

**The Book of Daniel:**  
**Temporal and Divine Authority in Chapters 2 & 7**

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On the book of Daniel, Lucas states that it is, “hard to explain why [its author] represented Daniel as so comfortably engaged in the service of pagan kings, or the pagan kings as so favourably disposed towards him and his God.”<sup>1</sup> Lucas’ argument is illustrative of the way in which the book of Daniel divides opinion; a division perhaps related more to the historical, thematic and narrative discordance in the book itself than is usually realized. In relation to other Old Testament writings, the book of Daniel is unique in more respects than its identification as the first example of the apocalyptic genre.<sup>2</sup> Developed eschatology in Daniel is in fact specific only to the latter chapters of the book, where the dreams of the first half give way to visions of a comparatively interactive and visceral nature.<sup>3</sup> The exact status of Daniel himself, moreover, has given rise to two traditional opinions. In the Hebrew bible, the book is categorized under ‘writings’, not ‘prophets.’<sup>4</sup> By contrast, the indirect communication between Daniel and God has not proved an obstacle to affording Daniel the status of a prophet within the Christian tradition. Thematically, it is the presence of a messianic figure (first instanced in chapter 7) which marks the pivotal point around which these divergent views of Daniel’s status revolve. Indeed, in contradiction to Lucas’ statement, a deliberate tension is maintained throughout the narrative, in accord to the book’s penultimate theme: the sovereignty of god and the temporality of political institutions that deviate from or transgress the Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> Lucas, E.C., “Daniel: Resolving the Enigma”, *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. 50, Fasc. 1. (Jan., 2000), 67.

<sup>2</sup> “[The book of Daniel is] the only example of full-blown apocalyptic in the Old Testament.” Collins, John J., “The Court-Tales in Daniel and the Development of Apocalyptic”, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 94, No. 2. (Jun., 1975), 219.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 230.

<sup>4</sup> Consigning reason to chapters 2 and 7, for this is the scope of this paper, the absence of direct conversation with God in chapter 2, as well as the angelic interpreter who imparts knowledge to Daniel as to the meaning of the vision in chapter 7, illustrate but one example of Daniel’s exclusion within the Jewish tradition from the category of prophetic writings. Cf. Collins, 230; Jeremiah 1:4; Ezekiel 2:1.

law template.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, political events and institutions are described in the book of Daniel as being under the jurisdiction of God. As stated in the opening verses of the book, “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoi’akim king of Judah into his hand...” (1:2)

Political activity in the book of Daniel ultimately remains under God’s control. As Weber states, “[a] distinctive concern with social reform is characteristic of Israelite prophets [...] Their primary concern was with foreign politics, chiefly because it constituted the theater of their god’s activity.”<sup>6</sup> Undermining Lucas’ claim, the tension between Daniel’s God’s ultimate authority and the power wielded by the Babylonian kingship creates a fundamental tension that stretches the entirety of the text.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Daniel’s visions are incommensurate with his working, waking life. For instance, after his vision of the destruction of “mighty men and the people of the saints”, he wakes in the morning and resumes his service to the king (8:24 – 27). Daniel’s engagement is less a “comfortable” one than one consisting of the burden of duty.<sup>8</sup> As such, the book of Daniel has proved a popular source document for millennial fervour and political resistance. The ideas contained therein have, for instance, been incorporated into the Christian apocalyptic tradition arising from the identification of Jesus Christ with the messianic figure of

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<sup>5</sup> This allows for a qualitative distinction between foreign political forms and the ‘kingdom’ of God, an integral part of Jewish soteriology. This is not to claim, however, that the book of Daniel expresses abject disavowal of monarchical institutions, for the descriptions of the ‘ancient of days’ and the messianic figure in chapter 7 reference monarchical imagery. Cf. Ezekiel 1:26 – 28; Daniel 7:9 – 11.

<sup>6</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, eds. Guenther Ross and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 443.

<sup>7</sup> Lacoque, André (Pellauer, David, trans.), *The Book of Daniel* (London: SPCK, 1979), 8 – 10.

<sup>8</sup> Incidentally, the Hebrew for prophet, ‘nevi’im’ carries connotations of ‘burden’. Presumably, such a narrative device as 8:24 – 27 was intended to arouse a similar sentiment to the stoicism and forbearance exemplified by Daniel in the work’s intended audience.

chapter 7.<sup>9</sup> In this essay I will explore the contrast between temporal and divine authority that compels the movements the book has inspired against monarchy and state institutions through illustrating its presence in chapters 2 and 7. In so doing, issues of narrative continuity, thematic consistency and historical authenticity will be brought to bear on the treatment of this dichotomy in these two chapters, considered chiastic correspondents.

## **I – Historical criticism**

### **Authorship**

The book of Daniel purports to be a firsthand account of a life spent in service of the Babylonian court. Traditionally ascribed to Daniel, a dream-interpreter, the claimed authorship is enforced from within the text by such statements as, “I was standing on the bank of the great river”; “a vision appeared to me, Daniel...”; “my thoughts greatly alarmed me.”<sup>10</sup> Despite the realism implied by the first person tense, there is reason to doubt that an individual named Daniel authored the work, and that such attempts to suggest authenticity are deliberately misleading.<sup>11</sup> Such a narrative device is found nearly exclusively in chapters 7 – 12 which, as will be shown below, are generally considered to have been a significantly later contribution to the text.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, the first six chapters

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<sup>9</sup> Collins, John J., “From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End” in Collins, John J. (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism: Vol. 1: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 141 – 142.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel 10:4; 8:1; 7:28.

<sup>11</sup> Collins, 218.

<sup>12</sup> Lacoque, 8.

are presented in the third person: “Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams”; “Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself”; “Daniel was taken up out of the den.”<sup>13</sup> This stylistic anomaly is a clear indicator of the fact that the book was redacted at a later date; the transition in tense within the text supports the general scholarly consensus that the book in its present form is not the work of a single author.<sup>14</sup> The first person narrative in chapters 7 – 12 is purposefully placed, some conclude, to suggest continuity with the first six chapters, which constitute an “earlier cycle” of stories to which the latter chapters were appended at a later date.<sup>15</sup>

## Dating

There are two main lines of argument concerning the historical context of the Book of Daniel.<sup>16</sup> The first – a literal reading – subscribes to the book’s own chronological system: “In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon”; “In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar”; “In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia”.<sup>17</sup> While the implications of this stylistic device for the theme of political subversion will be explored below, arrival at an accurate date of the text’s creation through its own chronology is generally considered

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<sup>13</sup> Daniel 1:17, 1:8; 6:23.

<sup>14</sup> Including a section as if written by Nebuchadnezzar (4:1-27), chapter 7 represents a stylistic turn from chapters 1 – 6; Towner states that the two halves of the book, “differ too radically in both literary style and theological content to have come from the same hand.” Towner in Hayes, 246.

<sup>15</sup> Towner, W.S., “Book of Daniel” in Hayes, John H. (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (USA: Abingdon Press, 1999), 242. Daniel 10:1 is the only exception to this rule. The statement, ““In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a word was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshezzar” is the only verse to interrupt a continuous first person narrative beginning at 7:2 and ending at 12:13.

<sup>16</sup> Gammie’s theory represents an exception to the main. While agreeing with the theory of the book’s redaction over time, Gammie concludes there is “high probability” that (earlier) sections of the book of Daniel were “composed during the reign of [...] Ptolemy IV Philopator.” Gammie, John G., “The Classification, Stages of Growth, and Changing Intentions in the Book of Daniel”, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 95, No. 2. (Jun., 1976), 204.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel 7:1; 8:1; 10:1.

inconsistent with certain stylistic, narrative and cultural features. For instance, the inclusion of Greek musical instruments in Nebuchadnezzar's orchestra (3:5, 3:7) suggests an historical context abridging Hellenistic culture more closely than admitted by traditional chronology.<sup>18</sup> The implications of dating the authorship of the book to 600 B.C.E., during the Babylonian exile, are an accuracy, authenticity and coherence clearly lacking.<sup>19</sup> Rowley states that the empirical history in Daniel is unreliable to the extent that it implies it was written long after the historical incidents described. The author makes "a gross error", he writes, "in introducing Darius the Mede between Belshazzar and Cyrus. [They also] supposed that a Median empire stood between the Babylonian and the Persian...."<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Rowley writes that the book displays conspicuously accurate knowledge of political events during the reign of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes.<sup>21</sup>

According to J.J. Collins, the first six chapters of Daniel constitute an older corpus to which the latter five were appended.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, thematic parallels can be found between the first six chapters Daniel and a range of ancient texts, including the Egyptian *Visions of Neferti* (1950 B.C.E.). Matthews states that it contains a prototype of the motif in the first six chapters in Daniel of "entertaining a monarch with the prediction of his

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<sup>18</sup> Mitchell, T.C. and R. Joyce, "The Musical Instruments in Nebuchadnezzar's Orchestra" in Wiseman, D.J. et al., *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (London: Tyndale Press, 1965), 19 – 27. See also, Kitchen, K.A., "The Aramaic in Daniel", in *ibid*, 31 – 79.

<sup>19</sup> Collins, 1975, 219.

<sup>20</sup> Rowley, H.H., *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel: A Historical Study of Contemporary Theories* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1935), 175 – 176.

<sup>21</sup> 'Epiphanes' is an honorific, loosely meaning 'manifestation of god'; cf. contemporary 'epiphany'.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*.

downfall.”<sup>23</sup> Of these obvious parallels, Towner writes that, “[m]odern critical scholarship has reached a near-consensus that the book of Daniel essentially attained its canonical form in the years 167 – 164 B.C.E. during the reign of the Greco-Syrian king Antiochus IV Epiphanes.”<sup>24</sup> In support of this view are empirical documentary accounts of the anti-Semitic politics of the king. Hippolytus’ *Treatise on Christ and the Antichrist*, written in approximately 200 C.E., is one such document. He writes that Antiochus:

devised measures against the Jews. He [...] issued a decree in those times, that ‘all should set up shrines before their doors, and sacrifice, and that they should march in procession to the honour of Dionysus, waving chaplets of ivy’; and that those who refused obedience should be put to death by strangulation and torture.<sup>25</sup>

In the context of the oppressive force of Antiochus’ reign, the underlying political focus of the book of Daniel becomes clearer. Discerning a particular set of socio-historical conditions suggests a reactive interpretation of contemporary events against an incursive foreign political power on the religious culture of the Jewish community. The abolition of the Sabbath, the destruction of Jewish scriptures and the attempt to institute a state cult of Zeus are among the proscriptions enacted by Antiochus included in contemporary records.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the king’s persecution of the Jewish community was so fervent that

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<sup>23</sup> “Visions of Neferti” in Matthews, Victor H. and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006), 335 – 341.

<sup>24</sup> Towner, W.S., “Book of Daniel” in Hayes, John H. (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (USA: Abingdon Press, 1999), 242 – 249; Provan, Iain, “Daniel” in Dunn, James D.G. and John W. Rogerson (eds.), *Eerdmans’ Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans’ Publishing Company, 2003), 673; Lacoque, 7 – 10; Lucas, Ernest C., “Book of Daniel” in Vanhoozer, Kevin J. (gen. ed.), *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005), 156 – 157.

<sup>25</sup> Hippolytus concludes: “But [Antiochus] also met his due recompense at the hand of the Lord, the righteous Judge and all-searching God; for he died eaten up of worms.”

<sup>26</sup> Book of Maccabees, 1:41 – 1:61. Bevan, E.R., “A Note on Antiochos Epiphanes”, *The Journal of Hellenistic Studies*, Vol. 20. (1900), 26 – 27

pigs were sacrificed within the temple at Jerusalem.<sup>27</sup> An act described as an “abomination that makes desolate” in (11:31), this cross-textual piece of historical evidence constitutes a compelling piece of evidence for the historical critical thesis that Daniel was redacted during a period of political oppression and religious incursion.<sup>28</sup>

## **Language**

The language forms employed in Daniel further assist the claim. The book is composed in two languages: Hebrew (chapters 2 – 7) and Aramaic (chapters 1, 8 – 12), corresponding approximately with the dramatic thematic shift from the court-tales of the first half to the apocalyptic visions of the second.<sup>29</sup> It has been suggested that the use of two separate languages was purposely related to the nature of the text’s message. The composition of a single work in more than one language was not unprecedented. In the corpus of Mesopotamian literature, the device of enclosing the main body of a text within a linguistic form of contrasting style so as to heighten the effect of the work was commonly employed in constructing single, integrated writings.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, other Old Testament examples of this technique are found in the book of Job, which contains a poetic core (3:1 - 42:6) within a narrative introduction and epilogue (1:1- 2:13; 42:6-17).

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Daniel 8:9-12; 9:27. According to Cox, Antiochus’ attempts to replace Jewish with Hellenistic cultural and religious forms included the alteration of scripture. His argument that Hellenistic categories were introduced by Antiochus to the cosmology of Genesis rests on the linguistic correspondence between the ‘firmament’ broken by the ‘little horn’ of Daniel 8, and the ‘firmament’ of Genesis 1:6-8. Though Cox’s claim that Antiochus ‘corrupted’ scripture in inserting Hellenistic cosmology into the Hebrew is speculative, it is nevertheless compelling: alterations in traditional cosmology could reasonably qualify as potent grounds [this] reactive apocalyptic scripture. See <http://www.sentex.net/~tcc/antioc1.html> (accessed 240807).

<sup>29</sup> Collins, 1998, 141.

<sup>30</sup> Gammie, 203.



Ezra also contains Aramaic sections (4:8 - 6:18; 7:12-26). In the case of Daniel, too, the transition of the format of the text is intimately related to the nature of the message. A language of revelation, it is permissible that the shift between Aramaic and Hebrew was intended to highlight the anti-monarchical elements as well as obscure the eschatological components of Daniel, the soteriology of which applied only to the community persecuted by Antiochus.<sup>31</sup>

That the book of Daniel speaks of this destructive period in history is clear. The redaction which took place under Antiochus allows a more historically coherent viewpoint of the narrative irregularities within the two halves of the text than ascribed throughout its reception history.<sup>32</sup> It also opens up discussion on the political significance of Daniel's method of undermining kingship within the narrative. While chapter 2 differs in many regards considerably from chapter 7, which marks the book's narrative, thematic and theological disjuncture, it participates in the same themes evident in the redacted chapter 7. Political subversion and the ultimate supremacy of God are apparent at the outset of the book.<sup>33</sup> Let us briefly review chapter 2 by way of illustrating a typological precedent for the presentation of a politically subversive message in chapter 7. The centrality of a

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<sup>31</sup> Porteous, 115. Hebrew has a "certain authority" as a language of revelation, and so it is not unsurprising that the employment of specific languages in texts was determined by the nature, value and imperative of the message.

<sup>32</sup> This narrative regularity is instanced in: (1) the absence of Babylonian political authorial figures in the chapters 7 - 12, save the chronological device of naming the years of the reign of a monarch [see n.] and (2) the absence of visions seen by Daniel himself in the first half. Both dreams are dreamt by Nebuchadnezzar and are only interpreted by Daniel, whereas in chapters this template is shifted and Daniel becomes the dreamer, in need of an interpreter (7:16; 8:15; 9:22; 10:14; 12:8).

<sup>33</sup> The presence of this theme within other ancient texts suggests that the political subversion in the opening chapter of Daniel may not simply be attributed to redaction during the reign of Antiochus. Indeed, this thematic substratum may have been the reason it was chosen to impose a new "cycle" of stories upon. Towner, 242. Cf. Porteous, 18; Collins, 1975, 221 n. 17; Matthews, 335 - 341.

dream in both chapters references a traditional understanding of the medium. It is through the dream above all that the book of Daniel pronounces the futility of temporal authority.

## II – The Politics of Interpreting a Dream

Among the 116 references to dreaming in the Old Testament, 52 are found in Genesis, and 29 in Daniel. The dreams in the book of Daniel are classed by Mendelsohn as symbolic, representative of a typology that for their obscurity require interpretation for apprehension of their meaning.<sup>34</sup> The first instance of the word ‘dream’ (Hebrew: מִלֹּחַ ‘*challowm*’) in Daniel is (1:17): “Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” This statement is made both by way of introduction to the main figure of the stories but more specifically, to the social and political significance of the skill within its narrative context, for it is on account of his superior interpretive ability that Daniel rises through the ranks of the Babylonian court.<sup>35</sup> However, Daniel’s ascendance to a prominent position among the king’s ‘magicians and astrologers’ is necessarily discordant with his status as a Jew and his rank as a captive. This tension constitutes an effective narrative device for surveying the theme of political subversion through interpretation of (dream) events.<sup>36</sup> Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of an idol composed of four

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<sup>34</sup> Mendelsohn, Isaac, “Dream” in Buttrick, George Arthur, et al (eds.), *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 1. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 868 – 869. See also Bromiley, Geoffrey W., et al (eds.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 991 – 912.

<sup>35</sup> Daniel 1:20

<sup>36</sup> In the case of the community oppressed by the Seleucid regime in 167 B.C.E., the book of Daniel was an appropriate choice for redaction and appendage; his interpretive ability is politically powerful in and of itself within the Babylonian court setting, but furthermore – within the context of God’s dominion –

elements in chapter 2 is the first instance of the paradigmatic polarization of temporal and divine authority that we will see features in chapter 7.<sup>37</sup>

## Chapter 2

Chapter 2 begins with Nebuchadnezzar informing his coterie of wisemen and astrologers that a recent dream makes him “anxious” as to its deeper meaning (2:2). Presupposing a meaning transcending his capacity to discern it, Nebuchadnezzar’s request for dream interpretation allows the political significance of Daniel’s mastery of the occupation to enter the narrative.<sup>38</sup> A member of the king’s court, Daniel’s interpretive faculties are superior to that of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian and Chaldean soothsayers, unable to interpret the dream without having it relayed (2:4, 7, 10). Prior to Daniel’s presentation before the king, Nebuchadnezzar issues an decree that all wisemen of the realm be put to death, an order that implements one half of a dual paradigm of authority which Daniel subsequently articulates in his interpretation (2:36–45). Daniel relays the king’s dream with unsurpassed accuracy, but pauses before his interpretation to offer an admonition:

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motivates resistance to oppressive political tactics through perceiving events through the lens of God’s ultimate sovereignty and an ‘everlasting’, just dominion to come.

<sup>37</sup> Although chapter 2 is most frequently cited as the chiasmic correspondent of chapter 7, chapter 1 contains an incident delineating a clear boundary between the legitimacy of divine and temporal authority. Daniel is introduced to the story as a captive (1:3-7), lead along with three companions to serve at the court of Nebuchadnezzar. During the journey Daniel rejects the provisions of his captors so as “not to contaminate himself,” and fasts instead of accepting the provisions of his captors (1:8). Challenging the guard to test and his companions by allowing them only vegetables and water, Daniel undergoes ten days of malnourishment at the end of which he emerges healthier and better nourished than those who had partaken of the captors’ provisions (1:15). In the first instance this is a case of the preservation of Jewish purity laws. Food and drink considered impure by Talmudic standards are unfit for consumption and deemed physically as well as spiritually contaminative. At the same time, the incident clearly dichotomizes these realms of authority. The result of Daniel and his companions’ fast – “their features appeared better [...] than all the young men *who ate the king’s delicacies*” – visibly tips the scales in favor of (submission to) divine authority. Cf. Provan, 665 – 666.

<sup>38</sup> The political significance of Daniel’s skill is not realized in chapter 1, but is contained in his active refusal to partaken in the king’s provisions.

“You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength and glory...” (2:37–39).

Whereas the political significance of Daniel’s interpretive powers is absent from chapter 1, here they are effectively expressed.<sup>39</sup> Daniel’s interpretation contextualizes Nebuchadnezzar’s authority in terms of supremacy of God, who “has given [men, birds and beasts] into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all...”<sup>40</sup> (Cf. 5:21) This is achieved by emphasizing the temporary nature of this reign: the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar is the head of gold that is crushed to dust (2:32–35); a similar fate is pronounced for the three kingdoms that succeed it.<sup>41</sup> By contrast, Daniel informs the Babylonian king, God’s kingdom “shall never be destroyed” (2:44). Regarding the inadequacy of the Babylonian wisemen and astrologers, who have in Nebuchadnezzar’s words spoken, “lying and corrupt words before me”, the king recognizes his superior interpretive powers and prostrates before Daniel, ordering that he be rewarded with “offering[s] and incense.”<sup>42</sup> Nebuchadnezzar proclaims God’s authority in his humble statement that Daniel’s God is truly “the Lord of kings,” and superior over all gods.<sup>43</sup> Daniel’s subversive admonition and, subsequently, Nebuchadnezzar’s humility to Daniel’s revelation of his secret dream explicates the paradigmatic conflict between the powers of God and those of the king.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>40</sup> Daniel 2:38.

<sup>41</sup> On the relativity of this quadripartite scheme to other contemporary cosmologies, see Blacker, Carmen and Michael Loewe (eds.), *Ancient Cosmologies* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1975).

<sup>42</sup> Daniel 2:46.

<sup>43</sup> Daniel 2:47.

<sup>44</sup> Lucas, 157.

A dichotomy is introduced in chapter 2 whereby temporality is contrasted with eternity: the head of gold is crushed to dust, replaced by a kingdom that shall “stand forever.”<sup>45</sup> Such a tension constitutes the diametric opposition between Daniel’s mastery of the interpretive faculty in comparison to his Babylonian counterparts’ obvious lack thereof: it is at Daniel’s request that they are spared the king’s death sentence (2:24). It also constitutes the contrast between Nebuchadnezzar’s humility and the ultimacy of Daniel’s god.<sup>46</sup> Daniel contextualizes the kingdom of Babylon in terms of a heavenly dominion, “which shall never be destroyed... [but] shall stand forever” (2:44). The same polar contrast is present in chapter 7, despite the stylistic differences created by the chapter’s historical dissonance. Thematic consistency is achieved through simulation of the apolitical potential of dream interpretation seen to feature in chapter 2. The book of Daniel again pronounces the destruction of temporal authority and its subservience to God, but the manner in which this assurance is made differs markedly.

### **III – The Heart of the Book of Daniel<sup>47</sup>**

#### **Chapter 7**

The stylistic developments of chapter 7 include the presence of full-formed apocalyptic imagery.<sup>48</sup> Concurrently, the theme of the ultimacy of God’s kingdom is increased and

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<sup>45</sup> See footnote 29.

<sup>46</sup> Even if the skills of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian and Chaldean interpreters are not acquired through rote learning, Daniel’s powers come from the superior god and those of his rivals ultimately fail the test of relaying Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Cf. Daniel 2:28: “[T]here is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dreams and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these...”

<sup>47</sup> “With this chapter we reach the heart of the book of Daniel.” Porteous, 95.

centralized while narrative is reduced. Concerning the historical disjuncture between chapters 6 and 7 (overcome by continuation of the overarching narrative of Daniel's dutiful service to the Babylonian court, alternately attending to the king and dreaming of the destruction of the Babylonian empire), the encounters between Daniel and the king[s] which characterize the 'court-tales' of the first six chapters are notably absent. The contrast between temporal and divine authority is contained primarily within Daniel's vision, where the lack of a figure of (foreign) political power is substituted by that of "one like the son of man."<sup>49</sup> Set, as shown above, within a specific historical frame, this replacement indicates the extent to which contextualizing socio-political events in terms of a broader cosmology constituted a potent form of political resistance.

Despite its linguistic accord with chapters 2 - 6, chapter 7 represents a thematic, stylistic and dramatic leap from the chapters which precede it. Writing that it represents a midpoint between the court-tales of the earlier half and the visionary accounts of the later, according to Porteous, "it is very difficult to determine whether [chapter 7] ought to be linked more closely with the former or latter [chapter]."<sup>50</sup> The sharp movement away from narrative to the dream-like quality of Daniel's visions is revealed in the transition from third to first person narrative tense. The transition that occurs in the second verse – from the third person tense to the first – marks the beginning point of a continuous first person narrative of which only a single verse (Daniel 10:1) is an exception. The visceral sense of urgency effected by this transition suggests the work's authenticity, as well as its authority. Redacted as if Daniel's private, troubling thoughts (7:28), the primary way in

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<sup>48</sup> Collins, 1975, 217.

<sup>49</sup> Daniel 7:13; Towner, 243.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 95.

which the inter-active qualities of this dream are authenticated is through cross-reference to traditional modes of prophecy reception. Proportionate to the decrease in narrative setting, Daniel's visions take on a visceral quality found in the writings and experiences of the Jewish prophets.<sup>51</sup> In contrast with the dream in chapter 2 which takes place in private, here Daniel 'considered,' 'looked', 'approached', 'desired'.<sup>52</sup> The interactivity of the dream experience recounted here (cf. 8:15; 10:8; 10:15), and the concluding verse, which notes Daniel's alarm at these "thoughts", suggest an authentic account, a deliberate attempt to smooth over the historical discord between the reign of Antiochus (represented by the fourth 'beast' of chapter 7) and the reign of Belshazzar, during which the dream claims to have been recorded.

As noted, one of the primary means of identifying the shift between Daniel 1 – 6 and 7 – 12 is in the situation of narrative within the dream. In chapter 7, the dream is largely disembodied from the rest of the text, unlike its chiastic counterpart in chapter 2. The only means by which it is situated historically is through the opening verse: "In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while on his bed."<sup>53</sup> Chapters 1, 2, 7, 8, 9 and 10 begin by recording the name of the reigning king, and the year in whose reign the events to follow occurred.<sup>54</sup> For instance, the vision of the ram and the goat in chapter 8 is prefaced by the statement that: "In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me..." It is pertinent to note that this

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Ezekiel 1:1, 1:28 – 2:2; Deuteronomy 18:18; II Kings 12:6.

<sup>52</sup> Daniel 7:8, 11, 16, 19.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Nebuchadnezzar's troubling "visions of my head" in Daniel 4:5.

<sup>54</sup> Porteous' commentary treats all three as a single chapter; Porteous, 149 – 173, as chapters 11 and 12 continue the narrative begun in chapter 10: Daniel's reception of 'secrets' from an angelic interpreter

stylistic device is largely particular to the Hebrew sections of the book.<sup>55</sup> Four of the six chapters in the ‘Aramaic core’ (3, 4, 5, 6) lack this feature, whereas four out of five of the Hebrew chapters (1, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12) retain it. Tenth century Jewish scholar Rabbi Saadia Gaon writes that this feature of the text demonstrates Daniel’s knowledge of, “every one of those hidden sciences at the beginning and the end of the reign of every [king].”<sup>56</sup> Attribution of theological significance to this chronological device is dubious in light of the increased frequency with which it occurs in the Aramaic portions of the book. Considering this chapter a later addition to the text an historical critical approach suggests a politically subversive function alongside chronological measure. In the context of the nature of the vision in chapter 7, this device contributes to the theme of contrasting temporal and divine authority, deliberately relating visions concerning the ultimate authority of God to the ‘reign’ of a king.<sup>57</sup> By reference to an historical figure, and to specific political circumstances, the chapter highlights the disproportionate and discordant qualities of the two realms of authority.<sup>58</sup>

This dichotomy, due to the reduction of narrative, is contained to Daniel’s dream in chapter 7. The account has three distinct parts: the description of the beasts (7:2–13) the appearance of the ‘Son of Man’ (7:13–15) and Daniel’s reception of interpretation by an angelic figure (7:15–28). Daniel’s description of the three beasts arising from the sea – a griffin, a bear and a leopard<sup>59</sup> – corresponds to the substances of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in chapter 2. The fourth beast – “different from all the beasts that were before it”

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<sup>55</sup> Two exceptions are chapter 2 and chapter 7. Incidentally, these are the two considered most significant by the apocalyptic Fifth Monarchy Men. See below.

<sup>56</sup> Alobaidi, Joseph (ed. and trans.), *The Book of Daniel: The Commentary of R. Saadia Gaon* (Berne: Peter Lang, 2006), 519.

<sup>57</sup> The reign is here symbolized by the succeeding kingdoms.

<sup>58</sup> See footnote 65.

<sup>59</sup> Daniel 7:4 – 6. Cf. Lacocque, 138 – 142; Porteous, 102 – 107.



(7:7) – reflects the golden head, symbol of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, which was crushed to dust (2:32–35). Like the humbling of the Babylonian king before the divine majesty of God, here the empire symbolized by the fourth beast is rendered impotent before a superior power.<sup>60</sup> The consensus that the fourth beast represents the Seleucid dynasty (its physical features have proved an overwhelmingly popular subject for symbolic analysis), determines pronouncement upon the temporality of Antiochus’ realm by the fact the arrogant beast is slain.<sup>61</sup> Daniel’s vision of the destruction of empires before a burnished throne upon which sits, “one ancient of days”, has allusions, Porteous states, to the visions Ezekiel (1:26 – 28, cf. 10:1).<sup>62</sup> Similarly, the appearance thereafter of a “son of man” employs a term with no accurate textual precedent.<sup>63</sup>

According to Porteous, it is not clear, “whether or not [this term] belonged to a tradition which could be taken for granted by the author of the book of Daniel as familiar to his readers.”<sup>64</sup> Though the exact identity of the term ‘son of man’ might be obscure, his actions within the text present the reader a clear message.<sup>65</sup> This is illustrated in the symbolism of the arrival of the two sets of forms. Whereas the divine authority

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<sup>60</sup> Moreover, the first three beasts are by turn *given* the mind of a man, *told* to arise and devour flesh, and *given* dominion, prior to being relieved of their authority (7:12). That political events form part of the “theatre of god’s activity” is noted above (see footnote \_\_\_\_).

<sup>61</sup> Lacocque, 139 – 141; Porteous, 103 – 107; Towner, 245 – 246; Provan, 761 – 762. Historical critical location of the composition of the vision of chapter 7 in the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes does not however, as illustrated in the chapter’s reception history, below, limit the text’s pronouncement upon the temporality of political empire to a specific historical context. The scope of the dual contrast in chapter 7 encompasses the four main empires of the ancient world, and the identities of the empires symbolized are obscure. A hierarchy is purposely constructed, with the kingdom of God according authority to the political institutions and their ‘heads’ (2:32–35).

<sup>62</sup> Lacocque confirms the uniqueness of the term, stating that “the parallels within canonical Scripture are more ideological than linguistic.” Lacocque, 142. Cf. I Enoch 46: 1 – 2, 47:3, 98:2; Isaiah 44:6; Psalms 55:19.

<sup>63</sup> Daniel 7:13; Porteous, 110.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 110.

<sup>65</sup> “...‘[M]an’ here seems to be a symbol for the celestial. The emphasis is on heavenly power which acts through the faithful Jews as contrasted with the power of chaos which acts through the kingdoms of the world.” Porteous, 116.

symbolized by the son of man descends from “the clouds of heaven,” the political systems represented by the four beasts arise from the depths of the sea.<sup>66</sup> In contrast with the beasts’ symbolic detail, the description of the son of man in terms of his authority and dominion maintains the fundamental contrast in spite of the ambiguity of his description.<sup>67</sup> The same can be said for the retinue which accompanies his appearance (7:22). The identity of the ‘saints of the Most High’ has given rise to a variety of opinion including, “angels” and “the Jewish people.”<sup>68</sup> While the term ‘Most High’ is a common referent to God<sup>69</sup>, a single meaning of the prefix ‘saints’, cannot be deduced from its occurrence in the Old Testament.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, the function of the saints within the text suggests the significance of the term. The saints may be considered in light of the chiasmic relationship of chapters 2 and 7 as correspondents of Nebuchadnezzar’s coterie of soothsayers. The invalidity of the powers of those dream interpreters at the Babylonian court is inverted in their chiasmic reflections in chapter 7. By contrast with the death sentence issued by the Babylonian king in response to his court’s interpretive inability, the relationship of the saints to the authority of the son of man is such that they in fact participate in his sovereignty over the eternal kingdom.<sup>71</sup> The saints’ reception of the eternal kingdom (7:27) pronounces the hierarchical systems of political authority mere

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<sup>66</sup> See footnote 28; cf. Daniel 7:7.

<sup>67</sup> Porteous, 110. “[T]o him was given [...] glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him...” (7:14).

<sup>68</sup> Rogers, P.G., *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 4. Cf. Porteous, 115; Saadia Goan (Alobaidi, trans.), 552 n. 266.

<sup>69</sup> Porteous, 116.

<sup>70</sup> For example, in one instance it designates supernatural beings (Genesis 12:1), and in another, Israel (Psalms 34:10); Lacoque, 126 – 127.

<sup>71</sup> The extent of this participation is indicated by similar linguistic features in the text. Of the son of man, the text states that, “his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away” and that, “all peoples, nations and languages should serve him” (7:14). By comparison, the saints are described as follows: “their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom” and, “all dominions shall serve and obey them.” (7:27)

simulacra of legitimate divine authority.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, it is this political statement – represented by the divine kingdom inaugurated by the appearance of the messianic figure (7:14) – that has most often been made throughout the book’s reception history.

To summarize, the contrast between temporal and divine authority is in chapter 7 assisted through the transition from third to first person narrative tense. Effectively imprinting an authoritative tone upon the text, it allows a seemingly authentic, unmediated amplification of the dichotomous contrast of chapter 2. Secondly, the reduction of the narrative context situates the dichotomous relationship between divine and political authority solely within Daniel’s dream. Relative to the political significances (within the text) of this traditional medium outlined in chapter 2, the visceral nature of the experience described in the first person creates a sense of apocalyptic imminence through its immediacy. By contrast with chapter 2, chapter 7 is presented as a largely decontextualized written account of Daniel’s dream experience. Historical setting is given in the first verse which, in light of the book’s redaction during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, connotes a (false) sense of predictive history while reinforcing the apolitical themes of the vision through reference to a reign of foreign power.<sup>73</sup> Lastly, the absence of a (foreign) king in the narrative is compensated by the depiction of a messianic figure.<sup>74</sup> Entering Daniel’s vision after the slaying of the ten-horned beast<sup>75</sup>,

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<sup>72</sup> See footnote 6.

<sup>73</sup> Towner, 247; Porteous, 149 – 150. See footnote 20.

<sup>74</sup> Towner, 243.

<sup>75</sup> Scholarly opinion upon the text’s redaction during the years 160 – 170 B.C.E attributes to the fourth beast to the Seleucid kingdom, and considers the talking horn a symbolic representation of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. See footnote 28.

this figure has been identified with Jesus Christ, representing a central point of focus in but one instance of the book's reception history.<sup>76</sup>

#### **IV – The Fifth Monarchy Men**

The European Middle Ages gave rise to a profusion of apocalyptic thought.<sup>77</sup> Incidentally supporting the scholarly consensus that the book of Daniel was composed in relation to political oppression, Rogers locates the source of this millennial fervour in the disenfranchisement resulting from rapid changes to socio-political conditions.<sup>78</sup> Within this milieu, the book of Daniel proved a popular source of rhetoric in its pronouncement on the futility of political institutions before the ultimate sovereignty of God.<sup>79</sup> The temporality of political institutions in light of the apocalyptic events described in chapter 7 was recognized as the elemental component of the text by the 17<sup>th</sup> century English political movement known as the Fifth Monarchy Men. Deriving their name from Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2, the Fifth Monarchy Men promulgated a vision of Christ's imminent arrival and implementation of a fifth kingdom, "which shall never be

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<sup>76</sup> Porteous, 50 – 51.

<sup>77</sup> Rogers, P.G., *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966); Creed, Kevin A., "The Pamphleteers Protestant Champion: Viewing Oliver Cromwell through the Media of his Day", *Essays in History* 34 (1992), <http://etext.virginia.edu/journals/EH/EH34/creed34.html> (accessed 010907).

<sup>78</sup> Rogers writes such rhetoric was well received due to the economic disenfranchisement of the time. See Rogers, 5. Likewise, the millennial message of Japanese layman Nichiren was easily disseminated in Kamakura Japan (1185 - 1333) due to political and socio-economic fluctuation. On the contribution of a pre-existing eschatological timetable in contributing to the proliferation of this form of Buddhism, see Nattier, Jan, *Once Upon A Future Time: Studies in a Buddhist Prophecy of Decline* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1991) and Anesaki, Masaharu, *Nichiren: The Buddhist Prophet* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966).

<sup>79</sup> Towner, 245 – 246.

destroyed” (2:44).<sup>80</sup> Placing overwhelming importance on chapters 2 and 7 of the book of Daniel, the Fifth Monarchy Men adhered to a literal reading of Daniel’s interpretation of the dream in chapter 2.<sup>81</sup> It was their intention to facilitate the implementation of the kingdom of God ruled by Jesus, who was identified with the son of man in chapter 7. This imperative entailed the rejection of the authority of the English monarchy as a corruption of the original authority of God.<sup>82</sup> Identifying themselves with the saints of the Most High, the group was a leader in the rebellion against Charles I; his execution, it was believed, was a necessary prerequisite to God’s sovereignty on earth.<sup>83</sup>

The utilization of the book of Daniel as instanced here is marked by two presuppositions. Firstly, the events described in scripture were interpreted literally, that is, they were treated as if they were authentic prophecies of the future.<sup>84</sup> The Fifth Monarchy Men justified their anti-monarchical position through the expectation that Christ would return to earth to occupy his rightful place as ruler of a “kingdom that shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:14). Secondly, parts of the text which formed such an integral component of their ideology were decontextualized. Indeed, the text as a whole was viewed without regard for the social conditions which compelled its creation. Discarding the specificity of cultural symbolic forms, a presumption was made regarding the universality of the imagery in the book of Daniel; more pertinently, ascription to contemporary empire was

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<sup>80</sup> Rogers, 1 – 5.

<sup>81</sup> Rogers, 4.

<sup>82</sup> Coward, Barry, *Cromwell* (London: Longman, 1991), 91.

<sup>83</sup> “The Saints of the Most High [...] are a people distinct from the world [...] and are by themselves a Common-Wealth and Free State; and therefore ‘tis to be desired from good and found grounds, that they would exercise that Royal Authority which God has given unto them, and invested them with, as they are saints by calling.” Rogers, 79. Ibid, 147 – 149. Cf. Coward, 92.

<sup>84</sup> See sections ‘dating’ and ‘authorship’, above.

ventured.<sup>85</sup> The Fifth Monarchy Men's view of Charles I was built upon the traditional correspondence of the four beasts of Daniel 7 to the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman empires respectively.<sup>86</sup> The reign of Charles I over England, Scotland and Wales was thus highly significant in terms of the presumption of the continuing validity of a symbolic tradition over time.<sup>87</sup> It was, furthermore, assisted by an historical coincidence. Within the Christian European culture which gave rise to the apocalyptic motives of the Fifth Monarchy Men, the significance of the 'number of the beast' played a quintessential role.<sup>88</sup> Constructing an apocalyptic based in equal part upon the New Testament book of Revelations, the 'number of the beast' (Revelations 13:18) was employed by the Fifth Monarchy Men in configuring a timetable which placed their point in time on the precipice of history. The forthcoming year 1666 served to increase fervor over Jesus' impending arrival and creation of a "kingdom" of God on earth.<sup>89</sup> The imminence of this event necessitated, it was believed, the immediate, and final, 'humbling' of the temporal king.

In conclusion, this essay has compared chapters 2 and 7 of the book of Daniel. A well-balanced historical critical approach rejects the book's own chronology as a legitimizing device intimately related to its genre of 'apocalyptic,' as well as to the accompanying political diagnosis the genre entails. The stylistic and narrative disjunctures between the two chapters indicate that it is certainly more plausible that the tumult created by the anti-

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<sup>85</sup> The practice continues. See, for instance, the Jehovah's Witness publication, Unknown, *Pay Attention to Daniel's Prophecy!* (Pennsylvania: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 1999), 276 – 285. Cf. Porteous, 104 – 106.

<sup>86</sup> Rogers, 11.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 101.

<sup>88</sup> Book of Revelations 13:18

<sup>89</sup> Book of Revelations 13:16 – 17.

Semitic politics of Antiochus IV Epiphanes compelled a reactive text seeking to locate contemporary political events within a coherent historico-cosmological schema than to suggest that the book of Daniel's own chronology is beyond reproach. If Collins is correct in asserting that the Book of Daniel is the first example of well-developed apocalyptic in the Old Testament, then scholarly consensus on the composition of its first instance in chapter 7 suggests historical and political context was the primary determinant of its theological contextualization of the persecutory politics of the Seleucid king. This contextualization, as shown, took place through reference to pre-existing modes of prophecy reception, a theology of restitution incorporating political justice, and the embodiment of salvation in a messiah.<sup>90</sup> Aside from the discrepancy over the son of man's exact identity, the imminent institution of a 'kingdom' of God on earth is an idea by which both halves of the book are able to be cohered. Shown through the above example, these features of the narrative assisted the formation and ideological coherence of a regicidal, apocalyptic movement, the motivation of which was derived from a mistaken view of the book of Daniel a united, consistent and coherent whole. Assuming its dream accounts were pertinent to future events, the Fifth Monarchy Men applied the text's paradigmatic dichotomy of temporal and divine authority to contemporary political conditions, executing a king as a means to facilitating a kingdom of Christ they mistakenly believed would soon arrive.

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<sup>90</sup> Towner, 244.

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