

A Preliminary Evaluation and Critique of Prosopological Exegesis

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Editor's note: On September 4, 2019, Madison Pierce from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School gave a presentation to the 1892 Club at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. She presented some of her latest research on the NT's use of the OT, specifically the NT's use of prosopological exegesis to interpret OT Christological texts. Prosopological exegesis is now widely discussed, and it is part of the larger discussion of "retrieval," specifically whether various hermeneutical methods used in the Patristic era ought to be retrieved today. In this paper, Peter Gentry seeks to wrestle with this form of exegesis and offer a preliminary evaluation and critique. He presented it at a later 1892 Club meeting in the fall of 2019. We have included his response in this issue of *SBJT* because it fits well with our attempt to think about "retrieval," and in this case, the attempt to learn from the Patristic era for us today. In this paper, Dr. Gentry questions the validity of this form of exegesis and thus provides an important conversation about what is best and not best to "retrieve" from the past, and how to read and interpret Scripture on its own terms. *SBJT* has preserved the oral nature of his presentation in what follows.

We enjoyed a presentation by Dr. Madison N. Pierce at the 1892 Club on September 4, 2019. She focused on hermeneutical methods used by the apostles to interpret the OT which she claimed were analogous to prosopological exegesis as evidenced later in the Church Fathers of the Fourth Century A.D.

Both her presentation and the book by Matthew Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity* (2016)¹ have raised questions I am attempting to resolve in my own thinking.

Madison Pierce has a paper posted on her academia.edu page entitled “Divine Speech among the Family of God in Hebrews.” At the beginning of this paper, she states,

The argument of Hebrews is based on Scripture. But of course, this is an understatement, since the author’s indebtedness to Scripture is well-established. Certainly, less established is the fact that in the 30 or so instances that the author quotes it directly, he presents Scripture as speech. Rather than a mere matter of style, I contend that this feature is representative of the author’s choice to move beyond reading the text καθὼς γέγραπται— “just as it is written” —in its original context.

She clearly states that the author of Hebrews is moving beyond the original context in his interpretation of OT texts. What makes it possible to move beyond the original context? Dr. Pierce thinks it likely that the apostles are employing an approach to interpretation analogous to prosopological exegesis.

Madison Pierce grounds her claim in three things:² (1) early handbooks on rhetoric where students in the educational system of Greece and Rome would consider how to represent the speech of different characters in literature. So, for example, if one was writing a novel that entailed speech between an old man and a young man, an author would have to ask himself, “How would an older person speak?” or “How would a younger person speak.” Certainly, in our own culture today these might be entirely different modes of speech. (2) as people in Greece and Rome read and studied dramas or plays such as the works of the great tragedians Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles, there weren’t directions written in the text about who was speaking. So, scholars inserted marginal notes called scholia to aid in identifying who was speaking, especially when there was some ambiguity in the text. (3) “solution from

the character” was a technique used in Greece and Rome. If a character in a literary work contradicted themselves, one might consider the possibility that another person was speaking.³ A character had to be consistently represented or readers suspected that another character was speaking.

In addition to approaches taken to literary criticism in Greece and Rome, Dr. Pierce appeals to Susan Docherty’s work on *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews*.⁴ Docherty notes that “one of the exegetical techniques employed most frequently in Hebrews 1 is the precise specification of a speaker and/or addressee who is left ambiguous in the scriptural source.”⁵ Alexander Samely notes the same approach in rabbinic exegesis seen in the targums.⁶ Finally, from the Dead Sea Scrolls 11QMelch II,9–10, 18 and 4QFlor I I,21 are given as examples of something analogous in Qumran literature.

Let us examine the sources to which Dr. Pierce appeals. The handbooks of rhetoric are those of Theon, Hermogenes, and Libanius. The *Progymnasmata* of Hermogenes and of Libanius are from the Second and Fourth centuries AD. Identifying the work of Aelius Theon is a bit trickier. I quote from the edition by George A. Kennedy:

The author of this treatise is identified in the manuscripts simply as Theon. The tenth-century Byzantine encyclopedia, Suda, has an entry for Aelius Theon of Alexandria, identifying him as author of a treatise on progymnasmata as well as works on rhetoric and commentaries on Xenophon, Isocrates, and Demosthenes. Certainty is impossible, but this Aelius Theon of Alexandria is the leading candidate for author of this work. When he lived can only be approximately determined. The latest authors to whom he refers are (ch. 11) Theodorus of Gadara and (ch. 14) Dionysius of Halicarnassus, indicating he was writing no earlier than the late first century B.C. Quintilian cites the views of a certain Theon on stasis theory (3.6.48) and of “Theon the Stoic” on figures of speech (9.3.76). If either of these references is to the author of the progymnasmata, he must have been active earlier than the publication of Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria* in A.D. 95. Thus, the treatise may have been written at almost any time in the first century after Christ. It is the consensus of scholarly opinion that it is, in any event, the earliest surviving work on exercises in composition, certainly written sometime between the Augustan period and the flowering of the Second Sophistic in the second century after Christ, and it shows the system of instruction still in a stage of experiment and development.⁷

Some uncertainty attaches to Theon's work in both authorship and date, but the time of writing is supposed to be later in the First Century. In these handbooks on rhetoric we are looking, then, at how Alexandrian scholarship began to influence education in Greece and Rome perhaps by the middle of the First Century and more certainly by the Second Century AD. The practice of identifying speakers in scholia on the playwrights and dealing with contradiction in the character of the speaker also comes from the same time. Francesca Schironi, Professor of Classics at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor states,

One of the problems back then (as now) was the attribution of lines. Many MSS have attributions, but sometimes there is a discrepancy in the attribution among MSS. The scholia, however, not only treat problems of attribution. There are questions of grammar, vocabulary, antiquarian details, myth and also discussion of the moral teachings of the specific passage.

We do not know much about when the scholia were put together. The material collected in them spans from the Hellenistic period to the Roman period. Scholia are generally dated as a genre to the late antiquity (or even to the seventh century, but there is no certainty).⁸

We can conclude, then, that certainly the church fathers who were educated in pagan schools would have been familiar with these techniques. The question is, however, is it reasonable to think that these practices or even analogous techniques were employed by the apostles in interpreting the OT?

APOSTOLIC INTERPRETATION

If we consider afresh the citations of the OT discussed by Dr. Pierce, a more reasonable explanation is that the apostles were interpreting the text according to the metanarrative of Scripture.

Since Dr. Pierce addressed citations in Hebrews 1 and Acts 2, I shall briefly consider the use of the OT in these texts.

Hebrews 1 cites Psalm 2:7 in 1:5a, 2 Samuel 7:14 in 1:5b, Deuteronomy 32:43 in 1:6, Psalm 104:4 in 1:7, Psalm 45:7-8 in 1:8-9, Psalm 102:26-28 in 1:10-12, and Psalm 110 in Hebrews 1:10-12. Dr. Pierce notes that the author of Hebrews cites these texts as the Father speaking to the Son which is true.

Let us, for a moment, consider the original context of 2 Samuel 7:14 and Psalms 2, 45, and 110.

Psalm 45

In Psalm 45 a psalm is composed for the wedding of a Davidic King. The poet seems to make extravagant statements about the king in verse 6: “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever.” Is the poet just saying that the Davidic throne is backed up by the rule of God? Probably more than that is meant because in the next verse he says, “therefore God, your God, has set you above all your companions.” He seems to distinguish the fact that the king is god from the fact that the king acknowledges a god over him.

This psalm is attributed to the sons of Korah. The descendants of Korah were a group of Levites who were gatekeepers for the Tent and for the Temple (1 Chron 6:1, 9:19, 26:1, 19). This group of psalms may well be later, written in the time of the writing prophets.⁹

At this point we need to consider the contribution of the writing prophets. If we look at the prophetic literature, there are two separate streams of thought. One is that Yahweh alone saves and God himself will rule his people. Another line of thought is that God will act through the Davidic king. We see this clearly in Isaiah. The prophet announces a coming king. This is not bad king Ahaz and not even good king Hezekiah. The future king is described in three panels in Isaiah 7–11. He is Immanuel born of a virgin in Isaiah 7:14. He is given divine names in Isaiah 9. He is given the Spirit sevenfold in Isaiah 11 and 61 and his righteous rule issues in a new creation. There are also three panels in Isaiah 49–53 depicting the coming king as the servant of Yahweh. Here he accomplishes atonement for his people that results in the forgiveness of sins and while he bears their sins, he, in turn, gives them his victory over death.

Parallel to these themes is the claim that Yahweh is King. Yahweh is clearly king over the human king in Isaiah 6. The divine king is mentioned again in Isaiah 24:23 as reigning on Mount Zion. He is confessed as king in 33:22: “Yahweh is our Judge, Yahweh is our Lawgiver, Yahweh is our King; it is he who will save us.” Yahweh identifies himself as Israel’s king in 41:21, 43:15, and 44:6, passages which emphasize his sovereign power and authority. Isaiah 66:1 loudly proclaims Yahweh as King without using the word and this forms a bookend for Isaiah 6.¹⁰

Moreover, not only is Yahweh proclaimed as Israel's Savior in 43:3 and 45:15, but 43:11 states that apart from Yahweh there is no Savior. So, when the former passages indicate that the coming human king will rule the world, will atone for sin, will inaugurate a new covenant that eventually brings the Spirit, the lines between Yahweh and the coming human king are becoming blurred. This is what we also see in Psalm 45.

Psalms 2 and 110

First, note that Psalm 2 has no superscription. The poet is unknown. Possibly since Psalm 110 is attributed to David it may be later than Psalm 110. Nonetheless we can say that a Davidic king is speaking. We can also say that the position of this psalm in the Psalter determines the contribution of Psalm 2 to the book as a whole. Peter attributes the Psalm to David in Acts 4:25. The plot structure of the text is straightforward. The kings and nations of the world are in rebellion against the rule of Yahweh. Yahweh laughs at the rebellion of the nations and counters this rebellion by affirming the installation of the Davidic King on Mount Zion based on the decree from the Covenant made between Yahweh and David in 2 Samuel 7. The Davidic King is invited to ask of Yahweh and he will indeed be granted all the nations as his inheritance. Yahweh tells him, "You will rule them with an iron rod, you will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." On the basis of this prediction, the kings of the nations are invited to make peace with the Davidic King before harsh treatment falls upon them.

The program of Psalm 2 is based squarely on 2 Samuel 7 in the covenant God made with David. Verse 19 is David's own reflection upon the revelation given to him through Nathan the Prophet. David states, "this, i.e. the covenant stipulations, entail the instruction for mankind."

In the ancient Near East (ANE), a country or region was thought to be ruled by the god of that region or territory, and the human king was considered the representative of the local deity. This explains how the king could be called the son of God. As the divine son, the Davidic king was to effect the divine instruction or *tôrâ* in the nation as a whole and was, as a result, a mediator of the Mosaic Torah. However, since the god whom the Davidic king represented was not limited to a local region or territory, but was the creator God and Sovereign Ruler of the whole world, the rule of the Davidic king would have repercussions for *all* the nations, not just for Israel.

Let us suppose, for a moment, that David meets Ben-Hadad of Damascus. Ben-Hadad's name means "son of Baal." So, the king of the Arameans is the son of his god. If he meets David, David will say to him, "You are the son of Baal, but he is only a local, tribal deity. I am also the son of God. In my case, I am the son of Yahweh, and he is the creator god of the entire world. Since my god is bigger than your god, you need to pay attention to me." Psalm 2, therefore, develops an idea *already* stated in 2 Samuel 7. Faithfulness on the part of the Davidic Son would effect the divine rule in the entire world, much as God intended for humanity in the creation covenant as indicated by the divine image in Genesis 1:26-28. This, I submit, is the logic behind David's response in verse 19, and this is why he claims that a covenant that makes the Davidic king son of God is the instrument of bringing Yahweh's Torah to all the nations. David's own understanding of divine sonship is clearly indicated by his statement in 7:19 that the covenant is God's charter or instruction for humankind.

While no superscription exists for Psalm 2, a brief superscription assigns Davidic authorship to Psalm 110.

The literary structure is obvious and well-recognized. The poem is divided into two stanzas each beginning with a divine revelation. Verse 1 begins with "declaration of Yahweh" and verse 4 begins with "Yahweh swore." The poem is based on direct divine revelation. Divine speech in the first stanza creates a king; an oath of Yahweh in the second stanza establishes a priest. And the text is referring to the one and the same person: that is, a king and priest at the same time.

We might ask, when and where David was given the revelation in Psalm 110? There are several possibilities: (1) it was given at an unspecified time; (2) it was given specifically for the occasion of this psalm; (3) it was given at a time clearly designated in the narrative of Samuel-Kings.

Is David referring specifically to the revelation via Nathan the Prophet given in 2 Samuel 7? This is an obvious possible solution since a covenant may be considered an oath. David Schrock believes it is possibly given by Nathan during the events of 1 Kings 1-2 when the kingship is passed from David to Solomon. This is, in my opinion, unlikely.

Rather, Erich Zenger is more to the point that the oath is a clear reference to 2 Samuel 7.¹¹ This is strongly supported by Psalm 89:4, 36, esp. 50 and Psalm 132:11. These passages clearly identify the oath of Yahweh to David

as the one given in 2 Samuel 7. What is especially significant is that the author of Hebrews cites Psalm 2, which is tied to Psalm 110, and 2 Samuel 7 side by side as if the second text is key to interpretation of the first according to the metanarrative of Scripture. And by the way, this is precisely how the author of Hebrews works: he places events and texts side by side to show the reader that one text is the key to interpreting the other in the larger story of Scripture.

In fact, the revelation via Nathan the Prophet in 2 Samuel 7 is entirely suitable for the declaration of Yahweh in 110:1-3. The Davidic Covenant entails a greater son, an eternal kingdom, and an eternal throne. 2 Samuel 7:19 indicates that the Davidic Covenant is the instruction for mankind. Psalm 2 is a meditation that could be derived entirely from 2 Samuel 7:19. David will have a greater son to whom all the kings of the earth will have to give attention and homage. Psalm 110:1-3 is in many ways an extrapolation of both 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 2.

The meaning of describing the relationship between Yahweh and the Davidic King as “father” and “son” must be fully explained. Factors involved in this include the use of the word *בן* in Hebrew, the cultural context of kingship in Canaan and in the ANE, the use of familial language in treaties, and the canonical context of the passage.¹²

A literal, physical family relationship is clearly contrary to the context. Nonetheless, *בן*, the term for “son” in Hebrew, has a much broader field of meaning than son in English. In an agrarian, preindustrial economy and society, trades were normally transmitted within a family setting. In this way, sons customarily did what their fathers did in addition to displaying common characteristics passed on from family setting, genetics, and upbringing. Thus, the term “son” can be used to mean “possessing the characteristics” of something. In the Parable of the Vineyard in Isaiah 5:1, the song is about a person who has a vineyard *בְּקֶרֶן בֶּן־שֶׁמֶן* (literally “on a horn, the son of fatness”). The horn, i.e., a hillside or terrace on a mountain spur or slope, is “a son of fatness,” i.e., characterized by abundant produce. An idiomatic English translation would be “a fertile hillside.”

The ANE and Canaanite cultural context is significant. In Egypt, from at least 1650 BC onwards, people perceived the king as the image of god because he was the son of god. The emphasis was not on physical appearance. For example, a male king could be the image of a female goddess. What is stressed

is that the behavior of the king reflects the behavior of the god. The king as the image of god reflects the characteristics and essential notions of the god.¹³

From Ugarit we have the story of King Kirtu, who is described as the son of El.¹⁴ His excellent health must indicate his divine origin.¹⁵

The OT records an Aramean king of Damascus known as Ben-Hadad.¹⁶ By his name, he is the son of his god. The prosopography of the Amarna Correspondence and also at Ugarit show a number of people from various levels of society whose names are of the format “son of Divine Name.”¹⁷ Thus we do not know if the name Ben-Hadad proves that he considered himself as the representative of Ba’al to his people. It might depend upon whether the name was a birth name from his parents or a name taken upon accession to the throne.¹⁸

The Canaanite and ANE culture shows that the notion of the king as a son of god was well established.¹⁹ The meaning may have differed in Egypt, Canaan, and Mesopotamia, but the common denominator is the idea that the king represents the character of the god in some way to the people.

Also, in the ANE, those bound by suzerain-vassal treaties may refer to each other as father and son.²⁰ This has a significant bearing on 2 Samuel 7. Earlier theologians discussed covenants in terms of unconditional or conditional promises. More recently, covenants have been evaluated according to suzerain-vassal models on the one hand or royal grant models on the other. The former emphasizes the obligations of the vassal king to the suzerain, the latter the obligations of the great king to his noble or vassal. The Davidic covenant has frequently been classified as a royal grant, yet it does not fit neatly either the unconditional-conditional categories or the more recent suzerain-vassal versus royal grant models.²¹ Verses 14–15 clearly emphasize the need for obedience on the part of the son, yet the literary structure shows that this is undergirded primarily by the promises of the father.²²

Second Samuel 7 must also be read according to the progression of the covenants in the larger story of Scripture.²³ A canonical reading indicates that the Davidic king is inheriting the role of both Adam as son of God and Israel as son of God according to the instructions of Deuteronomy 17. This can be briefly reviewed and summarized at this point.

First to be considered is the fact that humans are created as the divine image, according to Genesis 1:26–28. The divine image defines human

ontology in terms of a covenant relationship with the creator God on the one hand and with the creation on the other hand. The former may be captured by the term “sonship” and is implied by Genesis 5:1–3:

By juxtaposing the divine creation of Adam in the image of God and the subsequent human creation of Seth in the image of Adam, the transmission of the image of God through this genealogical line is implied, as well as the link between sonship and the image of God. As Seth is a son of Adam, so Adam is a son of God. Language is being stretched here as a literal son of God is certainly not in view, but nonetheless the writer is using an analogy to make a point.²⁴

The latter relationship, i.e., between humans and the creation, may be reflected in the terms kingship and servanthood. In the ninth-century Tell Fakhariyeh Inscription, צלמא (“image”) refers to the king’s majestic self and power in relation to his subjects, while דמותא (“likeness”) refers to the king’s petitionary role and relation to the deity.²⁵ The ANE data confirm and correspond exactly to this exegesis of the biblical text.

As Genesis 2:4–25 shows, the Adamic son is like a priest in a garden sanctuary. He must first learn the ways of God in order to exercise the rule of God as God himself would.²⁶

Second, Israel inherited this Adamic role.²⁷ Yahweh refers to the nation as his son in Exodus 4:22–23. The divine purpose in the covenant established between God and Israel at Sinai is unfolded in Exodus 19:3–6. As a kingdom of priests, they will function to make the ways of God known to the nations and also to bring the nations into a right relationship to God. Since Israel is located geographically on the one and only communications link between the great superpowers of the ancient world, in this position she will show the nations how to have a right relationship to God, how to treat each other in a truly human way, and how to be faithful stewards of the earth’s resources. This is the meaning of Israel’s sonship.

Third, Deuteronomy 17 intimates that the king will be the leader in this role. Verses 16–20 describe the manner in which the future king is to exercise his responsibilities. After three negative commands in verses 16–17, verses 18–20 specify three positive commands, all relating to Torah: (1) the king shall copy the Torah; (2) the king shall have the Torah with him; and (3) the king shall read the Torah. In other words, the only positive requirement is

that the king embodies Torah as a model citizen.²⁸ This is exactly the point of the father-son relationship set out in 2 Samuel 7.

Fourth, the author *avoids* using the word “king” (*melek*) and instead employs the word *nāgīd*, i.e., leader (2 Sam. 5:2; 6:21; 7:8). As Murray has shown, this is to counteract the notion of kingship in the culture surrounding Israel and to portray a kingship in Israel based not on autonomous power but one that represents the kingship of Yahweh.²⁹ In addition, twice in 2 Samuel 7, Yahweh refers to David as “my servant.”³⁰ This is *hugely significant*. This is the highest title a human can receive in the OT. In an exhaustive study of the term “servant of the Lord” in the OT, Stephen Dempster shows that David is the “servant of the Lord” par excellence in Kings.³¹ The term “servant” connects with *nāgīd* to emphasize a servant kingship and clearly marks David in an *Adamic role*.

The author, David, makes plain in the first verse that in the divine revelation, Yahweh is speaking about a coming king greater than himself. This corresponds well to the placement of Psalm 110 in the Psalter. Erich Zenger notes, “Different from the two Davidic Psalters, 3–41 and 51–72, here David is not the model royal petitioner with references to his life story as told in the books of Samuel and at the beginning of the first book of Kings, nor is he, as in the Davidic Psalter of Psalms 101–103, (104–106), the “historical” king who presents his program for governance and interprets the world and its history; rather he is a “new” David (a David redivivus) whom God will give for the restoration of his people and seat on his throne.”³² The imagery in verse 3, of birth (“from the womb of the dawn”) and of fertility (“the dew of your youth”) also speak of a new David.

The command for the future king to sit at the right hand of Yahweh shows that Zion’s king shares the throne of Yahweh. It is evident from the fact that the motif of the “footstool” appears primarily in connection with *divine* enthronement (cf. Pss 99:5; 132:7; Lam 2:1; Isa 66:1; 1 Chr 28:2) that the image is of Yahweh’s royal throne and not the physical throne in the king’s palace. Images from Egypt illustrate the expressions used in Psalm 110 for the defeat of the enemies of the king and the king sitting at the right hand of God.³³

While we do not have space to comment on every aspect of Psalm 110 it is important to note that both stanzas the first focusing on a king and the second focusing on a priest deal with the mastery, subjugation and defeat of the enemies of the king. Note that this is also the central theme of Psalm 2.

But what about Psalm 110:4-6? Where did Yahweh swear this? These ideas can be derived from two sources: (1) in 2 Samuel 7:14-15 Yahweh swears to give David a greater son who is viewed in Adamic terms. I argued for this in *Kingdom through Covenant* but I did not realize the implications of my own arguments. If the greater son of David is fulfilling an Adamic role, then this greater son must be both king and priest, because Adam was both king and priest. A recent study of the plot structure traced through the Book of Samuel adds further support by showing that a king-priest is expected as 1 Samuel 2:35 is unfolded throughout the narrative as a whole.³⁴ (2) But where do we find in Scripture the model for a king-priest who will crush the power of other earthly kings and inherit the nations? Surely this is exactly the story of Genesis 14. And when one looks at Psalm 110:4-6 all of these ideas are derived specifically from “the Battle of the Four Kings against the Five and the Victory of Melchizedek.” Please note, in the battle of the Four Kings against the Five, the victory is not the victory of Abraham. It is the victory of Melchizedek. The author of Hebrews helps us grasp this: “Consider how great this man was!”

Commentators find difficult the fact that the defeat of enemies is the topic of a stanza on the role of a priest. Erich Zenger states, “the description of battle that follows in vv. 5-7 is peculiar as an explication or concretion of v. 4.”³⁵ Yet he completely fails to connect these verses with Genesis 14 and only Genesis 14 can explain a priest-king who achieves victory over the kings of the nations.

Note particularly verse 5 of Psalm 110: “The Lord is at your right hand. He strikes kings in the day of his anger. He judges among the nations.” Tidal was King of the Nations. “He heaps up corpses. He strikes the head [SINGULAR] over a broad land.” This is a specific reference to Kedorlaomer. Unfortunately, many English versions make “head” plural. But the text is clearly singular. In my view, Kedorlaomer is a type of Satan. Verses 4-6 clearly combines the imagery of Psalm 2:9 with the data of Genesis 14: the defeat of enemy kings. And this is precisely why David looks to Genesis 14 for a model or type of his greater son.

Another conundrum for commentators on Psalm 110 is the subject of the verbs in verses 5-7.³⁶ One can argue that the subject of the verbs from verse 5 through 7 is the Lord, as in God himself. Yet the last sentence speaks of him drinking from the brook by the way. Minimally, this suggests that the subject

is human and like the treatment of the coming king in the prophets, blurs the distinction between the divine and human king.

Lastly, we will briefly consider how Peter quotes Psalm 16:8-11 and Psalm 110 in Acts 2 because in this text we actually see Peter's reasoning in his hermeneutical appropriation of Psalm 16. Here is Peter's citation and interpretation:

²²“Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ²⁵David said about him:

“I saw the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand,

I will not be shaken.

²⁶Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;

my body also will rest in hope,

²⁷because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,

you will not let your holy one see decay.

²⁸You have made known to me the paths of life;

you will fill me with joy in your presence.’

²⁹“Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.

³¹Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³²God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“The Lord said to my Lord:

“Sit at my right hand

³⁵until I make your enemies

a footstool for your feet.”

³⁶“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

Here is an instance where we can actually see the Apostle's reasoning and approach to interpretation. He interprets the statement of David on the basis of the Davidic Covenant, referring specifically to the oath Yahweh made to David. God promised that he would place one of David's descendants on the throne of God. Clearly this promise would not be fulfilled by David himself, but rather by one of David's descendants. At the resurrection, Jesus of Nazareth, descendant of David, is given eternal life, and then at the ascension he is given the throne of God.

What Peter is doing is reasoning from the metanarrative of Scripture based upon the promises made in the covenants. He begins with the original text; he considers the meaning according to the epochal horizon and according to the canonical horizon. His conclusions are based on exegesis from the three horizons.

Similarly, in the book of Hebrews, the claims made by the author are based upon the larger story of Scripture. They are based upon interpretation according to the original, epochal, and canonical horizons of Scripture. They are based upon typology in the case of Melchizedek. Typology is based on the fact that the character of God is consistent and that God controls history. Therefore, events, people, and places are predictive and prophetic of future events and people. Their reasoning is built on the storyline. They based their thinking on the divine revelation given in the Davidic Covenant. Their reasoning follows the statements of the prophets where the king eventually becomes identified with God. They are looking at how later texts pick up earlier texts to become a canonical text.

Note the following statement by Susan Docherty in her work on *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews*, a work that has influenced Madison Pierce:

Finally, this text is also an example of first person direct speech which can easily be taken out of its original context and provided with a new meaning by being placed in a new setting.³⁷

Did the Apostles think they were removing speech from original context and providing it with new meaning by giving it a new setting? This is contrary to the evidence.

CONCLUSION

Dr. Madison Pierce argues that the interpretation of the Apostles is analogous to the prosopological exegesis of the Church Fathers of the Fourth Century. After investigating this issue, my preliminary conclusions are as follows.

First, it is unlikely that the Apostles were aware of the methods promoted in the rhetorical handbooks. This is anachronistic. Certainly, the Church Fathers were trained in these techniques, but the evidence that Jews in the First Century interpreted texts this way is untenable. The evidence from the Aramaic Targums is also anachronistic. And why should we look for inspiration from Greek and Roman handbooks on rhetoric popular from the 2nd to 4th centuries AD and favor this over evidence, for example, from Second Temple Judaism? Although published more than a quarter of a century ago, Instone Brewer showed that the scribal predecessors of the rabbis in Palestine did not use allegory, did not ignore the context and did not read the text differently to suit their interpretation. However, Jewish interpreters in Alexandria, Qumran, and Rabbis after 70 AD did all these things. His conclusions remain solid, sound and substantive.³⁸

Second, the parallel between identifying actors in plays and identifying speakers in texts is rather weak.

Third, the Apostles base their interpretation on resolution within the storyline of Scripture rather than on consistency of character according to methods in Greek and Roman rhetoric.

Is it possible that we have a both/and situation? Is it likely that the Apostles' interpretive techniques are analogous to prosopological interpretation and the use of the metanarrative and typology at the same time? The reasoning exhibited by Peter in Acts 2 makes this unlikely. We should not import into the hermeneutic approach of the author of Hebrews methods that are not evident from his citation of texts and reasoning from these quotations.

This entire proposal concerning prosopological exegesis impacts the NT use of the OT and the issue of hermeneutics. The Reformers argued for the *sensus literalis* in an effort to challenge the hermeneutical approaches of the Roman Catholic Church. They spoke of *sola Scriptura* and delineated the attributes of Scripture in terms of necessity, authority, sufficiency and clarity. The approach of Dr. Pierce does not account for apostolic reasoning from

the Bible's storyline, the horizons of interpretation, and the predictive and prophetic nature of typology.

Dr. Pierce claims that apostolic exegesis is analogous to prosopological techniques. Instead, prosopological exegesis is analogous to *Deus ex Machina*.

The main problem is that if the NT authors are claiming things that an OT text does not clearly intend in its contexts (original, epochal, canonical), then the issue of warrant disappears, and you are never able to show from the OT itself that it was leading us to the NT conclusion. *Sensus literalis* is tied to authorial intent in the text. Even if we factor in that there are later authors of the OT that are reading earlier authors, it is still authorial intent. One must show that the NT authors are getting the authorial intent correctly. And if they are not getting that intent correctly, then they are just reading in things that they have no basis to show from the OT. If that is the case, how would they prove to a Jewish person that Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT? They are arguing from the Scriptures. They are not making things up.

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- 1 Matthew W. Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
 - 2 Madison N. Pierce, "Divine Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews," PhD diss. University of Durham, 2017.
 - 3 See her doctoral dissertation, pp. 9 – 11.
 - 4 Susan Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews: A Case Study in Early Jewish Bible Interpretation* (WUNT II 260; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2009).
 - 5 *Ibid.*, 178.
 - 6 Alexander Samely, *The Interpretation of Speech in the Pentateuch Targums: A Study of Method and Presentation in Targumic Exegesis* (TSAJ 27; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1992), 19.
 - 7 George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric. Translated with Introductions and Notes* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 1.
 - 8 Francesca Schironi, Personal Communication, September 22, 2019. See Francesca Schironi, *The Best of the Grammarians: Aristarchus of Samothrace on the Iliad* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018).
 - 9 See F.-L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, *Die Psalmen: Psalm 1 – 50* (Die Neue Echter Bible, Kommentar zum Alten Testament mit der Einheitsübersetzung (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1993), 268.
 - 10 See Richard Schultz, "The King in the Book of Isaiah," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts* (ed. Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 141-166.
 - 11 F.-L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101-150* (Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 146.
 - 12 In the following literature consulted, the most useful article was that of Hoffmeier: John Day, "The Canaanite Inheritance of the Israelite Monarchy," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. John Day; JSOTSup 270; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 72–90; H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 300–301; Ivan Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967); J. K. Hoffmeier, "The King as God's Son in Egypt and Israel," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities* 24 (1994): 28–38; T. Jacobsen, "The Concept of Divine Parentage of the Ruler in the Stela of the Vultures," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 2 (1943): 119–121; T. Kleven, "Kingship in Ugarit (= KTU 1.16 I 1–23)," in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory*

- of Peter C. Craigie (ed. L. Eslinger and G. Taylor; JSOTSup 67; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 29–53; Marjo C. A. Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* (Münster, Germany: Ugarit-Verlag, 1990), 252–261; A. Latto, “Second Samuel 7 and Ancient Near Eastern Royal Ideology,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 59 (1997): 244–269; T. N. D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings* (Lund, Sweden: Gleerup, 1976), 259–274; J. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 152–156; Juan-Pablo Vita, “The Society of Ugarit,” in *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies* (ed. W. G. E. Watson and N. Wyatt; Handbook of Oriental Studies I: The Near and Middle East 39; Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1999), 455–498; K. W. Whitelam, “Israelite Kingship. The Royal Ideology and Opponents,” in *The World of Ancient Israel* (ed. R. E. Clements; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 119–140. I am grateful to John Walton for assistance in locating literature on this topic.
- ¹³ See P. E. Dion, “Ressemblance et image du Dieu,” *Suppléments aux Dictionnaire de la Bible X*, ed. H. Cazelles and A. Feuillet, 55:365–403.
- ¹⁴ See Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition* (trans. W. G. E. Watson; 2 vols.; Handbook of Oriental Studies I: The Near and Middle East 67; Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 226. Also noteworthy: K. A. Kitchen, “The King List of Ugarit,” *Ugarit Forschungen* 9 (1977): 131–142; T. Kleven, “Kingship in Ugarit (KTU 1.16 I 1–23),” in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie* (ed. L. Eslinger and G. Taylor; JSOTSup 67; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 29–53.
- ¹⁵ Cf. also P. Kyle McMarter, Jr., “Two Bronze Arrowheads with Archaic Alphabetic Inscriptions,” *Eretz-Israel* 26 (1999): 124*–128*.
- ¹⁶ 1 Kings 15:18, 20; 2 Chronicles 16:2, 4. See M. Cogan, *1 Kings* (Anchor Bible 10; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 399–400.
- ¹⁷ For a listing of all names in texts from Amarna and Ugarit of the type, “son of DN,” see excursus in Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (2nd ed.; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 252–254.
- ¹⁸ Some argue that this is a dynastic name, but there is no clear evidence to support this. See K. Lawson Younger, Jr., “Shalmaneser III and Israel,” in *Israel—Ancient Kingdom or Late Invention? Archaeology, Ancient Civilizations, and the Bible* (ed. Daniel I. Block; Nashville, TN: B&H, 2008), 225–256.
- ¹⁹ See especially Ivan Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 80.
- ²⁰ For Mesopotamia, see, e.g., W. Heimpel, *Letters to the King of Mari: A New Translation, with Historical Introduction, Notes, and Commentary* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 48, and note texts such as 26:347 (311) and 26:372 (326), where “father” is used to refer to the suzerain. For Egypt and Canaan, “father” and “son” are terms used in the Amarna Letters (EA) of parties in suzerain-vassal treaties, e.g., EA 44, 73, 82 in William L. Moran, ed. and trans., *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore/London: John Hopkins University Press, 1987, 1992, 2002). Similar language comes from Phoenicia, as in the Kilamuwa and Karatepe inscriptions; see J. C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions: Phoenician Inscriptions* (3 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 3:47–48, 130–131. I am indebted to Gregory Smith and Jim Harriman for helping me locate these texts.
- ²¹ Anderson believes 2 Samuel 7 involves three overlapping concepts: adoption, covenant, and royal grant; A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel* (WBC 11; Waco, TX: Word, 1989), 122. A main proponent that the Davidic covenant follows the model of royal grant is M. Weinfeld, “The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90/2 (1970): 184–203; and idem, “בְּרִיתִי b^ʿriti,” in *TDOT* 2:253–279. Yet evidence to demonstrate that 2 Samuel 7 lacks essential elements of the royal grant and may better fit a suzerain-vassal treaty model was provided by Paul Kalluveetil, *Declaration and Covenant*, *Analecta Biblica* 88 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1982), 181. See also the critique of Weinfeld by Gary N. Knoppers, “Ancient Near Eastern Royal Grants and the Davidic Covenant: A Parallel?” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116/4 (1996): 670–697. Thus Anderson is more to the point. Recently Gordon Johnston has demonstrated that Weinfeld’s dichotomy between royal grant and suzerain-vassal treaties is too rigid and not supported by a re-examination of the evidence. See Gordon Johnston, “A Critical Evaluation of Moshe Weinfeld’s Approach to the Davidic Covenant in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Royal Grants: What Did He Get Right and What Did He Get Wrong?” Unpublished paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, November, 2011, San Francisco, CA.
- ²² Note in particular the connection between servant and sonship in the context of covenant in 2 Kings 16:7; and see Stephen G. Dempster, “The Servant of the Lord,” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 136f.

- ²³ For the approach, see especially Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (NSBT 15; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 58–59.
- ²⁵ W. Randall Garr, “‘Image’ and ‘Likeness’ in the Inscription from Tell Fakhariyeh,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 50/3–4 (2003): 227–234.
- ²⁶ See Gordon J. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” in *I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11* (ed. R. S. Hess and D. T. Tsumura; Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 4; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399–404; William J. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 24–25; and M. Hutter, “Adam als Gärtner und König (Gen. 2:8, 15),” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 30 (1985): 258–262.
- ²⁷ Exodus 15:17 shows that Canaan becomes for Israel what the garden sanctuary was for Adam.
- ²⁸ See Daniel I. Block, “The Burden of Leadership: The Mosaic Paradigm of Kingship (Deuteronomy 17:14–20),” in *How I Love Your Torah, O LORD! Studies in the Book of Deuteronomy* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade, 2011), 118–139 (originally published in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162 [2005]: 259–278).
- ²⁹ Donald F. Murray, *Divine Prerogative and Royal Pretension: Pragmatics, Poetics, and Polemics in a Narrative Sequence about David (2 Samuel 5.17–7.29)* (JSOTSup 264; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 299.
- ³⁰ Note how Psalm 89, the psalm on the Davidic Covenant par excellence, picks up on this and also twice speaks of “my servant David” (Psalm 89:3, 20).
- ³¹ Dempster, “The Servant of the Lord,” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology*, 128–178. Cf. also Daniel I. Block, “My Servant David: Ancient Israel’s Vision of the Messiah,” in *Israel’s Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 17–56.
- ³² F.-L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150* (Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 147.
- ³³ See Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (trans. Timothy J. Hallett; New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 255, 263, 265 for images illustrating Psalm 110.
- ³⁴ J. Alexander Rutherford, *God’s Kingdom through His Priest-King: An Analysis of the Book of Samuel in Light of the Davidic Covenant* (Vancouver, BC: Teleioteti Publishing, 2019).
- ³⁵ F.-L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150* (Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 146.
- ³⁶ F.-L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150* (Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 151–152.
- ³⁷ Susan Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews: A Case Study in Early Jewish Bible Interpretation* (WUNT II 260; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2009), 154.
- ³⁸ David Instone Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis Before 70 CE* (Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 30; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1992).