2:13).   The revelation of Yahweh's gracious and compassionate character first occurs in Exodus 34:6-7.   However, its usage here is associated with God repenting of evil (וְנִחַם עַל־הָרָעָה).   The two ideas occur together in Jeremiah and some related Deuteronomic traditions (Jer. 18:7-8; 26:3; 42:10; Ex. 32:12, 14; 2 Sam. 24:16).

In Joel 2:14, based on Judah's repentance and Yahweh's compassionate character, it is deemed possible that He will abort the full execution of the deserved covenant curses and leave a blessing behind, namely the harvest produce for meal offerings and libations for Yahweh.   The (מִנְחָה) and (נֶסֶךְ) hint at the coming agricultural covenant restoration

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[100]Harvey, "Le *riv* Pattern," 46; see Nielsen, Yahweh as Prosecutor and Judge, 18.

[101]Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School, 334, cites the theme in Deut. 4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:4; 26:16; 30:2, 6, 10 and in 1 Samuel 12:20, 24. It is also found in Ps. 119:10, 34, 69; and Prov. 3:5.

blessings following in the answering assurance oracle in Joel 2:18ff. "Who knows?" (מִי יוֹדֵעַ) recognizes the absolute freedom of God to continue judgment or have mercy.

The second prophetic alarm call in Joel 2:15 refers back to Joel 2:1 and Joel 1:14, linking the invasion with the need for a communal repentance in which everyone must participate from babies to the elderly (Joel 2:16). The priests are to express the people's fear of permanent captivity among the nations (Joel 2:17). As discussed earlier (p. 147, fn. 92), (לִמְשָׁל־בָּם) elsewhere means 'to rule over' which implies an invading army rather than literal locusts (see Ps. 106:41; Deut. 15:6; Lam. 5:8). Likewise, the priests' appeal to Yahweh's honor reflected in the conquering nations taunt, "Where is their God?" (אַיֵּה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם) denotes more than an extraordinary economic crisis. Indeed, it pictures the coming end of the covenant people.[102]

With Joel 2:18, the book shifts from covenant curses for Judah to the introduction of restoration blessings for the nation which includes ultimately curses on her enemies (Joel 4). Joel 2:18 provides a transition from the people's earlier plea for deliverance to Yahweh's response through an assurance oracle (Joel 2:19-3:5). In answer to the people's repentance, "Yahweh became jealous" (וַיְקַנֵּא) for his land "and took pity" (וַיַּחְמֹל) on his people. Thus begins what

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[102]Wolff, _Joel and Amos_, 52.

Yahweh will do in blessing to restore their state of devastation.

<div align="center">Covenant Restoration Blessings</div>

<u>Material</u>

The concept of God's promised 'blessing' (בְּרָכָה) is at the heart of the Old Testament message. From the blessing of humanity in Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:28), through the blessing of Abraham (Gen. 15:18-20; 22:17-18), to the covenant blessings given the nation Israel (Deut. 7:13, 14), blessing is intricately bound up in God's relationship with humankind. Thus, it was recently proposed that the essential core of blessing is the prior relationship between God and the person blessed.[103] "A blessing is any benefit or utterance which God freely bestows in order to make known to the recipient and to others that he is favorably disposed toward the recipient."[104] The actual type of benefit which God bestows is of secondary importance but God's relationship with a person is established by covenant.

The covenantal blessings promised the nation of Israel functioned to motivate the people to observe the stipulations of the Sinai covenant. The ultimate end of Yahweh's blessing of Israel is that the nations might fear

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[103]Christopher Wright Mitchell, <u>The Meaning of Barak, 'to bless', in the Old Testament</u>, SBL Dissertation Series (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1985), 165.

[104]Ibid.

and respect him once they ascribe Israel's prosperity and dominion to Yahweh's activity (Deut. 28:10).[105]

It is within the context of the national covenantal blessing promises that the blessings in Joel are understood. Further, the blessings in Joel occur in association with and under the rubric of the Day of Yahweh. Since the prophets did not set forth the first occupation blessings, already established in the Mosaic traditions, their allusions to the blessings are seen primarily as the opposites of the judgment curses invoked by the prophets on the nation for their violation of Yahweh's treaty covenant.[106]

Many of the covenantal blessings given to Israel involved the fertility of domesticated animals, crops, and people (e.g., Deut. 28:4, 5 corresponding to the blessings section of Deuteronomy seen as a confluence of law and treaty). In Yahweh's oracular response to the people of Judah in Joel, he promises to restore their agricultural prosperity by sending them grain, new-wine, and olive oil, a synecdoche for material covenant blessing (Joel 2:19, 22b, 24). It is important to note that the agricultural blessing is abundant and not merely enough to meet individual needs. Within the same answer to the lamentation of the Judahites, Yahweh promises to restore the fertility of animal husbandry by restoring the pastures of the field (Joel 2:22a). The

[105]Ibid, 36.

[106]Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, xxiii.

covenantal treaty blessings promised abundance to share with
an Israelite servant set free from his servitude (e.g.,
Deut. 15:14 commands the master to give the freed slave from
his own flocks, threshing floor, and wine vats). The
overflowing of food (Joel 2:26) will cause the people "to
eat and be sated" paralleled in Deuteronomy 8:10. Thus
sated the people will once again praise and worship Yahweh.
Part of such worship undoubtedly would involve returning
part of the blessing as a meal offering and libation unto
Yahweh (Joel 2:14). Rather than Joel seeing the restoration
of the (חִמְדָּ) per se as the blessing, in line with the
tradition in Exodus 20:24 and 1 Kings 8, the prophetic book
recognizes that God designated the centers of worship as the
chief places where blessing is mediated to the people (Ex.
20:24 "in every place where I cause my name to be remembered
I will come to you and bless you.") Therefore blessing in
Joel 2:14 encompasses the full range of covenant blessings
mentioned in Joel 2:19-27.

Including Joel 1:2-2:11, and adding the pericope to
Joel 2:27, there is a chiastic structure as follows:

A (Joel 1:2-20): Covenant Curses Executed: Locusts,
     Drought and Famine

B (Joel 2:1-11): Final Covenant Curse Envisioned:
     Military Invasion by a Foreign Power

C (Joel 2:12-19): Transition: Prayer for Breach of

Covenant and Introduction to Yahweh's

Response of Blessing (vv. 18-19)

B[1] (Joel 2:20): Restoration Blessings: the Coming

Army Destroyed

A[1] (Joel 2:21-27): Restoration Blessings: the Locust,

Drought, Famine Ravaged Land Restored[107]

This chiasm bifurcates the book at Joel 2:27 and honors the

intent of the "afterward" occurring in Joel 3:1.[108]

Spiritual

The pericope Joel 3:1-5 is a continuation of the

restoration blessings enumerated in the assurance oracle

beginning in Joel 2:18.[109] Yet the pericope is set apart

as well by the occurrence of the term "afterward" (אַחֲרֵי־כֵן)

in Joel 3:1. The temporal adverb (an anacrusis) refers to

an eschatological second phase of Yahweh's blessing that

includes the denouement of the Spirit in chapter 3 and the

war oracle in chapter 4 that promises ultimate deliverance

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[107]In this pattern, I agree with Garrett, "The
Structure of Joel," 295, but have added the covenant content
which is recognizable in the chiasm.

[108]See R. K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old
Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 874; J. A. Soggin,
Introduction to the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress
Press, 1979), 352.

[109]Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 257, notes the close
relationship between Joel 3:1-5 and the earlier material
blessings of Joel 2:18-27. The Vulgate, Septuagint and some
modern versions connect the pericope with the earlier
oracle.

from and judgment of all God's enemies. The giving of the
Spirit is a covenant restoration blessing in Joel 3 as is
the judgment against the nations in Joel 4. These blessings
supply further evidence of Yahweh's divine favor toward
Judah as the occurrence of "I am in the midst of Israel"
(בְקֶרֶב יִשְׂרָאֵל אָנִי) in Joel 2:27 and Joel 4:17 clearly shows.
The result of Yahweh's actions would be a new recognition
that he alone is the people's God (וַאֲנִי יהוה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְאֵין
עוֹד). The covenant recognition formula is taken up by
another prophet in Isaiah 45:5-6, 18, 22; 46:9, but its
ultimate source lies in the covenant (Deut. 4:35, 39;
32:39). Whereas the earlier restoration blessings were
primarily material or physical, this further blessing from
Yahweh is spiritual involving the giving of Yahweh's
Spirit.[110]

In the Old Testament, God's Spirit or (רוּחַ) often
signifies an energizing power for use in Yahweh's service.
Also, the Spirit evidences Yahweh's presence on those whom
it rests upon (Psalms 51:10-12).[111] The presence of
Yahweh is additional evidence of the renewal of divine favor

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[110]A radical distinction between material and
spiritual is more Greek than Hebrew. Nevertheless, the
passage is dealing with the presence of Yahweh's Spirit in
an intensified form as the capstone of blessing.

[111]New Bible Dictionary, ed. J. D. Douglas, 2d. ed.
(1982), s.v. "Spirit, Holy Spirit," by J. D. G. Dunn
mentions wind and breath as the two other primary meanings
of rûah.

in accordance with the covenant restoration blessings (Deut. 30:9).

The concept of the pouring out (אֶשְׁפּוֹךְ) of Yahweh's Spirit in Joel 3:1 is evidence of the renewal and ratification by Yahweh of the covenant which results in a restoration of peace and prosperity for Israel. The other canonical Old Testament references to the pouring out of Yahweh's Spirit are illuminating and similar. Though a different verb is used in Isaiah 32:15 (עָרָה) the pouring out of Yahweh's Spirit follows his judgment on Israel (Isa. 32:14) and is connected with agricultural fertility as in Joel.[112] Again in Ezekiel 39:29, the renewal of the covenant and the restoration of divine favor is signified by the pouring out of Yahweh's Spirit on the house of Israel. Ezekiel places the pouring out of the Spirit in a restoration context wherein Israel has been brought back from her captivity among the nations for her sin (Ezek. 39:23). The importance of the Spirit in enabling the people to keep Yahweh's covenant is strikingly portrayed in Ezekiel 36:24-29 where the (רוּחַ) empowers Israel to keep Torah. A similar concern is expressed in Jeremiah 31:27-33 where after Israel's captivity, Yahweh makes a new covenant with

[112]Isaiah 44:4 predicts future relief from drought and the pouring out of Yahweh's Spirit on Israel's descendants as proof of Yahweh's covenant blessing. The pouring out follows literarily Yahweh's consignment of Jacob to destruction (חֵרֶם). The reference to Jeshurun as Yahweh's chosen servant reminds one of its occurrence in Deut. 32:15 in a covenant judgment context.

the nation (Jer. 31:31) in which the law is internalized in the people's minds and hearts (Jer. 31:33).[113]

Like the above prophetic passages, Joel too connects the restoration of the covenant relationship with the pouring out of Yahweh's Spirit which occurs after an invasion of the land. However, the result of Yahweh's Spirit being poured out is a universal prophetism in which even slaves will participate (Joel 3:2). Similarly, Jeremiah 31:34 democratizes the infusion of the internalized law upon all classes of people. Joel's promise of the Spirit may be influenced by and prophetic of Moses's wish expressed in Numbers 11:29 that all God's covenant people would someday be prophets.[114] I would suggest that the function of the universal prophetism is to enable the people to understand, keep, and proclaim for a new day, Yahweh's

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[113]Daniel I. Block, "The Prophet of the Spirit: The Use of RWH in the Book of Ezekiel," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 32 (March, 1987): 27-49, notes the close structural similarity in the Hebrew text between Jer. 31:33 and Ezek. 36:27-28 concluding that infusion of the divine Torah in Jeremiah is virtually equated with infusion of the divine Spirit in Ezekiel which both point to as signs of the restored covenant relationship between Yahweh and his previously dispersed people.

[114]In the context of Numbers 11, Moses's wish that all the Israelites would receive the Spirit occurs after the seventy elders are given Yahweh's Spirit in order to bear Moses's burden for the people together with him. As the prophet par excellence, Moses's burden would seem to have included: (1) standing in immediate relationship to Yahweh, (2) receiving the Law from Yahweh, (3) mediating it to the people, (4) leading them in obedience to the Law, (5) identifying with the people, (6) grieving at their sin, (7) interceding for the people.

covenant Law, in direct line with the prophetic office extending back to Moses.

Oracles Against the Nations

The final pericope in Joel 4:1-21 is delivered under the rubric of the Day of Yahweh in Joel 4:14. It consists of oracles against "all nations" (אֵת כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם) further delimited in the prose section (Joel 4:4-8), a passage considered secondary by many.[115]

In taking up judgment oracles against the foreign nations, Joel uses a form common to the canonical prophets. The books of Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Nahum and Obadiah have significant portions devoted to such curse oracles.[116] The foreign nation oracles are indicative of the belief that Israel's God was not merely the God of Israel but was sovereign Lord over all the nations of the world. Yahweh's sovereignty over all nations is implicit in Israel's monotheism and important in Old Testament theology.

In assessing the canonical function of the oracles against the nations in the book of Joel, one must determine the original setting of the OAN[117] and compare it with

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[115]The prose passage in Joel 4:4-8 implicates Tyre, Sidon and Philistia for their crimes against Judah, and Joel 4:19 adds Egypt and Edom to the list.

[116]See Amos 1:3-2:3; Isa. 13:23; Jer. 46:1-51; Ezek. 25:1-32:32.

[117]OAN refers to Oracle Against the Nations in the rest of this sub-section of the chapter.

Joel's apparent usage. Three original settings are commonly proposed: namely, a cultic setting, a military setting, and one in the royal court. In the first, the foreign nation oracle is part of a cultic lament liturgy and is followed by a salvation oracle. A cultic Sitz im Leben has much to commend it since the OANs do appear to portray the ultimate deliverance of Israel from the power of the nations to a position of power over the nations, surely an aspect of the assurance or salvation oracle. The cultic setting fits well in the overall plan of the canonical form of Joel as a continuation of Yahweh's assurance oracle toward Judah begun in Joel 2:19.[118] Nevertheless, the distinguishing marks of an oracle answering a plea are absent except for the mark of divine speech.[119] The second proposal involves an original military setting in which the OAN is used to prepare for war against the enemy. Again, this view is possible in Joel's OAN pericope since a holy war oracle is announced in Joel 4:9 wherein Yahweh draws the nations into a futile battle against him. The third setting proposed is a royal court setting in which a court prophet would prophesy victory over an enemy. Such a setting appears unlikely in the context of the book of Joel. There are no signs of a royal context.

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[118]Wolff, Joel and Amos, 73-74.

[119]Ibid., 74.

In my judgment, all three of the proposed functional settings are lacking. Since the OANs, in general, announce violent retribution against Israel's enemies because of their treatment of her, they appear to be filled with violent hatred. Often they are seen as angry diatribes unworthy of any ethical prophet and thus secondary additions. However, there is another possible origin for the OAN which fits the formal structure of Joel and the theme of Yahweh's Day as Joel understands it. The proposed setting involves a treaty covenant context for the foreign nation oracles.

Michael L. Barre has recently set forth a case that the OANs in Amos 1:3-2:6 were motivated by treaty violations against Israel by nations which were part of the original empire of David.[120] As part of David's empire, they were under the imperium of Yahweh.[121] Therefore, the oracles function as pronouncements (readings) of a vassal/suzerain covenant response clause. If Barre is correct, then covenant was entering the stream of OAN traditions at least as early as the time of Amos in the mid eighth century B.C.

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[120]Michael L. Barre, "The Meaning of l᾿ ᾿sybnw in Amos 1:3-2:6," Journal of Biblical Literature 105 (1986): 619. Max Polley in Amos and the Davidic Empire (Oxford: at the University Press, 1989), 64, is more cautious about connecting the OANs with international law but calls it intriguing.

[121]Barre, "The Meaning of l᾿ ᾿sybnw in Amos 1:3-2:6," 622.

Another writer, Thomas Smothers, has recently set forth a similar context for the OANs in Jeremiah.[122] In his view, they are not hate oracles, unworthy of an ethical prophet, but reflections of a vassal/suzerain response clause. In examining the OANs in Jeremiah, Smothers noted that twenty-eight pronouncements of judgment in the OANs in the book had exact parallels in the treaty curses in comparative materials. As an example, he notes the removal of joy from Judah (Jer. 25:10) and Moab (Jer. 48:33). Both occur in the context of the execution of treaty invasion curses.[123] On this basis, Smothers concludes that the OANs in Jeremiah reflect a covenant lawsuit against the nations grounded in a treaty type covenant background.

In turning to the OANs in Joel 4, one can point to similar evidence of a treaty lawsuit against the nations. Indeed, the gathering of the nations mentioned in Joel 4:2 is so that Yahweh can bring a lawsuit as plaintiff and judge against them (וְנִשְׁפַּטְתִּי) as a niphal _tolerativum_).[124] Next follows the charges or accusations including the scattering (פִּזְּרוּ) of the nation Israel. Assuming a mid preexilic date for Joel, the original setting of the scattering of Israel

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[122]Thomas G. Smothers, "A Lawsuit Against the Nations: Some Reflections on the Oracles Against the Nations in Jeremiah," _Review and Expositor_ 85 (1988): 545-54.

[123]Ibid.

[124]Wolff, _Joel and Amos_, 76-77.

for Joel, the original setting of the scattering of Israel
refers to the Assyrian deportations of Israel in 733 and
721 B. C. and perhaps the later aborted invasion of Judah in
701 B. C.

The scattering of Israel as a curse for violation of
the covenant permeates the corpus of Deuteronomy seen as a
treaty document. It occurs in the historical prologue in
4:27 as an exhortation to obey, in the curses section in
28:64, and in the witnesses section in Deuteronomy 30:18,
19. It also occurs as a curse for covenant violation in the
Holiness Code in Leviticus 26:33. The primary charge is
that the nations invaded Israel and sold them as slaves to
the Greeks (Joel 4:3, 8). Israel is equated with Yahweh's
covenant people (עַל־עַמִּי) as in Deuteronomy 9:26, 29 and
Deuteronomy 32:9 where Israel is Yahweh's possession.
Further, charges include the casting of lots for the sale of
Israelite prisoners of war (Joel 4:3), a practice regulated
in Israel under her own Deuteronomic treaty covenant
stipulations (Deut. 21:14). Amos 1:6 lodges a similar
charge against the Philistines as the reason for Yahweh's
judgement against them. A third charge involves the removal
of treasure from the land of Judah (Joel 4:5). The
reference to the treasure need not refer to the destruction
of the Temple in Jerusalem and the plunder of its treasure
(cf., Haggai 2:8 where the land's silver and gold are
identified as Yahweh's possession).

Finally, the nations (under the paradigm of Egypt and

Edom) are indicted for shedding innocent blood in Judah

(Joel 4:19).[125] The shedding of innocent blood (דָּם נָקִיא)

was an important part of the Deuteronomic stipulations and

the Deuteronomistic interpretation of the covenant (see

Deut. 19:10; 21:8; 27:25; 2 Kings 21:16; 24:4). It was also

part and parcel of the prophetic critique and evidence of

the Judahite monarchy's failure to keep the covenant as in

Jeremiah 22:1-5. In his judgment against the nations Yahweh

is no respecter of persons. He judges nations under the

same covenant obligations as Israel showing his sovereignty

over the entire world. Yahweh's reason for judgment is

intensified in Joel 4:21 where I interpret the initial

clause as a question reading "And will I leave their

bloodshed unpunished?" and the second clause as Yahweh's

answer, "I will not leave it unpunished!"[126] As Yahweh's

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[125]The listing of the nations as Tyre, Sidon, Philistia, Egypt, and Edom provides little help for dating the events. Egypt and Edom were enemies of Israel from the beginning of the monarchy and before (see the Balaam tradition in Numbers 24:8, 18). Tyre, Sidon and Philistia occur as a group under Yahweh's judgement as early as Amos 1:6-10.

[126]This translation follows Allen, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah, 117, and Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 264, in noting the similar grammatical construction in Jer. 25:29 and assuming that the interrogative particle is lacking because of the waw [see W. Gesenius, Hebrew Grammar, ed. E. Kautzsch, trans. A. E. Cowley, 2d. English ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), par. 150a]. It becomes unnecessary therefore to see Joel 4:21 as an interpolation foreign to the thought of Joel as does Wolff, Joel and Amos, 84, who translates the verse as a declarative and applies it to Judah rather than her enemies.

Day came against his people for such crimes, it will surely come against those who shed the blood of his chosen people. There is indeed a case against these nations, good reason for Yahweh to enter into judgment against them. Thus, Joel places the OANs in the context of Yahweh's deserved judgment for ravaging his covenant people whom he will protect.

Yahweh's eschatological judgment against these nations is implemented through a holy war against them (Joel 4:9), culminating in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 4:12), where Yahweh implements his verdict (Joel 4:14). As it was against Judah, in the earlier part of the book of Joel, the judgment is again rendered against the nations under the rubric of Yahweh's Day, a day of darkness for those so judged (Joel 4:15). Darkness is set forth as covenant curse fulfillment in Deuteronomy 28:29. The inexorable progress of Yahweh's Day against his enemies begins with a challenge to turn their farm tools into weapons (Joel 4:10), and ends with Yahweh's victory roar from Zion in Joel 4:16, a roar which is used in an OAN context also in Amos 1:2.[127]

The judgment on the nations functions not in isolation but as an aspect of the restoration blessings promised Israel in the treaty covenant. However, these restoration blessings have now been placed in the future in an eschatological age when Yahweh would triumph once and for

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[127]This verse is often seen as an inversion of its original usage in Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3.

all over his enemies. One very important aspect of the
covenant restoration blessings was the ability of the
covenant people to regain power over their enemies.
Deuteronomy 32:43 specifically obligates Yahweh to avenge
the blood of his servants. In addition, Deuteronomy 30:7
promises that the curses Yahweh earlier placed on his
disobedient vassal people would rebound on their enemies
after the Israelites repented. Joel appeals to the sure
future punishment of Judah's enemies as evidence that Yahweh
is dwelling in Zion in Joel 4:17 and 4:21. In fact, the
idea of punishment is intrinsic to the Day of Yahweh
envisioned for these nations, and a Day of Punishment is
mentioned by Hosea (5:8) as a metonymy for the Day of
Yahweh. Again, punishment is a covenantal curse in
Leviticus 26:41, 43 and Deuteronomy 32:35. The restoration
blessing interpretation of the OANs is confirmed by the
assurance of recognition found in Joel 4:17 wherein Yahweh
affirms that his people will know that he is Yahweh who
dwells in Zion by his judging the nations. "The recognition
of Yahweh as the Covenant-God of Israel is the final goal of
Yahweh's acts with respect to the world of nations."[128]
The Deuteronomic covenant makes it a point of orthodoxy to

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[128]Wolff, _Joel and Amos_, 81.

worship in the place where Yahweh would place his name (Deut. 12), namely Jerusalem or Zion.[129]

The future spiritual covenant restoration blessings to be poured out on Judah are contrasted with the shorter term physical restoration blessings in a chiasm beginning with Yahweh's response to the people's lament (Joel 2:18-19).

Introduction to Yahweh's Promised Restoration

Blessings (Joel 2:18-19)

A (Joel 2:20): Physical Restoration Blessings: The

Coming Army Destroyed

B (Joel 2:21-27): Physical Restoration Blessings: The

Locust, Drought, and Famine Ravaged Land Restored

B[1] (Joel 3:1-5): Eschatological Restoration

Blessings: The Spirit Poured Out on all Flesh

A[1] (Joel 4:1-3, 9-21): Eschatological Restoration

Blessings: The Enemy Nations Destroyed[130]

This second chiastic pattern interlocks with the first, but moves beyond it into a coming eschatological age after the Deuteronomic curses, prophesied as inevitable (Deut. 30), are visited on the nation of Judah.

Just as the Day of Yahweh came in judgment curses against Judah in the first part of the book through Joel

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[129]The inviolability of Zion and the perpetuity of Jerusalem as the holy city of Yahweh was apparently a cultic motif (see the Songs of Zion, Pss. 46; 48; 76; also Isa. 8:9-10; 14:32; 28:16; 29:5-8).

[130]Garrett, "The Structure of Joel," 296.

2:11, after the lamentation and repentance of the people of Judah, the Day of Yahweh comes in blessing and grace unto Israel in the second part of the book. The Day of Yahweh typologically represents several stages of blessing for Judah after the nation's repentance. The stages are set apart by the "afterward" in Joel 3:1. The first phase includes physical restoration blessings (linked with the Day in Joel 2:11) and the second phase delimits spiritual restoration blessings (Joel 3:4) including the final deliverance from all enemies through Yahweh's judgment upon them (Joel 4:14). The pericope in Joel 4:18-21 caps it off with Edenic agricultural conditions in the coming eschatological Day of blessing for Judah.

Summary

In the preceding chapter it was pointed out that the primary problem in correctly interpreting the Day of the Lord in Joel was the connection between the Day itself as a concept and the locust plague evident in the book. In an attempt to solve the problem, we looked for possible canonical precursors that provided a paradigm for interpretation. The origin of the Day of Yahweh was sought in a cult drama, theophany, and holy war setting and all the settings found unconvincing. None of the proposed settings connected paradigmatically the Day of Yahweh with the motifs of locusts, drought, famine, and invasion which occur in Joel.

The final proposed precursor was the Day of Yahweh originating formally in the treaty covenant curses and blessings. The treaty form, in my view, still best explains certain covenant Torah traditions and provides an adequate interpretive framework for much of the prophetic blessings and cursings, the so-called lawsuit genre, and the linguistic usage of terms such as (ידע). In addition, the treaty covenant provides a good rationale for the function of the cult prophet, namely to call the attention of the people to their need for repentance for their covenant violations. Against those who have recently proposed that the covenant form is late and unconnected with the treaties, evidence was offered to support the antiquity of the form including the abundant comparative Near Eastern importance and usage of the form. The prophetic usage of treaty curses and the rîb motif was also adduced as evidence.

In assessing a possible treaty covenant background for Joel, the book was found to possess much imagery that falls under the canonical covenant treaty motifs, including curses such as the familiar locust plague, drought, famine, and invasion (Joel 1:2-2:11). The blessings are also there like the rain and restoration of the productivity of the land (Joel 2:18-27). In addition, the thematic formal similarity between Deuteronomy 32, often seen as a covenant lawsuit poem, and the structure of Joel 1 and 2 was further evidence of the treaty covenant influence in Joel.

When the occurrences of the term, the Day of Yahweh, in Joel are connected to the curse and blessing contents of the book, it can be posited that Joel, as a book, provides a strong argument for Fensham's contention that the Day of Yahweh originated in a treaty curse background since it entails and combines theophany, locusts, and holy war against the nations. Since the Day of Yahweh reflected the execution of curse clauses of a treaty covenant between the suzerain Yahweh and his vassal Israel, it was properly linked with the unprecedented locust plague, which signified the very dawning of the execution of the suzerain's wrath on his disobedient covenant people. Joel's use of locusts, drought, famine as the rationale for his call to communal lamentation in chapter 1 is paralleled in the covenant curse traditions and further evidence that Yahweh's Day is in process against the covenant nation. The invasion motif as a rationale for communal lamentation in Joel chapter 2, again connected with Yahweh's Day, is the final covenant curse inflicted by the sovereign Yahweh for continued national covenant violations.[131]

There is a shift in the focus of the Day of Yahweh caused by the people's lament prayer for breach of covenant (Joel 2:12-17). After the call and prayer, the Day is

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[131]The ancient covenant curse poem in Deut. 32 is set in the canonical form of Deuteronomy as a witness against Israel's descendants concerning their future defection from the covenant they had just ratified with Yahweh (Deut. 31:16-22).

prophesied to become one of blessing for Judah. At first the blessing is imminent and physical through Joel 2:27. Even the judgment on Judah's invading enemy (Joel 2:20) functions as an aspect of Yahweh's renewed covenant blessing on his people. Beginning in Joel 3:1, however, the Day of Yahweh becomes an eschatological day of covenant blessing for Judah which includes the presence of Yahweh's Spirit, the final judgement on Judah's enemies (the enemies of God) in the OANs, and finally paradisal conditions in the land with Yahweh permanently dwelling in Zion.

Thus, there appear to be several Days of Yahweh in the book of Joel. One is primarily historical (the locust plague in Joel 1), with a further imminent dimension (the invaders of Joel 2). Both of these events reflect covenant curses directed against Judah. However, after the prayer of repentance, the Day is transformed to provide restoration from the locust plague of chapter 1 and deliverance from the prophesied invaders of chapter 2. Connected with and yet set apart from the Day in chapters 1 and 2 is the eschatological Day in Joel 3 and 4 in which spiritual blessings are poured out on Judah and judgment is rendered against Yahweh's covenant people's enemies resulting in the restored Edenic conditions in Zion.

The incipient background eschatology for these Days is resident in the covenant, particularly in the covenant curses and blessings which were prophesied to unfold in the

Deuteronomic view of events to come. However, the eschatology of the Day in Joel is not coterminous with the Deuteronomic covenant. There is a progressive eschatology in Joel which seems to reflect a developing understanding of the Day of Yahweh. Such a progression can best be explained by examining the canonical hermeneutics used in Joel to update the Day of the Lord and its sub-themes for the believing communities in Joel's day and beyond. Uncovering these canonical hermeneutics will be attempted in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE CANONICAL HERMENEUTICS OF THE DAY OF YAHWEH

AND ITS SUB-THEMES IN THE BOOK OF JOEL

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I sought to locate and
identify the canonical precursors to the Day of the Lord in
Joel via a tradition history of the theme. I proposed that
the origin of the Day of Yahweh lay in a treaty covenant
that Israel made with Yahweh as reflected in the book of
Deuteronomy and in parts of the Holiness Code (Lev. 26). I
posited that certain sub-themes in Joel also correlated well
with a Day of Yahweh arising out of covenant theology.
These sub-themes included the locust, drought, and military
imagery which were indicative of covenant curses unleashed
on the Day of Yahweh. Likewise, the divine bestowal of
material and spiritual prosperity are aspects of covenant
blessing in the Deuteronomic treaty form, and aspects of the
Day of Yahweh in Joel. Finally, the oracles against the
nations in Joel functioned as an explication of the
Deuteronomic covenant blessing of power over enemies again
under the rubric of the Day of Yahweh.

In the analysis, I noted that the structure of the
book of Joel revealed evidence that the Day of Yahweh is

doublesided in the book. First, it is a Day in which the covenant curses are unleashed on Judah and Jerusalem. Then, it changes to a Day of covenant restoration blessing after the people's lament and repentance. The possibility that the Day of Yahweh in Joel is rooted in the keeping of covenant stipulations by Yahweh against his disobedient vassal people provides a cogent connection between the occurence of the locust plague and the Day of Yahweh which has caused many commentators since Duhm to bifurcate the book.

Some may question the plausibility of the analysis on the grounds of a mid preexilic date for the book of Joel, not to mention the assertion that the book reflects a Deuteronomic viewpoint at such an early date. In response, I would state that the same case could be built with a postexilic Joel and a Deuteronomy with a classical dating. The primary difference would be an eschatological apocalyptic threat in view in Joel chapter two rather than a literal coming army. This of course raises the issue of which meaning is the authoritative one which is precisely Sanders's concern in exploring canonical hermeneutics. For him, it is the wrong question to ask. Better to recover the hermeneutics of every believing community who listened to the book of Joel and contributed to its meaning. Each community should be listened to, from the community of Joel,

to any redactor's understanding, to understandings of the
intertestamental and New Testament believers and beyond.[1]

To begin at the beginning, I would like to examine the
canonical hermeneutics of the original form of the book of
Joel as I understand it. How did the prophet see the Day of
Yahweh? How did he reinterpret it for the needs of a mid
preexilic Judah? How did he transform it and change it?
What need was the tradition and its sub-themes called on to
meet? Sanders's triangle becomes useful in this process.
For it is at the point where traditions/themes are placed in
historical contexts that hermeneutics are discernible. I
have argued for a context in the mid to late eighth century
B.C. in Jerusalemite cultic circles. What point was being
scored by Joel in his claim of the nearness of Yahweh's Day?
I would suggest that the developing Assyrian empire and a
complacent Judah are at the heart of Joel's usage of the
Day.

In order to examine the canonical hermeneutics in Joel
a number of methodological cautions are in order. First,

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[1]Sanders's contention that canonical criticism implies
an open canon and his equation of our efforts at
understanding today with the canonical process is hard to
sustain in my view. The boundaries of the canon may be
somewhat fluid, but even the several canons of Christendom
were fixed over a millennia and a half ago and all contain
the Old and New Testaments. One could, of course, accept a
Marcionite canon which in Sanders's view would seem to be a
legitimate community pluralism. James A. Sanders, Canon and
Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism, Guides to
Biblical Scholarship, Old Testament Series, ed. Gene M.
Tucker (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 25.

"it is a mistake to accept the view that the forms the

canonical prophets used were always bound to their original

setting."[2] Second, for Sanders's canonical criticism the

original meaning is important but only the beginning point

for interpretation.[3] Third, there is both continuity and

discontinuity (or better, developing understandings) in the

believing communities' reuse of the canonical traditions.[4]

Finally, careful attention to canonical traditions does not

imply that the prophet/community lacks creativity in their

relecture, as the vivid locust imagery in Joel makes

abundantly clear.

F. A. Deist has recently proposed that the book of

Joel is constructed as a theology of the Yom Yahweh and I

concur.[5] This Day of Yahweh theology is evident in the

interlocking chiastic structure of the book proposed in

chapter IV of this dissertation (pages 156-57 and 169-70).

I will now examine these two Day of Yahweh chiasms for their

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[2]W. H. Bellinger, Jr., Psalmody and Prophecy, Journal
for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement 27 (Sheffield:
JSOT Press, 1984), 6.

[3]James A. Sanders, "From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4," in
Christianity, Judaism, and Other Greco-Roman Cults, Part
One, New Testament, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity,
ed. Jacob Neusner, 12 Vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 79.

[4]The growing canon and the needs of the believing
community in each period would affect each relecture of a
tradition.

[5]F. A. Deist, "Parallels and Reinterpretation in the
Book of Joel: A Theology of the Yom Yahweh?" in Text and
Context, ed. W. Claassen (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 63-
79.

canonical hermeneutics in the original form of Joel. In doing so, the elements of continuity and development from the Day's origin in treaty covenant curses and blessings is the focus of the study. Next, I will look at the later form of the book with the addition of Joel 4:4-8 and view the possible emphasis which the redactor and community were making in passing it on. Finally, the evidence of the versions will be scrutinized for clues of still later community canonical hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics of the Day of Yahweh in the Original Form of Joel

The First Chiasm

A (Joel 1:2-20): Covenant Curses Executed: Locusts, Drought, and Famine. This first section employs a literalistic hermeneutic. It expresses strong continuity with the Deuteronomic traditions in defining the Day of Yahweh. The imminent disasters of locusts, drought, and famine are proof that Yahweh's Day is near (Joel 1:15) and that the covenant curses are in the process of being unleashed. The covenant curses involve literal locusts (Deut. 28:38, 42), a literal drought (Deut. 28:22, 23), and a literal famine (Deut. 28:48, 53-57.). For the prophet Joel the plague ridden land of Judah was experiencing the fulfillment of Yahweh's prophecy that the people would turn away from the covenant and unleash the covenant curses upon themselves (Deut. 31:16, 29).

Paradigmatic for Joel is the earlier Day, of Yahweh's visitation on Egypt in the Exodus. "As the Deuteronomic series of curses had proclaimed, the calamities of Egypt have now broken in upon the people of God."[6] The connection between the Exodus motif and the Deuteronomic understanding occurs in Deuteronomy 4:32-35 where the Exodus from Egypt is pointed to as an absolutely incomparable event in the life of Israel. Wrapped up in the uniqueness of the event are the plagues themselves. Exodus 10:6, 14 mention that the locust plague on Egypt was of such magnitude that it had never before or since been duplicated.

Joel 1:2 asks the elders and Judahites to search their memories for a comparable event in Judah in consonance with the Deuteronomistic school in Deuteronomy 4:32-35. Further Joel 1:3 requests them to pass the event on to future generations. The request is similar to Yahweh's exhortation to Moses to pass on what he was about to do in his day of visitation against the Egyptians (Exodus 10:2). Thus at the very beginning of the book, Joel is trying to get the people's mental imagery focused on the Deuteronomic warning that Yahweh would visit them as he did Egypt if they rejected him as suzerain. Second, he wanted them to focus on the incomparability of the Egyptian locust plague as

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[6]Hans Walter Wolff, Joel and Amos, ed. S. Dean McBride, Jr., trans. Waldemar Janzen, S. Dean McBride, Jr., and Charles A. Muenchow, Hermeneia, ed. Frank Moore Cross, et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 36.

analogous to their own distress. If their own plague is
analogous to the Egyptian's plague, then it is solid proof
of Yahweh's visitation of his curses on them. This Day too
would be a unique one unto all generations. The tragic
truth of its uniqueness is seen after the fall of Judah and
the exile which dominates the prophetic writings as the
disaster in Israel's history.[7] Although I disagree with
Childs that Joel 1:3 arose as a result of a canonical
editor, he is surely correct in recognizing the importance
of the verse (and I would add v. 2) for the hermeneutics of
the book.[8]

In my judgment this section of the book of Joel
reflects what one might call a prophecy/fulfillment
hermeneutic. As the prophet realizes the serious
significance of these curses, he calls the people to cultic
lamentation.

However, it is clear that the prophet is quite
creative in the use of these curse fulfillment traditions.
The prophet puts most homileticians to shame with his
exegesis and application of the Day of Yahweh to the
believers of his time. He is no mere proof texter but a
creative describer of the covenant curses and their effects

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[7]Douglas Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, Word Biblical
Commentary, Vol. 31, ed. David A. Hubbard, et al. (Waco:
Word Books, 1987), 240.

[8]Brevard Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as
Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 391-92.

on the covenant community. The pathos is evident in his
descriptions of the curses' effects on every section of the
believing community. One can almost hear the addicted cry
of the drunkards as they withdraw from their wine (Joel 1:5)
and feel the exhaustion of the priests as they spend the
night in lamentation (Joel 1:13). Similarly, Joel's
personifications such as the land mourning (Joel 1:10) and
the beasts groaning (Joel 1:18) are exquisite.[9]

It is in the personification of the locusts as a
"nation" (גּוֹי) which has invaded the land that the prophet
excels. For (עָלָה עַל) is a military term and links up with
the invasion curse motif in Joel 2:1.[10] With this hint
Joel reveals that the agricultural disasters are only the
beginning of sorrows. The covenant curses are unleashed and
must play out as predicted. There is only one hope and it
is that Yahweh will respond to the people's sincere
lamentation and avert completion of the day of his wrath.

B (Joel 2:1-11): Final Covenant Curse Envisioned:
Military Invasion by a Foreign Power. This second section
of the first chiasm again suggests a literal trajectory with

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[9]Other stylistic devices abound. Anafora is used with
the repetition of (לִפְנֵי) 3 times in v. 4. Hyperbole is used
in v. 6 where the locusts have the teeth and fangs of a
lion. Assonance promotes the nature of the incomparable Day
in v. 15 where the disasters are called a (שֹׁד מִשַּׁדַּי).

[10]Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 238; Leslie C. Allen, Joel,
Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, New International Commentary on
the Old Testament, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids:
Eerdmans, 1976), 51; cf. Ezek. 38:16.

the covenant curse promise-fulfillment structure in
Deuteronomy and the Holiness Code (Lev. 26). The predicted
end result of the covenant curses is invasion and dispersion
(Deut. 28:25, 29-52). From the command to sound the alarm
Alarmbefehl with the blowing of the ram's horn, to the
description of the enemy, military imagery predominates.
The uniqueness of this coming military disaster is
emphasized in Joel 2:2 which harkens back to the same
introductory statement in Joel 1:2-3 with its Deuteronomic/
Exodus motif background. The invaders come at Yahweh's
behest as suzerain to visit Yahweh's wrath on the sinful
vassal people. In Chapter II of this dissertation, I set
forth the view that the enemy mentioned in Joel 2 is
different than the locusts, a coming human army.[11]
However, I do believe that the starting point for Joel's
prophetic vision of this future army is the locust plague
Judah was experiencing. The locusts provide the
metaphorical matrix for Joel's creative relecture of this
dreaded final curse listed in the covenant with Yahweh.

The prophet doesn't merely state that the end result
of Judah's unmentioned sin is invasion and dispersion. Joel
fleshes out the prophesied curse into a poetic literary
masterpiece. Once again it is a frightening picture
designed to make real live Judahites quake in fear of the
coming Day of the Lord invasion. Joel's hermeneutical

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[11]Wolff, Joel and Amos, 41-42.

intent is similar to Amos 4:4-12 where Israel is warned to prepare to meet their God because they failed to "return" or (שׁוּב) to Yahweh when similar agricultural disasters were visited upon them. Indeed, in Amos 5 Yahweh's Day culminates in Israel's dispersion beyond Damascus (Amos 5:27). Joel likewise prophesies an intensified Day of the Lord progressing from natural disasters to military disaster for the people of Judah.

In the midst of the actual locust plague the prophet envisions the coming Day of Yahweh when the canonical Mosaic prediction of the end of the nation for covenant unfaithfulness will come to pass. The unstoppable locusts with their miniature horse like heads and vast numbers trigger the vision of future cavalry invading the holy city of Zion and terrifying the populace so their faces turn flushed red with adrenalin (Joel 2:6b (פָּארוּר).

C (Joel 2:12-19): Transition: Prayer for breach of Covenant and Introduction to Yahweh's Response (vv. 18-19). The key to understanding Yahweh's assurance oracle lies in recognizing that Yahweh's answer addresses the distresses of both chapters 1 and 2 of Joel. In the introduction to Yahweh's response (Joel 2:19) the Lord encapsules a doublefold answer. In 19a Yahweh promises to restore the three agricultural staples destroyed by the covenant curses of locusts, drought, and famine in chapter 1. In 19b Yahweh promises restoration from the effects of the covenant curse

invaders delineated in Joel 2:1-11. Yahweh's summary answer
in v. 19 is fleshed out in 2:20 which describes the defeat
of the enemy army of 2:1-11. Next, Joel 2:21-27 portrays
the land restored from the plagues of chapter 1. The
prophet moves freely from the historical locust plague to
the coming army because he sees them sharing the self-same
reality. The reality is the Day of Yahweh's unleashing of
the covenant curses as prophesied.[12]

Because Yahweh's Day against Judah can encompass
several historical events in its execution, the prophet
feels free to move from the recent reality of the locust
plague to the assured coming destruction of the nation. For
Joel however, Yahweh's answer on behalf of the people was
also prophesied and expected to come to fruition after the
final end of the people (Lam. 3:31-32; 4:22).

B[1] (Joel 2:20): Restoration Blessings: The Coming Army
Destroyed. This pericope in the first chiasm provides
Yahweh's answer to the military invasion curse set forth in
B (Joel 2:1-11). It expounds on Yahweh's promise of
deliverance from "shame" (חֶרְפָּה) among the nations by
expelling "the Northerner" (הַצְּפוֹנִי) from the land and

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[12]Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as
Scripture, 391, recognizes the tension between the past
historical event in Joel 1 and the judgement in Joel 2 and
understands the cause as prophetic eschatology which spans
temporal differences. I would agree but see the seedbed of
Joel's prophetic Yom Yahweh eschatology in the covenant
prediction of the invasion, dispersion and regathering of
the Jews.

destroying him. Yahweh's answer corresponds to the people's

lament prayer in Joel 2:17 that Yahweh deliver them from the

"shame" of conquest and rule by foreign nations.

In using the term "Northerner," Joel takes up a

favorite prophetic designation of invading armies (see Jer.

1:14-15; 4:6; 6:1, 22 and Ezek. 38:6, 15; 39:2). "Because

of the desert to the east and the Mediterranean to the west,

most invasions of Palestine came from the North."[13] The

mysterious northerner aptly fits the mysterious locust like

army the prophet introduced in Joel 2:1-11. In a mid

preexilic setting Joel sees in the natural event of the

locust plague evidence that the prophetic eschatology of

disaster will not become void. However, the prophet cannot

carry out a historical identification of the coming foe.[14]

Nevertheless, the covenant curses will be unleashed but

Yahweh will deliver the remnant in that Day and destroy the

enemy. The enemy will be destroyed partly because of his

haughty arrogance, "for he has acted greatly" (כִּי הִגְדִּיל

לַעֲשׂוֹת) as in Psalm 35:26. Also, Yahweh will not make an end

because of his merciful character in response to the

people's returning to him (Joel 2:12-14). H. H. D. Stocks's

conception of the northerner as a historical foe is similar

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[13]Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 258.

[14]The Hebrew word "stench" (בָּאְשׁ) is used only two
other times in the Old Testament and both instances refer to
military corpses on the battlefield (Isa. 34:33; Amos 4:10).
In addition "their front" (פָּנָיו) is martial imagery in 2 Sam.
10:9. Allen, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, 89.

to my understanding except that he saw the "Northerner" as a
foe which had already come.[15]

A[1] (Joel 2:21-27): Restoration Blessings: the Locusts,

Drought, Famine Ravaged Land Restored. In the terse prose

summary of Joel 2:19a Yahweh promises to restore his

covenant agricultural blessings represented by the

synechdoche of grain, new wine and olive oil (cf. Joel 2:24

where the staples occur again). In beautiful poetic

strophes Yahweh exhorts the "land," "beasts of the field,"

and "sons of Zion" to be fearless and rejoice at Yahweh's

coming restoration blessings. Each of them was affected by

the economic crisis caused by the agricultural curses in

Joel chapter 1 (אֲדָמָה) 2:21, 1:10; (בַּהֲמוֹת) 2:22, 1:20, 18;

(בְּנֵי־צִיּוֹן) 2:23, 1:5, 11, 13-14). Wolff points out that

2:21-24 as an assurance oracle answering a plea corresponds

quite closely to the lamentation in Joel 1:16-20.[16] The

focus has shifted from the destructive army of Joel 2:1-11

dealt with in Joel 2:20 to the literal plagues of Joel

chapter 1. The prophet looks for a literal reversal of the

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[15]H. H. D. Stocks, "Der 'Nordliche' und die
Komposition des Buches Joel," Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift 19
(1908): 725-50. Stocks saw Joel as Josianic, heavily
influenced by Deuteronomy and the "Northerner" as the
Scythians. Stocks outline of Joel 1 and 2 follows: (1) Joel
1:2-15 a terrible locust plague, (2) Joel 1:16-2:2a drought
and a call to penance, (3) Joel 2:2b-17 portrayal of a
destructive nation with a renewed call to penance, (4) Joel
2:18-20 Yahweh's answer to (3) above. I find Stocks's
analysis close to the mark but find (4) also answers (1) and
(2) above as well.

[16]Wolff, Joel and Amos, 63.

agricultural covenant curses unleashed in chapter 1 in accordance with Yahweh's summary assurance oracle (Joel 2:19a).

Though the prophet expects a reversal of fortune according to Yahweh's covenant promise, he expounds upon Yahweh's response by continuing the personification of the land and the beasts to express its life giving effects on them. The land mourning in Joel 1:10 can now rejoice (Joel 2:21). The beasts crying out to Yahweh in Joel 1:20 need fear no longer. Finally the sons of Zion who were wailing in Joel 1 can now rejoice for Yahweh is in covenant harmony with his people again.[17]

How were the sons of Zion to know they were once again in covenant harmony? They were to receive "the môreh of righteousness" (הַמּוֹרֶה לִצְדָקָה אֶת). What is the môreh? For a number of reasons I am in agreement with those who translate it "rain." Thus it is "rain according to righteousness" that will be the sign that Yahweh has lifted the covenant curses upon the people's repentance.[18] Rain is a sign of restored covenant harmony in Solomon's temple dedication

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[17]Willem Prinsloo, The Theology of the Book of Joel, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 163 (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1985), 72, notes that "Yahweh's redemptive work in this pericope is depicted as a new act of creation."

[18]Allen, Joel, Jonah, Obadiah, and Micah, 86, translates "autumn rain in token of covenant harmony;" Wolff, Joel and Amos, 55, following the Septuagint translates "<food> according to (covenant) righteousness" which fits the context but is highly conjectural.

prayer in 1 Kings 8:35-36. Similarly the restoration of covenant harmony results in rain after Elijah's intercession for the people of Israel upon their turning from Baal on Mt. Carmel. In keeping with my understanding of the chiastic structure of the original book, the translation "rain" corresponds to the curses delineated in Joel 1. It also fits well with the literalistic hermeneutic operating in this particular section of the book. Obviously, rain must occur before the crops can grow and be harvested. It is the prerequisite for the promised covenant agricultural and animal husbandry blessings. Indeed the agricultural triumvirate blessing of grain, wine, and olive oil will be restored in abundance according to Joel 2:24. This verse through Joel 2:26 elaborates on the introductory response of Yahweh in Joel 2:19 that he would restore the staples destroyed by the curses and satisfy his people.[19]

It is difficult to completely separate the prophet's thought in Joel 2:25-27. He acknowledges that the locusts were Yahweh's great army and provided the catalyst for the warnings about the Day of Yahweh. However, Yahweh's deliverance entails not only agricultural blessings but also rescue from "shame" (בוֹשׁ) among the nations. In the prophetic writings Judah's shame was her defeat and exile at

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[19]Micah 6:14 notes the lack of satisfaction Israel would experience as a curse because of idolatry in Omri's day, perhaps reflecting the covenant version behind Lev. 26:26 where Israel is cursed for disobedience by lack of sufficient food.

the hands of their enemies (Ezek. 16:52, Jer. 12:13; Hos. 4:19). Thus Joel appears to include not just the current locusts, drought and famine but the inevitable northern army as well.

Yahweh's wondrous work will result in the people praising Yahweh for his deliverance.[20] The people will know that Yahweh is "in the midst" (בְּקֶרֶב) of Israel (Deut. 17:20, Josh. 6:25) and that He alone is God (Isa. 45:5; Hos. 13:4). The Erkenntnisformel or self-revelation of Yahweh as Auto-Predica is an ancient formula associated with the covenant (Ex. 20:2; Ps. 50:7; Lev. 18:2) perhaps originally a covenant preamble and common in Ezekiel (Ezek. 36:11). The restoration blessings will result in a new recognition of Yahweh as the covenant God who alone is God and dwells favorably among his people.[21] The strong monotheism in Joel 2:27 is routinely connected with the writer of Isaiah 45:6, 18. However, it is also a strong Deuteronomic covenant theme as Deuteronomy 4:35, 39 and 1 Kings 8:60 attest. The purpose of God in both unleashing the curses and removing them upon the people's repentance is summarized in the verse. The people will know three things about

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[20]Allen, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, 96, notes the continued covenantal emphasis in the phrases "your God" and "my people" seeing a reminiscence of Exodus 6:7.

[21]Wolff, Joel and Amos, 65.

Yahweh.[22] First, he is in Israel's midst and hasn't

abandoned them as the nations suggested in Joel 2:17.

Second, he is the Mosaic covenant keeping God and finally,

he alone is God.

Summary of the First Chiasm

In my judgment, the first two chapters of Joel follow

a quite literal trajectory from the prophesied blessings and

curses in the Deuteronomic covenant to the events of Joel's

day and beyond. I suggest that the prophet sees the

Deuteronomic prophecies coming to pass in the agricultural

disasters at hand. On a scale of 0 to 10 with 0 involving

no transformation of a canonical tradition and 10 involving

a complete change in a tradition, Joel's use of these

covenant traditions would rate a 0. There is almost

complete continuity.

Likewise, the Day of Yahweh in Joel 1 and 2 appears

continuous with the Deuteronomic curses. In Joel 1, the Day

is near because of the locusts, drought and famine. In Joel

2, it comes at the hands of future invaders. When the

prophet looks at deliverance from the Day, beneficial

effects in line with the restoration blessings are

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[22]Graham S. Ogden and Richard Deutsch, Joel and
Malachi: A Promise of Hope - A Call to Obedience, The
International Theological Commentary, ed. George A. R.
Knight and Frederick Carlson Holmgren (Grand Rapids:
Eerdmans, 1987), 36, sees the Davidic covenant reflected in
Joel. This appears to me abrogated by the language in Joel
2:27 which closely follows D and P and emphasizes the Mosaic
covenant.

enumerated. The land and people will be delivered from the agricultural plagues and the later human invaders prophesied in the Deuteronomic covenant.

There is an additional element in the first chiasm which Joel struggles with as a prophet. It is the possibility that Yahweh's unleashing of the Day of Yahweh can be delayed or averted by the people's genuine repentance. Joel 2:12-14 appeals to Yahweh's character as the gracious God of compassion (Ex. 34:6) who wants to turn from his wrath. What then of the Deuteronomic curses which say the Day's coming judgement is inevitable (Deut. 4)? The prophet leaves room for Yahweh's possible deliverance from the current distress (יוֹדֵעַ מִי) Joel 2:14), but apparently places the deliverance after the plagues and invaders (Joel 2:19, 25). For Joel, the curses must eventually be unleashed as prophesied.

Sanders has argued for a dual hermeneutic in Scripture. The biblical tradents used earlier traditions in a prophetic or constitutive manner.[23] In other words, the tradition was called upon to critique (prophetic) or support (constitutive) whatever aspect of the social-cultural matrix the prophet was addressing. Sanders opines that one task of canonical criticism is to see how tradents determined whether to use a tradition in a prophetic or constitutive

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[23]Sanders, Canon and Community, 66.

manner so that modern interpreters may derive a biblical paradigm for exegesis.

For Joel, the Day of Yahweh is used in both a prophetic and constitutive way. Through Joel 2:11, the Day of Yahweh is used in a prophetic manner against the people of Judah. The Day of covenant curses is directed against the people. On what basis could the prophet be assured a word of critique was needed? I would suggest that first of all agricultural disasters demanded explanation and the correct canonical explanation was found in the unleashing of the agricultural covenant curses per Deuteronomy. This canonical explanation further prophesied that the final end would be military invasion and led to Joel's prophetic warning of a coming army in Joel 2.

Coupled with the above, the prophet knew that the authoritative witness pointed to covenant unfaithfulness as the prior cause of the agricultural curses. Therefore, he requests an internal return to Yahweh in Joel 2:12, 13 in the prayer for breach of covenant.[24] Only a return of the Judahites to the God and principles of the covenant might stay his hand. Thus Joel saw the Deuteronomic stipulations in a literal manner. The blessings and cursings would follow upon the people's obedience or disobedience.

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[24]Ogden, Joel and Malachi, 11, sees Judah as innocent and calling on Yahweh for deliverance from unjust calamity as in a lament psalm of trust for instance. It is difficult to see how Judah can be innocent when the Day is unleashed by Yahweh against his own people.

Joel's constitutive hermeneutic begins in Joel 2:19 and continues to the end of the chiasm in Joel 2:27 (and to the end of the book in eschatological blessings). Once again the prophet can issue a constitutive word based on the Judahites' prophesied future repentance and return to Yahweh (Deut. 4:29-31). If the people repent, and they will, blessings will be restored. The restoration blessings are literal, encompassing a fruitful land and deliverance from the invader in the future (Joel 2:21-27). Joel's recognition of the compassion of God and his absolute freedom (Joel 2:14) provides a constitutive word in the present disaster. If the people turn back to God, any current plagues or invader may be turned back. Indeed, in the Deuteronomic view of history this happened several times (e.g., Hezekiah was delivered from Assyria, 2 Kings 18:13-19:37).

The Second Chiasm

The Day of Yahweh with its sub-themes becomes constitutive (a day of blessing) for Judah from Joel 2:18 onward. Likewise, it becomes prophetic (a day of cursing) for all the national enemies of Judah from 2:18 onward. However, Yahweh's constitutive word shifts from near term blessings to eschatological blessings with the "afterward" (אַחֲרֵי־כֵן) of Joel 3:1. This shift can be seen in the book's second chiastic pattern which interlocks with the first. This second chiasm delineates Yahweh's constitutive word of

blessing to his beleaguered people which includes a word of judgment or curse against the nations.

The first half of the chiasm A and B encompasses physical restoration blessings including deliverance from the army of Joel 2 and restoration of physical fertility caused by the ravaging locusts of Joel 1. Both of these (A and B) were examined for their hermeneutics in dealing with the first chiasm. Once again I stress their continuity with the Deuteronomic covenant curse and blessing traditions.

The second interlocking chiastic pattern in Joel continues the constitutive word from Yahweh toward his people into an eschatological age to come. This future Day of Yahweh begins in Joel 3:1 and progresses till the end of the book. The first part of the chiasm introduces Yahweh's response of promised restoration blessings (Joel 2:18-19). A (Joel 2:20) entails the physical blessing of the destruction of the coming army as discussed under the hermeneutics of Joel 1 and 2 in the first chiasm. Likewise, B (Joel 2:21-27) recounts the physical restoration of the land from the locust plague. Once again, this is identical with the meaning in the first chiastic pattern.

B^1 (Joel 3:1-5) and A^1 (Joel 4:1-3, 9-21) shift from near term physical restoration blessings to eschatological restoration blessings. These two parts of the chiasm appear to be a hermeneutical reflection on Joel 2:27 "and you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel" (וִידַעְתֶּם כִּי בְקֶרֶב

יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי(יְ).[25] Yahweh's renewed presence was proven by his defeat of the army in Joel 2:20 and the restoration from the locusts and drought and famine in Joel 2:21-27. But, it will be further evidenced in the future by the pouring out of the Spirit and the defeat of all Israel's enemies as well as restoration of paradisial conditions in the land.

Beginning with B[1] (Joel 3:1-5), there is a shift from physical restoration blessings to eschatological restoration blessings and here spiritual blessings. The author of Joel expounds upon a second phase of Yahweh's blessing which involves the promise of the Spirit being poured out on "all flesh" (כָּל בָּשָׂר) in the land of Israel.

Incipient in the Deuteronomic covenant was the belief that when Yahweh restored the fortunes of his people (Deut. 30:3), he would renew them (circumcise their hearts) and enable them to love him as he had commanded them in the Shema (Deut. 30:6).[26] Further, Yahweh would then place all the covenant curses on Israel's enemies (Deut. 30:7). The canonical prophets recognized the necessity of Yahweh's enabling the disobedient people to obey after their return (Jer. 31:31-32; 32:40; Ezek. 36:24-29; 39:29; Isa. 32:15).

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[25]Wolff, Joel and Amos, 65, notes that Joel 3 and 4 are prophecies about Yahweh being in the midst of a restored Israel. Joel 4:17 confirms this by connecting Yahweh's judgment on the nations with his presence in their midst.

[26]In Jer. 4:4 the prophet called the people to circumcise their hearts in order to prevent the coming judgment.

Isaiah and Ezekiel identified Yahweh's enabling power as his Spirit poured out upon his people. Indeed, all the prophets set the enabling within a covenant restoration blessing context and all imply a special future presence of Yahweh among all his people.

Joel 3:1-5 is no different. The pericope is set in the days of restoration by the statement in Joel 3:2 "in those days" and Joel 4:1 which also connects chapters 3 and 4 with "when I restore the fortunes of" (אֲשֶׁר אָשׁוּב אֶת־שְׁבוּת). The pouring out of Yahweh's Spirit is a spiritual counterpart to the rain, a higher gift.[27] As I discussed in an earlier part of this thesis (160), Joel's focus is on showing how the wish of Moses in Numbers 11:29 read as prophecy would be fulfilled. The prophet specifically names the classes and genders in Israel the fulfillment would effect (Joel 3:1, 2). Joel further equates the pouring out as an aspect of a coming Day of Yahweh when judgement "wonders" (מוֹפְתִים) would again appear on the earth. These "wonders" harken back to the horrible plagues on Egypt (Ex. 4:21; Deut. 6:22) and portend the judgment revealed to Joel in chapter 4 to be visited on the nations. In conformity with the Zion songs and Isaiah (14:32), Joel proclaims deliverance for the diaspora "survivors" (שְׂרִידִים) Yahweh will call, the true worshippers of Yahweh (Joel 3:5).

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[27]Allen, <u>Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah</u>, 98.

A[1] (Joel 4:1-3, 9-21): Eschatological Restoration

Blessings: The Enemy Nations Destroyed. The eschatological

restoration setting of this pericope is evident in the

formula "in those days" (הָהֵמָּה בַּיָּמִים).[28] The link with the

prophesied Deuteronomic covenant restoration blessings is

found in the phrase "when I reverse the fortunes of" (Deut.

30:3) as well as the charge against the nations, namely

"they scattered" the people of Judah and Jerusalem (Deut.

4:27; 28:64; 32:26; also Lev. 26:33). Further, Yahweh's

oracles against the enemies of Judah are also connected with

the Day of Yahweh in Joel 4:14.

Just as Yahweh destroyed the enemy of Joel 2 in Joel

2:20, in the Day after the restoration Yahweh will

ultimately deal with all Israel's enemies. The first three

verses of Joel 4 comprise an announcement of Yahweh's coming

punishment to all the nations in a tricola followed by six

cola which provide motives for judgment. The second

original section follows in vv. 9-13 and entails a 'summons

for war' Aufforderung zum Kampf to the nations called to

come against Yahweh and be destroyed (vv. 4-8 in my analysis

reflect a canonical interpretation by a later believing

community which is dealt with in the next section of this

paper). In Joel 4:18-21 the prophet shifts to the results

of the final defeat of Israel's enemies namely the

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[28]Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 266, notes that in all their
contexts, the phrases are associated with future blessings
promised as consolation for God's people.

restoration of paradise. This eschatological paradise
results from the presence of Yahweh in Zion (vv. 17, 21).
The paradise motif was alluded to in Joel 2:3 where the land
was like Eden but is desolate after the invading army.
"Joel's purpose is to take up key phrases used to describe
Judah's disastrous condition in the first half of the book
and to weave them into a grand finale of reversal."[29] The
pericope is connected with the eschatological Day by the
phrase in 4:18 "And it will come to pass in that day"
(וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַהוּא).[30]

Yahweh's great reversal of Judah's fortunes in the
grand restoration era promised in the covenant would result
in a time of indescribable superabundance (cf. Amos 9:13).
Even the ancient enemies of Egypt and Edom would be dealt
with once and for all and no longer be a threat. The charge
of shedding the innocent blood of Judahites could not refer
to the exile where Judah was not innocent. But, Egypt's
enmity extended back to the Exodus and Edom's to the
wilderness wanderings (Numbers 20:14-21). With a mid
preexilic background for the oracle, the revolt of Edom
against Judah described in Amos 1:11 is a possibility.
Regardless, Egypt and Edom typify the enemies of Israel and

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[29]Allen, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, 123.

[30]The phrase links up with Joel 4:2 "in those days and
at that time" after the regathering and further to Joel 3:2
(בַּיָּמִים הָהֵמָּה) referring to the time of God's Spirit being
poured out on the Jews. All these appear to be designated
as Yahweh's Day (cf. Joel 3:4; 4:14).

Judah and their God. The desolation of Edom is depicted in Isaiah 34:10. It is another example of the reversal of Judah's desolation caused earlier by the enemy army in Joel 2:3. The covenant curse of desolation (Lev. 26:43) has rebounded on the heads of the enemy.

Summary of the Second Chiasm

The second chiasm in the original form of Joel reveals an understanding of the transcendent nature of covenant curse reversals.[31] Whereas A: (Joel 2:20) and B: (Joel 2:21-27) promise a literal deliverance from an invading army and restoration of fertility, B^1 (Joel 3:1-5) and A^1 (Joel 4:1-3, 9-21) promise a fantastic future for Judah rooted in but transcending the restoration blessings. Likewise, the Day of Yahweh depicted from Joel 3:1 through the end of the book transcends the literal Day depicted in the first part of the book through Joel 2:27.

In Sanders's terms the entire second chiasm is constitutive toward the people of Judah and prophetic toward the nations. The future Day of Yahweh is hermeneutically favorable to Judah unlike the Day of alarm depicted in Joel 1 to 2:17. Joel's constitutive Day focuses on the

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[31]Herbert M. Wolff, "The Transcendent Nature of Covenant Curse Reversals," Israel's Apostasy and Restoration, ed. Avraham Gileadi (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 319-25.

transformation of nature and elimination of the evil represented by the nations.[32]

Joel combines the covenant promise in Deuteronomy 30:16 wherein Yahweh elects to circumcise the hearts of future Israel so they will live, with the Mosaic wish in Numbers 11:29, to prophesy the coming transformation of the people in Judah by the pouring out of Yahweh's Spirit upon them. While the meaning of "all flesh" in Joel 3:4 is hotly debated, the pouring out on slaves in Israel hints at Yahweh's grace on at least some of the (גוֹיִם).[33] Thus, the entire community will be blessed with direct access to God and his word in that Day.

In continuity with the covenant promise of power over enemies (Deut. 30:7), Joel's interpretation transforms the promise into the Day when all the enemies of Yahweh's covenant people would be dealt with by Yahweh himself in a great holy war of judgment (Joel 4:9-14). The final transformation noted in Joel's Day is the restoration of paradise and super abundance (Joel 4:18) in Judah. Again, the restoration of agricultural bounty is part of the covenant restoration promises (Deut. 30:9; Lev. 26:42). But, Joel intensifies it to fantastic dimensions.

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[32]Donald Gowan, _Eschatology in the Old Testament_ (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), iii-iv.

[33]Ibid., 75.

In Joel's Day of Yahweh in chapters 1 and 2 both the covenant curses and covenant restoration blessings are following literal trajectories from the Deuteronomic covenant tradition. In contrast, the second Day mentioned in Joel 3-4 seems to project the effects of the restoration blessings into the future and postulate how Yahweh's promised restoration blessings will ultimately transform land, people, and nations.

The Interpreting Community of Joel 4:4-8

In contrast to the original form of Joel which prophesied a general judgment against unnamed foes (except for the ancient foes Egypt and Edom in Joel 4:19), the redactional addition encompassing Joel 4:4-8 specifies some of the nations Yahweh will judge or must judge according to the covenant.

Although it is possible Joel 4:4-8 was part of the original form of Joel,[34] its insertion between 4:1-3 and 4:9-16 mitigates against such a position. Clearly, in Joel 4:1-3 Yahweh calls for the gathering of the nations for judgment and Joel 4:9-16 describes such a general gathering. Thus, Joel 4:4-8 interrupts that sequence. In addition, vv. 1-3 and 9-16 are poetic but Joel 4:4-8 is prosaic. Finally, the redactional piece (Joel 4:4-8) legally indicts the nations for plundering Jerusalem and selling Judeans as

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[34]Allen, _Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah_, 111f.; Stuart, _Hosea-Jonah_, 265-66.

slaves, which probably refers to actions leading to the exile. As Ogden puts it, "the possibility is raised that this coastal confederation either helped the Babylonian invaders or took advantage of the situation."[35] The intensity of the charges against Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia could suggest a date for the redaction in the early sixth century B.C. just after the events occurred.[36] Even if Joel 4:4-8 is a redactional addition, it is a part of the final text of Joel and fulfills a certain function and adds a new dimension to the text.[37]

Accepting a tentative date in the early exilic period for the redactional addition of Joel 4:4-8 brings up the question of the redactor's hermeneutics as well as the understanding of the early postexilic community which accepted his interpretation. Whereas Joel had foreseen a future day of Yahweh's judgment against the nations in line with the covenant restoration promises, the redactor of Joel 4:4-8 had experienced the terrifying fulfillment of the Deuteronomic curses and knew of specific nations who must

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[35]Ogden, Joel and Malachi, 44; cf. Ezek. 25:15-26:6.

[36]However, the lack of Babylon in the oracle may suggest a later date in the century after the collapse of the Babylonian empire.

[37]Prinsloo, The Theology of the Book of Joel, 110, bemoans the tendency to denigrate the importance of the passage because it is redactional. He argues that such a view is based on "the (mistaken) romantic notion that the earliest text is necessarily the true, the best and most authoritative text."

now be judged in accordance with the coming restored community's covenant blessings. One of the blessings was power over enemies (Deut. 30:7) with their evil rebounding on their own heads.

Therefore the addition provides an indictment of specific nations for engaging in the slave trade of Judeans during and after the Babylonian invasion. Joel 4:4-8 amounts to a clarification of Joel's general curse on the nations who would ultimately bring Yahweh's curse upon his disobedient people.[38] For the redactor, whatever else was meant by all nations in Joel 4:2, it must include Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia. Joel's general prophecy has vividly come to pass in the redactor's day.

Even though the redactor has concretized Joel's general prophecy, the continuity with the Deuteronomic restoration blessings is still patent. Not only will Joel's prophecy come to pass but it will circumscribe the named enemies of Judah designated in the pericope. Further in the redactional addition, Yahweh's Day against the nations is still future as in the original form of Joel though the redactor envisions the Day coming quickly against Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia for their terrible crimes against Judah (Joel 4:4).

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[38]Ibid., "Hence it is no mere arbitrary insertion, but a piece of competent, deliberate editing, apparently aimed at concretizing and specifying the vague, general assertions of the preceding pericope section (1-3a)."

It would appear then that the redactor of Joel 4:4-8 was still looking for a literal historical Day when Yahweh would judge the historical enemies of Judah. That Day would come when Yahweh restored his people to the land according to the Deuteronomic covenant promises taken up earlier in Joel 4:1. Perhaps the postexilic community tended to accept this redactional addition when the condemned enemy nations experienced judgment at the hands of Persia and Alexander the Great in the mid fourth century B.C.[39] This likelihood is strengthened by the fact that the postexilic community would consider its own existence as evidence that Joel 4:1 had come to pass and God was in the process of restoring Israel's fortunes. No doubt Yahweh's judgment on the nations would have been a welcome message during the chaotic period following the exile.

Hermeneutically then, Joel 4:4-8 involves little change from Joel's original understanding of Yahweh's Day against the enemy nations. On the other side of the scattering predicted in Joel 4:3, the pericope focuses on who some of those nations will be, indeed must be. So, the redactional layer (Joel 4:4-8) fits smoothly into the original structure of the book with its double chiasms. The pericope contains a focused constitutive word for Judah

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[39]Wolff, Joel and Amos, 79 states, "Even before Tyre and Gaza had been conquered by Alexander the Great in 332, Sidon was made to suffer under a punitive expedition of Artaxerxes III Ochus in 343."

based in a Deuteronomic perception of the future of Judah and the nations. The redaction follows a prophetic clarifying trajectory from the original form of Joel. The primary change in meaning effected by the redaction is adding specificity to the original prediction in Joel of a general judgment against the nations. Whereas Joel knew only of the general covenant promise to judge the enemies of Israel, the redactor could name and specify the perpetrators upon whom their Sovereign Lord's covenant curses would be executed in the coming Day of Judgment.

I would suggest that the addition of Joel 4:4-8 to Joel 4 is similar to what Fishbane defined as mantological exegesis of oracles.[40] The hermeneutical role of such exegesis is either to reopen or lengthen confidence in the content of a prophetic saying or delineate how the oracle has or will soon be fulfilled.[41] Essentially then, Joel 4:4-8 entails a clarification or relecture of Joel's general oracle in light of the exile and involves a particularizing of the prophet's words. The addition shows upon whom the oracle must be actualized.

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[40]Michael Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel (Clarendon: Oxford Press, 1985), 443 where he elucidates the term as follows, "mantology, by which is meant the study of material which is ominous or oracular in scope and content." While Fishbane did not focus on redactional work, his hermeneutical points about scribal activity could be transferrable.

[41]Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel, 445.

For the redactor the Deuteronomic tradition is used constitutively because Judah (586 B.C.) and Israel before (722 B.C.) had undergone the tragic results of violating the covenant relationship with Yahweh. The curses had come to pass as judgment and the promised restoration blessings lay ahead. The first Day of Yahweh against Judah was over and the second Day of the Lord against the nations was to come.

Developing Intertestamental Understanding of Joel's Day: Targum and Beyond

Embedded within the catena of material restoration blessings (Joel 2:21-27) is the phrase (אֶת הַמּוֹרֶה לִצְדָקָה) Joel 2:23a). This enigmatic phrase has exercised the minds of scholars, translators, and commentators for several millennia. No one knows for sure what the Hebrew phrase means in the context of this pericope in Joel. The evidence from philology and the versions is quite ambiguous. In order to arrive at the meaning of the phrase the word môreh, (מוֹרֶה) must be defined as well as (צְדָקָה).

Môreh itself can mean either "early rain" (throw water) as in Joel 2:23b and Psalm 84:7 or "teacher" as in Genesis 12:6, Deuteronomy 11:30, and Judges 7:1. The Brown, Driver and Briggs lexicon finds the antecedent of môreh in the verb (יָרָה) which means "to throw" or "shoot" and in the hiphil "to teach." The derived summary noun (תּוֹרָה) meaning "direction" or "instruction" may also be derived from (יָרָה). The verb in the hiphil may have developed the meaning of

instruction from the process of the priests casting lots to obtain divine instruction. Ahlstrom rejects tôrah as a pure Akkadian loan word from tertu "oracle" or "message" (from (w)aru), preferring to see both verbs as etymologically the same.[42] At any rate, the philological sources are inconclusive. However, there does seem to be some connection with divine instruction. Philological derivation does not necessarily identify with the meaning in a given text.[43] Usages may change in accordance with later historical and literary contexts. Also, the meaning in Joel must take into account the defining prepositional phrase (לִצְדָקָה).

Further insight into the original meaning of (מוֹרֶה) is found by examining the parallel usage of the term in the Hebrew Bible. The plural (מוֹרִים) is found in 1 Samuel 31:3 and 1 Chronicles 10:3 with the meaning of "shooters" or "archers." The noun is also used in Proverbs 5:13 (מוֹרַי), Isaiah 30:20 (מוֹרֶיךָ) twice), and Job 36:22 (מוֹרֶה) in the sense of "teacher." Likewise in Isaiah 9:14 (מוֹרֶה־שֶׁקֶר) is a hiphil participle form translated "teaching lies" or substantively "who teaches lies." The third usage of (מוֹרֶה)

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[42]Gosta W. Ahlström, Joel and the Temple Cult of Jerusalem, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 99.

[43]Sanders, "From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4," 79 where he states, "Do philologists not tend to assign meaning to words which antedate the period of the original biblical author, thus by-passing the original meaning in the opposite direction?"

is "early rain." Môreh denoting rain occurs only three

times. It is found in Psalm 84:7, in Joel 2:23b in

conjunction with "rain" (גֶּשֶׁם) and many would insist in Joel

2:23a in conjunction with "righteousness" (צְדָקָה). Other

than eliminating "archer" as a possible meaning, the

parallel usage is somewhat confusing. There appear to be

two possibilities namely "early rain" or "teacher."

At this point the prepositional phrase (לִצְדָקָה) which

defines môreh becomes important. Specifically, is there a

semantic constellation of "rain" or "teacher" connected with

"righteousness" in the parallel passages? For môreh as

"rain" there is no such passage. Similarly môreh as

"teacher" is nowhere connected with the word (צְדָקָה) per se.

But, Isaiah 30:20 does connect the coming of the teacher,

Yahweh in the context of the return of the remnant who will

also receive rain and food while judgment descends on the

nations, mainly Assyria (Isa. 30:31). The Isaianic passage

connects Yahweh as teacher with the blessings he brings

including rain and the resultant fertility. Yahweh teaches

them in the way (Isa. 30:22 commands obedience to the law

against graven images), they obey (Isa. 30:22), then he

provides rain, fertility, and judgment on Israel's enemies.

It is interesting that the same order occurs in Joel as a

book. The people suffer affliction for covenant violation,

they repent, then Yahweh returns in blessing with rain and

fertility finally judging the nations.

While the word m__ô__reh as "early rain" isn't used with
the word (צְדָקָה), the verb form (וְיֹרֶה) is so used in Hosea
10:12. It occurs in a context of a plea by the prophet for
the repentance of the people, "until Yahweh comes and rains
righteousness upon them" (עַד־יָבוֹא וְיֹרֶה צֶדֶק לָכֶם).[44]
Righteousness and rain are closely connected even with the
teaching of Yahweh. Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8:35ff. and
2 Chronicles 6:27 connects the teaching (תוֹרַם) of his ways
with his giving the people rain.[45]

Because of the conjunction of teaching, rain, and
righteousness, many of the Rabbis and early commentators
have rendered the phrase in Joel 2:23a as "teacher of
righteousness."[46] They had the support of some of the
versional evidence as well in their decision. The Vulgate,
Targum, and Symmachus all support such a reading.[47]

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[44]Cf. Isaiah 45:8 where it reads "the clouds pour down
righteousness" an obvious comparison of righteousness with
rain.

[45]Ahlström, Joel and the Temple Cult of Jerusalem,
105-7 also mentions Psalm 68:8 "Let drop, O heavens from
above, and let rain down (יִזְּלוּ) justice (צֶדֶק)"; and Zech.
10:1 where the prophet says that the people will ask Yahweh
for rain at the time of the latter rain. Yahweh is thus the
rain giver.

[46]C. F. Keil, A Commentary on the Minor Prophets,
trans. James Martin, Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol.
10 by C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch (Grand Rapids:
Eerdmans, n.d.), 205.

[47]Vulgate has doctorem justitiae; Targum (מַלְכִּי בְ דוֹן
בַּכְבוֹן) ; Symmachus (τὸν ὑποδεικνύοντα).

However, the Septuagint reading "food" (βρωμάτα) the
old Latin reading _escas_, and the Syriac m'kwlt', presuppose
"food" (מַאֲכָל) in the Hebrew Vorlage.[48] While not
supporting a reading of rain these versions sustain a
reading in line with physical restoration blessings as the
intent of the original form of Joel.

Since the philological evidence for the original
reading of _môreh_ is inconclusive, other evidence must be
weighed as well. Earlier in this dissertation (pp. 188-89),
I set forth evidence from context and structure that in the
original form of the book Joel 2:23a should be translated as
"rain."[49]

It is at the point where one has decided upon an
original reading and hermeneutic that canonical criticism
can open up new avenues for interpretation. "Canonical
criticism suggests that once the historical phenomenon
occurs, the tradition or literary work has a life of its own
unencumbered by the original intentions of author or
redactor, or even of the first tradents, though they must
all be included in the canonical history of the

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[48]Wolff, _Joel and Amos_, 55, note 1; cf. Allen, _Joel,
Obaidah, Jonah, and Micah_, 92, note 26 who claims that the
Septuagint translators may have misread (מוֹרֶה) relating it
to "eat" (בָּרָה) as in the Septuagint of 2 Sam. 13:5, 7.

[49]Allen, _Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah_, 93; Wolff,
Joel and Amos, 55; Stuart, _Hosea-Jonah_, 259 all concur
reading either "rain" or "food" on contextual grounds.

tradition."[50] Therefore, to isolate one's examination to

the original reading, say of the môreh in Joel 2:23a

prevents a comprehensive look at the hermeneutics of the

believing communities up through the New Testament period.

Thus, an original reading of "rain according to

covenant righteousness" in Joel 2:23a fits well with a

literal reading by the prophet Joel of the Deuteronomic

covenant (see Deut. 11; also Lev. 26). It is well known

that Deuteronomic theology by the sixth century B.C. viewed

the prophet as "a preacher of tôrah and a spokesman of the

covenant between Yahweh and Israel.[51] Rain is a covenant

blessing and evidence of Yahweh's restored favor.

Therefore, in the original form of Joel 2:23a the môreh of

righteousness reflected a trajectory in which the covenant

restoration blessings and curses would occur as prophesied

in a self-evident fashion. Such was the peshat or

interpretation of the word (מוֹרֶה). It may have been unusual

since the usual form was (יוֹרֶה) Deut. 11:14; Jer. 5:24), but

the unique form at most was there for word play[52] or

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[50]Sanders, Canon and Community, 38.

[51]Ronald Clements, Prophecy and Tradition, Growing
Points in Theology (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 56
notes the Deuteronomic connection between 2 Kings 17:13-14
which sees the prophets as preachers of repentance to
Yahweh's law and Deut. 18:15, 18 which views them as Moses's
successors.

[52]Ronald B. Allen, Joel (Grand Rapids: Zondervan,
1988), 81, notes a connection between teaching and (מוֹרֶה)
and speculates that Joel may have covenant in mind with rain
as a prelude and wordplay for the coming teacher of (מוֹרֶה).

euphony - balancing the other <u>môreh</u> at the end of the verse.[53]

Even if the translation "teacher of righteousness" is original, it may simply refer to the agricultural restoration blessings of rain iterated in Joel 2:23b (גֶּשֶׁם מוֹרֶה וּמַלְקוֹשׁ). In this interpretation the "teacher of righteousness" is paralleled in the Hebrew by the "rain, early rain, and latter rain" and the restored rain is the teacher as the return of rain taught the disobedient people in the Elijah on Carmel incident. The waw before (מַלְקוֹשׁ) might be translated "indeed." The verse might read "Indeed, he has sent down upon you the rain, the former rain and the latter rain in just measure." The "teacher of righteousness" possesses the definite article because it is really (the) rain given as a sign of covenant restoration blessing by Yahweh. In this case rain equals the teacher because its restoration teaches (תוֹרֶה). Joel 2:23a and 23b then say the same thing, 23b parallels 23a and defines it.

Nevertheless, to settle for an original translation of <u>môreh</u> as "early rain" fails to address the question of why some later intertestamental believing communities reflected in the Targum and at Qumran felt hermeneutically constrained to render Joel 2:23a as "teacher of righteousness," a personal perhaps titular understanding with messianic overtones. One of the goals of canonical criticism as

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[53]Keil, <u>A Commentary on the Minor Prophets</u>, 205.

Sanders perceives it is to establish a canonically
permissible range of resignification.[54] What has happened
to Joel's Day of the Lord in the translational attempts of
the Targumist? I would suggest that the rendering of Joel
2:23a as "teacher of righteousness" reflects a particular
eschatological interpretation of the book of Joel consistent
with sectors of intertestamental Rabbinic Judaism in which a
"teacher of righteousness" would come in the end time and
guide the faithful by answering their questions.[55]

Unlike the redactional community in Joel 4:4-8, the
Targumist and his community are interpreting this word in
Joel with little regard for its original context and in
light of contemporary events. That this is the case is
patent when one looks at another interpretive rendering
found in Joel 2:25 where the devouring locusts are called
"peoples, tongues, governments and kingdoms" (עממיא וליׁשניא
ׁשלטוניא ומלכתא). The locust plague has become a symbol of
the various nations who have overrun the Jews. The notion
that the original prophet was describing a mere locust
plague in the verses was inconceivable to the Targumist as
it was with the Qumran sectaries.[56]

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[54]Sanders, Canon and Community, 63.

[55]Gert Jeremias, Der Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit, Studien
zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck &
Ruprecht, 1963), 287.

[56]I. Rabbinowitz, "The Guides of Righteousness," Vetus
Testamentum 8 (1975): 393 "Clearly, it must envisage
something more significant, and the 'locusts' must imply

Clearly, the second half of the book of Joel dealt with the great eschatological Day of the Lord when the Spirit would come and the nations would be crushed in a great final battle. If true about Joel 3 and 4, it followed that the earlier chapters also foretold the earlier events including the trial of the Jewish people up to that final Day.[57]

It is quite possible that Joel 1 and 2 were already read in this manner with the locusts representing the invaders of the Jews up to the New Testament era.[58] Was the record in Joel 1 and 2 exegetically read then as merely historical, fulfilled prophecy by intertestamental times? There seems to have been two answers given by the believing communities. One trajectory represented by the Septuagint unpacked little new meaning in Joel 1 and 2 and translated Joel 2:23a in line with the original form recognizing the original context. Following this literal trajectory, Joel 1 and 2 were read as historical and Joel 3 and 4 were yet to come. Therefore, Joel 1 and 2 become a painful example of what happened to Jews who were unfaithful to the covenant and became a warning for future behavior.

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here the enemies of the Jewish people and describe their discomfiture."

[57]Ibid., 93, mentions similar thoughts among the Qumran sectarians.

[58]Wolff, Joel and Amos, 77, points out that in postexilic times "scattering" in Joel 4:3 would surely have entailed the Assyrian and Babylonian invaders.

However, the other apparent trajectory represented by the Targum and Qumran posited the necessity of a coming "teacher of righteousness" as a prelude to the eschaton and seized upon Joel 2:23a as a proof text. In connection with Joel's prophesied renewal and spiritual revival, the people of Israel were to be joyful because the Lord would send a leader who would emerge before the Day of the Lord and instruct them in that terrible time.[59]

Thus, the original Sitz im Leben of Joel 2:23a in the context of Joel 1 and 2 was ignored by the Targumist. What was to the original prophet a general prophecy of Yahweh's restoration blessing of "rain according to covenant righteousness" has been transformed into a prophecy concerning a "teacher of righteousness" who would signal the eschatological pouring out of the Spirit described in Joel 3 and the concomitant destruction of Israel's enemies portrayed in Joel 4. This common motif in intertestamental Judaism[60] has become the driving force in giving new interpretive life to this enigmatic phrase in Joel 2:23a.

In comparison with the original form of the book of Joel, the eschatological restoration blessings found in Joel 3 and 4 have bled over into the physical restoration

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[59]Cecil Roth, "The Teacher of Righteousness and the Prophecy of Joel," Vetus Testamentum 13 (January, 1963): 94.

[60]Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Suppl. Vol., s.v. "Teacher of Righteousness," by Gert Jeremias, mentions that this coming teacher was often identified with the returning Elijah, the precursor of Messiah.

blessings found in Joel 2:21-27. What Joel prophesied and what the Aramaic interpreter derived from the text are not the same. The Targumist has radically transformed Joel's original intent and the original intent of the restoration blessings enumerated in Joel 2:21-27. On a scale of 0 to 10 with 10 involving the most change in a tradition's relecture, the Targum gets a 10.

Nevertheless, it doesn't appear he has been canonically unfaithful. In other words, a perusal of the prophets probably canonized by that time reveals he was certainly in the mainstream of Old Testament interpretation concerning the coming Day of Yahweh. Canonical prophetic texts such as Isaiah 30:20; Hosea 10:12; Jeremiah 33:15-16; Deuteronomy 18:15 and many others provided authoritative canonical background for such an interpretation. Certainly, as already discussed the philological background was ambiguous enough to warrant such a personal translation.

Though beyond the scope of this paper, it is curious that the Targumic historical sequence of a "teacher of righteousness" followed by the coming of the Spirit and the shaking of the nations appears to be the sequence of New Testament salvation history as recorded in Acts. In Acts 2:17 the prophesied coming of the Spirit in Joel is an

inaugural manifestation of the Messianic age following the coming of the righteous teacher Jesus Christ.[61]

Summary

The progressive understanding of the Day of Yahweh in the original form of Joel, with the postexilic addition of Joel 4:4-8 and in the later intertestamental Targum reveals both continuity and developing understanding of the earlier covenant traditions among the believing communities.

Thus, the original Joel interpreted the Day of Yahweh as a Day of Yahweh's wrath against Judah for violation of her covenant with the Lord. Yahweh's wrath as suzerain would involve the visitation of curses such as locusts, drought, famine, and invasion (delineated in Joel 1 and 2). According to the canonical tradition (cf. Deuteronomy 30) this day of curses would be followed by a grand era of restoration in which Yahweh's Spirit would be present among all the people of Judah. In addition, Yahweh would curse all future enemies of the people though Joel was unable to forsee them except for Egypt and Edom. Finally, the land would become like Eden again - a land of milk and honey with Zion, Yahweh's dwelling place, as capital. Joel's original use of the Day follows a quite literal trajectory from its origin in the execution of covenant curses/blessings.

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[61]In view of the New Testament canon, it is easy to agree with Ronald Allen's equation of Jesus as the true "Teacher of Righteousness." Ronald Allen, Joel, 80.

The possibility that the Day might be averted by appeal to Yahweh's compassionate character based on the people's repentance seems to adjust the somewhat deterministic picture in the Deuteronomic covenant. Also, the explication of the restoration blessings in Joel 3 and 4 goes beyond the promised presence of Yahweh and power over enemies in Deuteronomy 30 and elsewhere. In the original form of Joel, apart from the devastating locust plague in Joel 1 all the events are yet to come.

In contrast the postexilic addition of Joel 4:4-8 assumes a different reading because the locust plague and invasion recounted in Joel 1 and 2 are historical events which have led to the terrible time of the exile. The great Day of Yahweh's wrath for covenant unfaithfulness has occurred. The Babylonians have destroyed Zion and exiled Judah. What awaits the exilic/early postexilic community is the full return to the land, the pouring out of Yahweh's Spirit, the destruction of Israel's enemies, and the hyper-fertility of Eden. But, what were general enemies to the original prophet have become specified in light of the horror of the exile. The blessing of Yahweh's power over Israel's enemies must include Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia for their crimes against Yahweh. What was originally a generalized judgement oracle against the nations has become specific in view of historical events but the overall focus

of the Day is the same. Yahweh will judge those nations indeed the named nations who participated in Judah's rape.

By the time of the Targum, the canonical understanding of Joel's coming Day has been influenced by the growing canon and the expectation of a coming teacher of righteousness as hinted at in Isaiah 30:20-21 and Hosea 10:12 for examples. There is even some expectation that this teacher would be God as in the Targum of Isaiah 12:3.[62] The purpose of this teacher is to spread the knowledge of God. In any event the Day of Yahweh's Spirit being poured out and the defeat of Israel's enemies must be preceded by the coming of the môreh of righteousness in the eschatological schema. The same order appears to occur in Acts, as noted earlier. The translation of a righteous teacher within a catena of Deuteronomic restoration blessings shows that the Targumist has placed an eschatological restoration blessing within what were originally literal fertility blessings. Indeed, the Targumist has begun to allegorize what were once literal covenant curses and blessings in Joel 1 and 2. Perhaps herein lies the transformation toward apocalyptic interpretations of the locusts in Joel 1 and 2 which has existed even down to modernity.

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[62]Gowan, _Eschatology in the Old Testament_, 78; cf. Isa. 54:13.

The Day of Yahweh has become a great final day of judgement against the enemies of God and his chosen people. It is an apocalyptic day in which the locust like heathen will set themselves against Yahweh and his people in Zion. However, they will not be successful. The final menace will be repulsed and the threat will be erased forever.

In Christian theology, Joel is read in light of the coming of Christ but has its meaning thereby been exhausted or made irrelevant? Or, does its setting in the complete New Testament canon raise the possibility of new horizons of meaning for today? Dispensational theologians, for example, see in Joel 3 and 4 a prediction of the time of the antichrist after the restoration of the Jews to their homeland.[63] The Day of the Lord in Joel becomes the Day of Christ's second coming. Is their believing community interpretation of Joel valid? Is it canonical in Sanders's terms? What is the difference if any between what they are doing and what the Targumic believers did? I hope to deal with some of these issues in the conclusion to this paper.

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[63]The New Scofield Reference Bible, 928-31, also interprets the invading army of Joel 2:1-11 as the Gentile hordes who come against Israel just before Armageddon.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The foregoing canonical critical analysis of the book
of Joel confirms that the book does present a myriad of
problems to the scholar. In particular, the inability to
date the book greatly affects its interpretation. By
accepting a mid preexilic date for the book, it is possible
to view Joel 2 as prophetic of coming Mesopotamian armies.
No doubt a postexilic dating could tend to see in the
locusts' coming apocalyptic armies instead. A literal
plague interpretation of both chapters 1 and 2 of Joel fits
either dating. Thus, relevant to all datings is Childs's
charge against Wolff that his hypothetical Persian _Sitz im
Leben_ is a tenuous basis for interpreting the Day of
Yahweh.[1]

How one addresses the question of the book's unity
also affects its interpretation. The earlier radical
bifurcation between Joel 1 and 2 and Joel 3 and 4 separated
by centuries led to two different prophets and books. The
first Joel was merely a locust preacher. The later Joel was
an apocalyptist who used the locusts for a future vision of

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[1]Childs, _Introduction to the Old Testament as
Scripture_ (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 389-90.

the eschaton. In agreement with Childs, such bifurcation
led to an inability to interpret the book on the basis of
its original intent.[2] Happily, the book's essential unity
in content, language, structure, style, and form are now
routinely and successfully defended (cf. the discussion on
unity in chapter two of this dissertation). Historically,
the book's interpretation turned on whether the locusts were
seen as literal or apocalyptic creatures and whether or not
those in Joel 1 were different from the locusts recounted in
Joel 2. I posited that they were literal in chapter 1 but
prophetic of coming armies in Joel 2.[3] Of course, any
unified interpretation of the book largely hinges on how one
interprets the connection between the locusts and the Day of
Yahweh. What was the background and function of the Day in
Joel? Exploring that problem via tradition history in
chapter IV of the dissertation, I set forth the view that
the connection lay in the treaty covenant background of the
Day of Yahweh. Therefore, the locusts (and the drought and
famine) were covenant curses indicative of the suzerain Lord
Yahweh's displeasure with sinful Judah. This admittedly

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[2]Ibid., 388, where Childs notes that Joel became a
"nationalistic cult prophet devoid of any ethical criticism
of Israel." Joel's original concern was merely what the
locusts were doing to the temple offerings and not the sins
of Judah.

[3]In agreement with Hans Walter Wolff, Joel and Amos,
ed. S. Dean McBride, Jr., trans. Waldemar Janzen, S. Dean
McBride, Jr., and Charles A. Muenchow, Hermeneia, ed. Frank
Moore Cross, et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977),
41-42.

hypothetical, though plausible, background for the Day was the starting point for examining the canonical readings of the book using Sanders's methodology.

Digressing for the moment, chapter III of the dissertation defined the somewhat hazy method of canonical criticism by analyzing both Childs's and Sanders's versions and comparing them with each other. Even after such analysis it remains true that "there is little if any methodological clarity concerning how one is to study the Bible canonically."[4] No doubt clarity of method sometimes has to be worked out in the doing. It was noted that Sanders's method would study the Day of Yahweh and its sub-themes diachronically in the several communities of faith reflected in the forms of the book of Joel found in the canonical process. The canonical approach of Childs by contrast would have focused on the community reading of the Day reflected in the Massoretic text as the primary object of discovery.

The focus of chapter five of this dissertation was an examination of the original book of Joel and two of its later forms using the canonical critical method of James Sanders. At each stage of the books in the canonical process, the research goal was to uncover how the believing communities were interpreting the traditions/themes under

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[4]Donn F. Morgan, "Canon and Criticism: Method or Madness?" Anglican Theological Review 68 (1986): 83.

study (i.e., the Day of Yahweh and the blessings and curses). In other words, the end was to uncover their canonical hermeneutics or how they 'droshed'[5] the earlier authoritative words from God to interpret their own life settings.[6]

Assuming a traditio-historical background for the Day of Yahweh in treaty covenant as set forth earlier in my dissertation, the locust plague becomes explicable. As the original prophet 'droshed' or searched the authoritative, Mosaic traditions, he recognized the ominous import of the locusts and other curses. They were the inaugural salvo of the dreaded Day of Yahweh when Judah's suzerain, Yahweh, would come and execute judgment against them for covenant violations. The prophet Joel saw the Deuteronomic tradition about the Day of judgment and dispersion against Israel followed by a return and restoration of the people as about to come to pass. The locusts, drought, and famine were enough to call the community to cultic lamentation for their sins. Thus, there was a promise/fulfillment hermeneutic operative in the original form of the book. It seems that the believing community was aware of such earlier

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[5]"Droshed" is Sanders's abbreviated term for the prophet's active search of the earlier tradition to shed light on the current moment or crisis [see Robert W. Wall, "Eccumenicity and Ecclesiology," Christian Scholar's Review 16 (1987): 343, fn. 19] as discussed in chapter III of my dissertation on pages 85-86.

[6]Wall, "Ecumenicity and Ecclesiology," 343.

predictions as well. For Joel's query to them whether the Day of Yahweh was imminent because of the locusts, drought, and famine events is otherwise inexplicable.

Likewise, the perusal of the redactional addition of Joel 4:4-8 uncovered a similar hermeneutic operative in this exilic or early postexilic form of the book. In line with the covenant promises, the original form of Joel looked beyond the Day of Yahweh against Judah to another Day of Yahweh wherein a restored Israel, possessing Yahweh's Spirit, would dwell safely in the promised land. In that future Day, Yahweh would destroy Israel's enemies. As the redactor 'droshed' or searched the Deuteronomic tradition and reflected on the events of the sacking of Jerusalem and the resultant exile of the people, he recognized that some of Joel's prophecy was fulfilled. There was a recent Day of Yahweh against the people of Judah in 587 B. C. Further, the redactor knew a coterie of enemy nations that participated in Judah's destruction. Thus, the redactor specified who some of the enemy nations Yahweh would destroy in the coming Day of restoration must be. As these nations were destroyed, the believing community saw the fulfillment of Yahweh's word to Joel and behind him to Moses. The redactor's hermeneutics were still within the promise/fulfillment trajectory of the original form of the book and consonant with the covenant prophecies.

Moving from the exilic/postexilic community of the Day
of Yahweh to the intertestamental Targumic rendering of Joel
provided another hermeneutical focus. Though the text was
apparently quite fixed by that time, the ambiguous phrase
môreh lisdāqāh in Joel 2:23 was seized upon for a unique
interpretation that may mirror the Targumic believing
community's hermeneutic of the Day of Yahweh.

Though the phrase was originally most likely "rain
according to covenant righteousness," a Deuteronomic
restoration blessing, the Aramaic speaking community of the
Targum saw it as a coming "teacher of righteousness." In
tune with the intertestamental expectation of a righteous
teacher, the translator 'droshed' Joel and found the
eschatological môreh. The broader prophetic corpus provided
broad hermeneutical background for a coming môreh who would
arrive before the age of the Spirit. Indeed, New Testament
salvation history appears to be structured in a similar
manner with Jesus as the righteous teacher followed by the
age of the Spirit at Pentecost. Apparently, Joel was
interpreted in light of a more holistic reading of the
prophets infused with the messianic expectations of the Day
of Yahweh in the late intertestamental period. That part of
Joel (chapters 1 and 2) which was already fulfilled with the
captivity and restoration and presumably literal fertility
blessings was hermeneutically revitalized by the Targumic

translation "teacher of righteousness" to further entail a coming fulfillment of messianic proportions.

In Sanders's terms, the original hermeneutic of Joel was primarily prophetic against Judah, but constitutive or supportive of the nation's future days. In contrast, the later community readings examined were both constitutive or supportive of the people of God. Perhaps it was felt Yahweh's wrath was already poured out on Judah in accordance with the covenant strictures and only restoration blessings remained ahead.

What then about the usefulness of canonical critical method for interpretation? Is it valuable? Does it measure up to its claims? I would have to say both yes and no. It does permit us to address and value the believing community readings as they occur in the diachronic history of a text's interpretation. The method controls against one critically reconstructed reading whether mid preexilic or Persian, whether cultic or covenantally based by focusing on the history of readings between the original and final usage in the New Testament. Further, attention to all community readings could be useful in bridging the gap from Old Testament to New Testament interpretation. In my judgment the method provides an adjunct way of viewing the _sensus plenior_ of a passage which makes it unnecessary that the full sense is contained in the original reading, but rather develops as the canon grows.

Also, canonical criticism does seem to give insight into the range of hermeneutics in interpreting Joel. This could help the modern interpreter discover boundaries for the interpretation of Scripture. Finally, I suspect canonical criticism relegitimizes reading Joel in the context of the coming of Christ and the New Testament book of Acts. It validates such readings in a historical-critical sense. The use of Joel in Acts 2 is not a violation or caricature of its original or proper usage, but a living, vital interpretation of authoritative Scripture by a vibrant community of faith, albeit a Christian one. Reading Joel in context of the Old and New Testament canon(s), puts critical attention on the canon as we have inherited it. Canonical reading recognizes what I already know as a Christian, namely that I cannot go back. The original reading is important, even interesting, but my believing community's canon contains Acts and Romans and even the Apocalypse with their authoritative interpretations of Joel. For me, Joel must be read in their light.

Such are the benefits of canonical-critical method when applied to Scripture. However, there are some weaknesses. First and foremost is the fact that canonical criticism is just as dependent on historical-critical reconstruction for ascertaining the believing community's readings or hermeneutics as earlier scholarship was when it focused on discovering the original meaning 'behind' the

canonical text. In my canonical analysis of Joel's Day of Yahweh, historical-critical methods were used at each stage in the canonical process. Despite Childs's recognition of the hypothetical nature of such reconstructions, Sanders's method acknowledges that the historical-critical method cannot be avoided.

Such a plethora of canonical readings would appear to destroy any possibility for one authoritative reading[7] and open the door for a Marcionite canonical reading. Yet, the New Testament is filled with relectures of Old Testament themes/traditions and that reality in the content of the text would seem to preclude leaving out the Old Testament. Thus, Marcion's canon violates the example of the New Testament text itself, for the New Testament text does not reject the Old but interprets it in a particular way. In terms of Childs's argument for one canonical authoritative reading, I would suggest that the reading in a full Old Testament-New Testament context is the authoritative one.[8] For example, what remains to come of Joel's Day is informed by its new context within which New Testament eschatology is added. Thus, the believing communities of Christians see

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[7]A dilemma Childs saw in positing his Massoretic canonical reading in the final form. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, 75-76.

[8]The hermeneutics in the overall context might determine the boundaries of acceptable textual and versional pluralism in postcanonical believing communities.

Joel's Day in light of the coming of Christ, the Day of Pentecost, and the book of Revelation.

Although enlightening, this canonical-critical study of Joel's Day of Yahweh and its sub-themes raises other questions. One area that might be addressed is the canonical hermeneutics of Joel found in the New Testament. In particular, the curious fact that the Targumist eschatology and that occurring in Acts are so similar deserves further inquiry. Another point for an interesting study might be the different readings of Joel's Day of Yahweh that might occur in the context of the Book of the Twelve. Also, examination of the versional and Hebrew manuscripts might reveal some interesting community understandings. The different readings attained using the canonical approach of Childs compared to the ones obtained via the canonical criticism of Sanders might also merit examination. I hope that the present study has been an impetus in exploring the benefits of canonical criticism for understanding the sacred text. If so, then it has accomplished its purpose.

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